

EDITORIAL

Sharon's brutal invasion defers peace for a generation

Israel's Prime Minister Ariel Sharon is "a man of peace," the reactionary Christian fundamentalist who occupies the White House told reporters April 19, even as Sharon was finishing up Israel's most aggressive military campaign since the 1982 Lebanon War. Sharon's three-week invasion of Palestinian-ruled areas of the West Bank left hundreds of civilians dead, thousands wounded or displaced, and the entire infrastructure of an embryonic Palestinian state in ruins. While Sharon's coalition government, which includes

the Labor Party, termed these actions a "war on terror," they constituted a war crime.

As the dust cleared, all eyes turned to the Jenin refugee camp, where Sharon's forces had gone on a rampage after encountering stiff Palestinian resistance that claimed 13 Israeli soldiers. For its part, Human Rights Watch estimated that 50 to 80 Palestinians out of the 10,000 originally inhabiting the camp were killed.

Human Rights Watch also charged the Israelis with four extremely serious violations of "the Geneva Con-

ventions and the laws of war": (1) the use of snipers to kill civilians; (2) the killing or burying by bulldozers of wounded or disarmed combatants, including resistance leader Abu Djendal; (3) preventing rescue workers from entering, even after hostilities ceased, which forced residents to dig with their bare hands for survivors buried in the rubble; (4) totally disproportionate use of force against a lightly armed enemy in a civilian area.

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NEWS & LETTERS

Theory/Practice

'Human Power is its own end'—Marx

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WORKSHOP TALKS

Bush's war on labor

by Htun Lin

Dizzy with success, Bush has begun to extend his permanent war abroad to a permanent war against us workers right here at home. To challenge this, I saw huge contingents of minority communities come out to participate in the April 20 march of 30,000 people in San Francisco against "War, Racism, and Poverty."

Increasingly, U.S. workers are made to compete with offshore production in dictatorial countries subcontracted to employ their large pool of state-disciplined labor force. Toward this trend, the U.S. government is looking more and more like the biggest subcontractor for American companies to squeeze more labor out of America's poor.

The government's corporate welfare system is shaping into an instrument of supplying private businesses with huge quantities of state-disciplined, second-class workers at an incredible cost savings. That workforce is comprised of 12.6 million Americans, half of whom used to be on the welfare rolls. Now that Clinton's 1996 "Welfare Reform" is up for renewal, Bush wants to force even more people into welfare programs. One in three former welfare recipients currently either holds a job, is looking for one, or is in vocational education. Bush wants to increase that figure to seven in ten.

This is happening just when a major study revealed

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BLACK/RED VIEW

Racism and terror

by John Alan

President Bush has declared a war on "terrorism and evil." But his war totally ignores the racist terrorism which is alive and active in this nation today and has been for several centuries.

Many Americans are well aware of the fact that racism is an evil and often violent force in this country. Newspapers print exposés on how the police profile and kill innocent African Americans with impunity. They also point to the race disparity in prison sentencing. A recent documentary on public television revealed that the Miami, Florida police force had systematically framed African Americans by planting guns on them after they were arrested.

However, any exposure of racist terrorism in this country today will not by itself cause the two old capitalist parties to seriously oppose it. Both parties feed on it, since the vital source of this terrorism is racism, which is at the very foundation of the social structure of American capitalism.

A racist specter of "evil" African Americans ready and able to spring from their impoverished urban communities to commit crimes against whites has long been used by politicians. President George Bush Sr., the father of President George W. Bush, won his 1988 presidential victory by playing the race card. He accused his Democratic opponent Michael Dukakis of being soft on Black crime because he furloughed an African-American prisoner, Willie Horton, who later raped and murdered a white woman.

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Capital fans global warming, puts human habitat at risk

by Franklin Dmitryev

Staggering as it was, the sudden collapse of Antarctica's 720-billion-ton Larsen B Ice Shelf could not for one minute deflect President Bush from his onslaught against all international initiatives to rein in global warming. Nor was he fazed by scientists declaring the collapse was "a wakeup call to expect more collapses"—including in the France-sized Ross Ice Shelf—with "a dramatic effect on global climate."

On the contrary, Bush pressed ahead with an assignment from oil giant ExxonMobil to oust Robert Watson as the head of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), the UN's scientific body on global warming. Joined by coal, electricity, and auto companies, ExxonMobil called for a "team that can better represent the Bush Administration interests."

ExxonMobil is also credited with having Bush withdraw the U.S. from the Kyoto treaty to limit global warming. For this environmentalists have awarded it with an international boycott, and it is one of the charges ExxonMobil will face at a mock Crimes Against Humanity Trial being held May 28 in Dallas.

No radical, Watson is also chief scientist of the World Bank. But what Exxon-Bush want to silence is the international scientific consensus articulated in IPCC reports, that the globe is warming mainly due to burning of fossil fuels—oil, coal, and natural gas.

Bush tried to evade the facts last year by having a U.S. National Academy of Sciences (NAS) panel reevaluate the 2001 IPCC reports. Even this panel, which contained previously skeptical scientists, had to endorse the IPCC's conclusions.

As an international consensus, the IPCC reports are more cautious and conservative than many other scientific projections. Yet even the IPCC concluded that global warming is already having ecological and social impacts. Current and potential impacts include:

- Infectious diseases and heat stress striking or killing



Earlier protest at Bonn global warming talks.

more people. Currently, waterborne diseases kill five million and malaria kills one million people yearly. With warming, diseases spread by insects may threaten half the world's population.

- Greater risk of flooding for tens of millions of people.
- Greater frequency and severity of droughts, floods, heat waves, forest fires, avalanches, and windstorms such as cyclones (hurricanes) and tornadoes.
- Increased soil erosion, landslides and mudslides.
- Scarcer water in many already water-scarce regions. Today, 1.1 billion people lack safe drinking water and millions of women and children must carry water long distances daily.
- Declining crop yields in most tropical and subtropical regions, and, if temperatures climb more than a few degrees, in the mid-latitudes. At present, more than enough food is produced for all of humanity, but due to the world capitalist order, an estimated 790 million people in developing countries are undernourished.
- Increasing species extinctions and biodiversity loss.

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100,000 march for peace, Palestine

Washington, D.C.—I joined with 100,000 people in Washington, D.C. on April 20 for one of the largest and most diverse marches in recent memory. Originally called months ago by an anti-war youth coalition to oppose Bush's war in Afghanistan, anti-Arab racism, and attacks on civil liberties in the name of "fighting terrorism," the day became a convergence of many movements, eliciting a confrontation of ideas between the general concept of "peace" and the struggle of the Palestinian people for self-determination.

The contention over the meaning of the march occasionally expressed itself practically, as when a contingent of mostly young white activists took their place at the front of the march chanting, "What do we want? Peace! When do we want it? Now!" competing with the Palestinian lead chant of "Free-Free Palestine" and "Long Live the Intifada."

People from all over the country and all over the world came to speak out against Bush's permanent war, oppose the World Bank and globalization, protest U.S. military aid to Colombia, abolish nuclear weapons, and fight racism and the attacks on our civil liberties here at home.

I met Arabs from many different countries, retired workers from South Jersey who came to support a Palestinian state and Japanese students who traveled to D.C. to stop nuclear weapons. Though at least three major national coalitions helped organize the march, many people came on their own, not as members of any established organization.

At least 10,000 of the participants were Palestinian or from the Middle East and the march was defined by hundreds of Palestinian flags and militant and emotional chants. Some signs and chants equated Israeli

Prime Minister Sharon with Hitler and signs featuring Nazi swastikas on Israeli flags were scattered throughout the march. Chants of "Jewish People Yes! Occupation no!" were lead by Palestinians throughout the day. Many Jewish organizations carried banners proclaiming their opposition to the occupation. Many young Palestinian women led chants and carried bullhorns.

A strong element of humanism emerged here in the face of the brutal attacks that the Israeli state has perpetrated on the Palestinians in the last several weeks and the murder of civilians in Israel by Palestinian suicide bombers. However, the explicit anti-capitalist message of the mass anti-globalization mobilizations of the last several years was not as evident.

A Syrian man told me: "I am not originally Palestinian, but now I am. Aren't Palestinians human too?" Many U.S. activists carried signs and wore T-shirts proclaiming, "We are all Palestinians." A Palestinian man holding a sign that said "News Flash: Arabs are Semites Too!" said, "We are not trying to alienate anyone—we're trying to show that we are all the same. We're all humans, but people cling to this whole idea of race and racial identity. We're not just Arabs, we're people."

A man holding an Algerian flag said he was there to "support the right of Palestinians to live in dignity and peace among Israelis or anyone else. Today it's Israel, tomorrow it could be anyone else. As an Arab Muslim I'm not against Jews, it has nothing to do with religion; it's about human rights. We went through that in the Algerian revolution."

"Land has never been cheap. This Israel-Palestine war has been going on for quite some decades. We have

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Independent Media Center

Women's co-ops in Chiapas

(A young woman from Chiapas, Manuela Diaz, spoke to News & Letters recently about the cooperative she had helped organize there, the Jolom Mayetik Weavers' Cooperative. We have translated her remarks from Spanish.)

I'm from Chiapas, here as the president of my cooperative to tell others about what we are doing. We organized our cooperative because the women have many needs and problems. We have no money or food or medicine for our families. The only large town nearby is San Cristobal, where we had to sell everything we made for cheap prices. We created the cooperative so we could look for markets besides San Cristobal.

It is important to understand the difference between co-ops run by the government and what we are doing. We demanded that we be in control of our own money and have social and political participation, so we formed our own independent co-ops.

After the 1994 uprising in Chiapas, women began to participate more directly in political matters, specifically meetings and roadblocks. That was a significant change from before, when women primarily stayed at home. The governmental co-ops were run by men who made all the decisions, while the women did all the work. Now women have taken responsibility for decision making and the direction that things are going.

We make cotton and woolen woven bags, also wall hangings, napkins, decorative covers, pillow cases, change purses, bracelets, dolls, stuffed animals and even Zapatista dolls. We use back strap looms and weave colored threads into the actual fabric, which looks like embroidery.

It takes a lot of work to do the weaving, but we also need to care for our homes and families. Sometimes I might wake up at 2:00 a.m. in order to get my weaving done, but then I have all the other chores I must do and so I get to bed by 11:00 at night. That's the way it is for a lot of women, especially when you have young children to take care of. It's difficult because there are so many needs.

Often we have no housing, or there is no corn, or there are families that have no fields to work. For the families, even if there is a fair trade, they don't get the

Economy of choice

The word that feminist writer Rickie Solinger finds the most politically damaging is "choice." Her new book *Beggars and Choosers: How the Politics of Choice Shapes Adoption, Abortion, and Welfare in the United States* (Hill & Wang 2001) is about how public policy defines poor, young women and Third-World women as makers of bad "choices." People who cannot pay the monetary price make bad "choices" to become pregnant, to carry to term, to keep their babies.

Historically, the U.S. (even the 13 original colonies) always regarded family living as a privilege for those who met church or government determined qualifications. In the 1600s and 1700s authorities could separate families that didn't meet community standards of dress, conduct or learning. The Massachusetts Assembly passed a law that removed children from their families if they were over six and couldn't recite the alphabet. So it is nothing new that reproduction is not a right but a choice (or an obligation) of culturally approved homes; and in the present consumer culture societal approval means having money. The Hyde Amendment, which reserved "choice" for those who could afford it, was a foregone conclusion.

