Letters from prison tell a freedom story

by Charles Denby, Editor

In the last year, there have been many letters coming across my desk from prisoners in all parts of this country. They want to read News & Letters, and many ask for books. In the first place, the majority of the letters are from whites and many more from Blacks, and we get letters from both men and women. They write of their conditions, and I have learned about many prisons than I ever knew existed in the USA.

But what struck me so much was that all the writers express the same passion for freedom, not just for themselves, but for oppressed people everywhere. They are asking questions about what is happening in Africa, and in women’s liberation. Even while they are shut out of this world, they consider so many struggles that are going on everywhere around the world in their own.

When I wrote my column about Amnesty International last June, many workers I talked with did not know of the work they have been doing to defend political prisoners all over the world. I was very happy to hear that they won the Nobel Peace Prize, because the publicity may help some of the prisoners they are trying to get free. When I wrote that column, I said I could not understand why they have never taken up cases of injustice in this country, like the Wilmington 10 who are sitting in jail in North Carolina, and many others, so I was very glad when I read recently that the U.S. chapter of Amnesty International had just adopted the Wilmington 10.

I am not saying that every person in jail is a political prisoner. All are not accused of the same thing. They are there for different reasons. But everyone knows that the jails of this country are part of the whole crisis of this society, and whatever they did to go to prison, once men and women were locked up, they many times first read and learn about themselves. Every letter that comes in seems to remind me of the Soledad Brother, George Jackson, especially where he wrote, “I met Marx and Engels and Lenin and Mao — and they redeemed me.” I am sure not for Mao, but I feel I know what Brother Jackson was talking about. This is what I wrote in the Bay Area Women’s Liberation-N&L meeting:

THEY ARE BUILDING UP this place to really be a concentration camp; it’s not even conceivable in the minds of a free country or people, that this camp is really a part of the state of Illinois. They attempt to contaminate the resident body here with the sick disease of hate—Would you believe that the prison officials have almost what we can call a Black House and a White House? It’s like this camp has returned to the old days of 1856.

I had a white friend here with me just a few months ago; he was forced to transfer over to the so-called good house. He is a almost all-white.

(Continued on page 7)

Blue Cross workers strike for union contract

Oakland, Calif.—Over 1,000 clerical workers—many of them Filipinos—formed mass picket lines on Oct. 6 at the Blue Cross Insurance Company here. The workers walked out when Blue Cross refused to negotiate a union contract in good faith.

After eight years of trying to get union recognition, the Black cross clerical workers voted in Office and Professional Employees Union Local 264, late June. The strikers said that low wages and benefits, and assembly-line work conditions were critical to the union winning. Below are comments from many of the clerical workers, as they spoke out on the picket line and at a Bay Area Women’s Liberation-N&L meeting:

-PREP MEANS SPEED-UP

“Blue Cross instituted PREP, which set time standards for 100% of the units, as I understand it. It was then possible to keep track of each worker’s production. It bothered many of the older workers, because they no longer had a job security check over their work. The work was won because no one could meet the standards every time.”

“We figure our average monthly salary is $143, compared to management’s $2,800. Blue Cross spends only $16 for our health, for every $1.05 it spends for management, it had to accept the union. It was possible to accept claims for other workers who have better Blue Cross coverage than we do.”

“Promotions and pay increases are strictly according to the company’s ‘merit’ system. Blue Cross keeps a record of employee ‘incidents’: one day out sick is an ‘incident;’ every time you leave work it is an ‘incident.’ If you get more than eight a year, it affects your raise.”

-SENIORITY, NOT ‘MERIT’

“Blue Cross evaluates us on a system from 1 to 5. My production was over 100 percent. I only missed 15 hours of work last year, and went home tired every night. But I never got a 5 evaluation. So I refused to kiss-up to the supervisor. So I never got the jobs I applied for. It took over five years to get out of one program, and even then they hired people off the street before I got a new job.”

Another worker said, “I worked consistently over production standards, yet all I got last year was a 5 percent raise. I’ve reached the top of my level, so that’s all I can get. We need a seniority system of regular promotions and pay increases, and that is what the union is demanding.”

