

# NEWS & LETTERS

Theory/Practice

'Human Power is its own end'—Marx

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## Regaining control of our labor



by Htun Lin

We service workers at Kaiser HMO have now been presented with a new nationally consolidated contract. The contract is touted as a great triumph of the strategic partnership between Kaiser management and the AFL-CIO. There are some good things in the contract, like giving benefits to domestic partners and extending coverage to unmarried children up to age 25. Union officials are saying the 4% per year raise over five years is a great victory. However, locking us into that wage structure for such a long time can be dangerous because anything can happen in this economy. Further, some of these wage increases are just making up lost ground from past wage freezes. Those freezes, along with speed-up and cuts in patient care, created Kaiser's new financial "health."

The biggest problem with this contract is the illusion projected by the union, that the benefits were won because of the union's strategic partnership with management. For example, the union claims they have won a say in staffing levels. The partnership language only calls for a "joint process for staffing" wherein partnership teams shall "recommend a staffing design within allocated organizational resources." Who do you think controls allocatable resources? Management and management alone.

The reason management even felt compelled to include novel but ineffectual language on staffing and quality patient care in a service workers' contract is precisely because there has been an intense prolonged struggle over these issues by independent unions driven by their rank-and-file's everyday struggle over quality care. It is that rank-and-file activity from the

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## BLACK/RED VIEW

### 'Million Family March'

by John Alan

*The modern family ... contains in itself in miniature all the antagonisms that later develop widely in society and its state. —Karl Marx*

Last month, on the fifth anniversary of the 1995 Million Man March, Louis Farrakhan, the leader of the Nation of Islam, led the Million Family March to the Mall in Washington, D.C. Neither march reached the magic million mark. Actually the word million was self-advertisement implying that Minister Farrakhan was the great African-American leader in the vanguard of the struggle for African-American freedom in this country. To thoroughly debunk this claim and its power to disorient the movement, one should review and critically think about what happened ideologically on Washington's Mall on Oct. 16.

First, the Million Family March was far from being a protest demonstration. According to Farrakhan, who co-sponsored the March with Rev. Sun Myung Moon of the Unification Church, the march was "a day of atonement, a day of reconciliation, a day of responsibility." It was also a very well-organized event with excellent entertainment. Singers like Stevie Wonder, Macy Gray and Regina Bell were lined up to perform for the crowd.

While the obvious focus of the Million Family March would be the family, there was nothing in the reported main presentations of Farrakhan or Rev. Moon that addressed directly and concretely the real social and economic problems that the great majority of African-American and working-class families are compelled to face daily in the United States. It is even more amazing that an organized, gigantic meeting on the family did not have one major presentation by a woman.

Instead, what the Million Family March projected was a male, conservative version of the family and Farrakhan's dreadful judgement that there is an absolute moral crisis in all families. In his words: "The human family—black, brown, yellow and white—we all seem to be frozen on a subhuman level of human

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## Specter of workers' revolt haunts post-Milosevic Serbia

by Peter Hudis

The mass mobilizations which led to the overthrow of Serbia's President Slobodan Milosevic seem, on the surface, to have receded now that its new president, Vojislav Kostunica, has assumed power. Since taking office on Oct. 6 Kostunica has worked with the military and police to clear the streets; he has obtained control over government ministries for his 18-party coalition, the Democratic Opposition of Serbia (DOS); and he has pushed for new elections to the Serbian parliament, to be held Dec. 23. All this is part of his effort to turn Serbia into what he calls "a normal European society" after 13 years of rule by Milosevic.

Yet beneath the surface things are anything but normal. Dozens of factories, firms, and enterprises have been occupied by workers. Workers have thrown out their state-appointed managers and are demanding an improvement in living and working conditions. Workers' committees have taken over mines, auto plants, pharmaceutical factories, hospitals, insurance agencies and trading companies.

Though this militancy erupted during the period of mass mobilization which forced Milosevic from power, the occupations of factories and firms have actually

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## Behind the Arab-Israeli explosion

In October, seven years of negotiations since the 1993 Oslo Accords fell apart in a rain of bloodshed and recrimination, as Israeli troops continued to fire upon Palestinian civilians armed mainly with stones, along with the occasional lightly armed Palestinian policeman. By the end of the month, the toll stood at well over 100, with a more than 10-to-1 ratio of Arabs to Jews killed, and thousands injured.

The conflict broke out on Sept. 28, after Israeli Likud (conservative) leader Ariel Sharon made a provocative visit to a major Muslim religious site in East Jerusalem. Palestinians had not forgotten that, as the commander of Israel's 1982 invasion of Lebanon, Sharon had allowed his Lebanese Christian allies to massacre hundreds of Palestinian women and children at Beirut's Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. He was found guilty of this horrific war crime, not only by international opinion, but also by an official inquiry undertaken by the Israeli state itself.

Since 1967, Jews have been able to pray in East Jerusalem at the most important religious site anywhere for Judaism, the Western or Wailing Wall at the base of what they call the Temple Mount. Muslims have done so at its top portion, which they call Haram al Sharif, where there are two major Muslim sites that together are the third most important one for Islam, after those at Mecca and Medina. Sharon's visit to the top of this small hill, backed up by 1,000 Israeli police plus helicopters, was a clear attempt to assert Jewish sovereignty over these Muslim religious sites, although even he did not dare to actually enter them.

As expected, his visit outraged Muslims, who had to be kept back by police. The next day, as angry Arab youth on the Haram al Sharif stoned Jews worshipping at the Western Wall below, Israeli troops opened fire. As smoke from the fighting wafted skyward and was shown on television around the world, this gave the (incorrect) impression that the Muslim sites themselves had caught fire. Muslim demagogues around the world seized upon this, falsely accusing the Israelis of burning the third most important mosque in the entire Muslim world.

### BARAK'S INTRANSIGENCE

In the next few days, as the throwing of stones and Molotov cocktails by Palestinian youth continued, Israeli troops killed dozens of Palestinians. The rioting also spread from East Jerusalem to the other occupied territories, the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. In a particularly shocking incident, also broadcast around the world on television, Israeli forces killed a 12-year-old Palestinian boy who was seeking cover from a furious crossfire with his father, while the father begged the Israelis to cease firing.

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Barak, an avowed supporter of the peace process who until now had seemed ready to make serious concessions to the Palestinians, inflamed things still further by refusing to criticize Sharon's provocation or the actions of his own troops, blaming instead alleged "incitement" by Palestinian



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Authority leader Yasir Arafat and his colleagues.

As one Israeli peace activist wrote, "Permission to kill has become 'self-evident.' It is permissible to kill a child in the arms of his father. It is permissible to shoot missiles at demonstrators. Human life is important only when the human is not Arab" (*Haaretz*, Oct. 8).

Next, the unrest spread to Israeli citizens of Arab descent, who took to the streets of Nazareth and other towns, also to be fired upon by soldiers. The fact that these Arab citizens of Israel solidarized with the Palestinians shocked much of the Israeli Jewish public, which had seemingly forgotten the second-class status of their fellow citizens.

In the ensuing days, some of the most chilling events since the 1980s took place, which will poison Israeli-Arab relations for years to come. After Israel evacuated the dubiously named Joseph's Tomb (the supposed grave of that patriarch of 3,500 years ago), located in the middle of a Palestinian-ruled portion of the West Bank, a Palestinian mob quickly overcame a weak force of Palestinian police and destroyed much of that religious site. Soon after, a Jewish mob in Nazareth attacked Arab neighborhoods, shouting "Death to Arabs." Police did nothing to protect these Israeli citizens of Arab descent, but did kill two who were resisting the mob.

The next day, a Palestinian mob lynched two Israeli soldiers who had been captured by the Palestinian police and were being held at the town jail in Ramallah on the West Bank. This gruesome event was also televised. Barak responded with air attacks on Palestinian offices, not only in Ramallah, but also on the building in Gaza City where Arafat's own office is located.

### FANNING THE FLAMES

The Israelis continued to fan the flames. Former Prime Minister Shimon Peres, a supposed peace supporter who had been appointed special envoy to Europe, was asked by a French reporter why "there have been three Israeli deaths but 100 on the Palestinian side." He responded, "Nothing justifies throwing stones" (*Le Monde*, Oct. 13).

After nearly three weeks of bloodshed, Clinton managed to convene a meeting in Egypt attended by Arafat, Barak, and the leaders of several Arab states. A new ceasefire was declared, but it only lasted a couple of days, after which Israel once again responded to stone throwing youths with gunfire.

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# World March of Women comes to U.S.

by Anne Jaclard

**New York**—The World March of Women 2000 (WMW) culminated at the UN Oct. 17 after a year-long, massive global women's protest to demand an end to violence against women and women's poverty, and to demand equality between women and men, peace, and a redistribution of wealth. Women from 159 countries or more, in 5,000 organizations, had participated in demonstrations and gathered five million signatures in support of the demands all over the world, beginning on International Women's Day, March 8. On Oct. 17, the UN International Day for the Eradication of Poverty, 10-15,000 women from the participating countries came together to demand that UN members stop betraying their promises of peace, women's rights and economic justice.

The participants at the march and rally were exuberant, banging spoons and pots, singing and chanting together in many languages. An Angolan woman observed, "This is something that has never happened before. It shows that if women have a chance, they will make a difference."

The signature campaign saw five million women from every corner of the globe endorse the 17 WMW demands. A symbolic 300,000 signature cards were brought by bicycle brigade from the Bronx, passed from hand to hand through the demonstration in "chains of solidarity," and then presented to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. In some African countries with high rates of illiteracy, women had signed cards with their finger prints. Some women in India signed on the fabric they use to make saris. In Haiti, poor women signed pieces of the cardboard they use to build their shantytown houses. In Nepal, women signed muslin squares and pinned them to their clotheslines.

Two days before the UN demonstration, the major U.S. WMW event took place in Washington, D.C. Sponsored by the National Organization for Women (NOW), it brought out 25,000 women, and many smaller marches were held around the country at the same time. NOW's demands for the U.S. included access to birth control and abortion without restriction, end to discrimination because of sex and sexual orientation, equal pay for comparable work, respect in personal relationships and on the job, end to racism, and more.

A young New York City NOW member described the Washington event: "It was striking to see so many strong, angry young women—more women than I've ever seen together before (the large abortion demonstration had a lot of men). We marched by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund offices to say that women in particular are suffering from their policies." Those institutions' structural adjustment programs force poor countries to cut their social services and to further impoverish women.

Marches were held Oct. 15 around the world. Some 37,000 from all over Europe demonstrated in Brussels, and 30,000 came together in Canada. Another 7,000 rallied in Lisbon Oct. 7. South Korean women marched

for three days. Native American women in British Columbia rafted down the Fraser River for 18 days, stopping in towns along the way to encourage women to speak out against violence. Earlier in the year, 20,000 women agricultural workers marched on the capital of Brazil in the largest women's demonstration in its history.

## Woman as Reason

The Quebec Federation of Women ([www.ffq.qc/marche2000/](http://www.ffq.qc/marche2000/)) conceptualized the global events and coordinated the UN event. Thousands of women came from Canada to the Oct. 17 demonstration, the biggest group by far. The Cameroon delegation wore bright-colored robes they had made which bore the WMW logo and a drawing of themselves arriving in New York.

"Women are poor, hungry and dying," one woman said of her country.

Colombian women brought attention to the U.S.'s Plan Colombia, which is militarizing the whole region, killing peasants and destroying women's jobs. Sonia Pachon of Pereira told *N&L*, "In

our country there is war, not only against drugs, but against women. Women are dying of hunger. We are forced to go from the countryside to the cities, but there are no jobs. We don't want to support the war."

Never have there been so many women involved in an international campaign. The only women's gatherings even close to the Oct. 17 event in internationalism have been UN and related NGO-sponsored meetings held a few times over the past 25 years. The WMW had more explicit economic demands, and an anti-capitalist fervor akin to the past year's explosion of youth demonstrations against global capitalism, beginning with Seattle. At the same time, feminism was not downplayed relative to general economic, anti-imperialist or anti-war demands, as it has been at many recent demonstrations in the U.S. Rather, the demands voiced Oct. 17 related violence and injustice specifically to women's oppression and their struggles, and did not exclude one's own nation or culture from condemnation for sexism and heterosexism.



Susan MacKenzie/NOW

## Acehnese women struggle for self-determination

*Editor's note: Cut Nur Asikin, 45, a leading spokesperson for the Acehnese mass movement demanding a referendum to determine the status of Aceh, and Syadiah A. Marhaban, 32, an Acehnese activist based in Jakarta, recently visited the U.S. They came to educate the public about the severe repression in Aceh, to lobby the U.S. and UN to pressure the Indonesian government to cease its military violence in Aceh, and to invite governments and NGOs to send representatives to monitor events in Aceh and supply aid. Cut Nur spoke with *N&L* in October.*

A "Humanitarian Pause" in effect since June has not stopped the repression by the military and police. For years preceding the cease-fire agreement, people were shot, disappeared, tortured, raped and burned out of their homes and businesses on a daily basis. Every region of Aceh, nearly every family, has suffered as a result of the military falsely accusing people of being part of the Free Aceh Movement (GAM). The military conducts "sweeps" of villages, and if they do not find any guerrillas, they kill people anyway. They torture people by slashing their arms, bayoneting their eyes, raping women, all these things in front of the children. Now the children are adults, saying, "I want to be free." They can't wait any longer for independence.

Being tied to Java after the Dutch is a second colonization. Aceh has been part of Indonesia for 55 years, but that union was decided on by four religious leaders, not by the people themselves. Our people have suffered ever since. We lost our political and social culture and the religions of our communities. We have lived under four presidents of Indonesia, but not seen any change from one regime to the other. We were supposedly given "autonomy," then "special autonomy," then "special, special autonomy," but none of it made any difference. We're not going to wait for another promise from Gus Dur (Abdurahman Walid, the current president).

I live in the capital, Banda Aceh, and was one of five speakers at last November's demonstration of two million people in support of a referendum to determine our status. This Nov. 8, I believe we will get three million (three quarters of the whole population) turning out to express their political wishes peacefully. I am here seeking support from the international community. Women, students, all of civil society wants the referendum. The government can't stop 3 million people from demonstrating, although I just received a call from the student organization SIRA that a lot of student activists are being kidnapped and killed.

The women's movement is solidly behind the inde-

## Take back your life!

**Chicago**—Advocates for Prostituted Women and Girls along with Haymarket Center sponsored an event called, "Take Back Your Life! Recovery from the Violence of Prostitution, Domestic Violence and Drug Abuse" on Oct. 12. Over 200 Black women attended, many taking the open mike to tell their stories for the first time ever—to anyone.

The event opened with keynote speaker, Vednita Carter, executive director of Breaking Free in St. Paul, Minn., an organization that gives real aid to women struggling to get out of prostitution. Vednita, herself a survivor of prostitution, politicized the issue: The average age of entry into prostitution in this country is 14. Over 75% report that they ran away from home because they were being sexually abused. Eighty percent of the women she works with are homeless and 75% have had their children taken by the state. Prostitution, she said, is not something that women do, but is rather something that happens to women in this world—"we are set up."

