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MONTHLY REVIEW:
(ISSN 0027-0520) is a publication of Monthly Review Foundation, a non-profit institution. It is published monthly except July and August, when bimonthly, and copyright © 1997, by Monthly Review. Second-class postage paid at New York, NY and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send all address changes (Form 3579) to Monthly Review Foundation, 122 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001. EDITORIAL AND BUSINESS: 122 West 27th Street, New York, NY 10001. Telephone: (212) 691-2555. Fax: (212) 727-3676. Email: mreview@igc.apc.org. Unsolicited manuscripts will not be returned unless accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. MR is indexed in the PAIS Bulletin, Historical Abstracts, America: History and Life, Political Science Abstracts, and the Alternative Press Index, P.O. Box 7729, Baltimore, MD 21218, tel.: (301) 243-2471. NEWSSTAND DISTRIBUTION: B. De Boer, Inc., 113 E. Centre Street, Nutley, NJ 07110; Armadillo & Co., 5795 W. Washington Boulevard, Culver City, CA 90232; Small Changes, 3443 Twelfth Avenue West, Seattle, WA 98119; Central Books, 99 Wallis Road, London, E9 5LN, England. SUBSCRIPTION PRICE: U.S.: One year \$28, students and senior citizens \$23; Foreign \$36; students and senior citizens \$32. Libraries and Institutions: U.S. \$48; Foreign \$55. Additional Postage: First Class (U.S. and Canada \$15); Airmail: Foreign \$20.

EDITORS:
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NOTES FROM THE EDITORS

Two articles in this issue recall how in the early post-war years the universities became cold war battlefields. The purge of dissenting academics led to the dismissal of hundreds of scholars whose loss diminished serious inquiry in their respective fields for decades. This hysteria was in large measure provoked by the reaction of the ruling class to the changed post-Second World War landscape: the emergence of the Soviet Union as a super power, the rise of revolutionary China, the fear of leftist insurgency in Western Europe, the appearance of anti-colonial movements in the Southern Hemisphere, as well as apprehension over domestic trade union militancy, radicalism, and the birth of the civil rights movement. There was also the fear, in American industrial and financial circles, of a return to pre-war depression. Even as the United States demobilized and its industries geared up to fulfil

(Continued on inside back cover)

REVIEW OF THE MONTH

**BREATH OF HOPE:
On the Writings of Eduardo Galeano**

By ISABEL ALLENDE

Many years ago, when I was young and still believed that the world could be shaped according to our best intentions and hopes, someone gave me a book with a yellow cover that I devoured in two days with such emotion that I had to read it again a couple more times to absorb all its meaning: *The Open Veins of Latin America*, by Eduardo Galeano.

In the early seventies Chile was a small island in the tempestuous sea in which history had plunged Latin America, the continent that appears on the map in the form of an ailing heart. We were in the midst of the Socialist government of Salvador Allende, the first Marxist ever to become president in a democratic election, a man who had a dream of equality and liberty, and the passion to make that dream come true. That book with the yellow covers, however, proved that there were no safe islands in our region, we all shared five hundred years of exploitation and colonization, we were all linked by a common fate, we all belonged to the same race of the oppressed. If I had been able to read between the lines, I could have concluded that Salvador Allende's government was

Isabel Allende is the author of several bestselling novels including *In the House of the Spirits*, *The Infinite Plan*, and *Paula*. Eduardo Galeano's classic *Open Veins of Latin America*, much honored since its publication 25 years ago, is further honored by Isabel Allende's new preface, printed here with the author's permission.

doomed from the beginning. It was the time of the Cold war, and the United States would not allow a leftist experiment to succeed in what Henry Kissinger called "its backyard." The Cuban revolution was enough; no other socialist project would be tolerated, even if it was the result of a democratic election. On September 11, 1973, a Military Coup ended a century of democratic tradition in Chile and started the long reign of General Augusto Pinochet. Similar coups followed in other countries, and soon half the continent's population was living in terror. This was a strategy designed in Washington and imposed upon the Latin American people by the economic and political forces of the right. In every instance the military acted as mercenaries to the privileged groups in power. Repression was organized on a large scale; torture, concentration camps, censorship, imprisonment without trial, and summary executions became common practices. Thousands of people "disappeared," masses of exiles and refugees left their countries running for their lives. New wounds were added to the old and recent scars that the continent had endured. In this political context *The Open Veins of Latin America* was published. This book made Eduardo Galeano famous overnight, although he was already a well known political journalist in Uruguay.