Solinger also takes up how "market forces" remove from young and poor women the choice, ignoring the right, to raise already-born children. In one particularly poignant case, a 15-year-old California girl was removed from her home because she was in poor health and the family could not afford a car to take her to school. "Truancy" placed her among strangers despite her human-family connections. This foster family received \$105 per month, whereas her mother on welfare had received only about \$36.

Also, the exercise of choice by U.S. couples who long for children was often dependent on the lack of choice for Romanian, Vietnamese, Russian, Chinese, and Latin American mothers. Put another way, for poor Third World families, keeping the child would have been a poor choice; but for the affluent European or American family, adoption was a good choice.

Solinger believes that the empowerment that came out of the late 1960s helped U.S. women who experienced shame and powerlessness as teenagers. They recognized that they were coerced into paying for their "mistake" with a lifetime of guilt and longing for the company of a lost child. They have organized "Concerned United Birthparents." These women were able to alter the categories of their thinking about the events of their early lives. They no longer accept "bad girl" as a designation. They no longer accept their lack of choice and the coercion that forced them to relinquish. Some of them became politically radical.

I liked *Beggars and Choosers* a lot. It shows that a different world is possible. When men and women are sensitized by experience with inhuman policies and systems, with an increased understanding of what it means to be cheated out of the right to make life-determining choices, they stand up and demand a society that puts human needs first.

—January

minimum salary for their weavings. They take classes in accounting and calculate the price, for example, of one pillow case and if they'd get the minimum it would be 300 pesos per pillow case. They sell it at 135 and 50% stays in the community to pay rent for the store, electricity, transportation costs for the women to bring in the products and administrative costs for the coop representatives.

In the U.S. they can make a little bit more but it's still not a fair price. Even though economically it's not a viable system, the co-ops are important because the women get the ability to get out of their homes, to come together and talk.

Women have developed a training center to help develop skills they never had before. There is a pedal loom there that allows you to work broader fabrics and we also have a sewing machine that women can learn about. Women also learn how to spread information to other areas concerning our cooperative. We're building a new training center which is not in San Cristobal but closer to the communities where we live. At the new center there will be young women who haven't been involved before so that is very exciting to us.

We have some girls that are involved who are 9-10 years old, and we have a broad span of ages, going up past 50 years old. Some of the younger women speak Spanish so they can go to various fairs and sell the goods. Some young women don't want to marry. They want to continue with their education and/or move to the city. They often get these skills through the co-op as well. In this way they are challenging racism against the rural Indian women within the broader Spanish speaking culture.

Before 1994 women didn't participate in much, but after, many more things were opened up for us. What the Zapatista women said was "we have a right to participate in this." Some things have changed, but some have not. Things have gotten a little better regarding domestic violence, but there are still some men who rape and beat women. In some cases when women leave the house, if they don't come back on time, they'll get beaten. Or, in other cases, men won't give women enough money to get things they need for the household, especially if it's for the children. Or, if women are sick, they won't take them to the clinic or for medicine.

When I return, I want to tell the other women, in addition to ideas, what life is like here. There are many women who just don't know what life is like anywhere else.

'Policing motherhood'

Chicago—I attended a workshop entitled "Policing Motherhood" at The Color of Violence Conference in March. The four panelists greatly expanded the concept of reproductive freedom and engaged in serious dialogue with the audience about whether or not to fight to broaden the mainstream abortion rights movement, or to form their own movement, reflective of the concerns of women of color.

The speakers considered the following to be issues of reproductive freedom: welfare reform, medically harmful public and private birth control incentives, incarceration and immigration policies that separate families; poverty and limited economic means to raise children; environmental racism and lack of prenatal care; the need for access to abortion; and, the protection of women from sexually transmitted diseases.

Toni Bond explained that this panel was necessary for an uncompromising and inclusive movement for reproductive freedom and health to be built. She said that while many white women fight for abortion rights, Black women and others fight for access to abortion and the right to have children—healthy children—free from economic constraints and population control measures.

Because much of the mainstream reproductive freedom movement has been so narrowly focused on abortion rights, "compromises" that have sold out women of color, the poor, and the young have often come easily. In fact, one member of the audience reminded people of the alliance between population control proponents and abortion rights activists in the 1990s.

Jael Silliman, one of the speakers, addressed this saying, "Women of color have fought like hell to change the debate around population issues." She asked, "Who is the biggest violator of the environment? Is it women of color around the globe?" Of course the answer is no. So, she asked, why is it that women's fertility is controlled in the name of preventing a drain on the national resources and economy?

Jael was the first to raise the issue of whether or not women of color's energy should be used to try to transform the predominantly white reproductive freedom movement. She said, "Instead of fighting the mainstream, why don't we go where race is naturally at the center of struggle." It was clear that she, along with so many of the women in the room, had been hurt by racism within the reproductive health/freedom movement. It was also exciting and inspiring to witness women of color deciding whether, and how, to create their own radical perspectives and space.

What I worry about is what Cherrie Moraga raised in the opening plenary session the day before this workshop when she talked about the nationalist movements of the '60s and '70s where women were told to produce soldiers for the revolution. What I've learned from women of color liberatory movements is that often times, when race is "naturally at the center," it has "naturally" been equated to male freedom. It seems like women of color are on their own.

We are all in need of the perspectives that were being developed in this workshop because they deal with what freedom is about in the here and now and how to fight for it. We've been losing the battle for years, and this workshop offered a way forward for women and all of humanity.

—Sonia Bergonzi

Women Worldwide

by Mary Jo Grey

Nurses in Sydney, Australia have received overwhelming public support in their campaign to solve the nursing shortage by improving both pay and conditions of patient care. In mid-April, nurses went to four commuter railway stations in Sydney and collected more than 50,000 signatures on petitions of support. The petitions will be presented to the New South Wales government at the end of May.

* * *

A Kenyan gynecologist has taken on the "taboo" of abortion, currently illegal throughout most of Africa despite statistics showing that African women are more likely to die in an unsafe abortion than women anywhere else in the world. Dr. Solomon Ororo performs abortions using a loophole in the Kenyan law that allows the procedure if performed safely to save a woman's life. Dr. Ororo says he is saving a woman's life if he terminates the pregnancy she planned on ending herself with a dangerous method.

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Revolutionary Legacy and Future

Working Women for Freedom

In 1976 three women put together an original pamphlet of working women speaking for themselves about liberation. We recently lost one of the authors, Mary Holmes, a long-time comrade and friend, to cancer (see page 5 to learn more about her). We know that her commitment to human freedom will live on.

"Because workers think their own thoughts, they are every bit as 'intellectual' as professionals who delude themselves that all originality resides in their thoughts. In all cases, working women, here and now, whether in production or in the home, or in political activity or just thinking things through, are hewing out new paths to liberation, and it is their stories that must be told and become the basis of the new action and the new theory. Let the deed and the dialogue begin."

See page 7 to order

In memory of our sister, Mary Holmes

The L.A. rebellion, ten years after

Los Angeles—April 29 is the tenth anniversary of the Los Angeles rebellion, where the "not guilty" verdict of the four police officers prosecuted for the beating of Rodney King was broadcast throughout the city. As word spread, the city burst into a spontaneous opposition to the verdict in three days of protests, demonstrations, fires and stealing. Selected images were repeatedly televised throughout the nation.

A major focal point for the media was a Korean man with a handgun who would protect his store from any intruder. Another was the beating of a white truck driver, Reginald Denny, at the corner of Florence and Normandy Streets. The TV replayed these selected scenes (accompanied by a spin of verbal horror against the uprising) over and over, so that they became imprinted on the minds of a fearful population. There was no mention of the rebellion's stored-up rage, caused by years of unemployment, exploitation, poverty, racism, and especially police brutality.

There was little or no coverage of over 50 people killed, mostly by police and national guardsmen. None of them were prosecuted. Nor was there attention to Latasha Harlins, a young Black girl shot in the head and killed by a Korean merchant for allegedly stealing a can of orange juice. In those days there was a high level of mistrust and antagonism between Korean merchants and their Black customers.

I do not recall any news coverage that expressed the

outrage felt by the demonstrators. Over 1,200 were arrested for mostly petty charges, mainly stealing, and many of the victimized mom-and-pop merchants later learned that the police protected large corporate shopping centers and the affluent Westside. In many cases the police allowed the burning and looting of stores, just watching.

Among those prosecuted for the beating of Reginald Denny was Damion Williams, a young Black man. He had various charges against him, and was found guilty of one lesser charge. Recall that an object was thrown at Reginald Denny only once, whereas police repeatedly clubbed and kicked Rodney King and were found "Not guilty."

Damian Williams served five or six years. After his release he was targeted by the 77th Street Police Precinct, constantly observed and harassed. A year and a half ago, while visiting friends, a stranger pointed a gun at him, upon which Damian said, "What are you doing?" He then knocked the gun away and ran out. After he left, a body was found outside the house and he became the "usual suspect." Upon hearing that he was wanted for murder, Damian turned himself in to police. He has been re-imprisoned for one and a half years awaiting trial; meanwhile, a butter knife was planted in his cell, so now he has two charges to answer to.

—Basho



Los Angeles rebellion, 1992

Workshop Talks

(Continued from page 1)

that in spite of the rapid pace of throwing people off welfare, the much vaunted notion of self-help and independence in working has been more of a mirage than reality for many of these former welfare recipients. Even those who have been able to find jobs have discovered that they are little better off than they were when they were on welfare—worse, if you consider the cost of being away from one's children, while toiling in some sweatshop to earn the same money, often without health benefits.

Clinton's "Welfare Reform" has not succeeded in lifting people out of the cycle of poverty. The Bush government's next goal now is to make sure that no one, no matter how poor or disadvantaged, escapes the despotism of wage slavery. The Bush administration's eagerness to strengthen welfare-to-work rules included floating a proposal to allow states to place welfare recipients in jobs that pay less than minimum wage.

They label such below minimum wage jobs with the euphemisms community service or supervised work experience. The real motive is to replace genuine job-training programs with lunatic programs of religious zealots to fund \$300 million for "marriage training" and \$135 million for "abstinence training."

CRIMINALLY LOW WAGES

The cruel irony is that while the Bush fundamentalists preach that the only way out of poverty is through marriage and "a proper work ethic," in the same breath they want to gut the Fair Labor Standards Act and its national minimum wage of \$5.15 an hour. By a worker's standard this is already criminally low. The drive for a "living wage" is an ongoing struggle among workers as in a grassroots effort in Oakland, California where community organizing successfully forced the city council to mandate a "living wage" in certain jobs connected to the city.

Wasting no time following the slave-wage proposal, the arrogant Bush administration proposed to make its huge tax cut to the richest 1% permanent. We workers don't see the timing of these two Bush proposals as any coincidence. Marx said that since profit comes from surplus value, or unpaid hours of labor, the only way capitalists can extract more to compensate for a falling rate of profit is to squeeze every last ounce from the worker even to the point of exhaustion and death.

They know they have to do this in the face of a global reality of recurring recessions and the permanent decline in the rate of profit. Welfare "reform" is quickly revealing itself to be a way for the state to discipline labor. So-called welfare policies are instruments of coercion to administer what Marx called the "reserve army of the unemployed" for capital's needs.

