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The Gulf Crisis Re-examined

Alfred Mendes

The recent stand-off between Iraq, on the one hand, and the US and Britain on the other, demands a second, closer look at the events that triggered this more recent crisis - namely, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait in August '90, resulting in the Gulf War some months later.

If there was one undeniable, salient fact in that earlier, 1990 crisis, it was that the US played the leading, principal rôle in the UN-sponsored, anti-Iraq Alliance, acting, ostensibly under the umbrella of the UN (though it should be recalled that Perez de Cuellar in January '91 emphasised that the ongoing military action was not under UN command). The fact that other countries within the Alliance also played a part is incidental here, and only helps to confuse the issue inasmuch as it was the US which had taken the initial, crucial steps on behalf of the Alliance at every stage of the crisis. This is on record. Furthermore, the US having been one of the two main protagonists - the other being Iraq - we are entitled to examine its rôle in the matter carefully if we are to reach a rational understanding of the crisis. Indeed, it is essential that we do so.

Let us, therefore, first examine the motives of the Americans over that earlier period. We were told, repeatedly, that that war on Iraq would be a 'just' war; a 'moral' war; a war to reinstate the legitimate government of Kuwait - under the aegis of 'Democracy'. Putting aside that it is, at the very least, an act of political dubiousness to associate democracy with what was (and still is) a family fiefdom, let us turn to the morality of the matter.

To begin with, did not the US have equally sound, moral reasons for opposing Russia militarily when the latter invaded Afghanistan in December '79? Or Israel, when it invaded Lebanon in June '82? Or, indeed, Iraq itself, when it invaded Iran in September '80? (It is pertinent to note here that the UN responded to that invasion by passing Resolution 479, which neither condemned the Iraqi's invasion, nor demanded a withdrawal of their troops fron Iran). That it did not, in any of these instances, intervene openly with military force can only be explained by the fact that its motives in these events were pragmatic - not moralistic. Surely, we are therefore justified in doubting its avowed moralistic motives in '90/'91? Our doubt may even swing towards disbelief

when we recall that not only did the US **not** adopt a moral stance towards Iraq when the latter invaded Iran - it subsequently assisted Iraq in the war that followed, turning one blind eye when the latter killed some 37 American sailors of the USS STARK in May '87, and turning the other blind eye when it, Iraq, gassed thousands of Kurds in Halabja in March '88. This was not morality - this was pragmatism. Pragmatism thus established, why, then, **did** the US intervene militarily, and with such vigour, in the Gulf - and not in other recent, similar events?

At this point, it is incumbent upon us to lay a basis of facts of an historical, political nature concerning the region in particular, and the Arab world in general before continuing with our scrutiny of more recent, contemporary events. It is essential to recall that the political geography of the region had been for centuries an amorphous mix of borderless tribal Sheikdoms interspersed with nomadic Bedu tribes. It was primarily as a result of gerrymandering by the British and French in the immediate post-World War 1 period that the Arab states, as we now know them, were formed - much of it by the British High Commissioner of that period, Sir Percy Cox. Another more critical fact to note is the presence in the region of vast reserves of oil, a product which, because it is the largest dollar-earning, power-wielding industry on this earth, frequently leads to it being the cause of politically motivated events that reflect the potentially explosive physical nature of the product itself - as a brief re-cap of the region's history illustrates.

Two events that were to have far-reaching, de- stabilising effects occurred in WW1: (1) the defeat of the Turkish Ottoman empire; and (2) The Balfour Declaration of December 1917, which pledged the establishment of a homeland for the Jews in British-controlled Palestine - though the latter would not take effect until 1948. In the case of the defeat of the Ottomans: as a result of the leading rôle that Britain had played in that, it was inevitable that it, Britain, would be the dominant power in the post-war period in the region: perhaps most poignantly exemplified by just two military actions taken by the British against recalcitrant groups in what was subsequently to become the State of Iraq: first, the mustard-gassing of Shia rebels by the Army in '20; second, the bombing of the Kurds in the north-east by the RAF (it is relevant to note here that Churchill, then Secretary of State for War, urged the RAF to use mustard gas - but this proved impractical, for technical reasons). Thereafter, British oil interests, mainly in the form of Anglo Iranian, prevailed in the region - particularly in Iran and Iraq. Later, in the forties, British influence declined, due to the encroachment of American oil interests into the region; and, in the post-WW2 period, American hegemony was significantly strengthened by the simultaneous development of the vast Saudi oil reserves, the largest in the region.

As for the Balfour Declaration: what had been formulated in 1917 in line with the classic British colonial ploy of 'divide and

rule', evolved in 1948 into the Great Divide: the State of Israel. The resulting destabilisation that this engendered in the Arab world can be more readily appreciated when it is realised that, until then, Arab and Sephardim Jew had over the centuries achieved a modus vivendi in their social relationship (It would, for instance, not be unduly surprising to find a Tunisian-born Jew who, until '48, had served as an officer in the Libyan Police Force). It is a sad fact of history that a similar claim cannot be made by many countries of Christian orientation. Ironically, this overall Arab/Jew division is today mirrored by the Ashkenazi/Sephardim split among Jews in Israel itself. It was against this background that the US, with its newly-acquired influence in the Gulf (as noted above), found itself on the horns of a dilemma: on the one hand, it needed to foster a well-armed, technically advanced country like Israel which would serve the dual purpose of being a foil against the Arabs while, at the same time satisfying its powerful domestic Jewish lobby; and, on the other hand, it had to support the Arab hosts of its (US) oil corporations - particularly Saudi Arabia. It resolved this problem by delegating many of its diplomatic functions to oil company executives in situ, thus creating a semi-autonomous (and thus non-attributable) arm of its foreign service in the Gulf. This resolution of its problem carried enormous risk, the effects of which reverberate today, as exemplified by the fact that, over the last few years, the US has used its considerable economic and political clout (as well as its veto) in the UN to ensure that Iraq adheres to the resolutions passed against it - while allowing Israel to side-step resolutions passed against it. As any banker would confirm: a customer heavily in debt (as the US is to the UN) carries weight. It must be presumed that this noted risk was outweighed by the high dollar- earning potential within the situation - particularly in the trade of arms.

The emergence of OPEC in the '60's exacerbated these risks. OPEC meant, in effect, an erosion of the oil companies control (though to a lesser degree than is commonly believed, due to strict contractual agreements between the companies and their hosts, which meant effective retainment of control of the market by the former - nonetheless, an erosion). This inevitably led to friction, as exemplified by America's bellicose response to the Arab embargo, when, in '74, James Schlesinger, the Defense Secretary, threatened to use force if the embargo was not lifted - a threat used more than once in the following months.

Due to its physical size, and the size of its oil reserves - resulting in the accumulation of vast wealth - Saudi Arabia would emerge as a key player on the stage of Gulf politics; but the nature, the direction of its politics, was inexorably influenced by the oil company that operated on its territory: The Arabian American Oil Company (ARAMCO). Formed in the late '40's by the most prestigious oil companies: Exxon, Texaco, Socal and Mobil, and run by executives of those companies serving under contracts of

secondment, it is no exaggeration to say that ARAMCO was - and is - Saudi Arabia. As the country's sole source of wealth, it could hardly be otherwise. Thus, the basis for a close political relationship was laid. One simplistic manifestation of this was the fact that (from the late '70's to the early '80's, at least) ARAMCO expatriates, most of whom were Americans, were issued with manuals instructing them in the proper, safe method of making their own alcohol stills - and this in the heart of Islam!

More significantly, this relationship led to a number of joint deals of a very dubious, secretive nature. This was both a reflection of the semi-official, non-attributable nature of American foreign policy practised in the area (as noted above), and confirmation of the intimacy of the relationship - exemplified by the following joint secret deals, made without the knowledge of Congress (though subsequently disclosed): (1) As part of the Irangate conspiracy, Saudi Arabia financed the Contras to the tune of 8 million dollars, in exchange for 400 Stinger Missiles. (2) The Saudis financed the failed CIA assassination attempt on Sheikh Fadlallah of the Hizbollah - then paid off the Sheikh. (3) Over a period of years, they jointly financed covert arms supplies to the Afghan Mujahadeen. In such a clonal relationship: between the strongest contemporary nation on earth, and a feudalistic Arab family (conveniently set-up by the British after WW1), it is surely obvious which partner calls the tune! This last point is particularly relevant to an understanding of America's actions vis-a-vis Saudi Arabia in the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, when the US claimed that Saudi Arabia had asked for the deployment of American forces in the Gulf. This was a patently specious claim.

Certain events in the short history of the State of Iraq fall within the constraints of an article of this length, and are relevant enough to be noted, starting with the birth of the state in 1921, when the British installed the Bedouin Feisal as monarch - but under British mandate. The High Commissioner, Sir Percy Cox (see above), was subsequently to play a crucial rôle in delineating national boundaries that had not, in effect, previously existed. These boundaries - or 'lines in the sand' - ill-defined and contentious as they were, would become a bone of contention between Iraq, Kuwait and Saudi Arabia in years to come - as evidenced by the Iraqi threat to absorb Kuwait in the crisis of 1961. A very similar crisis was to be repeated in August 1990, but with one significant difference: in 1961, Britain, still a power-broker in the region, made it clear to Iraq that its planned invasion of Kuwait would be countered by a strong British military force, backed by the 'Red Beard' tactical nuclear free-fall bomb - carried by HMS Victorious at that time. The invasion was abandoned.

Two factors that were to have a bearing on America's actions in the post WW2 period in the region were: (1) its increasing involvement in oil development, and (2) the rising influence of the Communist Party of Iraq, from its formation in the mid-30's to its

association with the populist government of General Qasim during his tenure from '58 to '63. The backdrop was set for what was to become another crucial event (though only the latest in a long line of coup and counter-coup that had marked Iraq's early history). In February 1963, Qasim was overthrown - and assassinated - by a Ba'athist Party group, with the direct connivance of the CIA. This resulted in the return to Iraq of young fellow-Ba'athist, Saddam Hussein, who had fled the country after his earlier abortive attempt to assassinate Qasim. Saddam was immediately assigned to the job of Head of the Al-Jihaz al- Khas (more popularly known as Jihaz Haneen), the clandestine Ba'athist Intelligence organisation, and as such, he was soon after involved in the killing of some five thousand communists. Saddam's rise to power had begun on the back of a CIA-engineered coup!

The build-up of the Iraqi military machine - including its bio-chemical weaponry - would not, of course, have been possible without considerable assistance from the more technically-advanced countries, such as Germany, France, Britain, America herself - and others. Much of this is now in the public domain, such as the Scott Report in Britain. It is also common knowledge that the US supplied Iraq with strategic information gleaned from their satellites during the Iran/Iraq War of '80 to '88. Less well publicised was the substantial American aid brokered by such as (1) the US-Iraq Business forum, set up in May' 85 with many of the top corporations as members; (2) the Kissinger Associates consulting firm, boasting such former members as Brent Scowcroft (National Security Advisor), Lawrence Eagleburger (State Department No.2), and Lord Carrington - and (3) the Bechtel Group, boasting such alumni as George Shultz (Sec. of State) and Caspar Weinberger (Sec. of Defense). Bechtel won the contract to build the PC-2 complex near Al-Musaiyib for the production of gas precursors and ethylene oxide.

This close relationship would account for the turning-of-the-blind-eye incidents noted above, and was perhaps most clearly spelt out by Geoffrey Kemp, Head of the Mid-East Section of the National Security Council under Reagan, when he stated that.."It wasn't that we wanted Iraq to win the war, we didn't want Iraq to lose. We really weren't that naive. We knew that he (Saddam Hussein) was a son-of-a-bitch - but he was **our** son-of-a-bitch."

Such, then, was the situation as we entered 1990. On the larger canvas of world events, détente leads, inevitably, to planned defence cuts. The US is no exception: a proposal to cut defence spending will be put to Congress in September, and almost certain to be passed by its Democrat majority, mindful of its country's enormous deficit. After eight years of war, Iraq is heavily in debt, but acutely aware that an increase in oil price could restore its credit. To determine this requisite price rise, it commissions a study from The Washington Center for Strategic and International Studies. As a result of this study, and with the tacit understanding

of the US government, a figure of 25 dollars per barrel is advised. With that figure in mind, Iraq tries, by means of cajolery and military threats, to persuade its OPEC partners to accede to this figure: without success. Its principal opponent in this matter is its neighbour, Kuwait. In view of the fact that Iraq has by now massed its troops on their common border, and is once more laying claim to its 'province' of Kuwait, it would seem that Kuwait's defiant rejection of the proposed price rise is both impolitic and illogical, and, as such, very puzzling. But - so it is. Iraq decides to kill two birds with one stone: it will invade Kuwait under the banner of 'righteous reclamation', and thus be in a position to impose its oil price rise. However, it must first obtain clearance for its planned action from the area's power-broker, America, and in view of its recent friendly relations with that country (perhaps best exemplified by Assistant Secretary John Kelly's report to Congress in Feb.'90, when, on his return from talks in Baghdad, he described Saddam Hussein as 'a force for moderation' in the region) - it foresees no obstacle from that quarter - and so it transpires. In the last week of July, Iraq is, in effect, given the green light by the US Ambassadress, April Glaspie, in Baghdad. On the 2nd of August, Iraq invades Kuwait. In view of the American's well-known proclivity to the use of military force in a situation such as this (Korea, Vietnam, Lebanon, Grenada and Panama), and in view of the effectiveness of Britain's earlier threat of military force in precisely similar circumstances to those that faced the US in 1990, it is surely logical to deduce from America's apparently aberrant reaction in this instance that it **wanted** Iraq to invade?

This poses the question: why should the US have wanted this? This, in turn, begs an answer, the key to which surely lies in CENTCOM (Central Command), a military strike force that had evolved in the mid-'80's from the earlier Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force formed by Carter in '79 to cope with the situation in Iran. **This** new force, CENTCOM, was to implement the Pentagon's new-found strategy of striking rapidly with air, sea and land forces at a targeted area, such as, in this instance, the crucial Gulf region. This called for bases where the logistic needs for such a force would be readily accessible - ideally in the targeted area itself. However, the volatile situation in the Gulf determined that the inadequate number - and efficacy - of such bases as were already there (Saudi Arabia, Oman and Bahrain) could not be strengthened. They would therefore be augmented by (1) bases where they were already ensconced - such as in Turkey and Diego Garcia (in the Indian Ocean) - and (2) further supplemented by 'Over the Horizon' bases for 'contingency access', staffed by 'caretaker personnel' - in Kenya, Somalia and Egypt. However, the Pentagon was acutely aware of the fact that these latter were no valid substitute for bases closer to the targeted area, for obvious logistic reasons.

The invasion of Kuwait supplied the US with an excuse for concentrating their forces in the targeted area - the Gulf - and

together with its allies in the Gulf Alliance, deployed a substantial military force there in the immediate aftermath of the invasion. The planned defense cuts were, naturally, set aside by Congress (much to the joy of the arms industry) - and war broke out some months later. Under the command of CENTCOM General Schwartzkopf (who, incidentally, had led the invasion of Grenada in '83), the Allies drove the Iraqis out of Kuwait - but no further. To have invaded Iraq with the intention of destroying its military structure would not only have carried great risk , it would - more pertinently - have deprived the US of a reason persuasive enough to convince the Arab States that it was necessary for a strong US military force to remain in the area to 'protect' them from an Iraq that still posed a threat.

That they were, at the very least, playing a double- game in the lead-up to the invasion was confirmed by the release to the UN in October '90 of a confidential letter written by Brigadier al-Fahd (Director of the Kuwaiti State Security Dept.) in November '89 to his Minister of the Interior, concerning a secret week-long meeting in Langley, Va. that he had attended with William Webster (Director of the CIA), during which they had agreed, in general, to cooperate. The letter continued: "We agreed with the American side that it was important to take advantage of the deteriorating economic situation in Iraq in order to put pressure on that country's government to delineate our common border. The CIA gave us its view of appropriate means of pressure, saying that broad co-operation should be initiated between us, on condition that such activities are co-ordinated at a high level". (This at a time when American companies were concluding a number of deals in Iraq!) From this, it is now clear why Kuwait adopted their somewhat puzzling stance towards Iraq prior to the invasion. And to claim, as the Americans did immediately after the invasion, that they had been caught unawares, can only be described as duplicitous when seen in the context of the frequent involvement of its diplomatic and Intelligence services in the Mid-East in the post-WW2 period.

Any rational synthesis of the facts and events that led to this crisis - as laid out above - leads, inescapably to two main conclusions: (1) that the US is in the Gulf, in force, in order to reassert the hegemony of its oil interests in this most crucial of regions; and (2) America not only used the invasion of Kuwait as a pretext to achieve that aim, but also effectively manipulated the circumstances surrounding the Iraq/Kuwait confrontation - thus ensuring the inevitability of the invasion. In other words: a 'Sting'. As is well known, this is a mode of operation that plays a significant rôle within US government agencies: agencies, moreover, which function under the authority of an **executive** Presidency, a post then held by George Bush, who, as founder of the well-known oil drilling contractor, Zapata, was therefore both an ex-oilman - and ex-Director of the CIA.

Whatever doubts we may harbour over various aspects of the

crisis, one fact brooks no argument: the oil and arms industries were the main beneficiaries of that war. the evidence is there. In the case of oil, for instance, Bechtel Group, the prestigious petro-chemical construction company co-founded by Stephen Davison Bechtel Snr. and John McCone (subsequently CIA Director under Kennedy and Johnson), and embellished by such potent executives as George Schultz and Caspar Weinberger, secured lucrative contracts for the reconstruction of Kuwait - before the war had even finished! It is pertinent to note here that in the late '70's, in order to win the lucrative Saudi contracts to build both the industrial town of Jubail ($30 billion), and the Riyadh International Airport ($3.4 billion), Bechtel had to cut Prince Mohammad ibn-Fahd al-Saud in on the deal - to the tune of a 10% interest in the Arabian Bechtel Co. Ltd.

As for arms: if nothing else, that war proved to be the most ubiquitous, persuasive sales pitch for hi-tech, murderously efficient weapons ever seen by the world's public- though it transpired later that most of these hi-tech, 'surgical' weapons fell far short of what had been claimed for them. Nevertheless, if this means that, as the custodian of such omnipotent weapons, the Americans may now be perceived as unchallengeable on the conventional battlefield, then the angry resentment, the frustration of the Arab fellaheen - exacerbated by the war - will both enhance the isolation of their autocratic Sheikhs/Emirs, and foment Khomeni-like revolts against those same Sheikhs/Emirs. In such a situation, mercenary forces such as the South Korean soldiers hired, under the guise of 'construction workers', by the Saudis in the late '70's to protect oil installations and the Saud Family (a contract brokered by the Americans), would prove inadequate. Herein lies the main reason the US is keen to maintain a military strike force in the Gulf, using Iraq's non-adherence to the UN's resolutions as an excuse: the oil corporations are closely intertwined with, and dependent upon the political stability enshrined within the rule of those same Sheiks and Emirs in the region, and until such time as oil reserves of similar magnitude can be developed elsewhere - as in the Falklands area of the South Atlantic - to replace those in the Gulf, then it is in America's interest to ensure that it maintains a high-profile military presence, CENTCOM, in the region with the primary aim of acting as a deterrent to any potential political threat to their surrogates. Indeed, there are many similarities between the rôle of CENTCOM in the Middle East, and NATO's rôle in Europe.

In conclusion: out of the myriad of words on this subject of the Gulf Crisis that have either been spoken or written by politicians, journalists and correspondents - over the past seven years - one depressing feature stands out: namely, the all- too-frequent omission of the one word that so concisely defines the crux of the matter - OIL.

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The Native in Us, the Earth We Belong To*

Mariarosa Dalla Costa

Educating the sentiments

The work I produced from the early 1970s and part of the 1980s is probably fairly well-known and readily available in print. The material emerged from a collective debate with other women focusing on the analysis of reproductive labour and the question of the struggle for wage/income, starting with wages for housework. These days, given the pervasiveness and destructiveness of this most recent phase of accumulation, I feel that a commitment revolving exclusively round the wage/income (1) and the reduction of labour time is inadequate unless it is pursued in step with a series of other issues which I will try to highlight.

In fact, I think that, from various viewpoints, the problem of human reproduction is indissolubly linked to issues – above all, land – raised by the indigenous movements. Women continue to be primarily responsible for human reproduction in all regions of the planet, and the problem of their condition cannot ignore the horizons that these issues outline, whether in families of the advanced areas or the village communities of the 'developing' countries.

Before discussing this, however, I must say something about my personal research in the 1980s, a decade of political repression and the 'normalisation' of a movement which, in the 1970s, produced powerful struggles for which the feminist movement I belonged to – Lotta Femminista, or the Wages for Housework area – paid a price in terms of repression, but, also and as usually happens, of the erasure of its history and work. In the 1970s, we carried out and published some studies (2) and, in the 1980s, with great effort, given the circumstances, we completed others. They

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* This piece was produced for the conference, *For Another Europe, a Europe of Movements and Class Autonomy,* in Turin on March 30, 1996 and was updated in December of the same year.

included (3) Leopoldina Fortunati's *The Arcane of Reproduction* (1981) and *Il grande Calibano,* published by Fortunati and Silvia Federici in 1984, two books conceived as part of a larger project which remains uncompleted. I am certain I am right in saying that circulation of these works was actively hindered.

