

NEWS & LETTERS

Theory/Practice

'Human Power is its own end'—Marx

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Struggles make history come alive



by S. Hamer

You can really see what capitalism is all about when you are in the factory. It is anti-human. Karl Marx wrote that in production "the machine dominates man, not man the machine." That is true. I relate that to our work force at the Delta Pride Catfish processing factory in Indianola, Miss. It is owned by 178 white farmers. They dominated the workers totally, practically owned the people, for the first five years of that plant.

When we first started there, they worked us from sundown to sundown. In 1986 we stood up as Black women and challenged them. After we voted for a union, they wanted to figure out a way to dominate us even though we had a contract. They paid over a million dollars for these automation machines to replace many workers, especially on the kill line. They downstuffed and said there wasn't room for all the workers due to this machinery.

They ran those machines for so long and, after running them like that, they wouldn't work. So in the end they had to throw the machines out. But they never stop trying to get faster and faster machines to do the work of workers. They put those machines in to dominate us, keep us down and stop us from progressing.

TREATED LIKE A MACHINE

Marx also wrote that "the capitalist mode of production produces, thus, with the extension of the working day, not only the deterioration of human labor power, but also the premature exhaustion and death of this labor power itself." When a machine runs so long, you are going to have to add new bolts and screws. It will produce for a while, but eventually it will break down. If you are a person and you don't get the proper care, you

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Black World

Campaign 2000— 6 degrees of danger



By Lou Turner

The U.S. media tell us, despite their interminable coverage to this year's presidential primary races. This is the first degree of danger we face in arguably one of the most scary political years of the last century. The danger lies in the media's attempt to convince us that there's nothing to stay awake for, so accustomed have they become to the stench of neofascism in the air.

While the corporate media help the current crop of far Right Republican candidates create a political smoke-screen with such seemingly innocuous issues as tax cuts, campaign financing, health care, and Social Security, a neofascist politics has been articulated with impunity around such social issues as women's reproductive freedom, lesbian and gay rights, militarism, affirmative action, and criminal justice policy.

Christian fundamentalist Gary Bauer of the reactionary Family Research Council has led the way, with the rest of the Republican field in tow, in making his rabid anti-abortion position the litmus test for choosing a vice-presidential running mate and nominees to the Supreme Court. With Bauer, the other panderer for the overly inflated Christian Right vote, Alan Keyes (who hates being referred to as a "Black" candidate), has articulated the most neofascist position, calling for the abolition of all human rights protections for lesbians and gays.

Arizona Senator John McCain epitomizes the so-called "character issue" and the "politics of biography" that the media christened in the aftermath of Bill Clinton's impeachment scandal. At every opportunity McCain trades on his experience as a Vietnam War era prisoner of war to his experience as a Vietnam War era prisoner of war in Vietnam that Republicans and Democrats foster to pursue their doctrine of permanent war.

Meanwhile, the Democratic Party campaigns of Vice-President Al Gore and former New Jersey Senator Bill Bradley have taken the art of taking the Black vote for

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Seattle anti-WTO demonstrations pose a future without capitalism

by Ron Brokmeyer

Tremors from the dramatic showdown in Seattle against the World Trade Organization in November continue two months later. While commentators of every ideological stripe weigh in, anti-WTO participants, having returned to home towns here and abroad, report the incredible events. Enthusiastic audiences debate the meaning of what is reported.

Local demonstrations inveigh against the Gap's use of virtually enslaved labor in poor Asian countries. Protests around the world extend solidarity to the other America as the one Dec. 12 in Mexico City, demanding the release of protesters arrested at the WTO talks in Seattle and the release of Mumia Abu-Jamal, the U.S. Black revolutionary journalist on Death Row. And anti-capitalist activists plan to write a second chapter to the Seattle episode with meetings and protests in Chicago on May Day.

The epicenter of these tremors was the youthful crowd of tens of thousands, fighting for human rights and the environment, and 30,000 trade unionists who converged on Seattle to protest the WTO's Nov. 30 conference opening. They put globalized capitalism on trial—and the whole world was watching. The demonstrations succeeded in throwing light on a thoroughly undemocratic, secretive organization that overrules, in the name of



Protesters converge on Seattle Nov. 29 to challenge the World Trade Organization's deliberations to exploit labor and plunder the environment.

trade agreements, environmental, trade union and human rights regulations.

THE BATTLE FOR SEATTLE

The youth actually stopped the opening WTO ceremony at the Paramount Theater. The day-long non-violent resistance of hundreds of autonomous affinity groups of the Direct Action Network were successful in dominating the area of Seattle around the conference center and, in turn, shutting down the whole conference. What was so hard for the capitalist media to grasp is how such a large mass of people with no centralized direction could exhibit such discipline and, in turn, the power of coordinated collective action.

(Continued on page 10)

Revolutionary Ecuador



Indians sit down in the streets of Quito blocking the traffic, joining other sectors of Ecuadorian society to protest against Jamil Mahuad's government Jan. 20. See eyewitness report page 9.

ON THE INSIDE

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FORCED TO MOVE...AN EMERGENCY APPEAL

Ever since our founding in 1955, our readers have helped us to keep going every time we have faced an emergency. We want to thank all those who responded generously as soon as they learned from our December issue that *News & Letters* was being forced to move from the building which had been our home in Chicago for 15 years to make room for the conversion of the building into higher rent condominiums. Because this kind of "condo-ization" has been sweeping Chicago, it has sent rents sky-high and forced countless small offices like ours into competition for whatever affordable office space remains.

We were able to find a new office and with your help moved into it before the new year began—but the extra expenses for the move and for meeting our new office rent are formidable. We need your help urgently to meet those bills and continue our work.

As is clear from the pages of this January-February 2000 issue, we have not allowed this emergency to divert us from our work with all the forces of revolt—or from our principle of never separating the voices from below from the articulation of a philosophy of revolution for our age. In this issue we are proud to present one of the most crucial writings of the founder of Marxist-Humanism, Raya Dunayevskaya, on "Race and Class" as a special celebration of the New Year Month.

We are proud as well to greet the new year with two brand new pamphlets. One consists of selected correspondence from revolutionary prisoners speaking for themselves about what is going on behind the walls of America's prison-industrial complex (page 10). The other consists of selections from our writings on Kosova and

the battle for the mind of humanity that was integral to the war itself (page 2). In the year ahead we are planning to bring out a new pamphlet of writings by Felix Martin, the worker-thinker who served as our Labor Editor until his death last year—as well as pamphlets on such needed areas as queer theory, value theory, and a Marxist-Humanist statement on the Black dimension.

None of this unique and urgent work can be achieved without your help in getting us through the emergency we faced when we were forced to move. PLEASE, SEND WHATEVER YOU CAN TO HELP US CONTINUE!

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Is development possible without the ravages of capital?

by Maya Jhansi

The recent Seattle protests were not the first time that "globalized" capitalism has felt the prongs of a freedom movement unwilling to sacrifice human life for capitalist development. For more than a decade, people in northern India have been battling a large dam building project along the Narmada River that threatens to displace hundreds of thousands of people. This movement, led by women, accomplished an incredible feat: it forced the World Bank for the first time to pull out of a project it was funding.

At the end of November, I saw the leader of the Save the Narmada Valley Movement (NBA), Medha Patker, speak in Chicago on her way to the anti-World Trade Organization protests in Seattle. She spoke powerfully about "backlash of development" on peasants, lower castes, and women, using the Narmada Valley situation to dismantle the logic of neo-liberalism.

The dam project along the Narmada is a proposal to build 3,200 dams, including the megadam, the Sardar Sarovar, in order to harness a mighty river that flows through three states into the Arabian Sea. The struggle against the project has sparked an intense national debate about capitalism, the environment, democracy and the future of India.

It is no wonder then that this epic battle on the banks of the Narmada attracted the attention of India's most prominent woman writer, Arundhati Roy, author of the Booker Prize-winning novel *The God of Small Things*. In addition to joining the movement as an activist (she was arrested on Jan. 11 for demonstrating against one of the large dams), she has written incisively about the struggle in a controversial essay called "The Greater Common Good," recently published along with another essay on India's nuclear bomb in her new book, *The Cost of Living* (Modern Library, 1999).

What is particularly gripping about "The Greater Common Good" is the way Roy analyzes the Narmada project from the vantage point of those most affected. She shows the uselessness of cash compensation to the displaced and exposes the lie of resettlement. She brings out shocking statistics, that of the estimated 200,000 to be uprooted, 117,000 are Adivasis or tribals (India's indigenous peoples). Fully 60% of those being displaced in the name of progress are Dalits and Adivasis. This "ethnic otherness of their victims," Roy writes, "takes some of the pressure off the nation builders" (p. 9).

She situates Narmada in the context of other "development" projects in India, exposing the unbelievable fact that 50 million people have been displaced in India because of "development" projects, 40 million by large dams alone.

Underlying her analysis is a deconstruction of the myth that the Indian state has its people's best interest at heart. The epigraph to the essay is a quote by Jawaharlal Nehru from a speech given to villagers to be displaced by a dam in 1948: "If you are to suffer, you should suffer in

the interests of the country." Throughout the book, Roy urges her readers to break their faith in the Indian state.

"Big Dams," she concludes, "are to a nation's 'development' what nuclear bombs are to its military arsenal. They're both weapons of mass destruction. They're both weapons governments use to control their own people. Both twentieth-century emblems that mark a point in time when human intelligence has outstripped its own instinct for survival" (p. 80).

This is where much of the controversy arises. In an open letter to Roy published in a prominent Indian newspaper, Gail Omvedt, a noted feminist and activist, takes Roy to task for equating big dams with big bombs, arguing that the path of industrialization is a form of progress supported by oppressed people in India: "Development to so many people in India means getting out of traditional traps of caste hierarchy and of being held in a birth-determined play." It seems that Omvedt has fallen into a modernist trap, assuming that the only way to break the oppressive ties of tradition is through destructive, technological development.

Woman as Reason

Many have responded to Omvedt's unprincipled attack on the NBA and on Medha Patker at such a crucial moment. However, larger philosophic issues are at stake here as well. Although both take up industrialization and "development," neither mentions the bad word: capitalism. In Omvedt's case, there seems to be a misplaced faith in technological progress that Roy challenges us to break. Omvedt assumes that the various "development" projects are actually undertaken in the world of globalized capitalism for the betterment of people's lives.

On the other hand, in Roy's championing of the god of small things, the specific wars and battles that will bring down "big bombs, big dams, big ideologies, big contradictions, big countries, big mistakes," there seems to be a note of resignation, perhaps one inherited from the failure of socialism in the twentieth century. Roy calls the 21st century the Century of the Small. How does one explain then that the small, specific struggle in Narmada has raised the Biggest and most universal questions facing humanity? It seems to me that we can't simply trade in the Big for the Small. The movement itself won't let us.

Part of the problem is the continued but false association of the socialist idea with the centralized State and with nationalized property. What the Narmada movement is fighting for is decentralized power. It is fighting the power of the Indian state to lay claim on any land it chooses in the name of "national development." It seems to me that the movement is raising the question of whether we can achieve a more human, socialist society without going through capitalist devastation, without a centralized state, without destroying unique communities and their intricate ties to the ecosystem. These are big questions that deserve the whole world's attention.

Women indentured in U.S.

Berkeley, Cal.—If it was not for the efforts of Berkeley High School students Megan Greenwell and Iliana Montauk, the death of a young Indian girl of carbon monoxide poisoning from a faulty heater, and the near death of her sister would have been passed over as just another tragic accident. The Berkeley youth, however, asked why the 2 young women were never in school.

They asked their Indian classmates and interviewed people in the community. On December 10 they published a story in the high school paper, *The Jacket* entitled "Young Indian Immigrant Dies in Berkeley Apartment; South Asian Community says 'Indentured Servitude' May Be to Blame."

Over a month later, the owner of the apartment building, who also owns a lot of other property in Berkeley, a construction business and a restaurant, Lakireddy Bali Reddy, was arrested for buying young women in India and bringing them to Berkeley to serve as janitors, restaurant help, construction workers and his personal sex slaves with little or no pay. I work in Berkeley, and have observed young women in saris doing heavy lifting in buildings that were being renovated, or climbing scaffolding to paint the outside of buildings, while men stood and watched them. I had no idea they might have been indentured servants.

Coming after the anti-WTO protests in Seattle, where we heard of sweatshop and forced labor conditions all over the world, it was a shock to find it happening right here in Berkeley. A number of women's groups are calling for demonstrations to denounce the practice, to stop rape and to protect the young women forced to work here.

—Urszula Wislanka

Ehrenreich's class ceiling

"Class ceiling—can feminism survive" by Barbara Ehrenreich, originally published in *In These Times*, was recently reprinted in Detroit's left, cultural weekly, the *Metro Times*. Ehrenreich rightly bewails the class polarization within feminism which has increased over the past 30 years. She points out the failure of the feminist movement to oppose the 1996 welfare reform act; feminism has not impacted status or pay in the traditional "women's occupations; and poor women still get second-class health care, when they get any, at all."

Ehrenreich's conclusion is subtitled "back to the roots," but her solutions are very superficial. She recalls "the original radical and yes, utopian feminist vision was of a society without hierarchies of any kind...the abolition of class...let's put that outrageous aim back on the long range feminist agenda..." No argument there. But how? "The burden necessarily falls on the more privileged among us—to support working class women's struggles, to advocate for...healthcare and childcare for all women, to push for greater educational access."

Ehrenreich has forgotten that the feminist movement had the opportunity to choose all this at its inception, but not by the elite leading the masses. In the development of feminist theory, the experiences and ideas of working class women were shut out. It was workingclass women who objected to the abstract language of the proposed Equal Rights Amendment. They knew that such an amendment would be used to take away hardwon workplace protective legislation for women. They challenged feminism to write an amendment that would not only protect women, but limit harsh working conditions for men, too. When the U.S. Supreme Court took the women's movement "off the hook" in struggling for abortion rights, the movement had already brushed aside concerns of minority and poor women. Today abortion is virtually inaccessible for poor women.

As it did in the 1970s the women's movement needs to overcome class divisions, but not by framing the theoretical direction of struggle as something to give workingclass women. Working class African-American women in the South have organized their workplaces when none thought it was possible. Ehrenreich could start by asking what she could learn from these women and their concerns and working out a theory with—not for—them.

—Susan Van Gelder

Women Worldwide

by Mary Jo Grey

The Kenyan Women's Political Caucus is calling for a new constitution for the country drawn up with input from the people and specifically addressing women's human rights. Kenyan president Daniel Arap Moi argues that the country's parliament should draft the new constitution. Only 3% of the 222 legislators in the parliament are women. Joseph Kanoto, secretary general of the ruling Kenyan African National Union, said they wanted to remove "amorphous" groups, like women's organizations, from the constitutional reform process.

The number of abortions in the United States has reached its lowest level since 1978, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Unfortunately, factors cited as contributing to the decline were not just better contraceptive services, but reduced access to abortion.