WAR ON RESERVE ARMY

Part of that reserve army is warehoused in America's prisons. Another aspect of capital's reach for totalitarian control over life and labor is when Ashcroft declared war on immigrant workers with his racial dragnet and fear-mongering in the wake of September 11.

With Bush's latest designs, American corporations hope to enjoy Third World labor conditions without having to go to the Third World. That Third World is being grown right here at home. The misery suffered by undocumented workers and welfare recipients should not be seen as an issue only for those whom mainstream society considers second-class citizens.

Unless we see their struggle as our struggle, what awaits those of us who are now more fortunate is the same harsh conditions of life and labor currently suffered by those trapped in the bottom rung of a two-tiered society. Ultimately no one is really free unless everyone is freed from capital's werewolf hunger to extract ever more from labor for its ever greater expansion.

Worker unrest met with force in China

"We are the working class," stated one worker in a March 11 mass demonstration in Liaoyang in China's northeast. Over 5,000 workers of Liaoyang Ferro-Alloy, in particular workers laid off and retired over the last three years, defied police intimidation to picket and blockade streets. Their demands related to job losses and unemployment, pension and health benefits stolen and withheld from them for more than a year.

Workers in this demonstration opposed the government shuttering or privatizing of state enterprises that have led to 25 million layoffs in the last three years. The workers targeted a local official as the symbol of the government's policy of deliberate bankruptcies, as well as official corruption, since he had arrogantly claimed there was no unemployment at all in Liaoyang.

The regime has plans to lay off another 540,000 workers in 2002, one-third of the workers left in state industry in the area. The World Bank calls unemployment already in excess of 40% in many a town in the "Rust Belt" northeast as foreign capital goes to coastal export industry from Shanghai south.

Protests multiplied and escalated through the rest of March and April in China's northeast—they are still ongoing as we go to press. Demonstrations expanded to 30,000 and more, especially after the arrest and abuse of workers' elected representatives, beginning with Yao Fuxin on March 17. Yao was detained as a healthy man, but his wife found a paralyzed stroke victim when she was finally allowed to visit him over three weeks later.

On March 20, the same day that 1,000 workers stormed city hall to demand Yao's release, police forced their way through picket lines to arrest three more protest leaders. Daqing oilfield workers, once the elite among China's production workers, organized their next demonstration on April 4 without selecting anyone as leaders to deny public security forces any easy targets. Daqing protests then spread to Lanzhou Chemical workers.

The only exception to suppression of news coverage about the protests is official slanders of the workers as hooligans. This shows that Chinese workers know the government is not merely at the service of a company as in the U.S., the government is the company. They need our international solidarity.

The following workers are presently incarcerated: Yao Fuxin, Yao Yunliang, Pang Qingxiang, Wang Zhaoming and Gu Baoshu. To add your voice to the campaign to free them, contact China Labour Bulletin, PO Box 11362 GPO, Hong Kong; or The International Liaison Committee of Workers and Peoples, Paris.

—Bob McGuire

West Side melee

Chicago—On April 16, at Roosevelt and Ashland near the ABLA public housing project, a small insurrection took place. Why? Why would 500 people rally around two suspects of questionable character who might be drug dealers? The group, young and old, men and women, attacked the police who came to arrest the two. What would prompt such anger in people who probably had not much in common with the alleged perpetrators?

The African-American community views the police with suspicion and distrust. There are good reasons for it. We only have to remember all the beatings they have endured. One or two caught on tape show the world the racism of the police, but countless others go undocumented. Intense rage embitters the individuals it happens to, and is retold to their family and friends.

Would the same arrest be made in affluent suburban neighborhoods in the manner they tried to make it in the public housing complex? Attorneys would be there before the squad car door closed. A different situation awaits the two African Americans once they get to the local lockup.

The rage began long ago when the slave owner took the whip to the African and jerked him away from his home to do the white owner's bidding and hasn't changed all that much. There are only so many times they can sic the dogs on you and only so many times the water hoses can be used to drown out the cries of inhuman treatment. The fighting spirit emerges from so much adversity. It was this that spurred on the 500 when they decided, No more! No more!

—Mike M.

Illegal firing now OK

Chicago—The Supreme Court decided 5-4 in favor of Hoffman Plastics Compounds against the National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) on March 27 to deny back pay to a worker who had been illegally fired for union organizing. After he was fired, Jose Castro admitted that he had entered the United States without documentation and had used a friend's Texas birth certificate to gain employment.

The Supreme Court said that Castro himself had performed illegal acts, gaining employment being one of them, and had violated immigration policy. The entire argument is that these other laws take precedence over labor law, in a country in which the activity of labor is seen as having little value, but is normally seen as a cost.

Mr. Castro was denied his right to back pay because of his "illegal" activities. The company was given less than a slap on the wrist, required to post a notice detailing its prior unfair practices. In effect, violating labor law doesn't cost you anything.

While the cowardly politicians and reactionaries have used the crimes of September 11 to burden immigrants with greater restrictions, labor and the Left must insist that the actions of a few cannot delegitimize the humanity of the many who come to the United States looking for work. Since this case changes the way the NLRB treats immigrant workers, it is necessary that a greater effort be made to change the legal regime for immigrants and their families. We must demand "Amnesty Now."

—D. D.

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TURNING THE U.S. INTO 'JUDGE, JURY AND EXECUTIONER'

The question about whether the U.S. should be the "policeman of the world" was answered by George Bush by using the events of September 11 to turn the U.S. into the "judge, jury and executioner of the world." The present U.S. administration claims it has a God-given right to overthrow unsympathetic regimes or leaders, whether in Iraq or Venezuela, and to interfere in any country's internal affairs if they feel U.S. corporate interests might be jeopardized. "You are with us or you are against us" makes it simple to declare anybody guilty of harboring a terrorist. According to this theory, by harboring, training, and even decorating Timothy McVeigh, the Oklahoma bomber, the U.S. itself qualifies as a terrorist state.

**Giorgio
Vancouver**

Bush called for Sharon to voluntarily "show restraint" while he did everything possible to enable Sharon to continue his criminal blitzkrieg against the Palestinians. It reminded me of his calls for industry to "voluntarily" study the problem of worker safety while workers continue to get hurt by the thousands. Like with his father's "thousand points of light," there's as much "voluntarism" in corporate America and in Sharon alike as there is in a werewolf's hunger to devour

everything in its path.

**Hospital worker
California**

The Catholic hierarchy took the position that the mission of their institution was more important than the lives sacrificed when a pedophile priest is moved to another parish.

Politically, it would be easy for the U.S. justice system to indict and convict criminal priests. But when the U.S. is on a mission like getting rid of Hussein, our government sacrifices untold lives to further it. If it is wrong for the Church to sacrifice lives for its aims, it's just as wrong for institutions like nations.

**Jan
Chicago**

In the April 20 demonstrations in D.C. that brought out tens of thousands, I liked that the issues were diverse—globalization of capital, Palestine, nuclear weapons, the School of the Americas and more. The demonstrators moved from signs and speeches about one issue to another, learning new things from each other and how the issues intersect. It stimulated people to feel we can accomplish something.

**George
New York**

me only more determined than ever to fight against both imperialism and fundamentalism everywhere.

**Supporter
California**

I ran into a large group of pro-Palestinian demonstrators in Dearborn, home to many Middle Easterners, and had an impulse to stop and pass out the last issue of *N&L*. But I decided against it because the crowd was very emotional and the possibility of being attacked seemed very real. I was frustrated because I thought many would be receptive to the paper.

**Subscriber
Detroit**

Reading Raya Dunayevskaya's 1982 "Stop the slaughter of the Palestinians" and then the editorial on "Israel-Palestine at boiling point," in the April issue showed how philosophy can give action a direction. Dunayevskaya's insight that "Begin-Sharon are out to destroy the very idea of Palestinian national self-determination" set the ground for the editorial in the same issue.

**Terry Moon
Memphis**

●

PUNISHING THE POOR

Some reality is needed to challenge Bush's lies and distortions regarding welfare. The whole emphasis on marriage as the solution to child poverty is built on a distortion. While it's true that statistics say children with both a mother and father do better, that's because those kinds of families usually have two incomes and thus more money. Statistics also show that children of single moms with good incomes do just as well as children from two-parent families. Of course, that's not the only thing wrong with Bush's punitive plan.

**Women's Liberationist
Tennessee**

●

LOSING OUR RIGHTS

Attorney General Ashcroft's arrest of New York attorney Lynne F. Stewart is really frightening. A noted defender of unpopular criminal defendants, Stewart and her translator were charged with providing material support for terrorism by allegedly passing messages from a client who had been convicted of planning terrorist activities to his supporters. Ashcroft made up this nonsense after secretly taping their conversations in the client's jail cell.

After September 11, when the government moved to deprive immigrants of any rights or civil liberties, U.S. citi-

**Teacher
Oregon**

Many of Israel's actions were designed to humiliate the Palestinians. I read that they drew the star of David on the walls of houses in Ramallah with a number written in the center of the star. It made

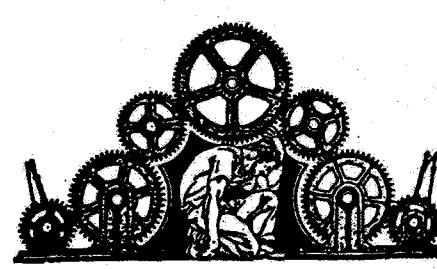
READERS' VIEWS

zens were not immediately affected. Now we had better realize that we have all lost the right to confidentiality with our attorneys. This harassment of attorneys can be the slippery slope to the loss of many more of our rights.

**Scared
New York**

John Alan's column in the April *N&L* was really interesting. Black culture did not just enrich the American culture. It enriched the idea of freedom. If it wasn't for the Black movement, white America wouldn't have all the civil rights they are now struggling to defend.

**Iranian exile
Berkeley, Cal.**



WORKERS' CONCERN

At the end of your article on the "Piqueteros" in Argentina (March *N&L*) one worker is quoted as saying that "everything is still divided, the movement hasn't yet united, we still go out only for our own individual battles." I thought of this when I read about how Chinese workers in Liaoyang, having been booted out of formerly state-enterprises that were converted to private enterprise, are organizing all laid-off workers across diverse industries as one unit. One worker says he doesn't have illusions that the demonstrations will necessarily produce jobs but wants to emphasize that "we exist and want work." They are struggling for something beyond only jobs.

**American worker
California**

Thanks for your support during our very successful Truth Tour in March. As you know, the struggle for dignity and fairness in the fields continues. We hope all who can will join us for a full day of action on Thursday, May 16, in Louisville, KY for the annual stockholders meeting of Tricon, Taco Bell's parent company. We plan to greet the shareholders in the morning, to educate them about Tricon's role in the continuing poverty and exploitation of Immokalee farmworkers and propose solutions they can take with them inside. In the afternoon we will be marching, singing, leafleting, and talking with folks at several Taco Bell restaurants in the Louisville area. We will conclude the day in a joint event with Kentucky Jobs with Justice. You can be back on the road by early evening. Email us at TBTour@aol.com for specific details and directions and meet us in Louisville.

