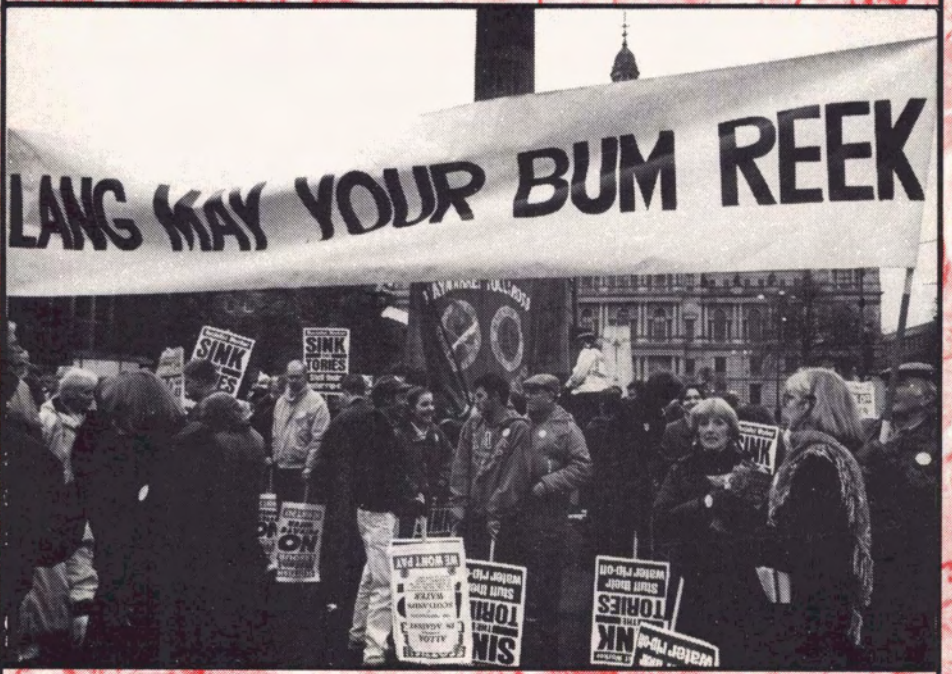
COMMON SENSE

Journal of Edinburgh Conference of Socialist Economists



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COMMON SENSE • EDINBURGH

Published in Scotland by Common Sense, PO Box 311, Southern District Office, Edinburgh, EH9 1SF, Scotland.

Printed by Clydeside Press, Glasgow.

Typeset in 9pt Times Roman.
Produced and Designed on Apple MacIntosh computers.

Notes for Contributors: if at all possible send articles (of no greater than 6000 words) on 3.5 inch IBM or Apple MacIntosh computer disc, otherwise send articles in clean typescript, please note that it would help the editorial committee greatly if more than one copy can be sent.

Subscriptions: please see backpages.

World-wide Distribution: *AK Distribution, 22 Lutton Place, Edinburgh EH8 9PE.*

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

Edinburgh Conference of Socialist Economists,
Common Sense
1. Social Theory
2. Philosophy - Education - Scotland
I. Title

ISSN: 0957 - 240X

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After the Flood

THERE have been many worrying reports recently on a potential water shortage worldwide. In Britain where one would think that water is in an abundant supply, the southern region say that July 1991 to January 1992 have been the driest ever, and records go back more than 100 years.

The areas worst effected are in the south east of England and East Anglia because half the water supply comes from groundwater, natural underground reservoirs which depend on winter rainfall to keep them topped up. In summer, rain tends to evaporate before it becomes groundwater.

Some areas of Britain are not short of water; either because they have a high rainfall or less demand from private consumers, industry and farming. It is not, however, considered viable to transport water over long distances, though adjoining water companies do cooperate with each other with water transfer schemes.

Probably we all use far more water than we really need to in our homes, and there are ways we can cut down. This will be good practice for the future when we may be paying for our water according to how much we use.

IN THE KITCHEN

Washing machines account for about 12% of the total water we use in and around our homes. To make the best use of the gallons needed for a wash cycle, collect a full load or, if your machine has one, use the half-load button. If you are replacing a washing machine, check out the manufacturer's information on water consumption before you buy a new one. This can vary from 16 to 25 gallons to wash a nine to 11 pound load on a hot cotton wash programme.

'Probably we all use far more water than we really need to in our homes, and there are ways we can cut down'

Older designs of machines kept clothes wet by submersing them in a lot of water. Newer designs recycle smaller amounts of water using built-in sprays or scoops. Automatic sensors on some models adjust the amount of water according to the size of the load and the type of fabric.

Dishwashers, like washing machines, should only be used when you have a full load. If you are buying one for the first time or replacing an old one, check on the amount of water required for a normal wash programme. Newer machines recycle smaller amounts of water, around four gallons, but get the dishes just as clean.

Cleaning is obviously not an area where we should skimp on using water, but there are a few small savings we can make, mainly by being careful not to waste it by overfilling washing up bowls or buckets. Washing up water can be used afterwards on garden plants.

Turn taps off securely and keep them in good repair by renewing washers when necessary. A dripping tap can lose around a pint of water every ten minutes

IN THE BATHROOM

A bath uses three times as much water as a shower. Letting the tap run all the time when we wash our hands or clean our teeth wastes water. Putting the plug in the washbasin and switching the tap on an off between cleaning and rinsing our teeth makes small savings which add up surprisingly over the year.

FLUSHING THE LAVATORY

This is the greatest use of household water - one third of the total. Older cisterns can use two gallons a flush. Since January 1, 1989, all new lavatories are required to use less than 1.8 gallons. Some lavatories have a two-tier flush system — a quick touch on the handle will produce less water than if you hold the handle down for a few seconds.

IN THE GARDEN

A sprinkler can use 220 gallons an hour, enough to fill 12 baths, which is why hosepipe bans are imposed. Collect rainwater from gutters in butts. Many plastic ones attach to downpipes with the fittings provided and have connectors on the side for hosepipes.

Water the garden in the evening — there is less chance of evaporation. Apply a mulch (well-rotted compost) to flower and shrub borders in spring to help preserve water in the soil.

Figure 1: An article on the 'water crisis' from The Scotish Homebuyer and Home Improver (1993a).

Cover Photograph by Rob Hoon. Demonstration against water privatisation, Glasgow, February 1993. The joke is on Ian Lang, Tory Secretary of State for Scotland.

Capital's 'Water Crisis': A Scottish Analysis

Brian McGrail

I. CAPITAL'S 'WATER CRISIS': THE GLOBAL DIMENSION

Like the 'energy crisis' of the 70s the emerging 'water crisis' is being presented as a technical and ecological question in which human life is an incidental variable: there just happens to be too many people living in areas with too little water to support an expanding number of people; too many nations rely for their staple food on the U.S. Midwest which depends for water on an unsustainable underground aquifer; and too many dams are being built by up-river nations who then, by implication rather than intention, threaten the livelihood of down-river neighbours and hence put world peace in jeopardy. As the *Observer Magazine* so dramatically summed-up, "In the seventies it was oil. In the nineties it is water: a natural resource so vital, and in such demand, that nations will do anything to get it. According to U.N. Secretary General Boutras Boutras-Ghali, 'The next war in the Middle East will be fought over water, not politics'.[1] But the water crisis is becoming dangerous in other parts of the world too, as more and more governments begin to worry about the vulnerability of their water supplies. Water's potential as a source of conflict affects us all[2], and it is time that we woke up to the dangers"[3].

In the same article African women who walk 5 hours a day to collect 30lbs of water are sited as instances of the worldwide 'water crisis' and the human cost of insufficient water supplies. The emphasis is of a crisis which affects us all - even if it is only our consciences. The 'water crisis' is an emerging tragedy *we* should and can all do something about by cutting down on our consumption: use less water; recycle what we use by pouring it onto the garden; fit a modern 1.8 gallon cistern, etc. Yet these individual measures can only prevent drought from occurring 'here', from this tragedy ever affecting 'us'. In the wider political sphere politicians and governments are expected to take care of major disasters by preventing deforestation and also aid the wholesale development of rivers from source to delta. Lean's article avoided the

[1] Seems Boutras Boutras-Ghali knows something the rest of us don't - like there "will be" another war in the Middle East!

[2] The opening phrase 'In the 70s it was oil. In the 90s it is water..' is so poignant as far as Scotland is concerned since the discovery of oil in the North Sea was exploited in the 1970s as a means of bolstering the British state's revenue and supporting oil companies' profits with very little benefit to the local populace. Likewise Scotland's water grows in significance in the 1990s (see below).

[3] From Lean (1993) *Troubled Waters: Geoffrey Lean Surveys a Global Crisis*, p. 17.

"consumer politics" message which was to be found in a later issue of the *Observer Magazine* but it is still a wealthy consumer's compendium of water usage and treatment disasters. No analysis of the reasons for these disasters is given other than the need for nations (acting independently) to acquire greater amounts of water in order to support ever growing and 'more affluent' populations. An affluence which in turn increases this pollution, whether it is due to domestic waste and hygiene treatments (such as bleach and detergents) or industrial pollutants, which a consumer society necessarily produces as a side effect[4].

Just as capital (re: the capitalist class) wishes to impress upon us that the 'water crisis' is a natural problem, an ecological barrier *humanity* must face, and that this is the problem capital faces, the official opposition wishes to impress upon us that the 'water crisis' is a matter of degree: it is bad state planning and lack of national and international regulation; it is government misrule and a wasteful use of resources. But at the end of the day there is nothing fundamentally wrong with a society premised upon private property and the exploitation this property form entails, after all the 'plebeians' are equally guilty since they too share in this exploitation - their own exploitation as well as that of mother nature. From the perspective of the official opposition *moderation* is the key. In all of this there is no clear class analysis of the situation, and hence a similar argument to that used consistently throughout the 'energy crisis' is redeployed, "the 'waste' would be due to families which use automobiles too much and sit too long in front of their bright television screens"[5].

However, there is no point in stressing Southern California's water shortage without asking why 20 million people (or more) are living in the middle of a desert? We must ask why do people urbanise?; why does capital concentrate plant and jobs in these 'dry' areas?; why has water consumption developed in the manner it has?; why is there uneven development?; etc. Equally there is nothing said when a 'nation' is blamed for its neighbour's plight because it has built a dam or re-diverted a river, even if the 'answer' seems to be clear. Are dams simply about quenching the thirst of growing urban populations? Or are they about supplying manufactories and producing electricity? All these questions are unanswerable without examining the restructuring of capital over the last 25 years. Like the 'energy crisis', which can only be understood in terms of a class analysis of the breakdown of the social contract between labour and capital under the post-war auto-deal, the 'water crisis' can only be understood by a class analysis of the impact the 'energy crisis' had on oil producing and oil consuming countries with regards to the transfer of capital (and thus the rapid populating and modernisation of 'barren' lands) and the search for 'alternative' forms of power.

In mainstream and Marxist literature nuclear power (as an alternative to oil) was given the most prominent place: it was secretive, capital intensive, linked to military programmes and posed a danger to human existence when things went wrong. It also provided mass, popular resistance - even amongst the rural middle classes who found their areas under threat. However, although nuclear appeared as capital's choice energy source it was in no way unwilling to recognise the usefulness of other sources. A general awareness of the centrality of *all* energy sources to capitalist exploitation and restructuring was missing from the populist anti-nuclear campaign, "In opposing

[4] For many new "green" capitalist enterprises this pollution "side effect" is rapidly becoming the *main effect* of consumer society since it is "clean-up" upon which they depend for their profits.

[5] Levidow & Young (1985), *Capital's 'Energy Crisis': Italian Analyses*, p. 61.

nuclear power... we are faced with a clear class choice: either simply propose 'alternative' energy sources and thus aid capitalist restructuring, or attack all capitalist exploitation involved in energy usage and embodied in technology design"[6]. In addition the anti-nuclear campaign was centred only in those countries which had the ability to build and operate nuclear stations, or could do so without undermining U.S. foreign policy (due to their connection with the construction of the atomic bomb - ie. Israel and Iraq).

The other major sources of power varied greatly in their capital intensiveness, unit price and energy output. In many traditional energy industries labour was well organised and concentrated due to the accumulation of both capital and labour power over the years (coal and gas). For environmentalists they also involved burning fossil fuels and added to global warming whilst for "energy planners" (who planned prices by *planning* the amount of energy to be *wasted*) they were similar to oil in their obtainability and limited lifespan. At the same time new energy indsutries (wind, wave and solar) remained unfeasible.

With rising energy prices and labour power costs in the highly industrialised nations, the flight of capital in the late 70s and early 80s to newly industrialising regions generated unforeseen problems. One point, perhaps the major one, in capital's flight was gaining access to cheaper labour power, but this labour power could not simply be pumped into a de-capitalised production and reproduction process as a means of lowering the organic composition of capital and labour power. Capital which supplanted itself in these countries had to both build modern automated factories and, in many instances, impose and re-impose methods of primitive accumulation. It required both rapid urbanisation and industrialisation to take place under the auspices of "development". In many cases old technologies of previous (temperate) urbanisation were used in altogether unsuitable and unsustainable situations with a consequential drive for new technologies[7].

Hence, even if capital wished to replace organic energy with the living energy "stored" in the source of human labour power it found itself consumed in the necessary social costs of reproducing that living energy source (as that life made its demands). One key to maintaining that particular energy source was *water*. Without cheapening the supply of water to expanding urban areas the supply of labour power would be slow and expensive. Not only because the cost of water would be high but because sewerage would also be expensive since water is essential to the removal of waste in urban drainage systems. However, coupled to this hydration and hygiene crisis of urban reproduction was *capital's* growing consumption of water and electricity as organic components in manufacturing and flow-engineering production. In the case of making computer chips Motorola use 512 gallons of water per minute per assembly line as a 'coolant' whilst a modern dye factory can use up to 2 million gallons a day, and new synthetic materials are weaved using a needle fired by water jets and supported on a stream of water. Finally, hydroelectric plants provide a high output form of cheap electricity from a 'sustainable' resource but require the massive capital investment of dam construction.

For these reasons the fate of many "developing" countries, and rural areas in

[6] ibid., p.52.

[7] For example, with regards to water usage the "low gravity flushing toilet" was designed in order to reduce the consumption of valuable water from toilet use in Southern Africa.

industrialised regions, were sealed by borrowing which was used to try and meet capital's growing "requirement" for reservoired, specifically dammed, water. Ethiopia, Syria, Iraq, Turkey, Mali, Mauritania, Senegal, the 8 countries of the Zambesi Basin, Jordan and China all drew up plans for large-scale dam projects in the 1980s whereas Egypt and Libya had already embarked on schemes. The Chinese plan encompasses the displacement of 7 million people! Major rivers have also been re-routed in Russia and the U.S. and now Slovakia is contemplating damming the Danube. These schemes are necessary to the global restructuring of *capital* and it is this restructuring which poses the threat outlined in the *Observer Magazine*, not "national" development and interests.

In harsh contrast to these feats of engineering the poverty caused by the continual process of primitive accumulation (from using slave labour in the Chinese Cultural Revolution to the mass starvation of Ethiopia and displacement of Iroquois in Canada) created a second disaster in the incessant search for basic use values. In Ethiopia and Bengal massive areas were deforested not by land speculators as was the case in the Amazon but by the widespread use of wood as the only fuel. To add a piece of irony the deforestation of Bengal in turn increased the cycle of serious flooding in Bangladesh from once every 50 years to once every 4 years. Ultimately capital's consumption of urban labour power and dammed water forced a general environmental crisis, of which direct water pollution was only a part. Yet, it must be stressed that capital's 'water crisis' is not simply a problem in 'developing countries'. It is universal. Having said this I will continue with a particular example of the crisis in a 'developed' region.

II. CAPITAL'S 'WATER CRISIS': THE SCOTTISH DIMENSION

Being, along with Iceland, Norway, etc., 'water rich' it would seem that Scotland is most unlikely to suffer from a water shortage - even with the demands of modern capitalism. Nonetheless ever since England and Wales' water boards were privatised in 1989 and the recession took its grip on government finances in the 1990s there has been an emerging 'water crisis' in Scotland. A significant part of this crisis has been the ever greater influence of the EEC and its various directives upon local economies and the services they provide - including water. Within this context Scotland's local authority run water industry has come under the scrutinising gaze of a crisis ridden state eager to remove its responsibility for funding the maintenance and reconstruction of the water system and, in the same manoeuvre, use Scotland's "excess" water capacity to help capital generate an opportunity out of the 'water crisis'. To this end the Scottish Secretary of State, Ian Lang, has started to develop plans whereby Scotland's "excess" water can be sold to private water companies in England and Wales (at a profit) by a restructured and, eventually, privatised Scottish industry.

There are several factors involved here which can be listed as follows: (i) the willingness of English and Welsh water companies to buy *cheaper* water from Scotland in order to secure continuous supply to their customers, to lessen their investment costs with regards to meeting EC directives by buying in pretreated water, and to stem the rise in unit water prices (to their customers) which limits their market and leaves the advantages of more productive technologies unrealisable; (ii) the method by which to raise finance in order to make (i) above possible, including the

financing (by the taxpayer) of a pipeline to England and the "up-grading" of Scottish water production plants so that the "commodity" manufactured meets the EC's definition of what can be sold as 'water' on the European single market; (iii) the need to restrict "wasteful" consumption of water in Scotland which would otherwise push up the cost of each unit supplied to English companies; (iv) the possibility of splitting the Scottish industry into distinct operations (as is the case with the English electricity industry) so that a particularised Scottish water 'generator' can sell to all U.K. water companies, including Scottish 'retailers'; and (v) the overall effect of rising water prices on the working class and the environmental justifications for this 'inevitable occurrence in modern society'.

From these factors capital's overall conception can be discerned (and therefore challenged) as a privatised, profitable and restructured Scottish water industry. This could be initially financed through higher domestic water bills and indirect government taxes. These both impose austerity on the working class (forcing them to work longer for a basic necessity) and can be justified on ecological/environmental grounds using EC directives as a 'compulsion'. This conjecture can be developed and criticised as follows.

In England and Wales the government argued for privatisation upon the basis that private finance was required if the water system was going to get the level of investment needed to meet EC directives[8] . In actual fact, in the 4 years since privatisation the vast majority of finance for England and Wales' water system has come from price hikes - OFWAT, the government's regulatory body has even allowed these monopoly companies to raise their prices by 6% above the level of inflation for their first 10 years. Yet the most serious problem has not been a collapse of infrastructure but a basic inability to supply the commodity during dry months. This is an acute problem for a private water company, like Anglian, who are trying to sell as much of a commodity as they can. It is a very different situation from when a public body failed to provide a continuous service. In the second instance the water charge is perceived as a socially necessary tax but in the first it is a payment directly linked to supply - no water, no payment. On top of this is the expense of up-grading plant (to meet EC directives) which could lie idle at certain times from a lack of sufficient water whilst this under-supply pushes up overheads and increases the unit cost when the unit price is regulated and fixed (even if it is 6% above inflation). The answer for Anglian is to buy in cheap, pre-standardised water and secure a continuous supply to its customers. The immediate option is to buy from other neighbouring English companies but in the long term sparcily populated Northern areas with plenty of better quality 'raw material' provide a better solution, even if the capital outlay is greater.

In Scotland the government began to face up to the 'problem' of EC directives in 1992, 11 years after they had been signed but, amazingly, still within the time limit they had to conform. Due to the state's fiscal crisis the government put their dilemma in terms of not being able to afford the required new investment without increasing taxes or public borrowing. The threat of *privatisation* was placed on the political agenda. This became the major political issue whereas the underlying issue of whether or not Scottish water needs to meet EC directives was pushed to the side, along with an announcement by *Scottish Enterprise* (a government industry and

[8] These directives were signed as far back as 1981, however, due to the state's 'financial crisis' they were never seriously implemented, that is, until the single European market loomed closer.

training Quango) that it was considering spending £1.5 billion of public money on building a pipeline to England.

The furthest the 'official opposition' (the Labour Party & STUC) went in this political struggle over the privatisation issue was to question the size of investment required by the Scottish water services to fulfil the directives. The government had put the figure at £5 billion but Malcolm Chisholm, the Labour MP for Leith, put it at nearer £2.5 billion which would making public funding feasible. Labour's main goal was to keep water public, and therefore under their political control, but they are prepared to keep it in local authority control at any cost - no matter the price that would have to be paid by the working class. Campbell Christie, General Secretary of the STUC, went as far as arguing against privatisation upon the basis that "Disconnection policy would be ... determined in a far away boardroom"[9] which in essence accepts the introduction of domestic water supply disconnection (as yet illegal in Scotland under the present laws) as a means of securing/enforcing payment.

Indeed on closer inspection the official opposition accepts the financial and European legal grounds for the restructuring which the government wants to take place - all they disagree on is the concept of full-blown 'privatisation'. Even the idea of selling water to England is acceptable in that it could generate revenue for the Scottish state (including local council revenue - the bodies Labour dominates), as is the use of disconnection and water metering as a means of debt enforcement, especially after the experience of Labour controlled local authorities in trying to collect the poll tax. As usual their lack of resilience is justified upon the necessity of obeying the 'law', and, as a result, water privatisation is seen by the official opposition in simplistic ideological terms as the perogative of the elected British government to do what it wants. In this way the only issue left to talk about is 'how are we going to achieve a Labour government?' with a resultant oppositional pessimism within labour ranks and a self-satisfied confidence in Conservative ones.

However, the issue of privatising Scotland's water is not an ideological one and cannot be viewed as a clear cut case of private versus public ownership. Rather it is a case of capital trying to turn the dangers of its crisis ridden existence into an opportunity, but while Labour - as a party of government - want to help capital generate this opportunity it is not a predetermined outcome of the crisis (as the politicians would have us believe). On the contrary the Scottish working class are not destined to accept higher water charges (no matter the reason given for them) and the austerity they signify as a necessary means to obtaining the provision of decent water (whether it is private capital or the state which stands to gain by their "compliance").
Capital's *opportunity* is our *danger*; we are *told* we must *learn* to use less water because prices are rising in order to save the environment (see Figure 1 for a reproduction of a typical newspaper article which carries this kind of bourgeois message). We are *told* to learn to economise in order to pay higher bills, but these bills will only be higher so that private capital can recoup *its* investment in new infrastructure (which, as will be seen, is largely unnecessary) whilst industrial consumers of water receive *price cuts*[10].

[9] From *Ministers rule out full-scale sell-off for Scotland's water*, Jones (1993), p.1.

[10] In England and Wales the government forced the private water companies to cut their industrial prices by at least 2% in 1992-93 "due to recession" and in one case North West Water cut ICI's bill by a whopping 25%, see Thian (1993) *The price of a public service!*

Sir, — It has been widely reported that EC environmental directives and other pressure for investment will require an injection of some £5 billion over the next decade. These directives cover the addition of chemicals to water supplies.

From the time of the last ice age until very recently, the inhabitants of Glen Finnan were refreshed by crystalline waters, sparkling with sunshine, filtered by clean rock faces and trapped in a reservoir in the hills above. The water had the quality of nectar, and visitors from all over the world remarked on its beneficial character when drunk from a tap, or added to whisky, or made into a pot of tea.

The new water supply complying with EC directives is pumped, at great expense, from the river up to a new reservoir constructed in the hills. There the waters are chemically controlled by a computer situated 16 miles away, in Fort William.

While the politicians and bureaucrats are smugly satisfied the regulations have been met, the inhabitants of this glen, and their visitors, are disgusted with the smelly, bitter liquid in their taps. It is repulsive to drink, ruins good whisky and makes awful tea. Highland communities whose supply is earmarked for EC upgrading should take whatever measures they can to avoid our misfortune. Indeed, why not save the £5 billion by permitting local knowledge and common sense to rule our lives?

Ramsay Dewar
GLEN FINNAN HOUSE
GLEN FINNAN, INVERNESS-SHIRE
15 MAY

Disgusting water

Sir, — Donald M Watson (Letters, 15 May) asks what has happened to Scotland's water supply in 55 years that £500 million has to be spent on it to bring it "up to standard". Nothing happened to the water supply. We joined the EC and find ourselves required to remove infinitesimal amounts of pollutants.

A recent report by the parliamentary Office of Science and Technology pointed out that the EC's levels for pesticides and nitrates in water supply are too low and that the levels for lead are too high. In other words, the EC demands that we remove relatively harmless pesticide and nitrate residues, but allows us to retain more harmful levels of lead.

Under EC rules, water will become more expensive (to remove trace pollutants) whether or not it is privatised/franchised. It is not privatisation that will put up the cost of water; it is the new EC rules.

Steuart Campbell
4 DOVECOT LOAN, EDINBURGH
16 MAY

Figure 2: Letters on Scotland's water at present. From Dewar (1993) and Campbell (1993).

What we are not *told* is the *truth*. Like the fact that the government wrote off £30 billion of accumulated public investment when it privatised the water industry in England and Wales[11], but claims it cannot find £5 billion to invest in the provision of the most basic necessity - water - in Scotland. Like the fact that this size of investment is not required for either health nor environmental reasons since where the government sites the need for greatest investment, the Highlands, has one of the highest quality drinking waters in Europe, *except* that this water is non-standard (it has high levels of *harmless* colourants) which prevents it from being sold on the European water market (for more detail on this point see the two letters in Figure 2).

The truth is that restructuring of the Scottish water industry is about *prestructuring* the consumption of water throughout the U.K. by relieving English water companies of their 'water crisis' (making commodification possible) and creating the Scottish 'water crisis'. In turn the 'economy ethic' is both false and socially in-formative - by using the 'environment' as an excuse to reduce water consumption and introduce

[11] Actual value of the water supply and sewerage system = £34 billion; capital value at sale = @£4 billion.

domestic metering the bourgeoisie also introduce the notion of 'waste'. This 'wastage' has, of course, nothing to do with wasting *water* but, to the capitalist class, everything to do with 'wasting' *money*. On the one hand the Scottish working class 'waste' their wages/benefits/pensions on an 'unnecessary' and 'luxuriant' consumption of water - by learning the "art of economy", like their bourgeois "superiors", these wages and benefits need not rise to cover the increased costs of water, hence preventing an erosion or 'wasting away' of expropriated surplus value through taxation while forcing the working class to subsidise "environmental requirements"[12]. On the other hand the saved or 'unwasted' water is sold, to the gain of private and state investors, with the result that both capital and state are reproduced.

From the working class perspective it is all too obvious that *their* investment in the Scottish water system will be *wasted on the bourgeoisie and their private and charitable fancies* twice over: once on the unnecessary "up-grading" of the water system to EC directives (which do nothing for the environment) and secondly on the needless extra labour that is spent earning the higher water bills. It is this wastage of the capitalist class that the Scottish working class need to arrest by refusing to meet the extra costs of capital's 'water crisis'. In doing this the working class will not only close off capital's opportunity but may create one for itself "by permitting local knowledge and common sense to rule our lives"[13]. This may at first seem a hopeless task given the extent of capital's incessant onslaught on our living standards over the last 15 years, therefore, it is appropriate and in the tradition of the journal to undermine politically prevalent accounts of capital's 'triumphalism' by demonstrating the historical momentum of resistance which lies behind this attack - an underlying crisis which capital has found increasingly difficult to overcome.

III. THEORETICAL CONCLUSIONS

Over the last 25 years capital has used several technical, environmental and social grounds as the basis for producing "scientific" arguments, the aim of which have been to impose austerity measures on the working class. The 'water crisis' should be seen in the light of one of these attempts. The fact that capital has resorted to public information campaigns and the sanction of (paid) experts demonstrates its unwillingness to impose many of these measures in an external fashion, that is, from the 'outside' of the working class through legal-juridical power, policing, penal or other punishment of transgressors, etc. Although it has not shied away from trying to use such power whenever it has deemed it necessary there has been an underlying awareness that such a form of power is impossible to use en masse – it has been reserved for use in distant arenas, against isolatable ghettos and minority groups, and for the usual violation of property rights by individuals and 'other' states (criminal and international law), but even in these specific cases it has faced growing resistance and crises of 'legitimation'.

When it comes to the restructuring of the working class in its global and local entirety capital has recognised the power of labour and thus the importance of working class 'consent', or approval, with regards to the implementation of

[12] Quote from a letter by the Chief Executive of North West Water, Bob Thian, to *The Observer*, 4th July, see Thian (1993).

[13] Requoting Dewar (1993) from Figure 2.

'necessary economic measures'. Capital, of course, has actively sought to construct this consent by defining the terms, conditions or boundaries of "reasonable" discourse, and then, within these limits, created the climates of economic *opportunism* on the one hand and economic *realism* on the other. In this manner capital has attempted to both *define* the conditions of its own crises in the categorical terms of nations, firms and citizens (ie. domestic consumers) and, at the same time, *constrict* conscious solutions of these crises to answers framed in the very same categories.

In the early to mid-70s the 'energy crisis' was made to appear as a technical problem thrown up by the post-war creation of an "affluent society". *We* were all to blame; *we* all used too much of the world's resources; *we* were now, all of us, 'well off' but the price of this affluence was rising and *we* had to pay. The "reasonable" answer lay in the government's "Save It" campaign which involved an onslaught of propaganda against *wasteful* use of resources. This policy went to the extent of state run schools restricting the number of jotters each pupil was allowed to 'consume' on the grounds that this would "save trees"[14] . It is questionable that this kind of austerity and economy was as avidly pursued in privately run schools! The "Save It" campaign showed that the 'energy crisis' was, for capital, to be a *self-imposed* moral austerity by those with an environmental conscience - the *moral* being an economic one of bourgeois reasoning rapped in environmental terms.

Yet the "Save It" campaign, which was initiated by a monopoly controlled hike in oil prices targeted at lowering the value of the wage and hence of making the working class labour longer and harder, was not without its contradictions. The composition of the working class at that time allowed not only factory and other workers to force up wages but other social movements to push up pensions, student grants and benefits in line with the rising domestic costs of electricity and oil which the 'energy crisis' imposed. As a means of reorganising the working class in line with capital's needs the 'energy crisis' failed[15] .

When the working class forced capital to abandon the 'energy crisis' a more profound problem came to the fore. The 'productivity crisis', or 'right to manage crisis', over who ran the 'economy' - unions or management[16] - brought the class nature of the conflict into focus. The productivity crisis was the *technical* reasoning of government. Whilst price hikes in oil, coal and gas had been directly aimed at working class domestic consumption, for example, in Italy domestic costs increased during a period when industrial electricity and fuel prices fell (in other words the 'energy crisis' was a means of both imposing more work on labour - reducing the wage - and transferring wealth to capital[17]) the 'productivity crisis' was a much more direct attack on the wage, working conditions and employment opportunities. Here capital replaced its vision of a model energy-saving and law-abiding citizen with the labour-saving, economically fit and "realist" firm in the global market.

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[14] I know this from personal experience.

[15] For a detailed class analysis of the 'energy crisis' see *Capital's 'Energy Crisis': Italian Analyses* in Levidow & Young (1985), pp. 49-87; and Midnight Notes (1993) *Midnight Oil - Work, Energy, War 1973-1992*. For a review of this latter work see Watson (1993) in this issue of Common Sense.

[16] We can include government, the state, the local state, etc. as management since the were the largest employer at the time.

[17] Levidow & Young (1985), op. cit., pp. 49-87.

Here too capital's conceptualisation and resolution of its underlying crisis was riddled with contradictions. The stated aim of raising productivity by cutting labour costs and introducing new technology (most notably information technology - I.T.) was for the particular firm to compete more effectively in the "growing" world market (a euphemism for the worldwide removal of national trade barriers, government regulations and protectionist policies) and, by doing this, secure future employment and company (or national) prosperity. In factories and workplaces the crisis was expressed by the generation of a new work-ethic literature based around the 'bonding' of team-work, quality circles, flexible practices and the general ability to adapt. The actual outcome of productivity raising was flooded markets forcing the full-scale run down of traditional national enterprises with the permanent loss of "economies of scale" and a massive rise in unemployment. With the first of these came mergers and conglomerations in the creation of "world leaders" – multi-national corporations so large, specialised and concentrated in particular regions that they could manipulate any national market. With the second came national and regional blight and a rapid rise in the state expenditures of governments like Thatcher's, which were politically committed to cutting taxes and public expenditure. Rising expenditure was still the case however when public money was used to attack the conditions of the working class and even sustain it in absolute poverty[18] .

