

OF HUMAN RIGHTS

P410

May 1, 1987

Hon. William Lehman
U.S. House of Representatives
2437 Rayburn HOB
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Mr. Lehman:

Knowing of your previous work in the field of education, I would like to bring to your attention the plight of a Cuban teacher who is serving eight years in prison for having written a book critical of Cuban society.

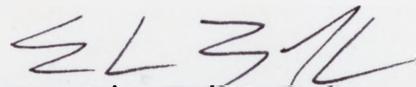
As you will see in the enclosed newsletter, Amnesty International reports that Ariel Hidalgo was arrested in 1981 and was charged and convicted of "enemy propaganda."

The 620,000-member American Federation of Teachers has begun a campaign on his behalf. Last month, Albert Shanker, President of AFT, sent a telegram to Fidel Castro asking for Hidalgo's freedom. An affiliate of AFT, the New York State United Teachers, unanimously passed a resolution calling for the same.

Would it be possible for you to add your voice to those already appealing to Fidel Castro to set Ariel Hidalgo free? A Congressional letter to Castro expressing concern for academic freedom in Cuba and the case of Professor Hidalgo, could be what is needed to obtain his release.

Thank you very much for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,



Eusebio Mujal-León
Professor of Government
Georgetown University

WASHINGTON OFFICE

5 1987

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Enclosure

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Ariel Hidalgo

Cuban teacher jailed by revolution he supported

(NEW YORK TEACHER, September 1, 1986)

RECEIVED

MAY 5 1987

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL

WASHINGTON OFFICE MAY 1986

CAMPAIGN FOR PRISONERS OF THE MONTH



Each of the people whose story is told below is a prisoner of conscience. Each has been arrested because of his or her religious or political beliefs, colour, sex, ethnic origin or language. None has used or advocated violence. Their continuing detention is a violation of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. International appeals can help to secure the release of these prisoners or to improve their detention conditions. In the interest of the prisoners, letters to the authorities should be worded carefully and courteously. You should stress that your concern for human rights is not in any way politically partisan. In *no* circumstances should communications be sent to the prisoner.

CUBA

Ariel Hidalgo Guillen: a 41-year-old academic and teacher, he is serving an eight-year prison term, apparently for criticizing the government.

Ariel Hidalgo Guillen was arrested by members of the *Departamento de Seguridad del Estado* (DSE), Department of State Security, on 19 August 1981. He was reportedly taken to a psychiatric hospital before being taken to DSE headquarters, where he was charged under Article 108-1 of the Cuban Penal Code with incitement "against the social order, international solidarity or the Socialist State, by means of oral, written or any other kind of propaganda."

He was sentenced to eight years' imprisonment. There is very little information about his trial, the main evidence

against him is said to have consisted of the testimony of members of the local *Comite de la Defensa de la Revolucion* (CDR), Committee for the Defence of the Revolution, who said among other things, that he "talked too much".

However, AI believes he may have been convicted because of an unpublished manuscript entitled *Cuba, the Marxist State and the "New Class": a Dialectical Materialist Study*, which the police reportedly found when they searched his home before the trial. The book strongly criticizes the new ruling class in Cuba and other communist countries.

For the first 14 months of his imprisonment in Combinado del Este Prison, Havana, he was reportedly held in solitary confinement. He was then moved to an ordinary cell and his wife was allowed to visit him for two hours each month. In

August 1984 the visits were reportedly cut to three a year. His health is said to be poor.

Ariel Hidalgo graduated in history from the University of Havana in 1975. During the 1970s he wrote a number of political articles, several of which were published in official Cuban journals. In 1976 he wrote *Origins of the Worker Movement and Socialist Thought in Cuba*, which was used as a university textbook until 1981. When the book was published, he was described as a professor of social economics at the Manolito Aguiar Workers' College, where he is thought to have worked until his arrest.

□ Please send courteous letters appealing for his release to: S.E. Comandante en Jefe Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz/Presidente de la Republica/Ciudad de la Habana/Cuba □

The Sadist As Revolutionary

NAT HENTOFF

Every month, in its newsletter, Amnesty International focuses on several "Prisoners of the Month." Each is a prisoner of conscience, "arrested because of his or her religious or political beliefs, color, sex, ethnic origin, or language. None has used or advocated violence."