Flora Brovina confronts Serbian state

Editor's Note: Noted Kosovar poet and women's rights activist, Flora Brovina, was sentenced to 12 years in prison for "terrorism" by a Serbian court, Dec. 9. A pediatrician, she founded and headed the League of Albanian Women in Kosova and ran a clinic for women and children. Below we print Flora Brovina's final words before the court in Nis, December 9, 1999:

I dedicated my whole life to children and children do not choose their ethnicity. With my patients, I have never divided them according to their ethnicity, according to religion or the ideological choice of their parents.

I am one of the persons most involved in humanitarian work in Kosova; I have sacrificed my health in order to help women and children. If I were free, I would help those that are suffering more now. Now it is not Albanians that are suffering the most; it is others.

My duty has been to dedicate myself also as a woman, as a doctor, as a poet to the emancipation of the Albanian woman, to her consciousness, to women's human rights, to help them fight for their freedom, to understand that without independence, economics cannot succeed, nor can freedom. In the League for Albanian Women, I have created bridges of friendship in the country and in the whole world. We have cooperated the most with Serbian women. Serbian women have given the strongest support, perhaps they

knew our problems best, and they have presented our problems best. The Albanian women of Kosova should never forget this.

I am very sorry that the court underestimates the role of women in the world. I will never renounce the right to fight for the rights of women.

To what the court has accused me of having fought for, the secession of Kosova and the annexation of Albania, I repeat: my country is where my friends are and where my poems are read. My poems are read in Switzerland, India, Brazil, Poland; in each of these countries it is as if I am in their own house. My poems have been published in the Encyclopedia of Poets of Yugoslavia (ex-Yugoslavia), and it is something very important for Albanian women.

The Albanian community has never behaved in this manner with their neighbors, women, and children. Right now in Kosova, they have

gone back to revenge at the end of the 20th century. I am very sorry for not being free, for being in jail, for not being able to influence more what is happening now in Kosova, for not being able to do more to lend a hand, to help those that are expelled, displaced. I believe that they will do it as if I were with them; I hope that they will do it because they are women. I hope that they behave in a just manner. I would do anything so that the Serbian community and the Albanians reconcile.

New!

KOSOVA

Writings from
News & Letters, 1998-1999



Published by News and Letters Committees

"The war clouds have now cleared from Kosova, but not the battle for the mind of humanity which was integral to the war itself."

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Teamsters continue Overnite strike

Memphis, Tenn.—We're not striking against Overnite over money. We have been on strike nationwide for over three months over unfair labor practices. Union Pacific owns Overnite. They've got so much money and I hate that they don't care nothing about NLRB rulings.

I have six children. I'm suffering. It hurts being on this picket line, but I'm not willing to go back until we get some kind of agreement from the company. I had my twelve-year-old boy here walking the picket line with me. My five-year-old here walking the picket line too. He's going to walk the picket line, so is my wife. They understand we all have to do this together. UPS workers and other workers have come to walk the picket line with us too.

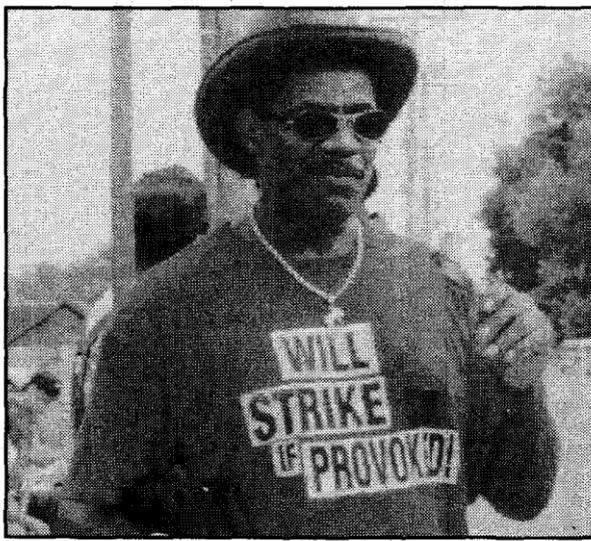
Overnite tries to brainwash people. Once the Teamsters got a foot in the door, they started giving really good benefits and wages, trying to bribe people. If they were to be able to get rid of the union, and those of us on strike didn't go back to work, in six months what do you think they would be doing to people?

We're still strong in Memphis. We have over 200 people out. We ain't going back without a contract. I'd rather see them shut the doors than keep operating like they are now. I'd rather lose 19 years seniority. It's that bad. You're here today, gone tomorrow.

In the last seven years I bet you I have seen at least 100 people terminated just for being affiliated with the union. They had a hit list, all the guys that were participating in the union with top seniority. They wanted them terminated.

I've learned a lot on this strike. You've got to stand for something or you'll fall for anything. Working a part-time job somewhere else is a totally different world. They treated me like a human being. There's life after Overnite.

—Overnite strikers



News & Letters

On the picket line at Overnight in Memphis, Tenn.

UPS shirks blame for pain

Chicago—I recently got a permanent part-time job with UPS, unloading trucks on the sunrise sort which is generally from around 4:00 am to 8:00 am. You lose weight and remember muscles you had probably forgotten about. At the same time your limbs can get covered in cuts and bruises, your back gets sore, and you are at risk for all kinds of injuries.

Last Friday night the metal latch of a truck door whipped around as I closed it and caught my knee. There hadn't been any warning about this hazard, and it hurt to the point where I was actually rolling around the unloading dock in pain, with my supervisor standing about five feet away. After he saw I could manage to walk, he sent me back to work for the last 20 minutes of the shift. By the time we clocked out, the knee was swelling and it was getting hard to walk.

After a weekend of ice packs and painkillers, I decided to come in and see if the company would send me to a doctor. But even before the shift began, the supervisor took our whole crew aside and gave a hard-ass lecture on safety, the gist of which was: "If you get hurt it is your own fault, it is not the company's fault. If you need to take a few days off (without pay) then you do it."

Then I got to celebrate Dr. King's birthday at UPS by unloading trucks all night with a painful knee that was hard to bend or put any weight on, all the while being criticized for not working fast enough. They were working everyone like dogs. What made it worse was that at the end of the shift the supervisor again called us all together, for another lecture, this time in the cold parking lot.

He said, "I want to explain to you all why you didn't get a break tonight. It's because some people weren't working fast enough. They weren't pulling their weight. And it's because some people didn't show up for work." This was the three of our crew who took the holiday off. He then said, "It's up to you all to get down on those people."

I don't know if this is technically the team concept, or just how-stupid-do-you-think-we-are, or if there is much difference there at first. People scoffed at it anyway, which felt really good. But it was clearly somebody's effort to pit people against each other in a most disgusting way—on Martin Luther King's nationally celebrated birthday. And on this, of all days, they encourage us to put the overseer's whip to our fellow workers.

As we were all leaving, UPS was handing out corporate T-shirts with a picture of Dr. King on them. I said to my co-workers that a picture of Jefferson Davis might be more appropriate for UPS, or at least Bull Connor and his police dogs. It felt good to be able to laugh about that, together.

Thank you, Dr. King. For real.

—New hire

Detroit Sunday Journal

Detroit—The *Detroit Sunday Journal*, published by striking/locked-out Detroit newspaper workers, ceased publication after four years with its Oct. 21 edition.

The paper was launched in October 1995, after the strike against the *Detroit News* and *Detroit Free Press* started that July. No one at that time thought that the *Journal* would publish every Sunday for four years. For that matter, no one thought that this strike would last even longer.

Starting out with 42 pages and a press run of 300,000, the *Journal* covered the strike and other labor issues, as well as general news and sports. An award-winning paper with a lot of heart, the *Journal* was not afraid to cover controversial issues. It did so with honest, well-researched and well-written reporting. The strikers who worked to get it out every week were a talented and dedicated bunch.

As this long strike wore on, the circulation gradually dropped. After the union made an unconditional offer to return to work in February 1997, the strike turned into a lockout. People began to be called back to work so the company could give the impression that they were complying with the law.

As more strikers were called back, especially the Guild and Teamsters, it affected our ability to write and distribute our paper. People were doing two and three jobs, which resulted in a lot of stress. There was also internal discussion and dissension on whether the paper should be more labor oriented or remain a general interest paper. It had also been losing money for the last six months or so.

It was a great paper that was the voice of this long, bitter newspaper strike, something that all the strikers rallied around. We would have liked to keep publishing the *Journal* until this strike/lockout was completely over, but many workers are still locked out and other legal and union contractual issues remain unresolved.

In the end, we can be proud that we published a beacon of truth in a sea of lousy, slanted, bumbled journalism printed by the scab *Detroit News* and *Free Press*.

—Armand Nevers

Detroit Typographical Union #18, CWA

Prison labor link to unions

Florence, Colo.—A first priority of a strong prisoners' movement is establishing community outreach on a national level. As a major step in that, a meaningful relationship must be established between prisoners and labor unions. Labor unions have never been allies in the majority of prisoner struggles, and now that prisons throughout the country are becoming profitable for the corporate sector a meaningful relationship between prisoners and labor unions that represent the working class interests can be placed on the agenda.

Prisoner-labor union alliances can assist in ensuring that living wages and benefits remain a reality for the working class. Prisoners can struggle to prevent their labor power from being used to erode the wages and benefits of the whole working class. Prisoners can achieve a high level of political education when they realize their economic power is being used to impoverish their own kind. A sociopolitical relationship between prisoners and the labor movement can blossom into a general working class movement for socialism and unconditional freedoms in a new society free of exploitation.

Prisoner involvement in the labor movement is at present virtually non-existent. A goal must be created aimed at establishing a prisoner labor union association that can increase communication and solidarity among unions and other labor organizations, broaden the scope of working class activism within prisons, and strengthen ties between prisoners and progressive labor unions. While prisoner issues rank low on the agenda of labor unions, such a situation has to change if the struggles for living wages and benefits is to remain a viable strategy.

A step in this direction would be to focus on the establishment of prisoner-labor union contact at local levels with expectations of seeing the relationship blossom to national levels. Those workers politically conscious of their own working existence can encourage the involvement of all labor unions. Labor unions must become allies if prisoners' struggles are to unite philosophy and revolution.

—Fred Bustillo

Workshop Talks

(Continued from page 1)

are going to break down even faster.

Once your hands wear out with carpal tunnel syndrome and you break down, they are going to replace you. It's all about making money, an easier way and a faster way to make money. We as human beings didn't matter to Delta. It was just producing catfish, making money, paying us a low wage and mistreating us.

So I began to understand, and many other workers at Delta Pride began to understand, that the way the company organized production was anti-human. They didn't care about our development or our dignity. They disrespected us as Black women when we took breaks to go to the bathroom. They didn't care about our lives.

We organized a union together, we went on strike together, we fought the company together. A lot of what we learned about a philosophy of liberation we learned because we went through the fire of experience. But not every worker has this kind of experience. I was fortunate to have it. That is why it is so important for all Black workers to know their own history.

When I was in high school, I had Black History Month. They would usually give us sheets of paper, like information on Dr. King or Rosa Parks, a little history about them, or they would let us go to the encyclopedia and pick our favorite Black person. What Dr. King said and did, especially in Memphis, was important to me, but I never hooked it up to unions.

When I started working at Delta Pride Catfish, I got the concepts Dr. King and Fannie Lou Hamer, Harriet Tubman and Sojourner Truth talked about, and they helped me to show how to defeat a company like Delta. Before then it never dawned on us that a union was the key to making a difference. All we knew was that if you spoke out like Dr. King, if you spoke out like Fannie Lou Hamer, you were just a fired turkey—or killed.

After I met News and Letters Committees, I began reading Black history a different way. I read *American Civilization on Trial* and learned about how you can trace a philosophy of liberation in Black people from the earliest times of America all the way up to the present.

SHARING FREEDOM

I liked it from the subtitle: "Black masses as vanguard." It made me think that what we did at Delta Pride was the kind of thing that could begin to make a change for this country. This pamphlet says right on the first page that "at each historic turning point of development in the U.S., it was the Black masses in motion who proved to be the vanguard."

To fully this means that we have to understand, really and to the understanding, what we did in the 1990 Delta Pride strike, the biggest victory Black workers have ever experienced in the Mississippi Delta. If we understood that, we would really begin to know the philosophy of liberation within ourselves, and we would be able to share it with other workers to bring about a turning point in the South.

There is so much we have to learn from *American Civilization on Trial*, because our history and philosophy have been taken from us. I learned about a million "forgotten Negro Populists" and how white populists let racism destroy their movement. I learned about how Karl Marx said that Black soldiers in the Civil War would be the end of the Confederacy. I learned about how the CIO was built by Black workers joining whites in sit-down strikes.

We never learned any of this Black history in school, and we need it to develop the Idea of Freedom.

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— Charles Denby,
Founding Editor, News & Letters

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From the Writings of Raya Dunayevskaya
MARXIST-HUMANIST ARCHIVES

Revisiting 'Black Power,' Race and Class

Editor's Note

With the many debates today over the nature of the relationship of race to class in U.S. society, we reprint "Black Power, Race and Class," an excerpt from the Marxist-Humanist Perspectives Thesis that Raya Dunayevskaya presented to the September 1966 Convention of News and Letters Committees (*The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, 4040). It was originally published in *News & Letters*, January 1967, at the time when the debate over Black Power was about to assume a most concrete form as Black mass revolt erupted in Newark, N.J., the summer of 1967, followed by the Detroit rebellion in which some segments of the white working class joined in. In commemoration of the first African-American History Month of the 21st century, we print this important battle of ideas, and encourage our readers to join in by writing and emailing us their responses (nandl@igc.org). The footnotes are the editor's.

by Raya Dunayevskaya

At the present crucial moment of world history, when the Third World of underdeveloped countries has become the bone of contention, not only between "East" and "West," but also within the so-called East, the Sino-Soviet orbit, it is imperative that the Negro maintain his independence from any state power, and its ideas. Presently, many of these have jumped on the bandwagon of the "Black Power" slogan. It therefore must be closely examined.

The SNCC [Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee] statement, which evidently SNCC had been discussing for months before its publication by others, is not outside of a certain philosophic framework, certain principled tenets. In turning to these, we, of course, take the statement at its face value when it declares: "These views should not be equated with outside influence or outside agitation but should be viewed as the natural process of growth and development within a movement; so that the move by the Black militants and SNCC in this direction should be viewed as a turn toward self-determination" (*New York Times*, Aug. 5, 1966).

At the same time, however, we know that ideas have a history of their own, and a logic of their own, and we must follow each to its logical, bitter end, including all its historic ramifications, not the least of which, both for past and present, is the interrelationship between class and race.

RACE AND CLASS

There is no such suprahistorical abstraction as racism. In each historical period it was something different. It was one thing during slavery, another during Reconstruction, and quite something else today.

To maintain, as the new SNCC statement and its new chairman, Stokely Carmichael,¹ do, that there is something called a "white psyche" and that this "white psyche" is part of the white fear-guilt complex resulting from the slave revolts,² is but the reverse side of the same coin which standard bourgeois white textbooks maintain: that it is not the exploitative class that is keeping the Negro down, but that it is due to some sort of "stigma of slavery." That, naturally, was not the intent of the SNCC statement, but ideas have a logic of their own.