Vednita said that the myths about prostitution need to be killed: that prostitution is glamorous, ("Pretty Woman" and "Indecent Exposure" are make believe!); that there's lots of money to be made; that prostitutes are bad women; that drug and alcohol addiction are the real issue instead of sexual abuse, poverty, homelessness. Until the original abuse is addressed, addiction is likely to persist. Until a woman has a place to stay, she can't stay sober or work through the abuse.

Woman after woman got up to speak. The story was always the same: I was raped at age five; it continued until I left home or was kicked out; I started doing drugs by 11, began prostituting between ages 10 and 15; and hooked up with or married a man who raped, beat, stabbed and/or shot me; and have been in and out of jail/prison.

The testimony of so many women provided a space to realize that what happened to them was not their fault, that they didn't deserve it, and that what they did to survive is an indictment of society, not of them. Sometimes you need to hear other women's stories in order to believe that like them, you are not to blame. It allows women the chance to move forward individually and poses the need for a movement.

Unfortunately in many cases the shelters and programs that brought the women to this meeting did so without telling them where they were going. They simply required them to get on the buses and vans. It was a terrible insult and act of disrespect contradicting in full the program's title: "Take Back Your Life!"

—Sonia Bergonzi

## Women Worldwide

by Mary Jo Grey

The international women's human rights organization MADRE publicly condemned Israeli military forces, Oct. 3, for the killing and wounding of more than 1,000 Palestinians, including children. They called on Israel to end all violence; comply with international human rights standards; withdraw from all occupied territories including Jerusalem, and respect Palestinian rights.

The Feminist Majority is calling for global opposition to the Taliban's efforts to take over Afghanistan's seat in the United Nations. The Taliban regime has subjected women and girls to horrific human rights violations, including death, since they took power in 1996.

Under the guise of promoting men's physical and mental health, *Men's Health* magazine presented in its September issue an eight-page misogynist "special report" ranking "male-friendly" and "anti-male" schools. The article defines "anti-male" schools as those with large women's studies departments and strong policies against sexual assault, which they claim are "rigged against men." "Male-friendly" schools have a tolerance for excessive drinking; attractive women, and a free reign for fraternities, with little attention given to classes addressing gender.

pendence movement. Women suffered especially during the 10 years of military occupation before Suharto stepped down two years ago. Even under that dictatorship, women met in small groups to talk about independence. Many activists are widows of the violence; many are survivors of rape by the military and police.

Some women are sympathetic to GAM because it is trying to protect people from abuse. GAM has trained 12,000 women in civil defense; they train for three months and then return to their villages to protect the people from attacks. Aceh has a long history of women fighters. In the 17th century, we had women generals and troops, so this doesn't seem strange to us.

I joined the civil movement two years ago and became a spokesperson for the student movement. I visit the refugee camps, to which people flee when they hear the military is coming to their town. Twenty refugee camps currently house 3,000-17,000 people each. They have no clean water, and now that humanitarian aid workers have fled the violence, they often have no food. In many areas of Aceh there are no longer schools or hospitals. I go to the refugee camps to encourage the residents not to give up hope. People treat you as a leader if you can give them spirit.

I am also a member of the Humanitarian Pause Joint Commission overseeing humanitarian assistance to Aceh during the current cease-fire between the government and the GAM. I represent GAM and other local groups on the commission. The "Pause" has hardly lessened the violence. According to the Support Committee for Human Rights in Aceh (SCHRA), from June through September the Indonesian military and national police shot dead on the spot 72 Acehnese, including 11 women and 7 children; tortured 350, including 31 children, 6 women and 5 elderly, some of whom died in detention and some of whose fates are unknown; kidnapped and tortured 146, and engaged in arson 31 times. Oct. 12, the military torched Ulee Gle, the second largest town in the district of Pidie, destroying 150 buildings and shooting one man dead.

In New York, the Acehnese community and its supporters are mourning the recent murder of Jafar Sidiq Hamzah, a prominent Acehnese human rights activist who lived here but had returned to Indonesia for the summer where he was kidnapped, tortured and killed. The International Forum for Aceh, which he founded in 1998, is continuing his work documenting and reporting human rights abuses in his homeland.

The IFA can be reached at, and donations sent to, Box 13, 511 Avenue of the Americas, New York, NY 10011, or email [acehforum@aol.com](mailto:acehforum@aol.com)



## Day laborers picket abusive agency

Chicago—Day laborers and their supporters rallied Oct. 25 outside the offices of Labor Ready, a national labor supply outfit notorious for exploiting the working poor. Having only their ability to work—in construction, delivery, manufacturing, and other hot, heavy and dirty jobs—day laborers end up usually shortchanged, sometimes injured, and powerless to complain, until now. "They are history! They are not treating us right!" declared one laborer.

Labor and community activists heard another day laborer describe how Labor Ready whittles away his paltry wage. "Labor Ready charges \$2 for transportation to the job and \$2 for transportation from the job. That's illegal. They also charge to cash your check, up to \$1.50, and they keep the change." The City of Chicago uses contract labor instead of city workers for the Taste of Chicago festival, one worker pointed out. "They are supposed to pay \$7.60 an hour, the union rate, but they only pay these people \$5 an hour minus deductions."

Money isn't the only issue, said one man. "There's no formal training when they send you to a job where you don't know what kind of equipment you'll be using." Another day laborer said he was sent to a Teamster-run site at McCormick Place to set up for a convention. "They charged me for a back support. After a day of hard work, I had a check for \$14." Often crews have



Latino day laborer denounces Labor Ready, exploiter of temporary workers.

day labor and union labor working side by side. An African-American man explained the situation at United Temps which has an office inside the Chicago Sun-Times newspaper printing plant. "Guys get the minimum wages while they work with drivers, Teamsters, who get \$25 an hour to drop off bundles. Then there are the jobs at Judge and Dolph beverage distributors. Sometimes the driver and you get to the last delivery and he's in a hurry and he leaves you behind in the suburbs. You spend everything you have to get home."

One Latino worker told the rally why he was committed to organize the day labor industry. "I had to work from four in the morning until four in the afternoon, for \$38, and then I had to be back at five in the morning the next day. They didn't send me out until 10 a.m." Pay for the temporary workers for Labor Ready and others doesn't start until they have arrived at a job.

He continued, "You can try to find another job, but most are closed to us. Agencies send us to factories making pillows, candy, magnets, all kinds of things. Hundreds come to places like this for labor, a lot of them speak only Spanish." Some 100,000 men and women every day resort to 300 labor contract agencies for work in the Chicago area.

Labor Ready and similar purveyors of "human capital" have supplied companies experiencing labor shortages because their employees are on strike. Labor Ready's not informing workers that they are being sent to struck jobs, including in the Five Star Laundry strike, is a violation of Illinois law. But the law carries no penalty. Steelworkers came from Local 977 to offer support. They are on strike at the John Gillen machine shop in nearby Cicero.

—J.O.

## 'Cos I'm free'

Much was made of Cathy Freeman, the Australian Aboriginal Olympic gold medal winner in Sydney, and how this young woman was to single-handedly bear the responsibility of placing a bandaid on a festering wound.

After her much-lauded victory in the 400 meter race, Freeman was given special permission to carry the Aboriginal flag—along with the flag of Australia—around the track during her victory lap. The same permission was not required when Marion Jones of the U.S. carried the flag of Belize in honor of her mother.

Earlier, Freeman had been criticized by the Australian press for carrying that same flag during a similar victory lap in Europe. What was the problem?

Close to 750,000 Aborigines existed in Australia prior to white settlement in the late 18th century, and more than 600,000—80%—died as a result of that settlement and expansion in what must be described as genocide.

Prime Minister Howard stated that such facts only describe a "Black view of history." In 1998, Howard's government passed legislation which disallowed common-law rights of Aboriginal peoples. That legislation compares to the 1857 decision by U.S. Supreme Court Justice Taney in the Dred Scott decision, which stated that Black people had no rights that whites needed to respect.

Over half of Australia's white population disagrees with giving some form of reparations to the Aborigines, and an almost equal number disagrees with discussions about something even simpler: an apology.

We have to frown at a country which believes that Aborigines can only assimilate if their children are removed from their families and raised by government programs and white families, like the number of Aboriginal athletes we observed with "stepparents."

We frown at these things, until someone reminds us that the U.S. brought millions of Africans to this country as slaves, and needed a Civil War to begin the move towards an even lackluster appearance of equality; and that similar acts of colonialism decimated the native people of this land.

The impact of the UN declaration against Australia holds about the same weight in Howard's conservative government, as the Amnesty International declaration which placed the United States on its list of countries cited for human rights abuses.

It is a damning indictment of a culture when the fallacy of "racial superiority" has to be dispelled on the field of athletics before a world stage by Jesse Owens or Cathy Freeman, rather than on the playing field of everyday life: in the courtrooms, in the boardrooms, in the schools.

Freeman noted that the tattoo on her shoulder—evident to all as the cameras panned as if drawn to her right arm by some unseen force—did not reflect any political message, it was simply "who she was." But one cannot escape the stark and vivid reality of what those words would mean to the Aborigines of Australia, and to all peoples of the world: that a change in the reality of race, class, and caste is needed so that a world-class runner does not have to ask permission to display and celebrate her pride in her heritage and country.

It seems that all the attention was paid to her, not because she is a great athlete or a good human being, but because she is Aboriginal, as if this feat was beyond her culture's capabilities. We would hope that the Freemans of the world, and those who have her dream, will be accepted for who they are, not what they can do, for the simple, humbly compelling reason: "Cos I'm Free."

—Robert Taliaferro

## Buhle on the AFL: Which side were they on?

The bureaucratic mentality of U.S. labor leaders, marked by the demand for total control over the membership and the ruthless destruction of any opposition, is well known. Not as well known, however, is the extent of the outright conscious betrayal by that leadership of the interests of workers both at home and abroad, which is detailed in Paul Buhle's book, *Taking Care of Business: Samuel Gompers, George Meany, Lane Kirkland and the Tragedy of American Labor* (Monthly Review Press, 1999).

Exposure of then AFL-CIO president Lane Kirkland's collusion with the U.S. government by putting the resources of the AFL-CIO at the disposal of the CIA certainly contributed to the swelling rank-and-file dissatisfaction that led to Kirkland's resignation in 1995 and replacement by John Sweeney as head of the AFL-CIO.

However, Kirkland's collaboration with the U.S. government against the interests of workers in Europe, Asia and Latin America and the organizations they had created to fight their oppressors, far from being an exception, followed the tradition set by the AFL's first president, Samuel Gompers, and followed by Kirkland's predecessor George Meany.

## Workshop Talks

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ground-up that resulted in the real contractual language on quality-care won in the landmark 1998 contract by the California Nurses Association.

At the time, the labor/management partnership undermined the rank-and-file solidarity with CNA pickets. CNA expanded their effort in a movement that included the working communities of Richmond and Oakland to stop Kaiser closures (medical red-lining). It was CNA's example that caught on.

In March 2000 registered nurses, nurses aides, lab-techs, pharmacists, and physician's assistants at Kaiser Permanente of Denver, Colo. represented by the United Commercial and Food Workers' Union won key provisions for quality care and a contractual obligation not to use sub-contractors even during labor shortages. The quality care provision was modeled after the 1998 victory by the CNA.

Rank-and-filers' taking ownership of the patient care issue is the underlying source for many new health-care work actions such the current strikes against Catholic Health Care West and Sutter in the Bay Area.

The irony is that the AFL-CIO's new partnership slogan, "Working Together Works!," used to be our slogan for a genuine partnership between all the unions (including CNA) against management. No amount of accommodationist rhetoric like this nor nationally consolidated agreements emerging out of this labor/management partnership can deny the objectivity of the fundamental conflict: the drive by managed care to restructure and ration healthcare, based on capital's needs, is opposed by the ongoing rank-and-file opposition on the shop floor in order to regain control of our labor.

## Frameup: it's the law

Memphis, Tenn.—I've been framed for a crime I didn't commit—I mean convicted on air. (See May N&L on the frame-up of this Black former deputy jailer on drug charges after testifying against Shelby County Sheriff's Department officers for the racist beating of prisoners.)

A confidential informant for the Sheriff's Department filed a federal lawsuit claiming that in 1991, while he was in Shelby County jail, high-ranking Shelby County officials took him out of the jail to my house and other Black deputy jailers' houses to plant drugs in our cars. He had my Social Security number and said he knew everything about me.

His lawsuit claims that the Sheriff's Department utilized him to steal cars for them while he was an inmate. He specifically named Deputy Billy Talley, who's in the penitentiary now for conspiracy to commit murder.

The lawsuit says that when the informant told Talley he wanted to stop stealing cars, Talley threatened to send him to the pen for 20 years. When the informant got arrested by Memphis Police, he told the investigator that he was tired of stealing cars and somebody needed to investigate the Sheriff's Department. He turned over information about Talley to the FBI, and Talley was convicted of trying to have him killed.

The Sheriff's Department and the news agencies are trying to keep his lawsuit quiet because it names some high-ranking officials in the Department. It proves that I've been framed, but it's so corrupt down here that I can't get anybody in Memphis to even write about it because they are so politically connected. Now the informant has been rearrested on false charges. He's a diabetic and he's afraid the medicine they give him in jail will be poisoned.

There are some more guys framed who are supposed to have a trial. They're not going to have it. The confidential informant in that trial was let out of jail. He won't be there. Their case has been going on four years now. The news stations here are really reluctant to investigate. I've been fighting, I'm trying to expose this corruption.

—Earley Story

Gompers, a socialist in his youth, underwent a total transformation into opposite in his climb to the leadership of the AFL in 1886 and afterward. He set the practices of accommodation to American business interests, collaboration with the Democratic Party, support of U.S. wars, and narrow exclusionary craft union jurisdictions. His opposition to independent political action and industrial organization led to the crushing of all opposition, especially from the left.

The reward for such accommodations was renewed offensives against labor. Anti-labor red squads and court injunctions led strikebreaking after World War I. The Taft-Hartley Labor Act after World War II, which is still on the books, can destroy the organized labor movement. The government and corporations obviously understand the class struggle and the need for capital's dictatorial control over workers much more profoundly than the so-called labor leaders.

Eminent Cold Warrior Meany deepened the leadership's regression from 1952 on with the sweeping purge of leftists and other opposition from the unions using the FBI, HUAC, police red squad files and a willing press. He so passionately supported the war in Vietnam that he ordered New York's construction workers (hard hats) to attack anti-war demonstrators in the streets. Meanwhile, corruption flourished, membership plummeted and the leaders lived sumptuous lives as their salaries skyrocketed and workers' living standards declined.

Buhle attributes the growth of the UMWA after its near collapse in 1929 to national legislation under Roosevelt. In fact John L. Lewis, in 1931, threw the union's entire treasury into an organizing drive that inspired rank-and-file miners to walk the railroads to organize non-union miners, swelling both the membership and treasury—both of which were used to organize the CIO.