**Coalition of Immokalee Workers
Florida**

I know you don't often mention the Labor Party concept but campaign "finance reform" seems to require that it be considered. It is more than an abstract issue of constitutional rights, namely the First Amendment. Last September Oklahoma passed a "right-to-work" law, which was partially touted as limiting political contributions from unions to "liberal causes" such as PAC, abortion rights, and so forth. So far, the only effect of the "right-to-work" legislation is to keep public school teachers' salaries among the lowest in the U.S.

**Allan Mui
Oklahoma**

●

MULTIPLE HATE CRIMES

The beautiful murals on the Women's Building in San Francisco, which hosts several nonprofit activist groups, were vandalized by being spray-painted with the words "Kill Arabs" in foot-long letters. The mural is a pastiche of famous women throughout history including

Georgia O'Keeffe and Rigoberta Menchu. The original muralists invited the community to come help them begin repairs.

**Women's liberationist
San Francisco**

For the first time, the 1994 *Hate Crimes Sentencing Enhancement Act* is being applied to a case of violence based on sexual orientation. It is the only federal law that addresses violence against lesbians and gay men that takes place on federal property. It also increases the severity of the crime and allows for the introduction of additional types of evidence, including motive.

The anti-human side of this is that the Attorney General has stated that this law makes it easier to request the death penalty. It will be used against a man accused of killing two women hikers in the summer of 1996 in the Shenandoah National Park. The indictment states that Julianne Marie Williams and Laura Winans, both in their 20s, were intentionally targeted because of the man's hatred of women and homosexuals.

**Suzanne Rose
North Carolina**

HOMELESSNESS

The article on homelessness (*N&L* April 2002) took me on an imaginary trip. It's important to understand that even when you're out of work you have a full time job just surviving. It may look like you're trying to milk the system when you're trying to just survive. This writer is working hard but losing the fight. I tended to look at homeless people as the result of a horrible system that makes people who are only a little better off their source of survival. You can't give money to everybody who asks without going broke. Those who are the most responsible for creating the situation don't ever have to run into these people. The problem is a lot deeper than just getting active to feed people.

**David
California**

ALTERNATIVES TO CAPITALISM

Activist-thinker (*N&L* April 2002) sees the left's problem as "knocking down the ruling ideology of capitalism." This is part of the problem. Having convincing alternatives is essential. But there are material difficulties which must be solved on both a theoretical and practical level as well. One of these was posed by Engels in his 1891 *Introduction to Marx's The Civil War in France*, where he described a class of professional politicians organized to "dominate and plunder" society. He saw this could only be bettered by measures proposed by the Paris Commune with delegates elected by "all concerned," subject to recall at any time and paid the same as ordinary workers.

Among the problems to overcome today are what to offer the large number who have a vested interest in the present system. Another is whether genuine democracy can start alongside the present system or whether it is necessary to "capture" the state machine to transform it. That takes us to questions of power and force, on which history has taught us much. Let's have readers' ideas on these questions.

**R. F. Price
Melbourne, Australia**

I wish *N&L* had more discussion of the way forces like the Zapatistas in Chiapas have sought to go beyond the traditional concept of the seizure of power. Political power is a corrupting force and history shows we have to avoid the tendency of radical projects to get sucked into it.

**Latin American solidarity activist
Chicago**

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HARDT, NEGRI AND 'THE MULTITUDE'

I think the essay on Hardt and Negri in the April *N&L* was too kind to them. I find their work full of postmodernist jargon. What is the point of using words like "the multitude" to define mass struggles? It effaces the differences between different revolutionary subjects.

Activist
New York

Capital has invaded every aspect of everyday life and the struggle against it has become universal as well. That's why I find the concept of "the multitude" attractive. It gets us away from the old notion of there being one privileged revolutionary subject ("THE proletariat") without giving up on the working class.

Bob
Oakland

I've been wondering if books such as *Empire* could be used by Marxist dialecticians to put things in perspective in the world. Lenin, like any serious revolutionary, often emphasized the need to read others to clarify one's own views. This time maybe the U.S. is the weakest link in the chain, as Lenin would say, opening the way to social revolution.

Revolutionary
Fremont, Cal.

There seems to be an assumption in Hardt and Negri's book that Marx was Eurocentric. How can they say that in light of all the work Marxist-Humanism has done over the past two decades to bring out the writings from Marx's last decade on Third World societies? Are they unaware of all this, or are they just pretending not to know?

Teacher
Indiana

The biggest problem with Negri and Hardt, in my view, is that they do not discuss the problem of the failed revolutions of the 20th century. In their eyes the revolutions succeeded simply by virtue of proving the power of "revolu-

tionary subjectivity." But unless we confront the reasons for the failure of the 20th century revolutions to get beyond capital, we'll keep on repeating their mistakes. It's fine to sing paeans to "subjectivity" but the key question remains—what happens AFTER the revolution?

P. W.
Illinois



WOMEN FIGHTING TERROR AND WAR

I must point out one error in the excellent Lead article on "Women fight terror and war in South Asia and the Middle East" (*N&L* March 2002). Current conditions in Afghanistan are not "beginning to wear away the confidence of Afghans in the ability of the interim government to move the country toward democracy" because people never had any confidence in that Northern Alliance-dominated, U.S.-imposed government. They experienced the same men in power prior to the Taliban and know them to be just as guilty of abusing the population. Women explain that is why many have not abandoned the burka. They don't feel safe. The Revolutionary Association of Women of Afghanistan (RAWA) has consistently advised the world that the new government is not to be tolerated.

In addition to all the countries Maya Jhansi discussed, women's groups are active in combating the repression being imposed in the name of "fighting terrorism" further east. In the Philippines women's groups predominate in opposing the recent re-institution of U.S. troops in their country. In Aceh, Indonesia, women are very active in the independence movement and oppose the government's recent imposition of religious law and dress code police.

Women's Liberationist
New York

THE BRITISH SCENE

A thousand attended a socialist alliance conference here. A revival in the unions would be welcome but it remains a defensive reaction. New ideas and new ways of doing things are long overdue. But the most reactionary ideas remain a powerful current as can be seen in the efforts here to generate a strong law and order debate. The main winners in this at the moment are the far right and the new-fascist groups.

Patrick
England

The Marxist-Humanists of the London Corresponding Committee were the only tendency at the Socialist Alliance conference connecting the question of organization to the abolition of capital and creation of a new society. The others did not even get beyond disaffiliation from New Labour and creation of a new organization! The conference raised more questions than answers, although the attendance of a thousand was reflective of the general resurgence in union struggle which has brought the connection of the unions to New Labour to the forefront.

Marxist-Humanist
England

●

HAVES AND HAVE-NOTS

This is how the World of Haves and Have-nots is divided.

The Haves: More necessities, more leisure time, more chance to go to any schools, more places to travel willingly.

The Have-Nots: Less necessities, virtually no leisure time, barely a chance to go to one school, barely allowed to stay where they are now.

Conclusion: The world has a recipe with the needed ingredients to set the world on fire literally and physically. The only question left is when?

George Wilfrid Smith Jr.
Chicago

Caught in a spiral of violence today are the civilians of the West Bank and Israel. The accelerating terrorism began one and a half years ago when Sharon, pro-

tected by his army, visited an Islamic mosque and provoked all the violence that followed. Yet where is there discussion of the fundamental causes of the clash—the vast disparity of daily living conditions between the haves and have-nots. It is not only between Israelis and Palestinians but throughout the whole Middle East between the rulers and the people. The class differences exist in all countries, yet the media focuses only on religious, racial or cultural differences.

Asian American
Los Angeles



PRISON VOICES

The Illinois Department of Corrections is so corrupt that I cannot figure out why the federal government does not touch them. Now they claim they cannot give prisoners raises on the details (jobs) they do, because of the state pay freeze. But if you look at the law, you will see that profits on sales from commissary stores are expended by the department for special benefit of committed persons, "which shall include but not be limited to the advancement of inmate payrolls." So how could any budget crisis stop the prisoners' pay increase when it has nothing to do with the state budget? I would like to read up on revolutionary history but have no funds for books. Thanks to the donor who paid for my sub to *N&L* I do know what is going on today.

Prisoner
Illinois

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Venezuela coup attempt fails but raises key questions

Venezuela's elite successfully ousted Hugo Chavez from his presidential post on April 11 in the midst of a general strike and a massive march, only to see him reinstated less than two days later after even bigger protests by his supporters. Governments throughout Latin America immediately condemned the coup, while the U.S. rushed to offer its support to the new regime on its first and only full day in power.

The whirlwind of events on those two days had been developing since last November, when Chavez used his "fast track" powers to enact 49 new laws that have alienated landowners and capitalists. One of those laws creates a National Land Institute whose job is to carry out a mild land reform. All of them are intended to institutionalize Chavez's "Bolivarian Revolution," which until November had done little concrete to aid Venezuela's poor, estimated at 80% of the country's 24 million people.

Pedro Carmona, head of Fedecamaras, the largest business group, was the old guard's hero for a day and a half. In that brief reign he attempted to abolish the legislature, cut off all oil shipments to Cuba ("Not a single barrel will reach the island!"), and fire the military chiefs still loyal to Chavez.

The stupidity of the U.S. in rushing to embrace him showed how poorly attuned they are to events there. Bush's hatred of Chavez had intensified since he criticized the war on Afghanistan for "fighting terror with terror," and they've no doubt been looking for ways to undermine the "Chavistas" since then. But they have little appreciation for the support Chavez still has among the poor, who again have shown no desire to give up on him if the only alternative is the same old neoliberalism that they threw out with Chavez's numerous election victories since 1998.

However, what has been even more surprising in the days after the coup is the lack of analysis by rational people to come to terms with what it meant. If Chavez is so popular, how was the old guard able to bring 100,000 people into the streets on the third day of a national strike? Most commentaries have skirted the issue by claiming there was not quite so many that came out, and anyway the "real people" were the bigger crowds that came out to protest the coup once Carmona took over.

The bulk of the April 11 march did come from the eastern end of Caracas, which is more affluent, whereas the huge outpouring (400,000 according to some estimates) on the 13th was from the western, poorer end. But this crisis is simply the latest in a string of similar events. On Dec. 10, Fedecamaras called a successful general strike, and on Jan. 23 brought out 100,000 people to a "March for Freedom & Democracy." Both were countered by even bigger pro-Chavez rallies, but the fact remains that Chavez has done much to

alienate workers from him. Oil workers have had their strikes deemed illegal and school teachers are sick of his attempts to militarize education. When 140,000 teachers went on strike in late January, the strike was declared illegal. Overriding everything is the poverty that has only worsened during Chavez's time in power.

What saved Chavez on April 13 was not only the masses, but the fact that the elite has yet to reconstruct its old two party system that ruled the country from 1958 to 1998. The Social Christians and Democratic Action are still defunct, and this explains why the bourgeoisie has turned to organizing mass events through Fedecamaras. They're sure to be getting some

help from the U.S. in the coming period.

On the other side looms a greater question that needs to be addressed: how can Chavez's so-called Bolivarian Revolution, which has not been able to change the lives of the poor in any significant way, become a real revolution? If the U.S. does not to get its wish for another puppet "democracy" that tows the neoliberal line, the masses that flexed their power on April 13 must follow through somehow with what they started.