To further insist that "whatever their political persuasion," "all whites" are "part of the collective white America" so that the U.S. has "180 million racists" is to blur the class line which cuts across the race divisions as well as to muffle the philosophy of total freedom which has created a second America. In this, the Negro has played a vanguard role and it is this role we must save from the SNCC statement which means to separate "all Blacks" from "all whites"—and thus ends up by flying in the face of how the Negro shaped the course of the second America.

The truth is this. Despite the ruling Bourbon South's economic power with its Simon Legrees, despite its political power in the halls of Congress ruling the North, despite their "fear complex" (I know nothing of any "guilt complex"; none of them had sufficient of that to do anything about it—but regarding their fear of Negro revolt they did plenty in the South, in the North, in Congress, and in the Supreme Court)—despite ALL these powers, the Bourbon South not only failed to brainwash all the people, but a very important section was inspired by the slave revolts, just those slave revolts which SNCC thinks all feared, to organize the most remarkable organization this country had ever seen. I am referring, of course, to the Abolitionists.

NEGRO AND WHITE UNITY—1830-65

It was no coincidence that in 1831, the year of the greatest slave revolt, Nat Turner's, a white New England Abolitionist, William Lloyd Garrison, founded the *Liberator*.

1. Stokely Carmichael was the chairman of SNCC from May 1966 to June 1967, and is credited with popularizing the slogan "Black Power." With Charles V. Hamilton, Carmichael wrote *Black Power: The Politics of Liberation in America* (1967) in an effort to give theoretical expression to the new stage of Black militancy. Carmichael later went into exile in Africa, after his involvement with the Black Panther Party, and took the name Kwame Ture. He died of cancer November 1998; see the in memoriam by Michael Flug in the January-February 1999 issue of *News & Letters*.

It was no accident that the Negro runaway slaves, the white Abolitionists and Negro freedmen gathered together, determined to resolve the problem of slavery, not by founding a colony abroad, but right here at home.

And it was neither accidental nor a mean achievement that these males had a different view of voteless women than that which was then prevalent, and the suffragette movement also arose out of this most remarkable organization of uncompromising freedom fighters that predated the origin of Bolshevism by 80 years.

Nor was it "an overnight affair." It lasted for three long decades, until they impelled the Civil War, and during all those 30 years, in slave-ridden America, these remarkable individuals practiced these human relations that they espoused for the country as a whole. So that when, finally, the paths of the Abolitionists and Karl Marx crossed, the affinity of his ideas and theirs should have revealed how indigenous, how deep were the American roots of Marxism.

It is peculiar, indeed, that this page of history, so carefully hidden from all standard white textbooks which, at best, treat the Abolitionists as a tiny group of "fanatics" with no influence on the course of American history, should also have been skipped over by Carmichael because it doesn't fit into his conception that all whites have the same "psyche." This does no harm to history because it has been lived.

It does a great deal of harm, however, to the SNCC philosophy which has thereby deprived itself of the awareness of the duality of historic development, of the dialectic methodology which is born out of these contradictions, and which had led Marx to see men's development as the development of various stages of freedom. This is the methodology which enabled Marx to make pivotal to his philosophy the vision that, just as man develops through contradiction, so his "quest for universality" is most intense when people are most degraded.

Either SNCC has not the slightest conception of this world view of history. Or they deliberately disregarded it, to continue with the logic of their first false premise, that "all whites" have one "psyche" and "all Blacks" another, and if ever the twain meet, it is always to the end that the whites interfere with or pervert the Negro's self-organization.

PERVERTED PHILOSOPHY PERVERTS MOVEMENT

It is to that end that Stokely Carmichael, instead, singled out the organization of the Niagara Movement, which he says was all Black and great, until it was "perverted" by whites and merged into the then new NAACP. Whatever the white liberal did in changing the direction of the Niagara Movement as it became the NAACP, this was not grounded in either their whiteness or their liberalism.

Rather, it had its origin in the thesis of DuBois himself, in his concept that each nation, each race has its own "talented tenth," and that this elite "brings" freedom to the mass. With such an underlying philosophy, the Niagara Movement couldn't possibly get a mass following, no matter how militant it was in its demands for full equality as against Booker T. Washington's philosophy of "Cast down your bucket wherever you are."

It is true that by then (the turn of the century) racism had become rampant, North and South, for, with America's plunge into imperialism in 1898, the other great pages in American history of Black and white solidarity, including the greatest page within the South's development—Populism—were fully expunged. It is true, also, that the only rational voice came from the Negro. It isn't true, however, that the failure of these movements to become mass movements was due to the whites "taking over" the NAACP.

As against Carmichael's rewrite, here is how one of the leaders of the Niagara Movement summed up this failure: "...their cause was just, their motives pure, their goals noble and practical; but they were perhaps too far removed from the masses to inspire them to action—too conscious of their own privileged position as a Black elite..." (Henry Lee Moon, *Balance of Power: The Negro Vote* [1948], p. 100).

Now, despite the fact that the word, Black, and not the word, white, precedes the word, elite, this is a class concept, a thoroughly bourgeois class concept, and it led to the isolation, self-imposed isolation of the Black intellectual, from the Negro masses, and therefore from their self-organization.

HOW CLASS SHOWS THROUGH

The only time this wasn't true, and Negroes by the millions organized themselves and put an end to the myth that the Negro couldn't be organized (and this was 1920, not 1966) to fight for his freedom in an all-Black organization, was the Garvey Movement. The interference it ran into was from the black "talented tenth." The most prominent of these, and the one who appealed to the white power structure, particularly the Justice Department, to deport Garvey was—DuBois!

Now DuBois was a great historian, one of the greatest this country has ever had, white or Negro, and the only

one who has made a great contribution to the true history of Black Reconstruction. Unfortunately, however, his class (petty-bourgeois) character always showed.

This was so when he organized an all-black movement, and retreated. It was so when the West Indian, Marcus Garvey, organized an all-Black mass movement, and DuBois attacked him. It was so when DuBois fought against the Marxists. And it remained true when, in his old age, he joined the Communist Party and followed their African line.

The point here is that, just as DuBois showed his class character in this country, so did he show it on the world scene, especially in Africa. For, while he appealed to still another white power structure—the United Nations—to give Africa limited freedom, the African masses arose spontaneously and changed the whole map of the world in less than a decade.

The point is that DuBois moved to Ghana after it became independent, that is to say, only when state power was won. The point is that, as with all intelligentsia, so with the Negro, there has always been a separation between the elite and the mass.

NEGRO AND WHITE UNITY—1930S AND NOW

This was so not only as they organized themselves in nationalist movements, but when they organized themselves, with white labor, to reorganize the whole industrial face of the nation through the CIO [Congress of Industrial Organizations]. Considering George S. Schuyler's² present reactionary stance, it is important to see how differently he spoke under the impact of the CIO, as he lashed out against the established Negro leaders in



Black youth being attacked by police at the battle of Birmingham, 1963.

1937: "Nowhere were the 'educated' classes cooperating with the unions to aid the work of organization, save in a few notable instances and there only by one or two individuals... Their desertion of the struggling Negro workers in this crisis constitutes one of the most shameful chapters in our recent history. The new position Negro labor has won in the past year has been gained in spite of the old leadership. It has been won with new leadership; militant young men and women from the ranks of labor and grizzled Black veterans of

the pick and shovel and the blast furnace" (*Crisis*, November 1937).

You cannot reverse history. This integration into labor having been achieved, the ones who will save the CIO from its degeneration, as we can see by the new formation of Black caucuses for upgrading, for the end of lily-white departments, against the bureaucracy in general, are the workers. It will not be achieved by those who disregard the integration, and themselves use college-type vocabulary, completely devoid of any sense of class struggle. The great German philosopher, G.W.F. Hegel, had a phrase for this type of thinking. He called it "self-determination applied externally." That is, from above, not as it emerged from internal self-development.

The Negro Revolution of the 1960s that emerged from below was for integration, not because of interference by the whites, but because it arose spontaneously from Black youth who wanted it. The Muslims were completely external to this movement, outside of it. Indeed, to get back into the mainstream of the Black revolution, Malcolm X found he had to break from Elijah Muhammad.

The development of SNCC to greater militancy, of necessity, had to involve a break from white liberals—a break both from their money and their policies, it is true. But the emphasis, if this is what SNCC meant to do, should have been on the "liberalism" they opposed. Instead the emphasis was put on "all whites," as a generalization, including even those who had given their very lives for the movement.

And the trouble with generalizations is that they very often sow only confusion, because each one reads into it his specific interpretation, which may not be what you intended at all. There is no way to avoid confusion except by being specific instead of general.

2. George S. Schuyler was a radical journalist for the *Black Pittsburgh Courier* in the 1930s before he became politically conservative in the period just preceding the Civil Rights Movement.

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Essay Article

50 years after first strike against automation— 'What kind of labor should humanity do?'

by Olga Domanski

While the passage of 1999 to 2000 invoked all kinds of retrospectives on the passing century and millennium, what received virtually no attention was that it marked the 50th anniversary of a critical moment both in American labor history and in revolutionary thought. What brought these together as one was the U.S. Miners' General Strike of 1949-50, the first-ever strike against automation. What demands a retrospective/perspective examination of that moment today is that the question the miners raised during the strike—"What kind of labor should a human being do?"—remains the crucial question humanity is still seeking to answer 50 years later.

Nothing shows this more than the events in Seattle that erupted at the end of 1999 against the globalization of capital. (See lead article, p. 1.) Whether or not Seattle marks a new stage of revolt that can move us forward, however, depends on whether a new stage of cognition arises out of it.

I. WHAT WAS NEW IN THE 1949-50 STRIKE?

The coal miners were long considered the "shock troops" of American labor. They had even gone out on strike during World War II, telling the government to "let the soldiers dig coal with their bayonets." And after the war the militancy of all of labor brought the country closer to a general strike than it had ever been or has been since. What made the 1949-50 strike historic, however, was not the miners' militancy, but the new question they raised in the face of automation—"What kind of labor should a human being do?"

The word "automation" had not yet been coined in 1949; what the miners confronted was called the "continuous miner." They understood the disastrous unemployment it would bring as soon as they learned it would require only one-third as many miners. But that was not the greatest disaster they faced. The continuous miner ripped coal from the face without stopping for a moment's break, while the intolerable heat and deadly dust generated by it could set off an explosion at any moment. It was for good reasons called the "man-killer."

During this period, the government and the coal operators were working together for laws to curb the militancy and power of organized labor, while United Mine Workers union President John L. Lewis was forced to spar with them as he tried to work out a strategy for a new contract. It soon became clear that the miners had more than better wages and fringe benefits on their minds. For months Lewis had been calling the miners out and then sending them back to work three days a week as a way to deplete the coal supply while steering clear of the government's anti-labor laws. Finally, on Sept. 19, 1949, the miners in northern West Virginia refused to follow Lewis' orders; his word had been law until that moment. They sent roving pickets out to shut down every mine in the area, even including the non-union mines. The strike spread quickly throughout all of Appalachia with the rank-and-file miners in control.

When you read the detailed story of the strike in *The Coal Miners' General Strike of 1949-50 and the Birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.* (MGS) you see that what the miners did truly signal a new way of thinking in refusing to limit the question to one of wages and benefits and asking instead, "What kind of labor should a human being do?"

It brought forth a new form of mass meetings where the miners made their own decisions about the way the strike was to be conducted. It even brought forth a new kind of worker-to-worker relief committee when miners traveled around the country to get food and clothing and begin correspondence with workers in other industries. It enabled them to hold out until the operators finally capitulated.

It is true that what Lewis settled for was not what the miners wanted. Their fears came true in the unemployment and economic devastation that describes Appalachia now. But the strike still has many lessons for today.

II. THEORY AND PRACTICE

The history of the 1949-50 events is interwoven with how the miners' questions were heard by Raya Dunayevskaya, who later founded the body of ideas of Marxist-Humanism. She saw the miners as demanding nothing less than the reuniting of mental and manual labor, which is precisely what Marx said is needed to achieve a new, truly human society.

She saw this not because the miners used any such words, but because she had been working for several years on a book on Marxism for the Johnson-Forest Tendency (JFT), of which she was the co-founder. (Forest was her pseudonym in the Trotskyist movement.) The Johnson-Forest Tendency was a unique minority grouping in the Trotskyist movement which was known for its analysis of Russia as a state-capitalist society. It analyzed state-capitalism as the new stage of world capitalism, and its economic analysis was never separated from new forms of revolt.

Dunayevskaya had moved to Pittsburgh in 1948 to work both with steel workers and with miners in West Virginia. She was studying how Marx had developed the ideas of his greatest work, *Capital*, and as the strike developed she felt that what the workers were doing and thinking brought to life many of its categories.

At the same time, she had been studying Lenin's *Philosophic Notebooks* on Hegel from 1914-15, together with the two other leaders of the JFT—C.L.R. James (who used the name of Johnson) and Grace Lee. As it happened, only a few months before the miners' strike began, Dunayevskaya completed a translation of these *Notebooks* for James and Lee and had begun a three-way correspondence with them about it. As the new features of the strike developed, "what had been a discussion of ideas assumed, to me, concreteness and urgency," she wrote as she looked back later (MGS, p. 34).

This interaction of ideas and concrete objective events can be seen in two very different events that happened to occur within a day of each other. One was the way Dunayevskaya's suggestion for a worker-to-worker relief committee was put into action by the miners and became a turning point in their strike. The second was the way it was decided, to invite a worker (John Zupan) to participate with the three JFT theoreticians in their next meeting to discuss the book on Marxism. "The struggle of the miners...gave me the impulse to go into the essential dialectical development of Marx himself," as Dunayevskaya put it when the meeting began. The worker's contribution was not confined to "class questions" but illuminated the whole discussion of dialectical philosophy.

The strike activity and the simultaneous philosophic activity led Dunayevskaya to decide on two critical new vantage points for the book on Marxism: one was the American proletariat; the second was Lenin's study of Hegel's *Science of Logic*. The book, which up to then had been called "State-Capitalism and Marxism," eventually became *Marxism and Freedom*. That work laid the ground for a totally new Marxist-Humanist organization—but it took a break between Dunayevskaya and James before that could become real.¹

What is important for our story here is that, although that break did not take place until 1955, their divergence emerged unmistakably as early as 1951 and came out directly in relation to the very different attitudes of Dunayevskaya and James to the miners, to philosophy, and to organization.

The three-way correspondence ended as the JFT submitted their document, *State-Capitalism and World Revolution*, to the Socialist Workers Party in August 1950, left Trotskyism the next year, and attempted an independent existence that aimed to publish a workers' paper, later called *Correspondence*. When Dunayevskaya proposed that its first issue be devoted to the new miners' seniority strike that had erupted—and to "the miners talking of their problems in their own words"—James objected. "If a mighty bubble broke out," he wrote, "with 500,000 miners vs. John L. Lewis and shook the minefields, I would not budge an inch from our program."²

The question we have to ask is, what could explain such a divergence of attitude, such a failure by James to grasp the importance of what the miners were saying and doing?