Buhle concludes that there is hope for a U.S. labor revival under AFL-CIO leader Sweeney if policies of inclusion and militant action are developed and implemented that match the inclusionary vision and practices of the Knights of Labor after the Civil War, the IWW (Wobblies) at the turn of the century and the CIO in its early organizing days. As Buhle's own narrative clearly reveals, however, the overriding need for labor is not only inclusionary militant action, but more importantly a revolutionary philosophy to give its action direction to not only totally uproot and transform society, but also to assure no regression after the conquest of power.

—Andy Phillips

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### Editor's note

As the 1960s "Freedom Now!" struggles against racism and segregation continued into the 1970s fights against discrimination in hiring and union representation, union bureaucrats and even left labor activists limited the given choices to either supporting Black and women workers' rights or supporting seniority rights. Raya Dunayevskaya, in a letter to autoworker and colleague Felix Martin in 1975, posed a more total view of the issue of seniority in relationship to liberation.

This letter is part of a new pamphlet by *News & Letters* which contains writings by Felix Martin (Isaac Woods), columnist and Labor Editor of *News & Letters* for 27 years until his death last year. It represents a lifetime of work, revolt, and thinking as well as *News & Letters'* uniqueness as a newspaper uniting workers and intellectuals. To order a copy, see the ad on this page.

The letter has been prepared for publication here and will be included in the *Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*.

July 25, 1975

Dear Isaac,  
Permit me to say a few historic-philosophic things on the question of seniority precisely at the time we have no definitive position on the question because...not only must all aspects be considered as a totality, but also there is then greater objectivity than at a point when one "must" take a position.

Marx, from the very start of being a revolutionary, declared, "The proletariat is revolutionary, or nothing." He said so not only because he was so set on spontaneity and what he called "the self-organization of the proletariat," but because, again from the very beginning, he considered the proletariat not only as revolutionary force, but as Reason. Thus in the 1844 Silesian weavers' strike—as against Lassalle and all other socialists, communists, Left Hegelians, and whatnot that were opposing Prussia, but who called for themselves, the intellectuals, to be elected to parliament and speak "for" workers and thus both avoid their "anarchy" and rioting and breaking up machines and other "backward" features—Marx insisted that they, those poor, supposedly backward masses, were in advance of the great 1789–1793 French Revolution.

He said so because (1) "the reason of these poor Germans were in inverse ratio to poor Germany." In a word, whereas "poor Germany," though they had reached the height of philosophy with Hegel, were only talking of dialectics, change, transcendence, the "poor German masses" were acting, doing it. (2) It may not be good to break up machines—and workers will surely learn otherwise once they see machinery helping them produce instead of throwing them out of work—but in action, that is in fact, machines do "represent" the bourgeoisie and all "truth is concrete." (3) And, moreover, they are nowhere backward as compared to the intellectuals. For...they found the deeds to the machines and made a bonfire of these.

So they are not just against machinery but private property, and even the French Revolution had not gone that far in overthrowing feudalism; private property remained, only this time belonging not to the lords, but to the capitalists, whereupon the opposition between haves and have-nots had grown to open contradiction, [that of] capitalists/workers, with this overwhelming

# Practicing proletarian Reason On seniority and labor's emancipation

advantage: the have-nots are now united by the very method of production with hundreds, thousands in a single factory—the revolutionary force, the gravediggers of this society which "produces" them.

By the time Marx was involved, first in actual revolutions—1848—and in all sorts of daily activities—unions, women's struggles, against child labor, national struggles be it in Poland or by slaves for freedom in USA—just as class struggle was the first and remaining major contradiction, the concrete now became internationalism. The International Workingmen's Association was established against blacklegging [scabbing], against slavery, against Tsarism in Poland especially, and against Bonapartism in France, but the overwhelming majority were Eng-

lish trade unionists. Yet the minute the Paris Commune burst forth—and many British trade unionists said they joined for international labor solidarity, not for proletarian revolution—he hesitated not one moment to discount their membership, and placed [ahead of them the] Paris Communards who never had belonged to the IWA.

Not only that—and this is most applicable to our day on the question of seniority vs. affirmative action and visa versa—just as in the 1850s after defeats of proletarian revolutions of 1848 and "bourgeoisification" of the proletariat in Great Britain because it was the empire then and Marx demanded "going lower and deeper," so in 1871, when trade unions said they were the masses and IWA was small, Marx concretized that "going deeper and lower" as the International appealing to the masses, whom the trade unions didn't know how to touch: unskilled workers, East side of London Jewish ghettos, peasants newly arrived in cities, women.

None in the Second International, even when it was still revolutionary and all Marxists belonged to it, grasped that "lower and deeper." The only one who organized the unskilled and women before [there was] the Second International was Marx's daughter Eleanor, and precisely where Marx pointed to—East London gas workers and women. It took nothing short of outright betrayal in 1914 before ever Lenin "discovered" "going lower and deeper," though he must have read [Marx] dozens of times before...

When he did "discover" [this he] said, "Never again with the Second International." *State and Revolution* came next, but when the Russian Revolution of 1917 did succeed, what happened to the trade unions?

Because there was no national trade union in Russia before 1917, three different organizations arose spontaneously: trade unions became national, but meanwhile shop committees at the point of production, and soviets were organized. Three different focal points were too much, but when Lenin started out for "single" rule, it was not at all what anarchists claim, that it was either political or trade union monolithism, but [rather] workers must chose one. Yet at once arose both the "right"—Trotsky insisting that trade unions be incorporated into state "since it was a workers' state already"—and the "left"—not only anarchists, but Bolshevik Shlyapnikov saying there should be no political party, calling for a "workers' congress." That sounded

great except if you looked at Kronstadt which broke out at once, not to mention world capitalism and the remaining White Guards in Russia. In any case...Lenin insisted the only [way] the workers' state can be sure of remaining is if workers have the right to criticize, and if they are permitted other forms of organization, and if they are not incorporated into the state.

When we get to the American scene in the 1920s, we find that we Bolsheviks couldn't for the life of us see that either the damned American Federation of Labor would ever organize the Blacks would be permitted

Felix Martin, left, and Charles Denby, *News & Letters* Editor.

in anywhere. So we organized the American Negro Labor Congress, the Trade Union Educational League, women workers in isolated places but especially garment and textiles. But after many years of struggle and failures, from below did arise the Congress of Industrial Organizations. By "from below" I do not mean out of nowhere because we certainly were there too, but from within and outside at one and the same time...

Presently, both Blacks and women find they have very little chance of getting in, not only because of labor bureaucracy, but, most tragically, the rank and file likewise do not recognize any value in "affirmative action." Believe me, no one in the movement is unaware of how long it took to get seniority, nor its absolute indispensability as against the boss who can otherwise fight at will. At the same time we cannot use just the past and old arguments since the opponents this time are not bosses but "lower and deeper layers." We also know the bosses would nevertheless use that against workers, even as they use the Equal Rights Amendment against working women who fought hard to win the rights. But here, too, we always defend the gains and demand proletarian women be consulted for working out any ERA on the basis of men too gaining the rights, not on basis of giving up rights. With seniority, instead of at once running to a "conclusion" and line, let's keep all avenues open, maintain dialogue with those excluded, or more precisely first hired, first fired.

AND ABOVE ALL, SEE THAT IT IS NOT ONLY LEFT IN THE TRADE UNION FIELD BUT THAT WE ACTUALLY PRACTICE PROLETARIAT AS REASON AS WELL AS FORCE...

Yours,  
Raya

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# ESSAY The subjectivity of philosophy and anti-capitalism

by David Black

Until the 1990s, socialist politics in the West had long been distorted in the Cold War's wilderness of ideological mirrors. The perspective that the Soviet Empire was somehow historically "progressive" in comparison with the "West" (it wasn't), competed with Social Democracy's notion that it could abolish capitalism gradually through bourgeois parliamentarianism (it couldn't and no longer even pretends to try). With Stalinism and Social Democracy now out of the picture for any meaningful rethinking of socialism, the Trotskyists have plodded on as best they can, continuing to blame the victories of Thatcher/Reaganism and the Clinton/Blair Third Way on a "crisis of leadership" in the "traditional" organizations of the working class.

Other leftists have rejected class politics altogether. Whilst the "anti-capitalist" protests in Seattle, Washington, D.C. and London over the last year have included sections of organized labor, there are many activists (especially within the anarcho-green and "Third Worldist" spectrum) who see the "traditional" organizations, such as unions and socialist parties, as irrelevant to their struggles if not as pillars of the rule of capitalist "productivism." Moishe Postone says in *Time, Labor, and Social Domination* that because the proletariat is tied to "the form of labor that constitutes and is constituted by structures of alienation," then capital cannot be opposed from the proletarian standpoint.

## CAPITAL, REVOLT, MARX-HEGEL

Postone is one of a growing number of radical theoreticians who believe that critical engagement with Marx's *Capital* must also tackle the question of how Hegel's idealist dialectic relates to Marx's critique. Postone says that "Whereas Hegel's Subject is transhistorical and knowing, in Marx's analysis it is historically determinate and blind." This "historical Subject" is, in Postone's analysis, capital; which, unlike "Hegel's *Geist*," does "not possess self-consciousness." Therefore, the notion of a "self-grounding" and "self-moving" Subject must, in Postone's view, be distinguished from the "sociohistorical Subject" in Marx's analysis.

Marx criticized Hegel for subjectivizing an abstraction of self-consciousness rather than real humanity; and as Peter Hudis points out:

"It should not be hard to see that this inversion of subject and object in Hegel mirrors one of the perverse features of capitalism....the product of our activity takes on a life of its own and shapes our lives according to its dictates. Subjective laboring activity becomes a mere means for the self-expansion of capital."<sup>1</sup>

But, as Hudis points out, because capital appears now more than ever as an absolutizing force of domination and destruction (and "ultimately uncontrollable" according to István Mészáros in *Beyond Capital*), theorists tend to see in Hegel's concept of the Absolute Idea an expression of capitalism's insane logic; in which, as Mészáros sees it, we are seemingly held under the "tyrannical spell of the World Spirit."

Whereas Postone sees "capital, as analyzed by Marx [a]s a form of social life with metaphysical attributes—those of the absolute subject," Hudis counters that "this implies the rejection, not just of the proletariat, but also the subjectivity of philosophy."<sup>2</sup>

I have taken the Postone debate as a starting point in defending the subjectivity of philosophy because, whether Hegel's concept of the absolute is seen as representing a "totalizing" monster or as a "new beginning," the issues involved are clearly important. Postone's book, like Mészáros' *Beyond Capital*, has had some impact within activist circles in recent years (though Mészáros' analysis, it should be said, does not share Postone's dismissal of organized labor). Bearing in mind that Marx at one point says that Hegel philosophizes "from the standpoint of modern political economy," I will draw out some important developments in Hegel scholarship which may help to show how Hegel's "absolute negativity" might relate to a philosophy of revolutionary anti-capitalism.

For many Hegel commentators, beginning with Schelling who was his contemporary, Hegel appears to be trying to show how the Idea, as a metaphysical abstraction, itself "creates" objectivity in a theological sense; as if the material world was only the self-reflection of the Idea; and as if the philosopher himself was some sort of guardian of pure philosophic form.

For some critics, such as the logical positivist Karl Popper, Hegel offers a metaphysical idealism drawn from Plato's earlier version. In Plato's cosmology, the relationship of the Idea to Nature is determined by a "demiurge" who makes the world out of primordial chaos; an external determination of the same order as the "divine" philosophic "guardians" who impose their pure forms and eternal truths on Plato's ideal republic. Indeed, it seems hardly an accident that the three sections of Hegel's *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences* correspond with Plato's main works (the *Parmenides* is concerned with Logic, the *Timaeus* with Nature, and the *Republic* with Mind).<sup>3</sup>

With Hegel's approach however, the relationship between Idea and Nature is quite different from all idealist philosophers, from Plato to Kant, for whom form is hidden from and opposed to particularity. In Hegel's dialectic, the universality, formulated as social-consciousness, is, as Mészáros puts it in *Marx's Theory of Alienation*, inherent in the "dynamically evolving particularity." As Hegel expresses it, the whole and the parts condition each other and are equal to each other, but the whole "is not equal to them as a parts, the whole is reflected unity," which means, in Raya Dunayevskaya's interpretation, that "the whole is not only the sum total of the parts, but has a pull on the parts that are not yet there."<sup>4</sup>

In Hegel's *Phenomenology of Mind* (1807), the subject of "absolute knowing" experiences the "certainty" of objectivity and the substantiality of subjectivity. Dunayevskaya comments that Hegel is thus able to "proceed to treat both knowledge and reality in the form of categories [in the *Science of Logic*] because they do include historical reality, present reality, as well as the long road of thought about it."<sup>5</sup>

The *Phenomenology* culminates in Absolute Knowledge/Absolute Knowing. In one of the most influential commentaries on the *Phenomenology*, Alexandre Kojève, the French existentialist, says in *Introduction to the Reading of Hegel*, that Hegel's Absolute Knowledge is the arrival of a present that is aware of progress in relation to the past. In this science of the way in which knowledge "appears," human progress is seen to be mediated by a knowledge which is at the same time "comprehending memory" and internalizing "recollection," and the "Golgotha" of Absolute Spirit. But the end is also a beginning of another science in which Hegel leaves behind the temporal concerns of the *Phenomenology* for the science of "pure thought" (the *Logic*). Hegel's *Smaller Logic* forms the first of his three-part *Encyclopedia of the Philosophical Sciences*.

The second part, *The Philosophy of Nature*, follows after the *Logic* and deals with chemistry, geology, botany, zoology and anthropology—all as understood in the empirical sciences of his day. Nature here is portrayed as the "Other" of the Idea, but at the same time Hegel sees Nature as representing the Idea's essential freedom. John Burbidge points out that in Hegel's larger work on logic, the *Science of Logic*, the discussion of the organic existence of "life" is concerned with the teleological development of a thinking subject. This

subject, presented in a syllogistic form, is a living individual, motivated by "feeling," who overcomes particular obstacles to his or her concept of "purpose" and then achieves a measure of universality.<sup>6</sup>

Within Hegel's "system," the self-determined idea of the Logic, once unfolded, "freely releases" Nature—as understood in all its diversity and objectivity. But in Nature, the logical does not itself generate the sequential categories; for subjectivity only comes at the end, in the concept of the telos.

Dieter Wandschneider suggests that, although Hegel's concept of nature doesn't represent an intuition of the now established fact of natural evolution, what does emerge at the end of his *Philosophy of Nature* is nonetheless the concept of "a being capable of thought." Wandschneider sees the relationship between Logic, Nature and Mind in Hegel's dialectic as working itself out through the mediation of "idealized nature or naturalized idea" in the form of "culture realized in a physical world."<sup>7</sup>

Burbidge, commenting on Popper's assertion that Hegel's dialectic was an attempt to "draw real physical rabbits out of purely metaphysical hats," points out that "a rabbit has its own independent life before the magician went on stage." Furthermore, "Hegel's magic comes not from producing something out of nothing, but from detailed reflection on the way the brute facts of existence acquire significance and meaning, even as our sense of meaning and significance organizes the way we read the facts of experience."