The climate was unfavourable, not least because of Marxism's 'hibernation' when it went out of fashion. And since my own and my comrades' approach was undoubtedly rooted in Marxist analysis, it was difficult for me to find talking partners, of either sex. Our efforts were directed to using a Marxian analysis integrated with our whole approach to housework. We reformulated the concept of class to include women as unwaged workers in that their main job was the production and reproduction of labour-power.

It was just as difficult to find anyone with whom to give explicit expression to a certain number of rather irksome misgivings I always felt in the Marxist ambit from which I set out. The first and major irritation was over the idea that *capitalist development* seemed to be seen as *ineluctable.* However powerful the struggles were, a new leap and a new level were just round the corner, creating a tunnel vision in which the tunnel's end was never in sight. The leap to a new level of technology obliged the struggle onto a new terrain which then became the only significant portent for liberation.

The second irritation I felt was because of the apparent cynicism with which each new level of development was awaited and greeted, and the fact that little research was devoted to the ways in which new possibilities of liberation opened up by development frequently turned into their opposite.

The debate dealt fundamentally with the advanced areas of the globe and gave little attention to Third World struggles; the assumption was in any case that the best way of supporting the latter was to struggle forcefully in the former. But this link is not as automatic as it looks; it needs a few more steps, which I shall try to illustrate. The decisions involved require that one should know what Third World struggles are going on and what they are, with a real knowledge of the factors they are moving against. This also requires knowing the relationship these factors have with the new leaps in technology at the most 'advanced' points of development, as well as with the re-stratification of labour at the world level. The most detailed knowledge possible is also required of the direction in which the actors in the struggles would like to see them move.

The idea that capitalist development could be ineluctable chilled me to the bone and froze my imagination. I wondered how many people would in fact survive to be liberated in the famous final stage of development since the fate of an increasingly large proportion of mankind seemed to be death by massacre, and I wondered what sense there would be in the liberation of the

surviving few if most had perished. Again, I wondered whether there was any sense in being liberated in a world where no blade of grass would be seen and the population consisted of monsters produced in laboratories. I knew my questions were not original, but they ate at me like woodworm eating wood.

In this debate, the focal points were labour and capital. However all-embracing they may be, I missed any reference to nature. By this, I mean nothing more than plants, the sea, rivers, animals. I lived in a kind of schizophrenia in which I only re-discovered my sensations, imagination, and life in nature, but nature found no place in the debate. I was unable to transfer the life it gave me to the political discourse I was involved with, and I felt unable to indicate nature as a source of life for others, except as a private and confidential observation. As women, we had brought our labour to the surface, but a black hole remained: the still submerged role of nature.

Beyond any possibility or impossibility of a theoretical debate on the problem, I took a simple decision to try and communicate with those who spoke the same language because they shared what I felt. Finding the present level of development intolerable, I had no intention of appealing to the next level.

In this rather solitary research, I had two fundamental meetings; with the *movement of the indigenous peoples*; and with what *ecologists* were saying, especially the *ecofeminists*.

My first encounter with the indigenous peoples' movement was Rigoberta Menchù's work *My Name is Rigoberta Menchù,* in the Italian edition by Burgos in 1991. I urge everyone to read it. It speaks of the condition of Guatemala's indigenous peoples. It consists of three books. Book One describes Mayan civilisation, and the great discovery for me was that it is a living civilisation, not a dead one. I learned about the traditions, rites, and other ways in which the Mayans hand down their secrets in their villages, or when they are no longer sure they will return there because they are going into the mountains to become guerillas. I also learned that this civilisation still keeps some of its secrets.

This encouraged me to see capitalism's apparent omnipotence, as something that destroys everything or re-shapes it to its own purposes, in more relative terms; there *are* things that capitalism doesn't know. But I also re-discovered myself in the natives described by Rigoberta, in their respect and love for the land and all living things. In the importance they give to their relationship with animals, I re-discovered a piece of my history and my identity, and I also re-discovered my research:

> Above all at sowing time, the animals came and searched through the seeds, so we took it in turns to guard the *milpa*...We took it in turns, but we were happy because we stayed out and slept under the trees. We had fun laying

> traps...and when we heard the poor animal crying out, we would run to see. But since our parents forbade us to kill animals, we let them go. We just shouted at them, and they never came back...(Burgos 1991 p. 67).

> When we girls were together...when we already had our pet animals and we carried them around with us, we talked about our dreams and what we wanted to do with the animals we had. We talked about life a bit, but only in very general terms. (Burgos 1991 p.102).

> They killed our animals. They killed many dogs. For us natives, killing an animal is like killing a person. Every being in nature comes high in our consideration (Burgos 1991 p.132).

Book One, then, is a book about love and respect for the earth and its inhabitants, about communication and the society of all living beings.

Book Two which I would describe as a book of horrors, concerns capitalist development i.e. the conditions under which the Maya are obliged to work in the *fincas*, the large landowners' plantations where export crops are grown and how the Maya are killed. It is not just the story of how the land is expropriated, but also how the landowners and the army leave the natives no more than a small plot of land, the *milpa*, which is so small and unfertile that they are in any case obliged to work in the *fincas*. There, the conditions are inhuman not only because the pay is so low that a day's wage leaves the day-labourers hungry. There is also the security guards' terrorism, and even the most elementary hygienic facilities are lacking; the plantation workers have nowhere to wash and no latrines. The tale I tell here is a tale of what death looks like when it comes to you at your place of work.

Rigoberta's family work on the banana plantation. Her mother knows that Rigoberta's two-year-old brother is dying of hunger and she can do nothing to feed him because she earns too little. He dies and is left unburied for several days because she doesn't have the money to rent a square meter of land in the plantation for his grave. In the end, overcoming a number of difficulties, among them, the difficulties of communication between the different ethnic minorities with different languages, the labour-ers manage to collect enough money to bury the child.

One of Rigoberta's friends, Donna Petrona Chona, resists the sexual advances of the owner's son and is hacked to pieces by the owner's body guard with a machete, her baby son in her arms. Her body is cut into 25 pieces and is left to rot. No-one in authority comes to investigate so the workers decided to break regulations and gather her remains in a basket to bury her.

Another of Rigoberta's little brothers and a friend are allowed to stay in an area where the cotton is being fumigated, and they die of the poison they absorb.

Book Three concerns political organisation and repression, the latter making it in this respect another book of horrors. But in what is said about political organisation, which means guerilla warfare for some and the Peasant Unity Committee for others, I was struck by one thing. Rigoberta, who teaches the people of her *aldea* (4), and later others as well, how to defend themselves from the soldiers' attacks, is particularly good at setting traps, the same traps as five centuries earlier the natives used when they defended themselves from the *conquistadores*: a heritage of knowledge handed down and preserved. The other origins of capital, unlike those of the advanced Great Britain, differently to what happens in the First World, are very evident here in what has been handed down, as a remembered presence of what happened, of what has been suffered and what defences have been used. But another striking thing is the *concern* the Maya show for the animals, which they *avoid killing* if it is not necessary, and also their concern for talking to the soldiers when they capture them. It is striking how, in defending themselves, they have preserved the memory of the *same weapons,* using them to organise effective forms of resistance today. Conquest and capital; a question that remains open. A weapon has remained close to hand to throw the invader into the sea, no longer a destiny interiorised as ineluctable, but rather a 500-year wait, but then you are ready for when the hidden weapons must be disinterred, to build a new future.

The repression, as I noted, is another book of horrors. Rigoberta's third brother, 16, is captured as a reprisal. He and the other prisoners are tortured and then brought to the square of a village. Here the villagers, among whom is the (hidden) family of Rigoberta, are then forced to gather round and listen as the soldiers, pointing to the wounds inflicted on each prisoner's naked body, explain which torture each wound corresponds to. They are then burned alive, in front of the villagers.

Rigoberta's father also died by fire, probably burned alive by a phosphorus bomb thrown into the Spanish Embassy in Ciudad de Guatemala after he had led a march of farm workers and peasants inside the building. The mother was captured, tortured to death and her body left to the wild animals. And the soldiers stood on guard to stop the natives from burying remains.

I don't know how high development had reached in the advanced countries in the 1970s and 1980s, but I do know that this was the underdevelopment it provoked and on which it rested. The Maya American natives paid, and continue to pay, just as they did at the origins of capital, with torture, death, forced labour, hunger and the expropriation of the land and the resources to be found in that land. They pay for the continually renewed globalisation of

the economy, through the combined strategy of development and underdevelopment on which it rests.

In so far as her book of love and horror deals with belonging to the land, being expropriated from the land, I must say that, in my mind, Rigoberta Menchù confirmed the *centrality* of the *relationship with the land* as a new starting point for a political analysis. She also gave *centrality* to the *native question*, both because of the indigenous peoples' fundamental role in the social body of workers at the world level, and because they represent the persistence in the world of 'other civilisations', with other memories and imaginary landscapes. They are peoples who have refused to disappear with the 'lost civilisations', keeping their daily lives, preserving their secrets and maintaining forms of knowledge which represent an enormous potential for founding another form of development, starting above all from a different relationship with the land and all living beings.

Because of its context, the explosion of the Zapatista movement on January 1, 1994, was certainly the most important event in attracting world attention to the rebellion of the indigenous peoples, and it gave further confirmation to the *centrality* of the above approach. In fact, starting from the claim to land as *common,* Chiapas has increasingly become a *political laboratory* which *movements in all parts of the planet* look to and create links with.

Another important encounter for me was Vandana Shiva's *Sopravvivere allo sviluppo* (1990), as a kind of introduction to eco-feminism. Various authors write in this vein of analysis, above all, Maria Mies (1986). I may disagree with some of the main points in these authors' approach, for example, when they look at the First World primarily as a source of consumption, neglecting the class struggle and conflict that impregnates it, and the poverty that increasingly invades it. Even though many of our conclusions are convergent, our analytical categories are very different. Vandana, for example, uses the female principle as the starting-point for her critique of male reductionist science, while I use the categories of class and capital in which the fundamental division between productive and reproductive, waged and non-waged labour is one of the common threads traversing them world-wide.

But, on the whole, one of the assumptions underlying all these works is one I share: that any political proposal whatsoever, for development or non-development – one can also mark time; there is no ineluctable obligation to develop and develop again – should start from respect for, and the determination to preserve nature's fundamental equilibria, above all, its self-regenerative-reproductive powers; from respect and love for all living creatures. In this sense, we were on shared ground, in any case and always. And also for the continual appreciation shown by these writers for the *knowledge used by indigenous women* in extracting nourish-

ment, resources, and *abundance* from nature, while allowing the *regeneration* of its resources by *using them in moderation* and *returning* what has been taken. For me, an extremely *innovative* and *significant* political approach could be seen at work in the *decision of the Chipko women* to turn down an offer from the lumber companies of jobs in the saw mills in exchange for felling the forests, arguing that they did not only not need the jobs, but that their children would never suffer hunger if the forest was nearby. Their struggle meant a rejection of development in so far as development means being enslaved to the wage economy's total uncertainty. It is not only the wage which has its uses; so does the non-wage.

The *love* in Shiva's book (1990) lies in how it describes, almost thanks and caresses the water, the land, the plants, the seeds and animals in their infinite possibilities for satisfying *needs that are also relational*, provided capitalist rules are not imposed on them. The horrors concern the systematic destruction of the diversity of the various species, their standardisation and distortion into laboratory hybrids, genetic manipulation, patents, monopolies, forbidden access, and the resulting creation of hunger and denial of survival for an increasingly large proportion of mankind.

It is no coincidence if these two books were written by women from the world's South, and I have mentioned them because they were important milestones in my identification with the cause of the land and of the indigenous peoples, while also revitalising me by reuniting my heart's quest with what my mind was searching for. Today, the struggle against the capitalist system of social relations must focus on how to construct a new relationship with the land. In this sense, in its affirmation of and claim to a different form of knowledge and volition towards the earth and all living creatures, the indigenous peoples' rebellion represents a moment of strength and a crucial indication for all mankind.

Structural Adjustment Policies and the Land Question

Seen from a much more 'rational' viewpoint, the land question, seen here negatively as privatisation/expropriation, became *central* to the collective work I have pursued with American comrades of both sexes since the early 1970s, when we started examining *policies* for managing the so-called *debt crisis*, broadly speaking the *structural adjustment policies* applied with *an increasingly heavy hand since the 1980s* in both 'developing' and 'advanced' countries.

Above all, because they have extended the poverty they were supposed to cure, these policies have been the vehicle for the *new international division of labour*, which has re-stratified the corpus of the world's workers in increasingly heavy ways, in production, but also in reproduction (Federici 1996), for the neoliberalism that

asks workers to make further sacrifices so that firms can compete better in the world economy; for the *new terms of production* that are designed to lower the wage and encourage the de-regulation of labour.

This set of coordinates was the response to the international cycle of struggles in the 1960s and 1970s, but in the 1980s and the present decade these same structural adjustment policies have already stirred a growing rebellion throughout the world. In Italy, in the 1990s, similar measures took giant steps towards acceptance as the *necessary corollary to recent major financial and economic agreements*, including the Maastricht Treaty, all of which are inspired by the free-market approach.

In the crisis of the nation-state, the International Monetary Fund and, in an emerging role, the World Bank have come to form a government without frontiers and international capital's institutional summit. By imposing adjustment policies, the IMF has continually lowered the conditions for human reproduction, while the World Bank has launched complementary development projects in which *profit maximisation* rests on the *further massive demolition of the factors on which social reproduction* is based. As more than a few analysts have said (George 1989; McCully 1996), these projects represent a hymn of praise to environmental devastation, waste, senselessness, and the annihilation of peoples. A few examples must suffice.

World Bank finance was used to build a nuclear power-station in a seismic zone in the Philippines; the station was never brought on stream because of the seismic risk.

The same source of funding ensured construction of the Tucurui dam in Brazilian Amazonia; rather than felling 2.8 million trees for a total of 13.4 million tons of wood, they were left to rot under the water. The forest was sprayed with the defoliant, dioxyn, whose devastating effects became widely known during the Vietnam war. Some barrels of dioxyn went missing and are still lying down under the water. Because of the pressure, they could explode at any moment and pollute the lake created by the dam. The lake is the water source supplying the state capital of Belem; the effects on its population of 1.2 million can perhaps be imagined (George 1989, p. 205).

Another project resting on World Bank funds is the Yacyretà dam, a structure 87 meters high and 67 meters long on the Paranà river at the frontier between Paraguay and Argentina. The project promised low-cost electrical energy, but the electricity it produces will in fact cost three times the current market price. Energy needs were overestimated at the design stage and could be covered at a lower cost by using Argentinian natural gas. When the project is complete, 50,000 persons will have been obliged to leave the flooded land. Those who have done so already have received no compen-sation and have finished up in decrepit shanties. Local

fishing has been ruined, and so have the local ceramics craftworkers since the clay the craftsmen need is under water. The damage to the ecosystem has caused the spread of various diseases and sicknesses (*Il Manifesto*, November 29, 1996). The bank's money has also been used to launch the largest and most terrible *transmigrasi*, a transfer of population I shall mention below (George 1989).

Returning to the adjustment polices to which these so-called plans are complementary, a cursory look at them shows that they are *substantially identical* in all the countries they are applied to. Officially to pay their debts, and in obedience to the IMF's directives whose primary objectives include *encouraging the growth of international trade*, these countries work out their policies along lines supposed to promote economic growth. The main ones are: devaluation to encourage exports; the liberalisation of trade and imports; the reorganisation of production for export; rationalisation of the public sector through *expenditure cuts, firings and privatisation*; *wage* reductions; investments cuts, especially in *health, education and pensions*; the suppression of *subsidies* for prime necessities; and, where as in more or less vast areas of Africa and Latin America as well as elsewhere *land* is still *managed collectively,* the imposition of a *price on land* with *privatisation*, on the one hand, and *expropriation* on the other. This is a very important factor in weakening the villagers' bargaining power since, in villages enjoying a reasonable level of reproduction, the inhabitants have always been able to refuse the most obnoxious jobs and wages that are too low.

The major financial agencies, led by the World Bank, match the expropriation/enclosure of the land and other 'commons' or collective goods needed for survival (for example, water supplies and the forest) with encouragement for population policies which discourage collective forms of social reproduction in favour of models of reproduction typical of the areas of advanced capitalism. This means, first of all, the nuclear family, even though the percentage of waged heads of family is by no means as high as in the advanced countries in the era of mass industrial production – and the nuclear family also lies in complete contrast with the rooted habits of collective management of the rights and duties in human reproduction.

The problem here is not so much one of fitting the form of the family and social reproduction to the forms in which production is organised, but rather to make reproduction a terrain for strong *behavioural discipline* according to the 'Western model'. Above all, it is a question of *weakening collective reproductive structures* in order to lower the population's bargaining power on work conditions. Individuals are thus deprived of both the material resources available independently of the money economy and the support deriving from the community and the extended family.

As Silvia Federici (1993) has shown, Nigeria is a significant example. Polygamy is the rule in much of Africa and taking care of

the children a responsibility of the village, yet the population propaganda campaign started in 1984 demands 'one man, one wife' and 'one couple, one child'. As Federici notes, for the most part, these targets have remained empty propaganda since the cuts in social expenditure mean that, in practice, there is no access to the means of birth control. Thus, the reduction in population that the governments are hoping for is achieved, instead, by the lethal consequences of the adjustment policies.

In the early 1980s, the social damage caused by these policies was claimed to be a transitory accident. Later, as the systematic damage they caused became more obvious the more persistently they were applied, the damage was said to represent a necessary social cost. A whole literature developed on how to alleviate the more aberrant forms of harm, for a form of 'adjustment with a human face'. Another, more recent approach admits that these policies were directly aimed at transforming, above all, the sphere of social reproduction, from family structure to nutrition, hygiene, health, education and pensions, but argues that this gives governments a big chance to convert their country's social reproduction to greater efficiency.

Looking at these approaches, I and the scholars I have worked with agree that these policies are in fact designed to reshape social reproduction, but what is *there* defined in terms of efficiency, we see as an attack on the population's conditions of reproduction and on women's labour and struggles, as a prerequisite for a take-off in the new phase of accumulation (Dalla Costa M. and Dalla Costa G.F., 1993, 1996; *Midnight Notes* 1988, 1990; *Cafa* 1990-96). More precisely, I think *these policies are the point at which neoliberalism emerges as a planned strategy*; in other words, *they form the programme for an overall strategy of underdevelopment in social reproduction*, which reflects *an increasingly pervasive world-wide level of proletarisation*, involving a deeper stratification of labour. The aim is to lower the bargaining power of the working body of society so that, in conformity with the conditions needed for neoliberalism fuller extension, new modes of labour are accepted, such that *guarantees and acquired rights are progressively dis-mantled and a return is made to conditions of slavery on an increasingly wide scale.*

In New York, a few months ago, I happened to hear a phone call from a trade-unionist to a local radio station in which he denounced a US company for employing children at a plant in Central America from 7 in the morning to 10 at night. Their shoes were removed so they wouldn't run away. The labour official was about to start touring the country to ask the Americans if they agree that this is the way the goods they buy should be made.

But, as a strategy for the underdevelopment of reproduction, structural adjustment policies are something more than an *attack on women's labour and their struggles in defence* of a decent level of

reproduction in the family or the community. These are struggles designed to obtain and defend income where survival depends on money; and defend resources and goods such as the land, water, the forest, animals, small trading and craftwork where survival does not rest predominantly on money, but may involve it.

Apart from their attack on all this, these policies *also undermine the autonomy won by the women, economically and socially*, in civil as well as political terms, especially as regards 'reproductive rights'. Communities are not immobile in their traditions as is patently clear from the Eritrean women's *Charter of Rights* and the revolutionary law of the Maya women in Chiapas. In no situation today can women be easily reduced to silence and obedience, as is shown by the Algerian crisis and the protest which burst out in the great demonstration in Afghanistan in October.

Another aspect that needs highlighting (Dalla Costa M. 1995) is *that this overall strategy of underdevelopment in social reproduction* involves social *macro-operations* very similar to those which characterized *primitive accumulation* at the birth of the capitalist system: not just the expropriation of the land, but also the dissolution of family and community relations today provoked above all by the uprooting and transfer of populations in order to create a mass of impoverished and isolated individuals who have nothing but their labour-power. Now, as then, women are expelled from the preceding means of reproduction and, since waged jobs in plantations and on dams are offered primarily to men, they are in large part denied access to new means; they emerge as the poorest of the poor. If the *individual proletarian woman's* emergence in capitalism is fundamentally in *poverty* and as a *prostitute* (Fortunati 1981), for that is when *prostitution first became a mass profession for women*, the launching of structural adjustment policies on an increasingly ample scale results in *prostitution* appearing as an *international profession for women on an increasingly mass scale.* Another point to note is that, even if it was ignored by Marx, *witch-hunting was a fundamental process* during primitive accumulation (Federici 1981) since it served to forge a *new female proletarian identity*, whose defining features were isolation and subordination in which women are deprived of their power and knowledge as regards sexuality and procreation. In the same way, today, we see the application of increasingly authoritarian population policies of which China's are anything but an isolated example – policies which are completely subordinate to capitalist interests and continue down this same path of denying women material possibilities, autonomy, power and knowledge as regards sexuality and procreation. At the same time, in precisely these same territories, and especially in the more advanced areas, they are progressively overrun by technologies of reproduction which make them increasingly sought-after for male domination and capitalist profit, as well as in the mystification and destruction of social relations. In this connection, it is significant to find so much

emphasis laid in so many debates on indifference to the biological father, who has been replaced so nonchalantly by the sperm bank.