—Mitch Weerth

Black/Red View

(Continued from page 1)

New York City's former Mayor Giuliani began his rise by permitting the New York police to terrorize, torture and kill innocent African Americans. Giuliani's police force constructed a regime of terror in the name of combating crime.

Former President Clinton, in a political sense, practiced terrorism. His clap-trap about a crisis in Black "morality" boiled down to getting Congress to enact punitive crime laws, such as the "three strikes and you're out" law—a mandatory life sentence if one is convicted of a third felony—as well as mandatory minimum sentences for minor drug offenders and the construction of more prisons. The result of those punitive laws are two million in jail and prison of which African-American men and women compose 50%.

U.S. LEGAL AND 'ILLEGAL' TERROR

Imprisonment of such a large number of African Americans, by the political action of a supposedly liberal president, says more about the depth of racism in American society than about actual or alleged crimes committed by those African Americans. In many parts of this nation, the very presence of African Americans implies crime in the thinking of white Americans and gives the police a reason to profile or shoot African Americans.

What history has clearly shown is: legal equality and political freedom do not, in themselves, abolish the practices of racism, sexism and classism in America's "democratic" capitalist society.

African Americans have been engaged in a ceaseless struggle against racist terrorism. Once freed from chattel slavery, they discovered they were not at all free, but landless people existing under the terrorism of lynch mobs. The Tuskegee Institute's conservative numbers show 3,426 African Americans were lynched between 1882 and 1947. Lynching was a brutal and a dehumanizing affair. Before hundreds and even thousands of spectators the victim was often stripped naked, mutilated and burned alive. No president of the United States ever intervened to stop those grisly affairs, even when the victim was the African-American postmaster of Lake City, South Carolina.

NO REPARATIONS YET FOR TULSA

May 31 is the 81st anniversary of one of the many race riots against African Americans, in Tulsa, Oklahoma. In 1921 deputy sheriffs and national guardsmen carried out one of the most violent acts of terrorism, killing 300 and making 10,000 homeless. To this day there has been no official acknowledgment of this state sponsored terror, not to mention reparations for the still-living survivors. That is true even though Congress appropriated \$29 million, after Timothy McVeigh blew up the Murrah Federal Building, to fund the Oklahoma City National Memorial Institute for the Prevention of Terrorism.

One cannot help but recognize that the long struggle against racist terrorism has both put American civilization on trial and given a greater dimension to the idea of freedom than the founding fathers were able to recognize or imagine. Then, as now, the fundamental issue is not pompous declarations about the evil of terrorism, but everyday human relationships.



News & Letters

Memphis King march

Memphis, Tenn. — On April 4, in commemoration of Martin Luther King Jr.'s death, over 200, mostly African-Americans, marched in "A Day of Remembrance" parade from the AFSCME hall through a poor Black Memphis neighborhood to the Civil Rights Museum. Though the march has become controversial in the last years as more energy has been put into the commemoration of Dr. King's birth, there are those in Memphis who feel both dates must be acknowledged.

While the famous "I am a man" posters were everywhere in evidence, a group of young Black women carried handmade "I am a woman" signs. One read: "I am a mother." When I asked the leader of this group if the women didn't feel that women were included in the "I am a man" signs, she replied that while the group's leaders had their own views, they felt that it should be up to the young women to decide.

—Women's Liberationist

Afro-Colombian struggle for land and justice

Colombia has 40 million people—26% of them of African descent, mostly in the Pacific region. Since the period of slavery, we have shared that area with indigenous Native Americans.

Fifty years ago, a law was passed that people willing to invest in that area could settle there. People began buying small landholdings from Blacks, peasants and indigenous people and turning them into big ranches for cattle and tourists. Private enterprises began exploiting natural resources. Many who lived there were forced into poverty in city slums.

In 1991, Colombia adopted a new Constitution. Blacks were not represented in that Constituent Assembly, but we asked the indigenous representatives to take up the defense of our culture and land rights. They won some recognition of our rights that were small, but important.

In 1993, a law was passed that said that the Black population should delineate the areas where it had lived and apply for titles. The law also said that the government must recognize the Black population's rights and devote money to social spending in consultation with the communities.

The community organizations met resistance from those who had been exploiting natural resources in our region such as gold and wood. Communities demanded title to the land. Since then we've experienced assassinations and expulsion by military groups paid by political and business interests.

My organization won the first collective titles in that region. Seven days later, at 5:00 AM on Dec. 13, 1996, paramilitary groups arrived in my town, Riosucio, intent on murdering the leaders and their families. Many were taken from their beds and paraded naked through the streets. Anyone who resisted was killed. The shouts woke me up. I ran to take refuge in the swamp along with many others.

At 8:00 AM, army helicopters started patrolling. The paramilitaries radioed the pilots to attack the swamp, claiming the people were guerrillas. The army attacked us with bombs and rifles, killing many people. Those who survived stayed in the water for three days until hunger and desperation forced us out. Some of us sneaked through the town and reached a rural community across the river. I recuperated there, then fled to Bogota, where I live today.

Two months later, in February 1997, the paramilitaries and army attacked the rural communities in the region and massacred an unknown number of people. More than 20,000 people left the area. Not a single per-

son remained. Today, some are living in Panama, Ecuador, Venezuela, and many are in the big cities.

People who survived the attacks from the Pacific region of Colombia organized the Association of Displaced Afro-Colombians (AFRODES) to fight for our territory. AFRODES helps orient families arriving in the cities. We also work for our return to our home. I lead the organization in Bogota, which began in 1999, and have had two attempts on my life. We have requested assistance from the national government, but they say they don't have the economic resources.

Last year, the U.S. government gave Colombia \$1.3 billion for "Plan Colombia"—80% goes for arms. Those arms are being used to attack peasants. They are spraying the croplands with pesticides prohibited in the U.S. and destroying what they grow for subsistence. Chemicals get into the rivers, which causes health problems for people and livestock.

We need the solidarity of organizations internationally who, like us, fight for justice, because our voices are not heard in our country.

—Marino Cordoba

Repression in Indonesian provinces

In the provinces seeking independence from Indonesia, March was marked by increased military presence and killings. The Megawati government reiterated its commitment to exterminate the rebellions in Aceh, West Papua, Maluku and Central Sulawesi, and the president herself ordered the military not to worry about human rights violations in the process.

Her statements were quickly followed by an attack March 13 against the head office in Jakarta of Kontras, the Commission for the Disappeared and the Victims of Violence, Indonesia's leading human rights organization. Seemingly incited by elements within the military, 500 thugs vandalized the office, destroying all its equipment and seizing its files.

Kontras reported 55 cases of forced disappearances in Aceh between Jan. 1 and September last year. An estimated 10,000 people have died in that province since December 1976, when the separatist Free Aceh Movement began to fight for an independent state. More than 300 have been killed this year alone.

The only recent bright spot, at least temporarily, was in Maluku. A peace treaty was signed Feb. 11 between that province's Muslim and Christian groups.

On Feb. 27, hundreds of Muslims and Christians from Ambon and Haruku islands marched together peacefully in support of the Malino II Declaration. The crowd marched around the government compound, crossing borders dividing Muslim and Christian areas.

Much of the violence in Maluku has been carried out by the militant Laskar Jihad organization, which was allegedly created, funded and armed by generals upset by Indonesia's transition to democracy. Recently, an armed gang waylaid a joint Muslim-Christian peace procession and abducted 60 Christian women.

A U.S. State Department report published in March said that human rights organizations were targets of the security forces last year, with killings, abuse and detentions reported. Nevertheless, Bush has gotten Congress to resume military (renamed "police") aid to Indonesia in the name of "fighting terrorism." Americans interested in stopping the resumption of aid and in learning about the struggles in the separatist provinces can get information from East Timor Action Network or from Aceh Referendum Information Center, at internationalaffairs@siraaceh.org.

—Anne Jaclard



VIEWS FROM THE INSIDE OUT

by Robert Taliaferro

When was the last time that you witnessed so much news about relatively obscure non-news items?

Since the beginning of the declared war on terrorism there has been no lack of information surrounding every aspect of the action.

Americans, and the world, now know more about the conduct of war than they have ever known, and the media onslaught describing the war's prosecution now borders on overkill.

From any minor scratch received by troops on the ground, to the utilization of multi-million dollar weapon systems, we now get up-to-the-minute information that supposedly lets the public know that their faith in the American leadership is not misplaced, and that their money is well-spent.

Additionally, we now know more about Afghanistan than we know about our own backyards, which is sadly ironic. Had this information been available prior to September 11, it is quite possible that the tragic events of that day could have been avoided.

Unfortunately we have this unique propensity to ignore anything in the world that does not directly pertain to our existence. If attacked in any fashion, we are quick to respond with a sense of emotional furor.

Yet, despite all of its technology and industrial might, the U.S. is relatively naive with an inchoate understanding of the world beyond its borders. In essence, it is a second-rate player when it comes to understanding the theoretical and philosophical context of world views.

Every administration since Reagan's has been defined by that inherent ignorance and American propensity to trust in the concept that "money can solve all problems."

Nearly every tragedy that has befallen American citizens, both home and abroad, can be mapped directly—or indirectly—to policy-makers who have blindly embarked on crusades that equated finance with solutions.

Yet the greatest deterrence to rational actions on the part of those policy-makers has not been economic, or philosophical for that matter. It has been cultural and nationalistic, attempting to imbue American ideas and principles on people in a manner that is as alien to

Capitalism's information virus infects all

them as Pop Tarts or peanut butter.

In search of public support, policy-makers often act like some virulent plague that runs rampantly through the population, sickening everyone with a deadly disease.

The disease that is spread is capitalism, whose symptoms are as devastating as the most deadly virus: inherent racism and the conditions that make genocide possible, ensure homelessness and hunger, that enhance and support hatred, and that ultimately promulgate some tragedy.

Today the enemy is Osama bin Laden and Saddam Hussein. Yesterday it was Noriega or the Duvaliers of Haiti. In each case they were once supported by policy-makers in this country in some capacity. In each case that support backfired.

During the Cold War, nearly every abusive leader in this hemisphere was supported directly, or indirectly, by American policy-makers of the day. The only criterion for that support was an espoused hatred of Communism. Unfortunately, they were not questioned about disdain for their own people.

Who will be tomorrow's puppet? Who will be the next unlikely partner in some newly-stylized freedom campaign? The die is already being cast for the next political failure, as policy-makers vie for public support.

In a letter to Adams, Thomas Jefferson once questioned whether the common man could be trusted with self-government. In a historical irony, it was Karl Marx who was able to answer that question affirmatively. One wonders what both would think today if they were to review the decisions that policy-makers have made over the last few decades?

Of course, Jefferson also noted that a little revolution every now and again was a healthy thing, if for no other reason than to ensure that the leadership was kept honest. Marx would have agreed with that idea.

It is important to be able to view events in order to ensure that the trust of the people is not misplaced. In viewing those events, however, one must be careful that they maintain the ability to discern the differences between factual—as opposed to manufactured and orchestrated—truths. In so doing, one cannot be lulled to sleep by disinformation and propaganda, from either side.

Cuts hurt prisoners

Joliet, Ill.—All college academic and vocational classes throughout the Illinois Department of Corrections (IDOC) were abruptly terminated as of Dec. 21. The only classes available are mandated GED curriculums. Prisoners were paying for these college classes once returning to society. College classes greatly enable prisoners to find employment and not return to prison.