## ABSOLUTE NEGATIVITY

Hegel could only transcend the limits of his age in an abstract manner; to do more would mean going beyond philosophy. Or as Marx put it, it would mean going beyond "interpretation" of the world—the world in which reigns the split between mental and manual labor through the social division of labor in a class-divided society.

For Dunayevskaya, because Hegel's absolutes end up being permeated with "absolute negativity," he remains relevant to the dialectic of labor and capital and Marx's concept of the "revolution in permanence."

In Volume 1 of *Capital*, in the chapter on "the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation," Marx writes that capital, which cannot produce wealth without producing poverty, eventually "begets its own negation," the organized working class. In Dunayevskaya's view, "free creative power assures the plunge to freedom" as the "unifying force," and "since absolute negativity, the new foundation, is not 'something merely picked up, but something deduced and proved,' this subjective couldn't but be objective, so much so that it extends to the *system itself*" as it becomes richer and more concrete.<sup>8</sup>

Self-realization as self-determined movement must also extend to the Universal. As Hegel puts it in the *Phenomenology*:

"The object as a whole is the mediated result (the syllogism) or the passing of universality into individuality through specification, also the reverse process from the individual, to universal through canceled individuality or specific determination."<sup>9</sup>

If new dimensions of the "Quest for Universality" (to use Marx's phrase)—Black, Feminist, Gay, "Green"—are to redefine the notion of "socialism," then Hegel's absolute negativity can be articulated as negation within the movement from practice of external obstacles to freedom which were themselves negations of earlier obstacles and as negation of internal barriers to new developments of subjectivity.

## NOTES

1. Peter Hudis, "Raya Dunayevskaya's Concretization of Hegel's Concept of 'Absolute Negativity,'" paper delivered at Socialist Scholars' Conference, New York, 1999.
2. Peter Hudis, "Is Marx's critique of capitalism still valid?" *News and Letters*, January-February 1995.
3. Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, vol. 2, p. 49. See Gary K. Browning, "Transitions to and from Nature in Hegel and Plato," in "Hegel's Metaphysics of Nature," *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, No. 26, 1992.
4. Raya Dunayevskaya, "Rough Notes on Hegel's *Science of Logic*," Part 3, Doctrine of Essence, *News & Letters*, April 1999. See also *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, 2806.
5. Raya Dunayevskaya, "Rough Notes on Hegel's *Science of Logic*," Part 1, Introduction and Preface, *News & Letters*, January-February 1999.
6. John W. Burbidge "Hegel's Hat Trick," *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain*, No. 39/40, 1999.
7. D. Wandschneider, "Nature and Dialectic of Nature in Hegel's Objective Idealism," *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Britain*, No. 39/40, 1999.
8. Raya Dunayevskaya, "Hegel's Absolute as New Beginning," *Art and Logic in Hegel's Philosophy*, (Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1974); also in *News Essays* (Detroit: News & Letters, 1977).
9. Raya Dunayevskaya, "Letter of May 12, 1953," *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism* (Chicago: News & Letters, 1989).



Anti-globalization protesters in Seattle last year.

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## ISRAELIS AND PALESTINIANS

I hope you will reprint Raya Dunayevskaya's 1976 Political-Philosophic Letter on "The UN Resolution on Zionism, and Ideological Obfuscation also on the Left." It will help provide ground for opposing the tragic degeneration of Palestinian-Israeli relations today.

In the letter Dunayevskaya shows: 1) how all leaders have rushed to whip up Palestinian-Israeli hatred in order to derail the development of any bi-national solidarity; 2) how, ever since World War II Arab leaders have turned upon the Palestinian masses when it suited their aims, as in bloody wars and massacres such as Lebanon 1976; 3) how the U.S. pays only lip service to democracy and freedom but has no intention of giving up its power in the oil-rich region; 4) perhaps most important, what has been mostly lost to history—that there was a movement by both Jewish and Arab socialists, as the State of Israel was forming in the late 1940s, to create a truly bi-national state. They were defeated by the predecessors of Ariel Sharon and his vicious Jewish chauvinism. Just the idea that Israel was never divided solely by nationality opens up a vision of a human-based, rather than a class-based state-capitalist Israel.

Susan Van Gelder  
Detroit

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Several emails have been circulating with similar claims—that the Arabs have no right to this territory, that there is no such thing as Palestinians, and that Jerusalem is not a sacred site to Muslims and to Jews. It's true that Palestine did not exist as a separate entity before 1948; neither did Israel between 70 A.D. and 1948. Both, however, exist today and we must contend with the need to reconcile the existence of both. As for Jerusalem, while it may not have been sacred to Muslims centuries ago, it is clearly sacred to them today. The parallel is also true for Jews. Jerusalem was sacred to them only as a religious symbol, but not as a national-political entity until recent years. Jerusalem was never part of the Zionist dream. Its importance as a political entity was revived after 1948, but not fully exalted until fewer than 30 years ago with the rise of the Gush Emunim settlers movement.

History is an excellent teacher about what mistakes not to repeat, but not that helpful in resolving the issues of historical rights in this part of the world. More important is the need to deal with current realities. A clear-eyed conclusion has to be that both nations have a passionate stake in this area and that the fate of both are intertwined.

Gila Svirsky  
Jerusalem

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While I do not think it is usually helpful to assign blame, my concern is that Barak believes, as he said in an interview, that "all the world now sees" that Israel is behaving morally. He said this in the context of the so-called "limited" shelling of the occupied territories, which he believes sent a positive (sic!) message internationally as well as domestically.

Peace activist  
Jerusalem

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Yesterday there was a lynching in Ramallah, perpetrated by a Palestinian mob upon Israelis and costing two lives.

Anybody living in the Old South of America would have recognized it as a lynching. Four days ago there was a pogrom in Nazareth, perpetrated by a Jewish mob upon Arabs and costing two lives. Anybody living in Czarist Russia would have recognized it as such.

Among both Israelis and Palestinians there is now an enormous hatred built up over a long period despite the years of an official peace process which dismally failed in building up any real confidence or trust.

So much for the similarities and symmetry. So much and no further. For Israelis and Palestinians are two manifestly unequal entities. There is a weak side and an enormously stronger one, oppressor and oppressed. And there is an occupation which manifests itself in land confiscation and settlement extension, house demolitions; and humiliating searches at checkpoints. It is the occupation which breeds the hatred and the conflict. We are all victims of the occupation. There is no assurance that the hatred will automatically disappear with the end of the occupation; but we can be certain that continuation of the occupation will lead to increase of the hatred.

Adam Keller  
Israel

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Neither side is right because neither one is trying to overthrow capitalism. What is happening in the Middle East has taken other forms in other places and times—whether we look at Northern Ireland, or Tibet and China, or Indonesia and Aceh, or Chechnya and Russia. Overthrowing capitalism is the "answer" everywhere, but that has not proved easy to do anywhere.

Anti-capitalist  
Detroit



SLAVERY  
AND THE  
PRISON  
SYSTEM

A study cited in the October 2000 issue of *Scientific American* links the relatively high homicide rate in the U.S. to the social behavior rules established by slavery, when the "honor" system demanded that the most trivial slights to whites by Blacks be answered immediately with physical force. The whites' virtual immunity from prosecution in cases of homicides resulting from quarrels over "honor" reinforced their disrespect for laws. The social dynamic in U.S. prisons, the unreasonable violence used by mostly white guards against primarily prisoners of color for very minor "offenses" and the virtual immunity from prosecution that guards experience for anything they do to prisoners, re-creates slavery in modern terms.

Prisoner solidarity activist  
California

## POOR PEOPLES SUMMIT

Poor people from around the world will converge in New York from Nov. 15-18 for the first-ever World People's Summit to End Poverty. It is being hosted by the Kensington Welfare Rights Union, a grassroots organization based in the poorest district in the state of

## READERS' VIEWS

Pennsylvania and led by poor people. Groups from Detroit, Mich., Minneapolis, Minn., and Oakland, California as well as Bangladesh, Pakistan, Sierra Leone, Cameroon, Latin America and many other countries and cities will attend. The daily press keeps reporting that we are enjoying an "economic boom" in this country, but we want to know for whom? Despite growing profit margins for the world's wealthiest individuals, basic survival is becoming increasingly difficult for the poor in the U.S. and conditions have worsened internationally. The Summit will bring together organized poor from the U.S. and the rest of the world to share lessons and histories of their respective movements and provide a forum for poor people to communicate directly with each other.

KWRU  
Philadelphia

## EXPLOITING THE CHILDREN

At the expense of Michigan's children, politicians continue to exploit education here. We now hear the state is suppressing a report (completed in July) on the quality of charter schools until after the election. A proposal on the state ballot would authorize vouchers for non-public schools. Unfortunately, the public systems are so bureaucratized and inadequate that desperate parents see vouchers as a solution.

Outraged Grandmother  
Detroit

## ECUADOR IN CRISIS

It is hardly news that Ecuador remains in crisis. The "dollarization" program is in full force (officially the old sucres are no longer negotiable, but the government has minted coins, widely in circulation, that are equivalent to the U.S. coinage). To me this indicates that what we have is not true "dollarization" but a sign that the government has no faith in its own strategy. I suppose it is only a matter of time before the government will be printing "Ecuadorian" dollar bills. Meanwhile it is no surprise that in switching from sucres to dollars, the big corporations have taken advantage to increase their actual prices.

Correspondent  
Ecuador

PHILOSOPHIC DIALOGUE—  
A CORRECTION

An important paragraph was inexplicably dropped from my contribution to the "Philosophic Dialogue" in the October issue. It was in the section on "Mind Objective" in the *Philosophy of Mind*: "Here Hegel posits '...the attitude which self-consciousness takes to the body of truth. So long as this body of truth is the very substance or indwelling spirit of self-consciousness in its actuality, then self-consciousness has the certainty of itself and is free'...It is also important here to see the way in which Hegel (par. #552) contrasts this to what he has called 'externality,' or that which is in 'rigid opposition to self-conscious spirit' and which 'binds the spirit under an externalism by which the very meaning of spirit is perverted and misconceived at its source, and law and justice, morality and conscience, responsibility and duty are corrupted at their root.' I'm sorry the editor left this out, as without the body of ideas or truth one can fall prey to anti-organizational practices or, perhaps, the wiles of the artificer-spirit.

Gerard Emmett  
Chicago

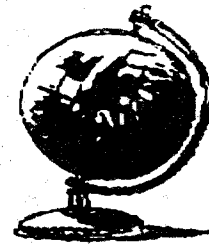
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Gerard Emmett moved freely in his essay in the October issue in several different contexts in Hegel, Marx and Dunayevskaya in order to ask some important questions. He makes a relationship between the end of the *Phenomenology* and the end of *Philosophy of Mind*, where Hegel revisits absolute spirit and the eternal Idea. Gerard says you do seem to see the "organization" Hegel presented at the end of the *Phenomenology* again at the end of *Philoso-*

*phy of Mind*. The whole piece could have been just on that affinity. That would have given the discussion a much needed form.

Marxist Hegelian  
Bay Area, Cal.

INREACH  
TO N&L  
FROM  
AROUND  
THE  
WORLD



I find your journal a stimulating publication. Its most distinguished feature is its independent attitude toward international issues, in a world where everything is biased. Please try to reveal more about what has happened to the depressed people of Palestine.

Reader  
Iran

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Your books are full and informative and really portray the situation of women in particular. It was moving to read of the plight of women prisoners. I shared the books you sent at my workplace and many have asked to read them. Can you send me a few more to share with those who are learning to read and understand the ideas you are spreading?

Teenage activist  
Zimbabwe

\*\*\*

We have a small discussion group concerned about democracy and a socialist environment. We are planning a small library to specialize in "left" reading materials. Any materials you could contribute to our socialist mini-library would be greatly welcomed.

Student  
Indonesia

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We represent a revolutionary Marxist group of workers and students from Kiev who have a good relationship with the worker movement representatives from other regions of Ukraine. For a long time we had been working in isolation from the world workers' movement. We feel it is necessary to raise the fight for the clearness of proletarian internationalism and a revolutionary Marxist program. We feel the Ukrainian working class needs information about the struggles in different parts of the world and would like to be acquainted with your documents and political program.

Ukrainian Workers Group  
Kiev

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Your paper makes it possible for people to interact and learn from your articles and from each other. I'd like to write for you about subjects such as refugees, the situation in Holland and important events in the Middle East. I am a critic of traditional Marxism-Leninism. I'd also like to send you a list of public libraries in Holland's big cities for you to send N&L.

Refugee  
Holland

## A GEM

Here's a gem I came across in a now discontinued Newsletter called *Trauma and Illness*: In 1997, the six governments which executed the greatest number of people per capita were China, Iran, Iraq, Nigeria, Florida and Texas. (Jeb Bush and George W. were the respective governors of Florida and Texas, of course.)

American exile  
Ecuador

## AN ANNOUNCEMENT TO OUR READERS

We draw your attention to some changes in *News & Letters*. John Alan's "Black/Red View" column will appear on page 1 beginning with this issue, in place of Lou Turner's "Black World" column. We also ask you to join us in welcoming a new worker-writer for our "Workshop Talks" column, Htun Lin, whose articles have appeared on the labor page for several years and whose essay on health care in the October 1999 issue won considerable acclaim from our readers.

These changes result from the resignation of several members over various differences that have arisen within our committees on a number of points, the most recent being differences over our principled position on self-determination for the people of Bosnia and Kosovo. Readers will remember our open airing of this debate through publication of letters of dissent together with our rebuttals; all

readers can get our full revolutionary analysis, which has been published in two pamphlets: *Bosnia-Herzegovina: Achilles Heel of Western 'Civilization'*, published in 1996, and *Kosovo: Writings from News & Letters*, published in January 2000. (See box on page 7 to order.) Our lead in this issue on the current situation in Serbia continues this analysis.

We want to assure our friends and subscribers that we will continue to carry out the decisions made at our convention over Labor Day weekend, which had unanimously approved the Marxist-Humanist Perspectives we published as a draft in our July issue, copies of which can be obtained for 55¢ postage by writing to us at 36 S. Wabash, Chicago, IL 60603, or by visiting [www.newsandletters.org](http://www.newsandletters.org) on the internet.

The National Editorial Board,  
News and Letters Committees

Readers ...  
WHY NOT  
INTRODUCE N&L  
TO YOUR FRIENDS?





Your article on the presidential race and capitalism (October *N&L*) pointed to a number of ways we see capital ruling openly today. Here are a few more we can add to the list: We see it in the explosive trend to monopolistic mergers and buy-outs today like Chase Manhattan Bank taking over J.P. Morgan. We see it in treaties like NAFTA and other trade agreements with countries throughout the world, especially China, that will depress U.S. workers' wages through the importing of cheaper goods made abroad. We see it in the proposed immigration bill supported by both Democrats and Republicans to permit 300,000 to come to the U.S. to fill high-tech jobs which will result in cutting wages and speeding-up production even further. I'm glad Andy Phillips' article also pointed to the ways the massive power of capital is not going unchallenged today.