III. DIVERGENCE OF JAMES AND DUNAYEVSKAYA

It demands looking more carefully at where, with hindsight, Dunayevskaya recognized that she had first spotted the philosophic divergence in her letters accompanying her translation of Lenin's *Philosophic Notebooks*. She kept contrasting Lenin's emphasis to what James had concentrated on in his own attempt to study Hegel's *Science of Logic* in the 1948 manuscript he called "Notes on Dialectics."³ Most crucial was James' concentration on the Law of Contradiction in the *Logic's* Doctrine of Essence as against Lenin's concentration on Hegel's section on the Idea in the more highly developed Doctrine of the Notion.

While Dunayevskaya's critique of James' *Notes on Dialectics* deepened as soon as she plunged into Hegel for herself, she never denied that she had considered them "great" when she read them in 1948. Whatever has been critiqued in subsequent years, they served as the stimulus for the Tendency to get down seriously to the task of digging into the meaning of Hegel's Absolute Idea for our age. That work by a tiny group of revolutionaries represented the highest point that had been reached up to that moment in the search for a philosophy of revolution for our age. James' *Notes* was the first of three crucial steps in that search. The second was when Dunayevskaya got down to a written translation of Lenin's *Philosophic Notebooks*; the third was the three-way correspondence as the Miners' General Strike was underway.

Although it would be important to look at the full history of the JFT at another time, it is not that "history" but the new questions we are confronting today that

demand looking again here at the difference between the direction James took in his *Notes* and the direction Dunayevskaya headed out of the '49-'50 experience.

In his *Notes* James does remind himself of the task his study was supposed to be undertaking: "We have to get hold of the Notion, of the Absolute Idea, before we can see this relation between organization and spontaneity in its concrete truth" (*Notes*, p. 119). The "relation" he is referring to is what he had singled out and italicized for emphasis a few pages earlier in his section on "Marxism Today" (*Notes*, p.115): "Organization. You know nothing about organization unless at every step you relate it to its opposite, spontaneity."

Nearly 40 years later at the end of her life—as Dunayevskaya was working out a new book she had tentatively called "Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy"—she reread James' *Notes* and circled that sentence, writing: "A key to 'dialectics of organization'—the wrong key—is when the opposite stops at spontaneity and omits philosophy." It is not, she stressed, that organization and spontaneity are not opposites, but that they are not absolute opposites. James' *Notes* and his practice thereafter show that he had reduced the Absolute Idea to an absolute opposition between spontaneity and organization.

One of the many recent books on James, Anthony Bogues' *Caliban's Freedom* (Pluto Press, 1997), has attempted to look seriously at James' *Notes*. Although Bogues does not critique James for reducing Hegel's Absolute Idea to an absolute opposition between spontaneity and organization, what does come through loud and clear is that James' work is really a political study of Leninism and that his concern throughout is with the question of "the Party." He quotes James: "If the party is the knowing of the proletariat, then the coming of age of the proletariat means the abolition of the party. That is our new universal" (Bogues, p. 175). What is important for us to see is that James' politicized reduction of the Absolute Idea means that he never poses a three-way relationship between spontaneity, organization and philosophy.

Martin Glaberman's new book, *Marxism for our Times* (Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1999), illuminates the question even more by revealing James' concept of Organization in James' own words. As he looks back in his 1962-63 letters to "Marty," James regrets, sometimes with bitterness, that his attempts to build a viable organization had been a "complete failure" (Glaberman, p. 72). In light of the 1949-50 Miners' Strike, it is startling to see that what he critiques most bitterly is what went on in the "years that preceded our downfall. A lot of babbling about automation, speculations as to the condition of the working class, a quite hopeless treatment of what should have been the very essence of our Marxist approach" (*Ibid.*, p. 74).

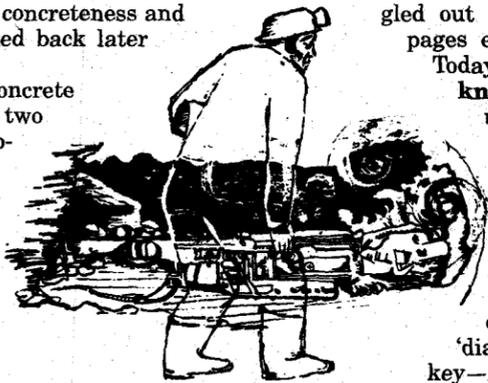
As he looks at the "personnel" he had, he takes up Dunayevskaya first, charging that her "personal disaster" took "the form of developing the ideas of Marxism, an absolutely valueless concern with theory, running around and babbling about (what) has been picked up in books which the general public does not read." He continues to rage against such conduct: "Over and over again through the years that I worked with them I had to tell Grace and Rae, 'you both will spend hours, days and weeks on a section of Hegel or a chapter of Marx, but I can never get you to pay the same attention to the problems of organization, as an organization.'" He demands, "It is that we have to break" (*Ibid.*, p. 86).

James gives the clearest expression of his concept of organization when he writes: "It is absolutely clear to me now, the socialism that exists in the population, the resentment, the desire to overturn and get rid of the tremendous burdens by which capitalism is crushing the people. That is what the Marxist movement has to learn... The masses don't need any education at all, absolutely none. The Marxist organization and the rest of them have to educate themselves" (*Ibid.*, p. 169).

This may explain James' startling attitude when the miners were on strike and why he fought Dunayevskaya's suggestion to come out with a special issue on the miners. That story has perplexed many, knowing James' love for "spontaneity." We can see that James didn't "hear" anything new in the miners' attitude to automation because he didn't see any need to work out a new stage of cognition to get to the new society. Socialism was all there in mass struggles and had only to be "recorded."

Dunayevskaya heard what was embedded in the 1949-50 strike and made it her point of departure to the future because she sensed that a relationship needs to be worked out between spontaneity, organization and philosophy. Although it cannot be further discussed here, the path that she subsequently took in developing Marxist-Humanism can be seen in embryo in the invitation to a worker to participate in working out what, after the break, became *Marxism and Freedom*. This year marks the 50th anniversary of that historic meeting on Feb. 15, 1950.

The three-way relationship between spontaneity, organization and philosophy is what is needed now to hear the new questions being raised and to work out the "Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy."



1. For the full story of the Johnson-Forest Tendency, consult *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection (RDC)*.

2. See the RDC, 9313-15.

3. Published in 1980 as *Notes on Dialectics: Hegel, Marx, Lenin* (Westport, Conn.: Lawrence Hill); hereafter references will be to "Notes" with page citations in the text.

DIALOGUE OF IDEAS OVER THE BATTLE IN SEATTLE

As a 20-year-old student, I was really taken with the protest against the World Trade Organization in Seattle. My generation has been told that the battle to overcome capitalism is at an end. My generation is the first one raised on the idea that no matter what we think or feel capitalism is here to stay, since all previous efforts to transcend it ended in failure. The protest in Seattle was the first time I saw a crack in this claim of capitalism's invincibility. It's not that the system itself was weakened by the protest, it's that it gave us a sense that the battle against capitalism is not over. In fact, the real battle may only now have first begun.

Stanley A. DeKalb, III.

* * *

It should be kept in mind that what allowed the protests in Seattle to be successful is that we put aside our theoretical and political differences and worked on a common issue—confronting the WTO. No views were suppressed; we said everyone can come with whatever agenda and slogans they want, and we weren't going to stifle anyone. But we kept away from making any kind of guiding or unifying mission statement beforehand, because it would have gotten us bogged down in a lot of fruitless theoretical debate.

Activist Chicago

* * *

The protest was the greatest thing I've been involved in. Who can say that labor struggles and environmentalists are at odds after this? Who can say that only capitalism is global? We're seeing a new global movement against corporate capital.

Anna B. Wisconsin

* * *

Seeing labor bureaucrats like John Sweeny literally running to catch up with the workers taking part in the marches was one of the most moving things I ever witnessed. There were also contradictions. I heard someone report that he was marching with some Teamsters and UAW members when they spotted Pat Buchanan. He said the workers showed neither friendship nor hostility toward him. Some issues apparently still need to be sorted out.

Labor activist California

* * *

Every practical movement raises new theoretical questions, and the Seattle protests are no exception. One question concerns the alternative to global capitalism. Many rightly feel that the WTO, like the entire global economic system, has escaped democratic accountability and control. But can capital ever be made democratically accountable? Can capital ever become amenable to meeting human needs? Can capital be controlled, through public pressure, legislation, or government action? For those who understand that the answer to all these questions is "No!" there is only one alternative—to develop a movement that projects the abolition of the capital-relation as a whole. And that isn't possible without doing a lot of hard theoretical work.

Peter Wermuth Chicago

* * *

In Nashville we had 45 people turn out for the "No to WTO" protest on Nov. 30 in front of the Gore campaign offices. There's a rumor that Gore called the local union head and told him to call us off. What was most wonderful about the experience was having a sense of solidarity and coming together of some of the activists in Nashville to rally on an issue which we care deeply about.

Chris Lugo Nashville, Tenn.

* * *

I feel that Seattle has the same potential as a spark of change and revolt as did the Los Angeles rebellion of 1992. There are many different possibilities for hope—labor, the environment, Mumia, etc. We must study what has been provided to us by Seattle and adapt it to our philosophy as we did with the events in Kosovo.

Dan P. Detroit

"The World is Not Enough" is the title of the latest James Bond film. This could have been the motto of Madame Barshefsky (the chief negotiator of the U.S. corporations) for the opening of the Millennium Round of the WTO's negotiations in Seattle, which ended in a complete fiasco. The U.S. and multinational corporations are totally blinded by their goal of completely subjugating the whole world as their economic playground. They ignore the fact that there are six billion other human beings on this planet who are finding incompatible these goals with the very survival of humanity.

Special praise is due to the wonderful organization of the anti-WTO protests and events. The seminars, workshops, printed materials, etc., the preparation for the police brutality and violence all contributed to the success. Perhaps historians will equate one day the recent events in Seattle with the gunshot of the Aurora battleship in St. Petersburg, which heralded the beginning of the Russian Revolution.

Giorgio Vancouver, Canada

* * *

In *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* Raya Dunayevskaya quoted from Rosa Luxemburg's speech at the 1907 Congress of Russian Marxists: "The Russian Revolution [of 1905] is not just the last act in a series of bourgeois revolutions of the 19th century, but rather the forerunner of a new series of future proletarian revolutions." Luxemburg was proven right a decade later, when the greatest revolution ever occurred in Russia in 1917. To me this has something to say about the protest in Seattle. I'm not saying it was on the level of the 1905 Revolution. But the Seattle protest has to be seen not as the last act in a series of 20th century efforts to reform capitalism, but as the forerunner of a new series of movements that will seek the total abolition of capitalism in this century.

Maya Jhansi Chicago

LABOR MOVING FORWARD OR BACK?



At the retail store where I work the managers were talking about a previous manager who had just died of a heart attack. From the way they were talking, I thought this was a guy in his fifties. I was surprised to hear the fellow was only 28! He had worked himself to death. Only a few hours later my current manager tried to push a speed-up on himself and on us. It seemed very ironic that on the same day that he hears about someone younger than himself dying, he tries to push all of us. Not very self-reflective there. Of course, at that point, all of us slowed down our pace. A few pennies profit for a multinational chain store isn't worth a life.

David L. Anderson Oakland, Cal.

* * *

I went to the Overnite strike picket line one afternoon with a small stack of *N&L* and some firewood. Folks are holding up well, and supporters are joining in on the picket lines. Both gates had three picketers. They could always use firewood and are also accepting donations to support those on strike. Some striking Overnite workers have found temporary work, but there are a few who have not.

Young activist Memphis

* * *

After having to unload 40 boxes a minute, work like a dog on an assembly line, and have the company tell me that coming into work late even once can be grounds for dismissal, I have to ask—what ever happened to that great victory in the UPS strike? It sure didn't affect working conditions.

New hire at UPS Chicago

Readers' Views

ENVIRONMENTAL RACISM

Last month Carter Gray from the Memphis Health Dept. was quoted saying that in four years the tighter standard for sulfur in gasoline will be like taking 2,000 cars off the Memphis streets. But next year we're projected to get 350,000 more vehicles through here and the year after that 500,000. We'll have a million and a half more cars coming through before they take any sulfur out of the gas. The city of Memphis is in trouble with the Clean Air Act. Memphis had the highest number of folks hospitalized this year from smog problems.

Activist Memphis

* * *

I saw an article in the paper about the smog in the Memphis area. We are the second worst city. The only way to stay healthy is not to breathe! Government and industry tie everything into economics so people get sold on the idea that we have to have pollution to have a job. In that situation you destroy so much more. I don't know what we can expect from the future generation, considering what we're perpetrating on them.

K.B. Tennessee

THE REALITY OF WELFARE 'REFORM'



The article in *N&L* on welfare (December 1999) by Anne Jaclard was great. You covered all the bases. I'm so glad that *N&L* gave the article such prominence. Maybe I'll revise my skepticism about the human rights strategy if it keeps appealing to people.

Betty Reid Mandell Massachusetts

* * *

New York City workfare (WEP) still imposes slave labor conditions on recipients. On Nov. 24, a group of WEP workers got a bus and went to various work sites in Brooklyn to confront abusive supervisors. Some supervisors yell at us and treat us like animals; there are good and bad ones throughout the system. That day we chanted and demanded they speak with us and that they sign a pledge to treat us fairly. Our demonstration was successful. Within 45 minutes of our visit, one WEP coordinator, Frank C., was out and his replacement was chosen.

On WEP, you have no vacations, no sick leave, no seniority, no compensation and no real training. You are then supposed to get a job and get off welfare, but WEP leaves you with a big hole in your resume. I worked with the WEP Workers Organizing Committee for three years and we were not able to meet our goals. Many people have dropped away from the effort. Others are still organizing and fighting. I like to think that nobody can stand on your neck if you are standing up.

Skip New York

* * *

The government started a dialogue where they got the workers involved with thinking that welfare was hurting them, and they tried to set them against the welfare recipients. That's why they were able to gut welfare; they made it us against them. That's how they can get stuff through without an uprising from the public.

Black worker Mississippi

TAKING A STAND FOR ABORTION RIGHTS

I am writing in response to Terry Moon's November *N&L* article about the issue of abortion. In it she states "further examples of the Left's abandonment of women's issues are seen right here in Memphis. At demonstrations

denouncing the death penalty, signs equating the anti-abortion position to being anti-death penalty were displayed."

The signs were in no way an abandonment of women's issues by the protesters. The intent was to point out the hypocrisy of the pro-lifer who supports capital punishment. The signs were to point out that if a person opposed abortion on the grounds that it is the taking of a life, they should oppose the death penalty on the same grounds.

Lee Ragsdale Chicago

HEGEL'S IDEAS TODAY



There is so much nuance in Hegel's thinking. It feels as if a worldview,

building on familiar ideas synthesized in an entirely new way, were trying to break into my mind. It's becoming difficult to think about things in isolation. I now see why *N&L* discusses the Subject trying to relate him or herself to Otherness in a dialectical process. That exposure is helping me make sense of Hegel's ideas.

Eric Chicago

* * *

Philosophy, Hegel once said, "is the thinking study of things." Those who think they have no need of philosophy are really evading their responsibility to be serious thinkers. By virtue of our capacity to think, we are "born metaphysicians"—the challenge is to take on the responsibility to develop that potential which is in us all.