Like all his countrymen, Eduardo wanted to be a soccer player. He also wanted to be a saint, but as it turned out, he ended up committing most of the deadly sins, as he once confessed. "I have never killed anybody, it is true, but it is because I lacked the courage or the time, not because I lacked the desire." He worked for a weekly political magazine *Marcha*, and at twenty-eight he became the director of the important newspaper *Epoca*, in Uruguay. He wrote *The Open Veins of Latin America* in three months, in the last ninety nights of 1970, while he worked during the day in the University, editing books, magazines, and newsletters.

Those were bad times in Uruguay. Planes and ships left filled with young people who were escaping from poverty and mediocrity in a country that forced them to be old at twenty, and that produced more violence than meat or wool. After an eclipse that had lasted a century, the military invaded the scene with the excuse of fighting

the Tupamara guerrilla. They sacrificed the spaces of liberty and devoured the civil power, which was less and less civil.

By the middle of 1973 there was a military coup, he was imprisoned, and shortly afterward he went into exile in Argentina, where he created the magazine *Crisis*. But by 1976 there was a military coup also in Argentina, and the "dirty war" against intellectuals, leftists, journalists, and artists began. Galeano initiated another exile, this time in Spain, with Helena Villagra, his wife. In Spain he wrote *Days and Nights of Love and War*, a beautiful book about memory, and soon after he began a sort of conversation with the soul of America: *Memories of Fire*, a massive fresco of Latin American history since the pre-Colombian era to modern times. "I imagined that America was a woman and she was telling in my ear her secrets, the acts of love and violations that had created her." He worked on these three volumes for eight years, writing by hand. "I am not particularly interested in saving time: I prefer to enjoy it." Finally, in 1985, after a plebiscite defeated the military dictatorship in Uruguay, Galeano was able to return to his country. His exile had lasted eleven years, but he had not learned to be invisible or silent; as soon as he set foot in Montevideo he was again working to fortify the fragile democracy that replaced the military junta, and he continued to defy the authorities and risk his life to denounce the crimes of the dictatorship.

Eduardo Galeano has also published several works of fiction and poetry; he is the author of innumerable articles, interviews, and lectures; he has obtained many awards, honorary degrees, and recognition for his literary talent and his political activism. He is one of the most interesting authors ever to come out of Latin America, a region known for its great literary names. His work is a mixture of meticulous detail, political conviction, poetic flair, and good storytelling. He has walked up and down Latin America listening to the voices of the poor and the oppressed, as well as those of the leaders and the intellectuals. He has lived with Indians, peasants, guerrillas, soldiers, artists, and outlaws; he has talked to presidents, tyrants, martyrs, priests, heroes, bandits, desperate mothers, and patient prostitutes. He has been bitten by snakes, suffered

tropical fevers, walked in the jungle, and survived a massive heart attack; he has been persecuted by repressive regimes as well as by fanatical terrorists. He has opposed military dictatorships and all forms of brutality and exploitation, taking unthinkable risks in defense of human rights. He has more first-hand knowledge of Latin America than anybody else I can think of, and uses it to tell the world of the dreams and disillusion, the hopes and the failures of its people. He is an adventurer with a talent for writing, a compassionate heart, and a soft sense of humor. "We live in a world that treats the dead better than the living. We, the living, are askers of questions and givers of answers, and we have other grave defects unpardonable by a system that believes death, like, money, improves people."

All these talents were already obvious in his first book, *The Open Veins of Latin America*, as was his genius for story-telling. I know Eduardo Galeano personally: he can produce an endless stream of stories with no apparent effort for an undetermined period of time. Once we were both stranded in a beach hotel in Cuba with no transportation and no air-conditioning. For several days he entertained me with his amazing stories over piña coladas. This almost superhuman talent for storytelling is what makes *The Open Veins of Latin America* so easy to read—like a pirate's novel, as he once described it—even for those who are not particularly knowledgeable about political or economic matters. The book flows with the grace of a tale; it is impossible to put it down. His arguments, his rage, and his passion would be overwhelming if they were not expressed with such superb style, with such masterful timing and suspense. Galeano denounces exploitation with uncompromising ferocity, yet this book is almost poetic in its description of solidarity and human capacity for survival in the midst of the worst kind of despoliation. There is a mysterious power in Galeano's story-telling. He uses his craft to invade the privacy of the reader's mind, to persuade him or her to read and to continue reading to the very end, to surrender to the charm of his writing and the power of his idealism.

In his *Book of Embraces*, Eduardo has a story that I love. To me it is a splendid metaphor of writing in general and his writing in particular.