**Longtime reader  
Chicago**

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The disgust with the emptiness of both presidential candidates, Gore and Bush—and their allegiance to corporate masters, as pointed out in the October *N&L* Lead—may have lulled a lot of us into thinking that they only represent more of the same of what we have now. We had better not forget the danger of creeping fascism, as it is being cultivated by the Christian Right as a stealth component of the Bush campaign.

**Worried  
Memphis**

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Mexico recently had a presidential election where the PRI which had been the ruling party for more than 70 years lost to Vicente Fox running on a populist platform. When the Mexican presidential debates were held, all six candidates participated. I suggest it's time to follow Mexico's lead and take back the debates from the corporations that are sponsoring them and the two-party lock-out system that is actively suppressing alternative political voices.

**Nader supporter  
Illinois**

One measure of how far back we have moved is the notion that Ralph Nader is a radical alternative to the Democrats and Republicans. In the 1960s and '70s people may have appreciated his expose of the car companies, but who in the radical movement then would ever have mistaken this consumer advocate for a radical?

**Puzzled  
Tennessee**

\*\*\*

In the most widely read book in the world there is a short passage that warns all to be aware that "the love of money is the root of all evil." It follows that this same love of money is at the root of the prison industrial complex, therefore it has been entirely designed with evil (profit) in mind. If we dig deeper yet we eventually find this evil motivation carries yet another label—capitalism. The same book warns against usury (interest). Let the reader beware. To stand idly by is to become a party to the continuing evil. We need to get off our duffs and act.

**Prisoner  
Texas**

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I support Oceanographer, Hawaii (October *N&L*, "Readers' Views") on the nature of science under capital. Explanations, science proper, are frequently reductionist, perhaps influenced by the domination of mathematics and physics by the military-industrial complex. Technology is even more obviously dominated by the military-industrial and the medical-pharmaceutical complexes, with all the anti-social aspects that involves.

**R.F. Price  
Australia**

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Marx symbolizes difficult change, and a type of perseverance which requires determination and a rejection of current conditions of society. The anti-globalization movement has thrown some Marxian discontent into the happy consumer society, and drawn attention to the fact of widespread misery and poverty. The more uncomfortable citizens feel about their place in an economically-imperialistic society, and in a world dominated by the corporate agenda for profit over people and the environment, the more citi-

zens will be open to the type of uncomfortable critique Marx poses of that society.

**A.H.  
Cyberspace**

**HARDLINER OR MORE?**

It was interesting to see the way Gus Hall's passing was covered in the bourgeois press. I saw the old Stalinist at a large meeting of Communist Party members in the mid-90s. He spoke of how the bourgeois press "lied" about famine in North Korea. He said he had been at a banquet with the CP leaders there and the table actually groaned with food! Furthermore, Gus told us that "Science has proven that there are billions of inhabited planets in the universe, and on none of them do they allow capitalism to exist. What we need is an interplanetary brigade to civilize the planet earth!"

He was called a "hardliner" in the obituaries. In truth, he was much more—a gourmand among the starving, a cosmic neo-colonialist, and a tragic clown.

**Fred  
Chicago**

**DIALOGUE ON  
THE DIALECTIC**

In his Preface to *Philosophy and Revolution*, Louis Dupré says that the Hegelian dialectic is "not an objective scheme, definitively articulated and then 'applied' and adapted to a variety of situations." While I agree with Dupré in general, such a statement appears to separate the dialectical method from reality. Dupré seems to confuse the dialectic proper with a specific term of dialectical movement that exists in actuality. Lenin's theoretical limitations on the Hegelian dialectic before the collapse of established Marxism did not prevent him from being a practicing dialectician.

**Fred Bustillo  
Colorado**

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Dunayevskaya was a practical Marxist. Her long-term practice in the labor movement made her consider the total emancipation of humanity as her theoretical aim. When she shows that the

Marxian dialectic is an absolute negation toward freedom, it is clear that she understood the deep meaning of "the objectification of philosophy" in Hegel and Marx.

However, socialist revolution is at its lowest tide. On the one hand, history itself put forward a claim for absolute negation. On the other hand, it showed it had come to an end in capitalism. I hold that the theoretical dimension of dialectic should be taken seriously, even more than the practical dimension, because bourgeois ideology has become the main problem instead of Stalinism.

**Scholar  
China**

**WE APPEAL FOR SUPPORT  
TO IMPRISONED IRANIAN  
STUDENTS**

Gholamreza Mohajerynejad, one of the student leaders who was arrested after the July 1999 uprising at Tehran University, spoke at the News and Letters Library in late October. His eyewitness account and political analysis will be published in our December issue. He is extremely worried about the fate of two other leaders of the student movement who remain in prison.

Manuchehr Mohammadi has been sentenced to 13 years imprisonment, has been repeatedly beaten and tortured, is suffering from infection in several parts of his body and is not receiving proper medical care.

Akbar Mohammadi has been arrested numerous times and is presently in the notorious Evin Prison after his death sentence was reduced to 15 years. His physical condition has severely deteriorated. Because of his torture he has lost hearing in one ear and one of his kidneys has stopped working.

*N&L* readers can contact Amnesty International USA at 322 Eighth Ave. New York, NY 10001 to see how they can help to stop their torture and gain their release. Letters of support sent to them through *N&L* will be forwarded.

**SELECTED PUBLICATIONS FROM NEWS & LETTERS**

**BOOKS**

By RAYA DUNAYEVSKAYA

- NEW!** *Marxism and Freedom, from 1776 until Today* 2000 edition. Foreword by Joel Kovel.....\$24.95
- Philosophy and Revolution: from Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao* 1989 edition. New author's introduction.....\$14.95
- Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation, and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution* 1991 edition. New author's introduction. Foreword by Adrienne Rich.....\$12.95
- Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future* (1996 edition).....\$15.95
- The Marxist-Humanist Theory of State-Capitalism: Selected Writings by Raya Dunayevskaya*.....\$8.50
- The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism: Two Historic-Philosophic Writings by Raya Dunayevskaya* Contains "Presentation on Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy of June 1, 1987," and 1953 "Letters on Hegel's Absolutes".....\$3 paperback, \$10 hardcover

By CHARLES DENBY

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

By KEVIN ANDERSON

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

**PAMPHLETS**

- American Civilization on Trial, Black Masses as Vanguard* Statement of the National Editorial Board. Includes "A 1980s View of the Two-Way Road Between the U.S. and Africa" by Raya Dunayevskaya, and "Black Caucuses in the Unions" by Charles Denby.....\$2

- Voices from within the Prison Walls* by D. A. Sheldon. Prisoners' views of (in)justice system and organizing from within.....\$8  
For pamphlet plus donor copy for a prisoner.....\$16
- Harry McShane and the Scottish Roots of Marxist-Humanism* by Peter Hudis.....\$3
- Bosnia-Herzegovina: Achilles Heel of Western 'Civilization'* (Expanded edition).....\$5
- NEW!** *Kosova: Writings from News & Letters* 1998-1999.....\$3.50
- Marx's Capital and Today's Global Crisis* Includes critiques of Ernest Mandel and Tony Cliff.....\$2
- The Coal Miners' General Strike of 1949-50 and the Birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.* by Andy Phillips and Raya Dunayevskaya.....\$2
- 25 Years of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S.: A History of Worldwide Revolutionary Developments* by Raya Dunayevskaya.....\$1.50
- Myriad Global Crises of the 1980s and the Nuclear World since World War II* by Raya Dunayevskaya.....\$2
- Theory and Practice, by Rosa Luxemburg* First English translation.....\$2
- Nationalism, Communism, Marxist-Humanism and the Afro-Asian Revolutions* by Raya Dunayevskaya.....\$1.25
- Frantz Fanon, Soweto, and American Black Thought* by Lou Turner and John Alan.....\$3
- Working Women for Freedom* by Angela Terrano, Marie Dignan, and Mary Holmes.....\$2
- Dos ensayos por Raya Dunayevskaya*.....\$2
- News and Letters Committees Constitution*.....33¢ postage

- NEW!** *Marxist-Humanist Literature Catalog for 2000* A full list of publications (includes many not listed here) available from News and Letters Committees.....55¢ postage

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- Guides to Collection and Supplement to the Raya Dunayevskaya Collection: Marxist-Humanism: A Half Century of Its World Development* Full description of 15,000-page microfilm collection...\$4.50
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## In memoriam: Harry Else, revolutionary fighter, thinker

Harry Else met Marxist-Humanism when he was already close to 50 and immediately brought to News and Letters Committees both a multitude of talents and a rich life of experience. Born and raised in Tyler, Texas where he played football for Tyler College, he came North as a young man. He took a job as a steelworker before being hired as a chemist for the Chicago water purification department, where he worked for some 30 years until his sight failed and he was forced to retire. Along the way, he got to know and be known by "everybody in Chicago." What animated him and became his life as soon as he heard a talk by Raya Dunayevskaya and immediately joined News and Letters Committees in the mid-1970s was the idea of Freedom he found in Marxist-Humanism.

Two aspects dominated that life for Harry. One was his deep understanding of what the "Boss and Black" relationship signified—his profound understanding that overcoming racism was inseparable from overcoming capitalism. Harry called Chicago the "plantation up North," and dubbed it the city that was a "single party state." In 1983, when Black Chicago stunned the world by electing Harold Washington mayor, Harry wrote in *N&L* about the significance of that victory, achieved by the more than 90% turnout of Black voters, augmented by nearly 80% of the Hispanic vote and a critical 18% of the white vote. He described how the system had worked before:

*When the precinct captains in the Black wards had to carry their votes to City Hall, they were supposed to get jobs in return. But most of the jobs went somewhere else and the ones they got were the most menial. The system was like the sharecropper*



Harry Else (1927–2000) and Raya Dunayevskaya.

*arrangement. You were supposed to split 50-50, but it didn't work like that, and come harvest time you wound up broke. This kind of thing has been built into the fabric of Chicago politics over the years. It's what I call the Boss-Black relationship. The Harold Washington election was the first substantial challenge to that form of racism.*

The other dominant aspect of Harry's activity for Marxist-Humanism was his love for philosophy. There was rarely, if ever, a meeting he attended where he did not take the floor to put the discussion in the dialectical context he saw in the ideas under discussion. In a discussion on overcoming racism, Harry put it in the context of what Hegel called "Science":

*"Science" is the universal experience that has occurred through the discovery of the Self. What the Self recognizes through this process is that I cannot be what I want to be unless you can be what you want to be. Racism is a backward step for humanity because it breaks this relation apart. The Self cannot self-develop.*

To express this notion more concretely Harry continued:

*The 13th through 15th Amendments to the Constitution set out certain principles. But they are not enforced. What Black Americans are lacking are real citizens' rights. When we talk about the permanence of racism today we need to know that it's due to all the incomplete revolutions we have suffered through, from 1776 until today. Marxist-Humanism becomes crucial here as the "negation of the negation" which shows that to reach the new*

*society we have to begin with the total uprooting.*

At his funeral, where a number of his friends and family rose to pay tribute to all that they had learned from Harry throughout his life, what speaker after speaker stressed was that he was able to inspire them because he always wanted to know what they thought and truly listened to what they told him. One of his most outstanding characteristics was his passion to involve everyone he knew in the struggle for Freedom that permeated his life.

It is why he refused to allow his loss of sight to isolate him or force him to lose his independence. To the very end of his life, he read voraciously by means of audiotapes and a computer scanner, keeping up with every struggle anywhere in the world against capitalism while he continued to introduce everyone he met to Marxist-Humanism, which he saw as crucial to help a new world come to be. We deeply mourn his passing and honor his life.

—Olga Domanski

## Black/Red View

(Continued from page 1)

existence." Farrakhan did not expand on the meaning of his universal "subhuman level of human existence." However, it can be speculated that, from the point of view of a Muslim male, he does not mean materially subhuman, that they don't have material means to live, but are spiritually deprived, socially subhuman.

During his two-hour speech, Farrakhan declared that "The family is the basic unit of civilization, so everything must be done to take care of the family unit." Farrakhan does not explain why the "family unit" is the "basic unit of civilization." Is he only speaking about the present day accepted monogamous family form, that is often violated in the American and European capitalist societies? Or does he include all the various family forms that have appeared in all the civilizations of Europe, Asia and Africa?

A serious objective examination of the history and development of the "family unit" reveals that it is not created in a spiritual heaven, but here on earth in the social organization and the division of human labor. For example, as Marx noted, in the Roman slave civilization "the word family had no relation to the married pair or their children, but [was used] in relation to the body of slaves and servants who labor for its maintenance and were under the power of the pater familias."

Here in the United States during the period of slavery, the African-American "family unit" was totally dehumanized. Slaves produced commodities for the world market and made more slaves to work in cotton fields and rice swamps. This historically dehumanized form of the African-American family was the original foundation upon which American civilization was built. The social consequences of that historic dehumanization and alienation of African-American labor still remain with us today. Today's forms of capitalism continue the dissolution of the African-American family in a pit of poverty and imprisonment of a million African Americans in federal and state prisons and local jails.

The inverted consciousness at this march focused on "atonement" like the Million Man March before it. This is a diversion meant to turn attention away from the need to totally uproot the social conditions that mean incarceration for one out of every thirty African Americans, permanent unemployment and a diminishing amount of public welfare allotments to the African-American poor and other non-whites in this nation. The persistent theme of these "million-march-ideologues," now with the added insult of the arch-conservative Rev. Moon, is to reinforce the patriarchal family as opposed to the striving for new human relations. They would transform marching on Washington from a reach for self-determination and a new society to a moral cry and a ritualistic mass "sacred marriage blessing."

I remember in the tremendous revolutionary ferment of the 1930s the Muslims of Elijah Muhammed were a fringe religious grouping most radical Blacks laughed at. Malcolm X broke them out of their narrow religious nationalism by reaching for more social involvement in the Black struggle for freedom of the 1960s. He paid with his life for that breach. Farrakhan went back to the religious self-help concept and social conservatism.

The danger of an ideologue like Farrakhan is that his Million Man March diverted the passion of the 1992 Los Angeles rebellion from a total challenge to this society into a religious self-help inwardness that even Clinton could endorse. This diversion's logical conclusion is the sorry spectacle we saw Oct. 16.

For Black radicals, it is not enough to condemn the ideology of accommodation to capitalism Farrakhan preaches. We have to help develop a revolutionary alternative to this society both in philosophy and in practice.

## Carlos Beas: 'Support Oaxacan freedom fight'

*Editor's note: The following interview with Carlos Beas was conducted by N&L during his October tour of the U.S., sponsored by the Mexico Solidarity Network. Beas is co-founder and current director of the Union of Indigenous Communities from the Northern Zone of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec.*

It's a fact that what has been going on in Mexico really has had an impact on the way of life of the people in the area I am from, the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. To survive, the families need to create their own economies. The family economy has been one of resistance.

For example, for five or six years the families that raise coffee saw coffee-growing cooperatives doing well. Before NAFTA people were surviving, but now we see the coffee growers having to work in the maquilas in northern Mexico. This is because of the economic crisis. This is destroying the essential social fabric of the region because all the young men are leaving their land and families to go work in the north.