Old radical New York

FIGHTING 'ZERO TOLERANCE'

In the article in the December *N&L* on the Decatur protests, I liked how it made the point that students are segregated into second-class status. Almost all of the guys I work with who are in the juvenile justice system have dropped out of school by the 11th grade.

Probation officer Memphis

* * *

One problem with the zero tolerance in the Tennessee and Mississippi schools is that they have the option of how they want to enforce it. They can be as severe or as lenient as they want to be. Our school system has 14,000 students and only 26% have good passing grades. The superintendent was congratulated last year because the dropout rate fell from 30% to 28%. This doesn't count those who were expelled. The children get so frustrated and feel that no one cares about them and they give up or go join a gang which doesn't care about them either. I don't know who got hurt in the fight in Decatur, but the punishment seems so severe, even though I don't condone what they did. But they were treated differently.

Civil rights activist Mississippi

ELIAN AND DEMAGOGUERY

The right-wing pretense over Elian Gonzalez is not fooling us worker-immigrants who fled political tyranny. While they use the little boy as a mascot for their demagoguery, they condone millions of children going hungry, homeless and parentless in the U.S. and all over the world. Thousands of Haitians and other Cuban refugees are sent back or condemned to detention centers for years. Thousands of Mexicans seeking work are deported, and Chinese refugees stowed away by human traffickers in cargo containers are dead or almost dead on arrival. We workers know why poor people risk their lives to seek refuge elsewhere. It is to escape capitalism's cruel politics.

Htun Lin California

MAKING SENSE OF THE WARS IN KOSOVA

The December *N&L* article, "Chomsky Ignores Lessons of Wars in Kosova," infers, but does not explicitly state, that Chomsky falls into the trap of dualistic thinking—or Manicheism, which Frantz Fanon said must be overcome if any movement is to be successful.

It is my opinion that the lack of the reason he falls into the trap of dualistic thinking—specifically, that since the U.S./NATO bombing and occupation of Milosevic and the Serbian military—as victims of the bombing—are the "good guys." Chomsky does this by omission, by not writing of Milosevic's evil military "ethnic cleansing" of the Bosnian and Kosovan civilians prior to the U.S./NATO bombing.

**Basho
Los Angeles**

Just wanted to tell you how much I appreciate the article on Chomsky in the December *N&L*. This is the only leftist publication I know that's done a good critique of Chomsky's appalling position on Kosova.

**University of Memphis professor
Tennessee**

I must admit that I did not agree at all with supporting independence for Kosova or critical support to the KLA. I can understand why *N&L* could not march together with the Workers World Party, but to me the question is more complex than simply being a question of self-determination for the Albanian minority in Yugoslavia. I am sure you would agree in principle that a democratic workers' government in Yugoslavia including Kosova would be the most desirable, but at present the KLA security force in Kosova does not inspire me with much confidence.

**Allan Mui
Oklahoma**

I'm not convinced that independence for Kosova is necessarily incompatible with U.S. goals. While I do not disagree with your analysis of the current

situation, it seems to me quite possible that some time down the road the U.S. will find it expedient to allow independence once it is certain that it has molded the power structure in Kosova to its liking, be that headed by Hashim Thaqi or somebody else.

**F.R.
New York**

I used to think that *N&L*'s stress on connecting philosophy and political events was idealistic and unnecessary. But after the war in Kosova I've come to see your point. Something is very wrong with the way leftists are approaching politics when genocide is ignored in the name of "opposing U.S. imperialism."

**Teacher
Illinois**

VOICES OF THE IMPRISONED



The supermax prison concept is nothing new in this country. All one needs to do is to go back to the history of the old Eastern Penitentiary in Pennsylvania. Every foreign visitor to this country, from Tocqueville and others—even when they systems were relatively brutal—were appalled at the conditions in American prisons.

**Prisoner
Wisconsin**

U.S. District Judge William Wayne Justice last year found that Texas prisons are unconstitutional and that Texas prisoners live in fear of being raped, beaten, owned and sold. He reported that inmates who refuse to join race-based gangs may be physically or sexually assaulted. He also found that there were many instances in which Texas prison guards used force not for restoring order but maliciously for the purpose of causing harm, significant pain, and injury. He

found that the pattern of excessive force in Texas prisons violated contemporary standards of decency. For more information contact *Prison Legal News*, 2400 NW 80th St., Seattle WA 98117.

**Roger Hummell
Gatesville, Tex.**

The page 12 photo and article in the October *N&L* entitled "Chiapas Solidarity" could just as easily have been titled "Preview of Coming Attractions." The picture shows an indigenous village, Amador Hernandez, surrounded by razor wire. Truly, if ever a picture was worth a thousand words, this is it. Mexico, a NAFTA country, is a police state and has been for 100 years. The plutocrats and their murderer enforcers don't waste money on prisons when, as the picture proves, they just make a whole town into one big prison. The people all over the U.S. will get the message when they see razor wire surrounding their communities and towns—but by then it will be too late.

**Robert Zani
Texas**

RELEASE 2000

On June 24, 2000, the nation's youth will come together to raise awareness of political and wrongly convicted prisoners. The event "Release 2000: The Fight for Freedom" is a worldwide rave/club benefit to raise funds for the defense of prisoners who don't receive a fair trial. Funds will be given to organizations such as Amnesty International, a human rights organization, and the ABC Federation, a support group which assists political prisoners. These organizations will then distribute partial proceeds to the defense funds of various prisoners. Information about this event is available at: <http://www.release2000.com>.

**Tito David Valdez
San Luis Obispo, Cal.**

ISRAEL'S FUNDAMENTALISM

Israel-the-democracy contains within it Israel-the-theocracy, and this was nowhere more evident than on Dec. 31. When the entire world was planning to

pop corcks and fireworks, the chief rabbinate in Israel (ultra-Orthodox affiliated) announced that any hotel that held a party would lose its kashrut certificate—a loss that could significantly hurt future business. In addition, none of the major politicians dared alienate the religious by celebration talk, risking a loss of political endorsement by the rabbis at next election time. Why were the rabbis so anti-celebration? First, because the millennium is a reflection of the Christian calendar, and second, because New Year's came on a Sabbath (Friday night) this year.

**Gila Svirsky
Jerusalem**

NEW MOVEMENT IN IRAN

Ali Reza Ardebili's article, "Democracy and Revolution in Iran" (December 1999 *N&L*), beautifully illuminated the question of the people's "loss of illusions" from the recent events in Iran. He is seeing that this struggle is going to take a different direction because of the recognition that no president is going to make the difference; you have to do it for yourselves. You see that loss of illusions in other places.

**Terry Moon
Memphis**

GERMANY'S NEW CRISES

In Germany there is growing disappointment in the Schröder administration. The right-wing Social-Democratic administration, mixed with some Greens, has problems with unemployment. They promised reduction of nuclear energy, but they now hesitate. Further, this administration was the first since Hitler to enter a war (in the Balkans). Lesson: Don't trust the state, don't trust political parties.

There is also at the moment the so-called Sloterdijk debate. Sloterdijk is a philosopher in the tradition of Nietzsche. He has ideas about "cultivating the people," a kind of "selection" of "better" or "more sane" people. Dangerous ideas in a time of a united and more aggressive Germany.

**K.L.
Germany**

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Black/Red View

by John Alan

A host of politicians, including President Clinton, journalists, economists and high-tech wizards have proclaimed, since the beginning of this new century, that the nation is on the verge of entering into a golden age. A unified market will create an unlimited amount of wealth through scientific development.

Clearly these soothsayers are disregarding the fact that a mere movement in time—from one century to the next—has not changed capitalism's need to exploit living labor in order to accumulate an ever increasing amount of capital. Thus, this new century has inherited all of capitalism's antagonistic social problems: poverty, the abuse of nature, labor unrest and a new generation of Black and white alienated youth.

In the 20th century mass movements organized by African Americans and labor fought to compel capitalism and its government to make many reforms regarding civil liberties, hours of labor, wages and the conditions of labor. African Americans in the 1950s and '60s created a mass Civil Rights Movement to regain the rights they had lost during the counter-revolution of the post-Reconstruction era.

VICTORIES NULLIFIED

When these movements were at their peak, none of the leaders would consider the possibility that their victories would be cut back or nullified by another retrogressive political period. The unthinkable did happen, and the 21st century also has inherited racism, a violent social division dating back to the origins of this nation.

Racism, in spite of all the passion and violence in its practice and the spurious concepts of race separation used to justify it, has its objective roots in the capitalist mode of production. More than 300 years ago the ancestors of African Americans were brought to this country and were forced to work in that type of alienating production.

Karl Marx saw it this way: "Direct slavery is the pivot of our industrialization today as much as machinery, credit, etc. Without slavery, you have no cotton, without cotton you have no modern industry. It is slavery that has given value to the colonies; it was the colonies that created world trade; it is world trade that is the necessary condition for large-scale machinery."

This kind of alienated production structured the



Nearly 50,000 people rallied in Columbia, S.C. on Martin Luther King Jr. Day against the flying of the Confederate flag above the statehouse.

social relations between the races in this country. As Ira Berlin contended in "The stench from slavery's moral rot cannot mask the design of American captivity: the extraction of labor that allowed a small group to dominate all. In short, if slavery made race, its larger purpose was to make class, and the fact that the two were made simultaneously by the same process has mystified both" (5). Every great leap in the struggle to emancipate labor has had to tear down that veil of mystification.

Mass activity in the U.S. in the 20th century did break down political and social barriers and restrictions imposed upon African Americans and women. Workers won the right to collective bargaining. However, the fundamental task for this century is to discover why struggles for freedom have ended in some forms of retrogression or in outright counter-revolution.

African Americans, women and labor have depended on the political intervention of the state to help them in their freedom struggles. This has proven to be an abstract, partial form of freedom which also stands in danger of being taken away. The 21st century has the task to go beyond a century of incomplete revolutions to real human freedom, where people and society are the same expression of being.

REASON OF CENTURY OF STRUGGLE

The starting point of this philosophic task is to reveal that the underlying reason of a century of mass struggles was to create a new, non-alienated society. A society founded upon capitalist production can never be made into a society where people are not debased, enslaved, neglected and treated as contemptible beings. Yet a host of theoretical concepts that separate people from their essence jeopardizes the struggles for freedom in the 21st century.

A group of prominent African Americans are vigorously projecting the concept that the road to African-American economic security is through corporate capitalism. They have reached back in history to a concept projected by Booker T. Washington during another retrogressive period in American history. In no way can freedom and economic security be found in capitalist production and the new world market it is reorganizing. The youth in Seattle understood that.

The new struggle for African-American freedom will emerge out of the Black masses. Its success will depend on whether or not we understand its underlying philosophy.

Black World Campaign 2000—6 degrees of danger

(Continued from page 1)

granted to a whole new height. Bradley's sports celebrity status, as a former forward for the New York Knicks, is the substance of his politics of personal biography and has garnered him a "dream team" of Black sports celebrities—Old School. Gore has matched Bradley with an all-star cast of Black celebrity support that includes Bill Cosby, Aretha Franklin, Coretta Scott King, Shaquille O'Neal, and Carl Lewis.

There was a curious moment in the politics of Black celebrity recently when Gore's campaign manager (a Black woman) told a reporter that the Gen. Colin Powell and the right-wing Congressman from Oklahoma, J.C. Watts, were nothing more than tokens that the Republican Party exploits to try convince Black Americans they are taken seriously.

More revealing still was the one discordant note in the reactionary chorus of Republican candidates sounded by McCain's so-called "anti-candidate" opposition to the current corrupt state of campaign financing by special interests.

Suddenly, the whole money trail of right-wing funding for everything, from the National Right to Life Committee to the Christian Coalition to pork-barrel spending to foreign contributions, was exposed. Through its access to wealthy right-wing contributors the political and religious Right has exerted its hegemonic hold on "American civilization."

Republican power brokers are actually on point when they attack McCain for being unstable and a loose cannon. He is! Indeed, one has to wonder if McCain himself wasn't the one who, in an effort to put the genie back in the bottle, leaked information that he had intervened in a government regulatory agency on behalf of one of his large corporate contributors. What the Republican campaign reveals is the ongoing right-wing attempt to drive American society further towards neofascism.

To make the fetishism of politics and money complete there is nothing to add save religion. The politics of religion have given a certain halo to the politics of personal biography. What the delusional, professional capitalist Steve Forbes lacks in personal biography he thinks can be made up with his personal fortune and the most reactionary pandering to the Christian Right.

Confessions of born-again Christian faith defy even being put into words. When asked to account for his new found faith, Texas Governor George W. (pronounced: Dubya) Bush confessed, "If they don't know, it's going to be hard to explain." Politics have been supplanted by religion, which, as Tocqueville observed, is

"believed in without discussion."

W.'s campaign, the richest in the history of the nation, personifies just this kind of politics for the Republican faithful. His oxymoronic "compassionate conservatism" is a case of what Marx called **religion as such**: the fetish of secular faith is believed in without discussion. According to such politics of immediate faith, it could be claimed that racism and poverty are no longer of any great significance, due supposedly to the "booming" economy. As an article of faith of the religion of "compassionate conservatism," the American people are then expected to believe in this catechism without discussion (shades of Ronald Reagan). And, naturally, the clueless amen corner called the media can be depended upon to do just that.

Bush is the only candidate in power who has carried out the authoritarian social policies that his scary wannabe fellow travelers froth at the mouth about carrying out. As governor, George W. Bush presides over a state that leads the country, if not the world, in executions (115 during his tenure) and boasts the country's largest prison-industrial complex and most ruthless welfare policy.

On the far side of the political lunar-scape is Ross Perot's Reform Party that has become a snake oil road show featuring sideshow performers like billionaire eccentric Donald Trump, ex-wrestler and current Minnesota Governor Jesse "The Body" Ventura, and in a class all alone, the political marriage between the neofascist Nixon speech writer Pat Buchanan and the Lyndon LaRouchite Black politico Lenora Fulani. The strange pseudo-left psychopolitics of Fulani's New Alliance Party are no stranger to red-brown alliances. Fulani was a staunch supporter of Louis Farrakhan in the period of his most rabid anti-Semitic demagoguery.

One warning of the dangers of this year's retrogressive political climate was actually evident in the past year's most radical moment—the Seattle WTO demonstrations. The emerging anti-globalization politics that were so full-blown in Seattle also form the ideological ground of the Buchanan-Fulani alliance. And others on the Left, such as followers of Ralph Nader, environmentalists, and trade unionists have been attracted to Buchanan's false populist attack on big-business, big-government, and big two-party politics.

The emerging anti-globalization left politics after Seattle are only one of the forces of revolt who face this danger. That is all the more reason why it's high time that we woke up to the neofascist dangers that lie ahead in this election year.

Racist airport economics

Memphis, Tenn.—I live near the Memphis International Airport. About 1985 the airport decided to expand. They went to the newspapers saying they were going to buy all the houses near the airport. This left the community thinking they had nothing to worry about. The airport didn't buy all those homes. They destroyed the neighborhood.

When they put this ad in the paper, that was letting the folks know to get out. Where I live was 95% Caucasian at that time. By 1997 we had fewer than 1,000 Caucasians in that area. The airport settled a lawsuit and gave those who had been in the community since 1973 so much money and lowered the amount by \$1,000 or \$2,000 for those who had been there a shorter time. That meant all these African-American folks who had moved in here and put their life savings in these homes.