There was an old and solitary man who spent most of his time in bed. There were rumors that he had a treasure hidden in his house. One day some thieves broke in, they searched everywhere and found a chest in the cellar. They went off with it and when they opened it they found that it was filled with letters. They were the love letters the old man had received all over the course of his long life. The thieves were going to burn the letters, but they talked it over and finally decided to return them. One by one. One a week. Since then, every Monday at noon, the old man would be waiting for the postman to appear. As soon as he saw him, the old man would start running and the postman, who knew all about it, held the letter in his hand. And even St. Peter could hear the beating of that heart, crazed with joy at receiving a message from a woman.

Isn't this the playful substance of literature? An event transformed by poetic truth. Writers are like those thieves, they take something that is real, like the letters, and by a trick of magic they transform it into something totally fresh. In Galeano's tale the letters existed and they belonged to the old man in the first place, but they were kept unread in a dark cellar, they were dead. By the simple trick of mailing them back one by one, those good thieves gave new life to the letters and new illusions to the old man. To me this is admirable in Galeano's work: finding the hidden treasures, giving sparkle to worn out events, and invigorating the tired soul with his ferocious passion.

The Open Veins of Latin America is an invitation to explore beyond the appearance of things. Great literary works like this one wake up consciousness, bring people together, interpret, explain, denounce, keep record, and provoke changes. There is one other aspect of Eduardo Galeano that fascinates me. This man who has so much knowledge and who has—by studying the clues and the signs—developed a sense of foretelling, is an optimist. At the end of *Century of the Wind*, the third volume of *Memory of Fire*, after 600 pages proving the genocide, the cruelty, the abuse, and exploitation exerted upon the people of Latin America, after a patient recount of

everything that has been stolen and continues to be stolen from the continent, he writes:

The tree of life knows that, whatever happens, the warm music spinning around it will never stop. However much death may come, however much blood may flow, the music will dance men and women as long as the air breaths them and the land plows and loves them.

This breath of hope is what moves me the most in Galeano's work. Like thousands of refugees all over the continent, I also had to leave my country after the military coup of 1973. I could not take much with me: some clothes, family pictures, a small bag with dirt from my garden, and two books: an old edition of the *Odes* by Pablo Neruda, and the book with the yellow cover, *Las Venas Abiertas de America Latina*. More than twenty years later I still have that same book with me. That is why I could not miss the opportunity to write this introduction and thank Eduardo Galeano publicly for his stupendous love for freedom, and for his contribution to my awareness as a writer and as a citizen of Latin America. As he said once: "it's worthwhile to die for things without which it's not worthwhile to live."

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FOOTNOTE TO THE COLD WAR: THE HARVARD RUSSIAN RESEARCH CENTER

by MARTIN OPPENHEIMER

In 1993 a German sociologist Uta Gerhardt edited an anthology entitled *Talcott Parsons on National Socialism*.¹ The book opens with a 78-page biographical introduction by Gerhardt and also includes fourteen essays by Parsons, some never before published. They deal with a range of topics from academic freedom, propaganda, and anti-Semitism to concrete discussions of Nazism and German social structure, the nature of fascist movements. There is even a radio script from September, 1940 that is a thinly disguised argument for intervention in the war.

Talcott Parsons was a leading figure in twentieth century American sociology. Parsons, who studied at Heidelberg among other places before going on to a long career at Harvard, is best known for his "functional analysis" of social systems, an essentially status-quo oriented sociology. His principal works, *The Structure of Social Action* (1939) and *The Social System* (1951), continue to be major pieces of the mainstream sociological canon today.

Gerhardt tells us that her collection of Parsons' work extends to 1951 when he published *The Social System*. So why

Martin Oppenheimer is Associate Professor of Sociology and Labor Studies at Rutgers University and works with the journal *Critical Sociology*.

- 452-53. This massive "dictionary" covers all aspects of the Korean war and its relevant prior history.
13. Ibid.
 14. "1945" of the "In Our Pages: 100, 75, and 50 Years Ago" subsection, *International Herald Tribune*, 24 November 1995, Editorial section.
 15. Cumings, *Origins*, op. cit., p. xxi.
 16. A term that became part of GI vocabulary during the war against Japan, widespread in Korea, and institutionalized in Vietnam.
 17. In all three cases, nationalization of the resources of the three societies was the central issue: oil in Iran, agricultural land (plus shipping, railroads, and communications) in Guatemala, the Suez Canal for Egypt. The United States was critical for the overthrow of the democratically elected (1951) nationalist Mossadegh in Iran, by supplying the military force and CIA guidance that placed our man the "Shah of Shahs" on the throne in 1953 (thus planting the long-growing seeds of the Khomeini "revolution" of 1979). The United States, Dulles using the Monroe Doctrine (1823!) as the official pretext, airlifted arms and CIA-trained Guatemalan exiles to overthrow the duly elected government of Arbenz in 1954 (which had confiscated 178,000 acres of United Fruit Company land, the real ruler of Guatemala throughout this century); and Britain and France, the owners of the Suez Canal Company, were seeking to overthrow the nationalist Nasser. For these, among other such moves of the Eisenhower-Dulles years, see LaFeber, op. cit., chap. 7 ("A Different Cold War. 1953-1955"), esp. pp. 152 ff. For oil and Iran (among other places) see Robert Engler, *The Politics of Oil: Private Power and Democratic Directions* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), especially chap. 8, and Michael Tanzer, *The Political Economy of International Oil and the Underdeveloped Countries* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1969).