This is why we put much more stress on the organization of indigenous women's groups because they are the ones re-creating the culture and "holding down the fort."

Another important factor is that this region has suffered the impacts of integration into the world capitalist system for about 150 years. From 1848 when the U.S. stole half of Mexico and a so-called "peace treaty" was signed, it was made clear that the U.S. would have control of the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. In the 19th century, when the U.S. was focused on holding down control of the Panama Canal for the spread of capitalism, we saw the British focusing on the Isthmus of Tehuantepec. In the beginning of the 20th century, that's when the first railroad was built across the isthmus. We saw this railroad bridge the Gulf of Mexico with the Pacific Ocean and the building of the railroad was linked with the first petro-chemical refinery in Mexico. This produced a huge indigenous revolt in 1906. In this process more than 400,000 hectares of land were taken from the people and given to the oil companies.

In July of 1996, with the memory of the first mega-project of this region, Zedillo then created the next mega-project. This is supposedly an investment project that includes shrimp farming, deforestation, mining, building factories for companies like Monsanto, and fertilizer and chemical refineries. Basically, it's a plan to take the region and turn it into a factory of raw materials for corporate capitalism. It includes investment in bio-diversity extraction projects and the modernization and privatization of all the transportation infrastructure: railroads, highways, airports. This is to make all these avenues available to the needs of international capital in four regions—Europe, East Coast, West Coast and Asia—because it's a strategic location for goods and services.

The business of Tehuantepec and the investment project is only one aspect of a four-part plan where highways will be built through Honduras, Guatemala, El Salvador, and the hot-spot of Colombia. There will be several canal systems as well as other projects to unite the Americas as part of NAFTA. We have to understand the whole of the region, not just one particular part, to understand the relationships involved and the impact on bio-diversity and natural resources.

There is also a huge tourism aspect that is being integrated into the project. This will have a geographic as well as economic impact on the region. Only through this lens can we understand why this area has been so conflicted over the last 20-150 years.

I was just reading in the Mexican press today that a Panamanian community was attacked by Colombian paramilitaries in the exact zone where one of the canals is supposed to be built.

In light of this, a very small group like ours, called the Ucizoni, has put forth different types of initiatives. We've organized national events in our region to ask the Mexican government exactly what is going on. We want to know what these companies are all about, like Pemex, which used to be state-owned. It's the fifth largest oil producing company in the world. We have to research these companies.

The people in this region are meeting and organizing to get access to information on what these companies are doing regarding the plans for the highway system, for example. We're also doing a campaign to indigenous communities telling them not to lease their land to International Paper because of the social impact involved.

We want to create many types of communication within various communities in the region, including North America. We understand that only together can we hope to have any type of impact.

Greenpeace, for example, had a meeting with some indigenous fishing communities. This area has inlets that are brackish and excellent for shrimp farming, but the region is being devastated by high-impact farming, with trucks coming in and destroying the area. They're trying to work with the government to address this problem. There is a great danger for them because of our capacity to resist. Like Subcomandante Marcos says, there's huge untapped resistance sitting there latent, so it's dangerous for the government.

However the danger for us is that we have the ability to block roads and fight the companies, but it doesn't allow us time to reflect on what we want.

In light of this, we've initiated a process where, since 1998, we've put together a bunch of workshops where women can discuss their issues and what they want to see, as well as youth (even including children). We want all different groups to come together where they can talk about a different type of development than that proposed by global capitalism. What we need to do is avoid getting into the trap of only addressing what the companies are doing; we need to create a sense of who we are and what we want.

I remember about 11 years ago when we had the first national meeting of indigenous people in Mexico (1989). There was very little participation by the women. However, [since then] a lot of people in these communities realized the role that women played: 1) in the local economies, and 2) in the Zapatista uprising. This has had a huge impact. As a result of this cultural shift, in almost every region women now participate in community assemblies and are taking on autonomous positions within various organizational structures. They are also gaining responsibility over some of the land. If you look at the indigenous resistance on a national scale, the strongest group, and the one that carries the most weight, is represented by the National Organization of Indigenous Women.

Write for  
and subscribe to  
News & Letters



# Editorial Bush, Gore and abortion

The approval of Mifepristone (R.U.-486), the so-called abortion pill, after a 20-year delay, brought women's struggle for the right to control their own bodies briefly into the forefront of the presidential campaign. It forced Governor George W. Bush—who successfully smothered the debate on abortion within his own party—to once again reveal his hostility to women's right to choose. And it allowed Vice President Al Gore to opportunistically say that under his administration women's right to abortion would be protected.

Bush, well aware that most Americans think that abortion should remain legal, said only that the Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) approval was "wrong" and that it would make abortions "more and more common, rather than more and more rare." As brief a statement as that was, it revealed that, to Bush, making abortion "rare" doesn't mean helping reduce unwanted pregnancies, but simply making legal abortions ever more difficult to obtain.

## LESS ACCESS TO ABORTION

Gore's assurances that he will maintain women's right to choose, has to be viewed in light of how women's access to legal abortions has eroded under President Clinton's watch. The statistics are well known: 86% of U.S. counties have no abortion providers and the number of doctors providing legal abortions has dropped from 2,900 in 1996 to only 2,000 today. There's no reason to think Gore can do any better.

Gary Bauer, right-wing leader of the Campaign for Working Families, said confidently a day after the approval of Mifepristone, "I don't think anything happened yesterday that is irreversible." His cronies in the Senate wasted no time in trying to make that a reality by proposing legislation that would severely restrict how Mifepristone is used and by whom.

Mifepristone's approval also highlighted the power the next president will have to appoint Supreme Court judges who could help carry out a right-wing agenda

and completely gut or overturn Roe v. Wade, the 1973 decision legalizing abortion. The Green Party candidate, Ralph Nader, had his head in the sand when he said recently that Roe v. Wade "is a settled issue. We're not going back to the alley again. Pro-choicers are too strong." If that were so, women wouldn't be in the position they are today, saddled with waiting periods, parental consent laws, late abortion bans, and serious lack of access and unnecessary expense.

## THREAT OF REACTIONARY JUDGES

Nor is it only the Supreme Court that a new president would have the opportunity to shape. Now many of the right-wing judges Reagan appointed to the nation's 13 circuit courts of appeal are finally retiring, giving the new president power to shape the judiciary one level below the Supreme Court. There is no question that Bush would name reactionary justices. He made that crystal clear when he said the Supreme Court judges he admired most were the reactionary, misogynist, anti-human rights Clarence Thomas and Antonin Scalia.

Given this retrogressive reality one has to sharply question some feminist euphoria, for example the statement by Gloria Feldt, president of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, who called Mifepristone "the most significant technological advance in women's reproductive healthcare since the birth control pill." It is not only that further restrictions may be applied to the use of this drug, but the restrictions already imposed by the FDA—doctors using the pill must determine how long a woman has been pregnant, and have ready access to surgical abortions—will drastically cut down on its use because access to surgical abortions is already so limited.

Furthermore, the Population Council, which holds the U.S. patent to Mifepristone, will not only audit doctors prescribing the drug but also require them to gather statistics on how many women suffer serious side effects as well as how effective it is. Women will also be required to sign a patient agreement form. All this record-keeping is being done in an atmosphere of terror; October 2000 is the second anniversary of the gunning down of Dr. Barnett Slepian by an anti-abortion maniac who is still at large. All these mean that many doctors will refuse to use Mifepristone, just as they have refused to offer vacuum aspirator abortions.

Today's reality reveals that we can't look to a president to gain freedom for us—although when it comes to a woman's right to control her own body, Bush in the White House would be a disaster. In order for such a great breakthrough as Mifepristone to truly be made available to all women who desire it, we must look to our own self-activity and reason. As long as women's freedom depends on who is president, it is hollow because, as we see so clearly today, it can be taken away by one election.



The Bush Dream Supreme Court: Left to right (standing) Thomas, Scalia, Scalia, Thomas; (seated) Thomas, Scalia, Scalia, Thomas, Scalia.

# A look at Nader rally

Chicago—Thousands of people attended the "Super-Rally" for Ralph Nader at the University of Illinois at Chicago Pavilion here on Nov. 10. The crowd was largely young and enthusiastic about Nader but also clearly searching for alternative voices.

They were energized by the recent series of demonstrations against the World Trade Organization that began last year in Seattle. Certainly they booed loudly whenever the letters "WTO" were pronounced. More importantly, many were also participants in the anti-sweatshop, anti-globalization movement on campuses.

It was a relief to hear a presidential candidate talking about real issues in this campaign. Both Gore and Bush are united on such things as support for the death penalty and opposition to universal health care. Nader was also better on campaign finance reform.

However, he has avoided taking strong positions on some very basic issues, such as racism and gay rights. In this regard, the overwhelming number of white faces, and the minuscule representation of Blacks, told a different story than was spoken by the white male celebrities on the stage.

For all his good points, the model that Nader invoked for his current movement was the Populist movement that began in the South in the 1890s. This is a problem since that movement had a tragic demise: the more compromised white Populists became with electoral politics, the greater they moved away from the Black dimension.

This movement—not only Nader but the broader segment of youth and the Left that he is attracting—could stumble for the same reason. It illustrates the danger of a purely "pragmatic" approach that avoids working out a philosophy of revolution only to end up by emulating the failures of the past.

It is especially important in this regard for Marxist-Humanism to have a relationship to this new generation of post-Seattle youth.

—Gerard Emmett and January

## Chemical release

Memphis, Tenn.—The Black community around the Defense Depot here was shocked to learn, Oct. 11, that a chemical release on the Depot almost four weeks earlier had been hushed up. It was only on that day that a handful of community activists received a letter about the incident, which happened while chemical weapons were being dug up from Dunn Field.

On Sept. 15, three workers on the dig, all wearing protective masks, complained of nausea, headaches and sinus irritation. The Army Corps of Engineers, which oversees the cleanup, sent them to the hospital for tests, but only after more than an hour had passed. The newspaper reported that "authorities" said "the examinations and follow-up visits showed no evidence of exposure to chemical-weapons materials." But the test did not check for the presence of chemicals but for the suppression of bone marrow, one effect of mustard gas.

That test has no relevance for exposure to thioxane and dithiane, chemicals resulting from the breakdown of mustard gas, which were found in soil tests after the incident and are known to cause these symptoms. The worksite has a device monitoring the air for mustard gas, but the air is not monitored for the breakdown products. Why were the workers only given a test sure to have negative results?

Activist Doris Bradshaw of Defense Depot of Memphis Tennessee Concerned Citizens Committee wrote in an open letter:

"The failure to report the release to the general public is just the latest example of environmental racism at the Defense Depot. Also this is a prime example of the Army's incompetence in the haphazard cleanup.

"The Army's total control, misuse and manipulation of news and information about the fake cleanup is deplorable—and totally unacceptable. The mere fact that all of the information had to go to Army headquarters before black people in the community were informed about the release enhances the need for a public evacuation plan, a plan the Army never saw reason to formulate nor implement!...When it comes to chemical weapons clean-up and disposal, the military's record is littered with withholding of information, de-emphasis or cover-up of worker illnesses, and denial of negative impact to workers or the local affected community."

Bradshaw and her group have long demanded a plan to inform and evacuate the community in case of a chemical release during the cleanup, and the latest incident proves the bureaucracy is still ruled by its instinct for cover-up.

Some in the military expressed concern that their credibility had suffered. They needn't worry; they have no credibility to lose.

—Environmental justice activist

## 'Dancer in the Dark'

Filmed in Sweden, by a Danish director, with an Icelandic and a French actress in the leading roles, "Dancer in the Dark" is a European film that makes an eloquent statement against capital punishment in the USA. Although set in a period some 40 years ago, the issues it deals with are all too contemporary.

Selma is an immigrant factory worker who conceals the fact that she is going blind, so that she can go on working to save up for an operation to stop her young son from losing his eyesight to the same hereditary disorder. She finds escape from everyday reality in watching musicals, and rehearsing to act the part of Maria in an amateur production of "The Sound of Music."

In her imagination, Selma transforms her own life into a musical, and the film jumps back and forth between the real world and the song and dance of her daydreams. When her precious savings are stolen, events avalanche out of control, and this harmless and well-liked person is drawn into one frantic, violent act. A trial for murder follows in which Selma's leanings to secrecy and fantasy make her appear more guilty than she really is, and Selma is sentenced to death.

The film follows Selma through her ordeal on Death Row, and the torment of waiting for her execution. The cruelty lies not in the behavior of the prison staff who are impersonal or sometimes sympathetic, but in the death penalty itself. Selma turns to the music in her mind to overcome her despair and terror.

To set a musical partly on Death Row is a daring thing to do, but in my view it works. Thanks to Bjork's inspired performance, Selma becomes an unforgettable tragic character, unique and yet representing women and men facing the death sentence anywhere in the world. The camerawork is brilliant and at times dizzying—be warned! "Dancer in the Dark" is a rich, humane, tragic movie that will remain in the mind long after you have seen it.

—Richard Bunting

# AMERICAN CIVILIZATION ON TRIAL:

## Black Masses as Vanguard

*"It becomes imperative, therefore, that every freedom movement re-examine its past, and map out its future in direct relationship to the continuous, the ceaseless, the ever new Black revolts."*



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# Specter of workers' revolt haunts post-Milosevic Serbia

(Continued from page 1)

intensified since Kostunica took office.

Since Milosevic's overthrow a major strike has broken out at Trudbenik, one of Serbia's biggest construction companies. The workers' committee there has called for the firing of its managing director, the board of directors and the trade union leadership. One report noted, "The strike committee wants to be sure that the new rulers from DOS do not just reproduce the old system by imposing so-called democrats [as the managers of] factories."

Though Kostunica rode a wave of strikes and protests to push Milosevic from power, he has since condemned the factory occupations as forcefully as has Milosevic's "Socialist" Party of Serbia (SSP). Kostunica's pleas to entrust DOS with the task of running things has so far not succeeded. Whether this remains so will help determine Serbia's future.

## THE 'BULLDOZER' REVOLUTION

Kostunica's victory does not mean Serbia has broken from narrow nationalism.

He is a Serb nationalist who opposed Tito in the 1970s for granting increased powers to Kosova. He was closely associated with the Serbian Academy of Sciences in the mid-1980s when it drew up its rationale for what later became known as "ethnic cleansing." He supported Milosevic's crushing of movements for autonomy in Kosova and Vojvodina in the late 1980s and Serbia's wars against Croatia, Bosnia and Kosova in the 1990s. But since Kostunica was an anti-Communist who never joined Milosevic's government, he was considered "clean" enough to run for president by the much-divided opposition.

Many voted for Kostunica because they have grown tired of Milosevic's promotion of narrow nationalism. Many others, however, voted for Kostunica because they feel Milosevic didn't defend Serbian narrow nationalism strongly enough.

Independent observers estimate that Milosevic won less than 40% of the Sept. 24 presidential vote, with about 56% going to Kostunica. Milosevic fared even worse in municipal elections: in Belgrade the DOS won 102 out of 110 contested seats.