For several months, there was a hiring freeze for most prison assignments. There were also no pay raises for prisoners for several months. At Hill Prison, pool and ping pong tables, which were purchased by the residents benefit fund (10% added to all prisoners' commissary purchases), are being taken out of the prison.

Hill Prison has had very few real security threats with very few officers being assaulted. Although Hill is a medium security institution, the prison is run like a maximum security one. Fences are being built around each cell house. Prisoners' movements have been drastically reduced. And for what? Fear?

The Illinois prison guards' union is only concerned with saving its membership. In reality, positions like food supervisor, just like counselors and superintendents, are unnecessary, expensive positions that can be fulfilled by security. There is plenty of money for the IDOC staff, as a whole, just none for prisoners' needs.

The bottom line is that prisoners are receiving the worst end of the stick during a time when increasing numbers of news stories are showing crooked cops forcing confessions to incarcerate while DNA tests exonerate prisoners from years of false confinement. The prison union doesn't know just how good they have it

—Tiberius Mays

Death Row prisoners 'volunteer' to die

Late in 1997, Arizona began moving Death Row prisoners to a super-maximum security facility. There, prisoners are held in small, separate cells for 23 hours a day with almost no interaction with other human beings.

In Florida, prison officials recently added a heavy mesh to the outside of Death Row cells so prisoners can no longer see out. In November 1999, prisoners were given a memo which read: "Effective Monday, Nov. 29, 1999, standard ink pens and pencils are now considered contraband."

In Oklahoma, which led the U.S. with 18 executions in 2001 (due, in large part, to laboratory evidence manufactured by now-disgraced police chemist Joyce Gilchrist), Death Row prisoners are housed in an underground facility where they never see direct sunlight.

In Texas, condemned men were previously held at the O. B. Ellis State Prison in Huntsville where they could work, four hours a day, see out of their cells, and enjoy recreation together. In 1999, a few months after an unsuccessful escape by seven Death Row prisoners, the condemned men were moved 70 miles east to Allan B. Polunsky State Prison at Livingston. There, they are locked up virtually all the time, have no view out of their cells, and make only brief, solitary visits to the recreation yard. (Texas' condemned women are held in a separate prison near Gatesville.)

As conditions on the nation's Death Rows become less humane, more and more prisoners are asking to be executed early. Death penalty opponents believe that the tough conditions and the virtual isolation from human contact are pushing prisoners so far into depression and mental illness that death becomes an attractive option.

Late in 2001, there were approximately 3,700 men and women on Death Rows in 38 states and in the federal prison system.

According to Amnesty International, 90 people had "volunteered" for execution since the U.S. Supreme Court removed the barriers to capital punishment in 1976. Two-thirds of these "voluntary" executions were carried out since 1994. Many lawyers working on death penalty cases point to the increasingly harsh environment on Death Row as the primary reason for the jump in voluntary executions.

An Arizona lawyer who asked not to be named commented on the situation in his state: "At some point, prisoners can no longer live like that and still be human or feel human emotions. An inner deadness sets in. The environment on Death Row not only makes you want to die but gives you the feeling you have no choice."

A former guard on Texas' Death Row said he understood why prisoners wanted to die. "Quite a few of them feel that way and I don't blame them. They are treated inhumanely," said the guard, who resigned late last year because he found the work distasteful.

Yolanda Torres, a Texas death penalty defense lawyer, said: "With inadequate medical and psychiatric attention, I have seen rapid deterioration and personality changes in these men which is what's leading to volunteerism."

"It's distressing that the only time you can get what amounts to a state-assisted suicide in the U.S. is on Death Row," noted Abram Bonowitz, director of Floridians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty. At last count, four voluntary executions were in the Florida pipeline.

—Roger Hummel

Confronting Permanent War & Terrorism: Why the Anti-War Movement Needs a Dialectical Perspective

A statement from the Resident Editorial Board of News and Letters Committees

The full text of this important challenge to today's movement against the permanent war drive of the Bush administration is available from News & Letters.

Excerpts from the Statement:

"Any doubts that George W. Bush is determined to plunge the U.S. into a permanent war was dispelled by his State of the Union speech of Jan. 29, which posed an "axis of evil" of Iraq, Iran, and North Korea as potential targets of U.S. military intervention. A chilling indication of how far Bush is willing to take this militarism was the Pentagon report leaked in March that calls for developing new nuclear weapons for use against North Korea, Iraq, Syria, Libya and even Iran..."

"Today's situation calls upon us to renew anti-war activism by developing a total view which expresses not only what we are against, but what we are for. Never has it become more important to connect political action with the development of a philosophy of human liberation..."

"Today's realities call not only for a political response, not only movements and rallies of solidarity and protest, but also the rethinking and the concretization for today of the dialectical perspectives of Hegel, Marx, and Marxist-Humanism. Such a movement from theory has a life and death importance because it can aid us in finding a way ahead in a situation where the pathway forward is far from clear."



Demonstration against IMF in Washington, D.C. on April 20

Capital fans global warming, puts human habitat at risk

(Continued from page 1)

- Rising sea levels may submerge many islands and inundate extensive coastal areas. A one-meter rise would displace seven million people in India and 11 million in Bangladesh and cut off a large proportion of cropland. Much of southern Florida would be underwater, and all coastal countries would be affected.

Moreover, the IPCC states, "The impacts of future changes in climate extremes are expected to fall disproportionately on the poor....The effects of climate change are expected to be greatest in developing countries in terms of loss of life and relative effects on investment and the economy."

Much as Bush cherishes the illusion that there is no need to face the burning question of global warming, it is not only a future threat. It is making itself felt today. Nowhere is that clearer than in the small South Pacific island nation Tuvalu.

Five years ago, Tuvalu lost 50 hectares (150 acres) of its land during the cyclones which have been hitting it more frequently in the past decade. Higher tides flood its islands more often. Floods and storms are eroding more of its land now. Salt water is degrading drinking water and cropland. Tuvalu has become the first country to plan to evacuate its population as environmental refugees.

RADICAL CLIMATE CHANGES

Bush justified his rejection of Kyoto by playing on the inevitable scientific uncertainty and the illusion that climate change will be gradual and manageable. But another NAS study released in December found that, rather than a gradual linear increase as assumed by the IPCC, abrupt climate shifts have occurred repeatedly in the past 100,000 years. The more greenhouse gases humanity pumps into the atmosphere, the more likely "large, abrupt, and unwelcome regional or global climatic events" are, drastically undermining ecosystems and human settlements.

The report continues: "The new paradigm of an abruptly changing climatic system has been well established by research over the last decade, but this new thinking is little known and scarcely appreciated in the wider community of natural and social scientists and policy-makers."

In the face of all this, on Feb. 14 Bush announced his plan to do—nothing. This oily valentine to the energy industry is part and parcel of the energy policy they wrote for him: a drive to expand the production and use of fossil fuels and nuclear power while giving lip service (plus some sneaky budget cuts) to conservation, efficiency, and renewable energy. So reactionary and dangerous is Bush's energy policy that 250 scientists issued an open letter last May denouncing its misinformation and social and environmental effects.

The Bush climate plan includes voluntary efforts only, and its "goal" is the same rate of growth in U.S. greenhouse gas emissions as has occurred in the past decade. His scriptwriters tried to hide this fact by inventing a new term: "greenhouse gas intensity," which means the proportion between emissions and economic output. As technology improves, this proportion declines, though actual emissions keep growing.

To put the meaninglessness of this measure in perspective, consider the African country Sierra Leone, whose devastation by armed groups has been met with indifference by the West. One of the poorest countries in the world, Sierra Leone has among the lowest carbon emissions per person in the world, yet its "greenhouse gas intensity" increased by 230% during the 1990s—precisely because of the economic devastation.

The Bush non-plan was widely denounced, not only by environmentalists who labeled it "Exxon-Mobil Approved," but by the U.S.'s European allies. The European Union declared its opposition, estimating the plan would allow the U.S. to increase emissions by 33%.

At the April 12-14 meeting of G-8 environment ministers, the depth of the environmental crisis shattered the diplomatic veneer that normally covers meetings of the rulers of the seven richest, most technologically advanced countries, plus Russia. The Bush administration came under sharp public critique for rejecting the Kyoto accord on greenhouse gas emissions.

European ministers declared that climate change can only be tackled through an international treaty with full participation by the number one greenhouse gas emitter in the world, and they slammed Bush's alternative climate plan as "business as usual."

Canada too came under fire for backing away from Kyoto. While Canada and the U.S. succeeded in keeping it off the formal G-8 agenda, Kyoto in fact came up in every discussion and overshadowed all other issues.

Reflecting a serious political defeat for the U.S. and Canada, the meeting's final consensus statement referred to the harmful "effects of climate change," affirmed "the need to reduce greenhouse gas emissions," and even referred to the European countries' commitment to ratifying Kyoto.

GLOBAL WARMING, GLOBAL CAPITAL

Even by meeting in remote Banff, Alberta, the ministers could not evade the protests that have dogged such international summits since Seattle 1999. The environmental dimension, including the demand for action against global warming, is an inseparable part of these protests, in both the highly industrialized and the less technologically developed countries. So perva-

sive have been the environmental struggles and the demonstrations against global capital that this opposition is the element that evoked this rift between the U.S. and Europe.

As much as Bush distorts scientific facts, his ideology does conform to objective reality—not the laws of nature but the laws of capitalist society: everything is subordinate to the accumulation of capital. Rejecting measures that might limit the growth of production, he declared that "economic growth is the solution, not the problem." No one has described this mentality better than Karl Marx:

Capital, which has such "good reasons" for denying the sufferings of the legions of workers surrounding it, allows its actual movement to be determined as much and as little by the sight of the coming degradation and final depopulation of the human race, as by the probable fall of the earth into the sun. In every stock-jobbing swindle everyone knows that some time or other the crash must come, but everyone hopes that it may fall on the head of his neighbor, after he himself has caught the shower of gold and placed it in secure hands. After me the deluge! is the watchword of every capitalist and of every capitalist nation.

FROM ALARM TO PROTEST

The Bush non-plan is only the latest swindle of humanity's future. The Reagan administration sabotaged support for greenhouse effect research. The first Bush administration gutted the climate change treaty signed at the 1992 Earth Summit, forcing removal of binding goals and deadlines. Industrialized countries pledged to limit carbon dioxide emissions to 1990 levels by the year 2000, but actual U.S. emissions increased by 17% in the 1990s. The uselessness of that purely voluntary treaty is what led to the Kyoto Protocol signed in 1997—but the Clinton administration led the charge to fill Kyoto with so many loopholes that emissions would keep growing.

EDITORIAL

(Continued from page 1)

Throughout the West Bank, there were also charges that Israeli forces had used civilians as human shields and had abused thousands of Palestinian men who were detained by its military forces. As we go to press, Israel is refusing to allow United Nations investigators into Jenin.

Until April, that town boasted a semi-independent public television station funded by liberal U.S. and European foundations that had promoted democratic values. Soldiers also destroyed the computer files at the Ministry of Education.