Just as the 'energy crisis' had been surrounded in a 'realist' environmental message the 'productivity crisis' was temporarily papered over with an 'opportunist' social message - those who conform and respect the power of money can avoid the blight, poverty and personal crisis they would otherwise "deserve". Meanwhile the newly dispossessed were offered a different, 'realist' message in the form of a "technological revolution" which would save the day through new forms of employment and work patterns of a society based on high quantities (though hardly quality) of leisure time – the shorter working week, more part-time jobs leading to a decline in unemployment and 'people' oriented work in the service sector.

Nonetheless, despite various accounts of how Thatcher, Reagan, et al, built consent for their policies, of how they tapped a popular vein with income tax cuts, sell-off and privatisation bonanzas, and owner-occupancy housing the 'productivity crisis' continued with a steady increase in unemployment until 1986 when the situation was temporarily stabilised by a credit explosion. In reality general taxes (sales, duties and local rates, etc.) proceeded to rise, sell-offs were one-offs and about acquiring desperately needed new capital whilst profits existed 'on paper', and owner-occupancy was, on the one hand, enforced due to the planned lack of council housing[19] and, on the other, only feasible due to a relaxation in credit restrictions (anathema to Monetarism - the official austerity philosophy of capital in the early 80s). The credit boom was the mechanism by which the economy thrived but with it came the 'debt crisis'.

Again capital tried to pitch *its* crisis in personal and national terms as a means of collectivising responsibility for the debt burden. Contrary to the impression that rising house prices were a sign of a strong economy they were in fact a sign of spiralling debts - the means of paying off one debt had become to take on another,

[18] For an account of how the British miners struggled through, suffered under and to a large extent survived this process see Benyon (1985) *Digging Deeper: Issues in the Miners' Strike.*

[19] Since the supply of cheap, good quality rented accommodation would knock the bottom out of the property market.

larger one upon the basis that the new, higher payments could be met due to the perceived current and continuing strength of the economy. However, as the number of defaults began to rise credit was restricted and the economy began to shrivel.

As a consequence governments, who had cut income tax *rates* whilst *absolute* tax receipts rose in the credit boom, saw their general revenues plummet and, at the same time, their expenditure base broadened to cover attendant increases in unemployment, training and education (as those made redundant took up opportunities in full-time education they were entitled to), housing benefit, healthcare, social work, forced retirement and, of course, legal aid and crime prevention. In this context the Poll Tax was devised as a 'flagship' policy of the central state's budget cutting drive. It was designed to attack what Thatcher perceived as the last sacred cow of employment protectionism, market regulation and state monopoly-run, "inefficient" services - the local authority. However, it was also a desperate, last ditch attempt to raise government revenues in proportion to expenditure by any other means than increasing income taxes – an option which would alienate wealthy conservative voters who had gained most from income tax cuts.

By the time the Poll Tax was implemented other sources of revenue had dried up. Privatisation of the most profitable and sought after industries (telecommunications, road transport (buses), gas, oil and electricity) had already taken place. Major sections of the health and education industries had been tendered out. There were of course plenty other sectors left but these were going to prove more problematic, long term and less easy to sell. These included rail, coal, the Post Office and Royal Mail, the BBC and prisons and other security services. For the *state* the Poll Tax was a way of imposing austerity by simultaneously shifting the tax burden onto the poor whilst cutting the local services they relied on, and in this manner the state hoped to reduce its borrowing[20].

The Poll Tax failed in the midst of the worst recession for 60 years and the British State's public sector borrowing requirement (PSBR) soared to £50 billion in 1993. That is no mean feat to achieve - it stands as a testement to the fact that the working class are not prepaired to be pushed into a new kind of Victorian underworld. The state can no longer afford us but at the same time we're making the state 'afford' us. It is only within this context that the Scottish 'water crisis' has emerged. Hence, privatisation is not the sign of the 'triumph' of capital but an indication of its Achilles Heel. It is, of course, important to point out that water supply and sewerage is only one of the problems capital faces. Others could be analysed: the crime wave, the pensions problem, the breakdown of the 'traditional' nuclear family, or the need to reform local government in general. However water is an issue which exemplifies both a local and an international difficulty which presents capital and the state form with opportunities as well as dangers, and demonstrates the compliance of reformism (social democratic parties, trade unions and environmental pressure groups) to capital's political, economic and environmental programme. Nonetheless, it is hoped that a knowledge of our own historical strength will provide a basis from which to undermine capital's conception and presentation of the water issue in global and local arenas – a view all too readily accepted by officially sanctioned forms of "opposition" in Scotland but simply unacceptable.

[20] For the relation between the debt crisis and the anti-poll tax (non-payment) struggle see CSE-Edinburgh (1989) *The Anti-Poll Tax Campaign: New Forms of Class Struggle* and Holloway (1990) *The Politics of Debt.*

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The Freeing of Marx

John Holloway

At last marx can turn freely in his grave.

That which has been attacked by Marxists for more than seventy years, Soviet 'Marxism', is no more. That peculiar 'Marxism' which usurped the name, separated socialism from the articulation of the power of labour and used Marx against the working class, is dead. 'Marxism' as dogmatism, as ideology of the state, as determinism, as historical certainty: all have at last fallen.

And with it much else will fall too. The Marxism that was borne into the universities on the wave of class struggle at the end of the 1960s has often become dessicated as it has become more sophisticated, adopting as its motto, in peculiar reversal of the last thesis on Feuerbach, the view that the point of Marxism is not to change the world but to interpret it. There can be little doubt that much of this sort of theory will be washed clean of its Marxist pretensions by the wave of anti-Marxist triumphalism that is accompanying the disintegration of the Soviet Union.

All that remains is Marxism, Marxism as a scream of anger, Marxism as a theory of struggle, the Marxism of a long subterranean, oppositional tradition. At last it is clear that there is no other way that Marxism can be understood. But that too is in danger. Not the scream of anger, not the struggle, but their Marxist articulation.

The scream pierces through the triumphalism of the politicians and the media. The fall of 'communism' does nothing to still the scream of a world in agony, the scream of a world in struggle. But there is a real danger that, with the collapse of 'Marxism', the struggle against the existing order will take increasingly divisive forms (religious, nationalistic, even fascist). These are forms of struggle that scream with the anger of the world, but turn that anger not against the oppressors, but against others of the oppressed: 'rebellion rushing doun the wrong road, storm blowing doun the wrong tree" [1]. By turning anger against the oppressed such struggles not only have results that are horrific in themselves: they end up confirming the power of capital, the power of the comfortable, of those for whom anger is simply irrational.

Of course it is not so simple: Marxism has deep roots in the working class movement,

[1] This is a quotation from a poem by Linton Kwesi Johnson, "Five Nights of Bleeding", in which he describes how the frustrations of young blacks in London are expressed in the stabbing of one of their number.

but this is a Marxism that has been much influenced by the Communist Party tradition, a tradition which has now collapsed. Too often Marxism seems irrelevant, or positively harmful to struggle, because it is presented as a theory of the 'objective conditions' of struggle rather than as a theory of struggle itself, a theory that spits with anger.

The struggles against existing society will certainly continue, but the future of Marxism is not guaranteed. It depends very much on struggle now, on the clear elaboration of Marxism as a theory of struggle. To say that Marxism is a theory of struggle is to state the obvious, but the obvious has been so hideously obscured by the so many years of Soviet dogma and academic pseudo-sophistication that it needs to be stated over and over again: Marxism is a theory of the struggle against capitalism, a theory of the scream of anger, of refusal, of hatred, of ab-normality, even in-sanity, of otherness, of alienation from an alienated world. It makes sense only in so far as it acts as a megaphone for that sometimes articulate, often silent, always discordant scream.

Marxism is negative, the theoretical articulation of the NO. Negativity is not a theoretical adornment, a direction given externally to the analysis of society: the whole conceptual structure of Marxism is negative. Capitalism is seen through negative glasses, from the standpoint of its negation. Conceptually, this negativity is expressed through the category of *form*. It is central to Marx's analysis of capitalism that the concepts used to analyse society (such as value, money, state, etc.) are understood as historically transitory modes of existence of social relations. The social relations are understod from the point of view of their overcoming, of their negation. In *Capital* Marx distinguishes his approach from that of classical political economy on precisely this basis: since the classical political economists accepted capitalist society as being permanent, they could not understand their categories as being the expression of historically specific forms of social relations[2]. Even to Ricardo, who had analysed value and its magnitude in terms of labour, the question that was crucial for Marx, namely "why labour is represented by the value of its product", would have been meaningless. For bourgeois theory (that theory which assumes the continued existence of capitalist society as its framework) the concepts of value, commodity, money and capital are important, but the Marxist understanding of these concepts as value-form, commodity-form, money-form and capital-form (which derives from the focus on the transitory nature of capitalism) is quite literally meaningless. The distinction between bourgeois theory and Marxist theory is thus not an external distinction, but is expressed in the categories and the way they are understood. The categories of Marxism are negative categories, not just in the sense that they express an antagonism against capital, but in the sense that capitalism is understood from the perspective of non-capitalism. The scream of NO against capitalism, the knowledge won through daily struggle that that which capital describes as white is actually black, finds its theoretical elaboration in the Marxist understanding of capitalism as a negative society.

Bourgeois theory presents negativity as useless. It is certainly seen as pointless by the main stream of the academic disciplines. Yet that is not so. Negation in itself has a point, regardless of any positive outcome, any possible negation of the negation. In an oppressive society, the simple scream of refusal has a point. In a dehumanising

[2] *Capital*, Vol. I, p.80

society, the only human reaction is to negate. To give verbal expression or theoretical elaboration to that negation needs no justification. Even if the scream were entirely isolated, it would still have a point. But of course it is not isolated: the theoretical articulation is only part of a discordant collective scream, the expression of all those struggles throughout the world (overt or not) against the existing order. Through these struggles forms of social relations very different from the dominant patterns of oppression are formed, possible prefigurations of a non-oppressive society; yet the constitution of these premonitions of a new society is established through the negation of that which is: the starting point is refusal.

Marxist theory is not the only theory which starts from refusal. There are many other forms of radical criticism of existing society. But other radical theories take their negations only half way: not in the sense that criticism of existing society is half-hearted, but in the sense that they are characterised by a dualism, by an externality between the NO of struggle and the YES of the existing order. Struggle confronts the system of domination (capitalism, patriarchy, etc.) as an external force: struggle is constant and necessary, but it is a struggle against an immovable object, an unending struggle of 'us' against 'them'.

The difference between Marxism and other theories of radical change is that Marxism takes negativity much further. It interprets the whole of society in terms of the force which negates this society, the power of labour. That is what makes it so powerful as a theory of revolutionary change. For Marxism the 'them' who dominate are not external to 'us' who are dominated. Capital is nothing other than alienated labour. The scream of Marxism is a promethean scream: we are everything, there are no gods, no superhuman forces. People are the sole creators, it is labour alone which constitutes social reality. *There is no external force, our own power is confronted by nothing but our own power, albeit in alienated form.* Money, that unfathomable god which rules our social world, is nothing but the alienated product of labour. In spite of the work of so many economists, the labour theory of value is still above all the assertion of the power of human creation.

That Marxism is not just a scream of anger but a scream of power is often forgotten. Too often Marxist analysis is seen as confirming scientifically (and so justifying) our own awareness of being oppressed rather than as asserting our power. So often Marxism is presented simply as a theory of capitalist oppression, when in fact it is a theory of the fragility of that oppression. And the fragility of that oppression lies ultimately in the fact that capital, being nothing other than alienated labour, depends absolutely on labour (and on its alienation) for its existence. Capital is forced into a constant fight forwards to try to escape from its own dependence. But there is no escape, only trans-formation. The constant revolutionising of production through technological innovation, for example, does not liberate capital from its dependence, but merely changes its form. The power of labour appears here in at least two forms. On the one hand it appears not only as technological achievement, but as technological contradiction (as in the so-called 'software crisis' which plagues the development of automation at the moment). On the other hand, *capital's dependence on labour also asserts itself in the rising costs of exploitation that technological innovation implies (what Marx called the 'rising organic composition of capital)* and in the consequent tendency for the rate of profit to fall. The power of labour asserts itself, but in a form which is not easily recognisable as such: the power of labour appears as technological crisis, falling profits, or monetary constraints. *The power*

of labour reverberates through capital itself, where it reappears in alientaed, fetishised form as contradiction.

It is this notion of the reverberation of the power of labour whitin capital as contradiction which makes Marxism such a powerful conceptualisation of struggle. For this power to be realised, however, it is essential to overcome dualistic notions which separate struggle from the movement of capital. So much of Marxism has in the past focused its attention on the 'objective contradictions' of capitalism, or on 'the objective laws of capitalist development'. In relation to particular struggles, Marxism has often claimed to analyse the 'objective conditions' of struggle: in doing so they have often adopted a position removed from, and even antagonistic to, those actively involved in the struggle itself. But there are no 'objective conditions' of struggle: society is a world of struggle, with nothing external to it. The so-called 'objective conditions' are simply the interrelation between different moments of struggle. Similarly, there are no 'objective contradictions' of capitalism, no 'objective laws of capitalist development': nothing but the rhythmns of struggle which result from the form of exploitation under capitalism (surplus value production) and which appear in fetishised form as 'objective contradiction', 'objective law', etc. The contribution that Marxism can make as a moment of class struggle is not to analyse 'objective situations', as was so often done in the past, but to defetishise those 'objective situations' and show that they are nothing but alienated (fetishised) expression of the power of labour.

Marxism as a scream of anger, Marxism as a theory of struggle, Marxism as an assertion of the power of labour: all these imply that Marxism is a theory of uncertainty. If the world is understood as struggle, then there is no room for determinism of any kind. Struggle, by definition, is uncertain and open, and the categories which conceptualise it must be understood as open too[3] . There can be no concept of historical necessity, nor any suggestion of a final victory of communism. In the past, the notion of the inevitability of the collapse of capitalism and victory of communism was seen by many as a necessary support for working class struggle. But such an idea is incompatible with the uncertainty and openess inherent in the concept of struggle. As Adorno put it, after the experience of fascism, it is no longer possible (if it ever was) to think of a smooth dialectical progression ending with communism as the resolution of conflict, the inevtiable negation of the negation. We can only think of the dialectic as being a negative dialectic, a dilaectic of negation with no certain synthesis. In a world of untruth, the only concept of truth that we can have is negative. There is no certainty in Marxism: its only claim to truth is the force of its attack on untruth. This leads perhaps to a dizzy, dizzying vision of the world (cf. Adorno 1990, 31), but the dizziness lies not in the vision but in the reality of a world hurtling who knows where.

Marx is free, but only potentially. The system of domination that held him (and us) in chains and sowed so much confusion in oppositional struggles throughout the world, has collapsed. With it, an extremely important element in the international system of capitalist domination has fallen, leaving a huge and very unpredictable hole in the texture of world capitalist rule. A very important part of capitalism's struggle to mend that hole is to portray the collapse of the Soviet Union as the failure of Marxism, to present the crisis of domination as the crisis of the struggle against domination.

[3] On 'open Marxism' see the two volumes edited by Werner Bonefeld, Richard Gunn and Kosmas Psychopedis on *Open Marxism*, Pluto Press, London 1992.

Whether they succeed in burying Marxism or whether we succeed in liberating Marxism depends on our theoretical struggles now, on our ability to develop Marxism as the most powerful theoretical articulation of the scream of a world in struggle.

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Marxism, Neorealism and International Relations

Peter Burnham

Introduction: a class analysis of international relations

In his *Economic Manuscripts* of 1857-1858 Marx provides definite albeit brief indications of how a class theory of international relations can be constructed. Taken together with passages from the *Communist Manifesto* and *The Civil War in France*, it is clear that although Marx did not live to complete his proposed treatise on the world market and crises, he prepared a rudimentary analysis of international relations which in many respects provides a more reliable starting point than the work of Lenin or Bukharin. In the wake of heightened inter-state conflict (expressed in the spheres of production, trade, finance and of course in direct military confrontation) a class understanding of international relations is fundamental for socialist strategy. The dominant `Marxist' interpretations however seem increasingly implausible. Bukharinist theories of the state as capitalist trust appear anachronistic and all to easily lend themselves to the mechanical functionalism characteristic of determinist Soviet Marxism-Leninism. Alternatively dependency and world systems theorists seek to dispense with the analysis of inter-state relations opting instead for sociological core-periphery models which prove unable to explain the dramatic rise of the Newly Industrialised Countries or provide a solid basis for class analysis except by fiat.

Faced with this crisis of theory many socialists simply adopt traditional realist or neorealist approaches to international relations. International outcomes are explained in terms of the hegemonic dominance or decline of great powers and versions of `super-imperialism' are fashioned from traditions which owe more to Machiavelli and Morgenthau than to Marx. The simple argument of this article is that socialists need not relinquish Marx's class analysis when it comes to international relations. Although bourgeois marxologists are keen on presenting the view that Marx's work is essentially a `domestic' study which was taken into the `international arena' by Lenin, my argument is that Marx theorises bourgeois social relations as global class relations. It is fundamentally mistaken to approach the study of international relations in terms of Poulantzean structural `levels'. By contrast Marx views capitalism as a single system in which state power is allocated between territorial entities. Class relations for Marx do not impinge on the state, they do not exist in `domestic' society and make their presence felt by influencing the state which

operates in the international realm. Rather the state itself is a form of the class relation which constitutes global capitalist society (Bonefeld 1992; 1993a; 1993b). Bourgeois social relations appear, for example, as British relations on the world market. Yet as Marx clarifies in *The Civil War in France*, struggles between states are to be understood as struggles between capital and labour which assume more and more the character of the national power of capital over labour.

The world market is not to be seen as an autonomous `level' for this simply reproduces the domestic/international split which so be-devils realist international relations theory. Rather the world market, existing in and through the territory of states, is where the disharmony of bourgeois social relations appear upon their most magnificent scene, as the nationally separate component parts of bourgeois society struggle in competition. A class analysis of international relations does not therefore proceed by dismissing the state or by seeking to divine how the `economy' determines and is the `real' motor behind the state. This would be to accept the axioms of neo-classical liberalism which see the state as both irrelevant and absent from the `autonomous realm' of the economy. Instead class analysis seeks to understand how seemingly independent features of capitalist society are interdependent and contradictory aspects of an organic unity whose foundation is the struggle between capital and labour. Neither the state nor the market exist simply as class relations but they are nevertheless the historically specific social forms taken by this contradictory unity.

Whilst a quick survey of international relations points to the durability of national states and the world market, class analysis probes behind this apparent solidity to reveal the incessant struggles between labour and capital which as Marx (1857: 96-7) points out are just so many mines to blow bourgeois society to pieces - a multitude of antagonistic forms of the social entity, whose antagonism, however, can never be exploded by a quiet metamorphosis. Capitalist society built on generalised commodity production fetishises social relations to the extent that the dead categories `trade', `competition', `profitability', and `the economy' itself, limit our vision and threaten to constrain our political action by obscuring the historical specificity of the present form of social organisation. Not only is the notion of `the economy' a reified abstraction, but even a seemingly innocuous idea such as the `national balance of payments' is revealed on closer inspection to have only a virtual existence - an accountant's attempt to chart the spatial (national) containment of the power of labour within the commodity form. As Marx (1857: 96) records in relation to trade, however much the private interests within every nation divide it into as many nations as there are full-grown individuals in it, and however the interests of the exporters and the importers of the same nation here conflict with each other - the rate of exchange creates the semblance of the existence of a national trade. Similarly, `competition' tends to be understood by both liberals and marxists as the relation between firms which fuels capitalist growth. However, `price competition' and `product differentiation' are simply the forms through which the class struggle between labour and capital is organised (Cleaver 1990). New job hierarchies, infinite model variations, marketing strategies and definitions of skill, are methods employed globally by capital to gain control over (principally by dividing) labour.

The foregoing has attempted to indicate that the aim of class analysis is to reveal the relations of struggle which constitute the seemingly solid nature of material categories. This does not mean that we should reject analysis of the categories

themselves. Rather we need to begin our study by asking why this content has assumed that particular form (Marx 1867: 174). In respect of international relations, firstly, what it is about the social relations of production under capitalism that makes them assume separate economic and political forms (Holloway and Picciotto 1977: 112), and secondly, how conflict and collaboration between states express struggle between capital and labour. To indicate the need for this type of analysis, and to demonstrate the dangers of importing material from non-dialectical methodologies, this article will point to the shortcomings of the most sophisticated neorealist attempt to understand international relations.

How realistic is neorealism?

The pre-eminent neorealist theorist is Kenneth Waltz (1979), who presents political realism as a rigorous, deductive, systemic theory of international politics. Cast in an unashamedly structuralist mould, Waltz argues for a systemic level approach to international politics which necessarily abstracts from both the attributes of `units' (by which he means states) and their interaction; `to define a structure requires ignoring how units relate with one another (how they interact) and concentrating on how they stand in relation to one another (how they are arranged or positioned). How units ... are arranged or positioned, is not a property of the units. The arrangement of the units is a property of the system'.

This leads to a position close to methodological holism whereby structure defines the arrangement of the parts of a system. Positing a sharp distinction between domestic and international political systems, Waltz suggests a three-part definition of structure derived from the organising principles of a system, the differentiation of units and unit functions, and the distribution of capabilities across units. His conclusion, which will provide the basis for a brief summary, is that `the parts of domestic political systems stand in relations of super- and subordination. Some are entitled to command; others to obey. Domestic systems are centralised and hierarchic. The parts of international political systems stand in relations of coordination. Formally, each is the equal of all the others. None is entitled to command; none is required to obey. International systems are decentralised and anarchic' (1979: 88). Neorealists draw a number of assumptions about the nature of the inter-state system from this characterisation.

The first relates to the ordering principle of the current international system: anarchy. It is a concept accorded a central role in international politics. For neorealists it is the structural feature from which all other consequences derive. Anarchy, of course, in the context of the international system is not a synonym for chaos, but rather refers to the absence of an over-arching central government. The states which comprise the international system claim sovereignty and the right to treat themselves as the ultimate source of governing authority within the territorial limits of their jurisdiction. A system of sovereign states is therefore by definition politically structured as an anarchy, as government remains in the parts rather than the whole. Anarchy is seen as a durable, decentralised form of political order, in which `like units coact'. It is durable because the actions states take to preserve their territorial integrity and sovereignty simultaneously perpetuate the condition of anarchy. In turn that condition generates system-wide effects on states. This is characterised by Waltz as the competitive, self-help principle which is imposed upon states within the

system, `whether those units live, prosper or die depends on their own efforts'.

This last point illustrates that the number of states in the international system is largely immaterial. In principle only two states are required to maintain anarchy and prevent the formation of world empire. The influence of neorealism on Immanuel Wallerstein (1984) is apparent here in his account of the rise of the modern interstate system. War is a basic determinant of the shape the system assumes at any one time, although it is the balancing of power throughout the international system as a whole which has served to prevent the system from being transformed by conquest into a universal empire (Bull 1977). The anarchic condition of international politics and the self-help character of states makes the issue of security a fundamental concern both for the historical development, and continued existence, of individual states.

Sophisticated neorealists are now beginning to acknowledge that Waltz's sharp distinction between domestic and international politics may have distinct analytic disadvantages. The issue of security analysis more than any other, requires a view that places `states and system' into a mutually constitutive relationship. Although realist historians have been slow to develop a focus on the emergence of the modern state system, advocates of this approach stress Migdal's (1988) recent conclusion that, the state's fantastic advantage over other political entities in mobilising and organising resources for war, as well as for other purposes, brought the survival of other political forms into question. This view is also supported by Holsti (1991) who shows the importance of armed conflict and international treaty in shaping the balance of power between states, and more fundamentally in consolidating the national form of the state itself. Part of the neorealist litany here is to invoke the Congresses of Munster and Osnabruck which produced the Treaties of Westphalia in 1648. The congresses were the first in the long history of multilateral diplomatic gatherings, and were attended by 145 delegates representing 55 jurisdictions. In essence it is claimed that the Peace of Westphalia (ending the Thirty Years War), organised Europe on the principal of particularism, sanctifying international anarchy and legitimising sovereignty and autonomy by replacing the local vestiges of hierarchy, at the pinnacle of which were the Pope and the Holy Roman Empire. It represented not only a new diplomatic arrangement but the consolidation of a new organising principle for the international system. As such, Holsti claims it was `an order created by states, for states', which, for the next three hundred years, served as a critical benchmark providing a legal basis for the developing territorial particularisms of Europe. Wight (1977) similarly provides a mainstay for this view tracing the chronology of the modern states system back to the fifteenth century concluding that, at Westphalia the states system `comes of age'. Of the twenty-two wars which took place in the post-Westphalian period (1648-1713), Holsti calculates that 55% had a territorial issue as a major stake for at least one of the combatants, followed by 36% prompted by commercial competition. A similar picture emerges in an analysis of the post-Utrecht period (1715-1814), where of the 36 recorded conflicts, territorial dispute was a major issue in 67% of wars, and questions of navigation and commerce in 36%, of the total. By the end of the post-Westphalian period, boundaries had become increasingly important with states beginning to exert jurisdiction over a defined territorial base, rather than over a congeries of feudal estates founded on ancestral privilege. The mercantilist state of the eighteenth century consolidated this trend, with territory providing an essential ingredient for `national' power - in terms of a population from which to conscript or purchase soldiers; a productivity base from which to generate taxes and raw materials; and control over trade routes (strategic territories).

The main lesson which neorealists draw from this characterisation of the nature of international politics, is that under anarchy, security can only be relative, never absolute. States are the principal referent object of security since they are the framework of order and the highest source of governing authority. However, the dynamics of `national' security are highly relational and interdependent between states. As long as anarchy holds these conditions obtain. This is particularly clear in the area of security and defence, where Buzan (1991) has drawn attention to the dilemmas which face states, given this condition of international anarchy. The fragmented political structure of the international system constitutes states as self-help units. For individual states, insecurity is thereby a permanent feature of the system. States that fail to comprehend this principle risk loss of independence, even existence. This `structural imperative', neorealists argue, gives rise to the `power-security' dilemma. By taking measures to enhance their own security, states increase the risk of conflict with other states. In seeking power and security for themselves, states can be interpreted as threatening the power and security of other states. Buzan (1991) summarises, that the causes of insecurity are sought in the structural and relational dynamics of states and the system, such as fragmented and incremental decision-making procedures, misunderstandings and misperceptions, arms racing, and the sheer complexity of cross-cutting interests and attitudes in a system of high density interdependence. The practical difficulty of distinguishing between aggressive, power-seeking military build up, and defensive, security enhancement, creates the power-security dilemma. To this should be added the straight `defence-dilemma', which involves balancing the trade-off between resources devoted to defence, as opposed to other objectives, and the threat which military preparations in the name of defence can pose to the state's survival (aptly illustrated in the threat to West Germany posed by NATO's policy of flexible response).

The empty structuralism of neorealism

Neorealism enjoys unrivalled popularity as the leading theory of international relations in the United States. This illustrates the ease with which logical Popperian abstractions purged of everyday struggle appeal to the liberal and conservative intelligensia who staff universities and government agencies. The weaknesses of neorealism are best presented by considering the relationship between system and state upon which their analysis is constructed.

It is often argued that marxist theories seek, in a one-dimensional fashion, to derive the nature of the state from the `internal' structure of capitalist society. In so doing, Barker (1991) argues, they abstract totally from the reality of the inter-state system, with the result that one might easily get the impression that capitalism has but one state (for critique see Holloway 1992). This is a charge that could not be levelled at neorealism! There is simply no attempt to account for the origin of states, the character of state-forms or the relationship of states to global capitalist society. As both Ashley (1986) and Wendt (1987) point out, neorealism is based on the metaphysical assumption that states have a status as unitary actors. The state is treated as an unproblematic entity, not as a historically determined social relation whose power and development requires explanation. In Wendt's terms, neorealism sees the state as an ontological given. Since an international system only develops through the interaction of states, it follows that it is not possible for neorealists to

theorise the `system' pre-existing the states. Hedley Bull (1977) offers a clear example of this argument. An international system is formed, he claims, when two or more states have sufficient contact between them, and have sufficient impact on one another's decisions, to cause them to behave as parts of a whole. Two or more states, his argument runs, can of course exist without forming an international system. With this theoretical closure the reification of the state is complete. The historical development of the state, and the social struggles which gave birth to the social relation of which it is a part, are lost from view, and we are left with a static account of the `organisational effects' of structure. Although the theory attempts to contribute to understanding how international anarchy (itself invoked without explanation) imposes constraints on already existing states, it does not explain the character of states, how these states came into existence, or at any point discuss the manner in which the `system' undergoes change.

A recent defence of Waltz by Little (in Buzan 1993), is worth briefly reviewing since it paradoxically lends support to this line of criticism. According to Little, Waltz proposes an `undifferentiated theory of the state', which considers the international political system to be individualist in origin, and spontaneously and unintentionally generated. Once in operation however, the international system has an important bearing on the development of states since anarchy generates competition and socialisation resulting in homogeneity amongst the units of the system. Little concludes on the side of Waltz, that states were ontologically prior to the international system and that the basic logic of the system remains the same no matter how many units are in it or what their internal character happens to be. Little's response aptly illustrates that at the heart of neorealism lies an exercise in formal abstraction - a logical structuralist, rather than a social/historical, understanding of the relation between `states and system'.

The deficiencies of the neorealist viewpoint principally derive from its restricted methodology, built on the supposed analytic autonomy of the political realm. Although neorealism seeks to shift the focus of classical realism, away from a theory about the behaviour of `parts' towards an explanation located at the `systemic' level concerned with the arrangement of the parts, it is built on many of the methodological foundations of the latter. The methodological premise which stresses the autonomy of the political sphere - which has its origins in Weber and Morgenthau, and stretches back to the nineteenth century marginalist revolution in economics - renders neorealism unable to offer an integrated account of the rise of the international system.

The basis of Weber's sociology is his typology of social action, built to complement the marginalist conception of the economy1. The forerunners of the marginalist revolution, William Jevons, Carl Menger and Leon Walras, displaced the holistic explanatory principles of classical political economy (class, capital, and the labour theory of value) with the abstract assumptions of individual rationality grounded in a subjective preference theory based on the concept of utility. Economics could henceforth be restricted to an analysis of individual rational choice occurring in a spontaneously given `market', which established prices exogenously, by supply and demand responding to conditions of consumer taste and resource scarcity. Politics, history, and sociology were now deemed irrelevant. As Perlman (1973) perceptively notes, the `replacement' of political economy by positive economics, actually constituted an omission of a field of knowledge - a headlong dash from reality - in

effect a `great evasion'. Space was now created for the fragmentation of social science into `disciplines' each established in relation to a specific irreducible type of action. This task fell to Max Weber. Weber's schema classifies actions not only with regard to their value orientations but also according to the types of means and ends to which they are directed. Variables which comprise a social order, such as the economy, the polity, and civil society, are given no overall structure in Weber's assessment, but rather each has a real autonomy which preludes overdetermination. The autonomy of the economy from the polity and civil society, finds expression in Weber's statement that political action is directed to the achievement of political power for its own sake. Political actions, therefore, although they may have economic implications, are deemed to be not directly oriented to economic gain and as such they must be analysed independently of economic factors since their orientation is to a distinctive form of action.