In my view, *the trend towards making the individual increasingly into a laboratory product* rather than the child of biological and social parents is matched by the *tendency towards uprooting populations*. Whether you uproot plants, individuals or populations, there is undoubtedly a weakening effect and, for humans, prejudice for an identity which is also defined by knowledge and memories handed down through the generations. Faced by this technology of reproduction, my hope is that, in view of times when plastic and metal are less predominant, the Mayan women will succeed in maintaining and handing on their secret knowledge of wild herbs which enables them to control how many children to have and when to have them (Burgos 1991).

Adjustment Policies and Restructurisation in Social Reproduction

Some observations are now needed on *the restructurisation of social reproduction* set in motion by *structural adjustment policies*. The IMF and the World Bank are the institutional summit and *the main driving power* behind capitalist restructurisation in the new global economy and, precisely, through the massive poverty they cause, *their adjustment policies* are the conduit for the *new inter-national division of labour, above all reproductive labour* (Federici 1996). *Adjustment policies and neoliberalism* are the *two pillars* on which the new mode of capitalist accumulation rests.

In fact, the impoverishment caused by the separation of increasingly large masses of individuals from their means of reproduction – *land*, above all, but also all those *individual and collective rights* that contribute to guaranteeing survival – is the root cause of the massive migratory flows providing *low-cost, even slave labour,* to Italy and other countries, while also helping to compress *domestic labour costs.*

Poverty generated elsewhere may explain why Chinese work day and night behind the closed doors of textile factories in some parts of Italy, but the poverty caused by Italian adjustment policies and the Italian model of economic development and aid to the South explains why Italian, and especially southern Italian, women and children are often recruited illegally to work a 12-14 hour day for as little as $45, and rarely more than $350 a month (5). At the same time, in recent years, the reproductive labour expressed in prostitution has increasingly found its outlet in forms of slavery and a trafficking in women from eastern Europe and Africa. To coercion is added a lowering of the prostitute's earnings and hygienic conditions.

Other levers which act jointly with adjustment policies to

send new contingents of emigrants on their way include the falling market price of farm products and the withdrawal of agricultural subsidies. Both ruin the small farmers and separate them from their means of production and reproduction.

The Third World's *monstrous impoverishment* lies behind the *aggravation of reproductive labour among the women* who have stayed behind in the village (Michel 1993), the other terminal of the emigrants' reproductive path. But is also the channel for *a major restructurisation of social reproduction on a global scale* whereby Third World women, either by staying in their countries of origins or *emigrating* to the more advanced zones, supply a growing proportion *of low-cost reproductive labour for the First World* (Federici 1996). The labour in question may be related to *sexual tourism* or *prostitution*, housework, childcare or caring for old people and the sick. But it also involves *supplying children* to advanced areas. The figures are spine-chilling. In the early 1990s, 5,000 South Korean children were being exported to the United States each year (Chira 1988), while at the end of the 1980s an adopted child was reckoned to arrive in the US every 48 minutes (Raymond 1994). The existence of 'baby farms' where children are specifically raised for export has been confirmed (Raymond 1994), like the widespread practice of using Third World women as surrogate mothers (Raymond 1989). There have also been reports of cases – but how many? – of women whose children have been snatched from their wombs with a Caesarean (*The Guardian*, October 7, 1995) for sale to child traffickers. And it is now common knowledge that people in the Third World sell their own organs because of their desperate need for money, or are kidnapped and have them removed forcibly. In this connection, I can only add that, in the last few years, the sale of one's own *organs* as an extreme means of procuring money has also begun in Italy (Dalla Costa M. 1995). Some scholars like to argue that it is good thing for Third World people to sell their organs because it is a way for them to get the money they need. The argument needs no comment, perhaps only that, in India or other areas of great poverty, someone who sells a kidney usually dies not soon after since it is impossible to survive long with only one kidney in those conditions of reproduction.

The massive *impoverishment* created by adjustment policies is, then, at the origin of a *major restructurisation of reproductive labour* at the world level; if *women* emerge as the *poorest among the poor*, we would in any case find no consolation if poverty also became more male. But parity of poverty seems to be the hidden aim of numerous studies that isolate women's poverty from the analysis of the macrofactors that cause it, blinding both men – many of whom obviously suffer from poverty too – and women to what needs to be done.

Annihilation Policies as an Effect or Corollary of Adjustment Policies on Populations rendered Superflous

Discussion of the effects of structural adjustment policies would not be complete if no attention was paid to the link between impoverishment and the deaths propagated by related operations such as the expropriation of land and the denial of monetary and non-monetary resources, *policies of annihilation* designed to achieve some of the effects aimed for with adjustment policies or introduced as a complement to them.

They include *tolerance for the spread of epidemics*. In sub-Saharan Africa, the International Monetary Fund is called the Infant Mortality Fund; in January-February 1996 alone, 2,500 children died of meningitis because it was impossible to buy the necessary vaccine for the equivalent of $3.50. The spread of epidemics is linked to further paring of the health system, leading to a failure of drinking water supplies, the spread of infected blood and medicines which have run beyond their expiry date or gone bad or are fake or harmful (6). Then, there is the overall degradation of the environment due to structural adjustment policies and maldevelopment projects.

Another series of annihilation policies involve *war* (7), *genocide* which has to all intents and purposes been authorised (8), and *military and police repression*, all of which eliminate the impoverished and expropriated from a world in which, precisely because they are impoverished and have been expropriated, they are seen as 'surplus'. Then there is the *'enclosure of populations'* in *refugee* and *concentration camps* more or less concealed in the war zones. To mention one case quite close to home, cases of suicide have begun to be reported among the Tuareg (Dayak 1995; Gaudio 1993; Beltrami and Vaistrocchi, ed. 1994) in the Algerian refugee camps; previously, suicide was unknown in their culture.

The execution of the Nigerian author, Ken Saro-Wiwa, was followed by a massive exodus of refugees from southern Nigeria to Benin, most of them men, aged 18-59 and members of the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (9). At the same time, the suspension of Red Cross aid caused scores of deaths in the camps for about 60,000 Mauritanians in northern Senegal. The victims were mostly children who died of deprivation and disease; the refugees may go as long as ten days without food, and no medicines are avai-lable. Further deaths came from marsh fever since the camps are near the Senegal river (*Il Manifesto*, March 27 1996). In November of the same year, the refugee camps in Zaire became battlefields thanks to a resurgence of fighting between Tutsi and Hutu.

Yet further annihilation is produced by the *uprooting and forced transfer* of populations. The *major hydroelectric* and *dam*

projects, financed primarily by the World Bank, usually involve major *population transfer and re-settlement* schemes (George 1989; McCully 1996). The re-settlement is naturally that part of the project which leaves *the least permanent trace.* But apart from mega-hydraulic and agricultural projects, there are also *pure population transfer projects* funded by the World Bank. One of the most strik-ing, and most widely denounced, is the *transmigrasi* in Indonesia (George 1989; *The Ecologist* 1986). Because of alleged overpop-ulation on Java and Bali, due in fact to the concentration of the land in few hands, the government decided on a forced 'internal migration' of 70 million to the outer and other islands: Sumatra, Sulawesi, Kalimantan (formerly Borneo), and Irian Jaya in New Guinea. The scheme was funded to the tune of $75 billion. The total population involved was later reduced to 'only' 20 million. The scheme was a combination of *genocide, ecocide* and *ethnocide.* One of the aims of the forced introduction of new population was to strike at the native communities in the wilder islands, by creating conflict with the newcomers because of the scarce resources, cultural differences and different crop choices. Very many of the 'migrants' died of hardship and hunger or were eaten by the animals which deforestation had deprived of their natural forest habitat. Some managed to escape, but were imprisoned to stop them talking. By progressively depriving them of their resources, the natives in the outer islands were supposed to gain a *sense of state and government* and a *single god*, to turn them into *disciplined labour for the plantations and mines.* First-hand testimony tells how a thousand families arrived in one zone, but only twelve survived (George 1989, p. 206 et seq.). On Irian Jaya, there was recently a revolt of 3,000 tribals (*Il Manifesto* March 13, 1996) against Freeport Indonesia, the US company which mines gold, copper and silver in their territory and uses them as workers. What is at stake is not only their working conditions, but also their identity, their territory, their commons and their culture (10). But the *transmigrasi* is just one of the best-known among many projects of this type in which the citizens of advanced or less advanced countries unwittingly finance projects for the impoverishment and uprooting of others. Moreover, the contributions from their own pockets hang an even heavier millstone of debt around their own necks and the necks of others.

In conclusion, the overall thrust of my argument is that, *nowadays*, the crucial components in adjustment policies and the World Bank's development plans are *expropriation of the land* and the *dissolution of communities by uprooting, transferring and enclosing their people so as to weaken their identity and organisational network. As when* the enclosures were under way in England and Africans were being traded towards the Americas, they *are essential* for capital's expansion, and therefore for the construction and re-stratification of a planetary class.

Implications

The *major operations* involved in *adjustment policies* as well as in very many of the *World Bank's development projects* thus form the channel for a *grand strategy for the underdevelopment of reproduction* as the *basis* for a *further development of production*. At the same time, as I have tried to show, the *relationship human beings* have with the *land* remains the *crucial moment in these policies and projects*. But, if all this is true, the *issue of the land and what relationship* people should have with it must return to the *centre of the analysis*, the struggle and the *political proposals*. I will now try to indicate at least some of the implications that I believe must follow.

A *first implication* is that, if a continual class re-foundation and re-stratification in the new world economy is made possible by major operations involving the land, struggles concerning the land must take a central role in any adequate political re-composition; international support must be constructed with more attention for the North-South axis than the so widely-debated European Union. In this sense, it is *fundamental to know, transmit, interpret and support the indigenous struggles*, but also other struggles of the populations and women of the planet's various Souths in so far as *their focus is the land*. Above all, get to know them as the first step in thinking about how to support them, what relationship to have with them, and how to translate them into our context: All this implies giving strength, but also receiving it. In this connection, I remain convinced that it is important for people to know and be *informed of the victories* as well as *struggles*; it helps undermine capital's apparent omnipotence and make people place less belief in the coming highest level of development which is just round the corner. Papua New Guinea may lie on the edge of our normal vision, but its people have successfully built up a movement against structural adjustment and privatisation, forcing the government to withdraw measures which the World Bank wanted introduced to end the common ownership of land. The same is happening in India. In some zones, the agriculturists have succeeded in forcing withdrawal of the concessions given to companies for plantations to grow export crops.

One consequence is that it is important *to link up with the international networks which place expropriation of the land and debt policies at the centre of the agenda*. Two examples are the *Debt Crisis Network* and the *50 Years is Enough! campaign*, and both are forums in which the various positions enter into debate. The *large regional meetings of the Zapatista rebellion and the first intercontinental meeting "for humanity and against neo-laissez faire"* in late July/early August this year in Chiapas are also fundamental; the debate and the decisions taken concern all of us.

Yet, these struggles have a long history in terms of the networks formed round them and as an organisational experience. Adjustment policies and World Bank development projects have in fact long been the source of conflicts in the world, not only *rurally* but also in an *urban context* (George 1989; *Cafa* 1990-96; *Midnight Notes* 1988; 1990)

The women's struggles in Indian *cities* in recent years have a *precedent* in organisations created in the early 1970s against rice price increases and the *poor quality of the rice produced by laboratory hybrids*. The Women's Anti-Price Committee in Bombay started in 1972 (Omvedt 1980, 1987). The protest grew so strongly that tens of thousands were marching the streets and building barricades. In the winter of 1973, 20,000 Bombay women marched on the home of the Minister for Food to see what was cooking in his kitchen. In the same way, organisations were built up and rebellions flared *against forced sterilization*. Women also spearheaded protests against the Bhopal incident in 1984 in which 2,500 were killed and hundreds of thousands injured when a poisonous chemical cloud descended on a slum neighbourhood (Roosa 1988). In India's slums, whose population continues to be swollen by those expelled from the land, there is the long history of urban revolts for land as *somewhere to live and somewhere to have an address*. Each year, 200,000 rural immigrants arrive in New Delhi alone (Roose 1988).

But, above all, thanks to the analyses and practical liaison work of scholars and activists in the North and South of the world, the revolts in India and elsewhere against the effects of higher development in the urban zones – price and quality of food, a place to live, pollution, ecological disasters – have found links to the struggles in the rural zones in defence of the land, the forest, water and biodiversity.

Struggles against the degradation of the environment and the lines laid for capitalist development have joined up with struggles to defend subsistence and the community as the essential basis for elaborating a different form of development. I think this is the most feared type of linkage because of the powerful political recomposition of the population that it represents. It is no coincidence if this chance for political recomposition is continually undermined by annihilation, forced transfer (including the causes that force people to emigrate), ghettoization and the enclosure of the populations. This chance is also undermined by attempts to create lines of conflict and division, even representing conflicts as ethnic those which in fact stem from lack of land or other scarce resources.

In very many regions, struggles concerning the land revolve around a defence of its communal management where this is still practised. This leads to the *second implication* of what we have been saying: how far our land should be defended and reinstated

as a public resource and collectively usable space; how far land rights should be won back as the rights of all mankind.

The *third implication* concerns the fact that all struggles for the land are at the same time struggles to *defend biodiversity* and the *different*, above all native *forms of knowledge* that *safeguard this biodiversity and work with it*. It is no coincidence if, in their struggles, the native peoples uproot eucalyptus saplings from the plantations because they destroy soil and water resources while giving no food or shade to the villagers (Shiva 1990, 1995); defend the *batua* (11) from destruction by herbicides (Shiva 1995); or defend varieties of cereals and woods with a high nutritional value as well as the animals which, in millennia of natural evolution and balanced cooperation between man and nature, have proven resistant to, and capable of multiplication in the most varied and hostile climates. But the struggles of those who defend the earth's resources and their renewability and biodiversity are also a vital moment of liaison for us because they are defending a *piece of land and a biodiversity* which is also a life-resource and a source of food and abundance for us.

The *fourth implication* is closely linked to the previous one since it is linked to *safeguarding biodiversity*, by defending the land as a source of natural evolution. As such, it is a common good whose claims must be defended against the pressing demands of industry and laboratories to patent and manipulate genes produced by nature in the course of millions of years (12).

These implications are already pursued by some environmentalist movements in the advanced world, and it is in our interest to pursue them, too. And, if this is the case, the struggles on these issues in the world's so-called South must be recognised as a defence of our material and cultural interests as well. To welcome them into our political approach means a commitment on two fronts: to bring them into our demands, practices and protest against present policies, inside and outside the agricultural sphere; and to find concrete ways of supporting them.

In particular, since the Zapatista rebellion, large sections of the movement throughout the world are involved in initiatives designed to offer concrete economic, political, social and cultural aid. In Italy, we mention only what is developing around the *Ya basta* campaign.

But, as I said at the outset, struggles with deeper historical roots in the advanced areas such as those for income or wage or on working time do not automatically translate into support for Third World struggles. If anything, experience shows that, when conflicts explode in the advanced areas, capital has already migrated or exported productive processes to the world's various Souths where the price of labour is lower; or, by various forms of expropriation, has induced individual emigrants to move to the more developed countries where they get the worst-paid jobs. It is increasingly

clear that limiting the struggle to issues of time and/or money or giving priority to proposals in which only these two aspects of the problem are considered (13), is not enough, as can also be seen from contemporary appeals as to "what is to be done" such as the Appeal of the 35 (*Il Manifesto*, October 27 1996).

The progressive *privatisation and expropriation* of the land through which the world economy's working class is continually re-structured at bargain-basement prices cannot be ignored. However good the intentions may be, failure to recognise the centrality of operations concerning the land in the economy's new globalisation betrays an approach which is Northern and development-oriented, on the one hand and, on the other, envisages the rights of poor people as no more than to pick up the crumbs from the rich man's table.

The approach is North-oriented in that it looks at the policies in the advanced areas without analysing their roots in the other areas; and it is development-oriented since it sees the present type of development as something ineluctable, for the evil it may do for us, but also the good. Yet, when it grasps the enormity of the evil and the paucity of the good, it does no more than ask for a small reduction in the evil. We don't know how many crumbs Lazarus got, but at least the bread of his time was a natural product.

Defences against unemployment, wage reduction, and labour de-regulation are certainly fated to crumble as long as nothing is said or done about issues such as expropriation, privatisation and, now more than ever, the poisoning of the land on which capitalist accumulation still rests. Thanks to them, accumulation continues to mass together the new expropriated poor, forcing them to work for any wage and under any conditions in their homeland or as emigrants, while new technological leaps are piled on top of each other – aberrations, technologies for the genetic manipulation of life. The earth itself is destroyed as a self-regenerating source of food and abundance, imposing an increasing dependence on the market-laboratory and, with it, poverty and hunger – and also representing the most lethal threat to the reproductive power of the working social body at the planetary level.

In any case, the debate on the wage, income and working time now requires a strong transnational liaison, at the trade-union level too, to set acceptable bargaining standards for the North, South and East. In this sense, the decision of the US trade unions to schedule joint bargaining with their Mexican counter-parts is important. But there are also numerous other organis-ational examples, among the workers of the *maquilladoras* in Central America or in the Asian free-trade zones who have built up autonomous contacts with the unions in Europe and the US. Then, there were the workers at the subsidiary of an American company in Guatemala. The machinery was moved out during the night, and the workers' wages left unpaid, but the employees informed the

unions in the US which represented their case with the mother company (14). At the international level, the unions must above all raise the increasing use of prison labour and its conditions (De Angelis 1996 p.17). There must be a true globalisation of the perspective within which bargaining on time and money is considered, and the struggles on these issues so closely linked to survival in the advanced areas must go hand in hand with the struggles for land, especially in the world's South.

Above all, while also pursuing struggles for wage/income, the problem must also be raised of which and how many 'commons' can be won back, not only to defend ourselves from the market, but also to strike back at the market's pervasiveness. How can struggles for money be linked to the defence and reconquest of land as commons? And, with them, the defence and reconquest of *biodiversity, integrity, and natural renewability*? – since, as the indigenous communities teach and show, they *multiply our life possibilities* rather than reducing them and turning them into monstrosities.

To mention only the cases closest to home, I am thinking of 'mad cows', trout that taste of chicken, and chicken that tastes of fish. But in the end everything will taste of petroleum. What will we do with a wage when all we can buy is poison? Clearly, the question of the land is also a struggle against the biotechnological laboratories which manipulate living species (15), from vegetable hybrids which are easily subject to diseases (the Karnal Blunt fungus has infected American hybrids of wheat and barley, destroying 1,200 tons in Arizona alone, *Il Manifesto* March 17, 1996) to cows which make more milk thanks to the Bovine Growth Hormone or produce fatless meat. It is a struggle against the *progressive industrialisation* of food production, *crop specialisation by geographical area*, and the *liberalistic internationalisation* of the markets. I see the following statements from former Peruvian President Alan Garcia as very significant:

> Food imports aren't just a problem of foreign currency; they also make a country lose contact with its own history and geography (quoted in George 1989, p. 283)

> Societies are born of food, they live off food and they build their awareness of time and space through the food they eat...This is why the democracy we want in Peru is not an urban democracy, nor a bureaucratic and administrative one. Peru wants a new historic encounter with its land through a national confirmation of what our food and our geography are...We want to pursue a transformation of much larger scope, inspired by the indigenous food model since this is the only way in which there will be a revolution on all fronts: national independence, justice and social liberation (quoted in George 1989, p. 284)

But, following the natives' lesson, the *question of the land* is also a question of a *loving and respectful relationship* with other living beings, whence a rejection of nutrition that comes, not only from the genetic manipulation of animals, but also from their *cruel treatment in battery conditions or in laboratories.* This is another implication on which people should speak out and make a practical commitment against the horror, for example, of a calf which will never be able to move, sometimes not even stand up, suck its mother's milk, walk on grass or eat it, but will only twist its neck to suck the chain holding it in search of the iron it is denied so that its flesh will be 'yet whiter' (16).

To sum up, in the new techniques and technologies, there is no life. I cannot continue discussing future possibilities of liberation inherent in future levels of development, while today allowing these same techniques and technologies to continue destroying life.

In themselves, the new technologies will never give me food to eat. My food comes from the earth. I cannot accept that it should come from the poisoning of the soil or the destruction and torture of animals in laboratories and intensive husbandry. In the same way, I cannot accept that it should come from forced labour or the exclusion of an increasingly large share of humanity from the possibility of feeding themselves.

If this is the *agricultural solution* lying behind the new technologies, I think that this is where the first battle must be fought, not only linking up with the struggles of the Third World agriculturists and agricultural labourers, but also asking what it means here to struggle for another relationship with the land and its creatures, in order to win back our commons.