Memphis International is the largest cargo airport in the world, the only airport that allows freight planes to fly all night. Cargo mostly goes out at night. Every time those planes come in they dump fuel. We have the highest noise level in our neighborhood. Memphis has the cheapest landing fees of any airport; for FedEx to make more money, they lowered the landing fees. FedEx earned \$13 billion last year. At the expense of whom?

There are 10 or 12 schools near the airport. There is not going to be any tomorrow for those students who can't sleep at night and are exposed to the chemicals and noise, because they won't do well in school. We have high youth problems in our neighborhood. They are going to build three more schools in the airport area. None of these schools have had any environmental impact studies done.

I'm from the country; I was a farmer. For a barn or stable we would pick a place where, when the wind blew, the smell wouldn't come toward the house. But they don't care which way the wind blows when they select a place for our children. This is racism. The airport is supposed to be there for the city, but Black people pay more than anyone; and we are the ones least able to fly out of that airport. We pay with our homes, our health and our children's education. They put economics over the human being. —Edmond Lindsey

Free Mumia Abu-Jamal!

Los Angeles—Mumia Abu-Jamal has been locked down since 1981 on Death Row in Pennsylvania's SCI Green Prison for a crime he did not commit, the murder of a Philadelphia police officer. Mumia's only crime is his critical, revolutionary ideas, reflected in political action as an organizer for the Black Panther Party and a MOVE supporter.

His radio show in Philadelphia was characterized as the "voice of the voiceless." Mumia laid the ground through his broadcasts for the poor, the powerless, the wretched and the downcast to be heard. He rocked the boat through his award-winning journalistic ability. Consequently Mumia became a marked man.

Mumia Abu-Jamal's first book is titled *Live from Death Row*; his second book is *Death Blossoms*. He is using the written word as a weapon against the state machine. The written word will give him life after death, if it comes to that. The blossoms are the fruit of his thought, words being planted within the mind of a living, breathing humanity, that next generation.

This capitalist system shakes at the concept of thought transmitted through the ages. Freedom ideas cannot be buried; only people die. The signing of Mumia Abu-Jamal's death warrant by Governor Ridge of Pennsylvania is not just to inflict Mumia's death, but death to the movement, the death in spirit of all of us who have a vision of a new humanity beyond the confines of capitalism. Mumia's death warrant is an attempt to silence us all!

New social movements will have to not just free those like Mumia or Geronimo Pratt who are considered political prisoners, but abolish the whole prison system with its racial and class prejudice, where rehabilitation has been abandoned for old-fashioned punishment and forced labor. The everyday "citizen" cannot turn a blind eye to what goes on behind prison walls. People allowed this inhuman abuse to happen with their endorsement for the war on crime, which has racist roots.

The American corporate propaganda machine took events like the Los Angeles Rebellion in 1992 to pour fuel on the fire, helping to ignite white middle-class fear of Black and Brown inner city poverty. So instead of the rebellion creating a breathing space for these very visible, unemployed and angry Black and Brown youth, the system attempts to build walls stronger and taller to confine more and more of them from sight.

The only line of defense becomes that thin blue line—the LAPD, NYPD and so on—to put fear in the heart of the Black and Brown community, to "take back our streets" for the law abiding people. That is why I think Mumia is so hard for middle-class Black Americans or their petty bourgeois organizations to defend. He has been condemned as a cop killer. The police are seen as the last line of defense to divide the haves from the have nots.

Mumia's struggle for life is about racism and capitalism and the condemnation of both. The revolutionary Left has not faced up to the ramifications of the Los Angeles Rebellion, nor does it see the need to work out its meaning, which has left the ground wide open for the right wing to take over the revolt by way of suppression and incarceration of masses of people. We should learn from Mumia's example; his mind remains active and alive from Death Row. We must demand Mumia's freedom now! His condemnation is, in a sense, a reflection of our own lack of struggle. ON A MOVE!

—Gene Ford

Editorial

A new unifying principle for the 21st century

On the first day of the new century, capitalists heaved a \$3 trillion sigh of relief. Their global system of industries, markets and services did not come crashing down. Media everywhere trumpeted the successful and expensive fix for the "Y2K bug," a little software programming oversight made three decades ago and reproduced ad infinitum in computer operating systems right through the 1990s. At the heart of a global system lay a technological "brain" so limited that it loomed as a barrier to progress itself, had the best engineering minds not been put to work making the cyberworld "Y2K compliant" and ready for business in the 21st century.

ETHOS OF HUMAN WASTAGE

The "Y2K bug," however, was far from the only contradiction in technology developed and implemented first and foremost for the self-expansion of capital. Less publicized was the death of Hisashi Ouchi, 35, who succumbed Dec. 21 to radiation poisoning from the Sept. 30 accident at the Tokai, Japan nuclear processing plant where he worked. When safety rules were made subservient to production quotas, human life subordinate to the bottom line, technology assumed the character of its creator, capitalism and its bloodthirsty quest for profits.

Furthermore advances in medicine, epidemiology, meteorology, seismology, and engineering have done little to stem preventable human loss and misery from the likes of the AIDS epidemic in Africa which has sur-

passed the Black Plague's grim death count, and the mud slides in slums surrounding Caracas, Venezuela which entombed thousands in December. To say that accidents will happen is, in capitalism, sacrificing the play of human inventiveness which can evade catastrophe. Indeed the wastage of human life has become the ethos of capitalist society. The consummate example is the prison-industrial complex where a whole generation of youth has been sent to hide the social and economic crises of the U.S. in 2000.

Scientific projects which promised to tell us something of who we are and eliminate disease, like the human genome project, remain mired in our jaded past. Pieces of the map of the body's genes have been patented and heredity itself is headed toward the status of intellectual property with price tag attached. Old elitist and racist attitudes which stifled human diversity and potential now threaten to be given new life, breeding a caste system which dictates who has the right genes and who doesn't, who lives and who suffers.

MARX'S VIEW OF CAPITALISM

More than wit or intuition gave Karl Marx the sense to characterize capitalism in words that become truer across the changes of centuries: "This antagonism between modern industry and science on the one hand, and dissolution on the other hand; this antagonism between the productive powers and the social relations

of our epoch is a fact, palpable, overwhelming, and not to be controverted." His dialectical methodology beginning with a "new Humanism" allowed him to see the contradiction at the heart of commodity production, a fetish so powerful that we believe we are subject to forces that appear not to be our making, even though they are within our powers to control: how we work, love, procreate, communicate, and otherwise live.

While viewers of the British Broadcasting System elected Karl Marx the millennium's greatest thinker, *Time* magazine's editors let their prejudices for technology and profits show when they named Albert Einstein their Man of the Century. Focusing on his scientific contributions, they failed to acknowledge Einstein's own socialist view of science. At mid-century he was adamant that "we should be on our guard not to overestimate science and scientific methods when it is a question of human problems," adding, "We should not assume that experts are the only ones who have a right to express themselves on questions affecting the organization of society."

The "unifying principle" that would make technology and human society a single progression was the concern of Einstein at the birth of the 20th century when he wrote the Theory of Relativity in 1905, the same year that the first Russian Revolution inaugurated a whole century of new kinds of revolutions. Each revolution in its own way contained a search for a philosophy of revolution, from Russia to Africa and the Third World to industrially developed countries, so-called Communist and Western alike. The birth of industrial unionism in the U.S., the Women's Liberation Movement, the 1960s Black "Freedom Now" struggles are children of the 20th century, each an unfinished revolution however. Counter-revolutionary descents into barbarism—Stalinism, Nazism, Pol Potism, and "ethnic cleansing"—have shown how more profound and urgent that quest for a philosophy of freedom has become for today.

NEW GENERATION'S SELF-DETERMINATION

The shortcomings of "post-Marx Marxists" who were not able to re-create Marx's philosophy of revolution in permanence have not relieved the 2000 generation of the responsibility for making revolution real once more, for finishing the unfinished revolutions. Marxist-Humanism succeeded in articulating a unifying principle in the post-World War Two world. Raya Dunayevskaya called this epoch—when new revolutions have lived with "ethnic cleansing" and nuclear madness—"our age of absolutes."

At the birth of the 21st century, a new generation of young protesters in Seattle reasserted their determination not to let the World Trade Organization's cabal of capitalists control their future. Sweatshop labor conditions and environmental pillage are human effects, and humans can stop them, they declared.

They also appropriated the internet "brain" of the burgeoning so-called information revolution to use email and web sites to organize a week of demonstrations. They extended Marx's "solution" to the limitations of technology: "We know that to work well the newfangled forces of society, they only want to be mastered by newfangled men—and such are the working men"—and women, youth, Blacks and oppressed minorities, and gays and lesbians. The "science" of making a successful revolution remains the new frontier in the 21st century.

Left media's misleading analyses of Serbia

At the Cold War's end, a fascist regime with the fourth largest army in Europe emerged to carry out slaughter and destruction (albeit on a smaller scale) reminiscent of Hitler's Third Reich. The authorities in Belgrade were able to carry out their plan for "Greater Serbia" without any meaningful interference from Western leaders. Sadly, there was no unified, anti-fascist response from the Left. Moreover, there is denial and, at times, support for what amounts to a modern fascist state.

Covert Action Quarterly magazine, for example, has misled its readers since 1992, initially with an article by Sean Gervasi, which offers a creative version of recent Balkan history, blaming the U.S. and the West for the break-up of Yugoslavia. The article fails to mention the Serb genocidal campaign of "ethnic cleansing" in Bosnia which was several months underway, and that the Serbs had, through extreme violence, carved out an ethnically pure statelet which covered nearly a third of Croatia in the previous year. Not even a word concerning Serbian nationalism!

The current issue of *Covert Action Quarterly* attacks the media for "demonizing the Serbs." Diana Johnstone, playing fast and loose with facts as usual, defends Milosevic as one trying to save socialism and Yugoslavia. According to her, his only mistake in Kosovo is not knowing how to keep it attached to Serbia. What in fact demonizes the Serbs is the abominable acts they've perpetrated over the last nine years.

Competing with *Covert Action Quarterly* for most disinformation on the former Yugoslavia, is the web site of the International Action Center (IAC). It carries a number of stories which attack those Albanians who took up arms to defend themselves against apartheid-like repression which has marked Kosova since 1989. The KLA is portrayed as a mercenary band of Albanian goons, funded by the U.S. and German governments and organized by the CIA like the Nicaraguan contras. They overlook the fact that Serbia is a brutal colonizer of Kosova. Attention to U.S. policy and administration rhetoric would tell them that the U.S. has continually refused to recognize Kosovar independence and referred to the KLA as terrorists. At Rambouillet, the administration twisted the arms of Albanian delegates to surrender their right to self-determination as was done to the Bosnian victims at Dayton.

The IAC assigns no blame to the Serbs for their campaign of "ethnic cleansing" Albanians, even after Kosova was virtually emptied of its Albanian population. IAC claims the forced expulsions of Albanians were the result of the NATO air war against Serbia, withholding the fact that just days before the first NATO bombs dropped, 40,000 additional Serbian troops entered Kosova. Has it ever occurred to IAC that the addition of so many armed men, motivated by ethnic hatred, may have had some link to the increased "ethnic cleansing"?

Another "Left" perspective short on facts but big on attitude was aired the first day of the NATO war, on the Washington, D.C. Pacifica radio station. Dorothy Healy opened her radio show by saying, "We take the pro-Serb view... so does Women's Strike for Peace and the Workers of the World (sic)..." insinuating that everyone on the Left supports the Serbs.

U.S. Balkan policy deserves plenty of condemnation, but for the right reasons:

The Bush administration was fairly quiet when reports of Serbian atrocities in Croatia surfaced. Bush's national security advisor, Brent Scowcroft, and Under Secretary of State (later Secretary of State) Larry Eagleburger were members of Kissinger Associates who had business dealings in Belgrade over the course of several years. In response to Croatia's vote for independence in 1991, Bush's Secretary of State James Baker III flew to Belgrade assuring Milosevic, "We support the territorial integrity of the Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia"—a green light for Milosevic to engage in his campaign for "Greater Serbia."

While ultranationalist Serbs murdered over 250,000

non-Serbs (as well as anti-fascist Serbs) in Bosnia and caused three million to become refugees, President Clinton followed the Bush practice of indifference and occasional tough talk. The illegal arms embargo (requested by Milosevic) which hurt only the victims was maintained by the U.S. and the West. The belated NATO military intervention of 1995 was not designed to stop ethnic cleansing or even the siege of Sarajevo, nor did it hurt the Serb ultranationalists in any meaningful way. The intent and result of the Western military action was to prevent the Bosnians from taking back and reintegrating their territory. After preventing the Bosnian rollback of Serb gains, Clinton further showed his disdain for the victims by inviting Milosevic to Dayton to determine the future of the country he had just decimated.

Three years of murder and expulsion of non-Serbs in Bosnia, combined with the Dayton Accords, set the stage for ethnic partition of Kosova, which is currently the greatest threat to stability, fostering continued injustice in the region.

Sadly, *Covert Action Quarterly* and International Action Center are probably not even cognizant that on this issue they're in bed with more reactionaries and hate groups than they can count. Just recently Van Gosse, director of Peace Action, sent out an article to his members written by former contra lover, Phyllis Schlafly. Typical of Holocaust deniers, she defends the Serbs and denies any humanitarian crisis existed in Kosova before the NATO campaign.

—Dede Faller, Chair,
Bosnia Support Committee
Washington, D.C.

Report from Ecuador—Mass upsurge and betrayal

The near revolution in Ecuador of Jan. 21, 2000, has deep roots in the history of the imperialist exploitation of an entire continent. That the driving force behind the temporary takeover of the three branches of government was a coalition of indigenous peoples and campesinos reflects both poetic justice as well as highlights the issue of racism (in that effects of the genocidal incursion into the Americas of the European "conquistadores" continues as a reality to this day).

In the face of a banking crisis, massive inflation and devaluation of the currency, unchecked government corruption and mismanagement, and increasing levels of poverty, hunger, unemployment and child labor, the government's response was an attempt to implement the belt-tightening type of policies favored by the international banking community.

Weeks of strikes, protest rallies, and demonstrations culminated in the week of Jan. 15-21 when tens of thousands of indigenous Ecuadorans and campesinos, under the leadership of the Confederation of Indigenous Nations of Ecuador (CONAIE) and its president, Jose Antonio Vargas, arrived in the capital city of Quito with the stated intention of changing the very structure of government. They enjoyed the support of students, organized labor, and a broad popular front of other social change organizations.

Previously, a People's Parliament was formed that called for the removal of all three existing branches of government to be replaced with a "popular" governing structure. And despite major obstacles to travel put up by the government, they arrived by the thousands in Quito with the intention of implementing the Parliament's dictum.

On Thursday, Jan. 20, thousands of demonstrators surrounded the ring of police and military that had formed to "protect" the Congress building, and thereby took effective control. No one entered or left without their approval. On the morning of Saturday, Jan. 21, assisted by a small number of troops under the leadership of Colonel Lucio Gutierrez, they successfully broke

through the cordon of police, and thousands were able to enter and take control of the Congress, where they were soon joined by hundreds of other junior military officers and where they proceeded to operate as a People's Parliament.