Milosevic responded by trying to engineer electoral fraud. He claimed that Kostunica won less than 50% of the vote, which would necessitate a runoff. DOS refused to participate in the runoff, and called for street protests and blockades to force the regime to recognize the election results.

Though many rallies were held in the days following the Sept. 24 elections, most were smaller than the opposition hoped for. What changed everything was the outbreak of a strike at the Kolubara mine complex on Sept. 29—a spontaneous action that was not envisioned by the DOS leaders.

Kolubara is the largest coal mine in Serbia (it employs 17,000) and supplies coal to the Nikola Tesla electricity plant in Obrenovac, which produces half of Serbia's electricity. The strike had a huge effect. Within days a general strike was proclaimed, the first in Yugoslavia since World War II. Some 4,500 miners at the Kostolac mine in eastern Serbia joined the strike, as did workers in other industries in Nis, Cacak, Pancevo, and Uzice. In Kragulevac 30,000 auto workers and laborers in the armaments industry demonstrated against Milosevic.

At the same time, tens of thousands of students and citizens came into the streets of 20 cities, especially Belgrade. For the first time, a worker-student alliance emerged in the struggle.

Milosevic responded by arresting dozens of strike leaders; he claimed they were financed by NATO as part of a plot to take over the country. He ordered the police to surround Kolubara, and sent in his army chief of staff, Nebojsa Pavkovic (an architect of Serbia's war against Kosova). Pavkovic said if the miners didn't return to work he would fire them and replace them with Serb miners from Kosova.

The threat proved futile. On Oct. 4 angry miners drove a bus through a police cordon, which allowed thousands of miners and their supporters to enter Kolubara. This proved to be the turning point. The police abandoned efforts to maintain control—perhaps in part because many in the army and police had themselves voted for Kostunica.

The next day, as crowds gathered at the federal parliament in Belgrade, the police stepped aside and did not fire on them. Ljubislav Djokiv, an unemployed construction worker, used his bulldozer to help break into the building. Parliament and the state-run TV and radio stations were soon in flames.

One worker said, "I've been waiting 10 years for this and out of that I spent 5 years in a queue. I just want to see Milosevic finished like Ceausescu" (a reference to the Romanian Communist leader who was shot during the revolution of 1989).

Within 24 hours of his failure to break the Kolubara strike, Milosevic decided the game was up. Rather than risk going down like Ceausescu, he stepped aside, admitting that Kostunica had won the election after all. Yet by retaining his leadership of the SSP—the largest party in Serbia—he remains a formidable, though weakened, political force.

The events in Serbia show how fast a tyrannical regime can come apart once the working class takes the initiative.

For years an array of bourgeois politicians tried to unseat Milosevic, without success. When he annulled

the results of elections in 1996, massive protests occurred. Yet Milosevic kept finding ways to outflank and disorient the opposition.

What was different this time is that in the aftermath of Serbia's military defeat in Kosova the workers decided they had had enough of Milosevic's lies and took the initiative to get rid of him.

The role played by the working class in the recent events differs in a number of respects from the upheavals which brought down the other Stalinist regimes in East Europe in 1989.

The Stalinist regimes collapsed in 1989 as a result of genuine mass upheavals. Yet for the most part the working class did not step forth as an independent force in its own right. Factory occupations and major strikes were few. Though the collapse of the exploitative "Communist" regimes were welcomed by all layers of the populace, a genuine revolutionary alternative did not arise from the Left. What predominated instead was the notion that there is no alternative to free market capitalism.

While there were many reasons for this, the global context was critical. The East European revolts of 1989 occurred at a moment of deep retrogression, with the triumph of Reaganism, the collapse of revolutionary alternatives in the Third World, and the decline of explicitly anti-capitalist movements in the West.

Today, the global context is somewhat different. Important cracks have appeared in capital's ideological edifice. The massive strikes in West Europe since 1995; the growing movements against globalization and sweatshop labor; and the Seattle protest against the WTO and its aftermath have rekindled new opposition to global capitalism. Even if only slowly and quietly, an undefined foreboding is emerging that we may not be fated to forever suffer the indignities of global capitalism after all.

It may be coincidental that the protest against the IMF and World Bank was held in nearby Prague on Sept. 26, just days before Serbia's workers took the initiative against Milosevic. Yet it may reflect the fact that something new is in the air which has helped reawaken the specter of workers' revolt.

## THE LEFT IN DISARRAY—ONCE AGAIN

Just as with the East European revolts of 1989, Serbia's new rulers are trying to ensure that the "revolution" remains within manageable channels without any real change in class or social relations.

Kostunica is being aided in this by the U.S. and West Europe. He was barely in office when the European Union announced it would lift sanctions against Serbia. The Clinton administration likewise hailed Kostunica's victory and agreed to lift sanctions, even though Kostunica says that he will not turn over Milosevic to the war crimes tribunal in The Hague—as demanded by the U.S. for the past year. The Clinton administration no longer appears concerned about bringing Milosevic to justice.

Despite the U.S.'s effort to bolster Kostunica, his position remains precarious. Milosevic still has many supporters in the military and government who can make life difficult for Kostunica. The DOS has a minority of seats in the Yugoslav parliament. Real political power in any case lies in the Serbian parliament, in which DOS has no seats. The leaders of Montenegro, who are pushing for independence, boycotted the election. In response, Kostunica—who opposes independence for both Montenegro and Kosova—has allied himself with a pro-Milosevic Montenegrin Party (the SNP) in order to obtain a majority in the Yugoslav parliament. And the DOS is a faction-ridden 18-party coalition which can split apart at any time.

The U.S. signaled its support for Kostunica even before the election by sending millions of dollars to the DOS. Some "leftists" are using this to argue that the Clinton administration "engineered" the overthrow of Milosevic.

Diana Johnstone—who wrote a series of scurrilous attacks on the Kosova Albanians and Kosova Liberation Army (KLA) during NATO's imperialist bombing of Kosova last year—has denounced the overthrow of Milosevic as a CIA-engineered coup. Events like the storming of parliament, she says in *Z Magazine*, were faked for the TV cameras!

Another Stalinoid "leftist" who was the source of much disinformation about the KLA, Michel Chossudovsky, has written similar nonsense. Neither Johnstone nor Chossudovsky explain how the CIA managed to infiltrate the Kolubara mines, spark a spontaneous strike, and then engineer workplace occupations across the country.

It is telling that those who denounced the KLA for being a "terrorist" group run by the CIA now denounce

factory occupations and strikes as "illegal" CIA-run activities. The failure to support a national liberation movement now extends to opposing actual workers' revolt—all because the U.S. supported the campaign of the man brought to power through it!

Such bizarre analyses totally misread U.S. policy in Serbia and the region as a whole.

It is true that the U.S. has an ally in Kostunica. But it also had an ally for years in Milosevic. The U.S. treated Milosevic as a friend upon the signing of the Dayton Accords in 1995, which prevented the Bosnians from achieving a military victory against Serbian forces. The U.S. figured: better to go along with Serb nationalism, in a somewhat tamed form with the Day-



March of Kolubara miners, who helped bring down Milosevic.

ton Accords, than risk "regional instability" by allowing the Bosnians to win. From 1995-98 Serbia, like Croatia, was treated as a U.S. regional ally.

That changed only in 1998-99, when Milosevic overreached himself by readying a full-scale crack-down against

the Kosovar Albanians. This occurred just as NATO was about to expand into the former countries of the Warsaw Pact. Faced with the outbreak of hostilities that could make NATO look like a helpless giant, Clinton and Albright decided to launch the U.S. air war against Serbia.

The U.S. did not attack Milosevic because of his narrow nationalism. Nor did it bomb Belgrade in order to obtain independence for Kosova. The U.S. has long opposed independence for Kosova. After the war it forced the KLA to disarm and insisted that Kosova be rejoined with Serbia—once one man, Milosevic, was removed from power.

Now that Milosevic is gone, the U.S. has no problem supporting Kostunica who shares Milosevic's basic nationalist standpoint. For that standpoint has never posed a serious threat to U.S. interests.

Nor did Milosevic's Serbia serve as an economic "bulwark" against the West. Under Kostunica, as under Milosevic, Serbia will have a state-capitalist economy with a set of rulers skimming off the proceeds, this time in the name of "democracy." Milosevic's plans to privatize 75 of the country's largest firms will now be carried out. That will be enough to satisfy the U.S., who will also find a way to sneak out of major commitments of economic aid, as it has in so many other areas of the Balkans.

## WHICH KOLUBARA?

Now that the new regime is having a hard time stopping the occupations of work sites, it may try to whip up national chauvinism as a way to unite the nation behind it. Kostunica has long supported Serbia's dominance over Kosova and there is little indication he is prepared to let the region go. He has not released over 800 Kosovar Albanians still in Serbian jails. Though he has admitted to Serbian "atrocities" against the Albanians in Kosova, he has not acknowledged the genocide inflicted on Bosnia.

Given the new situation in Belgrade, the U.S. will no doubt pressure the Kosovar Albanians to accept a form of limited autonomy within Serbia. Those KLA leaders who aspired for independence but who chose to ally themselves with the U.S. occupation will find themselves with no room to maneuver. The Kosovar struggle is now in grave jeopardy.

The situation in Bosnia and Kosova remains critical, not just for those areas, but for Serbia itself. As Marx said about freedom struggles in this country, "Labor cannot emancipate itself in the white skin where in the Black skin it is branded." Marx insisted that class struggles cannot reach fulfillment so long as they remain confined by the mind-forged manacles of racism and national chauvinism.

The future of workers' struggles in Serbia hinges on whether the masses face up to the "ethnic cleansing" inflicted upon Bosnia and Kosova and extend a hand of solidarity with those who fought it. Solidarizing with the ongoing fight of the Albanian Kosovar miners of Trepcja is key in that.

In 1914 Kolubara was the site of a Serb victory over the Austro-Hungarian army. The event became part of nationalist folklore and was later featured in a famous novel by Dobrica Cosic, *Time of Death*. The novel helped fuel the nationalist mania which seized Serbia in the late 1980s and 1990s.

In 2000 Kolubara was the site of a strike which helped end the reign of an architect of genocide. Which Kolubara will define the new Serbia? The nationalist mythology of 1914, or the workers' revolt of 2000 which, in reaching to realize itself, will rid itself of the vestiges of narrow nationalism? Upon this question the future of Serbia rests.

—October 20, 2000



# Death by neglect in women's prisons

by Diana Block and Donna Willmott

Senator Richard Polanco (D-Los Angeles), chair of the Joint Legislative Committee on Prison Construction and Operations, held unprecedented legislative hearings on Oct. 11-12 at Valley State Prison for Women (VSPW) and the California Institution for Women (CIW). The session at VSPW in Chowchilla was attended by over 100 prison activists, lawyers, family members and media representatives in addition to several state legislators and their aides.

Former prisoner Pat Shelton described how she was serving an eight-month sentence for a parole violation when she discovered a lump in her breast. She was not seen by a doctor until five months later by which time the cancer had spread to her lymph nodes. She is now struggling with terminal bone cancer and came to testify in order to try and make a difference around how other women are treated in the future.

Charisse Shumate told how she lost sight in one eye because of delays in treatment of a sickle cell anemia related condition and implored the audience not to forget that "we are human beings."

Ellen Richardson detailed how the California Department of Corrections ignores the particular problems of a population where one-third of the women are over 40 and need help with osteoporosis, menopause and many other critical issues related to aging. "We are our own best doctors" she asserted, given the current lack of basic medical care available.

Beverly Henry, a self-disclosed HIV positive woman, told how she accidentally discovered that she had Hepatitis C since the prison never notified her of crucial test results. She and Judy Ricci, also HIV positive, painfully described watching friends die of Hepatitis C (which is epidemic with approximately 54% of the women infected) while prison staff disregarded obvious symptoms and refused to provide necessary liver biopsies.

At many points throughout the medical testimony the legislative panel appeared horrified by the stories they were hearing. Cathie Wright (R-Simi Valley) said that the stories "curdled her stomach" and angrily concluded that "these women have been given two sentences—one by the court and one by the institution." The legislative panel promised to consider recommendations of Dr. Weinstein and other prisoner advocates

for a non-profit public health care institution to take over the provision of medical care for state prisoners.

The focus of the testimony at CIW was on battered women whose responses to abuse had resulted in prison sentences and on the types of sexual abuse which women are routinely confronted with once inside prison. Woman after woman described lives in which they were terrorized, beaten, raped and threatened on a daily basis until they finally killed their husbands or partners in order to protect themselves and their children from further torture and death. For many of these women, it was only once they came to prison, met others with similar life stories and formed a group called Convicted Women Against Abuse, that they began to recognize the common threads not only in their histories but in the problems with their trials.

Marva Wallace spoke forcefully for the majority of the women when she explained that there was no adequate assistance from legal counsel, no reference to her battering and no testimony from a psychologist as to her state of mind at her 1984 trial when she was convicted of first degree murder, eight years before laws allowed the issue of domestic violence to be introduced into trial proceedings. Many of the women had filed petitions for clemency with Governor Wilson but have had their requests ignored.

Widney Brown of Human Rights Watch described the universal fear of retaliation which kept women from coming forward to testify on sexual abuses inside the prison and also from even reporting abuses. Battered woman prisoner Nicole Garza risked further retaliation by coming forth to testify of her repeated rape by a correctional officer at the California Correctional Facility for Women, who also happened to be a member of the Internal Affairs. Attorney Carrie Hempel urged that in order to make inroads into the pervasive atmosphere of sexual abuse, women had to be believed rather than discounted pending investigation into the facts of a case.

The systemic problems within the California prison system were more than obvious. Advocates for prisoners will continue to work for the abolition of a system based on control, punishment and warehousing of human beings.

*Diana Block is a member of the California Coalition for Women Prisoners and Donna Willmott is litigation coordinator for Legal Services for Prisoners with Children. Contact 415-255-7036 for more information.*

# Memphis rallies against anti-gay hate

**Memphis, Tenn.**—Judy Shepard, the mother of Matthew Shepard, the young gay man who was murdered in an anti-gay hate crime in Wyoming, gave a speech at Calvary Episcopal Church here on Sept. 25. The event was sponsored primarily by the Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Religious Affairs as well as by numerous individuals, businesses, and gay rights groups. A crowd of about 400 people jammed into the church, packing the aisles and standing along the walls. This was in spite of anonymous hate mail—some threatening death to those who attended. They promised that anti-gay protesters would be present including Rev. Fred Phelps, who brought his message of hate to Matthew Shepard's funeral. Police patrolled the area, but no protesters showed up.

The city mayor, Willie Herenton, accepted an invitation to speak at the event and was criticized by a local right-wing religious group, Family, Life, and Responsible Education Under God (FLARE). Leeann McNinch, the president of FLARE, called the mayor's appearance "totally unnecessary" and said that he was "putting the city's seal of approval on a lifestyle." However, Herenton, who is African American, drew a comparison between racial and anti-gay oppression and presented a proclamation declaring "Memphians Against Hate Crimes Week."