One of May's "Prisoners of the Month" was Ariel Hidalgo Guillen, a Cuban teacher, scholar, and writer. On June 9, moreover, an AI delegation presented a letter on Hidalgo's behalf to Ramon Sanchez-Parodi, Charge D'Affaires, Cuban Interests Section, Washington.

What has happened to Ariel Hidalgo is hardly unique under the Cuban Revolution. I mean the "charge" under which he was arrested and imprisoned, and the treatment he has received because he will not bend. There are few countries in the world where prisoners of conscience are treated as vindictively and vengefully as in Cuba. And this sadistic tone is set by the colossus who bestrides that land. Fidel Castro keeps trying to break the spirit—he has already broken many bodies—of those who refuse to be "rehabilitated," who will not be "re-educated," who will not confess error by admitting that Dr. Castro is without error.

From time to time, Castro lets some of these maddeningly stubborn victims go. He does this for strategic public relations reasons, but there are many left who keep suffering, keep being denied medical care, and keep defying him. The resisters are called *plantados*. They do not cooperate with prison officials because the Government refuses to recognize their status as political prisoners.

Because Castro still hopes to force them to submit, *plantados* — as Amnesty International told a Congressional subcommittee in June 1984 — "are among some of the longest serving political prisoners of the world."

The sadism with which Dr. Castro and his colleagues operate is reflected not only in the abnormally long sentences for having "wrong" ideas but also in the regime's chortling habit of adding to the

sentence just when the prisoner is about to finish his original sentence. This usually takes place without a hearing and without a judge.

A chart, written in tiny letters and smuggled out of Boniato Prison in Santiago de Cuba in 1983, showed that at least

"There are few countries in the world where prisoners of conscience are treated as vindictively and vengefully as in Cuba."

11 of the prisoners were still locked up even though their sentences had been completed from one to 12 years ago. One of them was 12 when he was arrested in 1966 and sentenced to six years. He was still in a cell in 1983.

Ariel Hidalgo, a Marxist who would also characterize himself as a Communist, was a teacher of adult workers at a

From our point of view, we have no human-rights problem—there have been no "disappeareds" here, there have been no tortures here, there have been no murders here. In twenty-five years of revolution, in spite of the difficulties and dangers we have passed through, torture has never been committed, a crime has never been committed.

—Fidel Castro, speaking to French and American journalists in the Palacio de la Revolucion in Havana on July 28, 1983

A twenty-year old [Jehovah's Witness] has been tied to a pole [in this Cuban prison] to make him salute the flag. When he refused, he was savagely beaten until he was bleeding profusely, and then fainted. They revived him, but he still refused, and they beat him over and over again.

—Jorge Valls, *Twenty Years & Forty Days/Life in a Cuban Prison*, an Americas Watch Report, 1986

high school near Havana when he was first arrested in 1980. At the time there was an exodus of Cubans from the port of Mariel. A student wanted to go with them, and when some patriots found this out, they surrounded the student and threw rocks at him. Hidalgo intervened to protect the student, and that act alerted the police to the teacher.

Ariel Hidalgo was a popular teacher, and on many nights, students would sit around his living room talking about Marxism. Official Cuban journals and publishing firms had printed some of his articles. One of his passionate interests is Jose Marti, the inspiration for generations of Cuban revolutionaries, and Hidalgo wrote about Marti's conception of imperialist neocolonialism.

Meanwhile, Hidalgo was concerned with what he saw as the rise in Cuba of an arrogant, abusive bureaucracy. He had finished a manuscript, not yet published, titled *Cuba, the Marxist State and the "New Class": a Dialectical Materialistic Study*. The book dissects the new ruling class not only in Cuba but in other Communist countries, and urges that it be opposed.

In 1981, Ariel Hidalgo was arrested again and taken to a psychiatric hospital. The unpublished manuscript was found in his home. For a Communist to criticize

I ask: Where do the contradictions between Christian teachings and socialist teaching lie? Where? We both wish to struggle on behalf of humanity for the benefit of humanity, for the happiness of humanity.

—Commander in Chief Fidel Castro Ruz, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and President of the Council of State and of the Government, speaking to representatives of the Churches of Jamaica, October 20, 1977

These are not men, these are spectres, skeletons, covered with skin, human scarecrows.