It is now recognised that the 'technological solution' to agriculture and animal husbandry has not worked (17). The liberation from labour based on a greater productivity of the land by producing greater yields through the simple application of growing mechanical, chemical and biotechnological inputs has proved to be a false one. Through the various stages of the Green Revolution up to the most recent biotechnologies, each solution has simply opened up even greater problems while destroying forms of life and progressively poisoning the land. The impossibility of a 'technological solution' for human reproduction (Dalla Costa 1972) and, if I may be allowed the observation, also for the production of new human beings, reappears for other forms of life. What is alive needs care, above all, and care is one expression of living beings; technology can play a role only for marginal aspects. The earth is alive, and its technological manipulation has shown that it cannot be pulled on one side without ripping it apart on the other. But if this is true, and if human presence, labour and care remain a necessity for the earth to provide regenerative food sources and territories in which to live, the idea that, even in the famous last

stage, technology can produce liberation from work is a Utopia.

Since labour of reproduction is linked, not only to bringing up children and caring for adults, but to all living things with which we want and must have relations if we want to find the resources and joy to regenerate our own lives, a still greater terrain for struggle is opened up, around the working time and the working day of men and women. The demand for the necessary time to take care of interpersonal relations is immediately extended to care for the land. At stake is not only the extension of the time needed to take care of the 'reproduction' of life, but the speed which has been imposed on reproductive labour, in the overall intensification of labour induced by new technological leaps ahead. *To slow down* the working day is thus on the agenda of a crucial battle for those who, in their struggles around labour time, want above all to free the processes and rhythms of life's reproduction. The technological credo which has compressed and progressively suffocated the necessary time for human reproduction and for man and his relationship with the land has simply made the future more improbable.

If the approach is changed and the dimensions of the problem resized, how much space and what role can be given to technology? And, above all, is it possible as of now to have a technology which is not inspired by the capitalist approach? This is a question that a growing number of men and women are applying themselves to in various parts of the globe, and it means they are giving up other beliefs in order to do so, for example, the believe that one should never look back. As the English recognised, their engineers were unable to surpass the irrigation works carried out on the Indian rivers before their arrival (Shiva 1990). In the same way, much 'alternative' technology and many fruits of man's cooperation with nature are incorporated in many of the so-called 'natural' seeds, which are by no means 'primitive' (Shiva 1995, Schwarz 1994). Does it make sense and is it possible to preserve this technology and its criteria?

But what is the 'past' one looks back to? What is the 'past' in general? It is the present of the vast majority of the planet's inhabitants, and it is a future that so many people are defending against the present that others would like to turn into the sole agenda.

Indications from Struggles and Alternative Self-Organisation

The struggle begun by the agriculturists in the Indian region of Karnataka against the GATT agreements agreed to in Uruguay in March-April 1994 is indeed a great struggle around the question, Past? Present? Future?

The *Karnataka Farmers Union* was created fourteen years ago

and now enjoys a political role in twelve of Karnataka's 19 districts, with ten million members from all castes and religions. Its targets include the patenting of seeds whereby companies claim property rights that enable them to deny the rights of the local people to their seeds, therefore prejudicing their survival. The laboratory-produced hybrid seeds they sell are sterile, so once the agriculturists have been forced to use them, they will have to rebuy them every year, and they will also be forced to buy the fertilisers and pest control products needed to make them grow, most often from the same firms. But if they try to use and sell natural seeds, they finish up in court, charged with illegally selling seeds derived from the hybrids – and it is the defendants who have to prove their innocence.

Protest against seed patenting is flanked by growing disillusionment with the Green Revolution; its devastating effects, the ecological and economic unsustainability of the inputs needed by its hybrids, and their abnormal water consumption have become evident. The union, then, is leading struggles against the patent system, hybrids, single-crop economies, and the various polluting and destructive technologies. It is also defending the maintenance of natural seeds and the land in the name of 'food sovereignty', intended as the right to food self-sufficiency on the basis of the availability of land and the maintenance of its reproductive powers. Its aim is thus to pursue a diversified, economically and ecologically sustainable agriculture based on natural methods of reproduction for the various species and addressed primarily to domestic needs. As a practical alternative to the proposals and solutions imposed by the multinationals, major international organisations and governments, these agriculturists have created a series of cooperatives to develop and sell their natural seeds, calling them Seed Satyagraha, 'satyagraha' being the word for Gandhi's non-violent struggle. They have also created a centre in Bangalore where the seeds are preserved and distributed. Major rallies have been held in the same city, and meetings and links built up with farmers in France and other European countries (Schwarz 1994).

The most frequently cited examples of abuse of the patent system include the *neem* root, from a plant which grows everywhere and is used for its medicinal properties, even as an insecticide. A multinational has patented its derivates, provoking a particularly tough and widespread struggle in the region (Burns 1995).

The Karnataka Farmers Union is part of a much vaster network of rural organisations, *La Via Campesina*, which was founded in 1992 and is very strong in Central and Latin America, with solid liaison points in various other countries. Its second international conference was held at Tlaxcala in Mexico on April 18-21 this year. Its main concern is "food sovereignty" as described above. But self-organisation to defend the foundations of subsistence – land and natural seeds, above all – and the rebellion against policies that everywhere tend to destroy them are growing

in, and penetrating into various regions of the planet. Against these policies and the major economic and financial agreements supporting them, the Zapatista rebellion is a crucial moment of struggle and self-organisation, not only to guarantee land and life, but also, as Marcos has put it, "to be able to choose another movie".

In any case, it is interesting to note that community forms of organisation to guarantee life and land have taken on very different shapes, in Latin America as in the rest of the world.

Also linked to *La Via Campesina* is the New Frontier co-operative in the Brazilian state of Santa Caterina do Sul, where collective organisation is applied to the land, labour, machinery and infrastructures and allows sixty families to live better than the small private farmers in the area. Although divided into sectors, the work is shared equally among all. The cooperative started out by occupying land in 1985 and, in 1988, legal rights were won over 1,200 hectares. Today, the families in the cooperative enjoy decent housing with water, light, telephone and sewers, and their cereals, vegetables and fruit are produced ecologically. They have pasture and animal husbandry, trees and plantations of matè grass, a mill and a clothes factory.

The cooperative's founding members are active in the Sem Terra Movement which, in the last decade, has won the assignation of many hectares to hundreds of landless families and is now organising land occupations in the Mato Grosso (Correggia 1996). The guarantee offered by the cooperative against hunger and poverty already suffered rests, first of all, on the fact that there is an abundant distribution of the food produced within the cooperative every day or every week. The surplus is sold, and the profits distributed. Guaranteeing internal food consumption irrespective of market mechanisms is the greatest defence against the wheat, which arrives at much lower prices from nearby Argentina, bringing hunger with it rather than nutrition. There is a kindergarten and, according to reports arriving from the cooperative, domestic work is shared between men and women.

The commonest question raised in the past about situations of this kind was how the young people experiencing something so 'backward' could fail to flee and seek emancipation in the city. But, given the disasters of the global economy, it seems much more important that these citizens of the earth should have found a way of avoiding the ranks of the 800 million who go hungry. It may also be worth considering what Esteva (1994) has to say about the city's failing magnetism. Commuting between town and country is becoming more common; the city is being 're-ruralised' and, if the commuter stops traveling, he tends to stop where he set out from. In a global economy which uproots 'marginalised majorities', the strengthening of deep, strong roots has begun. The greater the disenchantment with the promises of development, the greater the

growth in a sense of self-organisation, inventiveness and, provided the urban context is not required, the alternative use of whatever has been brought back from the city: money, goods, knowledge, relationships. Dona Refugio refuses to buy a gas stove; she still prefers the fire in the centre of her kitchen (Esteva 1994).

At the same time, in the advanced areas, while the global economy has continued expelling a growing number from access to sources of income by both lowering wages and de-regulating labour, an increasing number of individuals are wondering how to link a struggle for wage/income or against its absence with some way of guaranteeing subsistence; and how to win back the commons as a defence against the market and a blow against its pervasiveness. In the 1980s and 1990s, numerous First World communities have tried and experimented with answers to this question, from the United States, gripped by de-industrialisation and high-tech unemployment, to Australia, whose most important export market, especially for food, was closed off by Britain's entry into the EU. According to the situation, in these two decades, struggles and the difficulties of launching struggles have been flanked by a multiplication, at the rural and urban level, of attempts to organise alternative economies, or at least to open up alternative economic and social spaces. And there have been often successful, and quite substantial efforts to win back commons and hold down abilities and resources locally, so that they are no longer captivated by the distant mirages of free-trade internationalisation in production and markets. For many people, experiments in this direction have represented the sole resource of survival or a resource for improved survival, in addition to whatever additional income can be scraped together, and besides whatever struggles for income are still being pursued.

An historical precedent worth mentioning because of its importance is the *Unemployed Citizens League in Seattle* during the Great Depression - the most extensive organisation for self-help, in practice for an alternative economy. The State of Washington was organised into 22 districts in which the League covered 13,000 families for a total of almost 40,000 persons, who depended on self-help programmes for the exchange of goods and services, some of which were also produced within the organisation. At the end of 1932, there were over 100 self-help organisations in the US, in almost 30 states. Many of them had their own money tokens and were involved in reopening for their own uses small factories closed down by the crisis (Dalla Costa M. 1983).

Precedents like these are by no means isolated in the history of alternative initiatives in the United States, but similar attempts in the last couple of decades tend to be something more than a self-defence measure in particularly difficult economic times (Ortoleva 1981), although this in itself should not be underestimated since, in order to struggle, one has to eat. The more recent initiatives aim more at grappling in a more permanent way with issues seen as essential for fighting the type of development we now have, in

order to set another type of development in motion.

Here, they can be given only a brief mention, but I think the experiences most worth citing come under the general headings of 'social ecology', 'bioregionalism' (19) and various forms of 'community economy', which are now taking new paths and showing a new vitality. Clearly, a common denominator here is the attempt to create new relations between individuals and with the land, at the same time seeking to relocate resources, goods, capacities, abilities and money regionally, rather than letting them be gobbled up by the uncontrollable kingdom of the global economy and global finance. I think it is important to mention urban experiences, or at least experiences in advanced areas, since what is being done in the Third World's rural zones is little known in Italy. An objection, often raised in Italy, is that these ideas about installing new relationships with nature, human resources and the work of reproduction may be feasible in the rural Third World but can hardly put down roots in advanced areas.

I will mention some examples which are not directly concerned with the land, then others based on the land as such. But they all concern the land as a collective space where the citizens, its inhabitants, are building up self-organisation to keep, defend and enhance resources locally.

My starting point will be as far from the land as can be envisaged, with money, a resource that is increasingly scarce in the pockets of agriculturists and blue-collar and white-collar, as well as self-employed workers, yet increasingly abundant in the salons of global finance whose speculative wagers have already endangered life for a large part of the planet's population. The time was thus ripe for many people to wonder how they could get money, but ensure that it was a more useful and user-friendly money.

One approach has been to coin a new currency envisaged as a means of exchange rather than speculation, and only valid locally, something that is completely legal in the United States and other countries. The idea is to create a currency to bolster and set in motion the local production of goods and services in order to provide stronger roots for the life-possibilities and life-choices of the individuals forming the local community, rather than letting them be uprooted and abandoned to the poverty and isolation provoked by global finance's unpredictable moves.

Among the various schemes for building extensive alternative economies resting on a new monetary system, the first place must go to the *Local Employment and Trading Schemes*, whose system of 'green dollars' registers the coordinated exchange of services by telephone calls to the central office. The system was created in the Comox Valley in British Columbia by Michael Linton, an unemployed computer programmer. He started noticing how many other people were in the same situation and developed an interest in 'community economics'; the first LETS got going in Canada in

1988. The unit of exchange is the 'green dollar', equivalent to its US equivalent, but the currency is not put into circulation; it remains an accounting unit to make the monthly credit and debit account supplied to each participant with the names of the others and the services they offer. When Britain entered the EU, Australia had to destroy large quantities of food that could no longer be sold there; the result was bankruptcies and extensive unemployment, so in 1992 the Australian government invited Linton to get Australian LETS going and provide whatever was needed to teach how to make the system work and how to computerise its management. Now, LETS are so widespread in Australia that some say they could easily maintain survival if the market economy collapses.

The same sort of scheme is also wide-spread, with some variations, in the United States and Britain. In Australia, and probably elsewhere, the schemes are also combined with the market economy in various ways. For example, many people agree to accept 25% of payment on a LETS account and have seen their business increase. Above all, many people, by resting their income and expenditure on the LETS as well as the market economy, have been able to lighten the market's pressure on their life and life-rhythms. Still others have turned their LETS surplus over to churches which have used them for the unemployed or people in other forms of difficulty. Among other things, the equivalent of LETS handed over to charity is tax deductible (Meeker-Lowry 1995; 1996).

Another scenario can be found by moving to upstate New York where Ithaca and Binghamton are located about an hour's bus ride from each other. In 1991, Ithaca created a local monetary system which many other cities would now like to emulate. The inventor of the Ithaca Hours is Paul Glover, an expert in community and ecological economics who wrote, *Los Angeles: A History of The Future* (1984). One Ithaca Hour corresponds to $10, the average hourly wage of a qualified worker; its circulation is limited to the city, but that is all that is needed since the aim is to keep money locally and boost the city's economic life. Significantly, another 400 communities in 48 states have taken the kit which teaches them how to apply the system, and they are now following in Ithaca's footsteps (Meeker-Lowry 1995 p.16; 1996).

Deli Dollars, named after the delicatessen for which they were invented at Great Barrington in the US, are also designed to keep financial resources locally. The shop was on the verge of closing because the rent was doubled when the contract ran out. Money was needed for a down-payment, and normal credit channels were not available. So the owner turned to SHARE, the *Self-Help Association for a Regional Economy*, which suggested he should issue his own currency. He called it the Deli Dollar. In practice, it was a receipt which became a purchase coupon. Customers who wanted to keep the shop open lent $9 each and received a coupon

giving them a credit of $10 in goods from the shop within a given period of time. Shop, money and professional ability thus remained within the community. The example served as a model for various commercial and productive activities in a number of sectors. It even got into the national press and onto the major US and Japanese TV networks, and projects inspired by it multiplied (Meeker-Lowry 1996).

Another system, *Time Dollars*, is already working in 150 communities in 38 states, with thousands of participants. Unlike Ithaca Hours and LETS, the value of the hours exchanged can be weighted differently, for example, for someone who needs costly equipment to supply the service he is offering. The Time Dollars maintain the absolute equivalence of the hours being exchanged. In New York, *Womanshare* is a special Time Dollar programme so that the many professional abilities of women are used, and used better. It is worth stressing that, in these systems, the work involved in reproduction receives the same recognition as any other work with professional standing, and therefore the right to a fair wage in the market economy. As I have already noted, only in exceptional cases such as the use of costly machinery or other especially onerous conditions do some systems adopt other criteria of evaluation. Time Dollar programmes have been activated in Boston, St.Louis, San Francisco and El Paso and, in Michigan and Missouri, they have received the support of local and state institutions. In some cases, they have been incorporated into local health systems (Meeker-Lowry 1995; 1996).

Moving to yet another scenario, in her 1995 publication, Mary Mellor (1995) noted how, over thirty years earlier, the cooperative movement in Britain found a new lease on life. The cooperative movement was founded in Brighton in 1818, to provide healthy food to its customers. It grew and developed until, in the 1950s, it could count on 12 million members, or almost a quarter of the British population. In the 1960s, new cooperatives were formed, many of them with the aim of supplying genuine foodstuffs.

The Seikatsu Club Consumer Cooperatives provide a similar example from Japan, linking the cooperative's members as consumers to the sources of biologically produced food.

In Britain, cooperatives have increasingly spread through the poor and rundown city neighbourhoods, to supply cheap, nutritious food, but also encouraging the creation of small local enterprises for essential services such as repair shops and laundromats. As Mellor also observes, though the point may apply elsewhere than in Britain, cooperatives supplying genuine food have come to be run more by the middle class than by workers or poor people. These days, however, as I will illustrate below when I talk about the US, the poor communities unable to obtain decent nutrition because of the high level of development are taking the initiative in cooperative or other movements, based in any case on

self-organised networking addressed to solving the problem of food. In the same way, in the US too, it was and is the indigenous movement's struggles for land which have radicalised so many battles for healthy food and a healthy environment in terms of class composition and a class perspective. In other words, the issue of land as something to be preserved for its value as a source of nutrition and habitat has characterised, and in many cases recomposed the struggles of Native Americans, Hispanics, Afro-Americans, Asiatic Americans and white blue-collar workers. One example is the struggles against toxic waste dumps which, on the basis of an environmental racism, are situated by preference in neighbourhoods inhabited by coloured people or poor whites (Schwab 1994), sapping the health of the territory they live in, their primary source of nutrition.

In Minnesota, Wisconsin and Vermont, the struggles have been set off by the Bovine Growth Hormone, given to cows to make them produce more milk. The hormone has united animal liberationists, ecologists and small farmers against big agro-business. In fact, in a sequence repeated in every corner of the globe, the animal's ruin is the ruin of small-scale economies and the environment. It remains an open question for us, too, and offers new case histories whichever way you look.

In Arizona, the Indians and small white farmers have joined forces to fight the mining companies which want the territory of the reservations because they recently discovered that it hides reserves of uranium, oil and coal, and also to fight agrobusinesses which want the farmers' land because it is suited to intensive cultivation. In this case, and in others, sections of the population who have always been at odds have found common ground in defence of land. But the Zapatista rebellion also releases and empowers other demands, here as elsewhere. For the Indians, for example, more force is given to the suits they have filed to recover the land stolen from them (Schwab 1994).

But, if there is a multiplication of initiatives for alternative uses (20) of the land against global economic policies, there is also a multiplication of conflicts to defend the land from increasing new uses for the few which prejudice its use as a common good for the many. Around leisure facilities such as golf courses for the wealthier few, blood has already begun to flow, for example, at Dalat in Vietnam, where the blood is the blood of those whose food came from the rice-fields located in the same area (*Il Manifesto* May 26 1996), or at Tepoztlàn near Cuernavaca in Mexico, where the local people have risen up in protest because they want the area designated as fairway and green to remain a public park and common environmental good (Cacucci 1996).

In October 1993, the New York Times announced that the Census Bureau would no longer count the number of Americans living on farms. As the newspaper explained, the reason was that

the 32 million farmers, or a third of the population, on farms in 1910-20 had fallen to 23 million in 1950 and only 4.6 million in 1991, less than 2% of the population - a loss of half a million in farming population every year for 41 years. Moreover, in 1991, 32% of those running a farm and 86% of those who worked there no longer lived on the farm itself. As Berry observes (1996), this also meant that politicians no longer had a problem of how the farmers would vote; they had simply disappeared.

A rural world like this, with all its implications for land management, the management of farm produce and unemployment, is matched by an industrial world where more and more workers are being left on the streets, as the backdrop to a movement now starting to emerge in the advanced areas, with food as its main issue.

Born not only to fight the implications of the existing model for agricultural and industrial development, but also to try and formulate different life-alternatives, the movement is growing in a number of American cities. Many of them have been hit by unemployment, followed by the flight of large stores and the closure of many shops. The orientation is towards a locally based biological agriculture to guarantee the community food, above all fresh and genuine food.

This is the case in Binghamton, the town near Ithaca mentioned above. When IBM moved to the Third World and the supermarkets closed down, new uses could be found for the land freed up, not only for biological crops, but also for different crops, discovered thanks to a new availability of time in which new relations were opened up with the Indians in the local reservations. The same is true in the former auto capital, Detroit, and in San Francisco, where the director of SLUG, the *San Francisco League of Urban Gardeners*, Mohammed Nuru, says: "It is the entire cycle that we are grappling with, not just a single issue." (Cook and Rodgers 1995)

The entire cycle is precisely what creates an impoverished community unable to count on the normal structures of reproduction such as decent homes, food, shops and public green spaces. In this way, self-organisation to obtain food becomes the engine of self-organisation for a series of other initiatives, based on local abilities and resources and designed to re-shape and re-draw the human habitat so that different sections of the population and different abilities in work are recomposed in a new whole. The idea of food security for the community started putting down roots simultaneously on the Atlantic and Pacific coasts in the 1990s, and there is now the embryo of a national *Community Food Security Coalition*. This has created networks to ensure the production of genuine food produced according to biological criteria, and its distribution at low prices, above all locally.

The coalition says it wants to install a "more democratic food system". It links together 125 groupings of food banks, family farm

networks, and anti-poverty organisations, which did not normally work together in the past. Clearly reflecting new impulses for inter-personal links, they create contacts between small rural or urban farmers, food banks, free meal programmes for the poor, and low-income communities. Or else they have given a new slant to old programmes such as *Community Supported Agriculture*, which dates back to the mid-1960s, originally guaranteeing fresh milk and vegetables in the poor suburbs of Tokyo. Similar projects were set up in Germany in 1968, and in Switzerland, at Geneva and Zurich, in the 1970s.

The first CSA project in the US was inaugurated in 1985, at South Egremont in Massachusetts (Imhoff 1996), and similar projects spread to all the states of the Union by the early 1990s. In CSA, the community advances money to small local agriculturists or supply direct labour, in the latter case building up credits for an equivalent quantity of the product when it is in season. Overall, there is a spreading commitment to buying fresh food from local farmers rather than from supermarkets.