Postwar realism (alongside the other dominant perspectives of the fragmented social sciences reconstituted along Weberian lines), fully accepts that politics is to be studied as an autonomous domain. Morgenthau (1978) provides the clearest example. Political actions, he argues, are to be judged according to political criteria. The economist, the lawyer, and the realist ask different questions, with the prerogative of the latter being, the power politics of the nation. Neorealism reproduces this fragmented, ahistorical methodology. Waltz, for example, constructs his theory self-consciously on the model of neoclassical microeconomics (although he claims a link with Smith, his interpretation of the latter is decidedly neoclassical). The market, he argues, is `individualist in origin, spontaneously generated, and unintended'. In the manner of standard textbook positive economics, Waltz maintains that `the market' created by self-directed interacting economic units, selects and rewards behaviours according to their consequences. In so doing, `microeconomic theory explains how an economy operates and why certain effects are to be expected'. This methodology is directly transposed to the political level (to a study of political action), to provide Waltz's theory of international politics. The error of tying a theory of global politics to the methodology of neoclassical economics becomes obvious once the latter is exposed as a late nineteenth century ideological reaction to Marx. Even economic sociology (see Block 1990) has pronounced that the central concepts of neoclassical economics are increasingly unrealistic and that the operation of the `self-regulating market' rests upon prior, historically determined social relations which for the most part are left unanalysed. Marx provides a clear critique arguing that what Adam Smith (and subsequent bourgeois economists) take as the `natural' starting point of history - the rational, isolated self-interested individual - is in fact a product of history. The epoch which produces the standpoint of the isolated individual is precisely the epoch of the most highly developed social (general) relations. Marx's point is that private interest is itself already a socially determined interest and can be attained only within the conditions laid down by society and with the means provided by society - `it is the interest of private persons; but its content, as well as the form and means of its realisation, are given by social conditions that are independent of them all' (1857: 94).

Conclusion: class struggle and global capitalist society

As with other forms of structuralist thought, neorealism presents a closed world which we are seemingly powerless to change. The anarchic condition of international

politics whose business is conducted at high levels of state seems unconnected with the daily lives and struggles of the majority of people around the world. Neorealism is clearly theory serving the interests of academics and state officials domiciled in the highly developed aggressive nations of the western world. High levels of military expenditure can be justified, given international anarchy. Military incursions are justified paradoxically to protect `sovereignty' and the decentralised nature of the present inter-state system. The `national interest' can be invoked to quell the `enemy within', and to build a fervent nationalism which further obscures class identity. If, for socialists, the academic costs of adopting neorealism are high, the political consequences are calamitous.

The alternative proposed by Marx is to understand that the apparent solidity of the `state' masks its existence as a contradictory form of social relationship. The state is not only an institution but a form-process, an active process of forming social relations and therefore class struggles channeling them into non-class forms - citizens rights, human rights - which promote the disorganisation of labour (Holloway 1991). Once an analysis is grounded in the realisation that labour is the constituting power of social reality, the form-giving fire of social existence, we can see the relevance of Marx's question, why does this content assume that particular form? The answer is found in the struggles which led to the crisis and demise of feudal social relations and the interests which were served by the slow growth of generalised commodity production (Burnham 1994). The key to understanding capitalist society is that it is a social system based on the imposition of work through the commodity-form. The reproduction of capitalist social relations at all levels (from the overseer, to the managing director, to the government, international agencies, and alliances between states) rests upon the ability of capital (in all its forms and many guises) to harness and contain the power of labour within the bounds of the commodity-form. The struggles which ensue over the imposition of work, the regulation of consumption through the commodification of labour time as money and the confinement of the production of use values within the bounds of profitability produce constant instability and crisis for the majority in capitalism. It is the everyday struggles in and against the dominance of the commodity-form which are manifest as `national' economic crises or balance of payments problems or speculative pressure on currency. Instead of uncritical state-centrism, Marx's approach sees relations between national states in terms of the social relationships which constitute states as moments of the global composition of class relations.

The most important feature of current international relations, which itself is a historical product of the class struggles which overturned feudal social relations, is the national political constitution of states and the global character of accumulation. Although capitalist relations are global, exploitation conditions are standardised nationally and sovereign states via the exchange rate mechanism are interlocked internationally into a hierarchy of price systems. In the same way that jurisdictions transcend national legal systems, world money transcends national currencies. National states therefore founded on the rule of money and law (as the source of their revenue and claim to legitimacy) are at the same time confined within limits imposed by the accumulation of capital on a world scale - the most obvious and important manifestation of which is their subordination to world money (Marazzi 1977). Conflictual relations between states are not a product of `the structural arrangement of like-units'. The anarchy so beloved of neorealism is nothing other than the constitutive power of labour resisting and breaking free of its national processing.

The subordination of national states both to global money and national/internationally orchestrated violence indicates that a Marxist theory of international relations could best proceed by analysing how specific class struggles produced particular institutional state structures and distinct configurations of labour-capital relations creating differential patterns of sectoral integration on the world market. In this way an all important link can be forged between global class struggles and the national formulation of policies, designed to re-channel the power of labour and disorganise its potential for political unification. In this light international relations is redefined as the study of the national processing of global class relations and the forms of resistance to this `nationalisation' from the workplace to the Strategic Defence Initiative.

1. Space does not allow a detailed discussion here, but see Max Weber (1949); Carl Menger (1963); Simon Clarke (1982); Ken Cole, John Cameron, Chris Edwards (1991); and Richard Walker (1988).

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Marxian Categories, the Crisis of Capital and the Constitution of Social Subjectivity Today

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Editorial Note: This article was presented to the session on "Considering the Side of Wage Labor" at the Rethinking Marxism Conference on "Marxism in the New World Order: Crises and Possibilities", Amherst, Massachusetts, November 14, 1992 and is a reworked version of a paper with the same title presented to the Seminar "Class Struggle and Subjectivity Today: The Constitution of Marxian Categories" which was held at the Université de Paris VIII (Saint-Denis) on the 24 and 25 of January 1992.

Introduction

This article does two things. First, against post-Marxism and postmodernism, it recognizes the crisis of Marxist theory posed by the crises of capitalism and socialism but argues both that Marxist theory *remains* essential in the struggle against domination and for liberation and that at least one tradition of Marxism has developed in such a manner as to be useful for these purposes. Not only does the theory of that tradition grasp the globality of the problem and provide the means to understand the separations and connections which account for our weaknesses and our strengths, it also provides a framework within which we can recognize and analyze the emergence and autonomy of new social subjects supposedly beyond the purview of Marxist theory. Second, the paper discusses the limits to the ability of Marxist theory to conceptualize and provide positive theories appropriate to those emerging social subjects and therefore the need to develop revolutionary theory by taking account of the autonomous development of ideas within the struggles of emerging social subjects. As an example of the kind of assessment we need to do, the second part of the paper examines, with a view to discovering common ground as well as identifying differences, one feminist attempt to construct a theoretical alternative to the Marxist theory of labor.

The Continuing Relevance and Limits of Marxist Theory

The intellectual challenge posed to Marxist theory by the recent evolution of critical social thought, i.e., the proliferation of post-modernism and post-Marxism, is an ideological moment of the more profound historical challenge posed by the crisis of capitalism (including the crisis of the traditional workers' movement and of socialism). It is also a moment of the associated formation of new social subjectivities which are not only undermining the domination of capital but crafting new, alternative projects of social constitution. Retrospectively, every historical

crisis of capital, brought on by the political recomposition of the working class, has involved a crisis for Marxist theory in the sense that it has implied transformations in the qualitative organization of the capital relation and thus the need to rethink the scope and redefine the content of Marxist categories so that their interpretation remains adequate to understanding changes in the dynamics of the enemy and to the elaboration of working class strategy.

But prior to such processes of theoretical adaptation, within the crisis the very contingency of the confrontation with all of its rupture and possibility of social mutation, Marxist theory has always faced both its verification and its limits. The verification can be seen in the crisis brought on by our struggles. The limits can be found in the theory's ability to grasp their new directions of movement. On the basis of an approach which rejects the abstract generalization of Marx's analysis of the dialectic of capital into a cosmology (dialectical materialism),[1] we must recognize that the social transcendence of capital also involves a transcendence of Marxism. In other words, in so far as our struggles go beyond our efforts as workers against capital to the elaboration of alternative ways of being, i.e., to become processes of "self-valorization", to that degree we must develop new theory beyond Marx's theory of capitalism.

Moreover, if communism is not a future social order beyond capital but just such on-going processes of self-valorization, then we should be looking for new ways of thinking and "theorizing" in the present. Simultaneously, of course, as the history of past struggles shows, we may also find innovative efforts being recuperated within the capitalist dialectic, and thus aborted in their autonomy. Thus, we have *a research agenda* that involves two interlocking projects: 1. to continue the adaptation of Marxist theory in order to understand the changing strategies of our common enemy (and the best ways to fight it) in terms of our own self-activity, and 2. to seek out and critically evaluate new, alternative categories of analysis. The former project requires the study of the current content of the class struggle and of the adequacy of our current interpretations of Marxist theory. The later project requires the exploration of the constituent power (and limits) of emerging processes of self-valorization —and their self-conceptualizations. These projects, of course, are not completely separate because understanding capital's efforts at domination requires understanding the working class' efforts at liberation and these latter involve not merely the positive creation of alternative ways of being but also the resistance to domination.

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One thing is certain: in spite of justifiable post-modern objections to master narratives, simple self-defense requires that for any critical social theory to be useful

[1] This approach, which is far from common among Marxists, is based on an assessment of Marx's own work and has received considerable elaboration. Besides being based on an interpretation of the content of his theory of capitalism as class struggle, we can also point to Marx's own reply to Mikhailovski in which he denied having produced a general philosophical theory of all of history. See: Letter to the Editor of *Otechestvennye Zapiski* (St. Petersburg), of November 1877, in S.K. Padover, *Letters of Karl Marx*, Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1979, p. 321-322. The contemporary elaboration of an explicitly anti-dialectical Marxist theory of the working class has included the work of Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Antonio Negri, Jean-Marie Vincent and others around the Parisian journal *Futur Antérieur*. The basic thrust of such theory not only sees capitalist society as a social order of class conflict but grasps the dialectic as the totalization capital seeks to impose on working class antagonism in order to convert it into mere useful contradiction. Within this perspective, that antagonism appears as a force which repeatedly ruptures the dialectic and has the potentiality of exploding it once and for all.

in the struggle for liberation, it must recognize and comprehend not only different forms of domination but the world-wide and totalizing character of the capitalist form. We can recognize how capital seeks the totalization of society within itself without attempting to replicate such tendencies in either social relations or theory. After all, one aspect of our struggles which tend to rupture such attempted totalizations is our theory which can be as diverse as other aspects of our projects of self-valorization. Contemporary developments of Marxist theory must provide a methodology which grasps the totality of capital's project without reductionism and with appreciation of the complex particularities (including theories) that resist the totalization.

Globality and Particularity: The Theory of Class Composition

In the past, of course, there have been various Marxist efforts to grasp the totality of capital as well as efforts to recognize and analyze the particularities that oppose it. Three examples have been: 1. the Hobson-Bukharin-Leninist *theory of imperialism* which visualized capitalism in terms of a world conquered, divided and redivided by competing national blocks of capital, 2. *dependency theory* which similarly sought to understand the global order of capital in terms of a hierarchy of development and underdevelopment and 3. *world-systems theory* which has focused on the global interconnections through which capital has knit the world into its own kind of totality. Unfortunately, in all three cases the manner in which the theories were developed —starting from a focus on capitalist totalization— led to the displacement of the analysis from class conflict to nation-state conflict and the relative neglect of the particularities of class conflict. In all three cases there was a failure to grasp the totality of capital as an attempted internalization of a diversity of class conflicts whose dynamics account both for the form of the relationship and the direction of its movement. Because of the top-down orientation of these projects, nowhere has there been an attempt to grasp the logic of capitalist development in terms of the autonomous self-activity of the people struggling against it. It has been this failure that has left these theories open to the "master narrative" critiques characteristic of the post-modern emphasis on the diversity and differences among social movements.

Yet, surely, despite the validity of such critiques, such theories must retain a certain appeal because the globality of the class relationships of capitalism has never been clearer than it is in the wake of the overthrow of socialism in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Today, global capitalism spearheaded by the International Monetary Fund is transforming the institutional structures of the ex-socialist countries into variations of familiar Western types. Simultaneously, and at the root of both the collapse and the current efforts at transformation, the similarities between the struggles of the working classes of Central Europe and those of the West are becoming more and more obvious. We now see them more clearly and recognize the parallels not only because their institutional framework is becoming more familiar, but because with the collapse of the traditional barriers to East-West communication their struggles and ours are joining. As hitherto barely visible reservoirs of resistance and self-valorization link with their Western counterparts through face-to-face encounters (e.g., of environmental activists) and autonomous computer networks (e.g., Glasnet—Peacenet, etc.) the commonalties of struggle resonate and new common directions are being elaborated. Thus, ironically, just as the ideologies of post-modernism have trumpeted the radical incomparability of contemporary

social conflicts and have demoted the Marxist analysis of class and class conflict to the status of one-issue-among-others, the development of those very social conflicts —East and West— have produced such an unmistakable unification of the institutions of capitalist power that no matter how autonomous the social conflicts the omnipresent menace of *capitalist* repression must force the recognition of a common enemy and of the continuing usefulness of Marxist analysis. Perhaps, with apologies to Marx, this character of the crisis "will drum the salience of class into the heads of the upstarts of post-modernism."

However, at the same time, the criticisms do highlight the failures to grasp the particular in such Marxist attempts to theorize the whole. Nor is it just a question of developing an analysis of the particular to complement the analysis of the whole —as the evolution of the debate over dependency and world-systems theory shows.[2] Rather what is required is an ability to grasp simultaneously: the nature of the totality/globality that capital has sought to impose, the diversity of self-activity which has resisted that totality and the evolution of each in terms of the other. Moreover, what we need is a theory that articulates all this from the point of view of the resistance to capital's totalization (as opposed to what we might call bourgeois theory which deals with these things from the point of view of capital) and of the effort to move beyond it. The question then is whether there are any traditions or developments within Marxism, i.e., by those who call themselves Marxists, that provide such a theory, or important elements of such a theory? My answer is yes.

There is a tradition of Marxist theory —one which I call "autonomist Marxism"— which has evolved in such a way as to answer the post-modern demand for the recognition of difference and the Marxist insistence on the totalizing character of capital. This is a tradition which long ago abandoned the simple reductionism of that deterministic orthodoxy which post-Marxism usually takes for its rhetorical target. In place of a narrow conception of the working class (as the waged industrial proletariat) which ignored or sought to subordinate other oppressed segments of society, we have had for several decades a complex *theory of class composition* explicitly designed to grasp, without reduction, the divisions and power relationships within and among the diverse populations on which capital seeks to maintain its dominion of work throughout the social factory — understood as including not only the traditional factory but also life outside of it which capital has sought to shape for the reproduction of labor power.[3] This is a theory which inverts, from a working class perspective, Marx's analysis of the composition of capital and

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[2] One of the earliest and most telling Marxist reproaches to dependency and world-system theory was that it's focus on the sphere of circulation neglected the sphere of production, especially the existence of different "modes of production" in the Third World. Such was the argument, for example, that Ernesto Laclau made against the work of Andre Gundar Frank. But as the subsequent evolution of Laclau's work makes clear, the neglect of difference could not be remedied simply by paying attention to it. Once one does pay attention the whole theory —including the theory of the whole— must be reworked. Laclau's inability to figure out how to do this within Marxism led him to post-Marxism. Others, however, have shown how this can be done as I sketch below.

[3] For an overview of the development of that theory, some of whose themes began to appear in anarcho-communism and council communism, which began to take on its modern form in the U.S. and France in the 1940s and was elaborated and polished in Italy in the 1960s, see the introduction to my book *Reading Capital Politically*. From insights of C.L.R. James, Raya Dunayevskaya and the editors of *Socialisme ou Barbarie* into the need to grasp not only the autonomy of the working class but also the concrete particularities of specific sectors of that class through the work of Raniero Panzieri, Romano Alquati, Mario Tronti, and Mariarosa Dalla Costa in systematizing the analysis in Marxian theory and practice to more recent American and French elaborations by the editors and friends of the journals *Zerowork*, *Midnight Notes* and *Futur Antérieur*, the theory of class composition has received both intensive development and extensive application.

constructs a theory of the changing "composition" of working class power.[4] Thus the concept of working class is seen to include all those lives capital has been able (to one degree or another) to subordinate to its own logic while, at the same time, appreciating the differences and conflicts among them. This theory explores how various sectors of the working class, through the circulation of their struggles, "recompose" the relations among them to increase their ability to rupture the dialectic of capital and to achieve their own ends. In response, over time and according to the dynamics of that recomposition, capital is forced to seek a restructuring "decomposition" of the class —which may involve the repression and/or the internalization of self-activity— to restore its control. Such analysis has involved the systematic reworking of all concepts within the changing historical context and has generated a comprehensive analysis of the evolution of Twentieth Century capitalism.

One central example of the recasting of key Marxian concepts in the light of changes in the class relations of capitalism has been that of Marx's concept of the "collective worker" elaborated in *Capital*, Volume I. Historical examination of the shift from skilled craft labor to relatively unskilled mass production labor led to the theory of the "mass worker" in the Fordist-Keynesian period.[5] That reworking produced analyses of the complexity of a new constitution of the working class in ways which have brought out both the autonomy and interconnectedness (complementarities *and* conflicts) among sectors of the class —including the various parts of the waged proletariat as well as groups traditionally defined as outside that class such as unwaged housewives, students, peasants and urban "marginals".[6] Such recognition and analysis of diversity has continued through the crisis of the Fordist-Keynesian period into the current phase of the crisis of capitalism.[7] Such analysis has provided the tools necessary to reveal the weaknesses and strengths of our struggles as well as the success and limits of capital's efforts to restore its power of command.

For the period beginning with the crisis of Fordist-Keynesian style command, the Marxist theory of class composition has provided an historical analysis of the crisis of the class relations of capitalism that we have been experiencing for the last 25 years in terms of two phases: (1) a complex and interrelated insurgency of a broadly defined working class which, through a process of political recomposition of the structure of class power, ruptured the sinews of capitalist command, and (2) a capitalist counterattack which has sought to decompose that power in order to

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[4] For more detail on methodological aspects of this "inversion" see H. Cleaver, "The Inversion of Class Perspective in Marxist Theory, from Valorization to Self-Valorization," in W. Bonefeld, R. Gunn and K. Psychopedis (eds) *Open Marxism*, Vol II, London: Pluto Press, 1992. There appear to be some parallels between the theory of class composition and what Michael Lebowitz has in mind when he calls, in his recent book *Beyond Capital*, for the development of a "political economy of wage labor" to complement Marx's analysis of capital.

[5] The development of the theory of the "mass worker" has recently been traced and analysed by Sergio Bologna. See his "Theory and History of the Mass Worker" in *Common Sense: Journal of the Edinburgh Conference of Socialist Economists*, #11, Winter 1991 and #12, Summer 1992.

[6] Key moments in the adaptation of Marxist theory to the ever more inclusive character of the working class were Mario Tronti's theorization of capitalist reproduction as social factory and Mariarosa Dalla Costa's work on the role of housework within capitalism. See: Mario Tronti, *Operai e Capitale*, Torino: Einaudi, 1964 (a central chapter of which is available as "Social Capital" in *TELOS*, #17, Fall 1973) and Mariarosa Dalla Costa, "Women and the Subversion of the Community" 1973. Subsequent work on the capitalist character of the work of peasants and urban "marginals" has been done by Selma James, myself, Ann Lucas de Roufignac, Gustavo Esteva and others.

[7] The crisis is thus located in the insurgency of the working class which occurred as it transformed itself into something no longer compatible with the Fordist organization of accumulation and the Keynesian role of state management.

restore its own ability to subordinate society. In both phases the key issue has been the ability of diverse sectors of the working class to overcome their isolation and differences and circulate their struggles among themselves and to other sectors.[8] Where they have succeeded they have gained ground in the class war; where they have failed capital has been successful in its counterattacks.

To begin with, the "class composition" analysis of the late 1960s and early 1970s demonstrated how the crisis of capital (which is at the heart of the violence of its reaction) was precipitated by a cycle of various interconnected struggles (including those of peasants, students, women, industrial workers, state workers, etc.) which succeeded in rupturing the post-WWII structures of global capitalist power, i.e., Fordism-Keynesianism-Pax-Americana. In other words, those working within this framework have shown how these struggles constituted a political recomposition of *class* power at the same time they were moving more or less autonomously in their own directions.9 Subsequently, in response to the variety of capitalist counterattacks launched in the 1970s and 1980s, from the reorganization of international money through the use of inflation and deflation to industrial and social restructuring, the theory of class composition has delineated both our failures to cope and the sources of our continuing strength.

On the negative side of our weaknesses, analyses based on this theory have shown how the defeats we have suffered over the past two decades of crisis have been in large part due to our inability to avoid being divided and conquered, i.e., to avoid the successful decomposition of our power. *At a global level*, capital's ability to impose localized hunger, disease and starvation in the 1970s and 1980s (especially the famines of Africa), through its ability to impose austerity (unemployment and falling real income) and police repression (e.g., Mexico, Brazil, Mozambique, the American rust belt, the ghettos of Washington and Los Angeles), to its ability to impose war and devastation (e.g., Panama, the Persian Gulf), the success of these terribly destructive counterattacks have depended on preventing the mobilization of outside support through the isolation of the targeted populations —in part through the manipulation of circuits of information and communication.[10] *In the U.S.*, counterattacks against particular sectors, especially those whose demands and struggles cut transversally across numerous other conflicts (e.g., the women's movement, "minority" movements, and immigrant self-mobilization) have involved fueling the most vitriolic ideologies of human division —sexism, racism and ethnic jingoism.[11] The objective of such ideological attacks being to mobilize support

[8] The term "sectors" is used loosely here to designate various subdivisions of the working class which have mobilized themselves autonomously vis à vis the rest of the class, e.g., women, blacks, students, black students, black women, and so on.

[9] Although earlier European centered analyses of this process appeared in Italy in the late 1960s and early 1970s (scattered pieces of which appeared in translation in the journals *Radical America* and *Telos*), the first detailed American elaboration of this analysis appeared in the first issue of the journal *Zerowork* in December 1975. The bulk of the that first issue has just been reissued as part of *Midnight Oil: Work, Energy, War, 1973-1992* (Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1992) by the Midnight Notes Collective. Watered down versions of this analysis, stripped of revolutionary politics, have appeared in the form of French theories of "regulation" and of American theories of "social structures of accumulation" —theories which have, as their titles imply, shifted the focus of analysis from working class power to the requirements of capitalist command.

[10] The flagrant state manipulation of the news media during the Gulf War to prevent the barbarous reality of the war from becoming apparent to the world —which has produced an outpouring of critical articles in the U.S.— provided an important public lesson on the day to day limitation and distortion of communication which prevents particular groups of people from recognizing the commonality of their situation with others.

[11] This fueling has been propagated from the highest political levels, e.g., in the case of racism, from the thinly veiled racism of a George Bush or Giscard d'Estaing to the more overt racism of David Duke, Jean-Marie Le Pen, Jörg Haider or Neo-Nazis in Germany.

for juridical and legislative attacks on gender rights, for similar attacks on racial rights as well as welfare cuts and Drug Wars aimed at already ghettoized minority populations and for the overt repression of the circulation of immigrant autonomy. Such official state violence, of course, has sanctioned an expansion of private violence accelerating the incidence of rape, gay bashing and skinhead attacks on minorities and immigrants.

On the positive side, the theory has helped locate our ability to resist such attacks in capital's inability to destroy or control existing connections or to prevent the further formation of linkages among those of us engaged both in destructuring the mechanisms of capitalist command and in pursuing our own autonomous purposes. Subsequent work on the failures of capital's counter-offensives have sought to understand the transformations through which people have been able to resist capitalist assault and continue to build their own autonomy.[12]

Internationally, the power of the Nicaraguan revolutionaries or of the Palestinian intifada to assert and defend their own programs has depended in obvious ways on international networks of relationships which inhibited both the American and Israeli governments in pursuing their proclivities toward military repression. The extremely rapid diffusion of information through such networks, which have evolved from newsprint into cyberspace, has been essential in the mobilization of mass opposition to the deployment of American troops against the Sandinistas (thus the recourse to the contras and economic blockade) and to the brutality of Israeli repression of Palestinian struggles. Similarly, the amazingly rapid mobilization of a movement against the possibility of a Gulf War which took place in the Autumn of 1990 —despite its failure to prevent the war— was based on the ability of those opposed to the military build-up to utilize global systems of computer communication (especially Peacenet) to diffuse counterinformation that was used for local organization. On a smaller scale, but more persistently, the ability of the South African liberation movement to break out of its isolation and mobilize a world-wide anti-racist movement against apartheid (imposing boycotts and disinvestment) was fundamental to its ability to force all of the recent changes which have widened the possibilities of its struggles. Perhaps most dramatically, the instantaneous circulation of the images of revolt from country to country, played a fundamental role in the wildfire-like spread of political revolution against Soviet-style communism in Central Europe.

In the U.S. such linkages have been multiplied a thousand fold and account for both the power of resistance and the power of constitution in arena after arena of social conflict. The resistance of American women to the "backlash" against their progress toward liberation and autonomy, that of the old to the attack on social security and healthcare, that of the gay community to the neglect of the AIDS epidemic and that of parents, students and the poor to reductions in school lunch programmes and food stamps are examples of struggles which stymied the Reagan White House's "social agenda" in the 1980s and forced it sometimes to abandon its efforts, sometimes to have recourse to private or local initiatives (e.g. the attack on abortion rights, state legislation, media ridicule of feminism and exposés of welfare cheats and street crime in the ghettos, the push for privatization of public schools) or even to make further concessions against its will (e.g., more money for AIDS research and outreach, more

[12] In the U.S. this historical research has mainly been carried out by the contributers to, and those influenced by, the two journals *Zerowork* (in the 1970s) and *Midnight Notes* (in the 1980s and 1990s).

money for food stamps).[13]

The persistence of pro-active struggles (beyond mere resistance) among such groups can be seen in the continuing drive by women, gays and racial minorities to extend the spaces and opportunities for self-development in spheres such as education where as students and professors they have forced the creation of courses and whole programs of study to provide opportunity and time for the elaboration of new kinds of self-understanding and autonomous projects —from the exploration of the hidden history of women and sexual diversity to that of Afrocentrism. It has been the strength of such struggles, the pervasiveness of the critiques of contemporary society which they have produced, together with their success in pushing forward their autonomous agendae that has produced an audience for the emphasis on difference characteristic of postmodernism as well as the most recent ideological backlash against "political correctness", diversity and multiculturalism.

The Autonomy of New Social Subjects and Self-Valorization

The theory of class composition insists that patterns of these evolving conflicts are materially rooted in the character of the class relations as they have evolved through these struggles. Among the most interesting aspects of the analysis of the current character of class struggle (as well as the movement beyond it) are the efforts to grasp the way in which the constitution of the working class has become increasingly autonomous of capital.

I have used the term "autonomist" Marxism to designate a tradition within which there has always been a tendency to recognize and valorize the ability of workers not only to resist capitalist exploitation and domination but to act in their own interests. In terms of the theory of the working class the main implications of this orientation has been to recognize and theorize both the self-activity of workers vis-à-vis capital and the self-activity of various sectors of the class vis-à-vis other sectors, e.g., of women vis-à-vis men, of blacks vis-à-vis whites. The study of skilled craft workers emphasized, in part, the autonomy of those workers in the control of the production process. The study of mass workers emphasized, in part, the autonomy of those workers from the labor process itself. The study of the cycle of struggles that ruptured the Fordist-Keynesian period emphasized the struggle against the capitalist imposition of work in all its forms, from the factory floor, through the rice paddy to the schoolroom and single-family dwelling. The theory of class composition has explored many areas of the "social factory" to reveal the particularities of domination and those of resistance and subversion. Thus, Mariarosa Della Costa, Selma James, Silvia Federici and others have examined the hidden fabric of gender relations that convert the daily lives of women into housework for capital, i.e., into the production and reproduction of life as labor power. At the same time, they sought to identify the sources of strength through which women have developed the power to resist such work and explode the capitalist subordination of daily life. In all of these cases, the degree and quality of that autonomy, it is suggested, not only explains the crisis of capital and the quality of its reaction (both its specificity and its violence) but also the concrete possibilities for liberation.

[13] H. Cleaver, "Reaganism et rapports de classe aux États-Unis," in M-B Tahon et A. Corten, *L'Italie: le philosophe et le gendarme*, Montréal: VLB, 1986.

In the course of attempting to grasp the connection between autonomous character of workers' struggles and those possibilities of liberation, some of those working in this area began to differentiate between those struggles (or those aspects of struggles) which resisted capitalist exploitation and those that sought to move in new directions beyond it. One way of conceptualizing the latter movement is in terms of the autonomy and self-liberation of desire —of the sort analyzed by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in their two volumes on capitalism and schizophrenia.[14] Another way of conceptualizing such movement is embodied in the term "self-valorization" as it developed within the Italian New Left. Whereas Marx often used the term interchangeably with capitalist valorization, refering to the self-expanding character of capital, Antonio Negri suggested that the term be used instead to designate the self-determination of the working class. Thus Negri's *auto-valorizzazione* refers to the ways in which workers act as autonomous subjects crafting their own existence, not only against capital, but for themselves. Although it is in practice often difficult to separate out the two moments of resistance and self-valorization, the distinction is fundamental to the notion that the working class becomes a revolutionary subject, not merely reacting to domination but constituting a new world through its self-activity.

Because the term has been developed in a way that conceptualizes working class self-valorization not as unified but as diverse, it provides a theoretical articulation of the tradition within "autonomist Marxism" of recognizing the autonomy not merely of the working class but of various sectors of it. To both recognize and accept diversity of self-valorization, rooted like all other activity in the diversity of the peoples capital seeks to dominate, implies a whole politics —one which rejects traditional socialist notions of post-capitalist unity and redefines the "transition" from capitalism to communism in terms of the elaboration from the present into the future of existing forms of self-valorization.[15]

In this recognition of the autonomy of the newly emerging social subjects, and of the diverse paths of self-valorization that may be followed, the theory of class composition differs radically from other Marxist efforts to understand the contemporary development of class relations —efforts such as those of the sociologists of the labor process or of the economists of "regulation theory." In both cases, the perception of fundamental change is clear enough but the focus is on the *capitalist* manipulation of change and the reorganization of its command. In terms of the contemporary crisis of capitalism, the sociologists are preoccupied with the increasingly flexible ways capital seeks to organize and exploit labor, while the regulation theorists retain their on-going fascination with regimes of accumulation and modes of capitalist regulation. Both think of the changes in terms of a movement from "Fordism" to "Post-Fordism" —a choice of terms which bespeaks their focus on capital. The difference in perspective of the Marxist theories of class composition and self-valorization is immediately apparent in its very inverse focus on the characteristics of the working class subject active at the heart of these

[14] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *L'anti-Oedipe*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1972 and *Milles Plateaux*, Paris: Editions de Minuit, 1980.

[15] On the reformulation of the transition from capitalism to communism and on the limits of the concept of socialism see: lesson 8 in Antonio Negri, *Marx Beyond Marx*, Brooklyn: Autonomedia, 1991 and Harry Cleaver, "Socialism" in Wolfgang Sachs (ed), *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*, London: Zed Books, 1992.

different social dynamics.[16]

With respect to the current period of crisis and restructuring, the emphasis on the autonomy of peoples' self-activity within, against and beyond the mechanisms of capitalist domination has led some Italian and French theorists of working class composition to suggest that at the heart of the crisis of "Fordism" and at the core of capitalist efforts to construct a "post-Fordist" form of control is a new kind of working class subjectivity which has emerged out of that of the mass worker. They suggest that only by understanding the positive characteristics of that subjectivity, which ruptured capitalist control and continues to defy its present efforts at subordination, can we understand either those efforts or the emergent possibilities of liberation. One early characterization of this new subjectivity (which is actually seen as a diversity of subjectivities) was given by Sergio Bologna in the 1970s who identified a new "tribe of moles" —a loose tribe of highly mobile, drop-outs, part-time workers, part-time students, participants in the underground economy, creators of temporary and every changing autonomous zones of social life that forced a fragmentation of and crisis in the mass-worker organization of the social factory.[17] Another characterization has been that of Antonio Negri, who used the term "socialized worker" to focus on how the crisis of the social factory has been generated precisely by a subject whose self-activity in all moments of life challenges the fabric of capitalist control.[18]

In recent years, in collaboration with a variety of French and Italian Marxists, Negri has sought to identify the evolving characteristics of this "socialized worker". Typical of the work of the theorists of working class composition, he and his co-workers have sought to go beyond the sociological analyses of the newest forms of capitalist command, to discover the newest forms of working class self-activity. As in the previous period of the mass worker or of the tribe of moles, the object is to identify the possibilities of liberation inherent within the capacities of self-activity. Thus within the interpersonal interactions and exchanges of information that the theorists of post-Fordism associate with the "computer and informational society", Negri and company believe to have identified an increasingly collective appropriation of (i.e., control over) "communication."