Other speakers at the event were Rev. Douglass Bailey, the rector at Calvary, Len Piechowski, the founder of the Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Religious Affairs, and Jim Maynard, the founder of the Memphis Lesbian and Gay Coalition for Justice.

Several gays and lesbians, including a lesbian mother, a drag queen, and a survivor of "ex-gay therapy" did a performance art piece including the reading of powerful poetry they had written, in which they explained their queerness as a positive force in their lives.

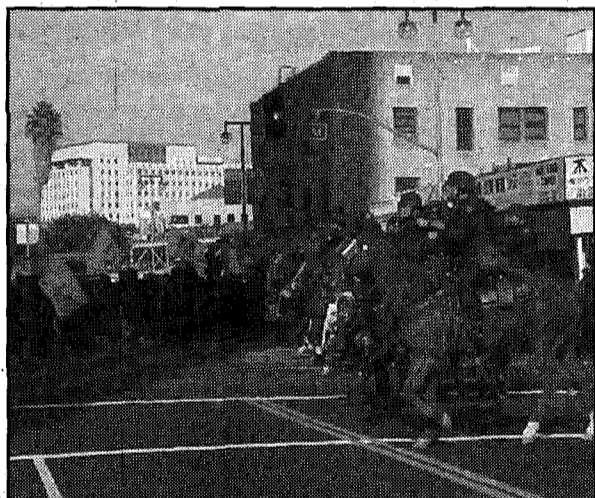
Judy Shepard told about her son's life and explained the importance of activism in creating social change. Although her main suggestion for activism was telling everyone to vote, several gay rights organizations had set up tables in a meeting hall after the presentation.

—Adele

# Nationwide protest against police brutality

**Chicago**—The October 22 Coalition organized a weekend of events this year. Around 500 people, including a high percentage of Black and Latino youth, gathered at the Federal Plaza Oct. 20 for the National Day of Protest Against Police Brutality, Repression, and the Criminalization of a Generation. As usual, the most moving part of the day was the testimony from family members of those killed by police or railroaded into the criminal injustice system. People like Gwen Hogan, George Morris, and Bertha Escamilla are always a great source of strength and renewal.

Another highlight this year was Andy Thayer of the Chicago Anti-Bashing Network. In previous years the October 22 Coalition here has had some problem including gays and lesbians in its program. Thayer gave an eloquent speech pointing to the brutalization of gays and lesbians by police, as with the current case of Frederick Mason here in Chicago. But he also sent a message to the Revolutionary Communist Party, with their retrograde position on gays: "We won't go away after the revolution."



Police harass marchers in the Los Angeles Oct. 22 demonstration.

To follow up the Friday event, a smaller rally and march was held at the Cook County jail complex at 26th St. and California on Oct. 22. Family members and supporters of people victimized by the system, like the sister of Edwin Ortiz, a young man convicted of a 1989 murder he didn't commit, denounced the corrupt practices of the police and courts. Approximately 100 activists marched around the large compound of cell blocks after hearing the speakers.

Both the Friday and Sunday events passed without police interference, unlike the protest in Los Angeles, which was subject to an unprovoked attack.

The urgency of the issue of police brutality in Chicago was made abundantly clear just days after the protests as police officers shot and killed 18-year-old Brandon Polk in a stairwell of a south side public housing project. Police claim Polk and two others confronted them with weapons, but residents of the building say this is not true. Activists and residents of the housing project held a press conference at City Hall on Oct. 27 to denounce the killing.

—Gerard Emmett and Kevin Michaels

# Israel's barbarism denounced

**Memphis, Tenn.**—A group of 400 Palestinians and Americans gathered at a busy intersection here on Oct. 6. to protest the brutality of the Israeli army in oppressing civilian Palestinian demonstrators and killing Palestinian children in the Holy Land.

We also took the responsibility for the job the media failed to do: informing the American people about what is really happening. The demonstrators asked their fellow Memphians to do whatever they can to stop the financial aid to Israel that helps kill Palestinian children.

We were holding signs and banners that called for ending the Israeli occupation and had pictures of children killed by the Israeli soldiers, including that of 12-year-old Mohammed Al-Durah, who died in his father's lap.

The biased U.S. media tried to put the blame on the father for being with his son among the demonstrators. When it was reported that he was shopping with his son for a used car, the media started to shift the blame onto the Palestinian soldiers in an attempt to make this brutal crime look like they were "caught in a crossfire."

The French cameraman who filmed the event, testified that the father and son were shot by Israeli snipers' explosive bullets. Two days later, the Israeli army admitted killing Mohammed "by mistake," while the U.S. media still insisted on the "crossfire" myth, ignoring the fact that a Palestinian ambulance driver was also shot while trying to save Mohammed and his father.

This demonstration was followed by another one in the same place on Oct. 13, and on Oct. 20, about 35 supporters of the Palestinian people gathered in front of the Federal Building in downtown Memphis. We demanded our representatives help the Palestinian people who have been under Israeli brutal attack for more than three weeks.

We demand that the U.S. cut its annual financial aid of up to \$3 billion to Israel and called upon the community in Memphis to inquire about their tax money that is helping the Israeli killing machine in its genocidal war against Palestinian civilians.

Up to now, over 120 Palestinians have been killed, including more than 30 children. Close to 6,000 Palestinians have been injured, many of them in serious or critical condition. Several are brain dead. All of those atrocities are committed with the help and support of the U.S.

The whole world is condemning Israel for its excessive use of force, except the U.S. How many more Palestinians need to be killed in order to move the conscience of the American people?

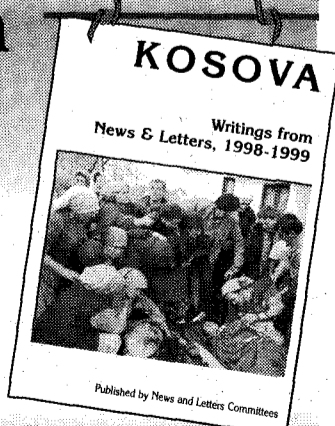
—Palestinian woman

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## Our Life and Times

by Kevin A. Barry and Mary Holmes

The dictatorial presidency of Alberto Fujimori was rocked from within when a videotape of Vladimiro Montesinos, head of the hated National Intelligence Service, collaborator with the CIA, and close ally of Fujimori, was broadcast to the whole country showing Montesinos bribing an opposition politician. Fujimori then announced that new presidential elections would be held next year, and that he would not run. Thousands of Peruvians celebrated with spontaneous street demonstrations.



Anti-Fujimori protest outside government palace in Lima, Oct. 27.

Fujimori lost his last shred of legitimacy with last April's fraudulent presidential elections in which it is widely accepted that the centrist opposition candidate, Alejandro Toledo, won. But Fujimori's demise actually began in 1992, two years after coming to power, when, aided by Montesinos, he dissolved the Congress and Supreme Court and assumed sweeping authoritarian powers under the guise of combatting Shining Path guerrillas.

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## Is Oslo dead? Behind the Arab-Israeli explosion

(Continued from page 1)

How could such horrific violence break out, only weeks after Israel and the Palestinian Authority had come closer than ever before to a final peace agreement last July at Camp David, and after Barak had made unprecedented concessions on Jerusalem?

At a general level, whenever peace has seemed to draw closer, religious and other fanatics, both Arab and Israeli, have tended to escalate their attacks in order to make any type of compromise impossible. That was certainly Sharon's aim on Sept. 28. It was also the aim of the Muslim fanatics who threatened Arafat's life if he gave up "one inch" of Jerusalem at Camp David, even the Western Wall that is so sacred to Jews. In addition, it played into the hands of those Middle Eastern regimes that have always sought to direct their people's anger at their oppressive conditions externally, against Israel.

### MAKING MOCKERY OF OSLO

Another major part of the answer lies in six years of Israeli intransigence since Oslo in 1993. This intransigence has made a mockery of promises to grant Palestinians autonomy and possibly an independent state composed of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, and to consider the issue of Jerusalem.

Instead of truly relinquishing control of Gaza and the West Bank, a succession of Israeli regimes since 1993 have refused to remove the Jewish settlements that honeycomb the Palestinian territories. When he seemed to move in that direction, Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin was assassinated by a Jewish fanatic. Under the reactionary Netanyahu government of 1996-99, these settlements were even expanded by the

A one-day general strike was held across Peru Oct. 12, demanding that Fujimori leave power immediately, that a transitional government be instituted, and that Montesinos be extradited from Panama, where he fled to stand trial for at least a decade of torture and murder. In Panama, Montesinos' bid for asylum, backed by the Organization of American States and the U.S., sparked anti-asylum demonstrations not seen since the Shah of Iran was ushered there by the U.S. in

1979.

As we go to press, Montesinos, keeping a low profile for now, has returned to Peru under apparent protection from some military sectors. Fujimori seems to have momentarily regained control by dismissing the three top chiefs of the military along with the commander in Lima (a relative of Montesinos). This does not rule out a later military coup, especially since opposition to both Fujimori and Montesinos continues.

## Anti-globalization protests continue

An estimated 15,000 anti-globalization protesters were not able to entirely shut down the September meeting of the World Bank/International Monetary Fund in Prague, but they did pressure the delegates to adjourn earlier than planned. The organizing coalition, Initiative Against Economic Globalization, welcomed activists from Brazil's landless movement and from Bangladesh's Federation of Landless Women Peasants, trade unionists from all over Europe, Italian supporters of the Zapatistas, the Colombian Black Communities Process, as well as hundreds of NGOs and thousands of grassroots activists.

Activities ranged from counter-summits to discuss anti-globalization theories, to the culminating demonstration on Sept. 26, the Global Day of Action. Placing themselves in a line of connection with the anti-globalization consciousness that erupted in the Seattle demonstrations nearly a year ago, the Prague protesters represented a wide spectrum of struggles that one banner attempted to sum up: "Make protest as global

as capitalism."

The lie of Czech Republic President Vaclav Havel's desire for "dialogue" between sides could be seen in the severity of police repression against the protesters. A special 11,000-member police force was formed to maintain control by any means necessary. Those deemed a threat were stopped at the border. Police violence against protesters was commonplace both on the streets and in the jails.

Countering the shock which Seattle threw into world capitalism, the WB/IMF conveners are now trying to peddle a new line, toning down their neo-liberal policies and portraying themselves as allies of the poorer, developing countries. This is an obvious strategy to split off the more pragmatist and reformist anti-globalization groups such as Jubilee 2000, the debt moratorium movement, from the more radical anti-capitalist tendencies in an attempt to weaken the anti-globalization movement. Judging from the events in Prague, this effort failed; there are other Pragues to come.

housing minister, who was none other than Sharon.

Until this summer, when Barak did so at Camp David, no Israeli prime minister had dared even to broach the subject of redividing Jerusalem. After doing so, Barak promptly lost his parliamentary majority, as the right-wing religious factions, which hold the balance of power between Barak's Labor Party and the conservative Likud Bloc, deserted him en masse.

On the Palestinian side, anger kept building after 1993, as Oslo came increasingly to be seen as a sham, with areas of Palestinian control viewed as little more than bantustans. The corruption and authoritarianism of Arafat's rule has also been a major source of disillusionment. All of this increased support for every variety of rejectionism, but with the collapse of the Arab Left after 1989, the rejectionist sentiment expressed itself more and more in Islamic fundamentalist language, whether that of Hamas, Islamic Jihad, or the Lebanon-based Hezbollah. The latter advised Palestinians to drive out the Israeli occupiers by force, just as they claimed to have done in southern Lebanon.

Once again, the old rejectionist cry of retaking the "whole" of Palestine, by which was meant every square inch of Israel proper, was heard, sending chills down the spines of Israelis who had thought that Oslo meant an acceptance by the Palestinians of Israel's right to exist.

### FUNDAMENTALISM REVIVED

The fact that Sharon chose a Muslim religious site as his point of provocation served only to increase the popularity of both Jewish and Arab religious fundamentalists. The latter were already flexing their muscles in Gaza City on Oct. 14, the day after Israeli planes had attacked. As crowds gathered to protest the Israeli

attacks, smoke suddenly blew skyward from the Gaza Hilton. Palestinians rushed over to protest what they thought had been another Israeli air raid, but discovered that Hamas had bombed the hotel to protest its serving of alcohol.

While Hamas is hardly about to wrest power from Arafat, the current conflict will have very negative regional implications. It will strengthen authoritarian Arab and Muslim regimes, from Syria and Iraq to Iran, all of which claim to be more militant than Arafat in opposing Israel and which never accepted the Oslo Accords.

This point was made by an Iranian student activist, now in exile under a death sentence after having suffered prison and torture for having helped to lead the summer 1999 protests at Tehran University: "The sooner peace is established, the sooner one will see the end of the Islamist regime in Iran."

Inside Israel, some courageous voices are also honestly addressing the core issues. A statement signed by feminist peace activist Gila Svirsky and other Israeli Jewish and Arab intellectuals demanded in part: "(1) An immediate and unilateral Israeli commitment to evacuating the provocative settlements and zones that are to be included in the Palestinian state—including those in the Gaza Strip, Hebron and the Jordan Valley. (2) That Israel accept Palestinian sovereignty over all Arab neighborhoods and mosques inside Jerusalem, while Israel will maintain sovereignty over the Western Wall" (*The Nation*, Oct. 30).

Unfortunately, such voices, whether Jewish or Muslim, are very isolated in the Middle East today.

—Kari Andrews

## NEWS AND LETTERS COMMITTEES

### Who We Are And What We Stand For

News and Letters Committees is an organization of Marxist-Humanists that since its birth has stood for the abolition of capitalism, both in its private property form as in the U.S., and its state property form, as it has historically appeared in state-capitalist regimes calling themselves Communist as in Russia and China. We stand for the development of new human relations, what Marx first called a new Humanism.

*News & Letters* was founded in 1955, the year of the Detroit wildcat strikes against Automation and the Montgomery Bus Boycott against segregation—activities which signaled a new movement from practice that was itself a form of theory. *News & Letters* was created so that the voices of revolt from below could be heard unseparated from the articulation of a philosophy of liberation.

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

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

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

what is, but to reveal and further develop the revolutionary Humanist future inherent in the present. The new visions of the future which Dunayevskaya left us in her work from the 1940s to the 1980s are rooted in her discovery of Marx's Marxism in its original form as a new Humanism and in her re-creation of that philosophy for our age as Marxist-Humanism. This is recorded in the documents on microfilm and open to all under the title *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection—Marxist-Humanism: A Half-Century of Its World Development*.

Dunayevskaya's philosophic comprehension of her creation and development of Marxist-Humanism, especially as expressed in her 1980s writings, presents the vantage point for re-creating her ideas anew. Seeking to grasp that vantage point for ourselves and make it available to all who struggle for freedom, we have published Dunayevskaya's original 1953 philosophic breakthrough and her final 1987

Presentation on the Dialectics of Organization and Philosophy in *The Philosophic Moment of Marxist-Humanism* (1989), and donated new supplementary volumes to *The Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*. News and Letters Committees aims at developing and concretizing this body of ideas for our time.

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