One of these CSA projects begun in October 1995 linked the *Southland Farmers' Market* and the University of California (UCLA) in a scheme to guarantee weekly supplies of cheap fresh vegetables to low-income neighbourhoods. The creation of local market gardens and the building of local markets to guarantee cheap supplies of fresh vegetables is spreading to many American cities.

In Austin, Texas, schemes of the kind have been developed in the Eastside, the poorest part of the city where 40% of the families are below the poverty line and have difficulties in obtaining food, especially decent food. There and in other cities, transport has also been provided so that the customers can get to the small shops set up to sell the produce. Similar experiences have been developed at Oakland in California where activists have built up links with service networks to supply food to schools and to the homes of the seriously disadvantaged. Thus, the Homeless Garden Project at Santa Cruz in California is expressly addressed to supplying fresh food and work to the city's many homeless. The basic difference between these projects and others set up in the past is that they do not rely solely on the distribution of food or food coupons by the state or other bodies, but aim for "production and distribution in terms of self-sufficiency" (Cook and Rodgers 1995; Imhoff 1996; Berry 1996). Other initiatives for a greater control of the land include Public Land Trusts in which funds are put together to buy land to be preserved as virgin nature or to build homes. These can be sold, but not the land they are built on so the the price is kept more accessible to poorer buyers. Up to this point, I have given only some first examples of alternative self-organisation, to make the point that the strongest and most significants movements emerging in the world's North and South are proving to be those whose agenda is food sovereignty and security, and therefore, above all, the availability of land. Apart from the few initiatives

mentioned above, many others can be listed as a corollary of a movement which already has a substantial itinerary behind it (21) in advanced and Third World areas and urban and rural settings. New approaches are being tried, and what emerges in my view is an attempt to couple a new relationship with the land, for *cultivation, habitation* and as a *public space*, with the maintenance locally of other resources, from working abilities to money, by reappropriating use value against exchange value. In this sense, it is a case of self-organisation in order to relocalize development.

Movement in this direction marks a clear difference from initiatives representing a large part of what is known as the 'third sector' in Italy, covering non-profit, charity and volunteer organisations. This is because there is no reason to believe that, not only capitalist development, but also its fall-out is inevitable, so that the wounds can only be patched up provisionally. Nor is there any reason to take an entrepreneurial approach to the malaise, nor even to activate a volunteerism straitjacketed by the global economy's laws, nor pursue ambiguous manoeuvres amidst them, confirming the subordination of beneficiary to benefactor. Still less to stand by as spectators of a parasitic proliferation of transnational bodies and initiatives surviving thanks to an allegedly 'ineluctable' extension of hunger and death through the world. Self-organisation, on the other hand, can start from "food sovereignty" as the first stretch of an Ariadne's thread to follow out of the "labyrinth of the ineluctable"; self-organisation as the will to say *ya basta* by linking up with all those who have taken the same decision, applying hearts and minds to managing the land, labour and money to build different paths.

I think some form of *bioregionalism* or *social ecology* or *community economy* as described above would be worth building up in Italy, too. From the struggle for the wage/income to a self-organisation committed to new forms of alternative economy to contain the market and try out new alternative ways of living, I think the 'new globalisation' should be fought on a number of fronts, by finding new alliances, discovering old and new commons, and taking ourselves new liberties.

Notes

1) In this publication, I will use 'wage/income' to mean money paid to both contract and self-employed labour as well as the so-called indirect wage which is being progressively reduced by present policies on health, education, pensions, and housing, undermining what is usually described as family or personal income. So, with an increasingly striking urgency in recent years, the struggle for the wage/income also means a struggle against current taxation levels and the arbitrary way in which public money is used.

2) For an analysis of the significance of violence in the provision of domestic labour in the capitalist mode of production, I mention, first of all, *Un lavoro*

d'amore (Giovanna F.Dalla Costa, 1978). For an analysis of the paths followed by women's autonomy in Italy since World War II and their intersections with the processes of emigration, I refer to the book I coauthored with Leopoldina Fortunati, *Brutto ciao* (1977). Moreover, a synthetic and reasoned indication on more analytical publications or materials more intended for immediate use by the movement can be found in Note 5 of my *Women's Studies e sapere delle donne* (1988). This contains no systematic listing of what has been produced by non-Italian feminist groups in the same network.

3) Published in that period were *La riproduzione nel sottosviluppo* (Giovanna F.Dalla Costa, 1980), republished later with some new material; and my *Famiglia welfare e Stato tra Progressismo e New Deal* (1983), which analyses the condition of the 'new woman' between nuclear family, external employment and the emerging welfare state.

4) A village which is not the seat of a town council and may be scores of kilometers from the town council that governs it.

5) Italy's public television broadcast a number of programmes on this issue in 1996. See also *Il Manifesto*, November 16, 1996, p.16.

6) The scandal of the 'false medicines' broke out at the end of October 1996 and received ample coverage in the major newspapers. How many deaths and how much disease has been caused by 'illegal medicines', 'informal medicines' and 'legal medicines' taken out of circulation in the advanced areas because harmful or expired, yet nonetheless sent to the 'developing' countries? For some of the facts, see *Il Manifesto*, October 27 1996, which includes a quotation from Gianni Tognoni, a pharmacologist at the Mario Negri Institute in Milan, for years active in controlling the pharmaceutical products in developing countries: "The Monetary Fund makes no controls, and local governments register any product. There is an extremely vast informal market, reaching as high as 80% of the total in the continents we are talking about (Africa, India, Latin America)."

7) How often do these wars sold by the media as 'tribal' stem from a reality of land expropriation and the curtailment of resources so that conflicts break out between various parts of the population over what are now insufficient resources for everyone to survive?

8) In Brazil's Mato Grosso, the *garimpeiros* (gold hunters), *fazendeiros* (landowners) and *madeireiros* (workers for logging firms dealing in rare woods) are continuing killing and torturing the natives, with some cases of castration. Torture and other acts of violence have been registered in recent months in the Amazon region where an increasingly pressing army of loggers is working for Asian companies in search of mahogany and other expensive trees (*Il Manifesto*, November 29 1996, p.18)

9) On Shell in Nigeria, see the article by Steve Kretzman, "Nigeria's 'Drilling Fields'. Shell Oil's Role in Repression", in *Multinational Monitor*, Januray-February, 1995.

10) Their territory has been devastated, their natural hunting reserves and crops destroyed, their rivers polluted, their people killed, tortured and raped. The Papua Liberation Movement is also making its voice heard in the region. On March 18, 1996, Indonesian troops opened fire on a march of 2,000 university students in Jayapura to mark the arrival of the body of independence leader

Thomas Wapai Wainggai, who died in jail in Jakarta.

11) Batua is a grass rich in Vitamin A which grows along with wheat. It is fundamental to the avoidance of blindness. Forty thousand Indian children go blind each year for lack of the vitamin which nature supplies free in the batua plant but which herbicides destroy. (Shiva 1995).

12) The problem is amply debated, especially in connection with the Human Genome Project. See, amongst others, Teresa Riordan's article in the New York Times, November 27, 1995. On the dangers of genetically manipulated food, in particular, see Mae-Wan Ho (typescript, 1996).

13) Here, I refer to these two dimensions which in any case define the coordinates of what the appeal's signatories include in the 'third sector'. I will discuss this in greater detail below.

14) These initiatives are described by Silvia Federici in "The Worldwide Struggle against the World Bank and IMF" in *Midnight Notes*, No. 12, *Studies in the New Enclosures*, to be published shortly.

15) In this connection, significant documentation was produced by the organisations of rural and tribal communities as well as women from the South and North at the NGO Forum to develop alternatives to the lines of action emerging from the technical documents prepared for FAO's World Food Summit in Rome (November 13-17, 1996). An example is the Leipzig Appeal drawn up by Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva, which I have proposed for signature by men and women in Italy. With Mies, Shiva and other women scholars and activists from various countries, I delivered a report to the conference for the Women's Food Day held at the Forum on November 15

16) The calf's "testimony" is from France, in the book, *Le Journal d'un veau* by Jean Louis Giovannoni (1996) in which a calf speaks up about our world and its terrible slaughters.

17) I am referring, not only to the eco-feminist literature, but also to very large part of ecologist literature in general, above all the documentation of the numerous rural organisations which voice protest and pursue rebellion in the world. For an approach from the viewpoint of the relationship of the crisis of Nature to the crisis in the capitalist mode of production,see James O'Connor's observations on the 'second contradiction' in the US magazine, *CNS Capitalism Nature Socialism,* and published in Italy by the magazine of the same name, that took the name *Political Ecology* in 1996, (O'Connor 1992).

18) I am referring to the statements made by Marcos and reported by the press for the Venice film festival where the video documentary by Gianni Minà, Images of Chiapas, was shown this September.

19) The relevant literature is vast. To mention just one of the better known authors, Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Liberty* (1995). For a review of ecological movements in the US, see James O'Connor (1994).

20) I thank Steven Colatrella for giving me important indications and bibliographical references.

21) Still one more example. In Lima in Peru, 85% of the bus lines are controlled by unofficial operators. The alternative transport network makes it possible to cover any route through the city for a maximum of two journeys at less than $0.10. Above all, the network covers the routes that people really need (George 1989, p. 290).

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Commodity Fetishism and Reification

Mike Rooke

Preface

In a sense the origins of this article go back to the early 70s, as a member of the International Socialists (later SWP), my conception of Marxism took shape. My early identification with working class self-activity, inclined me towards the politics of the Workers Opposition in the Bolshevik Party rather than those of Trotsky. While my anarcho-syndicalist sympathies could be accommodated in the loose framework of the IS group, in the years leading up to the formation of the SWP in 1975, I came to see that the corollary of their tailing of workers militancy was a political opportunism held in place by a leadership clique around Tony Cliff. I became a member of the oppositional Left Fraction and was expelled with them in 1975, working for a short time afterwards with what became the Workers Power Group. The analysis made of the IS-SWP was that it was a centrist grouping, vacillating between reformist and revolutionary positions, and unable to consistently express the political independence of the working class. The subsequent development of the SWP has only confirmed this view.

The 'philosophical' underpinnings of my Marxism throughout these years remained relatively eclectic and unworked. This reflected the status which 'philosophical' questions have always had on the 'revolutionary' left, long settled positions already present in the accepted canon of Marxist 'greats' (Engels, Luxembourg, Lenin, etc.). Accepting this view of theory as largely completed, I spent much of the 80s exploring what kind of programme was needed to express the political independence of the working class, and concluded that the mass partyism of much of the revolutionary left had to be rejected in favour of propaganda groups which could return to an examination of the fundamentals of the Marxist tradition. My view of Marxism remained however that of Marxism as epistemology, a method which could produce truly scientific knowledge of the world. This was consistent with a mechanical and dualistic view of the relation between party and class, theory and practice, an approach developed during my years as an activist.

Re-appraising my view of Marxism was fairly haphazard and unplanned. It began with a discarding of much of the dross produced by the academic domestication of Marxism in the post-war period, and seeing Marxism as a critique of political economy, of the commodity status of labour and the value form. This led to a clearer understanding of communism as the de-commodification of labour, as the end of ëworkí, a unifying theme of Marx's work from the 1844 Paris Manuscripts to the *Capital* of the 1860s. This further prompted a consideration of Marx's definitive break with the philosophical dualism of 18th century 'contemplative materialism' as the fundamental basis of all his subsequent work. The idea gradually took shape that it was the failure to fully appreciate and absorb the lessons of this philosophical revolution which accounted for the persisting dualisms of the mainstream Marxist tradition: those of theory and practise, party and class, and its tendency to present itself as above all else a scientific epistemology. My understanding of Marxism was beginning to change and cohere around the notion of Marxism as a form of ontology, and the concept of commodity fetishism. This article was a first venture in expressing this.

Commodity Fetishism and Reification

> *It is no accident that Marx should have begun with an analysis of commodities when, in the two great works of his mature period, he set out to portray capitalist society in its totality and to lay bare its fundamental nature. For at this stage in the history of mankind there is no problem that does not ultimately lead back to that question and there is no solution that could not be found in the solution to the riddle of commodity-structure.*

Thus Georg Lukács begins the chapter in *History and Class-consciousness* entitled 'Reification and the Consciousness of the Proletariat' (1). Following Marx's analysis in the first chapter of *Capital*, and in particular the section entitled ' The Mystery of the Fetishistic Character of Commodities', he identifies the essence of the commodity structure of capitalism as its tendency to make the social relations between people appear as relations between things, possessed of an autonomous power and objectivity. This commodity fetishism is, he claims, both an objective form and a subjective stance corresponding to it, by which he means that it is no mere illusion, but rather the actual lived experience of people in capitalist society. But this lived experience is one that conceals from people the true nature of their relations with each other. In the opening chapter of volume 1 of Capital, Marx states that under capitalism the product of labour is enigmatic because it assumes the commodity form. One of the most important features of this form is that the interdependent relations between the producers,

that is to say the social character of their labour, is expressed only through the relations between the products. Marx puts it thus:

> The sum total of the labour of all these private individuals and private groups makes up the aggregate of social labour. Inasmuch as the producers do not come into social contact until they exchange their labour products, the specifically social character of their individual labour does not manifest itself until exchange takes place. In other words, the labour of individuals becomes an effective part of the aggregate of social labour solely in virtue of the relations which the process of exchange establishes between the labour products and consequently between the producers. That is why the social relations connecting the labour of one private individual (or group) with the labour of another, seem to the producers, not direct social relations between individuals at work, but what they really are: material relations between persons and social relations between things. (2)

The first part of Lukács' chapter consists in a bringing together of the various comments made by Marx on commodity fetishism. In doing so Lukács develops points crucial for his conception of Marxism. The effects of commodity fetishism are not confined to the sphere of production, but permeate every sphere of social life. Commodity exchange is for Lukács a universal structuring principle of capitalist society. In pre-capitalist societies the personal nature of economic relations could be understood relatively clearly, since commodity exchange was not the sole regulator of production. Only when this stage was reached and the commodity had become the universal category of society as a whole, did reification assume decisive importance 'both for the objective evolution of society and for the stance adopted by man towards it' (p.86 of Lukács). The structure of reification develops in parallel with the development of capitalist commodity production, and reaches its most finished form when capitalism has displaced all other modes of production:

> Just as the capitalist system continuously produces and reproduces itself economically on higher levels, the structure of reification progressively sinks more deeply, more fatefully and more definitively into the consciousness of man. (3)

This is the stage when, for the first time in history, society is subject to a 'unified economic process', expressing itself in the existence of unified laws of development. Lukács talks of a 'veil' of reification, which prevents individuals in capitalist society from grasping their actual relations of production, how commodity relations subjugate human consciousness into reified forms. These reified forms constitute a 'second

nature'; a mode of thinking which is disastrous for the understanding of how capitalism really works.

Lukács illustrates the effects of reification with the category of interest-bearing capital (or money generating money). In this case the social relation which generates value (the capitalist who buys labour power and puts it to work extracts surplus value and thus augments the value of his capital) is obscured by the relation of money to itself. The actual transformation of money into capital becomes invisible, a form without content. Marx says that in this reified form of thinking, money acquires the property of generating value and yielding interest - we arrive at a fetish form of capital. The reified category of 'capital-interest' or 'capital-profit' is complemented by those of 'land-ground rent' and 'labour-wages', the economic trinity of political economy as Marx calls them. Lukács refers to Volume 3 of *Capital*, where Marx establishes the significance of this:

> It is the capacity of money, or of a commodity, to expand its own value independently of reproduction - which is a mystification of capital in its most flagrant form. For vulgar political economy, which seeks to represent capital as an independent source of value, of value creation, this form is naturally a veritable find, a form in which the source of profit is no longer discernible, and in which the result of the capitalist process of production - divorced from this process - acquires an independent existence. (4)

For Lukács the notion of capital as an independent source of value is a phenomenon produced by reification, that is to say conceived apart from the social relations of production by which it could properly be understood. In such categories Lukács points out that:

> the relations between men that lie hidden in the immediate commodity relation, as well as the relations between men and the objects that should really gratify their needs, have faded to the point where they can neither be recognised nor even perceived. For that reason the reified mind has come to regard them as true representatives of his societal existence. (5)

But reification is, he stresses, only the product of a society whose essence is the satisfaction of all its needs by commodity exchange. Consequently, reification becomes a generalised feature of bourgeois thought. This effect is so pervasive and deep going that even thinkers who accept the existence of reification in social thought, fail to get beyond 'its objectively most derivative forms, the forms furthest from the real life-process of capitalism.' (6)

1923 saw the publication not only of Lukács' *History and Class-Consciousness*, but also of I.I.Rubin's *Essays on Marx's Theory of Value.* (7) The opening chapter of Rubin's book deals exclusively with Marx's

theory of fetishism, arguing that it forms the foundation of Marx's account of capitalist economy, in particular his theory of value. Rubin declares:

> The theory of commodity fetishism is transformed into a general theory of production relations of the commodity economy, into a propadeutic to political economy. (8)

He emphasises that such a political economy does not analyse the 'material-technical aspect' of the capitalist mode of production, but is on the contrary concerned with its 'social form', the value form generated by capitalist relations of production:

> Political economy is not a science of the relation of things to things, as was thought by vulgar economists, nor of the relations of people to things, as was asserted by the theory of marginal utility, but of the relations of people to people in the process of production. (9)

Rubin emphasises that those whom he calls 'vulgar economists' (the representatives of political economy after Ricardo), employ categories such as value, money and capital, which are considered not as expressions of human relations 'tied' to things, but as the actual characteristics of the things themselves. They come to focus exclusively on, and study, the 'natural-technical' characteristics of these things, believing that it is in the analysis of the movement of these that the true science of economics resides. It is the reification of production relations therefore which considers the social characteristics of things as natural characteristics belonging to the things themselves. 'Vulgar economy' remains imprisoned within the reified conceptual limits of capitalism. Insofar as it only considers the quantitative relations between fetishised categories it can neither arrive at a real understanding of the mechanism of capitalist production, nor provide a prescription for its transformation.

The social character of labour under capitalism (i.e., the interconnected society-wide division of labour) is only apparent by virtue of the value relations possessed by the products of that labour, and this is effected through market exchange. The role of 'vulgar economy' is to provide a systematic rationalisation of this fetishised realm of market appearances, where social relations of production (the relation of capitalist to worker) are transmuted into the natural properties of things (capital and labour).

The focus of 'vulgar economy' on the fetishised exchange relations of the market conceals not only the inequality existing between employer and worker prior to any market transaction, but also the crucial process of surplus value extraction which takes place during the time when labour power is consumed by the employer. 'Bourgeois economics' is apologetic in the sense of justifying the existing property relations by

removing them from the frame of analysis, and failing to grasp the underlying mechanisms of value creation.

But it is not that orthodox economics deliberately sets out to mystify or to conceal. The economic categories of demand and supply, prices, wages, capital, interest and profit are the immediately apprehendable facts of everyday economic life - they constitute the spontaneous, lived experience of economic life under capitalism. Since it is the market, which establishes the social character of labour, it follows logically that the categories arising spontaneously in the market provide the conceptual means for making sense of it. But the reality thus apprehended at this level is 'mystificatory'.

Both Lukács and Rubin are distinguished by the fact that they consider commodity fetishism to be the very foundation of Marx's critique of political economy, and by that token, of Marxism itself. This is in contrast to the accounts given by orthodox social science, which treat it as at worst a sociological curiosity, and at best a valuable part of Marx's description of capitalism, but one which remains peripheral to his main theme. We have seen how in both Lukács and Rubin, but particularly the former, the terms commodity fetishism and reification tend to be used interchangeably. To the extent that there is a distinction to be made, reification may be taken to designate the fetishistic character of bourgeois social thought in general, expressed more widely than just the sphere of market exchange. But in essence the effect is the same - instead of regarding the categories of bourgeois political economy as, what they are, the reified abstractions of real, and therefore transitory social relations, they are taken to be the embodiment of reality, an accurate representation of the way things really are. Such reified categories are discreet and unhistorical, possessing explanatory power for the way things appear under capitalism precisely because the properties of social relations appear as the properties of 'things'.

Commodity fetishism was seen by both Lukács and Rubin as the centre-piece of Marxism. Their view however never made significant inroads into the mainstream of Marxist thought, which was at the time of their writing, crystallising into an orthodoxy. The philosophical core of Marxism after Marx had been established principally by Engels and Kautsky, and it was this core that was further ossified in the 'Diamat' of the Third International under Stalin. Philosophically, this mainstream was overwhelmingly epistemological and positivist in character. The two terms are used here to designate in the broadest and most general sense the dominant trend in modern philosophy and social theory.

By epistemological is meant a concern with the conditions and possibilities of knowledge, a focus that can be traced back to Cartesian rationalism. Its starting point is a subject-object dualism, whereby the human subject confronts a world external to it, and attempts to gain knowledge of it. The most important problem thrown up in this paradigm is that of the objectivity of knowledge. By positivism is meant the application of the methodology of the natural sciences to the study

of social phenomena. It is an approach which privileges the empirical given, the raw sense-data of reality (which it refers to as the 'facts'), regarding these as more or less readily intelligible to the neutral observer. Both terms signal objectives and problems which revolve around the questions of how the individual human subject can gain knowledge of the external world, and what the status of such knowledge is. The terms are used here almost interchangeably, since the rationalist and empiricist strands in modern philosophy reflect a common preoccupation with the status of scientific knowledge. Positivist social science is anyway the logical (and historical) result of the epistemological focus assumed by a modern philosophy influenced by the growing hegemony of natural science.