The analysis runs as follows: whereas the period of mass production was characterized by radical divisions between and within mental and manual labor (both within and

[16] This tendency of regulation theory to adopt the perspective of capitalist control rather than the perspective of the working class subject has been emphasized by Yann Moulier, "Les Theories Américaines de la «segmentation du marché du travail» et italiennes de la «composition de classe» à travers le priseme des lectures françaises," *Babylone* N° 0, Hiver 1981-1982, W. Bonefeld, "Reformulation of State Theory," *Capital & Class* 33, Winter 1987, J. Holloway, "The Great Bear, post-Fordism and class struggle," *Capital & Class* 36, Winter 1988 (reprinted in Bonfeld & Holloway (eds). *Post-Fordism & Social Form*, Macmillan, London 1991) and G. Cocco et C. Vercellone, "Les Paradigmes Sociaux du Post-Fordisme," *Future Antérieur* N° 4, Hiver 1990. Given the evidence of early regulation theorist familiarity with the theory of class composition, this choice has been quite conscious and symptomatic of its very different political orientation. See the discussion of "l'opéraïsme" in A. Lipietz, *Crise et Inflation, Pourquoi?* Paris: Maspero, 1979.

[17] Sergio Bologna, "La tribù delle talpe" *Primo Maggio* #8, Spring 1977. In English as "The Tribe of Moles" in Red Notes & the CSE, *Working Class Autonomy and the Crisis*, 1979. The term "temporary autonomous zone" is taken not from Bologna but from Hakim Bey's book *T.A.Z.: The Temporary Autonomous Zone, Ontological Anarchy, Poetic Terrorism*, Brooklyn: Autonomedia 1991.

[18] The term "socialized worker" (operaio sociale) was coined by Romano Alquati and adopted by Toni Negri in the late 1970s. See R. Alquati, N. Negri and A. Sormano *Universitá di ceto medio e proletariato intellectuale*, Turin: Stampatori, (1976) and A. Negri *Dall'Operaio Massa All'Operaio Sociale* (1979) and his "Archeologia e proggetto. L'operaio massa e l'operaio sociale" in *Macchina Temp* (1982). This last is also available in English as "Archaeology and Project: The Mass Worker and the Social Worker" in *Revolution Retrieved: Selected Writings of Toni Negri*, Red Notes, London, 1989.

outside of the factory) that limited daily participation in any kind of collective system of interactive communication to a small minority of skilled workers(e.g., engineers and scientists), the dynamics of the class struggle has increasingly forced a spatial and temporal recomposition of work that is undermining that division. On the one hand, automation has been dramatically reducing the role of simple manual labor —increasingly in the "service" sector as well as in manufacturing. At the same time, the needs of global coordination and continuous innovation have expanded not only the role of mental labor but its collective character, creating ever more jobs that require the manipulation of information flows, intelligent and informed decision making within production, independent initiative, creativity and the coordination of complex networks of cooperation.[19] The two forces of automation and communication have even contributed to the breakdown of this traditional distinction between mental and manual —especially, but not uniquely, in sectors of the "informational society."[20] The essential point is that at a social level, these developments embody the adaptation of capitalist command to the emergence of an increasingly independent collective subject — "the socialized worker"— whose self-organization of essentially intellectual work and play repeatedly outruns capital's ability to limit and control it.

The analysis of this emerging collective subject has suggested that it has begun to impose its hegemony on the class composition as a whole, much in the way the "mass worker" dominated the prior "Fordist" period of capitalist development. In other words, while during the period of the "mass worker" (Fordism) neither all nor even most workers were employed in factories on assembly lines, nevertheless they formed the paradigmatic core whose organization influenced all others. The argument is that, in the present period, not only are the new attributes of this collective subject (interlinked intellectual cooperation, appropriation of social communication, constituant of differentiated communities with new values, rejection of traditional politics and labor organization) increasingly coming to characterize the class as a whole but that subject has taken on, more and more, the political role of igniting, solidifying and linking social struggles. This grounding of the collective processes of constitution in communication, it is argued, is a common characteristic in the development of an array of "new social movements" which have been widely seen to be the most important components of social confrontation in this period. Let's look at some examples.

The Autumn 1986 French "student movement" has provided Negri with one concrete case of the appearance of the "socialized worker" and one in which the "'truth' of the new class composition appears most transparently."[21] That students are involved in cooperative networks of "intellectual work" is obvious.[22] That their collective work has been increasingly disciplined by a labor market which demands "productive"

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[19] See: B. Coriat, *L'Atelier et le robot*, Paris: Christian Bourgois, 1990 and M. Lazzarato, "Les caprices du flux, les mutations technologiques du point de vue de ceux qui les vivent," *Future Antérieur*, N° 4, hiver 1990.

[20] This analysis has been partly based on a study of working class self-activity in the Italian and French garment industry carried out by Negri, Maurizio Lazzarato and Giancarlo Santilli, *Beneton et Sentier: L'Entreprise Politique et la Nouvelle Cooperation Productive Sur L'Espace Europeen*, 1990.

[21] M. Lazzarato et A. Negri, "Travail immatériel et subjectivité," *Future Antérieur*, N° 6, été 1991, p. 92. Also see the earlier essay by A. Negri in *The Politics of Subversion*, op.cit., "Paris 1986, 26 November — 10 December, pp. 47-60.

[22] Obvious at least since the 1960s when the student movement provoked Marxists to begin to analyze schooling in terms of the production of labor power. (Just as the women's movement gave rise to a parallel analysis of housework.)

education, and that such "productive" intellectual activity (in the university as well as in later waged jobs) has become increasingly central to the organization of the global work machine is fairly widely recognized.[23] The degree to which capital succeeds in disciplining and expropriating that activity versus the degree to which students (and sometimes their professors) succeed in autonomously determining the direction of their own development was not only the central issue that provoked the Fall explosion, but has become the on-going central issue of "education" not only in France but throughout the world —East and West, North and South.

A subsequent study of student struggles in Italy, demonstrated not only the similar character of the conflict but the ways in which students organized themselves as a fighting collective subject through the use and manipulation of various means of communication. [24] Recent American studies of IMF plans for "restructuring" education in Africa, also show clearly how the fundamental aim is the repression of the autonomy of students and professors and the reduction of education to the production of labor power.[25]

To these examples, we can add the well known "democracy" movement in China in 1990 which was also clearly spearheaded by those who seem to fit the analysis of the new socialized worker: students and communication workers from Chinese universities, radio and television. (Traditional factory workers followed, not led, the movement.) Not only did these lead the movement into the streets but their formation into a movement and the circulation of their struggles were achieved precisely through the mobilization of those characteristics attributed to the "socialized worker". Traditional forms of organization such as mass meetings and strikes were complemented, in close collaboration with their counterparts in other countries, by the masterful utilization of virtually every technology of communication available, i.e., the tools of their trades: telephone, fax, radio, television, and computer networks —not only to mobilize international support but to build and circulate their struggles within the country. The state resorted to repressive and bloody violence only after repeated failures to cut the communicative sinews of the movement (e.g., the movement circumvented the state tactic of cutting intercity phone lines by linking cities via fax through third countries).

Outside the academy (although partly within as well), we can identify another set of self-constituting communities of "intellectual workers" at the core of "communication" as those working in or through the electronic world of computer networks. Originally constructed and operated to facilitate the development of technology at the service of capital (ARPANET), contemporary networks (e.g. INTERNET, BITNET) have not only, in fact, been largely constructed by the collectivities which use them —and retain the material stamp of that autonomy in their uncentralized and fluid technical organization— but constitute a terrain of constant

[23] In the U.S. this tendency —involving a dramatic expansion of "professional" training (e.g. engineering, sciences and business administration at the university level, lower level technical training within junior colleges and trade schools) at the expense of traditional "liberal arts"— has been widely recognized and lamented by humanist defenders of the latter fields. Yet the same expansion of "professional" training has also occurred within the liberal arts (especially in the social sciences) and constitutes a response to successful student struggles to expand the spaces and opportunities for critical analysis and self-valorization and to the crisis more generally. See below.

[24] Especially the use of faxes and control of media reporting of the university occupations. M. Lazzarato, "La «Panthère» et la communication," *Future Antérieur*, N° 2, été 1990, pp. 54-67.

[25] Committee for Academic Freedom in Africa, "The World Bank and Education in Africa," *Newsletter* No. 2, Fall 1991, pp. 2-12.

conflict between capitalist attempts at reappropriation and the fierce allegiance of most users to freedom of use and "movement" throughout the "cyber" space they have created and constantly recreate. The most visible evidence of this autonomy, and of the class character of the confrontation involved, is the conflict between the "hackers" —who repeatedly break down the barriers to free movement created by capital in its attempt to harness and control these networks— and the state. They mostly became visible in the U.S. as a result of the recent wave of inept state actions aimed at disrupting and repressing their activities.[26] Less visible but more important are the myriad participants of the networks who, operating from personal or institutional (academic, corporate, or state) entry points, utilize the technology not only for their "official" work but in the pursuit of their (and their friends') own interests. What has been striking over the last few years has been the constitution of a proliferating network of networks almost totally devoted both to the subversion of the current order and to the elaboration of autonomous communities of like-minded people connected in non-hierarchical, rhizomatic fashion purely by the commonalty of their desires. Examples include not only independent networks like PeaceNet, EcoNet, or the European Counter Network, but also radical nets within official nets, such as Pen-L (the Progressive Economist Network) and Activ-L (the Activist Mailing List) within Listserv on BITNET.

What needs to be emphasized here is that these networks are not constituted merely by "computer nerds" —those who like to play with computers— but by far the greater number of participants in these collectivities are workers in a diverse array of institutions. While some networks such as the Progressive Economist Network may be constituted mainly by academics, others such as PeaceNet or the European Counter Network involve people in all kinds of activity and all kinds of struggle.

The social character of the "socialized worker" derives not primarily from the way in which capital has annexed and integrated the sphere of reproduction (school, community, family, etc.) with the sphere of production (factory, office, etc.)[27] but mainly from how new subjectivities have redefined and restructured themselves in such a way as to undermine such distinctions. Women within the home and community and students of both sexes within the schooling system have come to recognize how their activities in those locations are supposed to be subordinated to the accumulation of capital. Simultaneously, they have sought to maintain or craft a subversive autonomy in those activities which undermines their role in the creation and reproduction of labor power and contributes to the constitution of new kinds of personal and social being. (See below) Similarly, waged workers have subordinated the tools of their trade to the realization of more broadly defined objectives and thus transformed to some degree the activities in the work place into liberated activity, often directly related to other spheres of life.

What has been remarkable about the proliferation of the "personal" computer in the U.S. (which is more extensive than anywhere else) has been the way it has rapidly evolved into a gateway of communication and mobilization linking otherwise isolated people and movements. In striking contrast to the first generation of arcade-

[26] Other state interventions have occurred through juridical and police intervention in defense of "intellectual property rights" (i.e., the control over the reproduction of software) against the pervasive "pirating" and sharing of programs. The communist character of such free redistribution of innovation is apparant and has taken legal form in the proliferation of "shareware" and "freeware" widely available for downloading from computer networks.

[27] Such integration was already recognized in the analysis of the "mass worker" and the "social factory".

style computer games, which were widely interpreted as contributing (like television) to the collapse of social being into screen-glued and purely reactive protoplasm, the modem and the spread of communication nets are providing the sinew of a growth of collective social being in dramatic ways.

Stepping back from this analysis of new social subjectivities which might be classed as variations of the "socialized worker", we must keep in mind that they are developing within a global population whose subordination to capitalist work continues through forms the most ancient as well as the most recent. Despite the emergence of new subjectivities within the most "high tech" parts of the social factory, vast numbers of people are still struggling against exploitation through more traditional forms, from the Fordist assembly line and state taxation to patriarchal slavery within the family and therefore seek to escape their life sentences at hard labor through all means possible. Processes of self-valorization, of the elaboration of new social projects, occur under the most diverse of circumstances —not just on the cutting edge of high tech. As work on the struggles of peasants and urban marginals has shown, it flowers in rural villages and urban barrios as well as university campuses and high-rise office buildings.[28] Yet, there can be no doubt that although some, at very different positions of the international wage hierarchy, have the power to push forward their own projects of self-valorization, others are being crushed by capitalist austerity and repression and struggle barely to survive. What we need today, in an age where capitalist strategy and policy are increasingly global, is to build, piece by piece, a comprehensive analysis of the international class composition and the processes of political recomposition which grasps the interactions among all sectors of the class, identifying those being beaten down as well as those on the move, those subject to the most abject exploitation as well as those capable of launching new initiatives.

With respect to the kinds of examples just cited, and to the analysis of them which has been carried out to date, it seems to me that we can see how the kind of Marxist theory which I have described is in the process of elaborating such an understanding of contemporary social conflict. The openness of the theoretical and political project to a kind of class analysis on all levels, from global configurations to the individual psyche, and to seizing not only the interconnected determinations of various kinds of domination but the positive diversity of collective self-valorization, provides an appealing framework for thinking about emancipation from repression and processes of liberation.

2.

As suggested at the outset, however, no matter how appealing the theories of class composition and self-valorization, they have their limits. The theory of class composition is a theory of *class*, a theory of the relationships within and between the classes of capitalist society. It was neither designed for nor is it adapted to the theorization of the emergence of post-capitalist social relations. Like other aspects of Marxist theory, it *can* help us understand something about the social forces at work undermining capitalism. It *can* focus our attention on the diversity of autonomous movements within the working class and thus suggest the need for a politics of

[28] See the work of Cleaver, de Roufignac and Esteva mentioned above. Wolfgang Sachs(ed) *The Development Dictionary*, London: Zed Books, 1992 brings together a variety of authors whose work focuses on the conflicts between various paths to self-valorization (although most of the authors would not use this term) and capitalist development.

alliance against capital by various movements headed in different directions. But, it does *not* provide us with an understanding of the positive content of those movements, of the new directions or patterns being developed. Similarly, the theory of self-valorization *can* concentrate our attention on the self-activity of the working class, on how, for example, living labor may be evolving into a revolutionary subject capable of casting off the constraints of capitalism, freeing itself from the vampirism of dead labor. But, it does *not*, in itself, give us more than very general concepts of this movement: of its autonomy, of its diversity. When we begin to explore the diversity of self-valorization in detail what we find are a variety of social relations under creation which by escaping capitalism also escape our Marxism.

Where are we to find useful understandings of such social relations, if not in Marxism? In the spirit of Marxism (as opposed to the spirit of all universalizing philosophies), I would say that we must look within the emerging movements themselves.[29] Just as new movements of the working class have generated new adaptations of capital and the need for new conceptualizations, so any movement which is struggling to craft social relations different from those of capitalism may generate new conceptualizations more or less consistent with its own character.[30] Where there are a multiplicity of movements, we may expect to find a multiplicity of concepts, quite different from their analogs in Marxist theory.

The need to be open to such possibilities is not merely intellectual but immanently political. The theory of molecular autonomy and the diversity of self-valorization implies a politics of alliance, as Guattari and Negri have argued: "the task of organizing new proletarian forms must be concerned with a plurality of relations within a multiplicity of singularities -- a plurality . . . [which] develops toward . . . a functional multicentrism."[31] Whatever "machines of struggle" can be constructed on the basis of such plurality, they argue, must involve "the totally free movement of each of its components, and in absolute respect of their own times — time for comprehending or refusing to comprehend, time to be unified or to be autonomous, time of identification or of the most exacerbated differences."[32] As they recognize, such a politics cannot depend on any kind of "ideological unification" —including consensus around the meaning or importance of theoretical categories.[33] It seems obvious that working out the terms and dynamics of such alliances requires a direct confrontation with the diversity of ideas and values that proliferate within their constituent parts. It would also seem clear that those ideas requiring the most urgent attention are those which are central to the conceptual world views of the various autonomous movements with which one would most like to establish links and build political alliances. Thus, once again, a double agenda: the working out of one's own analysis and the critical exploration of "neighboring" activities, values and ideas.

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[29] This suggestion should even appeal to those die-hard dialectical or historical materialists who believe that it is impossible to escape the dialectic. The only problem, of course, is the likelihood that no matter what they find, they will impute to it a "dialectical" logic that will blind them to the existence of other kinds of relationships.

[30] I say "more or less consistent" because it is clear, from the history of the workers' movement, that a whole range of concepts may be generated standing in quite different relationships to the dynamics of that movement. Not only have the meanings of "socialism" and "communism" varied widely, but so have those of all the other oppositional concepts thrown up by the struggles.

[31] F. Guattari et A. Negri, *Les Nouveaux Espaces de Liberté*, op.cit., p. 107 in the English verion.

[32] Ibid., p. 120.

[33] Ibid., p. 108.

If what we are looking for in such a confrontation are new ideas that articulate new realities transcending those of capital, then we have two tasks: first, to juxtapose the new ideas being investigated with the (Marxist) ones we have already developed for the social relations of capitalism —to see if the new ideas are really new, and second, to the degree that they appear to be, to investigate the social movements which have given rise to those ideas in order to better understand what is new about the struggles involved (in order to decide how we want to relate to them).[34]

Theories of Work, Marxist and Feminist

As an example/contribution to such efforts, I want to comment briefly on the feminist critique of the Marxist concept of work by Maria Mies and on her attempt to sketch an alternative feminist theory of work in her book *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale* (1986).[35] In terms of the two tasks just mentioned, I will limit my comments here to the first, namely to see whether and to what degree her work really does go beyond the concepts of Marxism and illuminates new kinds of social relations.

Mies' work is not only interesting but has been widely influential in the feminist movement in Western Europe, in the Third World and in building links between autonomous movements in both. Confronting her arguments can be done in a relatively straightforward manner for two reasons. First, she accepts the importance of thinking about feminist issues and politics in relation to global capitalism and on the basis of the autonomy of the various struggles against it.[36] Second, she came to these positions, in part, through the study of Marxist texts. In that study she shares with the theorists of class composition and self-valorization a common source of inspiration in the work of Italian Marxist feminists.

According to Mies' own account she, and a number of other German feminists with whom she collaborated, drew on the theoretical work of Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James dealing with the relationship between housework and capital and critiquing traditional Marxist positions. Dalla Costa and James' writings, beginning with "The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community," attacked concepts of housework as "unproductive" and of the only fruitful place for women's struggles being in the waged labor force.[37] On the basis of a detailed analysis of how women's activities in the family, home and community create and reproduce labor power (i.e., how they constitute work for capital), she argued the fundamental importance of that work in accumulation, the importance of recognizing how women's lives are exploited by it and the necessary autonomy of women's struggles

[34] This formulation obviously derives from the intellectual/political project of this paper. Clearly, the politics of autonomy mandates the study of other struggles and the investigation of the possibilities of complementary action regardless of whether those struggles have thrown up interesting new ideas or are based on old familiar ones.

[35] Maria Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, London: Zed, 1986.

[36] Ibid., all of these themes are discussed in the first chapter of the book. Her conception of autonomy is as thoroughgoing as that of any autonomist Marxist. With respect to the need for autonomy *within* the feminist movement, she writes: "As there is no centre, no hierarchy, no official and unified ideology, no formal leadership, the autonomy of the various initiatives, groups, collectives is the only principle that can maintain the dynamism, the diversity, as well as the truly humanist perspective, of the movement." p. 41.

[37] Mariarosa Dalla Costa and Selma James, *Potere femminile e sovversione sociale*, (The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community), Padova: Marsilio, 1972. First published in English in *Radical America*, Jan.-Feb. 1972 then by Falling Wall Press in England.

over unwaged work. All this, and the subsequent "debate over domestic labor", Mies considers to have been "an important contribution to a feminist theory of work."[38] Concerning these aspects of work under capitalism, there is considerable agreement between Mies' feminism and the theories of autonomist Marxism.

Disagreement begins over the concept of work that she sees as prevalent in all capitalist and socialist countries —one she believes is shared by Marx.[39] In her view that virtually omnipresent concept is one of work as "a necessary burden . . . which has to be reduced, as far as possible, by the development of productive forces or technology. Freedom, human happiness, the realization of our creative capacities, friendly unalienated relations to other human beings, the enjoyment of nature, of children's play, etc., all these are excluded from the realm of work and are possible only in the realm of non-work, that is, in leisure time."[40] The source of this formulation is obvious and she soon makes it clear by quoting the passages on the realm of necessity and the realm of freedom in the third volume of *Capital.* She also cites or quotes various passages from the *1844 Manuscripts*, the *Grundrisse* and *The German Ideology.* It soon becomes clear that her view of Marx's reasoning is one she draws from, or shares with, Alfred Schmidt who had previously interpreted the *Grundrisse* as a paean to the possibility of total automation.[41] For her, the epitome of the dead-end to which such a concept leads are the hallucinations of Andre Gorz for whom, as she puts it, the time has already arrived "for a straight march into the Marxist paradise because, with micro-electronics, computers and automation, necessary labor can almost be reduced to zero."[42]

There are two problems immediately apparent about this interpretation. First, it completely ignores the quite contrary orthodox Marxist arguments that the realization of socialism and communism would fully realize human potential not by eliminating work but by making everyone into a worker —precisely the ideology that has justified the brutal socialist imposition of work. Second, it also ignores the theory of the very positive, creative role of work in both Marx and the theory of self-valorization. However, not only can we read the passages on necessity and freedom as not excluding human fulfillment through work, but the (only partly) implicit analysis of unalienated work in the *1844 Manuscripts* (also mentioned above) demonstrates an appreciation of the potentiality of work to be a source of human self-realization, not something which has to be abolished. The argument in *Capital* does say that the "realm of freedom" only begins where necessary labor ends.[43] However, not only might the sphere of freedom (or disposable time) include work freely undertaken, but there is nothing in Marx to suggest why work in the realm of necessity cannot also be fulfilling, i.e., an integral part of autonomous self-constitution. The endless "wrestling with nature" that Marx foresaw, even under

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[38] Ibid., p. 33.

[39] Without going into detail, it should be said that her views on the fundamental similarities of 20th Century socialism and capitalism are shared by autonomist Marxists.

[40] Ibid., p. 212.

[41] Mies quotes approvingly from Schmidt's book *The Concept of Nature in Marx*, London: New Left Books, 1973.

[42] She is refering to Gorz's 1983 book *Les chemins du paradis* —a book which draws, mostly in an unacknowledged fashion, on autonomist Marxist thought but twists it around to Gorz's own purposes. See also Cocco et Vercellone, "Les Paradigmes Sociaux du Post-Fordisme," op. cit., pp. 90-91.

[43] *Capital*, Vol. III, Chapter 48 on the trinity formula. See below for a feminist critique of this division and a response.

communism, need not be interpreted negatively as a limitation on human development —especially when Marx's own description of how this can take place evokes "conditions most worthy and appropriate for their human nature." Just as wrestling between humans may contribute to their mutual development (depending on the context), so may such interaction with nature be organized within human constitution. In the *1844 Manuscripts*, Marx reflected on the content of the alienation of work under capitalism and provided, partly by implication, a sketch of what "unalienated" labor might be like: work as a life-giving objectification of the worker's personality and desires,[44] collective work which builds positive social relations among individuals, the sharing of the results of work as constitutive of social bonds, work as one link between individual and "being" of our species. In his subsequent analysis of the development of labor and working class subjectivity, Marx never returned to such a detailed discussion of how that development might transform the character of "liberated" labor. Nevertheless, as Negri has shown, the *Grundrisse* contains a whole line of (mostly abstract) argument of how such development becomes an increasingly autonomous process of "self-valorization". In fact, as we will see, some elements of this analysis are very close to Mies' own attempts to formulate a feminist theory of labor. Even the well known passage she quotes from *The German Ideology* about how communist society will "make it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind," evokes self-realization through several kinds of work. Hunting, fishing and husbandry are all forms of work according to Marx's definition, only "criticism" resembles a "purely leisure activity."

The confusion in the kind of interpretation Mies attacks, of the sort typified in Schmidt and in Gorz, is rooted in an inability to relate the quantitative dimension of workers' struggles against capitalist work, their attempts to reduce their exploitation by working less, to the qualitative transformation of work and of the relations between work and non-work activities. It is not that workers have sought the delusion of a total elimination of work, but rather it has been success in the reduction of working time, which has not only forced increases in productivity, but facilitated qualitative struggles to transform the character of work and the relations between work and non-work. It was the strategy of the refusal of (capitalist) work in the 1960s which forced the qualitative changes that have tended to displace the "mass worker" by the "socialized worker" who has more direct control over work and more possibility to either appropriate it or change it into non-work. At the same time, it is also true that, as Mies points out, the reduction in official working time (weekly hours, age of retirement, etc.) has rarely led to the reduction of unwaged domestic labor.[45] In fact, she might also have argued that historically speaking the achievement of such reduction along with the liberation/exclusion of children and women from long factory hours was what led to the capitalist colonization of "free time", the creation of generalized schooling, home economics and most of the other 20th Century institutions to guarantee the imposition of unwaged labor.

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[44] Because it is important in the discussion of feminist theory below, let us note that Marx's view of the "life-giving" character of human labor by no means disappeared in his later writings which focused more on evolving forms of capitalist exploitation. His oft repeated use of the vampire metaphor to characterize capital's relation to living labor is dramatic evidence of his view of that labor as a kind of "social life blood." This view was rooted in the very anthropocentric view which he shared with Hegel of what made humans different from the rest of nature: their imagination and will which allowed them to create/give-birth to newness in the world.

[45] Mies, Mies, *Patriarchy and Accumulation on a World Scale*, op. cit., p. 217.

However, in consequence, the struggle for the reduction of work was generalized as unwaged workers also came to refuse work, i.e., to liberate their daily activities from the real subordination to capital. Women have refused the work of procreation and other forms of housework, students have refused to subordinate their learning to job training, peasants have refused to work for the commodity market, or to join the labor market, and so on. The theory of the mass worker evolved into a theory of the *social* factory and it was recognized, in part thanks to feminists like Dalla Costa and Selma James, that more workers in that factory were unwaged and engaged in the work of reproducing labor power than in producing other commodities on Fordist assembly lines.[46] At the same time, those struggles to refuse the work of reproduction clearly involved not merely, or even mainly, less activity (e.g. fewer babies, less schoolwork, less time dealing with crop marketing agencies) but rather changes in the kinds of activities: from work for capital to self-activity of other kinds, both work and non-work (e.g., developing new kinds of gender relations, self-directed studying, experimenting with innovations in traditional techniques). However, it is also true that vast numbers, especially of the unwaged and especially unwaged women, being on the bottom of the capitalist income/power hierarchy, benefited less from the changes we have been analyzing and have been more vulnerable to capitalist counterattack. While not all of those working within the tradition of the Marxist theory of class composition have concentrated their work on the "underside of paradise", enough have to demonstrate that this kind of Marxist theory is not susceptible to the critique Mies directs at Marx and at Gorz.[47] On the contrary, there is a lot of common terrain, I would argue, on the basis of which we can understand each other well enough to work together.

To further explore the degree of commonality and difference, let's look at Mies' alternative, *feminist theory of work* which she elaborates, in part, in direct opposition to her interpretation of Marx. To begin with, it is important to recognize that Mies' "feminist concept of labor" is not primarily intended, as Marx's theory was, to be a critique of work under capitalism (in which we can, with effort, identify tendencies which point toward communism). In her book, and elsewhere, Mies has written a great deal about women's work within capitalism but her "feminist concept of labor" is primarily a theory of the kind of work women should fight for (and what elements of current labor processes are worth preserving) and only derivatively an analysis of what is wrong with current work practices.

Rather than the industrial wage worker whom Marx took as his paradigm, or the housewife who was the focus of Italian Marxist feminist research, Mies takes the *mother* as her model.[48] For the mother, she argues, work is never just a burden but also "a source of enjoyment, self-fulfillment and happiness."[49] Similarly, she argues

[46] This evolution occurred in Italy in tandem with the development of the struggles. Tronti's early, but fairly bare bones, recognition of the social character of the factory was only given flesh when the explosion of autonomous women's and student struggles focused theory on the real life content of the "reproduction of labor power." Compare Tronti's "La fabbrica e la società, *Quaderni Rossi* No. 2, 1962 and "Il piano del Capitale," *Quaderni Rossi*, No. 3, 1963 with Dalla Costa's "Power of Women" cited earlier.

[47] In the first place, I should say that I include Dalla Costa and James within the Marxist tradition of the analysis of "class composition" —Dalla Costa's own thinking developed within the space of *autonomia* (or workers' autonomy) in Italy and James' work was rooted in earlier related activities of the American Johnson-Forest Tendency and its offshoots. In the second place, much of the research some of us have done on various sectors of the unwaged has built directly on their work, especially work on peasants and students.

[48] This is an interesting choice given the history of feminist rejections of the mother as the appropriate paradigm for thinking about women and of women's struggles to have the right to refuse to be mothers!

[49] The section of Mies' book from which this and the material which follows is drawn, is that on "Towards a feminist concept of labor" in the last chapter, pp. 216-219.

that for unwaged *peasants*, especially peasant women, "whose production is not yet totally subsumed under commodity production and the compulsions of the market" work has this same dual character of burdensome toil and occasion for enjoyment and creative social interaction. Drawing on her experience in Germany and India, she evokes scenes of singing and dancing during periods of intense collective labor. What makes these work processes different from alienated factory labor, she argues, is that they are "all connected with the direct production of life or of use values." Therefore, she concludes, "*a feminist concept of labour has to be oriented towards the production of life* as the goal of work and not the production of things and wealth." (my emphasis)

As should be clear from the earlier discussion of alternative readings of Marx, this proposition contradicts neither Marx's analysis in the *1844 Manuscripts* of how self-determined work can be life-creating, even within necessary labor, nor the theory of self-valorization which Negri has discovered in the *Grundrisse*. On the contrary, this kind of Marxist theory provides precisely a conceptual framework to make the distinctions Mies wants: between life-destroying work and life-giving work. In the case of mothers as in the case of peasants (and indeed to some degree in the case of almost everyone within capitalism) daily life is rarely a case of either/or; it is more commonly full of tensions between the kind of alienation associated with capitalist command, and peoples' efforts, both as individuals and collectively, to reappropriate their activities. Mothers, for instance, may —when they have the energy— seek to interact with their children in reciprocally life-giving (self-valorizing) ways but they also, all too frequently, experience the life-destroying pressure of capital on that interaction in the form of school demands that they police their kids' stultifying homework or of husband demands (sometimes violent) for work reproducing his labor power. Peasants live similar contradictions between individual and collective attempts at autonomy (e.g., the kinds of intimate human relationships Mies describes) and the pressures of agribusiness or state repression that drain both their energy and their time. Which brings us to the second aspect of Mies' feminist theory of labor.

A feminist concept of labor, she argues, must have *a different concept of time* —by which she means that time should not be divided (either in the world or in theory) into burdensome work time and pleasurable leisure time. Although she presents the alternative to such a division as the alternation and interspersion of "times of work and times of rest and enjoyment" (which seems to retain the distinction she is arguing against) her previous argument about how work can and should be rewarding suggests a better formulation. Namely, that if various kinds of work along with other sorts of activity are organized so as to be rewarding in themselves then the question of how much time one spends working at this or that can become one of personal and collective choice among an array of alternative kinds of self-valorization requiring varying degrees and kinds of effort. This was clearly the kind of thing Marx had in mind when he wrote the passage in *The German Ideology* about cattle rearing, fishing, hunting and criticism quoted above. If he had known more about peasants he might have mentioned singing, dancing or story-telling as well.[50]

The third and fourth aspects of Mies' feminist theory of labor focus *the importance of work being sensuousness*, of the way it can provide a "direct and sensual

[50] What this description evokes is the inversion of the tendency of capitalism to convert all activities including those that take place during "leisure" into alientaed work. Here we imagine unalienated work as a moment of an unaliened life.

interaction with nature, with organic matter and living organisms." Clearly drawing on her exemplar of the mother as worker, and of the subsistence peasant working the land, she attacks the elimination of such interaction between workers and organic nature which has come with the development of the machine and modern automated production methods. This development, which she thinks Marx embraces wholeheartedly, has reached its nadir, according to her, with the appearance of the computer technology which is "destroying all productive human power, all understanding of nature and, in particular, all capacity for sensual enjoyment." Against this she argues that only through labor processes which involve such interaction can we retain a healthy physical capacity for "enjoyment, for sensuality and for erotic and sexual satisfaction." On the basis of this argument she explains, in part, the pathological mystification's involved in men's fascination with the female body and the tendential increase in violence against women. Against arguments that athletic sports and hobbies could provide an antidote for such estrangement and its pathologies, she reasons that they cannot because unlike work they lack the "sense of purpose", a "character of being useful and necessary" and do not produce products which are "useful and necessary."