The union negotiating team consists of two representatives and 20 stewards who were elected by the workers in July. The company has continually objected to this team. After several nights of negotiating meetings, Blue Cross would only agree to allow union bulletin boards for employees’ notices, and two 15-minute breaks.

(Continued on page 2)
Mrs. Trinidad Herrera, president of ZOTO, an organization representing 175,000 residents and squatters of the El Barrio community, has been leading local and international protests at reports of her arrest and torture.

American Airlines will be forced to pay $2.7 million to 300 stewardees fired between 1965-70 for taking part in a class-action suit begun in 1970. Also, 150 relatives as political prisoners. They have been meeting daily to protest the abduction of their loved ones by the police. A list of those still want to see their names on this letter.

Black students in Amite County, Miss., have been boycotting classes since late August to protest segregation in public schools, a problem which was begun only after racial integration of the schools was ordered in 1969.

(For letter from Japanese feminists, see page 8.)

To Our Readers:

We are writing this open letter to let you know how some of us from Women's Liberation-News & Letters, Box 77303, Station E, San Francisco, Calif. 94107, want your voice heard.

We want to take you seriously. This is our first contract, and anything worth getting is worth fighting for. We were angry when we found out what was being bought by the union.
Detroit, Mich.—Many Detroit auto workers, including the Trenton Seven, are now engaging in a trial and working in support of seven Chrysler Trenton Engine plant workers. They were arbitrarily chosen out of hundreds of wildcat strikers, and charged with contempt for ignoring a federal court injunction against their wildcat in August.

Trenton Engine members recalled that 1976, hundreds of workers and supporters encircled the Federal Building in Detroit. The trial ended Oct. 6 with a guilty verdict. It's the first time workers have been brought to trial on contempt charges after a strike has ended. The seven workers will be appealing the verdict.

The working conditions at Trenton Engine are notoriously bad. They were supposedly "settled" in an agreement a year ago, but the situation hasn't improved. Workers are still working in foul conditions.

The Trenton Seven verdict spurs workers' support

Automation used as excuse for steel lay-offs

(Two months I am turning my column over to a fellow worker, to make the importance of the current crisis in steel—Feliz Martinez)

Recently, the Bethlehem Sheath & Tube plant in Youngstown, Ohio, announced planned plant closings for the remaining three months of the year. 5,000 steel workers will be out of a job by the end of the year. Other companies besides Bethlehem, like U.S. Steel and Kaiser, have laid off workers in Gary, Chicago, Johnstown, and Fontana, bringing the number of steel workers laid off out of work to 10,000 in the last month alone.

The U.S. Department of Labor cites a figure of 65,000 steel workers who are unemployed because of plant closings. Yet there are at least 10 million unemployed. The real number is probably far higher—profit or no profit.

The reason given by the steel industry for these layoffs is the falling rate of profit. The reason given by the steel workers is the struggle for a living wage. How can the industry resist the steel workers' struggle? It must take drastic measures, like lay-offs and plant closings, that will be felt by communities all over the country.

The working conditions at Trenton Engine are no longer bad. They were supposedly "settled" in an agreement a year ago, but the situation hasn't improved. Workers are still working in foul conditions.

The working conditions at Trenton Engine are no longer bad. They were supposedly "settled" in an agreement a year ago, but the situation hasn't improved. Workers are still working in foul conditions.

The working conditions at Trenton Engine are no longer bad. They were supposedly "settled" in an agreement a year ago, but the situation hasn't improved. Workers are still working in foul conditions.

The working conditions at Trenton Engine are no longer bad. They were supposedly "settled" in an agreement a year ago, but the situation hasn't improved. Workers are still working in foul conditions.

The working conditions at Trenton Engine are no longer bad. They were supposedly "settled" in an agreement a year ago, but the situation hasn't improved. Workers are still working in foul conditions.

The working conditions at Trenton Engine are no longer bad. They were supposedly "settled" in an agreement a year ago, but the situation hasn't improved. Workers are still working in foul conditions.

The working conditions at Trenton Engine are no longer bad. They were supposedly "settled" in an agreement a year ago, but the situation hasn't improved. Workers are still working in foul conditions.

The working conditions at Trenton Engine are no longer bad. They were supposedly "settled" in an agreement a year ago, but the situation hasn't improved. Workers are still working in foul conditions.