In contrast to this tradition of positivist Marxism the concepts of commodity fetishism and reification provide the points of reference for Marxism as ontology. Ontology not in the speculative metaphysical sense of a philosophical system built around categories of being in general, but of a materialist, social ontology, grounded in the dialectic of social labour. Within the tradition of positivist Marxism these concepts have been read in an epistemological fashion, almost as illustrative examples of false consciousness in the debate over ideology, rather than as the specific result of Marx's analysis of the labour process of capitalism. The importance of Lukács' *History and Class Consciousness* lies in the centrality that the concept of reification has in his exposition of Marxism. In Lukács' *Ontology of Social Being* (the work of the last years of his life, from the mid-60s to 1971) he drew out the philosophical implications of this focus more deliberately and more explicitly, and in this sense produced an invaluable reference point for any critique of the orthodox tradition.

Subject and Object in Philosophy

"Truth is not to treat objects as alien"- Hegel.

Throughout the history of modern social science one theme has preoccupied its practitioners more than any other - the question of objectivity. This has been the coordinate around which the debates in the social sciences have remained steadfastly fixed, and it remains so even in the wake of the recent postmodernist turn. The spectre of relativism is merely another angle of this concern with objectivity. Can social science know the world through the murky lens of the human subject by employing the methods of natural science? Positivism emphatically says Yes! Relativism says No!, and in doing so tries to reformulate the question. But the original question still remains the over-riding concern of the mainstream in social science, and where this way of posing the question is avoided by those influenced by anti-empiricist social theory, it is still the question that deep down animates methodological debates.

Positivism in the social sciences was built on subject-object dualism, a product of modern philosophy which began with Descartes. The thinking subject confronts the objective world in order to know it. In all the variations of positivism such dualism conceives of the subject as possessing a passive, contemplative relationship to the external world (the object). It is not a relation whose chief defining feature is practical activity. It is rather a relation of one-way knowledge appropriation, from object to subject, in which transformation of the object plays no part. Marx brilliantly anticipated this in the first of his 'Theses on Feuerbach' written in the early 1840s:

> The chief defect of all materialism up to now (including Feuerbach's) is that the object, reality, what we apprehend through our senses, is understood only in the form of the object or contemplation; but not as sensuous human activity, as practice; not subjectively. Hence in opposition to materialism the active side was developed abstractly by idealism - which of course does not know real sensuous activity as such.... (10).

Such dualism reflects a reification of 'objective' reality, which assumes a separateness and autonomy from social actors, and can therefore only be known in abstraction from them. Arising logically from this separation is a parallel separation, the dualism of theory and practice. Theory in positivist social science is a closed epistemological realm, related to practice only by a process of abstraction. The subject is recognised of course to be ultimately part of social reality, but to be able to know it (objectively, that is to say without normative distortion), must be abstracted from it. This is the declared task of positivist social science. Practice, insofar as this category is given recognition, is seen as the application of principles discovered in the realm of theory, to the object social reality. But this separation of theory and practice, itself flowing from the separation of subject and object, sunders the unity of social existence. Reification of the social world is thus inscribed in the method of positivist social science at its most fundamental level.

Once the social world is objectified in this way it is closed off from social practice. Theory (theorisation) is not regarded as an aspect of social practice, a means of transforming social reality, but merely a technique of reflecting it as 'accurately' as possible. And the greater the detachment achieved by the subject (as bearer, producer of theory) the more accurate (i.e., objective) the reflection is. (Orthodox economics exemplifies this approach more obsessively than any other social science, having remained relatively immune from the incursions of anti-positivist thinking). Thus the passivity of the subject, and its separation from the social object, testifies to reification at the most general theoretical level. It has determined the preoccupation of bourgeois social theory with the question of objectivity from the beginning. Its history has been marked by alternating optimism and pessimism concerning the possibility of social knowledge. In periods of progress and advance,

positivist thinking sweeps all before it, but lapses into relativist self-doubt in times of stagnation and crisis.

The strict separation of subject and object, and of theory and practice, is ultimately the product of a mode of production whose reproduction is secured, as Marx puts it, 'behind the backs of the actors'. Capitalism made social science possible insofar as the economic assumed an autonomy from the social actors, and could be abstracted from the lives of individuals and thus theorised. The very way in which capitalism reproduces itself gave to social science its reified form.

If the structure of bourgeois social thought is reified, it should hardly be surprising if we find in the Marxist tradition the presence of reified categories and method. Marxism after Marx was of course always unfinished, although this was not always the view of many of its representatives. It was at any one time always the outcome of intellectual struggle against the ruling ideology, and of disputes within Marxism itself. But in keeping with the prevailing hegemony of positivist social thought over the last two hundred years or so, the dominant current of Marxism has also been a positivist one. This has manifested itself at a general philosophical level in a preoccupation with the construction of Marxism as a science, and flowing from this concern with scientific status, has come the emphasis on epistemology as the most important way of expressing that scientificity. Such positivist strains are to be found in the work of Engels after Marx's death, in the orthodox mainstream of German Social Democracy, and in what came to be the dialectical materialism of the Third International after Lenin.

What does this positivist strain in Marxism owe to Marx? Marx always clearly distinguished his materialism from the French materialism of the 18th century (La Mettrie, Helvetius, Holbach), and qualified his materialist credentials by referring to 'the materialist basis' of his dialectical method. French materialism of course derived from, on the one hand, the mechanistic philosophy of Descartes, and on the other, the materialism of Bacon, Hobbes and Locke. For Marx, this materialism, which he encountered in its most developed form in Feuerbach, was both mechanistic and contemplative.

The French materialists in particular emphasised the influence of environment and circumstances in moulding human character, and saw the human mind in this process as a passive receiver of sensations. As Marx pointed out in the 'Theses on Feuerbach,' the active side of cognition was ignored, enabling the idealists to emphasise the importance of the subject in the creation of knowledge. But Marx goes beyond the contraposition of subject and object as autonomous entities, introducing the idea of 'real sensuous activity', by which he means the unity of cognition and practical activity. Marx does not just bring these two categories together, but rather goes beyond them. Gone is the relation of man to the world as one of knowing subject confronting external object, and gone therefore are the specific problems associated with this relation: gaining knowledge of the external world, which according to the materialists exists independently of the observer. For

Marx this is a false and entirely misleading issue, because there are no pre-given 'facts', there is no natural datum of experience existing independently of human subjects. The so-called objects of knowledge are in fact socially mediated objects, determined by the needs of human beings in their struggle for existence. Moreover there is no nature existing independently of and prior to humans - it too exists as it does only for human activity - nature is for Marx, 'man's inorganic body'. Humanity only knows the world which its productive activity has created. In 'The German Ideology', Marx says:

> The sensuous world...is not a thing given direct from all eternity, ever the same, but the product of industry and the state of society; and indeed, in the sense that it is a historical product, the result of the activity of a whole succession of generations, each standing on the shoulders of the preceding one, developing its industry and its intercourse, modifying its social organisation according to the changed needs. (11)

The conventional epistemological problem, which exists for both materialism and idealism, of whether the external world exists, or how knowledge is possible, and is produced, did not exist for Marx. In this sense Marx was not pursuing epistemological lines of enquiry. Yet the post-Marx tradition of Marxism has been predominantly concerned with the construction of a scientific epistemology in the classical sense.

In place of the subject-object dualism of 'contemplative materialism', Marx employs the categories of 'sensuous activity', the 'real life process' of world-objectifying social activity (*'vergegenstandlichung'*). With these categories he draws attention to the fact that it is human beings engaging in social labour who create their objective world. Where materialism sees the discreet entities of object and subject in a mechanical relation of cause and effect, Marx's naturalism starts from labour as object-constituting activity. What we have is a profoundly different concept of science to the one held by materialism and its heir, positivist social science. Where the latter focuses on the knowability of the social world and nature (i.e., objective reality), distinct from the knowing human subject, Marx's starting point is 'anthropological' - the nature of man as producer whose world is his historically created reality. This is what Marx meant in referring to a science, a natural history, of man. This science is historical and therefore concrete, because its object is the succession of social relations through which humanity has produced the world. This contrasts with the foundation of materialism and positivism, which is unhistorical, and by virtue of that, abstract. The limit reached by contemplative materialism was the limit never transcended by subsequent bourgeois thought. In the forms of social science or philosophy the reigning paradigm was to be epistemology, and its chief preoccupation was the possibility and objectivity of knowledge. In this fundamental respect it remained metaphysical.

While Marx rejected the materialism of his day as contemplative and mechanical, he commended idealism at least for its 'active' side. We see this most clearly in Kant, who argued in his 'Critique of Pure Reason' that the objective world is constituted by the synthetic work of consciousness, the mind possessing innate properties by which it orders experience. In the terminology of epistemological dualism, the subject mediates the raw material of experience (the object) by means of innate categories of thought - the subject thus produces the intelligible world. Hitherto, Kant claimed, it was assumed that knowledge must conform to its objects, but in his Copernican revolution he reversed this, arguing that objects must be seen as conforming to the 'knowledge' of the subject. But while Kant stressed the synthetic role of the human mind, he remained on the idealist terrain of the epistemological subject, and did not transcend subject-object dualism. Such transcendence was to be the achievement of Marx.

Marxism As Ontology

Lukács believed that Marxists could only fruitfully analyse history and society by means of Marxism as ontology. This, he argued, was only consistent with the method employed by Marx, for whom forms of existence and categories are grounded ontologically. It was invalid, according to Lukács, to solve the problems of real life by using epistemology as a defining analytic approach. This is indeed what Kantianism, positivism and neo-positivism had tried to do, with the result that they were a block to authentic knowledge. (12)

Lukács considered ontology as the proper form which philosophy should take, being in the most general sense philosophy based on history:

> Marx established that historicity is the fundamental concept of social being, and as such of all beings. This I hold to be the most important part of Marxian theory. (13)

Lukács considered his own Marxism as having moved in the direction of a general ontology, giving it what he called a 'true philosophical foundation'. He considered that conventional epistemological approaches dwelt only on the possibilities of knowledge, whereas ontological approaches confront the historical necessities, which bring entities into being.(14)

On his own account, Lukács' later work (in the *Ontology of Social Being*) focussed on the relationship between necessity and freedom, or in his preferred terminology, between teleology and causality. He sought to go beyond traditional philosophical approaches which had always tended to fix on one or the other of these poles - in stressing necessity, freedom was denied, and vice versa. Lukács wanted to examine the interrelatedness of the two. The central category in this enterprise was that of 'labour', whose essential feature is teleological.

This is so, because the exercise of human labour always involves choices between alternative projected outcomes. In this, labour expresses human freedom. The freedom however is always bounded by objective physical laws, which cannot be transcended.

This is indeed consistent with Marx's approach, and in fact is really only a restatement of the philosophical vantage point already achieved by Marx in his early works (notably the *German Ideology*) - an ontology of human productive activity, where reality is understood as historically grounded (i.e., changing) human practice. In his last work 'The Ontology of Social Being', Lukács writes:

> Since Marx made the production and reproduction of human life into the central question, man himself, as well as all his objects, conditions, relationships, etc., acquires the double determination of an insuperable natural basis and the permanent social transformation of this. As in all Marx's work, labour is here too the central category, in which all other determinations already manifest themselves 'in nuce'. (15)

Lukács draws out the implication of this approach for the Marxist conception of socialism, and in doing so offers an illustration of Marxism as ontology:

> It is well known that Marx demarcated his conception of socialism first and foremost as scientific, as against the utopian conception. If we examine this distinction from the standpoint of Marx's ontology, the first decisive aspect that strikes us is that Marx sees socialism as the normal and necessary product of the internal dialectic of social being, of the self-development of the economy with all its presuppositions and consequences, as well as of the class struggle, whereas for the utopians, a development that was in many respects essentially defective had to be corrected by decisions, experiments, provision of models etc. (16)

But Lukács' restatement is in itself important, since it challenges the dominant trend after Marx, of Marxism as epistemology. For much of this mainstream, the social ontology of Marx was not properly understood, and even ignored. Classical subject-object dualism remained in an ill-digested form within Marxist discourse. It provided the theoretical underpinning of the attempt to fashion Marxism as a positive science.

We have said that the epistemological focus was one which Marx had defined as irrelevant to a natural history of man. But positivistic Marxism, in retaining the category of the subject, has accepted the content and significance this has given to the concepts of consciousness and knowledge. In recognition of this, some thinkers have sought to stress that Marx's contribution centers around the concept of 'praxis' (Labriola, Gramsci, Sartre, among others). The problem with the

concept of 'praxis' is that it is too easily interpreted as simply human activity in general, and does not convey what is specific to Marx's notion of human practice - as 'world objectifying activity'. The important point here is that 'praxis' in the latter sense only becomes apparent insofar as the idea of the subject as passive knowledge producer is rejected, and in its place social individuals are seen as producing their world through labour. In this respect Marx does not just give the concept of the subject a different content, but rather replaces it with the altogether different concept of social labour. This is a reversal of the epistemological tradition which runs from Descartes through to Kant, and is continued in positivist social theory.

Yet the mainstream of the Marxist tradition, in which Engels, and some would argue Lenin, were pivotal influences, has reduced the philosophical choice to one between materialism and idealism, identifying Marx as merely an elaborator of Feuerbachian materialism. In this schema Marxism as an historical ontology of social being had no place. The addition of the dialectic to the materialism in no way compensates for this exclusion, since it complements the materialism in what is basically an epistemology. Completing the philosophical revolution initiated by materialism became the raison d'être of positivist Marxism, its emblem the honing of Marxism as a science in a decisive and self-conscious distancing from philosophy. It thus claimed to be the most thoroughgoing part of the modern scientific enterprise, fulfilling the goal which positivism was held to be incapable of - the achievement of objectivity.

Marx, from the very beginning of his philosophical enterprise, is seeking an ontological ground for the reality beneath the appearances. Throughout he seeks to establish the material presuppositions of human existence by regarding 'being' as production, as labour. Lukács argues that Marx's so-called 'economic writings' are in fact works of science, but ones which have been arrived at through philosophy. This means that facticity is investigated from the standpoint of actually existing relations, and not facts as isolated and self contained ('fetishised' and 'deified') entities. The philosophical account of Marx's method is to be found in the first part of his book *The German Ideology*, written in 1845.

Cartesian epistemology attempted an account of knowledge by employing a reductive method of analysis which broke down phenomena into their constituent parts, and insofar as it created for itself a 'problem' of knowledge, turned this 'problem' into one of knowledge of the self (the subject) and its cognitive capacities. This is the 'subjective turn', which is inherent in epistemology conventionally conceived, as an abstract and metaphysical account of the possibilities of knowledge. This approach ultimately throws all questions of knowledge back on to the nature of 'mind' and 'consciousness'. Modern philosophy, dominated as it is by epistemology, is replete with variants of this 'subjective turn'. But this is something that is not only characteristic of bourgeois philosophy. It has molded the mainstream Marxist tradition in turn. An

example from a Marxist critique of Economics will illustrate the point. In an article entitled 'Ideology, Knowledge and Neoclassical Economics: Some elements of a Marxist account' (17), Simon Mohun sets out to explore the question why the appearances of capitalism take the particular forms that they do, and why these appearances are systematically delusory. After explaining that the root cause is commodity fetishism, he goes on to argue that an account of fetishism is crucial to an account of ideology. Mohun then suggests that it is the task of a Marxist theory of ideology to provide an account of why ideological systems arise. His posing of the problem however, reveals an approach which falls squarely within the tradition of Marxism as epistemology:

> since within Marxism ideology is counterposed to knowledge, or science, then to the extent that such a counterposition can be justified, a theory of ideology necessarily involves a theory of knowledge, and much of modern Marxism has been concerned with establishing the differences between knowledge and ideology, and the relations between the two. (18)

He goes on to elaborate that the problem is one of 'specifying the relation between the knower or subject, and the thing known or object'. (19)

Such a specification is necessary he adds, if choices are to be made between competing theories. Indeed such questions 'comprise the classical problems of epistemology and are the source of many of the areas of debate within contemporary Marxism'. (20)

Mohun takes Marx's thesis in the *German Ideology* that 'it is not the consciousness of men that determines their being, but, on the contrary, their social being that determines their consciousness', as the essence of the classical Marxist position, but adds that such a statement 'does not provide any solution to the epistemological problem of the relation between thought and reality'. This thesis however presents Mohun with an insoluble conundrum precisely because he chooses to interpret what Marx is saying through the lens of classical epistemology.

But, as has been argued above, this was entirely foreign to Marx's method. Marx was at pains to avoid analysing the subjective stance which proves the existence of the objective world and the degree of accuracy in knowing it. For him this was a philosophical cul-de-sac which forced a fruitless inquiry into consciousness and its conditions of existence. For Marx the question of the relation of thought to reality in its conventional philosophical form had to be transcended, and he did this by focussing his inquiry on 'sensuous activity' and the 'sensuous world':

> Where speculation ends - in real life - there, real, positive science begins: the representation of the practical activity, of the

> practical process of development of men. Empty talk about consciousness ceases, and real knowledge has to take its place. When reality is depicted, philosophy as an independent branch of activity loses its medium of existence. (21)

The epistemological dualism of subject and object is dissolved into dialectic of knowledge as practical activity. Marx explains this at length in his critique of Feuerbach at the beginning of *The German Ideology*. The premises, from which he proceeds are 'real' or 'material' premises, that is to say, real men engaged in producing their conditions of existence. This is an empirically perceptible process, which has no use for the abstract concepts of 'man', 'consciousness' and 'nature'. But grasping the implications of this transcendence of subject-object dualism has proved to be the most elusive theoretical step for Marxists after Marx.

David MacGregor in his important book *The Communist Ideal in Hegel and Marx* (22), has provided an important corrective to the retention in Marxism of a subject-object epistemology. He starts from the claim that Hegel's use of the dialectic is identical to that of Marx, and that the essence of both is conceiving thought (knowledge) as identical with its object. He shows that Hegel, in the *Science of Logic*, talks of subjectivity (the 'Idea') being active in the object, thereby giving itself reality (Truth). But MacGregor argues that Hegel is asserting more than that there is a coming together (an accommodation) of subject and object as categories which exist on their own account. This conception of the relationship is characteristic of what Hegel describes as the error of 'Understanding' (pre-dialectical thinking), which imagines the objective world as a separate, finished entity, to which the cognitive subject (as an equally separate and finished entity) must gain access. For this mode of thought, truth, as a correct correspondence of thought with an object external to and separate from it, does not go beyond the point reached by Kant with his notion of the ultimately unknowable 'thing-in-itself'.

If it is MacGregor's claim that the identity of knowledge with its object is the essence of the dialectical method of both Hegel and Marx, what is the mode of existence of this dialectic? MacGregor argues that in Hegel it is 'ideality', the activity (both theoretical and practical) through which men create ideas and translate them into reality. In Marx the corresponding notion is 'revolutionary practice'. For both, Labour is the activity which mediates subject and object, and in fact dissolves their separation. And it is Labour which carries with it the concepts of teleology and contradiction. In fact MacGregor claims that the dialectic of labour as the essence of the social individual, is the core of Hegel's thought which Marx absorbs into his own work, but does not fully acknowledge. At any rate, what we have here is the ontology of social being referred to by Lukács.

For MacGregor the failure to grasp the identity of knowledge with its object is characteristic of both 'bourgeois' and 'Marxist' thought. In

fact both these traditions conceive of thought as separate from its object, and regard any claim to the contrary as idealistic and metaphysical. The error of the 'Understanding' is, MacGregor argues, 'the root of all ideology or false consciousness; it forms the dominant structure of thought in capitalist society - a structure which both Marxist and bourgeois have in common' (23).

What are the implications of Marxism as epistemology? In the most general philosophical sense it is without a dialectic. Subject and objective reality are separate entities, and as such are without any logic of transformation. The relation is one of existents whose defining feature is separation. When the formal description of dialectic as the conflict of opposites has been applied, the source of movement is conceived mechanically as the coming into conflict of two externally constituted entities. Even in the formal sense this loses the notion of dialectic as the unity of opposites, which alone generates, from its inner structure the necessary antagonism that generates qualitatively new development. The fact is that Marxism as epistemology has, because of its metaphysical leaning, remained preoccupied with formal dialectical structures, which because they rest on reified categories, are ultimately sterile. Since the unacknowledged assumption is that such dialectical formulas are to be applied to reality, they merely reproduce the separation of theory and practice so central to the contemplative approach of bourgeois philosophy.