The parts of this argument which insist on the value of sensuously healthy work and of working having a sense of purpose is completely parallel to Marxist analysis and by no means its contrary. Marx deplored, like others before him, e.g., Adam Smith, the destructive character of work under capitalism: especially the way the division of labor leads to a crippling deskilling of workers and how the imposition of capitalist purpose is one aspect of labor which alienates them from it. The implication of such Marxian analysis, as I have already indicated, is that to the degree that workers are able to take command over their work and their lives more generally, they transform the organization of labor so as to overcome such destructive organization. The uncritical embrace by socialist managers of capitalist work organization (e.g., of Taylorism in the Soviet Union) may have required the studied neglect of Marx's analyses of these matters but it is there and, once again, it is in harmony with Mies' own arguments.

Her arguments about the results of such estrangement of workers from positive forms of sensuousness are interesting and useful contributions to the analysis of the relationship between the divisions of labor and divisions of gender. They complement Jungian theories of individuals' quest for missing gender traits while emphasizing the increasingly important element of violence which accompanies the desperation of such alienation.[51] They are also very consistent with the Marxist tradition of analyzing the nefarious effects of alienated work conditions. Whereas Marx tended to spend more time writing about such physical effects as poisoning and exhaustion, many contemporary Marxist theorists have focused on the analysis of psychological damage. The intersection of Marxian and various strains of pyschoanalytic thought has not always been fruitful but it has deepened our awareness of the links between capitalism and psychological phenomena. Within the development of the theory of class composition and that of self-valorization the most important such intersection occurred with the schizoanalytic thought of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari.[52] The result has been lines of analysis highly sensitive to the kind of problem Mies has identified. In discussing the women's movement,

[51] The parallels are striking between Mies' argument and that of the Jungian analyst Robert Johnson in his recent book *Ecstasy*, dealing with the absense of joy (Dionysios) and the destructive additions it produces.

[52] Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipe* (1972) and *Milles Plateaux* (1980) op. cit.

Guattari and Negri have acknowledged the importance of the insistence on body politics: "The corporeality of liberation became primary. Insurrection of bodies as an expression of subjectivity, as incarnating the materiality of desires and of needs, as promising in the future the impossibility of separating the collective character of economic development from the singularities of its ends."[53] On the basis of such recognition that accepts and also attempts to theorize exactly the kind of issues Mies sees as being at the heart of her theory of labor, there would seem to be considerable grounds for the exploration of common concerns.

The final theoretical point which Mies considers essential for a feminist theory of labor concerns the reduction or abolition of the division and distance between production and consumption. This, she proposes, is necessary to achieve "the sense of usefulness, necessity and purpose with regard to work and its products." Only understanding the entire material circuit of products from production to consumption can guarantee progress towards creating the kind of work she has described. Not surprisingly, this approach leads her to an embrace of considerable community and regional self-sufficiency.

In this last point and in her focus on mothering and on subsistence agriculture, Mies seems very much a part of the "small is beautiful" movement which tends to valorize small scale, autonomous, traditional agrarian communities and the immediacy of social relations, i.e., the refusal of mediation —especially of the market, of capitalist managers and of the state. These last characteristics have also been prominent in the "workers autonomy" movement out of which the Marxist theory of class composition and constitution have grown. The points of reference for the latter have tended to be urban and large scale rather than rural and small scale but appreciation of autonomy and the refusal of mediation are similar.

Mies' critique of the computer which contrasts with the more positive Marxist assessment of its role in the development of subjectivity would seem to derive in part from this difference in scale as well as from the historical gender specificity of computer use. There is no doubt that women have been more obviously exploited by computers than men and more alienated from them.[54] The scale of their interaction has tended to be limited to woman-machine (e.g., secretarial word processing and data entry) where part of the machine's capability (i.e., the ability to keep track of key-strokes per minute) is being used to impose an increased, indeed crippling, intensity of labor or where women have been put to work assembling computers also in crippling fashion (e.g., soldering connections under a microscope). Whereas men have been more likely to have been involved in the very collective and interactive design of computers or their utilization as tools in research and vehicles of the kind of play and communication mentioned above. It is only recently that some women have begun to reverse their relations to such machines and to incorporate them into their own autonomous struggles. For example, feminist computer networks explicitly for the circulation of experience and political discussion have been proliferating, e.g., Femecon-L, Wmst-L, Gender, Systers. Both kinds of relationships between women and computers must be taken into account. Changes in women's assessments of the appropriability of such technology as well as the

[53] Guattari and Negri, op.cit., p. 44 of the English edition.

[54] In the workshop on computer networks in the circulation of struggles, held as part of the "International Meeting" of some 2,000 grassroots activists in Venice in June 1991, the vast majority of partipants were men. They noted the absense of women but had little of use to say about it.

ways in which such appropriation occurs are developments which will change the texture of the "socialized worker" and need to be taken into account if the concept is to help us and have meaning.

To sum up, close examination of Mies' "feminist" theory of labor reveals enormous overlap with Marxist theory rather than the dramatic opposition which she asserts to have established. If there is any point where her analysis goes beyond Marxist theory to articulate feminist projects of self-reconstruction, it would seem to be in her desire to reconceptualize the relationship between humans and the rest of nature —for which she seems to feel the woman-nature nexus is key. In this desire, which she shares with a variety of other eco-feminists, there is an attempt to overcome the human/active-subject — nature/passive-object dichotomy which Marx takes over from Hegel and shares with most of the enlightenment.[55] A feminist theory of labor, as she says elsewhere, must "replace the predatory economic relationship of Man to 'nature' by a cooperative [or reciprocal] one".[56] Such attempts to rethink the human-nature relationship are extremely interesting and have been one of the most thought provoking aspects of both feminist and environmental movements. Unfortunately, neither in her book nor in the article just cited is there any substance offered for the meaning of a "cooperative [or reciprocal]" relationship beyond a lack of exploitation. Both terms "cooperative" and "reciprocal" imply the existence of different beings who come together and act together in mutually beneficial ways. But in what sense can we say non-human nature *acts*? In Hegel and Marx humans are thought to be differentiated from other life forms by having a "will". In chapter 13 of Volume I of *Capital*, Marx analyzes the meaning of "cooperation" in the context of human work but does not extend the concept to the relationship between humans and the rest of nature. Today many persons, including scientists as well as animal rights activists and ecologists, are willing to identify a greater or lesser "will" in other kinds of life. But what does "cooperation" mean in such an interspecial context? How do humans "cooperate" with great apes, with whales, with dogs and cats, with rats and mice? And beyond animals there is the issue of the whole ecosystem of animals, plants, rivers, winds, rocks and oceans. Many ecologists have thought about what "less exploitative" relations between humans and their environment might mean. Perhaps more of this might be brought to bear in our collective efforts to reconceptualize and to change the nature of work.

Moreover, I would argue that we should question the very concept of "work" or "labor" itself and not just the adjectives we attach to it. "Work" is an abstraction from a wide variety of concrete activities —an abstraction that only makes sense in a capitalist world of commodity production. Capitalism, by its very nature, turns all human activity into the "production" of objects as its fundamental mechanism of social control. Part of the processes of self-valorization through which we liberate ourselves from such a world would seem to involve reconcretization of activities we now call work —a new "embedding", to use Polanyi's term, within new contexts of meaning and social relationships. Growing food, for example, instead of being just one more form of capitalist work through which workers and nature are exploited and

[55] This orientation of Marx's seems to have been constant in his work, from the early *1844 Manuscripts* to the later volumes of *Capital* — compare his dicussion in "Estranged Labor" where the human works on passive nature to give it life by incorporating it into the human world and that in chapter 7 of Volume I on the "labor process" where the three elements are human labor, tools and raw materials, with the latter treated as inert and passive.

[56] See her interview with Ariel Sallah, "Patriarchy & Progress: A Critique of Technological Domination", *The Fifth Estate*, Vol. 26, No. 3, Issue 338, Winter 1992, pp. 8-9, 17.

a commodity is produced, can be one element in a social pattern of non-exploitative human interaction and meaning as well as a collective human interaction with the rest of nature, e.g., part of a (cooperative?) metabolic process regenerating a complex ecosystem within which humans situate themselves as participating moments. Mothering, for example, instead of being the work of producing labor power can be one kind of mutually supportive and reinforcing relationship between the young and the old and between the old themselves —for there is no a priori reason to conceive of "mothering" as limited to the activities of an individual mother.

In her research and activism, Mies has had considerable experience both in India and in Germany. She might add substance to her attempts to redefine work by analysing the new meanings and new social relationships crafted by women in India and Germany as part of their struggles to create better lives. Mies' evocations of their lives suggests the existence of such creativity, but she doesn't tell us enough to reveal what it has generated that transforms their activities into something richer than the concept of work in Marxist theory.

Despite the limitations of Mies' analysis, however, I think that her work, as well as that of others who have sought ways out of the alienation's of capitalist labor, deserve the closest attention from all of us interested in the transcendence of capitalism. Ultimately, it is only amongst such creative efforts that paths forward can be found.

Conclusion

What all of the forgoing suggests, it seems to me, is that the ability to understand emerging possibilities of liberation through attention to the newest forms of "class" recomposition and of collective constitution (beyond class) requires the closest study of the diverse directions different subjectivities may pursue and theoretico-political interaction among them over their different ideas and projects. Only such a politics of alliance can minimize the possibilities for capital to divide and conquer by accentuating antagonisms (e.g., aggravating gender, racist or ethnic divisions). Only such a politics can make it possible for the constitution of Marxist categories to keep up with the developments of our struggles and for us to explore the limits of their ability to grasp the emergence of new ways of social being.

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History and 'Open Marxism' A Reply to John Holloway

Heide Gerstenberger

Editorial Note: This article is a reply to the review by John Holloway of Heide Gerstenberger's book *Die subjektlose Gewalt: Theorie der Entstehung bürgerlicher Staatsgewalt*, published as "Open Marxism, History and Class Struggle" in *Common Sense* no. 13. A theoretical summary of Gerstenberger's approach can be found in *Open Marxism*, Vol. 1, edited by Bonefeld, Gunn and Psychopedis, Pltuo Press, London 1992.

I expected a number of objections to my theoretical approach. From the Marxist side I expected: extreme culturalism, historicism, politicist analysis, false conception of class. I find three of them in John Holloway's contribution. The first is missing. It is omitted because the author undertook the quite incomprehensible effort of divesting a very extensive concrete analysis of every element of historical concreteness in order to seek thereunder the naked frame of a history of the forms of exploitation. Whatever clashes with this perspective is not even perceived as a theoretical provocation, but simply left out of view. Just to mention one example, I presented the structural precondition for the specific English transformation from the Ancien Regime to bourgeois society not just in terms of the long period of economic dominance by families of the high aristocracy but also - among other explanatory structural elements which need not be mentioned here - the political culture of protestantism. The English form of the reformation very soon provoked the creation of a generalised (religious-) political public sphere, and this became not only a structural precondition for the changes in the forms of domination in the *Ancien Regime* of the 17th century, but was never fully eliminated even with the stabilisation of estate domination in the 18th century and could therefore in the nineteenth century become a precondition for the fact that bourgeois forms of political organisation could be achieved by means of constantly renewed public campaigns. In considering the possibility of achieving structural revolution by reform, reference to the (religious-) political public sphere is just as important as the material position of the high aristocracy. That is a theoretical conception which I hope will be taken up in Marxist theoretical debate as the challenge which I intend it to be.

Many provocations of this sort could be mentioned. Especially the conclusion of the whole analysis that the equation of capitalist with bourgeois state power should be seen as the expression of a theoretically sterile economism. Bourgeois state power,

in my argument, is a *special* form of capitalist state power. It arose when societies of the *Ancien Regime* were revolutionised to become bourgeois-capitalist societies. In the societies of the *Ancien Regime*, domination was largely secularised in spite (and also because) of the continuing religious conflicts, social relations were already reified to a considerable degree and the concept of individuality had already been extensively realised since the reformation, through opposition to established forms of religious practice. There were also struggles to concretise ideas about the equality of all people in protest against personal forms of domination. These conflicts brought about what William Sewell Jr. has called a stable "transformation of discourse". By shaping the way in which people in bourgeois society experienced and reflected upon their own situation, they contributed to the process of the constitution of interests. The bourgeois revolution - and not some sort of functional requirements of capitalist production - constituted the demands for equality in bourgeois societies and also the specific contents of those demands. Because the organisational forms of state power, legal systems, administrative rules and much of the content of specific historically constituted discourses were later taken over into other capitalistically produced countries, most of us have fallen into the error of thinking that these structural features were to be explained by the general structures of capitalist production, without thinking that not only the development of political relations, but also that of the capital relation, is subject to different conditions if it proceeds from a social practice into which secularisation, individualisation, reification and the scientific standpoint have entered only with the penetration of capitalist forms of production. In spite of all the differences that distinguish bourgoeis states from one another, I therefore suggest this term to characterise the specific conditions of development which prevailed and prevail where capitalist-bourgeois state power arose from the revolutionising of a society of the *Ancien Regime.*

Enough of the omitted objections. In what follows the criticisms which John Holloway did formulate will be discussed. This will make clearer the differences in our theoretical conceptions and in our strategies for theory-formation. First, however, I will try to clear out of the way a point of conflict that I consider to be a simple misunderstanding.

Holloway claims that I make a distinction between contradiction and conflict, and that I see as class struggle only the resistance and the demands that appear openly. That is a mistake. The difference between us is rather that I maintain that the contradiction in each historical epoch is different. That is why in my analysis class struggle does not appear in feudalism or the *Ancien Regime*, because the contradiction consisted of the opposition between the owners of personal domination and those who were subjected to the exercise of their domination. Reports of attempted domination strategies which had to be modified or which were quite unsuccessful and of avoidances of the exercise of personal domination occur throughout the historical analysis. As far as the unity of contradiction and conflict is concerned, we are also in complete agreement that it is not only emphatic historical events[1] that are to be seen as expressions of conflict but also, and much more, those forms of action that were so much a part of regular practice that they had almost become part of the flesh and blood of people. When I say that in capitalist societies class structures made their appearance as such, I am merely pointing to the fact that they were liberated from the total complex of domination, because production and appropriation are organised in separate spheres, that

[1] I refer here to the everyday use of the term - frequently encountered also in historical analyses - of which Paul Veyne says that it puts 'historical event' on the same footing as a guitar or a soup spoon (1990, 40).

economic life therefore - to speak with Karl Polanyi - was released from the social relations in which it was previously 'embedded' (1944/1975, 75). This formulation has nothing to do with a reduction of class struggle to 'open class struggle'.

The argument that there was a revolutionary difference in the conditions of social dynamics is bound up with the stress on the separation of the economy (and of politics) from the total complex of the social practice of domination. Holloway denies this difference. In his view the working out of the class contradiction is determinant not only for the development of capitalism[2] but also for the 'societies' which preceded capitalism historically. Indeed I too - that should be obvious - tried for a long time to explain the dynamic of the development of domination in the kingdoms I was examining comparatively in terms of the unfolding of the contradiction of feudal relations of exploitation. However, this interpretation does not stand up to historical analysis. If, following Holloway's demands, we wanted to explain the "dramatic regional differences" in economic development (of which Robert Brenner rightly speaks) in terms of the class struggle which developed at the end of the middle ages as a reaction to the attempts by feudal lords to defend and, where possible, to extend their power of exploitation, then we would have to suppose that in some areas of Europe the peasants took less seriously than in others the 'routine' struggle (as John Holloway puts it) to ensure that the corn which they needed to feed their children was not defined as 'surplus' product. Such differences can, however, be explained quite well - let the reality of the world be blamed - if we take into account that in the different regions of Europe the lords disposed, for various reasons, of means of domination which differed in their extent and in their form, and that these differences shaped decisively the chances of success of the peasant strategies. This is an answer which I was not looking for. Nevertheless I now think it is unavoidable. The same is true of the observation, which John Holloway cites critically, that the structural significance of the practical lives of individuals in the European middle ages and in the early modern period is greater, the more extensive their personal power. That is said not from a political viewpoint which retrospectively deprives peasants and artisans, and even more their wives, of the significance of their lives, but the result of a historical analysis in the course of which it became increasingly clear that the long-term conditions of the practical lives of people subjected to personal domination were established through conflicts between lords, on the outcome of which they had only a very indirect influence.

Holloway explains such results as the expression of a functionalism to which, he claims, I have fallen prey - in spite of my declared intentions. Indeed, for me, the critique of the structural-functionalist explanatory models of modernisation theory or of Marxist origin does not lead to a concept of the total openness of social practice[3]. By virtue of the fact that by social practice at any given time one of the existing historical possibilities is realised and others are thereby excluded, the possibilities of future social practice are extended *and* limited. I refer to such shaping (and limiting) of present social practice by earlier practice when I use the term 'structure'. The idea that social practice at any given time can overcome all the results of previous social practice I consider to be political romanticism.

[2] The analytical range of this approach for established capitalist societies can not be discussed here. It is clear, however, that a concept of hidden class struggle completely immunised against empirical evidence is not a satisfactory basis for analytical work.

[3] In my book I refer positively in this context to the distinction made by Philip Abrams betwen hard and soft functionalism (Abrams 1982, 152).

Class struggle is seen by Holloway not only as being completely open but also as supra-historically determining and at the same time hidden. His is a concept of class which is immune to empirical evidence. It not only saves historians the trouble of struggling with the sources but also denies their results the quality of an argument. To be precise, it construes the historical dynamic as the unfolding of a Marxist system of categories.

What Holloway calls class contradiction exists, in my opinion, in feudalism and in the *Ancien Regime* only as a retro-projection of capitalist class relations upon those relations of personal domination in which direct exploitation took place. This 'scientific operation' uncovers what, in order to distinguish them from class relations, I call by the unlovely term of 'class-like relations', a contradiction between the production and the appropriation of the 'surplus' product. Such scientific operations can - and should! - serve to sift out the conditions of material reproduction *analytically* from the real historical context. This procedure is scientifically not only admissible but imperative, for it allows us to ascertain the material conditions of reproduction and thus to explain the material *effect* of certain generalised practices. In applying this procedure we must, however, be constantly aware that it is *not* appropriate for understanding the dynamic of the real historical process. The application of the concept of class implies not only the separation of economic life from the total complex of a living practice (including the striving to reach eternal salvation) subject to domination, but it also implies the achievement of economic rationalism. Even in capitalist societies, in which the competitive structure of the conditions of reproduction repeatedly imposes economically rational behaviour, it is a concept of only limited adequacy for understanding the real historical dynamic. If it is applied to societies in which lords often cared far less about the expansion of their wealth than about their honour, and in which, for centuries, people - often against all 'economic reason' - strove to be respected as free, then false inferences are inevitable. That even peasants, who demanded for themselves and for their children the status of free people, would have preferred to eat more rather than less meat is obvious. However, since the conditions of their life and their understanding of their place in the world was to a great degree determined by the practice of personal domination, we must assume that their specific motivations for action opened on to a social practice which can not be adequately grasped with the concept of class analysis. Moreover, this concept implies a *real* generalisation of those material conditions of reproduction which are the result of the conflicts over the determination of the 'surplus product'. Their development presupposes the mediation of such conditions of reproduction through market processes. Even in the *Ancien Regime* - even though the privileges of lordship increasingly became a commodity - that was not the case. On the other hand, there developed in the *Ancien Regime* a real generalisation of certain aspects of material repoduction in so far as as princes and kings succeeded in imposing their fiscal power. The contradiction between appropriation and production which this implied led to resistance. I maintain that its specific dynamic can not to be understood through the use of a historically unspecific concept of class struggle. In short: the theoretical recourse suggested by Holloway to a supra-historical, development-determining and yet hidden effect of the class contradiction means turning one's back on the attempt to understand history from the real social practice of people.

The criticism advanced by John Holloway is politically grounded. He measures theoretical concepts by their relevance for the struggles of oppositional movements. That is why his criticism is directed against the theoretical bases of the pessimistic

conclusions which he feels he has to draw from my analysis. I will not enter into dispute with him about these conclusions, but, as far as the strategy of theorisation is concerned, we are very far apart. In the Marxist tradition both exist: a tendency to be overpowered by the demands of the political struggle and - especially in recent times - a tendency to an academisation far removed from practice. John Holloway takes the side of the first against the second. That does not mean that he represents a conception of decreed 'theory', but the demands of theorisation result for him from the command to contribute theoretically to oppositional movements to the best of one's ability. That is a position which I respect for its motivation but do not share. I do not see the contribution that social science can make to political practice in terms of a conception - however sympathetic - of a partisan science[4], but rather I regard it as our duty constantly to test the theoretical concepts, by means of which we explain social relations, against the historical material and to defend the results which we arrive at in this manner, if necessary even against our very best political friends.

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Translated by John Holloway

[4] For those who value such indications: the different strategies of theorisation can all claim authority from Marx. The radical critique of partisan science is in *Theories of Surplus Value*, Part II, page 119 (Lawrence & Wishart, 1969).

Money and Crisis: Marx as Correspondent of the New York Daily Tribune, 1856-57 (Part 2)

Sergio Bologna

Editorial Note: This is the second part of Bologna's 1973 work. The first part appeared in *Common Sense* No. 13. This translation is taken from a forthcoming volume to be published by Red Notes: *Selected Writings of Sergio Bologna*. The footnotes for this article will be included in that publication. For further details, write to Red Notes, BP15, 2a St Paul's Road, London N1.

Between the end of October and the start of December 1856, Marx wrote four articles in the *New Yrok Daily Tribune* devoted to the world crisis. In the first, on 27 October, we find ourselves in the midst of a financial panic; once again the crisis was due to a "disproportion between the disposable capital and the vastness of the industrial, commercial and speculative enterprises"; it was not due to a scarcity of the circulating medium, to a crisis of money as a means of payment, but to a crisis in the relation between money and capital, between rates of accumulation and the system of exchange. The raising of interest rates did nothing to stop the outflow of gold; the fact that the capital markets of the various countries were closely connected stood in the way of measures aimed at isolating the crisis; the crisis was general. "The present crisis in Europe is complicated by the fact that a drain of bullion – the common harbinger of commercial disasters - is interwoven with a depreciation of gold." Marx analyses the international monetary system with extreme precision, examining the standards of value present in the various countries (for example, those in which gold was the standard, those where silver was the standard, and those where bimetallism existed) and the ways in which the workings of these standards, far from making crises less communicable, actually multiplied their effects. Between 1848 and 1855, £105 million in gold flowed onto the market, as a result of the development of goldfields in California, Australia, and Russia. Having taken into account that a large part of this was used for international payments, for the replenishment of bank reserves, and for articles of luxury, it was reckoned that this left £53 million, of which only part was used to replace silver in America and in France. In reality the outflows of silver from France and England were much higher, and this was explained by the strong preference of Italian and Levantine traders for silver, as well as by an accumulation of silver reserves by the Arabs. But even this is only a partial explanation. The basic reason was to be sought in trade relations with China and India. "Since the beginning of the seventeenth century, Asia, and especially China

and India, have never ceased to exercise an important influence on the bullion markets of Europe and America," as Marx notes in his next article, on 1 November. Prior to the discoveries of gold in California, the flow of metal coming from America was balanced by payments to Asia, but the crisis in the opium trade with India, due to the Chinese rebellion, had produced an impressive drive towards hoarding, which, following on the discovery of gold in California, was principally in silver. At that point India too wanted to be paid in silver, which provoked an outflow of silver from Europe, and at the same time its price rose in relation to gold. This was the framework within which the European commercial crisis developed. It was precisely for this reason that "this Chinese revolution is destined to exercise a far greater influence upon Europe than all the Russian wars, Italian manifestos and secret societies of that Continent."

As I noted above, the whole analysis of the imperialist wars in Persia, India and China – the other main topic of the articles for the *NYDT* – was related back to the crisis in Europe, to revolution in the metropolis. What constituted the interlocking fabric of capitalist relations between America, Asia and Europe was the monetary system; it not only represented the surface appearance of underlying production relations, but was also the basic unifying factor of the system. Far from being a fetish, the monetary system was an extremely concrete and rigid fact of life. Its unity integrated countries with very different levels of capitalist development, and thus the system's sensitivity to the shock waves of crises was far greater. The rates of expansion of the monetary system were faster than those of the spread of the factory system. As a result, the pace of capitalism was accelerated. The monetary system was the world market in its concrete materiality. Without the monetary system it would have been unthinkable for the Chinese insurrection to have had such immediate knock-on effects in the English factories. Seen within the perspective of the revolution from above, the monetary system is the vector, the communicating medium of proletarian internationalism.

Thus the group of articles on financial crisis and the group on colonial undertakings no longer appear as separate entities, but as complementary. Imperialism is the false name under which the concept of world market is hidden. Anti-colonial insurrections aggravate the crisis and further undermine the stability of the capitalist system. Marx's low opinion of the European conspiratorial groups derives from their inability to have any effect at the real levels, on the effective mechanisms of the world market, on the power of capitalism. Marx had already concluded his preceding article with a forecast that there would be a government crisis in France in the near future as a result of the financial crisis. It was precisely the days of uncertainty following Orsini's *attentat* that led him to understand that, given the inadequacy of the conspiratorial groups, the mere spontaneity of the masses, even in a situation already rendered precarious by the crisis, was not sufficient to produce subversive results. The power of the regime, the power of capital, despite the individualist subjectivism of the conspirators, was too strong, stable and militarily organised to be able to be shaken by a simple movement of popular indignation. The spontaneity of the Parisian masses needed a party that was equally organised, and, more particularly, furnished with a theory which understood fundamentally that "revolution from above" which the new capitalist institutions were bringing about. Only one thing was certain: "Not only France, but all Europe, is fully convinced that the fate of what is called the Bonapartist dynasty, as well as the present state of European society, is suspended on the issue of the commercial crisis (of which Paris seems now to be witnessing the

beginning)."

In the third of this group of articles, published in the *NYDT* on 22 November 1856, Marx thus returns doggedly to his analysis of the French crisis. "The stringent measures taken by the Bank of France, with a view to prevent, or at least to delay, the suspension of cash payments, have begun to tell severely on the industrial and commercial classes. Indeed, there is now raging a regular war between the *bona fide* commerce and industry, the speculative joint-stock companies already at work, and the newly-hatched schemes about to be established, all of them struggling to carry off the floating capital of the country. The inevitable result of such a struggle must be the rise of interest, the fall of profits in all departments of industry and the depreciation of all sorts of securities, even if there existed no Bank of France, nor any drain of bullion. That, apart from all foreign influences, this pressure on the disposable capital of France must go on increasing, a glance at the development of the French railway system sufficiently demonstrates."

Was it the case that in this ruthless competition to acquire capital Marx had perhaps perceived one of the basic reasons for the conflict between the Rothschilds and the Péreires, without actually saying as much? Adopting an opposite viewpoint to that of his earlier articles, Marx analyses the destructive function of the *Crédit Mobilier*. Not only, in this very difficult conjuncture, was the *Crédit* going to enormous lengths to open new initiatives abroad (with, we might add, the consensus of the Rothschilds) but what was becoming increasingly apparent was "its tendency to fix capital, not to mobilise it. What it mobilises is only the titles of property. The shares of the companies started by it are, indeed, of a purely floating nature, but the capital which they represent is sunk. The whole mystery of the *Crédit Mobilier* is to allure capital into industrial enterprises, where it is sunk, in order to speculate on the sale of the shares created to represent that capital."

Here, in a nutshell, is a whole vision of the excess of immobile capital, of excess of investment, of which speculation is the form but not the substance, and to this vision we should add the view which Marx was to develop in the *Grundrisse* and in *Towards a Critique*, regarding the function of money within crises. Within general crises, money is no longer required as a means of payment or as a measure; it is required as a materialisation of abstract wealth, in its material substance as a precious metal. This return to hoarding, this re-emergence of economic primitivism, highlights brusquely the contradictory nature of the system founded on exchange values. What appears is precisely a halt to circulation, the disappearance of fluid capital, the temporary disappearance of money as an agent of exchange. Fixed capital, the immobile part of capital, then presents itself as a synonym of crisis, of paralysis and of disaggregation of the process. In fact capital no longer appears as a process, because the moments of which that process are composed are violently isolated from each other and separated. The stages of development in which the organic composition of capital increases, in which capital becomes disproportionately "fixed", are the periods that are forerunners of crisis, of paralysis of the process, of a halt to circulation. Contrary to the name which it carried, the *Crédit Mobilier* was the greatest source of capital "fixation", of increase in the organic composition of capital; this, therefore – and not speculation – was its decisive function in relation to crisis; speculation is only the form in which the split between the process of production and circulation presents itself.

However, Marx does not stop here; the list of the forms in which crisis presents itself

needs to be fleshed out, because these forms condition the phenomena of popular reaction to the crisis. The textile industries in Lyons and the South of France were being put on short time, or even closing, as a result of the rising prices of raw materials: "The consequences are increased suffering and discontent among the workers - especially at Lyons and in the south of France - where a degree of exasperation prevails, only to be compared with that which attended the crisis of 1847.

Here one should also add the very bad harvest, as a result of floods, which obliged France, a traditional exporter of grain, to import. However, the root cause of the crisis was the backwardness of French agriculture, which was now overburdened with taxation, and was also suffering shortages of labour-power: "What the *Crédit Mobilier* offered to the middle and higher classes, the Imperial subscription loans did for the peasantry." These moneys tossed into the maw of speculation capital which could have served to bring about improvements in the agricultural sector. Bonaparte now no longer appeared as the candidate of the peasantry in the eyes of the masses of the French countryside.

The article ends with a series of observations on popular discontent in Paris over the shortage of housing, increased prices, the crisis of small traders, etc.

On 6 December, the final article of the four pieces on crisis appeared: "...indeed, the chronic character assumed by the existing financial crisis only forebodes for it a more violent and destructive end. The longer the crisis lasts, the worse the ultimate reckoning. Europe is now like a man on the verge of bankruptcy, forced to continue at once all the enterprises which have ruined him, and all the desperate expedients by which he hopes to put off and to prevent the last dread crash."

The suggestions by both the English and the Bonapartist official press, claiming that the most acute phase of the crisis was now over, were seen by Marx as pure government propaganda, as false information designed to check the panic: the company which was building the big central railway line through France was obliged to sack 500 white collar workers and 15,000 labourers on the Mulhouse section; there were an enormous number of bankruptcies in France: "It is evident that the French differ in this respect from the Roman Empire – since the one feared death from the advance of the barbarians while the other fears it from the retreat of the stockjobbers."

The "chronic" character of the crisis had been the subject of observations by Engels in a letter to Marx on 17 November 1856. In particular he highlighted the importance of the fixing of floating capitals. And he concluded: "Never again, perhaps, will the revolution find such a fine *tabula rasa* as now. All socialist dodges exhausted, the compulsory employment of labour anticipated and exploded six years since, no opportunity for new experiments or slogans." We find this same optimism, together with an identical assessment of the political situation and an identical evaluation of tendencies, in Marx's articles for the *NYDT*.

These articles brought to a close a year which had been very difficult, but also extremely important in Marx's life. A few days before Christmas he again wrote to Engels: "You would oblige me greatly if you could send me the money before the week is out... If I'm late with the first payment to my landlord, I shall be entirely

discrédité." His everday problems were still unresolved, but he had re-found the overall meaning of his practice as a militant and of his anger as a theoretician. In the lost 1851 manuscript of *Das vollendete Geldsystem*, Marx had written:

"What every single individual possesses in money is a generic possibility of exchange, through which he can establish, at his pleasure and in his full rights, his participation in social products. Each individual possesses social power in his pocket in the form of a thing. Rob the thing of this social power and you must give it to persons to exercise over persons. Thus, without money, there is no possibility of industrial development. The links must be organised on a political basis, or a religious basis, etc, until the point when the power of money becomes the *nexus rerum et hominum*."