—a description of political prisoners at Combinado del Este prison, Cuba, by the Organization of American States Inter-American Commission on Human Rights, December 1979.

the Revolution was a sign, to say the least, of instability. Or so it should appear. After further official thought, however, Hidalgo was taken to state security headquarters.

Charges were filed against him under Section 5 (“Enemy Propaganda”), Article 108-1 of the Cuban Penal Code. The provision punishes anyone “who, (a) incites against the social order, international solidarity, or the socialist State by means of oral or written propaganda, or any other form; (b) makes, distributes, or possesses propaganda of the character mentioned in the preceding clause.”

The trial was brief and not covered in the Cuban press. The “evidence” was supplied by members of the neighborhood defense committee where he lived. That “evidence” consisted of those ever vigilant spies on their neighbors telling the court that Hidalgo had the highly suspicious habit of “talking too much.” This presumably referred to the evening sessions with students at his home.

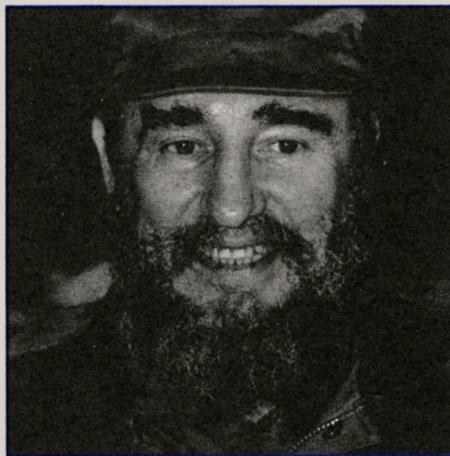
The sentence for failing to leash his words and ideas was eight years in prison. One expects that Madame Defarge and the other members of the branch of the Committee for the Defense of the Revolution on his block rejoiced.

For the first 14 months of his sentence, Hidalgo was held in solitary confinement in a tiny cell in the Combinado del Este prison near Havana. The unrelievedly dark and filthy cell was so small that he could not stretch out his legs. (It has not been unknown for some of Dr. Castro’s other political prisoners to be kept in small, wooden boxes in fetal positions for up to six months.

Hidalgo was then moved to a regular cell and allowed monthly visits from his wife, but not his daughter. Those visits were sometimes denied for months because Hidalgo refused “rehabilitation.” He will not recant his ideas because they are his life. The most dangerous of those is that no socialist revolution can survive without socialist democracy.

At certain times and places in history, having such an idea is indeed so dangerous that, Hidalgo told his wife not long ago, “I love my daughter so much, but a man with my ideas should not have children.”

Another of the reasons, by the way, that the visits of Hidalgo’s wife are sometimes canceled for months on end is that Hidalgo has been caught writing. Has



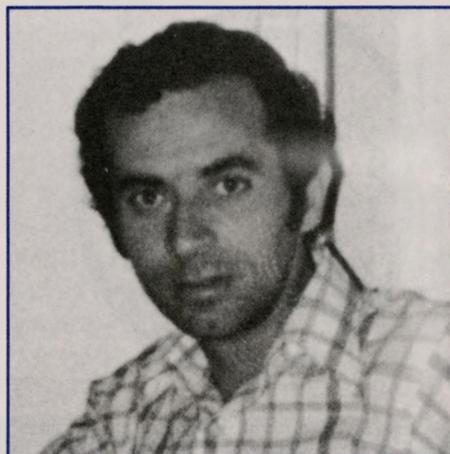
Fidel Castro: “We have no human-rights problem.”

Fidel never heard of oral histories?

Both Hidalgo’s daughter and his wife are under psychiatric treatment — the girl, in part, because the kids and the teachers in her school unflinchingly remind her that her father is a traitor. So Hidalgo has to not only keep himself together but also shores up his wife when she visits.

“The ‘evidence’ was supplied . . . by the neighborhood defense committee . . . [They told] the court that Hidalgo had the highly suspicious habit of “Talking too much”

It was hoped by his friends and relatives that Hidalgo would be released when Jesse Jackson visited Fidel in mid-1984. But Hidalgo was not on the list. Jackson, by the way, got to see one of the “model” Potemkin prisons that some visitors to Cuba are permitted to admire.



Ariel Hidalgo Guillen: He has a problem.