This inspired uprisings across the country, and the eventual takeover of the judiciary building in Quito and the surrounding of the Presidential Palace, which President Mahuad had abandoned. When the Joint Military Command announced its withdrawal of support for Mahuad, and when support for the rebellion began to grow, one could smell revolution in the air.

A lengthy conference held at the Presidential Palace between the rebels and the leaders of the armed forces yielded a civilian/military popular junta that included CONAIE leader Vargas. This turned out to be a ploy by the senior military command to defuse the protest, which was achieved when the military withdrew from the junta in favor of supporting the replacement of Mahuad with his vice president, Gustavo Noboa, who promptly was affirmed by a thoroughly corrupt Congress the next morning while he in turn reaffirmed his predecessor's intended economic policies. The confused and disillusioned protesters were then easily dislodged from the government buildings in Quito.

Behind all this, of course, was the shadow of the U.S. State Department, whose Latin American coordinator, Peter Romero, was on the air in Ecuador making threats of political and economic sanctions against a rebel government. The equally "unconstitutional" government of Noboa (because it results from a military overthrow of the existing president), however, seems to be quite acceptable.

Replacing Mahuad with his clone was not the end result desired by the massive protests across Ecuador. The frustration of these passions through trickery has only bought time for the establishment, and the next round of protest is already being planned.

—Roger H.

Seattle anti-WTO protests pose a future without capitalism

(Continued from page 1)

It was just this, and not a handful of who shattered a few windows in big money chain stores like Nordstrom's and Starbucks, that drove Seattle Mayor Paul Schell and Governor Gary Locke to order a "state of emergency," including a 7 p.m. curfew. (Much more looting and window smashing has been quietly forgotten in many cities after a home sports team won a championship.)

The world saw on TV that night a brutal suppression of peaceful demonstrators and many local bystanders with a massive use of tear gas, rubber bullets, concussion bombs and pepper spray by phalanxes of what looked like Darth Vader clones. Reminiscent of any totalitarian regime's police state, on the following day the forces of order declared a 50-square block "no protest zone" reinforced by the National Guard, state police, and neighboring police departments.

In spite of this on Dec. 3, after most demonstrators left town, the local King County Labor Council sponsored a march where 5,000 came out to violate the "no protest zone" and demand the release of "The Seattle 600." Along with workers there were environmentalists, lesbians and youth chanting: "This Is What Democracy Looks Like!"

In contrast to the WTO's private deliberations, affecting the conditions of life and labor for hundreds of millions around the world, dozens of open marches and forums took place in Seattle during the week leading up to the Nov. 30 confrontation. Why are laws barring the import of shrimp which are caught by methods that threaten to drive turtles to extinction shot down by the WTO as a restraint on trade? Why can't Massachusetts refuse to do business with companies who conspire with the brutal military regime in Burma to enslave Burmese laborers? Why can't we refuse to participate in a system that brings us goods made with prison labor in China or by kids and women earning a dollar a day in Laos or Cambodia?

It is not that these issues had not been talked about for years. They certainly were. However it took the WTO protests to bring them all into focus as aspects of the same globalized capitalism. Open democratic deliberation on such a total range of issues impelled participants to act, to express their solidarity with the broad range of humanity fighting this global system, beginning with an absolute certainty of the need to shut down the WTO.

WORKERS AND ENVIRONMENTALISTS

The Nov. 30 demonstrations made the WTO the most visible manifestation of the totally undemocratic essence of capitalism. It was a crucial milestone that raised many new questions about the meaning and future direction of the movement. A whole new generation experienced the power of mass revolt as well as a new broad-based coalescence with workers. As USWA (Steelworker) President George Becker put it at a Nov. 29 forum on Global Trade Unionism, "These kids want change, and they are not going to wait for us. We have to catch up."

However, the AFL-CIO leadership, seeing the power of genuine democracy in direct actions, decided to do everything they could to divert the march of labor away from their planned destination at the convention site. Thousands of workers, especially Steelworkers and Longshoremens of the ILWU, defied the AFL-CIO leaders and joined the youth braving the police assault. Many workers, who had sat in rapt attention as labor and human rights activists from poor countries described their conditions of life and labor under multi-national corporations, were not the same people at the end of the week.

In solidarity with the WTO protests, the West Coast Longshoremens shut down the coastal ports for eight hours. The ILWU has recently shown an international and social consciousness by refusing to cross picket lines in support of dockworkers in Liverpool and striking in support Mumia Abu-Jamal. Some business journalists pondered how the Longshoremens could bring the new economy, based on just-in-time globally integrated production, to a virtual standstill in a matter of days. ILWU International President Brian McWilliams, in his speech at the Seattle WTO protest rally, declared that far from being against trade, "the interests of working people transcend national and local boundaries, and...labor solidarity truly means that when necessary we will engage in concrete action...Don't ever forget it—it is the labor of working people that produces all the wealth."

INTERNATIONALIST FORUM

The WTO meeting came on the heels of the Clinton administration's announcement that it had just completed an agreement to invite China to join the WTO. That made the testimony of Cai Chong Guo, a trade union leader in China at the time of the Tiananmen revolt, all the more important. He described the actual conditions for workers in China in graphic terms as sweated labor multiplied many fold as a result of China's trade opening to the West. Much

like the Triangle Shirtwaist fire in New York at the beginning of this century, he described how 250 young peasant women were burned to death in a locked toy factory which caught fire in Shanghai. The China of free trade is one where there is mass unemployment and untold misery for the great majority. Trade union activism is totally repressed. Nevertheless he declared there has been a proliferation of marches and demonstrations which have been met with heightened repression and selective targeting of organizers and leaders of an independent trade union movement.

Today's permanent restructuring on a global scale is an outgrowth of the internal authoritarian character of capitalist organizations in China and elsewhere. This has led to several incidents of cross border solidarity described at the Global Trade Unionism panel such as a victory for a more livable wage for the Chilean miners achieved with the help of Canadian miners. On the same panel Victor Thorpe, a trade union official from Brussels, appealed to his co-panelists to reject their desire to reform WTO by being given a place at the table. "Free trade," he said, "is an internal transfer from one part of the global system to another..."

Two-thirds of what is counted as trade is already in the hands of the same megacompanies dominating the whole market. The other one-third is small suppliers and vendors who service these companies."

The truth is that the global trading system is about the right of capital to move freely in order to exploit labor and the environment without restriction. Over 150 years ago, Marx saw the emergence of a global capitalism, then based on cotton and slavery, and described it in a way that is so contemporary it has many taking another look at his philosophy. In the *Communist Manifesto*, Marx detailed not only the dizzying pace at which capitalism revolutionized production but also its narrow ideology: "In the place of the numberless infeasible chartered freedoms, [the bourgeoisie] has set up that single, unconscionable freedom—Free Trade." (For a philosophic discussion of the relevance of Marx to today's globalized capitalism, see "Celebrations of the 150th anniversary of *The Communist Manifesto*," available from *New & Letters*.)

ABROAD AT HOME

Today's globally integrated commodity production with its much touted U.S.-centered high-tech prosperity has as its foundation sweated labor both abroad and increasingly in this country's bottom tier economy—from chicken and fish farm processing to textiles and call centers. It is based as well on criminalizing the poor and homeless, with now over two million in prisons where there is growing use of prison labor (See pages 3 and 10).

While Black participation in the Seattle protests was small, Black masses have repeatedly declared this system unviable and in need of tearing down. Like the response of many Black leaders to the 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion, Clinton and his friends in the labor bureaucracy hope to confine the struggle to the electoral arena. But workers, at least the rank and file, more often take their cue from the arena of production. "Every worker," one Seattle protester explained, "has an immediate face for the undemocratic character of the WTO in the person of their boss."

The labor bureaucracy's yearning for co-partnership with capitalists, asking for a place at the WTO's bargaining table, is at odds with the notion of genuine democracy of workers taking control of their own lives and with the direct action of the youth and workers in Seattle. Clinton and now Gore, who the AFL-CIO bureaucrats have adopted as their candidate, espouse and administer the "free trade" ideology of the WTO and have done so ever since Clinton quickly forgot that he made human rights in China an issue in the 1992 election.

As Marx once said, politicians bow to capital because it is "an alienated social power which has gained an autonomous position and confronts society as a thing, and as the power that the capitalist has through this thing." On the one hand, the WTO protests questioned whether to appeal, in a capitalist system, to state "sovereignty," in other words, government-to-government relations based on regulating more or less the international flow of things, commodities and capital.

The labor bureaucracy, on the other hand, wants to partner with Clinton and Gore and become a player in their arena of state-brokered agreements because, above all, they fear the workers confronting the "alienated social power" of capital through their own self-activity in the workplace. The appeal to U.S. "sovereignty" also comes from liberals like Ralph Nader. This plays right into the hands of neo-fascists like Pat

Buchanan who also declared his "support" for workers who engaged in a "peaceful," that is, non-consequential protest against the WTO.

Seattle's huge protests did impact the outcome of the internal WTO negotiations. By itself the collapse of those negotiations cannot be declared a victory for the movement, as some have, because rulers had their own class reasons for turning to more nationalistic ideologies in order to help them stay in power.

Nevertheless Seattle saw new international worker-to-worker connections as well as a coalescence of human rights and environmental activists with workers. The demonstrations in Seattle were billed as the revolt of "civil society" against the globalized economy. Many youth who focused on capitalism's disregard for the environment are now reaching out to workers. The WTO events demonstrated the beginnings of global worker solidarity and social relations not between things—commodities—and material relations between persons, but workers' own direct relations with each other.

Stateville lock-down

Once considered the most notorious, corrupt slave camp in Illinois, Stateville Maximum Security Prison still has a corrupt staff that has prisoners under control by stricter enforcement of numerous, insignificant prison rules. Stateville's wardens under the direction of George DeTella, deputy director of the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC), have terminated all normal movement of prisoners and operated the prison under semi-lockdown conditions since 1996. This prison has been on lockdown—prisoners locked in their cells 24 hours except for visits, writs or hospital passes—for approximately 120 days as of the end of 1999.

For all prisoners in Stateville, 1999 brought many major changes in staff, policies and enforcement of rules. The director of the IDOC and Stateville's two top wardens were replaced. Other major changes included increased lockdowns, confiscation of stingers (water heaters), deleting over 75 commissary items, big price increases in commissary items, huge increases in drug testing and so on.

Almost all prisoners, if they could, would seek transfers to another prison, any prison just as long as it was not Stateville.

Other things which happened throughout the year include random urine drug testing, with fewer prisoners testing positive each time. Officers also sent many prisoners to segregation for minor rule violations that a few years before never were segregation walks. Prisoners often had to shower in cold water at least several times a month during cold and hot months. Stateville does not provide adequate hygiene and clothing items mandated by the Illinois Revised Statutes for prisoners.

To an outsider, it may be hard to have any sympathy for prisoners. You are probably thinking, "Hey, they deserve whatever they get. Deal with it." However, these same prisoners, over 90% of them, will return to society, possibly being "mad as hell" because they were treated like animals. Contrary to all the negative occurrences at Stateville, some prisoners are using this time to develop themselves spiritually, mentally, emotionally and physically.

Let this review of Stateville motivate you to get involved with prison issues that revolve around humane conditions and treatment. These men in prison need your support to make it through the deplorable, desperate and desolate prison conditions which will only worsen. Stop the madness!!!

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Struggle in Aceh intensifies

New York—The mass movement for independence from Indonesia continues in Aceh, the province on the western end of Sumatra. But in spite of the demonstration Nov. 8 by half the population, the Indonesian government still refuses to schedule a referendum on Aceh's future status. Instead, it has sent more and more special military units to the province, who beat and kill civilian activists every day. Some people think Jakarta will not dare to repeat its



Police confront youth at a recent pro-referendum demonstration.

September slaughter of the East Timorese, especially after parliament began an investigation of military abuses in Aceh, but the repression is getting worse. It seems that Indonesia is instituting a counter-revolution early, creating fear and confusion in the population and the mass movement. Members of special units of the army, disguised as the elite police mobile brigade, are attacking people, spreading rumors and provoking violence as an excuse to reimpose martial law.

The mass civilian movement that exploded last year (see December 1999 *News & Letters*) is led by student organizations, who are planning to hold a referendum on independence themselves in June or July in light of Jakarta's refusal to do so. Student groups held a rally Jan. 3 in the capital of Banda Aceh to mark the first anniversary of the massacre in Pusong. In that poor fishing village in northern Aceh, the military killed six unarmed villagers and wounded many more. No one has been prosecuted for the massacre. At the recent demonstration, the "police" pointed M-16 rifles at the demonstrators and were closing in, so the students ended the rally. Going back to the office of the student group Student Solidarity for the People, they were attacked by three truckloads of "special police." Three students were hospitalized after the soldiers finished kicking them and beating them with fists and guns, all the time saying, "You can call for your f---g human rights, there are no human rights in Aceh."

Some student groups recently formed a new organization called Black Cat to protect the movement from attacks and provocateurs. Many of the police and 80% of

the administrators have fled Aceh, especially since the attacks on police stations Dec. 4, the anniversary of the guerrilla movement's declaration of independence. Civilians are afraid of the police and military anyway, so now people call on Black Cat for help instead. Its student members investigate common crimes as well as political threats, assaults and provocations. Recently, when hundreds of people in a refugee camp were poisoned, Black Cat found the boy who did it and learned that he was paid to do so by someone connected to the military.

In the areas where government personnel, composed of military hierarchies and police, have fled, people are reaching back into Aceh's history to create self-governing villages. These have leadership composed of four elders, one expert in each field religion, law, customs, and the local economic base. Decisions are made by meetings of the whole village.

The Indonesian government portrays the independence movement as comprised of Muslim fundamentalists and guerrillas, when in fact it is a mass-based movement against military repression and for self-determination. Jakarta has offered to hold a referendum just on whether to have Islamic law apply in Aceh, but the province already has that right. Last year, it also won the right to keep a slightly larger share of the wealth it produces.

Aceh is rich in natural gas and is highly industrialized, but most of what it produces does not benefit the impoverished population. Mobil Oil is partners with the Indonesian company that owns the gas, and Mobil has looked the other way while some 3,000 people have been killed by the military over the last 11 years. There is evidence Mobil even lent the military bulldozers to dig mass graves.

The Student Coalition for Aceh was recently formed in New York, and invites the participation of students around the country and around the world who want to publicize events in Aceh.

—Anne Jaclard

'War on youth' in California

Oakland, Cal.—The insanity of this society is most recently reflected in ex-governor Pete Wilson's initiative called "Gang Violence and Youth Crime Prevention." This initiative, known as Proposition 21 will allow prosecutors to lock up youth as young as 14 in adult facilities for the "crime" of spraying graffiti. Proposition 21 will make property damage of \$400 a felony strike.

The youth organizing against this initiative rightly call it a "War on Youth." They held a number of demonstrations, hip-hop benefits, educational, petition drives and other events since the fall to warn people about its implications. There was a large contingent of youth against Proposition 21 at the San Francisco Martin Luther King, Jr., freedom parade on Jan. 17. A young woman, for example, said "Youth were heavily involved in the Civil Rights Movement. Proposition 21 would lock us up before we have a chance to do anything." A young Asian woman pointed out that California is number one in prison building and 41st in school spending.