The working conditions at Trenton Engine are no longer bad. They were supposedly "settled" in an agreement a year ago, but the situation hasn't improved. Workers are still working in foul conditions.

The working conditions at Trenton Engine are no longer bad. They were supposedly "settled" in an agreement a year ago, but the situation hasn't improved. Workers are still working in foul conditions.

The working conditions at Trenton Engine are no longer bad. They were supposedly "settled" in an agreement a year ago, but the situation hasn't improved. Workers are still working in foul conditions.
The 21st anniversary of the great Hungarian Revolu­tion of 1956 was fittingly marked this year over 1.5 million Americans, as well as those in the govern­ment's 28th anniversary celebration on Oct. 7 with chants of "Russians out!" and "End the police state." Speakers, who gathered at a rally in Central Park, within East Germany and the "closest friendship" between East Germany and Russia, were watched riot police break into the meetings. There were at least three dead, 200 wounded, and 700 detained overnight.

Nothing more proves the persistence and continuity of the revolt than the people who have broken through the police state's barriers. It was in East Germany that workers first exploded the myth of the invincibility of Russian totalitarianism, as they broke out into spontaneous mass strikes against speed-up on June 17, 1953. But it was in Hungary where the revolt was distinguished by its greater depth, its uncompromising stand, and the involvement of the entire population of workers, youth and women. Through the 1956-70 to today's struggles, the movement has been ceaseless.

In the past month this deep revolt has taken different forms in each of the Russian satellites, and inside Russia as well. Some of the most active have been engaged in a massive strike, the first in 30 years. In Czechoslovakia, where trials of three Charter 77 signers for "subversion" have just begun, activists responded by circulating new petitions for civil liberties. And from Russia come reports of organized resistance by Helsinki Movement, pawning of real estate, and other condensations in mental hospitals in which they have been confined.

PHILOSOPHY INTEGRAL TO REVOLT

While some leftists, like the Trotskyists, have been busy following Ukrainian dissident exile Leonid Plyushch around from meeting to meeting—bitterly denouncing their segregation plan. Into the hands of the regime. The film footage on contemporary Iran—320 minutes of the mandatory French language bill that will be sold in the film—was produced, will go to Iran in accordance with the administration of York University here from meeting with representatives of the South African government. The South Africans apparently refused the application of the South African government. They have no interest in public day of the academic services, which oversees the mandatory French language bill that will be sold in the film.
**Gramsci's 'philosophy of praxis'**

The philosophy of **PRAXIS** is concretely dialectical: in which the philosopher himself, understood both individually and as an organ of the total movement, not merely grasps the contradictions, but points himself as an element of the concretely dialectical center as an element to a principle of knowledge and therefore of action.—A. Gramsci, *Problems of Marxism* in PRISON NOTEBOOKS

Fifty-one years ago this month, on Nov. 12, 1918. Antonio Gramsci, founder of the Communist Party of Mussolini's police. When, after nearly a year of incarceration, Gramsci was brought to face fascist courts, the Prosecutor, descending from a truck, denounced and denounced with utter contempt his own injunction: "We must prevent this brain from functioning for 20 years!"

It meant a life sentence for the trial revolutionary. Indeed, he died before the 20-year sentence had expired. But fascism could not stop the brain from functioning. The 11 years of brutal fascist imprisonment had produced profound philosophic-political writings that retain their power, history as well as triangular relationship of class, factory councils, party. That is to say, spontaneity and organization, to Gramsci, could no more be narrowed to an elitist party ordering the masses around them than spontaneous actions could be squeezed dry of the creative thought that produced the action of masses in motion.

**FACTORY COUNCILS IN FACT**

To the extent whether either only a vanguard party to lead, or philosophy sans revolution, what had to be worked out was the inseparableness of philosophy and revolution. So socially oriented was the concept of the Russian Revolution and the Soviets which brought the Bolsheviks to power, that he perceived opening a "new stage of humanity." And when he wrote of the Factory Councils in Italy as "the model of the prologue to a future political constitution," he foretold a vision of a political democracy.

Consider, then, the irony that among Gramsci's detractors are not only state-capitalists in power calling for a "new stage of humanity," but also those who want to "squeezed dry of the creative thought that produced the action of masses in motion.