But for a quarter of a century, no human-rights group has been allowed to see, let alone investigate, any of the places where the political prisoners are kept. For that matter, no official delegation from a human-rights organization, including Amnesty International, is even allowed inside Cuba — although on an unofficial basis, some representatives have been permitted to have a discussion with the authorities.

With regard to Jesse Jackson’s visit, it should be noted that shortly before he was to see the “model” prison, the walls past which he was to walk were brightly painted. And on the day of his visit, some of the inmates suddenly had thrust upon them baseball uniforms and baseball equipment. (See the happy prisoners run and play!) If was a long game because Jesse was an hour and a half late and the prisoners were not allowed to stop running the bases until he got there.

There is not, of course, an active domestic human-rights organization inside Cuba. By contrast, there have been independent, though perilous, human-rights groups even in such ferocious dictatorships as Chile and Guatemala. But Fidel takes no chances.

While it happens to be true that Cuba has been without death squad executions and “disappearances,” Americas Watch points out in a report this year that “many opponents of its government” have been “legally executed.”

For further illumination of Fidel’s Revolution, here is an official 1974 Cuban court document explaining why Angel Rene Ariza Bardales, 33, was sentenced to more than three years in prison:

“. . . for some time [he] has been devoting himself to writing short stories, essays, and reports, the contents and point of view of which are based on the amplest sort of ideological diversionism and written counterrevolutionary propaganda . . . All this literary material *lacking artistic value* is written against the interests of our people, of our first minister Commander Fidel Castro Ruz, the martyrs of our country, and the rest of our leaders. He tried to send it abroad [thereby inciting] against the socialist order and international solidarity. [Emphasis added.]

“These facts constitute a crime against the integrity of the nation. . .

“Fatherland of death we will triumph!”

So too say the tyrants of South Africa and Chile. It is no wonder that Fidel fears Ariel Hidalgo. ■

Loyal Marxist Languishes in Cuban Jail For Writing on Privileged 'Ruling Class'

ROGER LOWENSTEIN

HAVANA — Critics of Fidel Castro's Cuba inevitably seem to be determined anti-communists. But there is one exception in a Cuban jail, and for many in the United States he is becoming a cause celebre.

Ariel Hidalgo was a professor of Marxism whose books were widely used in Cuban schools. Ideologically, he was a lily white Marxist who worshipped Che Guevara and the ideal of a classless state.

But in 1981, Mr. Hidalgo was sentenced to eight years in jail for "inciting against the social order." His crime was writing a secret manuscript, turned over to the police by a neighbor, entitled "Cuba: The Marxist State and the New Class."

Unlike the Soviet Union, Cuba has no public dissidents or underground press, and its political prisoners are relatively obscure. Thus, Mr. Hidalgo's manuscript, smuggled out of Cuba on onion-skin paper and recently circulated in the U.S., provides an unusual look at the thinking of a Cuban dissident.

In 1980 he protected a student, who had asked to leave the country, against a government-inspired, rock-throwing mob. Mr. Hidalgo was arrested, confined for a month to a mental asylum and then released.

Sometime after that, the government apparently discovered a copy of "The New Class." He was rearrested, according to his wife, Barbara Rodriguez, at 6:30 a.m., on Aug. 19, 1981.

"Four state security agents came and said 'Come with me,'" Mrs. Rodriguez, who lives in Havana, recalled in an interview in the coffee shop of the Hotel Havana Libre. "I was dressing the girl for school. Some of them took Ariel to State Security and the others began looking around the house. They took his papers and they took photographs of everything."

At his trial, neighbors testified that Mr. Hidalgo "talked too much." His manu-

script wasn't mentioned - perhaps, his sister says, because the government was intent on burying it.

Mr. Hidalgo was barely allowed to talk in his defense, his wife says. He was convicted under the Enemy Propaganda section of Article 108-1 of the Cuban penal code after a two-hour trial.

For the first 14 months Mr. Hidalgo was in solitary confinement in Combinado del Este prison near Havana. During that period, his family says, he didn't have enough room to fully stretch his legs.

After that, his wife was allowed to visit once a month. Last August, however, the regimen was changed to three visits a year.

"The New Class' argues . . . that the Cuban Communist Party has become a 'new ruling class' in a supposedly classless state."

Their daughter Yankde, now 12, was "very disturbed when her father became a prisoner," her mother says. "I told her he hadn't killed or robbed anybody — it was because of his ideas.