The whole world knows that Israel's overwhelming military superiority over the Palestinians and the neighboring Arab regimes is possible only because of lavish U.S. funding. That is why the most massive pro-Palestinian demonstrations ever have targeted the U.S. as well as Israel in scores of cities in the Arab world, Europe, and even in Washington, D.C. The fact that some expressions of support for the Palestinians have exhibited a crude and alarming anti-Semitism does not remove the fact that it is Israel that today is the aggressor and the prime destroyer of peace in the region.

THE REAL TARGET: PEACE

Sharon's invasion was not, as he stated, a response to Palestinian suicide bombings of Israeli civilians, which have been going on for over a year. The reason he picked April 2002 to launch his invasion was that he wanted to obliterate from memory the most serious Arab peace initiative in a decade, the Saudi proposals unveiled at the Arab League Summit in Beirut on March 27.

Saudi Arabia, itself a reactionary, theocratic, and anti-Semitic state, had nonetheless made an unprecedented offer of "normal relations" with Israel on reasonable conditions: withdrawal from all territories occupied in 1967, creation of a Palestinian state with its capital in East Jerusalem, and the return of refugees.

The latter point was left vague, but clearly did not mean the return of all Palestinian refugees to Israel proper, a demand that would end the Jewish state and that had derailed the July 2000 Camp David negotiations. The Palestinian Authority and most Arab regimes signed on to this proposal.

This was terrible news for Sharon, a longtime advocate of a "Greater Israel" where Jewish fundamentalist settlers would dominate the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. That very night of March 27, which by no coincidence was also Passover Eve, another force unalterably opposed to peace, the Islamic fundamentalist Hamas, sent a suicide bomber to an Israeli hotel in Netanya, killing almost 30 celebrants.

This gift from the reactionaries of Hamas allowed

Kyoto has also sparked overt opposition from environmental, anti-globalization and indigenous peoples' movements in both industrialized and developing countries. During the final round of negotiations in Marrakech, Morocco, demonstrations were held from South Korea to the Netherlands. Even in Marrakech, where authorities had forbidden their planned street

action and the UN denied them a table inside the conference center, 42 Moroccan groups held their own conference, despite police harassment.

From this convergence of movements has emerged a new category of "climate justice" linking the problems of climate change to racial justice, workers' rights and social transformation. (See "Kyoto Treaty Scandal," December 2001 N&L.)

While most of the mainstream environmental groups see Kyoto as ineffective but still important as a "first step" in creating institutions that will eventually become meaningful, what is being institutionalized is a direction leading away from the only thing that might avoid global catastrophe: a drastic cut in the use of fossil fuels.

While emissions-trading protesters are correct to join the movements against global capital in challenging corporate power and neoliberalism, it is still true that nothing short of a total uprooting of capitalism can alter this society's basic direction: accumulation of capital at the expense of both nature and humanity.

Capital's destructive drive for self-expansion is rooted in its inner nature as a system. As capital, dead labor dominates living labor and imposes its imperative of "economic growth"—the self-expansion of capital—at the expense of both the worker and the natural conditions on which human society depends.

A totally new direction will be established when the opposition from below realizes itself in theory and in practice as the quest for a new society where humanity is no longer driven by capitalism's destructive impulses but self-develops as free social beings within nature.

Sharon's brutal invasion

Sharon to do what he had been itching to do all along, declare war on the Palestinians, launching his invasion. What few have noted, however, is that Sharon's April "war on terrorism" did not focus on Hamas, which together with Islamic Jihad has been responsible for most of the terror attacks against Israeli civilians. These groups, headquartered in the Gaza Strip, were left alone, even as Sharon attacked the more secular Palestinian Authority.

Could the reason be that if Arafat could be dislodged, Hamas, which had been gaining strength, might take his place? Since Hamas rejects the very existence of a Jewish state or even a Jewish community anywhere in the Middle East, then the U.S. might allow Sharon to end even the appearance of negotiations and to keep to his plan of a Greater Israel.

Two moments in Sharon's career have made him utterly unacceptable to the Arab side. 1) From 1977 to 1981, Sharon was in charge of building large numbers of Jewish settlements in the occupied territories—the chief obstacle to the creation of a viable Palestinian state. 2) In September 1982, Israeli forces under Sharon allowed their Lebanese Christian allies to murder over 800 Palestinian civilians at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. International efforts to prosecute him for war crimes continue.

In the retrogressive climate in Israel today, polls indicate that his April invasion of the West Bank is supported by 88% of Israeli Jews. This suggests that his election by a two-thirds majority in 2001 was no mere aberration.

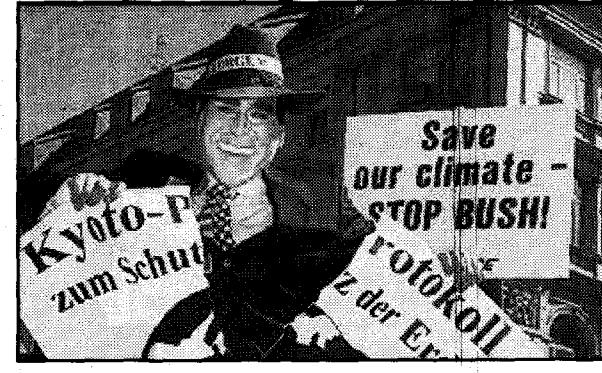
PUT SHARON ON TRIAL

In this extremely bleak and retrogressive climate, we need to call for the cutoff of U.S. military aid to Israel. We also need to support critically the Palestinian resistance, especially those forces represented by people like Sari Nusseibeh, who have clearly called for a two-state solution without the usual obfuscation of return of all refugees.

In addition, we need to support calls by Hanan Ashrawi and others to end the suicide bombings, in statements she made in the wake of the deaths of three boys on April 25 in Gaza, one of them only 14 years old.

We also need to support those forces within Israel that have campaigned for a just peace, especially groups like Women in Black or the over 900 Israeli "refuseniks," soldiers who have had the moral courage to court arrest by refusing to serve in the occupation forces. But most of all, we must demand the removal from power and the arrest and trial of the war criminal Ariel Sharon. As long as he remains in power, only war is possible.

—April 26, 2002



Independent Media Center

YOUTH**Demands intensify for justice in Middle East****Memphis, Tennessee**

In the first week in April well over 125 Palestinian men, women and children, as well as other Middle Eastern people, demonstrated on a busy street corner here, protesting the Israeli occupation of Palestinian areas.

The demonstration was almost frantic, with people screaming until they were hoarse or lost their voices. A woman explained why the demonstration had such a desperate tone. Her family lived where some of the heaviest fighting was being carried out and she didn't know and couldn't find out if her relatives were alive or dead, she said.

Israeli soldiers were not letting ambulances through, injured people were bleeding to death in the streets, people were running out of food and some already "had nothing and were naked in the streets." She despaired the U.S. media reports which only give the official Israeli point of view. She was trying to get the truth of the situation of the Palestinians under siege, she said.

Signs and chants revealed the diverse nature of those in attendance. Some equated Zionism with racism and terrorism, and chanted "Down with Israel," revealing that they either had no understanding of the growing peace movement within Israel, or that they had succumbed to hatred and wanted Israel and all the Jews within it to be driven into the sea.

Kids in Pakistani jails

I am sad to report from Lahore that the police authorities have suddenly reneged on their reluctant permission to activists for visiting children and women in jails.

The police are now demanding a five-year report of any organization that has been working in the jails, insisting that only after a complete review will they allow activists to continue their work in jails.

This came suddenly and without warning when the activists found that they could not visit jails pending "approval" from authorities. If it were a genuine effort to monitor the work of these activists and organizations, the concerned authorities would have sought to work with them, instead of putting a stop to the valuable and necessary efforts they are making for an enslaved segment of a disastrously oppressed society.

The refusal to allow activists from concerned organizations such as AGHS Legal Aid Cell and the Human Rights Commission of Pakistan is a calculated effort to discourage their humanitarian work which exposes the bestial cruelty of an inhumane system.

—Hawa Bibi

Queer Notes

by Suzanne Rose

Iran is launching its first AIDS awareness campaign without the mention of gay sex. Facing a rapid increase in the number of people becoming infected and fearing a major epidemic, the government has been forced to give its approval to an AIDS education program. The subject of sex is taboo in Iran and homosexuality is forbidden by law. As part of the new program, high school students will receive material describing how people can be infected that will not mention sex between two men.

In a unanimous decision, Australia's high court rejected a challenge by the Catholic Church that would have prevented single women and lesbians from having access to in-vitro fertilization treatments. An earlier federal court decision had ruled that restricting the women's access violated the Federal Sex Discrimination Act.

The American Civil Liberties Union's National Prison Project filed suit against the executive director of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, along with over a dozen officials at the James Allred prison in the town of Iowa Park. The suit states that Roderick Johnson was subjected to rape and sexual slavery on a daily basis for a year and a half at the prison. Having had a "safekeeping status" at a previous prison, Roderick was denied that status at Allred. The special classification is designed to protect inmates at risk for brutality because of their sexual orientation or other factors. Roderick went through seven classification hearings on his behalf; each time his requests were rejected.

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But others held signs reading, "Jerusalem belongs to all religions." And while there were several American flags waving, anger at the U.S. government was strongly expressed with chants of "Bush, Bush you should know, occupation has got to go!" and many signs reading "USA—With Force Comes Responsibility," "Fund Education, Not Occupation," and "Stop funding racism, stop sending tax \$\$\$ to Israel." Perhaps the sign that spoke for all there—Arabs, Palestinians, and U.S. activists alike—was: "Stop the occupation!"

Later in the month, a smaller group of Palestinians and supporters held a silent demonstration at the University of Memphis Campus. There were Palestinian students and some American and other nationalities. They stood opposite to Jewish students who were celebrating the founding of Israel and held signs protesting the war crimes in Palestine.

At this demonstration there was no chanting, simply standing silently with signs. As one Palestinian woman told me, "The important thing was that some students, who don't know anything, came and talked to us and asked us why we were angry, and we explained to them." There is no doubt that demonstrations of one kind or another will continue. Some of us plan to start a Women in Black group here in the fall.

—Marxist-Humanist activist

Berkeley, California

In response to Sharon's invasion of the West Bank, Jewish Voices for Peace and others organized a demonstration and march in Berkeley on April 2. Even with only a day's notice, more than 600 came demanding immediate withdrawal of Israeli troops and Palestinian statehood.

In the next couple weeks, there were dozens more events. For example, an Israeli student, Tamir Sorek, who is an officer in the Israeli reserve army, talked on several occasions about why he chose to join the ranks of the "refuseniks."

He spoke on the steps of the Israeli consulate on April 4 and at the Berkeley campus the next day. He said he believes Jews have a right to live in Israel and he would defend Israel from military threats.

However, he said that the human obligation to act morally overrode military orders to wage an unjust war against civilians. He distinguished between a war of self-defense and a war of occupation. He dismissed the arguments that the Israeli Defense Force was going into the West Bank only to pursue military targets. When a commander orders such an action in a heavily populated civilian area, it is a fact that there will be civilian casualties. This military operation would not

create a more secure Israel, or make it possible for Israelis to live with Palestinians or their Arab neighbors, he said.

Sorek stressed his opposition to Israelis and Palestinians whose only solution is to exterminate the other. He mentioned those on both sides who want to live in peace, citing a number of organizations such as Gush Shalom and Mothers of Victims of Violence, which includes mothers from both sides. It was surprising that the Left, which embraces the Palestinian cause, did not come to hear this.