(2) This is especially ludicrous in view of Gramsci's singling out for criticism classic collaborationism as well as the then-existing Socialist Party's own "anti-philosophical" tactic. Most of them were staggered by the experiences of the Biennio Rosso as well as its philosophy, history as well as triangular relationship of class, factory councils, party. That is to say, spontaneity and organization, to Gramsci, could no more be narrowed to an elitist party ordering the masses around them than spontaneous actions could be squeezed dry of the creative thought that produced the action of masses in motion.

(Labor: Three Setbacks)

I went out to Zenith several different times to look for the rank and file workers about whom I was hearing. By the time I arrived, they were coming lay-offs. The papers and TV have been playing up the angle of "foreign" dealership. U.S. workers are being shown as the losers. But wasn't their concern. In fact, several workers commented on it as a diversionary tactic. Most of them were wary about conditions in the plant; the union wasn't doing very much about the layoffs. They were happy to have it off their backs and didn't want it to last too long. The feeling was, it's not much worse than the 'other' job. But the layoffs on TV and that's all they were told. They waited a year or more for this job and when they get it, they'll do all right.

---

**TWO STRIKES WON**

The workers are in a good position over here. It is quite anti-labor. The B.C. employees have been working for some time without a contract. The company would not bargain seriously. The employees finally threatened to strike. Instead of calling in all workers, they decided to strike only the Government owned liquor stores.

The Government countered by threatening a general lock-out. It could never have worked and would have meant the fall of the Government. There were over a block long at all the liquor stores. Four days of threats and the government set and the employees got their contract.

---

**Women's Liberation**

A friend who is a veteran of the Spanish Civil War recently spent three months in Canton, China. She says that the political climate is extremely hopeful. Book shops are open on every corner and there is a lot of printing and discussion. Communist leaders are trying to work underground, now everyone from socialists to anarchists is holding open meetings. It is thought the revolution is here, but even this level of democracy is small, after so long.

What disturbed her was the extremely backward position of the women. At all the meetings she attended she saw women come in only to clean the tables — and she knows many of these women are office workers, who fought and served prison terms.

---

**VIEW FROM MONTGOMERY**

"Thoughts on the 8th of March" as being coincidental to their joining with both in Portugal. You can see how revolutionary the women's dimension is when you see that the rulers don't want us to talk about our own lives.

---

**REVISING MARX**

Did you see the full page picture of Marx at the top of the page? I thought it was a little curious, but the way they would look for the new in the old. There are a number of women on the film, and sometimes I think it's the new revolts that have caused the old to take action again.

---

**Labor: Three Setbacks**

I went out to Zenith several different times to look for the rank and file workers about whom I was hearing. By the time I arrived, they were coming lay-offs. The papers and TV have been playing up the angle of "foreign" dealership. U.S. workers are being shown as the losers. But wasn't their concern. In fact, several workers commented on it as a diversionary tactic. Most of them were wary about conditions in the plant; the union wasn't doing very much about the layoffs. They were happy to have it off their backs and didn't want it to last too long. The feeling was, it's not much worse than the 'other' job. But the layoffs on TV and that's all they were told. They waited a year or more for this job and when they get it, they'll do all right.

---

**TWO STRIKES WON**

The workers are in a good position over here. It is quite anti-labor. The B.C. employees have been working for some time without a contract. The company would not bargain seriously. The employees finally threatened to strike. Instead of calling in all workers, they decided to strike only the Government owned liquor stores.

The Government countered by threatening a general lock-out. It could never have worked and would have meant the fall of the Government. There were over a block long at all the liquor stores. Four days of threats and the government set and the employees got their contract.

---

**Women's Liberation**

A friend who is a veteran of the Spanish Civil War recently spent three months in Canton, China. She says that the political climate is extremely hopeful. Book shops are open on every corner and there is a lot of printing and discussion. Communist leaders are trying to work underground, now everyone from socialists to anarchists is holding open meetings. It is thought the revolution is here, but even this level of democracy is small, after so long.

What disturbed her was the extremely backward position of the women. At all the meetings she attended she saw women come in only to clean the tables — and she knows many of these women are office workers, who fought and served prison terms.