"She said what ideas? I told her I would explain when she was older, but they were nothing bad."

"The New Class" argues, from an orthodox Marxist viewpoint, that the Cuban Communist Party has become a "new ruling class" in a supposedly classless state. This is the ultimate heresy in communist societies, for it suggests that another revolution might be needed to realize true communism.

"Exploitation of workers has only changed its shape," and faith in the party has become "the new opiate of the masses," Mr. Hidalgo wrote. Cuba is controlled "by a caste of bureaucratic managers" who enjoy the same privileges

as the capitalists of old.

Cuban officials haven't responded to questions from a reporter about Mr. Hidalgo. However, Rep. Jim Leach, an Iowa congressman who has visited Mr. Castro, wrote the Cuban Interest Section in Washington last month appealing for Mr. Hidalgo's release.

"The case is significant," Rep. Leach says. "One expects the Batista followers to be critics, but nothing undercuts legitimacy more than a Marxist critique" of communism.

Earlier this year, a group of 4 prominent liberals and leftists — including I.F. Stone, Noam Chomsky and Paul Robeson, Jr. — published a letter calling for Mr. Hidalgo's release.

And in March, a Columbia Law School group visiting Cuba asked about Mr. Hidalgo, and about other prisoners, at the request of America's Watch, a New York-based human rights group. Cuban officials provided details on a dozen prisoners, but not on Mr. Hidalgo.

According to his sister, Giselda Dolgicer, who lives in New York, Mr. Hidalgo's family was "revolutionary through and through," particularly in the early years. Mario Hidalgo, his uncle, was a captain with Mr. Castro in the Sierra Maestra, though he later fell out with the government and was imprisoned.

Ariel Hidalgo studied history at the University of Havana and kept a picture of Che Guevara in his home. His work was radical: A study of the Panama Canal and U.S. imperialism won a prize in Panama; a book on the origins of socialist thought in Cuban was well received at home.

Before his arrest, he taught adult high school classes at the Manolito Aguirer school near Havana. His sister, who left Cuba in 1980, says his house was "filled almost every night" with students who came to talk politics.

Mr. Hidalgo frequently spoke out about what he viewed as abuses, particularly those by bureaucrats. He wrote, in "The New Class": "How are we to explain that the majority of the managers enjoy a series of privileges denied to the working masses? How are we to explain the source of these luxurious mansions, of the fancy furniture, of the freezers chock full of a wide variety of food, the yachts, the automobiles, the parties, when most of the people must resign themselves to proletarian austerity?" ■

Cuban teacher jailed by revolution he supported

ANTONIO RAMIREZ

A 41-year old orthodox Marxist, who won praise for his earlier writings in support of Cuba's Communist revolution against American "imperialism," is serving eight years in prison because he extended his criticisms to Cuba's rulers whom he characterizes as a new managerial elite.

Ariel Hidalgo was arrested on August 19, 1981 and charged with violating a law prohibiting "inciting against the social order, international solidarity, or the socialist State by means of oral or written propaganda, or any other form." Members of the local neighborhood defense committee, part of Cuba's network of grass-roots political informers, testified at Hidalgo's two-hour trial that he "talked too much." Hidalgo's troubles with the police started in 1980 when he was arrested for defending a student at the workers' high school where he taught who was being assaulted by a rock-throwing mob for having sought a visa to leave Cuba.

According to information gathered by Amnesty International, the human rights agency which has adopted Hidalgo as a prisoner of conscience, the probable actual reason for Hidalgo's second arrest was that he was working on an essay titled "Cuba: The Marxist State and the 'New Class': A Dialectical Materialist Study."

Excerpts from the essay, smuggled out of Cuba after Hidalgo's arrest, appear in "The Heresy of Words in Cuba" by Carlos Ripoll, published by Freedom House. Hidalgo charges that control of the society has fallen into the hands of a "managerial ruling class" and that ownership of industry by the people "is a mere sophism, and workers' control of the State a mere slogan." He also points an accusing finger at the "lavish homes of these functionaries with their luxurious furnishings, their pantries bulging with many foods, their yachts, automobiles and sumptuous parties, while the majority of workers must resign themselves to

copied with deprivation under the guise of proletarian austerity." Foreign visitors, Hidalgo reports, are shown model schools and hospitals used only by the upper echelon while "there exists dozens more in wretched conditions which are utilized primarily by the children of the workers."