Marxism as ontology privileges social labour as its ground, and from the dialectic of labour as a commodity under capitalism, poses the necessity of free labour. The impulse of transformation lies in the very nature of human labour as world-objectifying activity. Marxism in this sense is the 'political economy' of free labour (as communism), not scientific knowledge of an objective, and therefore reified reality. The teleology expressed in this dialectic of labour is not the assigning of an arbitrary terminus for 'history' or 'society' (again, reified categories), but is of the nature of an inner necessity, flowing from human labour in its historical development, in the complete unfolding of its social character (its decommodification as communism). Forces of production and relations of production, are second order concepts which derive their significance only insofar as they articulate the dialectic of labour. Isolated (i.e., reified), they cannot explain historical development, which is why all attempts to extrapolate a formula for historical materialism from Marx's famous 1859 Preface have proved unsatisfactory, and have more often than not led to declarations of the redundancy of Marxism.

The theory of commodity fetishism is the clearest expression of Marxism as ontology. It grounds the categories of class, value and exploitation ontologically and thereby posits the possibility of decommodified, free labour. An epistemological reading of commodity fetishism, rooted as it is in the separation of subject and object, treats it as a problem of distinguishing the forms of appearance from reality, and therefore a problem of perception (i.e., misperception), of ideology. This

is a point appreciated by Etienne Balibar in his 'The Philosophy of Marx':

> Now fetishism is not a subjective phenomenon or a false perception of reality, as an optical illusion or a superstitious belief would be. It constitutes, rather the way in which reality (a certain form or social structure) cannot but appear. (24)

The words 'cannot but appear' are key here, and they refer us to Marx's overturning of philosophy's conventional understanding of objectivity. Balibar goes on to suggest this (without, it has to be said further developing the point):

> We can now see that with Marx's argument, by way of an apparently contingent detour through the analysis of the social forms of commodity circulation and the critique of their economic representation, the question of objectivity was entirely recast. The mechanism of fetishism is indeed, in one sense, a constituting of the world: the social world, structured by relations of exchange which clearly represents the greater part of the 'nature' in which human individuals live, think and act today. (25)

Marx argues, in his earliest writings (the 1844 Manuscripts in particular), that it is man's 'sensuous activity' which creates an objective world. Reality is therefore a product, an objectification of sensuous activity; so-called 'objective nature' is not simply given, but must be established, constituted by human practice. To the extent that man's reality appears over and above him, as a dominating and autonomous force, it is so precisely because of the form taken by his labour as a commodity. Alienated labour is thus the pivotal category, which makes its appearance in the 1844 Manuscripts, and which is further developed through the theory of commodity fetishism in the Capital of 1867.

In contrast to Marx's standpoint, reified thinking rests on the established separation of the subject from the world. It segregates subjectivity from 'nature', from 'objective reality', granting it only the properties of perception or knowing, which are separated from what Marx calls the 'world objectifying activity' of real, human individuals. But it does this not from any peculiar logic internal to itself, but because it reifies categories arising from a world constituted by alienated labour. The understanding of labour as a thing (as a commodity), which is characteristic of capitalist society, is of course a reified one: labour fixed in its subordination to and separation from Capital (or in the terminology of orthodox economics, labour as a factor of production). The theory of commodity fetishism, in showing why labour must appear in this way, at the same time posits the negation of labour as commodity.

I have argued that Marx did not lay the basis for a scientific epistemology. In fact the originality of Marx lay in his attempt to go beyond the dualism's offered by mechanical materialism and Kantian idealism, and elaborate an ontology of social being, at the heart of which was a dialectic of labour. The orthodox tradition which grew up after Marx however, crystallised into a positivist epistemology, unable to break fully free from the reified conceptual structures of bourgeois philosophy and social theory. Such reification is rooted in the sundering of the subject from the objective world, the defining feature of modern philosophy. The passive, contemplative relation of the cognitive subject to nature underpins the separation of thought and being, theory and practice. Such a subject confronts a reality which is always finished, always 'given' prior to the observer. Theory therefore plays no active part in the constitution of this reality, but produces the concepts of science as the abstractions of the entities it appropriates. Reified thought thus 'fixes' as 'things' what are the expressions of, because actually based on, social relations. It separates and seals off its categories as discreet entities bearing no organic relation to each other. The notion of the theoretical object as a totality of interconnected categories which is in the process of continuous change, is entirely foreign to the metaphysical method of bourgeois thought.

Positivist Marxism identified itself as a scientific theory of knowledge, embodied in the theory and the programme, and applied to its object, the proletariat. But such a conception reflected the reified structures of the ruling ideology, albeit delivered in the language of Marxist concepts. Thus:

Scientific epistemology----------->Produces---------->Applies knowledge
Knowledge to object

A positivist Marx sees capitalism, more specifically Capital, as a finished entity (ready-made and essentially complete), separate from labour, to which labour has to adapt and confront, and which it therefore has to 'know', as one knows an alien object. This is Capital as object or 'thing'. Reifying Capital at the same time reifies the category of Labour. It too becomes a fixed and unchanging essence in the world, moved only be Capital, to which it is always subordinate. A dialectical Marxism by contrast, knows capital as a social relation, produced and reproduced by labour under definite historical conditions. Capital and labour are but the expression of alienated labour in a system of generalised commodity production. The relation of labour to capital is only the relation of labour to itself, and going beyond capital is the self-transforming of labour, a transformation which is driven by contradictions internal to its form as value.

Arising from these different conceptions of the capital-wage relation, are opposed conceptions of class struggle. Positivist Marxism

sees the class struggle as the conflict of exclusive entities (Capital and Labour) which move into relations of contingent, but not necessary, opposition. Dialectical Marxism recognises the class antagonism embodied in alienated labour, not as the result of the subjective inclinations of capitalists or workers (although this is the form through which class struggle is expressed), but because of the form that this labour takes - as value producing labour.

Marx, in *Capital*, and in *Theories of Surplus Value* (26), makes the value form of labour the crux of his criticism of Ricardo. He asks why Ricardo 'never once asked the question.....why labour is expressed in value', pointing out that in failing to examine the specific form that labour takes under capitalism, he is unable to understand the historical specificity of capitalism as such (as opposed to production in general). The point is that only in this historically specific form of supply does labour produce value, that is to say, where the labour of individuals is expressed as abstract social labour. Value, for Marx, is the product of social labour and its form is exchange value.

Analysis of the value form is critical, for as Scott Meikle has argued, the driving contradiction in capitalist society is that between the form and content of the commodity form. The contradiction is immanent in the value form, expressing itself as that between human social labour and its value-creating form. Meikle's outline of Marx's analysis of the value form of labour, is part of his larger exposition of Marxism as an 'essentialism', a philosophical standpoint in stark contrast to the prevailing empiricist 'atomism' of bourgeois theory. He further argues that Marx's conception of the historical process and its contradictions are founded upon an essentialist ontology of the real natures of things, an ontology which transcends the false dualisms of empiricist epistemology. (27)

The Emergence Of Marxist Economics

Positive economics is essentially the study of reified categories (in the language of the discipline, variables such as, price, cost, demand, profit, demand, profit, etc). Such 'economic facts' are reified insofar as they are abstracted from the social relations in which they are rooted, and of which ultimately they are the expression, however distortedly. Such abstraction is total, investing in such variables a self-sustaining power which in reality only social relations between people possess. In granting variables such 'thing-like' qualities, the nature of the social relations underlying them is totally obscured. Such reification is expressed most succinctly in the idea of the 'economy' as a thing, separate from other spheres of life (politics, the family, etc.,), and made up of those 'facts' designated as 'economic'. The economy thus reified has a life of its own, operating above and beyond the actual existence of its participants (who are identified as 'economic actors'). The economy as machine is the most telling metaphor at work in orthodox economics,

and the language of modern economics is replete with the associated reified imagery: the economy is talked about as something which either harms or benefits people, which is beyond or under their control, which overheats, stagnates or prospers. The unifying idea is that the economy is an entity, a thing, autonomous of the human beings who are largely powerless to affect its laws of working.

The concepts of 'the economy' and the 'economic' possess no methodological significance in the work of Marx. Yet despite this, the overwhelming majority of Marx commentators, and indeed many Marxists, compartmentalize Marx's work into philosophical, political and sociological writings. To refer to Marxist economics is commonplace among avowed Marxists. So for example, Ernest Mandel refers to Marx's 'economic theory', and contends that 'Marx's contributions to economic analysis lie essentially in the field of the theory of value and surplus value...'(28). Those who eschew the idea of a Marxist economics invariably prefer the notion of Marxist political economy, but even here Marx was very clear that he was engaged in a critique of political economy, a critique that meant going beyond the social and property relations which made political economy necessary.

The reified character of bourgeois economics has had a pervasive impact on the attempt to develop Marx's critique of political economy, an impact resulting from developments following the Bolshevik revolution. The years leading up to the Russian revolution of 1917 were dominated by the work of Hilferding, Lenin and Luxemburg, and focussed chiefly on the question of Imperialism. This reflected the emergence of a truly global capitalism in the last quarter of the 19th century, and it concentrated the minds of the best Marxists on the material preconditions of the world revolution. In the early 1920s the survival of the young soviet workers state generated the industrialisation debate involving among others, Bukharin, Preobrazhensky and Trotsky. While the possibility of revolution in Germany still existed, the debate could encompass the view that socialism could only be built in the Soviet Union if capitalism was overthrown elsewhere - the question of the victory or defeat of revolutionary class struggle outside the USSR was therefore still the central issue. But with the ebbing of the revolutionary tide in the mid-20's, and the defeat of the Left Opposition in the Soviet Union, the debate turned inward, focussing on the Stalinist strategy of socialism in one country. Varga became the most prominent Soviet analyst under the Stalin regime, devoting his attention to the question of whether capitalism would stabilise or experience further stagnation. If socialism in one country was possible, an accurate assessment of capitalism's prospects was critical for deciding the internal and external policy of the Soviet Union. Since Stalinism was to mean the complete atomisation of the working class under a command economy policed by terror, a political economy crystallised whose limitations reflected the needs of such a regime.

Soviet historical materialism was conceived as an account of the objective logic of world history, where successive modes of production were seen as the motors of historical evolution. The Stalin regime regarded the economy over which it presided as the incarnation of the newly emerging socialist mode of production. But in this view, Marx's class struggle as the motor of history was entirely absent, replaced by productive forces which developed objectively according to their own inherent laws. Labour as a dialectical category disappears completely in this reified political economy, and to the extent that class antagonism remains, it is transmuted into the competition of rival economic systems. History becomes the succession of modes of production, the progressive unfolding of which has a logic independent of the will of the human beings involved. Such objectivism became the hallmark of orthodox Marxism, indicating its degeneration into a closed, reified dogma.

The ebb of the world revolution and the consequent isolation and bureaucratisation of the Soviet workers state, were the key factors leading to the ossification of Marxism into a dogmatic and apologetic state ideology. The output of Soviet political economy for over 60 years, was the work of official 'economists' in the service of the Stalinist State. But through the vehicles of national Communist parties, Soviet 'Histomat' also influenced an entire generation of Marxist intellectuals outside the Soviet Union. With the consolidation of Stalinist power in the 'east', and the onset of the democratic counterrevolution in the 'west', Marxism after 1945 retreated into the academy. Reflecting the influence of segregated social science disciplines, Marxist political economy fell increasingly under the umbrella of Economics, and was increasingly identified as Marxist economics. The double influence of waning class struggle and the quantitative approach of orthodox academic economics, gradually reduced the presence of labour and class antagonism from the literature of Marxist economics. The latter retained Marxist categories, but tended to employ them in the standard areas of research, and in the theoretical framework favoured by the orthodox mainstream. Emptied of a focus on labour and class struggle, Marxist economics could become, despite its radical terminology, just another safe area of academic study.

The other influence facilitating the development of a domesticated Marxist economics was the challenge of Keynesianism. The theoretical significance of the work of Keynes lay in his claimed break with the Classical tradition, and the inspiration it gave to a new generation of economists to break new ground for their discipline. The Keynesian thesis that a capitalist economy could remain in equilibrium with high levels of unemployment and stagnating output has provided a powerful pole of attraction for left-leaning and radical thinkers since Keynes' General Theory appeared in 1936. In particular, the Keynesian revolution gave rise to a radical strand of orthodox economics known as Post-Keynesian theory.(29) Based on the twin contributions of Keynes and Kalecki, it's most prominent exponent in England was Joan

Robinson, and its focus was the instability and tendency to crisis of the capitalist system. For this reason many academic Marxists saw in this wing of orthodox economics a research agenda and a theoretical framework not that dissimilar to their own. For 30 years after the emergence of Keynesianism, a 'Marxist' presence in the field of economics was represented by a small number of academics - Maurice Dobb, Ronald Meek, Paul Sweezy, Paul Baran, Joseph Gillman; while others, such as Michal Kalecki and Joseph Steindl, presented a radical profile by incorporating 'Marxist' concepts into what was essentially an orthodox framework. In the 1970s there was a revival of interest by the orthodox economics establishment in Marx, and a new generation of academic Marxist economists sprang up. But with exceptions this was Marxist economics, which when not seen merely as a sub-discipline of the mainstream, was firmly situated in the tradition of positivist social science.

A crucial development which did take place in the 70s-80s revival of Marxist scholarship was the emphasis placed by some Marxists on 'value theory'. This placed the labour theory of value (or law of value) at the very center of the Marxist analysis of capitalism, attempting to engage with the question which Marx reproached Ricardo for not asking: why does labour take the form that it does, as value creating labour? John Weeks, as a proponent of this standpoint sums it up as:

> the view that value theory is the key to unlocking the inner nature of capitalism; that because of what Marx called 'the fetishism of commodities', capitalism cannot be fruitfully analysed in terms of its surface manifestation (prices, profits, wages, etc.,). Rather, the surface appearances hide the true nature of capitalist society and must be understood as reflections of the underlying value relations. (30)

The task is therefore primarily one of demystifying the obfuscating appearances of capitalism. Weeks identifies Lenin, Rubin and Henryk Grossman as earlier representatives of this approach, while pointing out that 'Marxists' such as Baran and Sweezy explicitly rejected 'value theory' as a tool of analysis. The dividing line between those who identify with a 'value theory' approach and those who do not, is clearly important in deciding the very validity of Marxist economics as a disciplinary practice.

Marxist economics has largely focussed its efforts on the elaboration of theories of capitalist crisis. What is striking about these contributions is that the concepts traditionally identified in Marx's writings - surplus value, organic composition of capital, the falling rate of profit, etc., and relationships such as those between departments of production (disproportionality, underconsumption, overproduction), have for the most part been employed in the quantitative and technical fashion characteristic of positive economics. This means that the concepts thus used are abstracted from class struggle and become reified. So for

example, much of Marxist economics has been concerned to pinpoint the origins of capitalist crisis in configurations of disembodied, technical categories. It is no accident that labour has been the one category which has been largely absent in this approach. Marxist economics in this way reproduces the objectivism of orthodox economics - the tendency to regard capitalism as an entity autonomous of its human actors, and insofar as labour is included in its list of variables, it is as a factor of production, and not as the central, integrating category of its analysis.

The technical, quantitative approach has led to a preoccupation with identifying those tendencies leading to the breakdown and collapse of capitalism. This search for the cause of system dysfunction is reified thinking par excellence. As Lenin famously pointed out, there is no such thing as a terminal crisis of capitalism - the final collapse never arrives, since all crises can be resolved IF the working class is prepared to foot the bill. The precise outcome of a crisis is always in the last analysis a question of the balance of class forces. But systems thinking does not appreciate that capitalism is the particular and unique way in which a class of capitalists pumps the surplus out of the direct producers, and is thus the changing series of forms which that exploitation of labour takes. The various forms of the labour process are always the original outcome of the conflict generated over the distribution of the surplus product, the resolution of one phase of conflict preparing the conditions for the form that the next phase will take. It is in this process that the source of the crisis of capital accumulation is to be located. To adhere exclusively to a theory of underconsumption, overproduction, or falling rate of profit, is to grant such measurements an explanatory power which they do not possess.

There are those Marxist economists who see the development of a 'quantitative Marxism' as the means of avoiding the marginalization of the 'discipline'. The Marxist debate over 'value theory' in the 70s and 80s is regarded as having led to a dead end, failing as it did to generate an engagement with orthodox economics. The antidote to such sterility lies in taking up 'the tools and data of orthodox analysis' in order to capture such phenomena as 'the dynamics of capital accumulation' (31). The failure of 'value theory' Marxism is quite clearly seen to be its anti-empirical bias. But the argument turns on what is meant by the empirical. What quantitative Marxism means by empirical is reference to the statistical data which an engagement with the techniques and analysis of orthodox economics makes available. However what is crucially forgotten is that when 'value theory' employs categories which start from the relations of commodified labour (value-producing labour), this is a concrete analysis of social relations. This is in complete contrast to the approach of orthodox economics, which while priding itself on starting from the 'empirical' (price, profit, cost, etc.,), is in fact looking only at the surface appearances of capitalist distribution, appearances which obscure social relations rather than illuminate them, and which is therefore anything but concrete.

The recent efforts to elaborate a quantitative Marxism have been paralleled by renewed interest in models of market socialism. Although the first market socialists were early 19th century utopian socialists and radicals, such as Hodgskin, Gray and Proudhon, against whom Marx polemicised, the twentieth century version of market socialism was a response to the claim made in the 1920s and 30s by Ludwig von Mises, Lionel Robbins and Friedrich Hayek, that rational economic calculation and an efficient allocation of resources was impossible in a socialist economy. The recent revival has been fuelled largely by the collapse of the soviet model of command economy, leading to a thorough-going questioning by the radical intelligentsia of the traditional Social-Democratic forms of public ownership and state intervention in a capitalist economy.

Market socialism asserts the indispensability of markets in any system of resource allocation. It thus believes that socialism cannot aspire to the complete replacement of markets with planning. Oskar Lange, Fred Taylor, H.D.Dickinson and Abba Lerner produced the basic market socialist model. (32) The challenge they addressed was the one laid down by Neoclassical economic theory and defended vociferously by von Mises and Hayek: that only under a free market capitalist system is it possible to achieve efficient resource allocation. Their broad solution was to suggest that a central planning board would set market-clearing prices (through a process of trial and error) to which individual enterprises could adjust their output (or in the case of Lerner, allow 'socialist' enterprises to form their own market prices). This was to be supplemented by a state provided social dividend payment to offset the inequality of wages resulting from market determined wage differentials.

The key point was that such a system was supposed to be capable of simulating the resource allocation function of decentralised perfect competition and delivering an allocation of resources as good as, if not better, than could be achieved under capitalism. Most importantly, the standard of efficiency adopted was the one fashioned by Neoclassical economics. In fact the use of the label socialist to describe the system was entirely misleading, since it presupposed the continued existence of wage labour and capital, and of course markets.

Hayek aptly called it a model of 'competitive socialism'. Despite the extensive debate now taking place over market socialism (33), contemporary proponents of market socialism add nothing new to the older models, except perhaps a greater preoccupation with the politics, as opposed to the economics of the case.

Market socialists have always been united in seeing the market as an economically neutral mechanism for the allocation of resources, and one which will still be required under a socialist system. According to this view markets may operate inefficiently under capitalism (market failure), but they can be made to work efficiently and in the service of human needs - they are, in other words, essentially system neutral. Such a view of markets comes directly from neoclassical economics,

which conceptualises them as mechanisms for reconciling the supply and demand of use-values, and which therefore, any system of economy must rely on.(34) But this is to think of markets as the means of distributing use-values as opposed to the regulation of exchange value; in other words a physical as opposed to a value conception of markets. For Marx, the market is the medium through which the law of value regulates the allocation of labour time - markets presuppose value-creating labour, and it is quite mistaken to imagine that you could have one without the other. If socialism is defined as the defetishisizing of the relations of production, the decommodification of human labour, then this means nothing less than the ending of labour as a value-creating activity, and with it the role of the market as the regulator of this activity. (35)

The contradiction which has always existed at the heart of market socialism is that between the reality that the retention of markets means the retention of capitalism, and the claim that retaining markets is compatible with socialism, and in this respect market socialism is the ultimate contradiction in terms. Clearly, it all depends on how socialism is defined, and if, as is the case, it increasingly means only a more humanitarian regulation of the capitalist system, resolution of the contradiction means the disappearance of socialism as a meaningful alternative to capitalism. Recent attempts to provide greater philosophical and methodological sophistication to the market socialism model have come from Analytical Marxism, a current of thought which has emerged as one of the leading edges of Marxism in the academy. Associated with the names of G.A.Cohen, Jon Elster, John Roemer and Erik Olin Wright, it is highly self-conscious of its claim to theoretical innovation. What this amounts to is an attempt to read Marx, and reformulate the conclusions of the Marxist tradition, from the standpoint of methodological individualism, in particular using concepts originating in the marginalist revolution of neoclassical economics. In many respects this is nothing new, but it has made the running in many academic circles given the demoralised state of many of the radical intelligentsia. Analytical or rational choice Marxism, is usually perceived to be the result of the importation into Marxism of a positivist method. But if the Marxist orthodoxy is, as I have argued, already strongly positivist, Analytical Marxism should be construed not so much as an alien import, but rather the further reification of an already reified body of thought.

Conclusion

Marx argued that the commodity (which was the starting point of his whole analysis) was 'mysterious' precisely because the social character of labour appears as the objective character of the relations between commodities themselves, i.e., commodity fetishism 'attaches itself to the products of labour, as soon as they are produced as commodities' (36).