---

**Correspondent London**

At the meeting to assuage the rally of the "Coalition to Defend Reproductive Rights," the organizers were worried be- cause the women were so much against legal- ization and sterilization setbacks. The poor and minority women, weren't there. Wasn't surprised that you can't just ask for women's bodies to be at a rally. Why weren't they asked to be on the committee to plan the activities.

---

**REVISING MARX**

Did you see the full page picture of Marx at the top of the page? I thought it was a little curious, but the way they would look for the new in the old. There are a number of women on the film, and sometimes I think it's the new revolts that have caused the old to take action again.
When the Bakke decision was handed down by the California Supreme Court, only a few could predict the vast amount of racism that this legal opinion would dredge from the dark corners of this country. Who would have guessed that "liberal" organizations would find themselves in the same corner with conservative organizations like Young Americans for Freedom, Americans for Constitutional Action, and their ilk, all crowned by the support of American Nazis for the Bakke decision? This is not a vulgar attempt to paint every pro-Bakke organization with the brush of Nazism, but shows how widespread racism is in this country.

The most curious result of the history war currently raging over the "revolutionary" or "counter-revolutionary" credentials of some members of the Trotskyist Left is the subtle attempt to ignore hundreds of years of Black slavery, the brutality of the Jim Crow/sundown system, the violence of the "white backlash," the exploitation of poor and working-class blacks, and the refusal to acknowledge that U.S. capitalism is in a state of internal crisis and must be confronted. It is a vulgar, black-out confronting the economic crisis head on.

One Black student said, "The situation is more than race. It's the economy. It's all of the above." It is a vulgar attempt to paint every pro-Bakke organization with the brush of Nazism, and it is nothing other than a refusal to acknowledge the extent to which the economy is racist.

This can be done only through people who have become conscious of themselves as human beings, and their desire to see the system they are opposing, and, in struggle, conscious of the new society they want to achieve.
I turn this column over to two freedom fighters from Kent State University in Ohio, whose talks at Wayne State University on Oct. 6 (see article, this page) are briefly excerpted below.

JETER PITTMAN, Black United Students:
Eight years ago, KSU had approximately 600 Black students enrolled. Today the number has increased three-fold. At first, the acceptance of Black students at this institution attracted little attention, and such feelings as they existed, were generally one of indifference and satisfaction. However, the Black student of the early '70s was aggressive, loud and boisterous, and no longer seemed to be interested in the unimportant sense of 'alienation.' I remember the concept of 'alienation.' I recall the sense of illumination I felt at the exposure to Marxist literature, the philosophical core of which is to be in control of history. The proud history of the United States of America is at the same time a struggle to resurrect the true history of the revolutionary events of the past. KSU is but a chapter in the history of this university, a very important chapter.

The struggle of this summer and fall around the gymnasium is today fact that seeks a future. But new beginnings don't just happen. They are made by the political consciousness of its agents. This political consciousness must emerge in a commitment to action.

At times we failed to organize in such a way as to insure the heat procedure for democratic decision-making. This is no longer the case. KSU members, but on certain vanguard groups I feel we have overreached our bounds to a certain degree within the coalition.

We will continue to analyze and take into the level of effective political action for the safety and cam­

puses, to link our struggles to the concerns of union ac­tivities of campus workers, to properly deal with sexism in our own ranks, and to link our actions with the struggles of our Black brothers and sisters in Kent. But despite these flaws our struggle continues to grow.

KENT STUDENTS speak at Wayne on common struggle

TODD MCFARREN, May 4 Coalition:
To be in control of history and all its apparatus is like the Board of Trustees of a major university. It is to be in control of history. The proud history of the University of Wayne State University here on Oct. 6 at a meeting co-sponsored by the WSU News and Letters Youth Committee and Wayne State University's Center Against Discrimination and Racism in Education.

The campus meeting featured Todd McFarren, a member of the May 4 Coalition, and Jeter Pittman, a member of Black United Students. Both spoke about the struggles at Kent State — McFarren about the move to stop the gym on Blanket Hill, and Pittman about B.U.S. efforts to end the racist attacks on Black students and racist, right-wing and Black organizations.