Money thus becomes the incarnation of the capitalist mode of production, and embodies a break with bourgeois social structures based on tradition, caste, religion, clan and feuds between conflicting interests. And for as long as conflictual elements such as these continue to have the upper hand (in other words for as long as capitalist society is weighed down by superstructural elements of pre-capitalist society, or of a capitalist society which is not yet fully developed – in short, for as long as the unity of the bourgeoisie is not yet fully realised), there is no possibility of a transition to large-scale industry. Money represents a universal terrain within which all subjects are reduced to subjects of exchange, and is also the terrain in which the unity of the bourgeois class and its total availability for the historic mission of capital is grounded. However, all this clashed with Proudhon's idea that even within a society that was regulated by exchange values, "right" could be established. As production relations could be established on an alternative basis once certain rights had been sanctioned. Money, for Marx, is the abolition of "right" as a social norm. By destroying all political ties and by making them secondary and accessory, money has a power which no right, no positive norm, can touch. This unifying function of money is the theme that Marx takes up again in 1856, when he examines the role of the financial bourgeoisie under the Bonaparte regime; no longer the conflicts of the various fractions and factions of the bourgeoisie, as in *The Class Struggle in France* etc, but the unity of the bourgeois class around money and the elimination of all artifical party subdivisions on the part of Napoleon's despotism. Marx sheds no tears for the abolition of rights of association; the French parties of the pre-Bonapartist epoch were not, for him, emblematic of capital's democracy, but represented rather the web of divisions founded on tradition. Only the United States represent for Marx a fully developed society, the democracy of which he speaks in the *Grundrisse*, particularly in the pages devoted to Cary. "In money relations, in the system of developed exchange – and this appearance corrupts democracy – the links of personal dependence, differences of blood, of education etc, are in effect blown aside, swept away... and individuals seem to enter into a free and independent reciprocal contact."

However, highlighting this aspect in 1856 would have been mere apologetics for capital (albeit with the weapons of the critique of political economy), a mere description of the given level of things, if, at the same time as his identification of the new industrial society, Marx had not defined capital as everlasting contradiction and as crisis - and thus as a limitation on itself, and an obstacle to the very roots of its existence. When it comes to specific details too, Marx's point of reference is his critique of socialism: as we know, he was interested in precious metals, because, as he was to say in the *Grundrisse*, "The study of precious metals as subjects of the money

relations, as incarnations of the latter, is therefore by no means a matter lying outside the realm of political economy, as Proudhon believes."

We now arrive at 1857, the crucial year in which the theoretical programme of revolutionary workers was finally to take shape. Certainly the crisis of that year was not, for Marx, purely a terrain for experimenting with hypotheses; he lived it in the conviction of an imminent and generalised resurgence of the revolutionary process. In 1848 it had been *The Communist Manifesto*; in 1857 the *Grundrisse*. But since things turned out differently and this expectation was promptly undermined, nowadays we tend to read these materials as preparatory soundings for a more systematic work in the future.

The year opens with a letter to Engels, on 10 January 1857: "Proudhon is in the process of bringing out an 'economic bible' in Paris. *Destruam et aedificabo*. The first part, or so he says, was set forth in the *Philosophie de la misère*. The second he is about to 'reveal'. I have seen a recent piece by one of Proudhon's disciples: *De la Réforme des banques* by Alfred Darimon, 1856."

Destruam et aedificabo – I shall destroy in order to rebuild. But in the event there would be little to destroy. What Marx refers to here as an "economic bible" was none other than the pamphlet *The Manual of a Stock Exchange Speculator* which Proudhon published in order to document, with all his polemical qualities as a moralist, the bad habits of the world of French finance. A pamphlet, precisely, and a success within its own terms, although its lack of theoretical ambitions made it an unsuitable target for a reconstructional critique. In the event, Marx found it more logical to set his sights on the modest Darimon. However, the fact that Proudhon laid such emphasis on the evils of speculation led Marx, in the articles on crisis which we shall be examining, to frame them as a critique of the critics of speculation – in other words he aimed to show that speculation was a superficial, marginal and formal aspect, compared to the real mechanisms of crisis. It also led him to compete with Proudhon in providing technical explanations of Stock Exchange matters, and of the world of finance in general.

In the introduction to the third edition of his pamphlet in December 1856 (the first two had been published anonymously), Proudhon had written that speculation represented the fourth among the general principles of wealth – after labour, capital and trade; it "creates from nothing", it "is the essential faculty of economy"; it "makes laws", while labour, capital and trade "carry them out". "Politics," Proudhon adds, "is a variety of speculation, and as such a variety of production." But while speculation has this power of inventiveness, it is at the same time also a gamble and a search for the "easy life"; as such it "is the art of getting rich without work, without capital, without trade, and without genius, the secret of appropriating to oneself public funds or private funds without giving anything equivalent in exchange; it is the cancer of production, the plague of society and of states." The Stock Exchange is portrayed as the temple of speculation: "It comes before education, the academy, the theatre, political assemblies, congress, before the army, before justice and the church... It is there that our modern reformers are going to have to go in order to instruct themselves, and to learn their trade as revolutionaries..." This was not simply a question of literary emphasis; Proudhon was here mistaking the form for the substance, even if his analysis of Stock Exchange techniques and of the *modus operandi* of the financial principles (particularly the Bank of France and the *Crédit*

Mobilier) was pursued with technical skill and penetrating lucidity.

The year that had just begun brought with it the usual difficulties, but now Marx's problems were even more acute. On 20 January 1857 he wrote to Engels: "Dear Engels, I am thoroughly down on my luck. For approximately three weeks now, Dana is sending me the daily *Tribune*, obviously with the intention of only showing me that they no longer print anything of mine. The *Tribune*, in exceedingly poor and insipid leaders, is moreover adopting a view almost diametrically opposed to all that I write [...] So I am completely stuck in the sand, in a house on which I have used my small amounts of money and wherein it is impossible to piss through from day to day, as in Dean Street, without prospects and with a growing family. I absolutely don't know where to begin, and am in fact in a more desperate situation than I was five years ago. I believed I had already swallowed the quintessence of shit. *Mais non.* Moreover, the worst of it is that the crisis is not temporary. I don't know how I can disentangle myself from it." This bitter letter arrived "like a bolt from the blue" for Engels. The main problem was Marx's relations with the *NYDT*. It looked as if they were wanting to force Marx to take the initiative of breaking off relations. Engels advised caution, and at the same time sent him five pounds. ("I only wish you had told me about the business a fortnight earlier. For my Christmas present my old man gave me the money to buy a horse, and, as there was a good one going, I bought it last week.") In his reply, on 23 January 1857, Marx writes: "The *Tribune* probably imagines that, now they have turned me out, I shall resign myself to abandoning the American camp altogether. The prospect of their 'military' and 'financial' monopoly going over to another paper is hardly likely to please them. Accordingly I have today sent them a 'financial' piece [...] I shall postpone any outright rupture until I find out whether I can fix anything up elsewhere in New York. If I cannot, and the *Tribune*, for its part, does not change its attitude, then the break will have to be made, of course. But in a sordid contest like this I believe that it is important to gain time."

On more than one occasion in his letters during these months Marx formulates the suspicion that the behaviour of the editors of the *New York Daily Tribune* was influenced by the hand of the Russian embassy in Washington, and that Russian agents had directly contributed to his being forced out. However these suspicions, instead of leading him to give up, drove him to persevere. Finally, in a letter of 24 March 1857, he announces that he has arrived at an agreement with the *Tribune*: he will be paid for one article per week, whether or not it is published; he might send a second article at his own risk, but would be paid for it only in the event of publication: "Thus they are in effect cutting me down by one half. However, I shall agree to it, and must agree to it. Also, if things in England take the course I think they will, it won't be long before my income reaches its former level again."

What were the new facts of the English political scene? Prime Minister Palmerston was preparing to carry out a Bonaparte-style operation; in practice, a coalition cabinet within which his personal dictatorship would be assured.

Marx's attention shifts from France to England, and this was not solely because of the similarity in the political conditions of the two countries – the gradual undermining of parliamentary representation and the party system, and the shift from a period of transition to the phase of heavy industry, of the unified and centralised despotism of capitalism. His shift of focus was particularly due to the fact that the English situation allowed him to view the crisis from a different perspective, from within a different

system of productive forces. The fact that Palmerston's government no longer enjoyed a majority in Parliament, and the decision to hold elections, gave Marx a chance to examine the possibilities of a working-class response which might produce revolutionary results.

On more than one occasion in his letters to Engels he had stated that the big difference with the crisis of 1847-48 would be that England would also be drawn into the revolutionary upheaval, that the English would "no longer be able to stand at the window", that the "balanced English production" would itself be hit by a crisis of overproduction. The closeness of his relationship with Engels becomes crucial; what Marx wants to follow in precise detail is the development of the crisis in the cotton districts, of which Manchester was the capital, in the heart of the great capitalist factory. And it is with a theoretician's eagerness and curiosity that he follows the battle between the candidates supporting Palmerston and those of the old free trade league for the abolition of grain tariffs. In appearance it was a struggle between, on the one hand, the entrepreneurial class which had initiated the industrial lift-off and which had been instrumental in the historical break with the agrarian bourgeoisie, and, on the other, the government of social capital, the forces representing the despotism of big industry. The defeat of the old free-traders precisely in the cotton districts which had been their stronghold was certainly not seen by Marx as a return to reaction; rather, he saw it as a confirmation of the leap forward that had been achieved by capital as a whole. Once again, the capitalism which he confronts in the year in which he writes the *Grundrisse* is not that of free-trade competition, of the Ricardian bourgeoisie and of the value of labour, but capital as an all-embracing social entity, as synthesis and governing of its own internal contradictions – the capital of relative surplus value, of big machinery, of urban ghettoes and of stagnation. Engels' letters on the electoral defeat of the likes of Cobden are enthusiastic:

"This time 'Philistia' was tremendously divided. The vast majority of the bourgeoisie, a small majority of the lower-middle class, against Bright and Gibson. Quakers and Catholics for Bright to a man; the Greeks likewise; the established Germans against him. A drunken anti-Bright man shouted: 'We won't have home policy, we want foreign policy.' What the rationale of the local elections more or less amounts to is: To hell with all questions of reform and class matters. After all, we philistines form the majority of voters, and that's that. The clamour against the aristocracy etc is tedious and produces no tangible result... We've got Free Trade and as much bourgeois social reform as we require. We're flourishing like mad, especially since Pam reduced war income tax. So let's all foregather on territory where we are all equal, and let's be Englishmen, John Bull, under the leadership of the Truly British Minister Pam. Such is the present mood of the majority of philistines."

Marx pursues the same arguments in his three articles on the English situation, published on 9, 25 and 31 March in the *NYDT*.

Palmerston's interventionist policy in China, in Persia, and with the Naples expedition, was carrying the country to disaster. The consumption of tea, sugar and other foodstuffs had dropped dramatically, while the consumption of alcohol had increased over the recent period and thousands of the unemployed were seeking refuge in the hospices. The big bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, weighed down by the war tax on income, were leaving the battle against taxes to be conducted by the petty bourgeoisie, which was particularly badly affected by the increase in prices. Spurred

by a vote of no confidence in the government's policies in China, Palmerston dissolved Parliament and called elections. He was counting on the direct support of the big opium and tea merchants, but his electoral tactic was to follow Napoleon's model in building a political consensus with himself as the figurehead. In his article of 17 April 1857, Marx gives an exemplary interpretation of the conduct of the election. First, who were the contending parties? Palmerston, the diplomatic viscount, "the trumpet of national-glory... concentrates in his person all the usurpations of the British oligarchy... he deriving his strength from the decay of parties." Bright and Cobden, the parvenu demagogues, "the organ of industrial interests, representing all the vitality of the British middle classes... they owing their strength to the class struggle". The problem, thus, is to analyse the relationship between the industrial bourgeoisie and those who, at first sight, would have been its proper representatives. Why was it that they didn't vote for them, why was it that they preferred to throw themselves into the arms of an old Tory? Because what emerges – within the industrial bourgeoisie – is above all a fear of the workers; the defeat of Bright and Cobden functioned as an exorcism of the Jacobin spectre. The elections therefore expressed a class content, precisely in what had been left unstated. However, they had not defeated the working class; in fact, according to Marx, they had eliminated the main obstruction which stood in the way of the construction of a new working-class political party, or rather of a new revolutionary movement.

This judgement by Marx, apparently so paradoxical, has to be related back to the relations between the movement for parliamentary reform – in which the old leaders of the League had been active – and the last remaining exponents of the declining chartist movement. Both in Glasgow and in Leeds, both in the working-class areas of Scotland and in the old textile centres, the alliance between the old radicals and the old Chartists had been under way now for some time. Their common interests included universal suffrage, parliamentary reform, the revision of the Poor Laws, the abolition of the death penalty, and also solidarity with the Italian and Polish independence movements. Thus the times of the clashes between O'Connor and Cobden were long distant; bourgeois radicals had extended their hegemony over what remained of the political movement of the British workers. This may have been entirely insufficient to guarantee them a working-class representativity, but it was sufficient to frighten the bourgeoisie. Marx's judgement has to be read within the framework of his long-standing polemic on the absence of a party for the English working class: the elimination of Bright and Cobden and their Chartist allies removed any possible misunderstanding, any further possible mortgage on the development of the political movement of the English workers. It was not a question only of a proposed programme, a reformist line, to be fought against, but rather of an institutional alternative. How was one to explain the vote of no confidence which had brought down the Palmerston government and forced it to call new elections? It was due to the rebellion of the old parties – of which Cobden had made himself a spokesman – for the fact that Parliament had been shut out of all the major decisions on foreign policy (intervention in Persia and in China) taken by Palmerston. Thus if there was a positive side to Palmerston's victory it was the defeat of the representativity of the old political system, which had expressed divisions internal to the bourgeoisie which now no longer existed, partly because the interests of rentiers and industrialists were no longer in conflict, but more particularly because the big financial bourgeoisie, integrated with the old oligarchies, had unified the command of the social stratum which could lay claim to the work of others. This is why, in his article of 6 April, Marx went to some lengths to draw a parallel, at times forced, between Pam and

Bonaparte ("One saved France from a social crisis; the other wants to save England from a continental crisis.")

Marx's success in eliciting the class content from an election in which the principal issues being discussed were foreign policy and constitutional guarantees, eases the transition to two subsequent articles which were to appear as appendices to Engels' *The Condition of the Working Class in England.*

If one reads Kuczinsky, Landes and Hobsbawm, it seems to me that there is a remarkable homogeneity in the judgements which historians have given regarding the class composition of Britain at that time. Leaving aside the constant complaint that it is hard to find reliable or at least significant general data prior to 1860 (on employment levels, wages, contracts, intensity of work etc) the class situation appears to be characterised by a fairly precise composition: "The immense mass of semi-proletarians, the poor with occasional jobs, hired irregularly, homeworkers or helpers in small workshops, the world of poverty which comes out of the pages of Mayhew in *London Labour and the London Poor* in the period 1850-60... was for practical reasons beyond the reach of the trade unions."

It was within this proletarian context that the big factories of the industrial districts functioned, and within them we find once again a working-class composition that is very similar to that of the mass worker, particularly in the textile sector, where female employment levels tend to rise progressively (according to Kuczinsky from 635,000 in 1851 to 726,000 in 1871), or in the clothing sector (from 491,000 to 594,000 in 1871). Or in the new sectors, characterised by unskilled and general manual labour, such as rail transport, steel, or in others where the enormous increase in production and the absence of mechanisation to replace human labour carried employment to incredible levels, as among the coal miners, who, by the end of the century, would number more than a million. But in the "artisanal" sectors too, in a sense by long-standing tradition, there were situations and behaviours which were characteristic of the mass worker. In particular that of labour mobility from zones of crisis to zones of development. The spread, within the craft unions, of the travel chit and the migration indemnity, (which, as Hobsbawm notes in his essay, suggest a generalised practice and a mobility of labour far greater than one might suppose from looking at the statistics) went hand in hand with a greater awareness of the precariousness of work: "The experience of the decade 1840-50 brought about an important change: the spread of unemployment benefits. The reasons were clearly of non-financial origin, inasmuch as the cost of the migration indemnity per person was not high, and was generally paid by means of local collections and private hospitality rather than via established payments." This innovation, and others, "constitute a recognition of the industrial cycle; they mark an important phase in the education of the working class; it was the recognition of the fact that the capitalist economy was not something which could be avoided, but which had to be confronted with the understanding of the specific laws of its movement."

"Above" these worker-proletarian strata stood the "labour aristocracy", which, as has been noted, had an extremely strong bargaining power and exercised a particular hegemony over the construction of the trade union movement, although precisely in this period of transition it was in a clear minority. On the other hand, at the other extreme of working-class stratification, we still find a very large number of children (according to Kuczinsky as much as 10% of the industrial workforce) working in

sectors such as textiles which were characterised for the most part by small-to-medium-sized companies.

This is the period of transition from the "textile age" to the age dominated by coal and steel. In 1856 the Bessemer process was discovered, followed a few years later by the Siemens-Martin process. The new industrial regions and the new British factory-cities begin to grow up around the steel sector (Middlesborough); the percentage of factory workers in relation to the rest of the active population is higher in Scotland than in England. Clearly this leads to a big increase in the more skilled jobs, and to increased levels of skill, but there is also a relatively greater increase in the number of unskilled workers. In some sectors, in shipbuilding, for example, the transition from wooden hulls to metal hulls brings a massive destruction of artisanal trades. The other big phenomenon of the reduction of artisanal skills is found in the decline of domestic industry.

The crisis of 1857 took unemployment to the highest levels of the decade 1850-60, reaching almost 12% by 1858.

It is obvious why this state of dis-aggregation of the class led bourgeois historiography to call this Britain's "Golden Age". Following a classic Leninist schema, Kuczinsky maintains that the massive export of capital was the most significant fact in the strengthening of the bourgeoisie and the exploitation of the working class. At the same time, between 1849 and 1858, English overseas trade increased by 66%. Palmerston's policy of colonial intervention would be a logical corollary of this expansive force of British capital. But what is the motor of this development? Landes correctly identifies it in the "finance revolution", in other words in the incredible expansion of credit and in particular of that favouring the setting-up of new industrial companies. The growth of credit, and thus the increased circulation of paper money first, and then fiduciary money, is thus not linked to the rate of accumulation of metal reserves by the Bank of England, in the wake of the imports of Californian and Australian gold; reserves rose from £8.3 million sterling in October 1847 to £21.8 million in the third quarter of 1852.

The fact that interest rates remained low for the whole decade resulted not from the policies of the commercial banks, but from the interest rates set by the central bank ("and when the central banks were ready to take paper, everyone was ready to take paper"). The volume of credit and the mass of money in circulation was extended; what counted now was not so much the price of money as its availability. Therefore, going against the Ricardian theories which had inspired the Peel Act of 1844, the policy pursued by the command staff of British capital was that of allowing an unlimited speculation and appropriation of the labour of others, both at home and abroad. "Trade and industrial development of this period (1840-80) is to a large extent marked by three large credit booms: 1852-7, 1861-6, 1869-73." However the consequences were disastrous at the level of inflation, leading to a depreciation of wages and thereby worsening the conditions of crisis and poverty of the proletariat and further locking them into conditions of precarious industrial labour. Finally, the growing demand for credit drove interest rates upwards, and the weaker employers, the more fragile companies, began to wobble. Then, when monetary panic led to a run on gold and a withdrawing of savings, this triggered a collapse of many commercial speculators. But the spread of credit, the diffusion of operations which at one time were the privilege of an inner elite, ended up creating – as in France – a propensity to

investment which even led to forms of working-class shareholding, to the setting-up of cooperatives and limited companies which developed a major role in certain sectors (for example, the "Oldham limited companies" in the textile sector).

The dangers of an economic co-optation of certain sections of the working class, the increasing tendency shown by the Chartists to dedicate themselves to cooperative enterprises, the spread of the ideology of profit within the petty bourgeoisie and the privileged working-cass strata, posed an immediate problem for Marx's battle for communism. Kuczinsky notes, correctly, that in 1851 Marx and Engels were counting on a crisis in the short term, and that by 1856-57 they were already becoming more cautious. Their objective was to organise an assault on the economic illusions of the proletariat, be they the bankers' utopias or the utopias of co-operatives.

As in *Capital*, the source which Marx uses to examine the condition of the working class and its level of exploitation is the reports of the Factory Inspectors. The statistics were relatively up-to-date, dating from October 1856. Shortly prior to its dissolution, the British parliament had passed two laws with a reformist flavour: the first concerned protection in the event of industrial accidents due to machinery; the second set up arbitration bodies to deal with conflicts between employers and workers – particularly as regards the application of safety regulations. But the inspectors themselves noted that the first law only protected workers in relation to their own machines, not workers who were transferred temporarily to other machines (and thus, not being familiar with them, were more liable to have accidents). Working-class mobility, which was already an instrument of exploitation, enjoyed none of the protections accorded by the bourgeois state. Further, the inspectors also noted that, for the proposed membership of the arbitration tribunals, the second law recommended engineers and machine-makers – in other words the textile employers' best suppliers. What Marx found particularly interesting in the factory inspectors' reports was the systems of intensification of exploitation, of extraction of absolute surplus value. These consisted essentially of extending the working day of young workers, women and children – by allowing work to be started before six in the morning and continued beyond six in the evening, and taking away five minutes at the start and end of lunch breaks. While the relationship between installed motive power and working-class employment levels remained constant, the relation between the number of machines and employment levels increased enormously. Not only were there now more machines per worker, but there was also a greater overall velocity of machinery. The results were alarming in terms of accidents at work: in the six months from April to October 1856, the number of industrial accidents registered by the Factory Inspectors in the Lancashire textile industry was "about ten times the number lost by the British Navy during its glorious Canton massacre," as Marx notes.

The inspectors also noted the variety of systems which textile employers were setting up in order to escape inspections, including providing their factories with multiple exit doors so that workers could be evacuated in a hurry if the inspector happened to turn up at the wrong moment, or suddenly turning the gas off, leaving the inspector poking around in the dark among machines that were unfamiliar to him, or sending "scouts" to railway stations and coach stations, in order to warn when an inspector was about to arrive. The article concludes: "The antagonism between the mill lords and the operatives is rapidly approaching the point of actual social war", and "the industrial slavedrivers of Lancashire need a foreign policy capable of distracting attention from the problems of domestic policy." The term "surplus labour" had been

used by the inspectors themselves, as Marx notes punctiliously. What interests us is not so much the re-descent from the heavens of money into the hell of the factory – which Marx performs with these two articles – but the fact that the theme of the intensification of exploitation is directly related to crisis and becomes part and parcel of his analysis of the crisis. From over-production to surplus labour. One recalls immediately the section on crisis in the *Grundrisse*, in which he speaks of the intrinsic necessity of the accumulation mechanism in reducing the amount of necessary labour and of increasing the amount of surplus labour – posing this necessity as the real origin of the crisis. Each employer sees only other employers' workers as consumers, not his own; each sees his own workforce as a mass from which to extract a maximum of surplus labour. Mechanisms of surplus value and mechanisms of crisis are thus indivisibly related.

In his second article, of 28 April 1857, Marx quotes from the Factory Inspectors' comments on a series of statistical tables developed from a questionnaire distributed to textile industry employers who were using steam or water-power as their power source. They note the average increase in the number of factories in the period 1838-1850, and the period from 1850 to 1856, particularly in the silk industry, which sees an increase of 66% compared with 14.2% in cotton. On the other hand there is total stagnation in the wool sector. This indicates more the process of concentration that was taking place in the cotton sector than anything else. What is interesting, however, is the data on regional differentiation of growth, where one sees on the one hand a strengthening of the traditional regions of Lancashire and Yorkshire, where the big factories are being set up, and the weakening of a whole series of textile counties in the South (Wiltshire, Dorset, Somerset, Gloucestershire) where, in addition to an absolute decline in the number of factories, there is a stagnation in the process of concentration. Polar attractions can thus be observed both in terms of capital and at the territorial level. Finally, his statistics on employment levels are interesting. The percentage of child labour (children below the age of 13) shows a continuous increase from 1838 onwards, and reaches 6.6% in 1856, while that of young workers between the ages of 13 and 18 actually fell slightly. Employment levels of women (aged 13 and upwards) increased: from 55.2% in 1838 to 57% in 1856. Adult male levels (18 years and upwards) fell from 26.5% of the workforce in 1850 to 25.8% in 1856.

The insistence with which Marx underlines the importance of child labour and women's labour, his very decision to embark on an isolated analysis of the textile sector – leaving aside the fact that he was prompted by the availability of statistical material – confirms the hypothesis that the model of the big factory which he seeks to take on is that in which there is the maximum wage compression, in which the wage really is a minimum subsistence level, in which "slavery" is the determining element. It is no accident that he ends his article by noting that 1844 saw the passing of the law which permitted the employment of children of eight years and over, whereas the previous legislation had forbidden children below the age of nine from working in factories.

But the descent into the hell of the factory was short-lived. Already on 23 April 1857 he is writing to Engels that he had heard from an old Stock Exchange buff that a crisis of such severity had not been seen for forty years. He adds: "I haven't yet got round to it, but some time I really must investigate the relation between the rate of exchange and bullion. The role played by money as such in determining the bank rate and the money market is something striking and quite antagonistic to all laws of political

economy. Worthy of note are the two newly published volumes of Tooke's *History of Prices*. A pity the old man's head-on collision with the 'currency principle' chaps should lead him to give such a one-sided turn to all his disquisitions."

He is referring to the final two volumes of Thomas Tooke's *History of Prices*, to be precise those covering the period 1848 to 1856, which were written in collaboration with his pupil William Newmarch. By Marx's own admission, they are a crucial work as regards the transcendence of the Ricardian theory of money; seen in the context of Marx's intellectual biography, they are probably the decisive work which proved on the one hand the falsity of Ricardo's theory, and on the other hand the incongruousness of the measures taken by the English state with the Peel Act in 1844 – precisely in the application of that theory. In fact, in *Towards a Critique of Political Economy* he was to say: "Prices are thus not high or low because more or less money is circulating, but more or less money circulates because prices are high or low. This is one of the most important laws of economics, whose detailed demonstration on the basis of the history of prices constitutes perhaps the only merit of post-Ricardian English economics."

Here the circle really does close, and the links of the chain are welded together. The data produced by Tooke demonstrated amply that a whole series of laws inherent to Ricardian theory had been disproved by economic reality. Together with the Reports on the Bank Acts, in other words the reports of the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry into the crisis of 1857-58, which we find amply represented in the materials gathered by Engels for Book III of *Capital*, the history of prices offered raw material for finally making an explicit criticism of Ricardo. The final preparatory work for the writing of the *Grundrisse* (and then *Towards a Critique of Political Economy*) was thus completed. Marx reads the two final volumes of Tooke in April; the Parliamentary Commission begins its activities in July; the writing of the *Grundrisse* begins in November. However, in addition to this historical material, the crisis itself provided a wealth of insights.

The articles in the *Economist*, particularly those of its editor James Wilson – a man very close to the "banking school", later to become a member of the commission of inquiry into the banking laws (which heard submissions from Lord Overstone, the force behind the Peel Act, and from Tooke, Newmarch and others) – aimed to show how the relationship between the drain of gold, exchange rate mechanisms and variations in the interest rate were entirely at odds with the laws expressed by Ricardo, and the absolute unsuitability of the monetary instruments which the British state had installed in order to govern liquidity, in other words to control the economic process and prevent crises.

These criticisms of Ricardo were a demonstration of capital's inability to govern the crisis; given that they suggest an element of weakness of the state, they thus supply Marx with powerful arguments for his critique of the capitalist state. The introduction to a discussion of the state which we saw so clearly expressed in the articles on the *Crédit Mobilier* is here enriched and consolidated. Naturally the discussion goes far beyond the unsuitability of the government's technical instruments. While Marx strips bare the tautologies in Ricardo, this does not imply that he accepts the positions of the "banking school", where "there is an undifferentiated confusion of the differences between the means of circulation as money, as money capital in general, and as capital productive of interest." They do, however, represent an

advance in bourgeois science, a greater critical awareness of monetary conditions, and are thus a prelude to the creation of more refined technical instruments in order to govern the monetary process and eliminate the more destructive aspects of crisis. Thus we can say that in this instance too 1857 constitutes a leap forward in the science and political power of the bourgeoisie.

In what follows we have the fundamental points of Ricardian theory as Marx outlines them, and the substance of the Banking Law of 1844 (which was completed with the law on Scottish banking in the subsequent year). "According to Ricardo the value of metallic money is determined by the labour-time incorporated in it, but only as long as the quantity of money stands in correct relationship to the amount and price of commodities to be exchanged. If the quantity of money rises above this ratio, its value falls and commodity-prices rise; if it falls below the correct ratio, its value rises and commodity prices fall – assuming all other conditions equal. In the first case, the country in which this excess gold exists will export the gold whose value had depreciated and import commodities; in the second case, gold will flow to those countries in which it is assessed above its value, while the under-assessed commodities flow from these countries to other markets, where they command normal prices. [...] Although bank-notes are convertible, and therefore their real value corresponds to their nominal value, the aggregate currency consisting of metal and of convertible notes may appreciate or depreciate in accordance with its aggregate quantity, for reasons already stated, rising above or falling below the level determined by the exchange-value of circulating commodities and the metallic value of gold..."

On the basis of these premises, whereby only gold and banknotes constituted money, the banking laws of 1844-5 imposed on the issuing house, the Bank of England, an obligation to maintain metallic reserves which were not to fall below a given percentage of the amount of banknotes in circulation. The relation between the amount of gold and banknotes in circulation and the amount of gold reserves was fixed by a legislative standard which represented a quantitative margin within which control of monetary liquidity would be possible. The 1844 Bank Act divided the Bank of England into an issue department and a banking department, of which the former was specifically enabled as regards control over liquidity, and the latter was empowered to deal with relations with other banks – where, however, the problem then re-presented itself. The bank thus came to have two distinct functions. However, while on the one hand a corrective was introduced to the rigid ratio laid down by the law and the government was prepared to let things be guided by the exigencies of credit (it is worth noting that the above-mentioned statistics cited by Landes demonstrate how despite the Peel Act, the mass of money in circulation and the gold reserve never once observed the proportions required by law), on the other, a series of contradictions arose precisely with the principles of this law, which Marx was to highlight in the preparatory materials for Book III of *Capital*.

If we read these materials closely, together with the preceding pages of *Towards a Critique of Political Economy*, we see that the first point on which Marx engages Ricardo is precisely in the determination of gold as a world money and thus as a means of international payments. Tooke's researches had shown clearly how the outflow of gold had not in fact caused substantial variations in the prices of commodities, precisely because the gold exported functioned as a means of international payment inasmuch as it was gold, money as raw material. What was affected by the outflow of gold was thus variations in the price of money, in other words the rate of interest, and

not the prices of commodities. It had an effect on exchange rates and thus proved false Ricardo's assumption that money had the same value in all countries.

Marx describes the instigators of the banking laws of 1844-5 as "meteorologists of economics". A large part of the contradictions into which they had fallen could only be clarified by confronting the problem of credit: "Their shameful fiasco, both theoretical and practical, after experiments at the highest national level, can be illustrated only in the theory of credit." Marx thus accepts, as the first step in his critique of Ricardo and Lord Overstone, the position of the "banking school", whereby not only money and banknotes were to be considered as currency, but also the use of banking deposits, shares and cheques. For which reason, since money as a means of circulation is essentially credit money, it was impossible to think of regulating its mass with legislative provisions. Did this *laissez faire* extremism represent a step forward or a step back in relation to Lord Overstone's centralising tendencies? Marx's interventions in the *New York Daily Tribune* tend to demonstrate that while the vision of money that characterised the "banking school" was historically more progressive than the Ricardian view, nonetheless it was wrong to think that it represented a rejection of the centralisation of capital's political command. And it was precisely the organisation of credit that created this command, no longer as equilibrium but as a forcing of the process, no longer according to the idyllic image of things somehow finding their own level, but according to the fierce process of changes in the organic composition of capital. Ricardian theory expressed a requirement for stability, whereas that of Tooke, Péreire and Wilson expressed a necessity of breaking with the past. Something quite other than *laissez faire*, therefore, as seemed to have been expressed in the thesis that a control of liquidity was impossible to bring about! That thesis expressed, rather, a need to break the barriers of equilibrium - of the old equilibrium. The onward march of exploitation had to trample Ricardo underfoot and leave him behind. The confrontation with the "banking school" and with all the problems of credit money was to be taken up again at a higher level. What was at stake, at the political level, was hegemony over the process of crisis. Either the science of capital would have to be successful in forging instruments in order to manoeuvre crisis and where necessary to determine it (i.e. longer to eliminate it), or the working class movement would succeed in transforming it into an opportunity for subversive organisation.