Hidalgo spent his first 14 months in the Combinado del Este prison in solitary confinement. Then his wife, but not his daughter, was allowed to visit him for two hours once a month. However, in August 1984 the visits were cut to three a year and in December 1985 Hidalgo's wife was told he would not be allowed any visitors or mail for a year as punishment for continuing to write in prison. The prisoner has reportedly refused to accept "rehabilitation" procedures which could ease his prison conditions or hasten his release.

Politely worded letters, in Spanish when possible, asking for Hidalgo's release should be addressed to S.E. Comdante en Jefe Dr. Fidel Castro Ruz/Presidente de la Republica/Ciudad de la Habana/Cuba.

Amnesty International works for the release of those who have been detained anywhere for their beliefs, color, sex, ethnic origin, language, or religion provided they have not used or advocated violence. The organization, now celebrating its 25th anniversary, was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1977. ■



"Fidel Castro keeps trying to break the spirit — he has already broken many bodies — of those who refuse to be 'rehabilitated,' who will not be 're-educated,' who will not confess error by admitting that Dr. Castro is without error."

—The Sadist as Revolutionary

Speak Up For Human Rights in Cuba

Editors:

We all have been long-standing opponents, in our writings and actions, of U.S. intervention in the affairs of Latin American and Caribbean countries. While we have varying views of the Castro government in Cuba, we are greatly disturbed by the case of Ariel Hidalgo, a Cuban leftist writer, historian, and educator.

Ariel Hidalgo was first arrested in 1980 when he faced a rock-throwing group and loudly protested their attack on a student who was seeking to leave the country during the exodus of Cubans from the port of Mariel. Hidalgo was freed, but he was arrested again in 1981.

Hidalgo was eventually convicted and sentenced to eight years in prison under the Fifth Section (titled "Enemy Propaganda"), article 108-1 of the Cuban Penal Code, which punishes any person "who, (a) incites against the social order, international solidarity or the socialist State by means of oral or written propaganda, or any other form; (b) makes, distributes or possesses propaganda of the character mentioned in the preceding clause." In fact, Hidalgo was sentenced to the maximum term of one to eight years established by this law.

At his brief one-session trial, unmentioned in the Cuban press, Hidalgo was only allowed to say a few words at the conclusion of the proceedings. The government's case consisted of testimony by the local neighborhood defense committee, which spoke of Hidalgo's "talking too much." The prosecution chose not to mention that the police had seized an unpublished manuscript in which Hidalgo attempts to demonstrate that a new ruling class has taken over the "socialist" countries including Cuba. Furthermore, he argues that this class should be forthrightly opposed.

*Ariel Hidalgo, a Cuban historian, has been in prison because of his beliefs since 1980. A group of American intellectuals, many of whom strongly supported the Cuban revolution, have urged his release. Noam Chomsky, I.F. Stone, Paul Sweezy, and other published the following letter in **DISSENT**, Spring 1985. **DISSENT** is the social-democratic journal edited by Irving Howe in New York.*

For simply expressing his views, Hidalgo spent the first 14 months in jail in deplorable conditions—solitary confinement in the Combinado del Este prison near Havana. He was then moved to a regular cell, and his wife (but not his daughter) could visit him once a month for two hours. He still was, however, not allowed to receive writing or reading

materials. Since August 1984, even these monthly visits have been prohibited.

We believe that Hidalgo's trial, the law under which he was punished, and the prison conditions he is enduring fail to meet the most elementary standards of human rights.

Consistent with our stand in support of struggles for freedom and self-determination throughout the world, we ask the Cuban government to release Ariel Hidalgo, and any other persons whose rights have been similarly denied.

Pete Camarata
Noam Chomsky
John Enryk Clarke
Bernadette Devlin McAliskey
Barbara Ehrenreich
Alexander Erlich (1912-85)
Samuel Farber
Barbara Garson
Gay Community News
Richard Healey
Joanne Landy
Gordon K. Lewis
Sam Meyers
Ralph Miliband
Carlos Moore
Paul Robeson, Jr.
Nanette Rosa-Collazo
Virginia Sanchez-Korro
Clancy Sigal
I.F. Stone
Carlota Suarez
Paul M. Sweezy
Nancy Wechsler
Stanley Weir