Both Kent State students expressed the affinity of issues and struggles in Kent and Detroit by stating they had come here not just to gain new student support, but that by sharing their experiences, they could help us in our battles at WSU.

This universality of struggles was summed up by Jeter Pittman, who began the meeting by relating it to two other Black student freedom fighters — Melaine Turner and Steve Biko. (For excerpts from Jeter's and Todd's talks, see "Youth Column," this page.)

We feel that this discussion will add a new dimen­sion to the struggles we are beginning at WSU this year.

—WSU & N.Y.L. Youth Committee

PUBLICATIONS OF NEWS & LETTERS COMMITTEES

1—American Civilization on Trial, Black Masseurs as Vanguard
Includes, "Black Courses in the Unions," by Charles Denby 75c per copy

2—Working Woman for Freedom
By Karen Terr成交, Marie Dignesi, and Mary Holmes $1 per copy

3—America's First Unfinished Revolution
By M. Frankl and J. Hillstrom $1 per copy

4—Russia As State-Capitalist Society
By Michael and Masha Prinbl $1 per copy

5—China: Voices of Revolt
Excerpts from Shao Wo-Lien 35c per copy

6—U.S. and Russia Enter Middle East Cockpit
By Roy Dunayevskaya 50c per copy

7—Dialectics of Liberation
Summaries of Hegel's works and Marxism-Leninism
By Raya Dunayevskaya $1 per copy

8—The First General Strike in The U.S.
By Yvonne Gordon $1 per copy

9—Black, Brown and Red
The movement for freedom among Black, Chicano, Latin American, and Indian youth $1 per copy

10—King, Cloward and the 'Proletariat Cultural Revolution'
By Roy Dunayevskaya 25c per copy

11—The Political-Philosophical Letters of Roy Dunayevskaya
1 Marxist-Humanist analyses of Stalin $2 per copy

12—New Essays
By Roy Dunayevskaya $2 per copy

13—News & Letters
The Revolution of worker and intellectual, published 10 times a year $1 per sub.

Also available by Roy Dunayevskaya:

14—Marxism and Freedom
Includes preface by Henri Marceaux $5 per copy

15—Philosophy and Revolution: From Hegel to Sartre and from Marx to Mao $2.95 per copy

MAIL ORDERS TO:
Enclosed please find $...

Please add 15c to each order for postage and handling.

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15
(Please circle number corresponding to literature desired as listed above)

Name
Addres...
City
State
Zip

...
Black consciousness: Steve Biko speaks for himself

(Continued from page 1)

the third world on the part of American capitalism, I am convinced, is being accomplished almost exclusively by imperialism as America. This is evident in its internal history as well as in the role it plays in countries like Angola. But there is no more doubt about the inevitability of the events in the third world, they have a clean slate. Because of this, they have had a better start in the power game. Their primary task is to be acceptable to revolutionary groups . . . Here we are probably faced with the greatest problem of the black movement, the problem of ideology, because some of us think that Russian imperialism can be accepted as purely an interim phase while others—like myself—believe not only that the liberation of the black peoples.

THE BLACK CONSCIOUSNESS movement does not want to be identified with capitalism versus communism. It will opt for a socialist solution that is an authentic expression of black communism. In the present situation there is no clear-cut evidence of the feasibility of this alternative. But it is a recognition of the fact that our liberation will not take place without struggle but that we must take an active role and make sure that the opportunity is not lost by failure to achieve any degree of black power. And it is the realization of black power that is the strategy for achieving the goal of black consciousness.

(From a statement to Sen. Dick Clark of Iowa last December)

THESE ARE CRUCIAL years in the history of Africa.

(From an article by Biko on "Black Consciousness.")

THE CALL FOR Black consciousness is the most positive response to these events. It has been taken to apply concerted pressure on the minority white South African regime.

Heavy investments in the South African economy, bilateral trade with South Africa, cultural exchanges in the fields of sport and education, and political ties, among other-forcer-kinship exercises are among the sins of which America is accused.

The new American Administration must, however, take into account the fact that time remains static forever.

Through their political intransigence and racial bigotry, the South African minority regime has increased the level of resentment amongst Blacks to a point where it seems that the people are prepared to use any means to attain their aspirations.

(From an article by Biko on "Black Consciousness.")