The critique of the theories of Tooke and Fullerton on credit money hinged essentially on the confusion between circulation and capital or, rather, on the confused distinction between money as a means of circulation and money as capital. According to Marx, money is a means of circulation, is money in the proper sense, when it functions as expenditure of revenue. It is capital when it is exchanged for means of production and labour power. But in both cases it functions as a means of acquisition and as a means of payment: in other words, it is an agent of circulation. Thus it is erroneous to see circulation as distinct from capital. If anything, the distinction is between the money form of revenue and the money form of capital. But whereas what counts in the first case is the contracts of buying and selling, in the second case – where capitalists and workers confront each other face to face -- it is not the contract of acquisition that counts, but the fact that the acquisition is completed by means of money, which here appears as monetary capital waiting to be transformed into productive capital (whereas in the first case it is waiting to be transformed into commodity). A society in which the money form of revenue operates can be any mercantile society; a society in which the money form of capital operates can only be

capitalist society, in other words a society where already given social relations exist, where the person who buys labour power must already own means of production. The problem is to know whether it is possible to apply the same laws of circulation to all these functions of money. Now, where money presents itself as an expenditure of revenue, its velocity of circulation is determined by consumption; where it presents itself as money capital it is determined by the rhythm of the process of reproduction; where it presents itself as transfer of capital – in other words from capitalist to capitalist –it is determined by credit. Each of these spheres is determined by variables which are not proper to the other spheres. The various determinations of money are articulated in different institutional compartments, each of which has its own organisation. The contemporaneous functioning of this plurality of mechanisms is what brings about crisis. But this entering-into-contradiction of autonomous spheres is only one aspect of the problem. The fundamental difference between vulgar economists and Marx on this count lies in the view of the cycle as a variable which has a powerful conditioning effect on the state of circulation.

On the problem of liquidity Marx had already written a first article for the *New York Daily Tribune* in 1853 (24 September): "Peel's Bank Act of 1844 proceeds on the assumption that the metallic circulation is the normal one; that the amount of the currency regulates prices; that in the case of a purely metallic circulation, the curRency would expand, with a favourable exchange and with an influx of bullion, while it would be concentrated by an adverse exchange and a drain of bullion; that a circulation of bank notes has exactly to initiate the metallic circulation; that accordingly there had to be a degree of correspondence between the variations in the amount of bullion in the vaults of the Bank of England and the variations in the quantities of its notes circulating among the public; that the issue of notes must be expanded with a favourable and contracted with an unfavourable exchange; lastly that the Bank of England had control over the amount of its notes in circulation."

But also on the basis of purely metallic circulation, the sum of the means of circulation is not able to determine prices, just as it would not be in a position to determine the extent of trade and industrial transactions; but prices do determine the amount of money in circulation. Unfavourable exchange rates and a drain of bullion would not diminish even a purely metallic circulation because they do not influence the amount of currency in circulation, but the amount of currency held in reserve in the form of deposits. On the other hand, a favourable exchange and an influx of bullion would increase not the currency payment in circulation, but the currency deposited in banks or hoarded by private individuals. Since the Peel Act starts from a false conception of metallic circulation, naturally it arrives at a false imitation of it by paper circulation. "The very idea that a bank of issue has a control over the amount of its outstanding notes, is utterly preposterous." A bank issuing convertible notes or advancing notes generally has neither the power of augmenting the natural level of circulation nor the power to cripple it by one single note. A bank may certainly issue notes to any amount its customers will accept; but, if not wanted for circulation, the notes will be returned to it in the form of deposits, or in exchange for metal itself. On the other hand, if a bank intends forcibly to contract its issues, its deposits would be withdrawn to the amount needed for filling up the vacuum created in the circulation. "Thus a bank has no power whatever over the quantity of circulation, whatever may be its power for the abuse of other people's capital." He returned to the same theme in an article in the *Neue Oder Zeitung* of 22 May 1855, where he extends to the banking problems what he had said in a preceding article concerning production: "The crisis is

permanent; the government is only temporary."

On 21 November 1857, at the height of the crisis, Marx resumed in the *New York Daily Tribune* the debate that he had begun four years previously. Now his technical instruments of analysis were far more refined, and the wealth of material which the crisis had brought into the open enabled him to deepen his analysis.

However, before re-reading this group of articles from November-December 1857, I shall look at four articles published between June and September. Once again the protagonist is the *Crédit Mobilier* as capital productive of interest. Marx demonstrates the social form and the private nature of its operations. We find ourselves here at the height of the financial crisis and a fairly harsh polemic is under way between the *Crédit Mobilier* and the Bank of France. Péreire had offered to buy the public debt held by the Bank of France, and he had presented this offer as an act of patriotic self-abnegation. In actual fact, if the bank had thrown these shares onto the open market it would have lowered the value of the railway shares owned by the *Crédit*. So here we have a patriotic operation unmasked as private interest. Péreire, furthermore, had been forbidden to issue six hundred million francs-worth of "trump cards", just as two years previously he had been banned from issuing two hundred millions-worth of fiduciary money: "The *Crédit* calls this issue augmenting its capital, where the common people were more likely to call it augmenting its debts." The Crédit boasts of having replaced private industry with industrial joint-stock companies. But the fact that it had invested forty million francs in state funds in 1856 (of the sixty million francs which form the capital of the company) and the fact that it had used the sums provided to it by credit to concede "'continuations' in *rentes* and railway shares on the settling days of the Stock Exchange", that it had speculated on the capital gains, demonstrates once again that the *Crédit* had turned over a good part of the national capital "from productive industry to unproductive gambling".

Does this highlighting of the *Crédit's* non-productive and speculative characteristics, contrasting with the revolutionary and innovative view given in the first group of articles in 1858, perhaps show the influence of Proudhon's *Manual*? In the pages that he dedicates to the Péreire bank, Proudhon, who was more concerned with problems of value than with the political function of the institution, had shown how the Crédit, with a capital of sixty million francs, had issued bonds to the tune of six hundred million francs, guaranteed by an equal sum employed in subscriptions of public bills (treasury bonds, etc) or of company shares. But since shares are subjected to depreciation, they would not provide effective guarantees. Unlike the circulating banks which discount commercial effects of a given value and are guarantees of a transaction – Proudhon concluded – the *Crédit Mobilier* is not in a position to supply guarantees of value, and thus it "cheats" its clients. Proudhon did not draw the conclusions which Marx had indicated – that the *Crédit*, by virtue precisely of that structure, was an institution which could prosper only in times of boom, and which would collapse in times of monetary panic. He had not drawn them because he lacked an overall perception of the cycle. His vision of the speculative nature of the *Crédit Mobilier* was therefore static and moralistic, and to the extent that it influenced Marx, it was in the sense of making possible a further deepening of his analysis.

His analysis at this point was entirely focused on the relationship between money and credit, and therefore on the relations between the Bank of France and the *Crédit Mobilier*, to which he dedicates the third of the articles in question, the one published

in the *New York Daily Tribune* on 20 June 1857. The director of the Bank of France, the Conte d'Argout, had resigned, having been in charge since the times of Louis Philippe (which meant that he had lasted through the revolution of 1848 and the Bonapartist *coup d'état*. His period of office had been identified with a gradual strengthening of the Bank of France's monopoly as the sole issuing house. If he resigned it meant that the regime's days were numbered; the reason given for his resignation was the new law regulating the Bank of France, which renewed its privilege for a limited period of time and made large concessions to the "bankocracy" – suggesting that the regime no longer had the power to control it, but still needed it.

The conflict between monetary "schools" here becomes openly a conflict of power between private interest and a central command capable of representing it and mediating its interests with those of the social base that supports the regime. It is a crisis in the process of the socialisation of capital, it is a crisis of the state. As he was to say in an article for the *New York Daily Tribune*, 27 July 1857, it was the symptom of an imminent revolution: "...revolutions must receive their tickets of admission to the official stage from the ruling classes themselves." ... "The name under which a revolution is ushered in is never that borne on the banner on the day of triumph." "The British commercial revulsion seems to have worn throughout its immense development the three distinct forms of a pressure on the money and produce markets of London and Liverpool, a bank panic in Scotland, and an industrial breakdown in the manufacturing districts." This was the start of the article which appeared in the *New York Daily Tribune* on 30 November 1857. The theoretical problem was how recompose the unity of the process of crisis, probing behind forms and appearances in order to discover the laws of capital's movement. The long analysis which Marx had made of the 1844 Peel Act in his preceding article obviously led into an analysis of the relationship between the world of commodities and money.

He had written in the *Grundrisse*: "Since the total sum of prices to be realised in circulation changes with the prices of the commodities and with the quantity of them thrown into circulation; and since, on the other side, the velocity of the medium of circulation is determined by circumstances independent of itself, it follows from this that the quantity of media of circulation must be capable of changing, or expanding and contracting – contraction and expansion of circulation." Here we have immediately a refutation of the possibility of a rigid control of liquidity, the uselessness of fixing rigidly percentage relations between gold and bank notes, and here we also see a prefiguration of modern "monetary manoeuvres", in other words, the necessity for capital to ride out cyclical movements by alternately tightening and slackening controls on the expansion of liquidity. The Peel Act had therefore introduced new contradictions while attempting to eliminate others; in fact it had rather aggravated and accentuated contradictions in periods of crisis. Working-class theory in this instance lays bare the fragility of the science of capital. But this is only one aspect. The more important point was to establish correct relationships within the process of production and the process of circulation, the creation and realisation of value, the world of commodities and the world of money. By means of the determination of price, the world of circulation re-finds its subordinateness in relation to that of production. Thus the proper determination of crisis is not an excess of circulating money, but overproduction. However, since the movement of capital passes through phases which are posed as independent, as if each is detached from the one which precedes it, and since the division of labour requires a productive capital, a commercial capital, and a capital for the trading of money (as separate moments of

industrial capital), the crisis shows itself in three different guises: in the trading capital of Liverpool, in the centres of the money trade in Scotland and London, and in the productive heartlands of Manchester. Three different figures of one single disproportion which present themselves as three different moments of one single process; but this does not suffice. The different forms which the crisis assumes correspond to the different determinations of money and of the relationship between commodity and money. "Now, in this function, as pure medium of circulation, the specific role of money consists only of this circulation, which it brings about owing to the fact that its quantity, its amount, was fixed beforehand. The number of times in which it is itself contained in the commodities as a unit is determined beforehand by their prices, and as a medium of circulation it appears merely as a multiple of this predetermined unit. [...] Money as medium of circulation is only medium of circulation. The only attribute which is essential to it in order to serve in this capacity is the attribute of quantity, of amount, in which it circulates." However this determination, in which money is entirely bound by commodities, in which money figures as an equivalent, and in which it therefore undergoes the contractions and expansions of the production of commodities, enters into contradiction with other determinations of money – that in which it is one commodity among others, similarly subject to the law of supply and demand, or that in which money, as a world means of circulation, counts only for its material existence, like gold and silver, and is thus subjected to the fortunes of international payments. The analysis of overproduction, of variations in interest rates, of the price of money, of the trade balance and the factors which determine it, are equally key for uncovering the different forms in which the crisis runs through the various determinations of money and its varying relationship with the commodity. The centralisation of capitalist command over the cycle may appear as an archaic constraint, as an institutional violence against society, but Marx identifies its logic in the unity of capital's process. Bonaparte's dictatorship – and Palmerston's too – thus become functional to the workings of capital, but at the same time they are a contradiction, a useless obstacle to the movement of capital. Thus, too, with the Peel Act. In the end the government suspended it: "The effect of the suspension must be one of comparative relief, as we have previously shown. It does away with an artificial stringency, which the Act adds to the natural stringency of the money market in times of commercial revulsion." The article continues: "In the vain hope of checking the rush of current which was sweeping all away, in the progress of the present crisis the Bank has five times raised its interest rate. On the 8th ult. the rate was advanced to 6 per cent, on the 12th to 7, on the 22nd to 8, on the 5th inst. to 9, and on the 9th to 10. The rapidity of this movement offers a remarkable contrast to that which attended the crisis of 1847." A detailed comparative analysis with the preceding decades leads Marx to discover that, while for a long period interest rates had followed fluctuations of trade in a regular manner, being high in periods of crisis and low in periods of prosperity, in the three most recent years considered by him, despite the fact that there had been an abrupt rise, production and exchange had increased regularly. According to Marx this was made possible by the sudden availability of Californian and Australian gold and their transformation into reserve funds at the Bank of England. However, more importantly, this would demonstrate that the the symptoms of crisis had been manifested more than two years previously, and that the crisis had only been artificially postponed and thereby rendered more serious. Now, the pressure on the money market and the simultaneous influx of American commodities had provoked a disastrous collapse of prices; but the Bank of England could have handled the difficulties were it not for the fact that simultaneously a monetary panic had broken

out in Scotland. In order to assist banks of Scotland and Ireland, which were grounded principally in the savings of rural populations, the Bank of England transferred huge sums of sterling. But the English banknotes were rejected – the Scots wanted gold, thereby demonstrating the opposite of what the supporters of the Peel Act had maintained: the owners of banknotes were in the same situation as deposit-holders. But the situation is equally dramatic in the field of production. ... "The truth is that the English have largely participated in speculations abroad, both on the Continent of Europe and in America, while at home their surplus capital has been mainly invested in factories, so that, more than ever before, the present convulsion bears the character of an industrial crisis and therefore strikes at the very roots of the national prosperity."

Finally the crisis touches real power, the real base of capitalist domination. But what appeared in theory to be the very roots of crisis – the fact that money had become independent of commodities, as had exchange in relation to production, and money-as-a-commodity in relation to the world of commodities, and means of payment from money, etc – turn out in fact to be further barriers preventing the processes of crisis from going to the heart of the relations of production, from rendering them really explicit, from transforming them into a basis for the subversion of the status quo. Theory as a simple rending of the veil which conceals the links between processes which have apparently become independent of each other is not yet sufficient, in itself, to provide subversion with the legs on which it might walk. Theory is not yet the party. Needless to say. But this is not the main point I am making here, for the moment. The problem is more the limits which the antagonistic movement of living labour is able to pose in relation to capital, the extent to which the working-class is capable of driving the system into crisis simply by means of its movements in the factories. This problematic appears to be a thousand miles distant from Marx in 1857. But perhaps this is not in fact the case: "In a general crisis of overproduction, the contradiction is not between the different kinds of productive capital, but between industrial and loanable capital – between capital as directly involved in the production process and capital as money existing (relatively) outside of it."

Put baldly, this simple phrase would suffice to refute any notion that Marx theorised crisis as being due to a disproportion between the production-goods sector and the consumer-goods sector. The point is quite clear, the contradiction is between the production of surplus value and realisation via the mechanism of circulation, between power relations in the factory and capital's need to conceal them, enlarging enormously the sphere of circulation, creating a contrived system of circulation of capital. A headlong flight of capital which "forgets" the slow pace, the daily struggle for the extortion of surplus labour. "The whole dispute as to whether overproduction is possible and necessary in capitalist production revolves around the point whether the process of the realisation of capital within production directly posits its realisation in circulation; whether its realisation posited in the production process is its real realisation. Or, putting it another way, it is question matter of knowing whether the blocking of surplus labour in the factory – in the real form in which it occurs, as a temporary blockage – is sufficient to arrest the process of realisation as a whole, or, vice versa, if the blockage of circulation due to speculative excesses, to capitalist "disorder", is sufficient to prevent the process of production; whether the working class's ability to organise against surplus labour – a rigidity of necessary labour - is in itself sufficient to bring about crisis in the system, or whether, on the other hand, the contradictions between commodity and money are sufficient to bring about crisis

in the relationship, as a real factory relationship. Loan capital, or more in general, the process of realisation of capital, thus presents itself here as an attempt to smash the law of value, and, in this regard – precisely in the pages cited above – Marx underlines forcefully how "Ricardo and with him the whole school has never understood the reality of modern crises," precisely inasmuch as these crises derive not from a disfunctioning of the law of value but from the failed capitalist attempt to break it and to suppress it. So, if we start at the other end of things, the working-class refusal of work confirms the law of value in antagonistic terms and enters into contradiction with capitalist attempts to conceal it, to "forget it". It is capital "recalled to its concept" which enters into crisis. And it responds by imposing new relations on the law of value, and a new organic composition on itself. But the shift to these new equilibria – and this is the conclusion of the section on crisis in the *Grundrisse* cited above – the victory of capital over its own contradictions, are admissable within a perspective in which the refusal of work was seen as a temporary moment of the working-class struggle, and in which the reduction of surplus labour – in the absolute terms of the length of the working day – was viewed as a slow, centuries-long process. But today, when the working-class struggle against direct exploitation has become a permanent, on-going phenomenon and proceeds at a far faster pace, is it possible and sufficient to continue seeing crisis only as "the symptom" of a "new level of productive forces"? And on the other hand is it possible to regard this long march against direct exploitation as in itself sufficient to bring about a crisis of power without running into the Ricardian error by which the process of production is the process of real realisation?

The materials which Marx used for the writing of these two articles are to be found, somewhat enhanced, in the chapters of the third book of *Capital* where he deals with the relation between the average rate of profit and the rate of interst. This provides further proof that what Marx was looking for was the laws of the real relationship between factory exploitation and capitalist command over money. Of the two elements, contrary to appearances, he considers the former to be variable and the latter constant – the former being subject to competition between capitals and to class antagonism, and the latter rigidly controlled and governed. Although the rate of interest was a quota of the rate of profit, although it was, in other words, naturally subordinated to profit, "in every country the average rate of interest appears for a rather long period as a constant magnitude, because the general rate of profit (...) changes only after a very long period." "Custom, the juridical tradition etc, intervene precisely as much as competition itself in the determination of the rate of average interest, to the extent to which it exists not only as an average figure, but as a real magnitude." "The rate of interest reaches its maximum level during crises, when in order to pay it is necessary to take out a loan, whatever it may cost."

In denying the existence of a natural rate of interest, and in attributing the rate of interest to capitalist subjective command, to its historical decisions (or at least to the historically-given level of the allocation between productive capital and interest-producing capital Marx reaffirms the entirely political nature of monetary mechanisms. Only crisis succeeds in bringing the average rate close to the market rate of interest; then "the market" opposes itself to the capitalist as a hostile force.

But the difference between productive capital and loan capital lies above all in the following: in productive capital the share between surplus value and profit is determined qualitatively – is the result of a social relation, of a situation of political

power; whereas in loan capital the apportioning is purely quantitative, is an administrative act of capitalist command itself, a dictatorship of capital over itself. The first effect of crises is to abolish this specific form of dictatorship, as is proven by the suspension of the Bank Act: money once again becomes a particular commodity, its price again becomes a market price, and its very function, as a general commodity, over and above all commodities, as the "God of commodities", is challenged. Marx repeats several times that the money form of the exchange relation is endangered during crises; he observes more than once that during crises there is a return to barter, to the exchange of commodities for commodities, of surplus value for surplus value without the mediation of money. But an exchange of surplus value against surplus value can as well mean an equilibrium of rates of exploitation, as it can mean a disproportion between rates of exploitation that are different, between different levels of working-class struggle.

"Still the very recurrence of crises despite all the warnings of the past, in regular intervals, forbids the idea of seeking their final causes in the recklessness of single individuals. [...] If speculation towards the close of a given commercial period appears as the immediate forerunner of the crash, it should not be forgotten that speculation itself is a result and an accident instead of the final cause and the substance. [...] The political economists who pretend to explain the regular spasms of industry and commerce by speculation resemble the now-extinct school of natural philosophers who considered fever as the true cause of all maladies." Are we mistaken if we seem to see the Proudhon of the *Manual of a Stock Exchange Speculator* as the target of Marx's allusive polemic? Certainly Proudhon here stands for a whole vast field of moral apologists of the system who saw speculation as a pathological phenomenon growing on the healthy body of the market. It is a polemic which Marx had been conducting for some time, dating back to his first articles on the crisis, and it is perhaps worth quoting, because this time (15 December 1857) it is expressed rather vehemently. But the main point lies elsewhere. Marx shows how, in England, the first reactions to the American crisis expressed themselves in the form of monetary panic, accompanied by a general depression of the commodity market. He goes on to announce triumphantly that "the industrial crisis now stands at the top and the monetary difficulty at the bottom." The true "focus of conflagration" is no longer London, but Manchester. Overproduction, a cut in working hours and mass sackings. Here the contradiction becomes the fundamental one, between necessary labour and surplus labour. In an industrial country like England, "the fluctuations on the money market are far from indicating either the intensity or the extent of a commercial crisis." But when one examines this contradiction, there is only one background against which it can adequately be measured – that of the world market. The contradiction between money as a world means of circulation, as a means of international payments, and money as an agent of circulation (where, in the former instance its material existence is everything, and in the latter it is indifferent), this is the contradiction which lies at the root of the disproportion arising from the problems of the British balance of payments and the problems of industrial development. When Manchester laughs, London cries, and vice versa; industrial capital and loan capital are in opposition to each other. The two opposing positions are expressed, in theoretical terms, in the two schools, the "monetary" and the "banking" schools, with Colonel Torrens and Lord Overstone on the one hand and Tooke and Fullarton on the other. In his article, Marx fires a well-aimed salvo at Tooke: "Hence, even Mr Tooke, the writer of the *History of Prices*, well as he handles the phenomena of the London money and colonial markets, has proved unable not

only to delineate, but even to comprehend the contractions in the heart of English production." The raising and lowering of interest rates have the precise aim of re-establishing the central bank's gold reserves, in order to meet balance of payments obligations, and more particularly to fulfil obligations to other banks. But, according to Marx, the true element for an understanding of the industrial crisis is trade relations: "The study of the English trade reports affords the only reliable clue to the mystery of the present convulsion in that country." What is important is the exchange of goods, to be read as an exchange of surplus values, as an act of exchange of different levels of exploitation, between magnitudes of relative power. The world market may be defined in real terms as a relationship between surplus values, as a confrontation between capitalist groups, between national bourgeoisies whose capacity to trade is defined by the extent to which they are capable of exploiting, of extorting surplus value; any diminution of their relative power, any refusal of workers to allow themselves to be exploited beyond certain limits, weakens the competitive strength of the capitalist group in question. And money itself, as a world means of circulation, as a given quantity of gold and silver, as solely this concrete materiality, becomes inadequate to express that quality of relationship; it "enters into crisis with its own concept".

In the *Grundrisse* Marx was to develop only the capitalist side of this discourse, only the extensive effect which the exchange between surplus values produces, only the "civilising power" of capital.

In the final article of 1857, published in the *New York Daily Tribune* on 22 December, Marx shifts his gaze to Europe. "The centre of the convulsion" is now Hamburg, where the most interesting phenomenon is the attempts recently set in motion by the city's Senate, in other words with the collectivity, to deal with the collapse of credit. The state of Hamburg was undertaking to give advances on "goods of a permanent description", to the tune of fifty and even sixty-six percent. But the system failed in the extent to which prices fell, and the state, in order to keep its promises, was obliged to pay at the prices applying prior to the outbreak of the commercial panic, and to realise the value of bills of exchange which represented nothing more than bankrupts. Thus the money of the community was being used to reimburse the losses of private individuals: "This kind of communism, where the mutuality is all on the one side, seems rather attractive to the European capitalists." But his most important conclusion is the following: "The Hamburg collapse is a conclusive answer to those imaginative minds which presume the present crisis to have originated in prices artificially enhanced by a paper currency." Hamburg, in fact, boasted a purely metallic circulation (silver), but this fact did not prevent it from becoming a major focus of monetary panic, and since the beginning of the trade crises, Hamburg became "their favourite arena". The increased demand for silver on this market once again threatened the stability of the British gold reserves, where fresh outflows of metal were being recorded. Prices were also falling on the London market, and at the same time the price of grain was also falling as a result of the sudden influx of cereals from France.

In his first articles dealing with the *Crédit Mobilier*, the Bank of England, Napoleon III and Palmerston, Marx had stressed exclusively the centralised character of capitalist command; now, however, in analysing the real movements of the world market, he stresses the competition between capitals. The domestic political instability which the crisis triggers forces the national bourgeoisies, the various regimes of Europe, into increasingly savage competition and conflict, and instead of

healing the crisis conditions in the countries concerned, this only makes them worse. From this point onwards, all the independent moments of the process of realisation of world capital become equally focuses of crisis which feed off each other. But Marx's analysis stops here. The year 1857 closes with the "industrial crash", finally arrived at after a long and merry journey via "monetary panic". From money to capital, or, if you like, from money as means of circulation to money as capital, from money as agent of rotation to money as ownership of the labour of others. Having reached this point, having identified the myriad internal threads and having successfully tied them up, Marx in a certain sense stops. The task was to embark on a reconstruction that began not from the movements of capital but from the movement of the working class, but it found itself suddenly on the edge of an abyss, in terms of practice. The two-man "theoretical party" of Marx and Engels is infinitely weak. Being right does not mean having won. From the skies of theory Marx is now obliged to descend to the level of party politics, and the terrain that he finds there is immediately hostile: his theoretical adversaries, who were easy enough to eliminate in print, were still dominant within "the movement". The transition from the "theoretical party" to the "real party" involved huge costs, in the form of compromises which were to set back the level of the struggle by years. But all this is familiar terrain in the history of the origins of the First International and the mass socialist parties. The question that concerns us is rather different. We find ourselves wondering whether Marx's lack of attention to working-class behaviours and the fact of his very long isolation from the real movement, from the spontaneous behaviours of the working class, from the modifications in the class composition, from the everyday sufferings and struggles of the proletariat, had not in turn weakened the theoretical project. Was it perhaps this that led Marx, in the final pages of the *Grundrisse*, to cherish notions of a "future society", or led him to see within the working class a demand for total power, immediately, in a born-again insurrection, in what would turn out to be an "assault on the heavens" like that of the Commune, which, as Marx himself pointed out in *The Civil War in France*, had stopped at the gates of that earthly god, the god of all commodities – at the doors of the gold chamber of the Bank of France.

The historiography of working-class autonomy, the reconstruction of the proletariat's creativity of invention and its subversive behaviours – that whole substantive level which Marx had consciously omitted – therefore becomes crucially important – as important as "the movement" is in relation to "the vanguard". Not as a co-optation but as an act of subversion, an attempt to re-read those same mechanisms which Marx described when he took as his starting point not the initiatives and errors of capital, but the resistance of living labour. Torrens, in his time one of the foremost economists in the area of political management of the system, was already stressing that: "The great practical problem of economic science is to balance production so that supply and demand are in equal relation." However he added that "the only limits to the increase of effective demand will be those set upon the increase of production by the scarcity of fertile land, or by a rate of wages which is so high as to deprive the capitalist of the minimum rate of profit necessary to induce him to continue his anticipations."

Where Marx speaks in the *Grundrisse* of the disproportion between necessary labour and surplus labour, in part he expresses a similar view of crises to that which Torrens, one of the supporters of the Peel Act, had expressed in 1821. However, in Marx the analysis of the disproportions which are produced within capitalist crises is viewed within a perspective of the re-establishment of equilibrium, of establishing the new

level of productive forces that capital would use as the base for its next phase of development. It was a function, in other words, of his analysis of the world market, of the fact that unequal surplus values could not be exchanged for long without putting into crisis the system's very foundations, and that thus the history of capital revealed a tendency to equalise surplus values, to establish a uniform level of exploitation.

However, while this is true, the opposite is also true. Phenomena of mass resistance to exploitation – mass rigidity of necessary labour – prolonged over long historical periods, tend to multiply and spread to the whole mass of existing living labour. In order to block this spread, capital is obliged to break the unity of the world market, to establish precise frontiers within which certain monetary conventions are valid and beyond which they are no longer valid. But the immanent tendency to break these unnatural limits and to recompose the exchange of surplus values within a unified framework poses again the problem of how to spread and diffuse the highest levels of resistance of living labour.

The history of the working class since Marx teaches us that it moves on a double terrain – that of the assault on the heavens of the state, and that of the ongoing struggle around the definition of necessary labour.

Translated by Ed Emery

KATE SHARPLEY LIBRARY

Dear Comrades and Friends,

No doubt some of you will be aware of the existence and work of the Kate Sharpley Library and Documentation Centre, which has been in existence for the last eight years. During the course of 1991 the Library was moved from a storage location in London to Northamptonshire, where we are now in the process of creating a complete computerised database of the entire collection. At the same time a working group has been created to oversee the running and organisation of the Library.

The Library itself is made up of private donations from deceased and living comrades, and comprises of several thousand pamphlets, books, newspapers, journals, posters, flyers and unpublished manuscripts, monographs, essays, etc., in over 20 languages covering the history of our movement over the last century. It contains detailed reports from the IWA (AIT/IAA), the Anarchist Federation of Britain (1945-50), the Syndicalist Workers' Federation (1950-79), records from the anarchist publishing house, Cienfuegos Press, among others. Newspapers include near complete sets of Freedom, Spain and the World, Direct Action (from 1945 onwards), Black Flag, along with many others.

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To enhance the collection we appeal to all anarchist groups and publications worldwide to add our name to their mailing lists.

We also appeal to all comrades and friends to donate any suitable material to the collection.

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The KSL was named in honour of Kate Sharpley, a First World War anarchist and anti-war activist. One of the countless "unknown" members of our movement so ignored by the "official historians" of anarchism.

All mail for the present to:
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Book Reviews

Sabotage in the American Workplace

Anecdotes of dissatisfaction, mischief and revenge

Edited by Martin Sprouse
Pressure Drop Press/A.K Press
1992 175 pages
ISBN 0.9627091.3.1 (U.S) $12.00
ISBN 1.873176.65.1 (UK) £ 9.95

Two Reviews

(1) A review by Paul Barret

Following two years employment in a mailroom job at a San Francisco financial magazine, Martin Sprouse having "*witnessed sabotage done by almost every level of staff*" (p.2) decided to investigate whether such occurence was prevalent in the rest of the American worplace. The result is published by Pressure Drop Press and A.K Press, entitled appropriately enough "Sabotage in the American workplace".

The book is made up of a series of interviews broken up into chapters according to the trade of the participants of this investigation. The interviews are accompanied by "*excerpts from news--paper and magazine articles, management manuals, quotes, poems, proverbs, lyrics and statistics*" (p.6) which are somehow related to the subject at hand. The book is also interspersed with rather somber and gloomy graphics by Tracy Cox which somehow contrasts with the mood set up by the interviews, which are on the whole jocular. The point that the editor wants to make is that sabotage (by his definition) is endemic, normal and "*a necessary and valid reaction to dissatisfation caused by work*" (p.6).

The problem arises out of the definition Martin Sprouse uses: "*anything that you do at work that you're not suposed to do* " (p.3). This tends to lead to all sorts of stories of employees who somehow get their own back at their boses (and in some cases at the customer, but I'll come back to this) with very little in common with the usual perception of sabotage as an industrial weapon of the working class.

Take the example of Kat - the teacher (p.36), how can the editor remotly consider that because while Kat teaches sex education, she slightly deviates from a purely biological study of the reproductive system to explaining sexuality also in terms of erections and wet dreams this somehow constitutes an act of sabotage? Or Leroy - the press operator (p.48) who walks out on his boss because he fired an assistant - where is the sabotage in this? Or Anthony - the demolition worker (p.82) who when faced with an employer who would not pay him or his fellow workers, pay themselves with material that can be resold - that's not sabotage that is getting your wages in another way, which is far quicker than through court action.