What was the Commune?... The child has the right to know the reason of the paternal defeats, the socialist party, the campaign of its flag in all countries. He who tells the people revolutionary legends, who amuses them with sensational stories, is as criminal as the geographer who would draw up false charts for navigators.

—Lissagaray, *History of the Commune of 1871*

BOOKS

Self-Portrait of a Revolutionary

by Victor Wallis

Mumia Abu-Jamal, *Death Blossoms: Reflections from a Prisoner of Conscience*, Foreword by Cornel West, Preface by Julia Wright (Farmington, Pa.: Plough Publishing House, 1997), \$12.00, 190 pp.

Mumia Abu-Jamal is a major popularizer of revolution. Although the conditions for his notoriety were very much imposed upon him, he makes the best possible use of his extremely painful, and potentially tragic, platform.

He has been on death row now for almost fifteen years. This time-lapse may well be unprecedented for a case so strongly and explicitly rooted in ideological struggle.

His nemesis through the whole period has been a "hanging judge" who, in addition to supporting a consistent pattern of intimidation of defense witnesses (among many other irregularities), encouraged overt ideological stereotyping as grounds for obtaining the death-sentence. (If the initial verdict of guilt was political in a veiled sense—as with many other convicts from oppressed communities—the sentencing verdict's politics were blatant, thus justifying Mumia's claim to be a prisoner of conscience.¹)

From the opposite direction, a worldwide movement of protest, culminating in the summer of 1995, forced the setting aside of the one actual death-warrant, less than two weeks before it was to take effect. As of February 1997, the case is before the Pennsylvania Supreme Court.

Victor Wallis teaches at the Berklee College of Music and is an editor of *Socialism and Democracy*.

As the victim of a judicial and repressive nightmare (including censorship and reprisals against his efforts at public communication), Mumia Abu-Jamal deserves whatever support we can give him. As a writer and, in his own words, "a professional revolutionary," he amply repays the energies of the thousands who have rallied to his cause.

Mumia's previous book, *Live from Death Row*, was primarily a series of exposés (originally written for radio broadcast) of the conditions and the effects of death row itself. The present book, likewise made up of short takes, is more autobiographical and spiritual in content. We learn something of how Mumia got to be who he is: the setting in which he grew up; his painstaking search for a spiritual community; his sensitivity and responsiveness to every detail—human and inhuman—of his surroundings.

We get to know someone who, living under excruciating conditions of isolation and impending doom, has kept his head and his heart intact. Solid in his own grounding, he is free of bombast in his approach to others. He is open to whatever he can know of the world—from the drama of a besieged revolution (Cuba) to the spider in his neighbor's cell—but he is uncompromising in the affirmation of his core convictions. As he said of Wall Street, in a message to people demonstrating there in his support (December 1996), "It is fitting that we be heard here at America's highest court of appeals. Let the roar of revolution resound from here to all corners of this empire."

Reading Mumia's books, listening to his radio tapes, seeing his videotaped interviews, one can understand why the state's custodians want to get rid of him at all costs. Here is a man who has been a leader since his adolescent years (when he became one of the youngest independent subjects of FBI scrutiny). A skilled analytic journalist and a forceful speaker, rooted yet ecumenical, he can communicate with everyone—in particular, with every possible sector of the oppositional movement that is now struggling to define itself.

One reason, then, for supporting Mumia is that we actually need him, every bit as much as he needs us. He has the rare capacity to illuminate the underside of capitalist society, from first-hand experience, without descending into bitterness.

But there remains also a more general reason for supporting Mumia, one which he himself is the first to acknowledge. While it

may be true, as earlier revolutionaries have argued, that all great struggles will ultimately be played out as life-and-death confrontations, it is equally true that the routine and systematic use of the death penalty is a capstone for the more diffuse failures of a social order. Advocacy of capital punishment and opposition to even the barest measures of social improvement have always gone hand in hand. Institutionalized killing perpetuates the culture of meanness which competitive priorities demand.

Mumia expresses all this in the form of anecdotes of discovery. They make for compelling reading.

NOTES

1. Mumia's unadorned first name, much like that of Fidel Castro, has come into general public use among his supporters, without a trace of condescension.

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