A young Black man said: "You can get a job in prison, but you can't get one on the outside. They pay you 15 cents an hour to make a chip, but when you get out, you think they'll pay you \$22 an hour to do the same thing? No! Because now you have a record."

Many are concerned with the loosened criteria for definition of a gang. You can be entered into the gang database solely on suspicion and then convicted of a felony by association. Gang member is a new code word primarily for minority youth.

This proposition continues the anti-human spirit of the 3 Strikes law, which used racist images of violent offenders to give prosecutors vast powers and resulted in the incarceration of millions of non-violent people like drug addicts. Of the fastest growing segment of the prison population, women, 80% are convicted of drug-related offenses. What no one is discussing is the impact of this proposition on young women, who don't even need to commit a crime to be locked up. Currently they are locked up for status offenses, like truancy.

—Urszula Wislanka

Thoughts on nature and labor

The Seattle mass protest on Nov. 30, 1999 saw youth and labor united against the World Trade Organization. The reality is that global capitalism is squeezing the life out of humanity. This is reflected in sweated labor being suffocated the world over through industrial pollution.

The new of labor and youth fighting on common ground is a unity being forged by nature, interpreted not just as wildlife preservation, but the connection between nature and humanity; human nature as Marx characterized it as being central to the full development of the human being, i.e. freedom.

That concept seems to run central to how the environmental movement, with youth in the forefront, can link up with labor which sees jobs exported overseas to a cheaper labor force. The call from labor has been to condemn those corporations who export jobs abroad. The Third World standard of living should be equal to the laws that govern U.S. industry in order to give U.S. workers an equal playing field. "Foreign" labor cannot be exploited tenfold. In a sense, it is a call for workers of the world to unite.

The exhaustion of capitalist production is reflected in the ground soil, clear cutting and destruction of the Brazilian rain forest. The exploitation of nature by man is not far removed from the exploitation of man by man. With the capitalist exhaustion of labor comes the starvation and hunger of humanity.

If nature is not just the practical activity of humanity, nature is the internal passion and hunger for liberation in action.

"We do not, therefore see in Nature the coming-to-be of the universal; that is, the universal side of Nature has no history. The science, political constitutions, etc., on the other hand, have a history, for they are the universal in the sphere of Mind" (Hegel's *Philosophy of Nature*, p. 280).

New life for the future world, universal life to develop in which labor creates in harmony with nature is in the hands of those that do the work. Reason is the key to action.

—Gene Ford

Youth

Activists resist Iraq embargo

Memphis, Tenn.—On Dec. 18, the one-year anniversary of Operation Desert Fox—the U.S. bombing campaign against Iraq named after the infamous Nazi tank commander Erwin Rommel—the Humanitarian Action Collective and supporters assembled at the Crosstown Post Office here to protest eight years of a merciless U.S. foreign policy and to mail several hundred pounds of medicine and textbooks.

The demonstration was followed by a forum/panel at the Mid-South Peace and Justice Center which included Angela Schindler, who recently went on a Voices in the Wilderness delegation to Iraq; Father Joe Kerrigan of Immaculate Conception Catholic Church; and Mid-South Peace and Justice board member, Pete Gathje.

The UN economic sanctions imposed on Iraq in 1990 are devastating. The Oil For Food Program barely meets the needs of the people, and importing even simple medicine and sanitation equipment is impossible.

UNICEF, in their 1998 report on Iraq, states that 5,700 Iraqi children under the age of five die every month due to the UN economic sanctions.

Hospitals lack basics; birth defects in Iraq since Operation Desert Storm have risen drastically as have cancer rates due to the U.S. use of armor-piercing depleted Uranium—which has also been cited as a direct cause of Gulf War Syndrome. The economy, infrastructure, and health of Iraqis are in absolute ruin. Without water sanitation systems and the ability to make or import medicine, Iraqis, especially the young and infirm suffer slow death by U.S. foreign policy.

The Humanitarian Action Collective conducted a medicine drive recently for the people of Iraq. Hundreds of bottles of medicine were collected and sent to Sister Anne Montgomery. Transporting these contraband catheters and children's cough medicine, a delegation of Dominican nuns from New York City departs for an illegal humanitarian mission to Iraq in February.

Operation Desert Storm saw the end of weapons inspections and the beginning of an unrelenting series of air strikes over the two "no-fly zones" in northern and southern Iraq. Since our government gave the Iraqis bombs for Christmas last year, the Humanitarian Action Collective wanted to make a gesture of peace toward the people of Iraq by demonstrating our resistance to the sanctions.

—Lee Lawrence and Ceylon Mooney

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<p>DETROIT P.O. Box 27205 Detroit MI 48227</p> <p>MEETINGS Tuesdays, 6 p.m. Central Methodist Church Woodward and Adams</p>	<p>OAKLAND P.O. Box 3345 Oakland, CA 94609 510 658 1448</p> <p>MEETINGS Sundays, 6:30 p.m. 2015 Center St. (at Milvia) Berkeley</p>
<p>LOS ANGELES P.O. Box 29194 Los Angeles, CA 90029</p> <p>MEETINGS Sundays, 5:30 p.m. Echo Park United Methodist Church 1226 N. Alvarado (North of Sunset, side door)</p>	<p>MEMPHIS & MISSISSIPPI 1910 Madison Ave, PMB 59 Memphis, TN 38104</p>

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40 YEARS

Since inception of Civil Rights Movement in Greensboro, N.C.

From the May 1960 News & Letters: "A Marxist-Humanist looks at the freedom fighters of South U.S.A." by Raya Dunayevskaya

The greatest achievement of the present Freedom Fighters in South USA is its own working existence. The elemental outburst of Southern Negro college students took the form of sitting down at segregated lunch counters, asking to be served, and continuing to sit down after service was refused.

The spontaneous movement spread from Greensboro, North Carolina, where it began on February 1, till it now covers the entire South, including Mississippi. In that notorious lynch state, however, the form of the movement is not that of the sit-down, but the more passive boycott...

What the Freedom Fighters of South USA show is that revolution is only the evolution in the fullness of time and in the elemental form called forth by the needs of the movement. The form any further development of this movement will take no one can foretell, or dictate. What we can do is not to create new points of confusion in the thinking of the young freedom fighters as their doing leads them to grapple with the foundation of a new society whose point of departure and point of return alike would center around the relation of man to man—the relation of man to man sans exploitation and discrimination.

Our Life and Times

Crisis in Russia in wake of Chechen war

by Kevin A. Barry and Mary Holmes

Boris Yeltsin's surprise Jan. 1 resignation, which allowed the former KGB man, Vladimir Putin, to assume the presidency, has deepened the drift toward authoritarianism. Putin has not hesitated to form an alliance with the Stalinist Communist Party. His recent and very relative popularity has rested on a single issue, his appeal to the rankest Russian chauvinism against national minorities as he has conducted a brutal war against the tiny republic of Chechnya. Putin has also attempted to reassert Russian power with some nuclear saber rattling, admitting for the first time that Russia would conduct a first strike "if necessary."

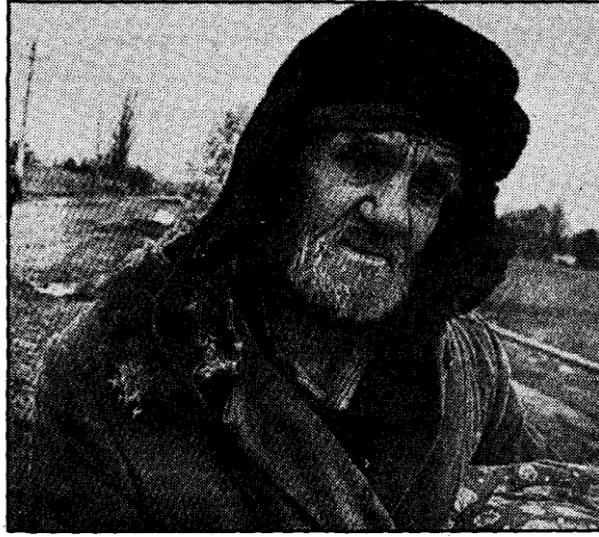
The new Chechen war, on the heels of the 1994-96 one, has devastated Chechnya but done absolutely nothing to stem the deteriorating conditions of life and labor of the Russian people. Since September, Russian forces have mercilessly bombed Chechnya's towns and villages, following that up with looting and murder. They have driven hundreds of thousands from their homes and have not hesitated to machine-gun refugees. Their corrupt officers have also sold off military supplies, including thousands of arms to the Chechen resistance.

The tide of battle began to turn in late November, when Chechens began to ambush Russian patrols. By

mid-January, strong Chechen counterattacks besieged several towns the Russians thought to have been behind the lines. These counterattacks are sure to continue even if the Russians succeed in taking Grozny.

Putin is discovering what Yeltsin learned in 1994-96: Although Russia's technological superiority allows it to pound civilians with impunity, when its demoralized and often unpaid ground troops try to hold territory, they are no match for Chechens fighting for the independence of their country.

Inside Russia, courageous human rights activists such as Sergei Kovaliev and Yelena Bonner, widow of Andrei Sakharov, have been among the few to openly condemn this imperialist war. However, even some of these activists, including Kovaliev, have opposed Bonner's open support for an independent Chechnya. The Chechen people clearly demand this, although few



Chechen refugee wanders the streets near Grozny.

of them support uncritically their current leadership which contains its share of Islamic fundamentalists, corrupt politicians, and gangsters.

For their part, the Western powers, especially the U.S., have shed crocodile tears, but done nothing to support Chechnya. They have ignored the fact that Russian troop levels in the Caucasus now surpass the limits set by the Treaty on Conventional Forces in Europe. They have refused to slow or cut off their massive economic aid which is financing the war.

The Chechen independence struggle has a long history and will not be suppressed. In 1853, Karl Marx, a strong supporter of Chechnya, wrote that the failure of the West to support them in that period would "neither out-voice history nor silence the mountaineers, the clashing of whose arms proves to the world that the Caucasus does not...belong to Russia" (*Marx-Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 12, 406).

Having suffered greatly under the Tsars, the Chechen people experienced even worse under Stalin, who in 1944 deported this entire people (and others) en masse to Central Asia. Hundreds of thousands died along the way. Inside Stalin's labor camps, the Chechens stood out among other oppressed nationalities for their absolute refusal to accept Russian authority. That spirit, still alive today, is haunting Russia.

Hijacking of Indian plane

In December, Islamic militants supporting the secession of Kashmir from India hijacked an Indian plane, forcing it to land in Afghanistan. In the end, the Indian government agreed to free several Kashmiri militants, the hostages were released, and the hijackers melted away.

The hijacking was yet another chapter in the half-century-old rivalry between mainly Hindu India and overwhelmingly Muslim Pakistan, the latter a supporter of secession for majority Muslim Kashmir. In 1998, the rulers of India and then Pakistan each tested nuclear weapons openly. The Indian government has publicly blamed Pakistan for the hijacking, heightening tensions once again.

Last October, the Hindu chauvinist Atal Behari Vajpayee government won a solid majority in elections in India. This same government began the nuclear tests in 1998. Also in October, Pakistan's unpopular and authoritarian Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif was overthrown by the even more authoritarian General Pervez Musharraf, in a pattern of corruption and coups that has marked the history of that country since it broke away from India in 1947.

Irish accords underway

The implementation of the April 1998 Northern Ireland accords leading to political power sharing between Protestants and Catholics got underway Dec. 2. Two elements were central: pressure applied by Britain and the U.S., and support from the majority of Irish, north and south, for an end to both paramilitary and state supported violence.

The coalition government, headed by David Trimble of the majority Protestant Ulster Unionist Party and including representatives of Sinn Fein, terminated rule by Britain which was imposed 25 years ago at the height of the Catholic minority struggle for civil rights. Over 15,000 British troops still remain. For the first time since partition, the Irish Republic has revoked claims on Ulster, and a few tentative cross border bodies have been set up.

The current implementation, however, is still on shaky ground. Trimble and the Unionists have set a Feb. 12 deadline for evidence that the IRA, which has observed a ceasefire since July 1997, has begun turning in arms to a third party commission. If not, they will pull out of the coalition government, likely setting off a new round of mindless sectarian killing to which the majority is so opposed.

Panama gets canal

The Panama Canal was relinquished from U.S. control on Dec. 31, after nearly a century of U.S. occupation of the Canal Zone, under provisions of the 1978 treaty brokered by then-President Jimmy Carter who led the U.S. delegation at a ceremony held Dec. 14. No ranking members of the Clinton administration attended.

Reactionary U.S. pundits nostalgically extolled the canal as the technological crown jewel of turn-of-the-century imperialism, failing to credit the brutalization and deaths of tens of thousands of Black, ladino and native Panamanian workers who built the canal under the rigid race-nationality system set up and maintained by the U.S.

Nearly half the population of Panama lives in poverty. Newly-elected President Moscoso has insisted that the canal be run for profit, but she has not indicated whether the profits will go to improving social conditions, or how the government intends to replace the \$350 million which U.S. control generated. The ruling elite is making money in real estate and development contracts in the former Canal Zone, which is also being "globalized" through foreign projects ranging from port facilities to luxury resorts.

On another front, Panamanian environmentalists are warning against the increased degradation of the watershed through erosion due to construction and the settlement of poor communities, as each ship passing through the locks uses 52 million gallons of fresh water.

December also marked the tenth anniversary of the 1989 U.S. invasion that overthrew Noriega. The huge U.S. Southern Command military headquarters has moved its operations from Panama to Miami, but under the 1978 treaty, the U.S. retains the right to intervene if it deems the canal is under threat.

Socialist win in Chile

Ricardo Lagos narrowly won (by 2.5%) the presidential election in Chile on Jan. 16 against the right-wing candidate, Joaquin Lavín. Lagos is the first socialist president since Salvador Allende was overthrown in a bloody military coup in 1973 led by Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

The closeness of the vote in part demonstrated how both candidates attempted to distance themselves from the events of 1973 and what they represent. Lavín, who once held a position in Pinochet's government and visited him in London after Pinochet was arrested in 1998, campaigned as a U.S.-style "compassionate conservative."

Lagos ran with the center-left Concertación coalition, mainly Christian Democrats and Socialists, who have held the presidency in Chile since 1990 when Pinochet's dictatorship ended. While Lagos had once been part of Allende's socialist government, he long since moved with the social democratic tendency away from Marxism.

Both candidates opposed Pinochet's extradition to Spain to stand trial on charges of torture and murder, and tried to keep the issue low key during the campaign. Now that the British government has ruled Pinochet medically unfit to be sent to Spain to stand trial, he may quickly return to Chile. This could be the first test of Lagos' presidency, since many of his supporters want Pinochet's self-conferred immunity overturned so that he can be prosecuted. Relatives of Pinochet's victims have filed nearly 50 legal cases, to which Pinochet will have to respond.

Coming next month...

A special section introducing the recently-published Chinese edition of *Marxism and Freedom* by Raya Dunayevskaya, with a new introduction.

Don't miss it!

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 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 in 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*.