These are just a few examples of many anecdotes which while pertaining to work have very little relevence to what constitutes sabotage; but there is worse, there are the stories of taking revenge on the employer by affecting other workmates like the case of Lazlo - the programmer (p.24) who plants a logic bomb in the bank's computer thereby deleting the payroll program affecting the pay of his erstwhile fellow workers, or the case of Keith - the gas station attentant (p.12) who ripped his boss blind while other employees got the blame, the fact that they had left or been fired before discovery of the theft in no way mitigates Keith actions. And it gets worse! Take the case of Eugene - the carburettor assembler (p.113) and Carol - the waitress (p.125). The former when dealing with cars internal parts like carburettors "*would screw them up purposely" (p.113), thus affecting the reputation of that particular car manufacturer* , never mind the expense inflicted on the client, and who needs built-in obsolescence when guys like Eugene will do it for the capitalist, not only that but he taught and encouraged others to do the same. And to think I used to blame the capitalist system for machines breaking down but no it's Eugene I have to blame, at least according to Martin Sprouse. As to the latter, Carol, she endears herself to us by food poisoning the customers in order to get back at her boss. Oh yes she sorts of regrets it now "*there are better ways to handle things like that*" (p.125). Well what a relief, we might be able to eat where Carol works now (or can we?).

It is a sad indictment of this book that out of all the various stories only one stood out as being relevent to sabotage at all, and that is Judi – the mail handler's story (p.90). Faced with bad working conditions and not being allowed to strike the workforce resorted to sabotage. As a result they improved their working conditions, and replaced the corrupt unions, and all this thanks to collective action. This story stands out because for once, in a book called 'Sabotage' and which seems to go out of it's way to find examples of individual petty acts of revenge, the issues of solidarity, direct action, and unionism are presented. That story must have escaped the editor's notice as it does not fit in with all the others. Hardly any of the other stories link "sabotage" with any kind of demands, whether these are for improvements in working conditions, wage settlements or union recognition. They deal more with disaffected individuals who take revenge on either the employer, the workmate or client but this is where it ends. While this might be a reflection on working class retreats in America during the eighties dominated by Reaganism, it is hardly inspirational.

While I take the point the editor makes that if an employee is not happy with his/her work there will always be some sort of reaction to this state of affairs, whether this reaction should be defined, as Martin Sprouse does, as sabotage is rather a moot point. Sabotage as used and defined by revolutionary syndicalists of the turn of the century, most notably the French CGT and the IWW from U.S.A., was seen as one of many tools used as a means towards a goal or specific demands. "It is always directed against the employer, never against the consumer". And to quote Rudolf Rocker in his book *Anarcho-Syndicalism*, "in his report before the Congress of the CGT in Toulouse in 1897, Emile Pouget laid special stress on this point. All the reports in the bourgeois press about bakers who had baked glass in their bread, and farm hands who had poisoned milk and the like, are malicious inventions designed solely to prejudice the public against the worker" [Phoenix Press; p.71]. "Sabotaging the consumers is the age old privilege of the

employers" [p.71]. When sabotage was used with food products it was in order to enhance the product, at the expense of the capitalist, not to poison the consumer. And what do we get less than 100 years later, some idiot doing exactly what the bourgeoisie has accused the workers of doing. Here lies the problem: in his book, Martin Sprouse's definition is so loose that the examples shown are exmples of anti-social, anti-solidarity, and anti-working class attitudes. This book only reinforces the image of lone individuals struggling for him/herself, no mention of solidarity, mass action. Emancipation from the drudgeries of work are done singly with no conception of the mass of toilers (to use old phraseology) yearning for emancipation.

This is not a book I would recommend for inspiration, apart from a fair to middling bibliography at the end it portrays a world devoid of mutual aid, of class solidarity, a world where everyone is out to get what they can and if they don't they'll lash out at the boss, the consumer, and even the workmate.

(2) A review by Alan Rice

Sabotage has a long and glorious history in the United States. Outbreaks of such seditious behaviour range from the slaves in the agricultural South who feigned inability to wield new-fangled hoes to the machine-wrecking Wobblies of the early twentieth century in the industrial North and frontier West. This book seeks to bring the narrative up-to-date through a compilation of contemporary anecdotes from the front-line of modern capitalist relationships.

What is noticeably different about these instances of sabotage is the individual nature of the acts of sedition which is in stark contradiction to the Wobbly movement's collective approach. There are few instance of collective action and Sprouse mainly details individualistic acts of sabotage. For instance, there is the mailroom clerk at the right-wing Heritage Foundation who shreds cheques worth thousands, a welfare case-worker who gives out cheques whether his clients are eligible or not, whilst a third destroys the Christmas ornaments he has hated making so much. Many of the anecdotes are humorous such as the disc jockey who relayed false news bulletins, the office worker who cut the wires so the irritating muzak system would not work and the mural painter who added details in the figures of his commissioned paintings to add to his own interest. Here sabotage seems to be widely defined so that actions that enable one to take control of one's working environment from the faceless plutocrats who seek to define one's working conditions are seen as victorious acts of sabotage even if they do not cost the firm a penny.

In a way this makes it a heartening book as you would need to be a pretty zombified worker not to have committed sabotage according to Martin Sprouse's definition of sabotage as, "anything you do at work that you're not supposed to..". However, the most successful forms of sabotage detailed here are those which have a collective thrust. The construction workers who steal all the equipment from a job when the boss is slow to pay, the autoworkers who make sure the cars produced on the last shift before industrial action are all faulty and the mailworkers who indulge in machine-wrecking to get their grievances seen to.

All these anecdotes are presented in an upbeat vernacular style with appropriately grim illustrations from Tracy Cox and are accompanied by illustrative quotations from the history of sabotage which make the book an extremely valuable resource. One of these states, "that if conpicuous

consumption was the badge of a rising middle-class, conspicuous loafing is the hostile gesture of a tired working-class". That such loafing continues shows that the American working-class are not a totally defeated force and gives hope for the collective struggles to come.

N.B: Sabotage in the American Workplace is available from AK Press, 22 Lutton Place, Edinburgh EH8 9PE.

Lutz Niethammer

Posthistoire: Has History Come to an End?

translated by Patrick Camiller
Verso, London 1992, £19.95
ISBN 0-86091-395-3

Reviewed by Adrian Wilding

Paradoxically, postmodernism - a genre associated with the dismantling of 'metaphysical' notions such as subjectivity and history - commonly understands its own genesis and development in socio-historical terms. More specifically postmodernism typically portrays its own timeliness with reference to a transformation of world-historical significance, a transformation which renders obsolete the very historicist framework in which it is necessarily presented. Whether this apocalyptic break is explained in terms of the cyberneticisation of production (Lyotard) or the accelerated globalisation of the media (Baudrillard) what unites such thinking is the contention that traditional historical, philosophical and political models for understanding the world have become redundant, swept away by the spiralling trajectory of technological change. To the extent that 'history' names a condition in which human actions and struggles could be said to control or shape this world of technology, and in which notions of 'freedom' or 'progress' thereby become realistic ideals, what is being announced in the discourse of postmodernity is precisely the *end of history*.

It is as a critique of an intellectual climate in which postmodernism has seized much of the critical highground that Lutz Niethammer's fascinating book can be understood. The crucial insight of *Posthistoire* is that the postmodern rejection of history and historicism is inevitably implicated in that which it would reject; that the thesis of an 'end of history,' rather than being a novel discovery, instead has its own long unacknowledged history.

Contrary to many of the assumptions of postmodernism Niethammer argues that the thesis of a future 'end of history' is not in fact antithetical to the ideals of the Enlightenment but was always *anticipated* by them:

"The idea that history would be overcome through the unfolding of bourgeois society was ultimately part of the Enlightenment programme, which in Germany was most clearly expressed in Immanuel Kant's 'Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Intent' (1784). According to this conception, after a long period of military conflicts in which the historically established states had fragmented and thus neutralized one another on a manageable scale, developed bourgeois society would 'maintain itself automatically' [*als wie ein Automat*]. In the nineteenth century, therefore, the concept of 'posthistory' (if it existed at all) did not contain the frustration of cultural pessimism, but rather the hope that the chaos of history and the ubiquitousness of historicism might finally be overcome." (p17-18)

What differentiates Kant's goal of 'perpetual peace' from the contemporary revolt against history is that whilst the

former sought the harnessing of natural forces by man's understanding (*Verstand*) to the end of establishing a free and harmonious polity, postmodernism articulates a revenge of those very 'blind' forces from which Enlightened man believed he had extricated himself. Turning to the natural sciences for its theoretical and linguistic armature postmodernism thereby gives voice to the 'return of the repressed' upon the consciousness of society. Whether this idea is expressed in the recycled terminologies of 'will to power' or 'libidinal economics,' the assumptions are the same. As Niethammer notes,

> "the link between them lies not at the level of argument or information, but in intellectual outlook and coincidences for which certain allusions and codewords continually appear: for example references to the tradition of Nietzsche and Schopenhauer, as opposed to the Enlightenment. At their centre stands an ambivalent fascination with scientific rationalization, at once urging it forward and presenting it as a danger for the life-forces of the individual. The dynamism and levelling of society tends to produce a lifeless structural compulsion and to mark out progress as decline and exhaustion....These authors see themselves facing anonymous structural processes before which individuals feel so powerless that they endow them with omnipotence and, without detailed argument, authenticate them through a grid of allusions and metaphors. These processes are endowed with properties such as independence, prominence, dynamism, irreversibility and a capacity to dissolve cultural values in non-temporal randomness....In this way subjectivity, contingency and perceptible reality come to disappear." (p57-8)

In Niethammer's description of certain romantic themes popular in the early part of this century we are able to recognise many of the intellectual thematics of our own times - from the futurism of "hyperreality" to the technophilia of "cybernetic capitalism" - a recognition which implies that the contemporary fascination on the part of philosophy and the social sciences with the discourses of information technology, molecular biology, and systems theory, is not particularly novel.(1) This century has witnessed repeated appropriations of the language of the natural sciences in analyses of social processes. It is ironic though that in the cause of a progressive embracing of technological change the contemporary displacement of the Enlightenment distinction between the social and the natural would return us to the cosmological worldview dispensed with by Kant's own critical revolution.(2)

Just as Niethammer identifies the thesis of an 'end of history' as already immanent to the Enlightenment project, so he detects resources already present within the philosophy of history for a preemptive critique of the revolt *against* history and its positivist tendencies. These resources are to be found in their most fully-fledged form in the writings of the German philosopher and literary critic Walter Benjamin. Benjamin appreciated that the collapse of the Enlightenment distinction between the natural and the historical had important political implications, that the increasingly pervasive ideology of 'natural history' (which for him meant not simply a history of nature *but the fusion of the natural and the historical, the naturalisation of historical development*) was the plane upon which Fascism evolved.(3)

It is this naturalisation of history which, for Benjamin, gives rise to the two distinctive modes in which we experience historical time: eternal repetition and natural progression. Both forms of time-consciousness, according to Benjamin, have their basis in the world of generalised commodity production. In the case of repetition, it is only with the rise of mass production that the myth of the "ever-always-the-same appears palpably...for the first

time". Similarly, the notion of time as natural progression - as evolving smoothly towards some future goal - merely articulates the 'empty time' of life under developed capitalism, glorified as an *ethic* by conservatives and social democrats alike. These two experiences of time in modern society must therefore be understood as 'antinomies' - apparent opposites which in fact share the same social context. "Belief in progress," Benjamin argued, "in endless perfectibility (- an unending moral task -) and the conception of eternal recurrence are complementary. They are ineluctable antinomies, in the face of which the dialectical conception of historical time needs to be developed."(4)

Benjamin furthered the analysis of Horkheimer and Adorno by seeing the implication of myth and Enlightenment as an implication of *temporalities*. The 'dialectical' third which he wished to oppose to the twin times of repetition and progress is precisely the *Jetztzeit* or 'now-time' of his reflections 'On the Concept of History'.(5) Like Adorno's famous imperative - that "universal history must be construed and denied" - Benjamin's reflections did not themselves announce the end of history (Niethammer is keen to rescue the 'Theses' from such an interpretation). Rather, they warned of the political collusions implied by uncritically accepting certain models of historical time. The political context may have changed somewhat from the dark days in which Benjamin composed this warning, but the force of his injunction, to "grasp actuality as the reverse of the eternal in history" can be redeemed today in the form a challenge to resist all those theories of social development which stress the security, stability and permanence of capitalist domination. Benjamin's notion of the 'now-time,' rather than being a purely theological or eschatological category can be understood as an acknowledgement that historical time is characterised not by permanence and stability but instead by rupture, discontinuity and crisis. Similarly the apocalyptic 'state of emergency' which Benjamin wished to oppose to its Fascist counterpart can be construed as a recognition of the *fragility* of the rule of homogeneous empty time (which for Benjamin is first and foremost the time of *work*), a rule which is repeatedly and explosively breached in our *emergence* out of the stultifying and stifling times of repetition and progress. To this extent Benjamin's writing anticipates and contributes to undermining all the forms of functionalism that currently pervade intellectual discourse; beneath the calm and serene world portrayed by such models he uncovers an effervescent and discontinuous history of revolt.

This being said, there is a long tradition within Benjamin scholarship which would downplay the Marxian sources of his understanding of history, emphasising instead the theological and mystic ideas it invokes. The central chapter of Niethammer's book, entitled 'The Blown Away Angel,' cleverly demonstates that what is at stake in this debate is not simply the respective status of interpretive models but something much more important. Undoubtedly, the notion of apocalypse evoked by Benjamin's writing *is* indebted both to the Christian theme of Revelation and the Messianic strain of Judaism, but, at the same time, if apocalypse is a *solely* theological or mystic category and makes no sense outside of this theism, then the force of the Marxian critique of religion - namely that the promise of religion can be realised only in and through revolutionary practice - is thereby eclipsed. If, on the other hand, the tensions between Marxism and theology are solved on the side of a profane politics, then it is Marxism's *hopefulness* - precisely that "sin of optimism"(6) for which it is today

disparaged - which is diluted. In both cases the political challenge of Benjamin's writing is missed.

Niethammer's appropriation of Benjamin brings with it certain questions though, and, significantly, it is often the most important of these which go unaddressed in his book. The author wishes to oppose Benjamin's insights to what he describes as the "macro-theoretical" assumptions of the 'end of history' thesis, assumptions which imply that we can know "something substantive about the beginning and the end" of history - for Niethammer an inevitably "hypothetical" mode of thinking (p144). But if, contra postmodernism, an idea of the meaningfulness of history is to be defended, does the discovery of this meaning not require at least the *possibility* of an Archimedean point from which the past might be surveyed and comprehended in its totality i.e. exactly the sort of survey Niethammer dismisses as "hypothetical"? The problem is, as he correctly observes, one of *foreclosure* : which account of historical time - one which stresses our irrevocably situated position within history or one which posits the possibility of a *telos* or a transcendence - is more conceptually and politically restrictive?

That this is just one example of several important questions which *Posthistoire* raises but fails to explore means that the reader is inevitably left with reservations regarding its comprehensive claims. In a sense the book's weakness might be traced back to one crucial oversight in Niethammmer's selective interpretation of Walter Benjamin: in an era of recrudescent Nazism, what is surely demanded of the historian by Benjamin's legacy is not so much the reassurance that history still obtains but an awareness of the dangers of history's *repetition* , an awareness which would today mean examining the connections between the intransigence of liberal democracy and the growing seeds of fascism. On this score we might do well to learn from Benjamin's contention that 'catastrophe' lies not in the ruptures which break with history but in the simple fact that history "keeps going on like this".

References:

1: See for example Gilles Deleuze and FÇlix Guattari's two volume *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (Athlone, 1983/88). Note also similar moves in Guattari's collaboration with Toni Negri, *Communists Like Us* (Semiotexte, 1990).
2: A critique of apocalypticism as the attempt to bypass the work of the understanding is prefigured in Kant's own work. See his late essay 'On a Newly Arisen Superior Tone in Philosophy,' translated in Peter Fenves (ed.) *Raising the Tone of Philosophy* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993)
3: Susan Buck-Morss makes this point by reference to John Heartfield's photomontage 'Deutsche Naturgeschichte' in her excellent reconstruction of Benjamin's *Passagenwerk, The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (MIT Press, 1989)
4: Benjamin cited in Buck-Morss, p108
5: Mistranslated as 'Theses on the Philosophy of History' in *Illuminations* (Shocken, 1969)
6: E.M. Cioran, *The Temptation to Exist* (Quartet, 1987) p49

Peter Linebaugh

The London Hanged

Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century

Allen Lane, Penguin, London 1991,
xxvii + 484 pp, £25.00
ISBN 0-713-99045-7

Reviewed by Ian Fraser

It was Tronti who told us to re-focus our attention away from an emphasis on capitalist development and instead start from the struggle of the working class. Peter Linebaugh has taken Tronti's message to heart and produced a truly wonderful book about working class resistance during the eighteenth century.

It is not just a work of history but, in true Marxist fashion, crosses the discipline boundaries into the fields of politics, political philosophy/economy and even English literature. Linebaugh tells us that the impetus for his investigation came from E. P. Thompson's *The Making of the English Working Class* and he carries on that tradition more than admirably. His primary focus is on the thousands of men and women hanged at, what was then, the Tyburn Gallows situated on the edge of London. Their story, despite the abundance of primary source material, has not been told and this Linebaugh seeks to rectify. He discovers that their deaths by public hanging are of paramount importance in understanding urban class conflict during this period. The hanged were specifically chosen by the ruling class to set an example to the rest of the labouring poor. This was because the mass of the labouring poor were themselves engaged in resistance, in one form or another, against the rule of capital.

Linebaugh brings these 'forgotten' individuals back to life. In contrast to Foucault, who, by stressing the incarceration of the labouring poor depicts them as powerless, Linebaugh stresses the notion of 'excarceration' by which he means the skill and ingenuity of the working class in actually escaping the imposition of discipline. A whole chapter is devoted to the infamous thief and highway robber Jack Sheppard whose escapes from prison became legendary. Linebaugh rightly depicts Sheppard as providing an example of resourcefulness and freedom to the London working class in that here was a man that even the prisons of the ruling class could not contain. Throughout the book he introduces us to lesser known individuals who stole in order to live with some receiving the ultimate punishment whilst others escaped the fate of the 'triple tree'. On the basis of this Linebaugh is keen to stress that the composition of the working class in London was generally homogeneous and not dichotomised between criminals and those who worked or had a trade. This is evidence by the occupational structure of those hanged which was in no way different to the London labouring poor as a whole. The clear implication was that whether an individual was in work or out of it stealing was essential in order to survive.

The ultimate punishment that could be implemented at the time was, therefore, a symbol of the ruling class attempting to impose its authority and trying to inculcate respect for private property amongst the London poor. Yet what was actually considered as private property was continually changing throughout the century and this is a persistent theme in the book. Many of the disputes which resulted in punishment centred around what workers saw as customs and what capitalists began to regard as crimes. Workers saw themselves as having rights to certain materials in their workplace. The coal heaver and the jeweller's servant, for instance, both saw it as the custom to keep what little they swept up at the end of the day. This was not shared by the courts, however, who transported the latter for 'stealing' two ounces of gold. Hence, rights to the materials of production were a constant source of conflict in the workshops across London. Items that were seen as perquisites of the job to workers rapidly became designated as the private property of the capitalist. Such gratuities were essential to supplement the meagre earnings of the London poor but for capital were a waste of materials which could be used more profitably in the production process. Capital responded to this by attempting to minimise workers' control in production. For instance, Jeremy Bentham's brother, Samuel, attempted to introduce 'Taylorist' forms of control

over workers in the shipbuilding industry a century before F. W. Taylor even put pen to paper. The process was one of the ending of perquisites and the introduction of strict scientific management of workers who were assigned to carry out one particular task and participate in 'incessant work', a euphemism for twenty-four hour shifts. This was achieved through severe struggles as shipworkers rioted and went on strike only to be faced with being blacklisted and even having the artillery of the state set against them. This culiminated in the ending of perquisites, of payment in kind and the introduction of wage payments. These measures were entraced to counteract workers power in the production process, a power which derived from their co-operation with one another in the carrying out of the actual work done. To break this power it was necessary to divorce such organisation amongst the workers from the organisation of production itself. Hence, the emphasis on scientific management. It was far too dangerous for capital to allow workers such a level of control over their own productive capacities but to end it involved a bitter and protracted struggle.

The message of the whole book is incredibly upbeat in that the instances of working class resistance to capital's will shines through the sheer brutality and horror of this embryonic market society. This London working class was an international working class in that many had been transported to colonies, fought in foreign wars or been a member of the labour force of mercantilist expansion. Experiences of both slavery and revolution were therefore brought back to London. Hence, by 1780 working class resistance manifested itself most visibly in the Gordon Riots. The latter has traditionally been interpreted as the actions of a drunken mob under the influence of religious prejudice but as Linebaugh points out this was far from the truth. It was the citadels of the representation of wealth - parliament, The Bank of England, the houses of the bourgeoisie - along with those of oppression - Newgate prison itself - which were the target of a 'mob' made up of journeymen and wage earners. Even the home of the Lord Chief Justice, the Earl of Mansfield, who thought that the rule of private property and accumulation of wealth was the keystone to a fully civilised society, was ransacked, forcing both him and his wife to escape through the back door. These were not just sporadic atacks but deliberate targets in the sights of a hostile working class assaulting bourgeois wealth and property. It is not surprising that three years later the ruling class dispensed with public hangings. This terrorist tactic had not cowed the working class in its resistance to capitalist authority and so Tyburn was no more.

Such an uplifting message should make us see our working class ancestors not as victims of capitalist development but as fellow human beings engaged in hidden and overt struggles against capitalist domination. On this basis Linebaugh should not only be thoroughly commeneded for exhuming a fighting working class from historical obscurity but also in making us more sensitive to the different forms class struggle takes in the crisis-ridden capitalism both of yesterday and also of today.

Midnight Notes

Midnight Oil -
Work, Energy, War, 1973-1992

Autonomedia
Brooklyn 1992
£9.95
ISBN 0-936756-96-9

Reviewed by Andrew Watson

> "The largest and swiftest mass layoff in decades. Five million workers uprooted, deported, murdered or otherwise severed from their means of subsistence as a result of the Gulf War."

The opening lines of *Midnight Oil*, a collection of articles from the American journal *Midnight Notes* and its predecessor *Zerowork*, including several new articles about the Gulf War and the oil producing proletariat. This book is an attempt to analyse and respond to the events of the Gulf War. It is, as the cover blurb states, "a political journey through two decades of social struggles, ranging from the oil fields of the Middle East and Africa to the coal mines of Appalachia and the homes and neighbourhoods of America and Europe.... Tracing the unifying themes of work, energy, oil and war".

For the Gulf War was not fought to retain access to cheap oil, nor was it about capitalist competition between the U.S. and Japan, or Western imperialism, as much of the left understood it, but was rather capital's response to proletarian struggles the world over - a violent restructuring of class relations in a region strategically important for the maintenance of capitalist control (A view which will be familiar to readers of *Common Sense* - see issue 10).

Oil has been a central component of capitalist planing since the end of World War 2, when, in response to working class power, capital implemented the Keynesian deal - increasing wages and social spending linked to increasing productivity in the factories. This strategy required cheap oil given the predominance of assembly-line production and, in particular, the car industry in Europe and the States. As much of the world's oil was owned, processed and sold by seven Western oil companies, the price of oil could be set so that it accorded with the general growth of the 'auto-deal'.

By the late 60's/early 70's working class struggles broke the wage/benefits/productivity deal as wildcats broke out in the factories, workers demanded higher wages irrespective of increased productivity, blacks organised and rioted in the streets, and women challenged their position as free labour power in the home. The result was a steep decline in profits. Capital had to attempt to recompose class relations to restore control, and thus profitability.

In 1973, using the pretext of the Yom Kippur War (though oil supplies were at no point seriously disrupted) capital responded with the 'energy crisis', dramatically increasing the price of oil (and natural gas, coal and uranium). The working class wage was effectively reduced as prices of consumption goods like heating, petrol, electricity and consumer durables increased. Working class power in the factory and the neighbourhood was also attacked as increased costs closed down "inefficient" factories, beginning the de-industrialisation of Europe and North America. But the resulting huge profits reaped by the energy companies and the increased revenues accrued to the oil producing countries, recycled as petrodollars, allowed a massive investment in automation and computerisation of factories and a shift of production to the 'Newly

Industrialised Countries' where labour was cheaper and unions 'discouraged'.

However, by the late 70's it was clear to capital that the "energy crisis" had to end. Oil producing states in the Middle East, North Africa and the Caribbean, succumbing to popular demands had "squandered" part of their oil revenues on nationalisation and higher wages and social spending, one consequence being the toppling of the Shah by the Iranian proletariat - a disastrous end to a decade that witnessed US military defeat in Indo-China, defeat of US backed regimes in Angola, Mozambique, Nicaragua and Grenada and general working class insubordination.

Variously known as "Reaganomics", "Thatcherism" and "monetarism", capital's strategy for the 80's was austerity via the "debt crisis". The U.S. Federal Reserve Bank engineered a global slowdown by constricting the money supply and inducing a steep climb in interest rates. In Europe, Japan and the U.S. the effect was to further cut wages, undermine unions and increase unemployment. For countries borrowing money from Western banks the high interest rates and loss of export revenues quickly increased their debt to astronomical proportions, and the IMF prescribed the bitter pill of austerity (for the working class), a more favourable investment climate and production for export.

It was the threat of defaults on debt that forced the U.S. to devalue the dollar by a half, thus halving the debt of the debtor countries. Saudi Arabia simultaneously doubled its oil production, thereby halving the price of oil and saving the U.S. government from insolvency. This oil devaluation bankrupted many oil producing countries, leading to austerity and the denationalisation of their oil industries.

Throughout the 80's anti-austerity and anti-IMF rebellions erupted all over the South, especially in oil producing regions, and low-intensity warfare, killing millions, was capital's means to enforce debt repayments.

By the late 80's capital was planning oil price rises to create capital for increased investment and a restructuring of the oil industry, particularly in areas previously off limits,as state owned oil companies in Algeria, China, Mexico, Venezuela, Vietnam and the USSR opened their doors to international capital. To succeed it needed a "quantum leap in repression" to thwart the possibility of proletarian resistance or the "appropriation" of planned revenues which had plagued capital throughout the 70's and 80's.

In 1990 OPEC agreed a higher oil price of $21 a barrel as opposed to the $25 a barrel demanded by Iraq. The Iraqi economy was in deep crisis after the Iran-Iraq war. The Ba'ath Party had attempted to impose austerity and privatisation to attract foreign capital for a new cycle of industrial expansion, but had failed, partly because nationalised industries were its political base and because political stability was based on a police state and increased standards of living and patronage.

Unable to effectively confront its own working class Iraq invaded Kuwait to cancel its debt with Kuwait, loot some of its wealth and stake a claim to some of its oil fields. Hussein didn't think he had much to lose, even if the U.S. did attack, as there was no reason to believe that it would destroy the Ba'ath police state.

In the event, the targets of the mass bombing were primarily the civilian infrastructure - factories, bridges, water treatment centres, houses and office buildings - and retreating Kurdish and Shia conscripts who would have been the main force of revolt within Iraq.

Although about two hundred thousand people were exterminated, the Iraqi state's repressive apparatus was left largely untouched.

The bombing and sanctions have achieved what the Ba'ath regime was unable to do itself - smash the National-Socialist deal and impose austerity, indeed starvation, on the working class. Furthermore, the US now controls how much oil Iraq can sell, when, to whom and for how much.

The Gulf War was the reorganisation, not just of the Iraqi working class but also of the predominantly migrant workers in the whole Gulf region, as planned by these states for some time. In Kuwait, the replacement of politically unreliable Palestinian workers began immediately the war finished with killings, torture and expulsion. At the same time Saudi Arabia and Iran commenced an enormous leap in investment and expansion of their oil industries.

Midnight Notes view the Gulf War as having been part of the "New Enclosures", which they argue is Capital's current strategy, aimed at uprooting workers "from the terrain on which their organisational power has been built, so that like African slaves transplanted to the Americas, they are forced to work and fight in a strange environment where the forms of resistance possible at home are no longer available."

Several features of this process can be noted. Firstly, the ending of communal control of the means of subsistence as witnessed in the destruction of 'aboriginal' land from Indonesia to the Amazon. A second aspect of this is that communal land in Africa and Asia is seized to pay debts to Western banks. Thirdly, the New Enclosures make mobile and migrant labour the dominant form of labour as Capital keeps us constantly on the move, guaranteeing "cheap wages, communal disorganisation and maximum vulnerability in front of law courts and the police" - a central feature of the Gulf War, as was the destruction of Iraq's national-socialism and the profitable "enclosure" of previously socialist /national-socialist oil industries. For the collapse of socialism throughout the world is required, to dramatically increase the international competition of workers, even though it was workers themselves who undermined the socialist deal. Finally, another interrelated aspect is the despoilation of the environment - the destruction of the earthly commons.

Midnight Notes argue that, strategically, Marx and Engels fail at this moment of the New Enclosures, because they would understand the New Enclosures as they understood the Old Enclosures - progressive, in that they destroy petty bourgeois individual and private production, break down the separation between town and country, and unify the international working class. The problem is that the New Enclosures (and many of the old) are aimed not only at petty private producers and their property, but also aim to destroy communal land and space that forms an "energy well of proletarian power".

It is argued that Marx did not see the possibilities of proletarian power in the communal life of millions in Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas. Similarly, Engels, in *The Housing Question* could not see a new communal power developing in the proletarian quarters of the new industrial cities of Europe. Both are the result of a "categorical failure of Marxist understanding of the Enclosures that remains central to Marxism today". Consequently, Marxists have often accepted the demise of loci of proletarian power, be they villages, tracts of land, neighbourhoods or towns as necessary and ultimately progressive sacrifices to the destruction of capitalism and the

development of universal proletarians. But, "universal or not, real living proletarians (that do not live on air) must put their feet someplace, must strike from someplace, must rest someplace, must retreat someplace. For class war does not happen on an abstract board toting up a profit and loss, it is a war that needs a terrain".

These New Enclosures are being resisted and we should participate in that resistance, for "in no way could capital have won in any place if it had not operated in every place. Only if Filipinos thrown off the land could be used in 'free enterprise zones' in Manila or as 'shit' workers in Italy could capital reduce real wages in the US or sustain chronically high unemployment rates in Europe". Under the logic of capitalist accumulation, for every Enclosure in the "Third World or previously Socialist Bloc there must be a corresponding Enclosure in Europe or the U.S.

Midnight Oil is a fascinating book, and what is more, is very well written, with an accessible and "colloquial" style and occasional dry humour that differentiates it from much Left and 'academic' Marxist work. What I particularly like about this book, apart from its content, is the way that potentially difficult concepts and lines of argument are rendered easily comprehensible, whether through the general style of writing or through the inclusion of introductory passages and articles that outline Midnight Notes' general 'Autonomist' Marxist theoretical basis.

Midnight Oil is packed with interesting and thought provoking insights. Apart from chapters covering the major themes outlined above, there are chapters dealing with a whole variety of related aspects: migrant workers in the Middle East ; the use of sabotage by Nigerian oil workers, struggles in the car industry and in the Appalachian Coal Fields; self-reduction of prices in Italy; a class analysis of the anti-nuclear movement; the debt crisis and Africa. Other articles include: *Work/Energy Crisis and the Apocalypse* - which discusses (amongst other things) the connections between theories of physics and capitalism's historical understanding of its crises and its strategies, and a defence of Marx's value theory in relation to capital's use of energy pricing; and *Notes on the International Crisis* which discusses the implications of automation and tendencies to labourless production.

To complete a well rounded book there are two beautiful first hand accounts of a "small journey of investigation" in Jordan and of an observation of "development and underdevelopment" in Nigeria.

Midnight Notes challenges much Left orthodoxy, and in doing so develops an understanding of our world that has important implications for revolutionary organisation and politics, and as such is to be highly recommended.

N.B: *Midnight Oil* is available from AK Distribution, 22 Lutton Place, Edinburgh EH8 9PE. £10.45. (Price includes Postage & Packing within U.K.)

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Published and Printed in central Scotland
by Edinburgh Conference of Socialist Economists

ISSN: 0957 - 204X