Then on April 20, during the planned anti-war march against "the real axis of evil: war, racism and poverty," support for the besieged Palestinians overwhelmed all other issues. Over 30,000 came from all over the western states and even Canada, to express a diverse opposition to militarism.

Many Arabs as well as Jews came out with home made signs: "Your tax \$ pay for Sharon's bullets," "How can you end terrorism with terrorism?" "No one is free until we're all free." The Santa Cruz Coalition to Free Mumia Abu-Jamal marched with environmental groups to stop oil drilling in the arctic and to save the redwoods.

Others who focused on opposing U.S. intervention in Colombia or the Philippines, marched with the victims of police terror in the Black community. There were representatives of the anti-globalization movement—against GAP, Enron, Starbucks, etc.

Perhaps the very diversity of the march will become a challenge to the activists that they not fall into a narrow anti-imperialism of much of the Left. We must create a space for dialogue regarding not only what we are opposing but figuring out what we are for.

—Participants

Washington, D.C.

(Continued from page 1)

seen quite a bit of back stabbing against Palestinians by some Arab states...this time I think that we all have to do something about it—all of us, all Arabs, all Muslims, all human beings."

The Humanism I experienced in D.C. has really been a missing element in the anti-capitalist movement that has emerged over the last several years. The world of Bush/bin Laden/Sharon wants to crush it through permanent war. Another world is possible, but all the contradictions that swirled at this march must not be swept under the rug. I'd like to see this discussion continue in the pages of *News & Letters*.

—Tom Parsons

The enduring revolutionary legacy of Paris '68

by Brown Douglas

This May is the anniversary of the 1968 revolutionary uprising of students and workers in France. The events themselves strike a chord today with anyone interested in transforming society, especially youth.

The book, *When Poetry Ruled the Streets: The French May Events of 1968*, analyzes these events and captures some of the spirit surrounding the uprising and eventual downfall in May 1968.

The youth were the starting point in the revolt of '68. Beginning at Nanterre University, the students made radical demands such as doing away with exams, true democracy in education, and a totally new relationship between professor and student. These were not merely reformist measures (although some wanted them to be). As the authors put it, this action was an "act of opposition and committed to revolution."

Eventually, one university shutting down became thousands of students from all over Paris in the streets, condemning capitalist society while at the same time letting ideas flow everywhere. This uprising is famous for its sayings, most anonymously written or spoken, that exemplified this condemnation. "All power to the imagination" and "Do not consume Marx, live him," were written on the walls.

The uprising reached a turning point when it combined with the workers. The students sparked feelings in the heart of French workers that the workers recognized by shutting down and occupying factories all over France. Not only did this surprise and anger de Gaulle and the prevailing government, but the Communist Party and existing union bureaucracy, who had no faith in workers to make a new life by and for themselves.

The students told the workers to "Take from our fragile hands the struggle against the regime" and the workers answered with 10 million in the streets. Surely it must have been exciting to be a part of this uprising that had so many active, revolutionary elements.

Throughout the book, the authors create a lively and in-depth picture of the events of Paris 1968, including a very large appendix with actual documents from the students, workers, and their organizations. They bring

out the uniqueness and spontaneity of the situation while making it seem like it just happened yesterday.

UNE JEUNESSE QUI L'AVENIR INQUIÈTE TROP SEUVENT



"A youth who worries too much about the future"—Poster from 1968 uprising in France.

Thus, at the end of the book, what is said is that "the May Events set in motion a process of cultural change that transformed the image of the Left, shifted the focus of opposition from economic exploitation to social and cultural alienation, and prepared the rejection of Stalinist authoritarianism in the new social movements."

In "shifting the focus of opposition from economic exploitation to social and cultural alienation," workers seem to disappear altogether! The conclusion for them is not projecting what revolutionary transformation of society could be, but mainly that the image of the Left was "transformed" in various ways.

We can see today, with a movement largely built on the rejection of authoritarianism and social and cultural alienation, that all of this is not enough. It is certainly important that the youth have brought these things out and made them part of the resistance. But there is still the attitude of picking up theory "en route," or maybe better said a resistance to theory altogether. With this attitude it is impossible to create a revolutionary movement that will not only tear down what is old but build a new society on new beginnings.

When Poetry Ruled the Streets has been released at an important time. Its description of the revolutionary events of the past generation is indispensable when we, especially youth, are looking to make our own revolution now. What happens with the movement now remains to be seen, but we can take inspiration from the students of 1968, when "All is possible" was on so many people's lips fighting for true freedom.

Our Life and Times

French vote sends shock through Europe

by Kevin A. Barry

"Today I'm Ashamed to Be French," read the hand-lettered sign carried by a young woman demonstrator in Paris on April 22, one day after the neo-fascist Jean-Marie Le Pen placed second in the initial round of the presidential election. How could France, the country that in 1789 gave birth to the modern conception of human rights, sink so low and what did this portend elsewhere? Such questions have impacted European and even global public opinion. Poland's liberal newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* editorialized that this "catastrophe" would give a green light to those who up to

Italian general strike

Some 15 million workers created the biggest general strike Italy has seen in decades on April 16. Factories, schools, banks, rail and air transport, and post offices all had to shut down as workers came out to protest plans by the ultra-rightist government of Silvio Berlusconi to modify Article 18 of the labor law. Enacted in 1970 under the pressure of massive labor and student protests, Article 18 allows workers in companies with over 15 employees to contest any form of dismissal in the courts. This makes layoffs extremely difficult, giving the majority of Italian workers a unique type of job security.

The strike was so successful that it could not be shown on TV, since the networks were also shut down by strikers! In addition to the strike itself, some two million demonstrated in the streets, most of them under the auspices of the large reformist trade unions. However, the Cobas "unions from below" also attracted hundreds of thousands to their demonstrations.

Several events led up to April 16. In March, two million workers had demonstrated to defend Article 18. Many trace the new stage of mass mobilization back to February, when over 40,000 people, including many prominent intellectuals, protested in Milan against Berlusconi's attempt to undermine the judiciary. He has sought to curtail independent judges from the "clean hands" investigation of corrupt politicians like himself and also removed police protection from judges handling Mafia cases. Others trace the new spirit of protest further back, to the anti-capitalist demonstrations at the G-8 Summit in Genoa last July.

Berlusconi, who compares himself to Britain's Margaret Thatcher, clearly intends to discipline labor. So far, he has spurned all attempts at negotiations over Article 18, claiming that his election by 45% of the voters in May 2001—vs. 44% for his left of center opponents—gives him the right to impose his will on labor. Italian workers, youth, and intellectuals see things differently. Under the impact of the anti-globalization movement, they have shown that they can challenge Berlusconi, who seems to believe that we are still living in the retrogressive Reagan-Thatcher 1980s.

May Day

All across France, a nearly unprecedented one million people, with over 400,000 in Paris alone, turned out for the annual May Day marches organized by unions and the Left. This mobilization against Le Pen, which drew significant numbers of youth and ethnic minorities, was for many their first political demonstration. Elsewhere too, May Day drew a very large participation. Some 500,000 came out in Berlin, with hundreds of thousands in Rome. London and Israeli-occupied Ramallah also had significant actions. We will carry a full report in our June issue.

now have been "embarrassed to express their demagogic, nationalist, racist, and anti-Semitic ideas."

Over the past two decades, Le Pen has frequently had to pay fines for violating French laws against disseminating racial and ethnic hatred. He has called for the deportation of North African immigrants and referred to the Holocaust as a mere "detail" of the history of World War II. In 1998, he was deprived of the right to hold office for two years after his bodyguards assaulted a leftist politician. However, his racist appeals, combined with attacks on crime and unemployment, both of which he links to immigration, have won him support among some sectors, including parts of the white working class. His National Front is a tightly disciplined organization, complete with "security" squads, many of them former police or military officers. Le Pen himself was a paratrooper during the Algerian War, where he tortured liberation fighters.

The young woman demonstrator's sense of shame was a common feeling among the over 100,000 French youth who came out in dozens of cities to protest Le Pen's showing. Many of them were too young to vote, but nonetheless determined to make sure that Le Pen's type of politics are not the future that they will inherit from their elders. Describing how they organized the largely spontaneous demonstrations, one Black youth, clearly reassured by the outpouring, told French television: "It

spread by word of mouth because we're all in this together."

The actual election results were as follows: Gaullist conservative Jacques Chirac received 20% of the vote, Le Pen 17%, social democrat Lionel Jospin 16%, the Greens 5%, and the Communists a humiliating 3%, the latter three parties making up the current government. Thus, Le Pen narrowly edged out Jospin, until now the Prime Minister, who lost ground largely due to leftist discontent with his government's pro-capitalist policies.

There was also an important realignment within those parts of the Left espousing versions of Marxism, with Trotskyist parties reaching an unprecedented total of 11%, buoyed to a great extent by the anti-globalization movement and by workers disillusionment with both Jospin and the Communists. It is no small thing that revolutionary anti-Stalinist parties now dominate French Marxist politics, but the Marxist Left also faces a severe challenge, since the runoff election on May 5 offers only two candidates, Chirac and Le Pen. Will they be able to distinguish between a conservative bourgeois democrat and a neo-fascist, or will they fall

into the politics of "a plague on both of your houses"?

The French youth and the leftist public are determined to see to it that Le Pen is not only defeated, but resoundingly so. How can one accomplish that without giving up one's anti-capitalist politics in a situation where abstention will only help Le Pen? This is a major test that will have implications not only for the French Left, but also for the worldwide anti-globalization movement, which will be watching these events closely.

—April 24, 2002



Independent Media Center

Tribunal prosecutes Rwandan genocide

The International Criminal Court in Arusha, Tanzania continues to prosecute perpetrators of the Rwandan genocide. Currently, radio broadcaster Jean-Bosco Barayagwiza and other media personalities are before the court, charged with incitement to genocide for their role in the 1994 massacre of 800,000 people, mainly from the Tutsi minority. Barayagwiza and others referred to Tutsis as "cockroaches," stating "we will kill you," while also broadcasting names and locations.

Despite the bureaucratic problems that have plagued the Arusha Tribunal—for example, a trial of three top military officers began one day in April but was abruptly adjourned the next day—its actions are historic. They have not received adequate coverage in the Eurocentric global media. Nor has the precedent of trying propagandists of genocide been applied to the former Yugoslavia, where intellectual instigators of Serbian genocide, such as the philosopher Mihailo Markovic, have yet to be investigated, let alone tried.

Taliban crimes revealed

"Those who burn books will also burn people," it was said in 1933. Something similar occurred under Taliban rule in Afghanistan. During their last year in power, it has now been revealed, they not only dynamited the 1,500-year-old Buddhist statues at Bamiyan, but also methodically used sledgehammers to destroy thousands of Buddhist statues at the National Museum in Kabul.

Reportedly, much of the damage at the museum was done by an Al Qaeda squad, after local Taliban units refused to take part in this rape of their country's cultural heritage. Near Bamiyan, United Nations investigators have also turned up mass graves from among the estimated 15,000 members of the Hazara ethnic minority murdered by the Taliban. Had the world paid more attention at the time, perhaps September 11 might have been prevented.

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.