This concept of commodity fetishism is therefore a property of value-producing labour. Since it is through the mechanism of exchange that the social character of the labour of individual producers is expressed, the market is an integral aspect of this value producing process. Thus the products of labour assume the form of things which dominate the lives and labour of the producers, and reify the very forms of thought, which seek to apprehend the process of wealth creation.

But the mainstream tradition of Marxism has moved a long way from the ontology of social being which Marx fashioned to demystify value creation. It has correspondingly displaced the categories of fetishism and reification from the analysis of labour, and in doing so has fallen prey itself to the use of reified concepts. Nowhere has this been more marked than in the practice of Marxist economics, for it is in the sphere of economics that reified categories exert their strongest influence. Thus the task of re-establishing value analysis as the core of Marxist thought (and resisting the pull of quantitative Marxism, analytical Marxism, and market socialism), is part of the task of re-establishing Marxism as ontology, and the defetishisation of labour as its object. The socialism registered by this ontology is thus the abolition of wage labour, of commodity production and the market - in short, the suppression of the law of value. At the end of an era of reified socialisms, in the space created by the collapse of Keynesian 'socialism' and Stalinist 'communism', it is socialism as the emancipation of labour which Marxists must fashion anew.

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150 Years Old: Looking Back in Anger

Werner Bonefeld

In the Preface to the 1872 German edition of *The Communist Manifesto*, Marx and Engels pointed out that developments since its first publication in 1848 rendered parts of the *Manifesto* redundant, especially the list of specific demands at the end of Section 2 and the Section 3 polemics against other socialist parties which had long since ceased to exist. What would their comments on the *Manifesto* have been in 1998?

The aim of the *Manifesto* was not to leave a timeless philosophical legacy to the world, but to give direction to the political ferment of the day. Would the continuous existence of capitalist social relations convince them that struggle against capitalist command over labour is all but fruitless? What would they have to say about the former regimes in the Eastern bloc that commanded labour under the name of socialism? Would they join in the chorus of the 'western world' that decrees the end of history? Would they really be surprised at a bourgeoisie announcing that history has come to an end with its system of exploitation and domination? I suppose not. Yet, I would think that Marx and Engels would be angry. Their anger, however, would not be directed at a bourgeoisie that fulfils its role and purpose: the capitalist class can not exist without its battle against the spectre of communism. Anger would be directed against their comrades who have turned out to have been false friends: Instead of freeing Marx from the chains of Stalinism, the fall of the Berlin Wall has been grasped as an opportunity finally to flee from Marx. I say flee with critical intent. The announcement of the end of history is synonymous with the espousal of the spectre of capitalism. It has been the New Left that has announced its farewell to the working class, not the bourgeoisie: the very circumstance that bourgeois social relations stand for relations between property owners has never been forgotten by the bourgeoisie. Fanatically bent on making 'its' wealth expand itself, it has never ceased to make the worker work for the sake of work and that means the treatment of humanity as a resource that is sacrificed on the pyramids of accumulation. The bourgeoisie knows what class divisions are and what the class struggle entails. Marx understood the role and function of the bourgeoisie well and would not be surprised that it, faithfully and relentlessly, continuous to perform its function and role

with unsmiling vigour and a posture of respectfullness that does not lack a certain charm. What, however, would Marx have to say to the New Left in a 1998 Preface to *The Communist Manifesto*?

Contemporary studies of a political economy kind assert that the capitalist world has suddenly globalised, has left the national state behind, has become a cosmopolitan order that cannot be resisted. Would Marx merely point out that *The Communist Manifesto*, written as it was in 1848, emphasises the global character of capitalist relations of exploitation? Would he merely recommend that the *Manifesto* is to be taken into consideration when the cosmopolitan character of the bourgeoisie is assessed? Or might he simply turn back in frustration muttering to himself that, since his time, the executive of the modern state has always been but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie? I suppose he would. Yet, the endorsement of his 150 year old views would not be without qualifications. History does neither stand still nor repeat itself. Would he thus not demand that contemporary developments of 'globalisation' are conceptualised not merely in terms of the objective laws of capitalist development but, rather, that these objective laws require a thorough conceptualisation in terms of class struggle? Would he, then, not charge that the contemporary accumulation of capital cannot be studied in abstraction from class but, rather, that it can go forward only on the basis of an analysis of class? In short would he not demand that the purpose of the critique of political economy is the discovery of the real living relations between humans and that this discovery has to be an analysis of history? What would be the reply of the proponents of globalisation? Would they argue, as indeed they do, that today's developments are driven by technological demands and requirements that are quite independent from and develop in abstraction from human wishes and aspirations? What would he have to say to that? Might he invite his listener to read the classic texts on political economy, including his own critique of political economy? Or might he simply turn round in anger shouting You are mystified by the self-presentation of a world which knows nothing about itself and so is without soul. To think scientifically is not to repeat the everyday religion of a senseless world. Rather it means demystification: Neither 'nations' nor 'history' nor 'capital' have made war. History does nothing, does not possess vast wealth, does not fight battles! It is Man, rather, the real, living Man who does all that, who does possess and fight, it is not history that uses Man as a means to pursue its ends, as if it were a person apart. History is nothing but the activity of Man pursuing its ends. This is his argument in the *Manifesto* and what is the argument of the proponents of globalisation?

However, might there not be an argument that Marx's work and the legacy that he bequeathed, was not in the least interested in matters of the soul? Indeed, the Marxist orthodoxy and bourgeois critics of Marx have, time and time again, emphasised that Marx was a rationalist thinker who built a system of thought based on notions of historical necessity and that any idea associated with the issue of the human soul

was not only expelled from his conception of history but, also, most strongly rejected and criticised. I suppose, the issue rests on what is understood by historical necessity. What about barbarism, famine, a universal war of devastation? Was the slaughter at Verdun a historical necessity? Was the killing of millions and millions in world war II, was Auschwitz, a historical necessity? A necessity on whose behalf and for what purpose? Is the apparently more recent 'invention' of 'baby farms' where babies are produced for sale on the world market a historical necessity? Have the truly disgusting developments that have characterised this Century not been with us since the inception of capitalist social relations? Are they merely the results of historical necessity, a necessity no other than the circumstance which Marx reports in *Capital*: 'a great deal of capital, which appears today in the United States without any certificate of birth, was yesterday, in England, the capitalised blood of children'? Or are these disgusting 'occurrences' the result of 'too much civilisation, too much means of subsistence, too much industry, too much commerce' as is reported in *The Communist Manifesto* when the argument turns on the contradictory development between the relations and the forces of production?

The *Manifesto* celebrates the soul as the possibility of self-comprehending existence, of class hatred, and of better things to come in the name of humanity that views, and so exists in and for, itself as a purpose. This, I suppose, is why *The Communist Manifesto* espouses the idea of an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all. Is it too far fetched to espouse this association in terms of 'soul'? No, it is not. Within the argument of *The Communist Manifesto*, gravediggers do not only bury the dead weight of history but, also, set free the soul of history: the age-long longing for a dignified, a happy life of a humanity that exists as a subject in control of its own affairs, in possession of itself and, that is, as a mature human being that views herself, and therewith nature, as a purpose and not as a resource for the exploitation of Man by Man. Against this view, some might object that Marx's work, especially the *Manifesto*, espouses a progressivist view of history where nature is merely commanded by Man bent on exploiting its resources for reasons of exploitation alone. However, for Marx, the category 'progress' is completely empty, is meaningless, if viewed in abstraction from its content and that is the relations between humans. The solution to environmental destruction is not just a question of the relationship between nature and Man but, rather, a question of the relationships between the human beings themselves.

Some might object to what I have had to say by pointing out that the emphasis on human practice, including its soul, has an all too anthropological ring to it. However, and importantly, should communists disdain to conceal their views and aims? Should communists be motivated by issues other than the demand for human conditions beyond the relations of exploitation whose proper place is no other than the museum of history? Furthermore, should one be

ashamed to demand human conditions, to espouse the notion of humanity, because capitalist relations of exploitation rest on the invocation of the human rights of Man. Without doubt, one of the major achievements of *The Communist Manifesto* is its denunciation of bourgeois conceptions of individuality, human rights etc. as conceptions that support the respectfulness of the capitalist exploitation of the working class. Marx's concept of human practice disavows the bourgeois concept of humanity. Furthermore, it calls for the realisation of the 'concept' of humanity through the forceful overthrow of all existing relations. The understanding of history as a history of class struggle is not undermined by the fact that it has so far failed to make history look anything other than a grotesque and bloody grimace.

The Communist Manifesto emphasises that theoretical mysteries find their rational solution in human practice and in the comprehension of this practice and that the point of philosophy is not that of interpreting the world but of changing it. It is a sad reflection on a great many of left approaches that neither of these insights seem to have much currency. This only emphasises the continued importance of *The Communist Manifesto* and this despite the failure of Marx's own revolutionary hopes.

The Communist Manifesto Today

John Holloway

I

In 1872, when Marx and Engels published the second German edition of *The Communist Manifesto*, they posed the question of whether, after the passage of almost twenty-five years, the argument of the *Manifesto* was still valid. They concluded that the general principles laid down there were 'on the whole, as correct as ever'. The experience of the Paris Commune had, however, made one thing clear, namely, 'that the working class cannot simply lay hold of the state machinery, and wield it for its own purposes'.

Another century and a quarter have passed since then, and again we must pose the question of whether the argument of the *Manifesto* still holds. Again we would conclude that the general principles are correct, but that there are certain things we would like to change. Certainly we would not want to dilute their conclusions, for the murderous obscenity of capitalism is more blatant than ever. After the

horrors of the two world wars, after Auschwitz and Hiroshima, after the inhuman depredations of neoliberalism, our criticism of capitalism would, if anything, be more bitter, more anguished, more urgent. And less optimistic.

The sentence that jars most, on rereading the *Manifesto*, is the closing sentence of the first section: 'Its [the bourgeoisie's] fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable.' (496) Of course the victory of the proletariat is not inevitable! Since Hiroshima, since the building of bombs big enough to destroy the population of the earth, it is quite clear that there is nothing inevitable about the victory of the proletariat, that 'the common ruin of the contending classes' (482) is at least as possible. Today our Communist Manifesto must be a manifesto without certainties, our dialectic must be a 'negative dialectic', as Adorno argued, a movement through negation with no guaranteed happy ending.

The sentence about the inevitability of the victory of the proletariat is, of course, a stylistic flourish at the end of the most important section of a revolutionary pamphlet. The notion of assured historical progress towards communism, however, goes deeper than that in the *Manifesto*. The whole tone of the pamphlet is imbued with the idea of historical advance. In the pages prior to the statement about the inevitability of the victory of the proletariat, Marx and Engels present a fairly linear picture of the growth of the revolutionary movement: 'with the development of industry the proletariat not only increases in number; it becomes concentrated in greater masses, its strength grows and it feels that strength more... The advance of industry, whose involuntary promoter is the bourgeoisie, replaces the isolation of the labourers, due to competition, by their revolutionary combination, due to association.' (492,496).

In the light of the experience of the last century, it is difficult to maintain such a linear view of the development of the revolutionary movement: advances have been followed by terrible defeats; out of these terrible defeats, new power has grown, but never on a secure basis, always threatened by capital's attacks. The advance of modern industry has not led in any simple way to an increasingly strong and self-confident proletariat. On the contrary, the industrial development of recent years has tended to break up the proletarian armies of the massive factories and has often brought increasing isolation to the workers. The actual movement of the decomposition and recomposition of the working class, in other words, has proved far more complex and contradictory than anything suggested in the *Manifesto*.

II

After the horrors of this century, how can we maintain the optimistic view of progress proposed by *The Communist Manifesto*? And yet, for the revolutionaries of the early years of this century, the belief that there was a scientifically proven historical march towards communism was of the essence of Marxism. Rosa Luxemburg's critique of Bernstein,

for example, still challenges us across the years: "'Why represent socialism as the consequence of economic compulsion?' he complains. 'Why degrade man's understanding, his feeling for justice, his will?' (Vorwaerts, March 26th, 1899). Bernstein's superlatively just distribution is to be attained thanks to man's free will, man's will acting not because of economic necessity, since this will itself is only an instrument, but because of man's comprehension of justice, because of man's idea of justice. We thus quite happily return to the principle of justice, to the old war horse on which the reformers of the earth have rocked for ages, for the lack of surer means of historic transportation. We return to that lamentable Rosinante on which the Don Quixotes of history have galloped towards the great reform of the earth, always to come home with their eyes blackened" (72-73).

If the optimistic certainty of *The Communist Manifesto* is now closed to us, does this mean that we too can aspire to be no more than the Don Quixotes of history, full of good intentions, but destined always to come back with our eyes blackened? Does it mean that we must abandon revolution and accept, as Bernstein argued, that reform is all that can be hoped for? Certainly not, but we should at least recognise that the basis of our struggle is not a sense of historical necessity. It is not because we think that history is on our side that we declare ourselves to be communists: it grows rather out of a 'judgment on existence', a judgment that grows out of the (individual and collective) experience of oppression. We rebel against capitalism as a matter of existence, not because we are sure of a safe landing.

Does that mean that we are content to come home with our eyes blackened, to be the permanent losers of history? Or else to adopt the always seductive role of Cassandra, warning of humanity's self-destruction, but resigned to the idea that there is no perspective of radical change? Certainly not. Both of these roles, that of the brave loser and that of the prescient but resigned intellectual, mean the abandonment of communism as a practical perspective. Any approach that condemns capitalist oppression but abandons the perspective of communism is self-contradictory, simply because any theory of domination that does not point beyond that domination ends up reinforcing the domination it purports to criticise: that is the tragedy of so much 'left' theory of the last thirty years.

But what does the 'perspective of communism' mean if we abandon the optimistic, linear progress of the *Manifesto*? Our rebellion is a matter of present existence, not of future happiness. But once we abandon the linear concept of progress, the dividing line between present and future becomes more fluid. Our present existence negates the present and reaches beyond it. Communism, that which does Not Yet exist, exists as the Not-Yet in the present, as dreams, as projects, as daily opposition to capitalism, as humanity in the face of inhumanity. In that sense, communism already exists as the real movement of the working class. As Marx and Engels put it in *The German Ideology*: 'Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality will have to adjust itself. We call communism the

real movement which abolishes the present state of things.' Communism exists as our dignity, our refusal to subordinate ourselves to what is, our refusal of the eternally repeated Is-ness of the present.

But surely that is not enough? Certainly communism exists as the Not-Yet in the present, as our refusal, but surely there must be more than a permanent dream of a future that might be? Surely the notion of communism implies a hope that we can really go beyond the obscene society in which we live - not just in the sense of projecting against it, but in the sense of really living in conditions of humanity?

Even if we reject the over-confident, over-simplistic notion of progress of *The Communist Manifesto*, there is a sense in which 'progress', as movement beyond capitalism, is integral to the notion of communism. But this progress is not the progress of one who walks on a firmly paved road to some visible destination. It is rather the progress of an inexperienced tightrope walker, who unrolls the tightrope she is walking on as she goes, hoping that somewhere there will be another pole she can attach it to, inventing each step, never sure of the future, always in the presence of the abyss, and knowing that she is on the tightrope not because she wants to go somewhere but because that is her existence. Progress is subjunctive, rather than the indicative progress of *The Communist Manifesto*: the growth of a potential rather than of a certainty. A progress based not on the onward march of the forces of production, but on the perilous growth of the insubordinate presence of labour against-in-and-beyond capital.

III

Such a subjunctive view of progress is suggested by Marx's *Capital*. By the time he came to write his great work (or perhaps just in the absence of the helping hand of his friend Fred), Marx's view of movement was more complex than in 1848 (although there are certainly passages, such as chapter 32 of Volume I, which echo the words of the *Manifesto*.)

Value is the central category for considering the perilous nature of progress. It is an antagonistic and explosive category, torn two ways like the society it conceptualises. Marx's theory of value is at the same time a theory of hope and a theory of despair, at once a theory of the strength of labour and the weakness of capital and of the strength of capital and the weakness of labour.

The theory of value is first and foremost (because we are first and foremost) a theory of the power of labour. Value is created by labour and by labour only. Value and the expansion of value are the result of labour. Capital, then, depends absolutely for its existence on labour. Without labour, capital is nothing. This, the most obvious and the most important aspect of Marx's theory of value, is generally completely overlooked by economists ('Marxist' or otherwise).

The theory of value is at the same time a theory of the subjugation of humanity, of the transformation of human creativity into labour. It is not free, purposeful activity that creates value, but abstract labour,

labour abstracted of all content. The expansion of value is the expansion of the subjugation and abstraction of labour.

In capitalism, progress means the accumulation of capital ('growth'), the expansion of value. This progress is inherently double-edged: it is at one and the same time the expansion of capital's dependence on labour and the expansion of the subjugation of labour by capital.

Progress is double-edged and knife-edged. The more capital progresses, the more intense its dependence upon labour becomes and the more intense its subjugation of labour must become. Marx discusses this development in terms of the tendency for the rate of profit to fall: in order to maintain its profitability, capital must subordinate and exploit labour ever more intensely. And why? Because its dependence on living labour becomes ever more intense. Technological innovation, instead of releasing capital from its dependence on labour (by getting rid of workers and replacing them with machines), actually makes it dependent on an ever more rigorous subordination of labour (think of nuclear power stations or just-in-time production systems, for example).

The expansion of capital is the movement of an increasingly intense contradiction: as capital grows stronger, it grows more dependent on the increasingly effective subordination of labour. But labour is never as subordinate as capital requires: even when it does not organise itself politically or in trade unions, it still insists on living, on having parties, on falling ill, on making mistakes, on getting tired, on resisting its reduction to the state of a machine. The increasingly inhuman, dehumanising demands of capital are increasingly confronted by our humanity, our non-subordination, our insubordination. Even labour at its most docile poses a threat to capital: capital depends absolutely on something it cannot completely control.

So capital flees. It tries all the time to escape from the insubordination or non-subordination of labour. It flees by replacing workers by machines. If insubordination or non-subordination is too great in one area, it flees in search of other areas where discipline is more effective. Its best escape of all is to flee completely from the dirt of the factory into the realm of finance, where money appears to make more money, without human intervention. The more it flees, the more violent it becomes: through flight and threat of flight it imposes its discipline, with all the misery, corruption and brute force that that implies.

However, turn and thrash as it may (as it does), there is no escape for capital. It can never break away from its dependence upon the subordination of insubordinate labour. All profit, even in the most recondite areas of financial dealing, depends on the subordination and exploitation of labour. The most that capital can do is to stretch the bonds that tie it to labour through the expansion of credit, but the more it does so, the more volatile, fragile and violent its existence becomes.

That is essentially the situation in contemporary capitalism. It seems that capital is triumphant. After the collapse of the Soviet Union and the defeat of so many revolutionary movements throughout the

world, after the silencing of trade union militancy in the face of neoliberalism, it seems that capital is having everything its own way. But capital is caught in the meshes of its own dependence on labour. Even when the labour movement seems to be beaten, it still remains true that capital depends absolutely on labour for its existence. Capital now demands a more inhuman subordination than ever before and, unable to achieve it, flees from labour as never before, stretching credit to the point where the only way in which it can survive is through the constant expansion of credit. The price is increasing financial instability. The insubordinate presence of labour against-in-and-beyond capital manifests itself through the financial instability of the system as a whole. A large-scale credit crunch which might restore financial stability is unthinkable, simply because it would destroy the social basis of capitalism. The only way forward for capital is to try to manage the ever more frequent and virulent financial crises (Latin American debt crisis of 1982, stock market crash of 1987, savings and loans and junk bonds crises of the late 1980s, tequila crisis of 1994, South East Asia today etc), while trying (through the financial crises and other means) to intensify the subordination of humanity, the subjugation of labour.

History, as ever, is on the edge. Benjamin's angel of history who 'sees one single catastrophe which keeps piling wreckage upon wreckage and hurls it in front of his feet' is no less, and no more, true than the confident optimism of *The Communist Manifesto*. The abyss is part of the tight-rope walk, not separate from it. The insubordination of labour, the struggle of humanity for humanity, threatens the world with disaster, but the subordination of labour, the 'safe' inhuman conformism of humanity threatens the world with a far greater disaster. In the present circumstances, our claim to live human lives, our insubordination or non-subordination to the obscenities of capitalism, our cry of dignity, whether in the factory, the street or the jungle, threatens capitalism more and more profoundly than ever before. That is our hope. But there is no certainty. The victory of the proletariat is not inevitable; it depends on us.

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Book Review

Ruth Milkman
Farewell to the Factory:
Autoworkers in the Late Twentieth Century
University of California Press, 1997, pp. 234.

Reviewed by Curtis Price

"Farewell to the Factory" is a study of autoworkers at a General Motors (GM) plant in Linden New Jersey and the choices these workers made when confronted by the restructuring imposed by GM in the late 80s. Given the opportunity to withdraw from the factory on a buy-out, a surprisingly high number of Linden autoworkers opted to exit the plant – and assembly line labor – entirely. Through extensive interviews conducted both at the time of the severance package offer and at regular intervals over the next few years, Milkman examines why some stayed, why others left and what happened to both categories of Linden workers in the aftermath.

While focused on an especially traumatic juncture in the plants' history, a strength of this book lies in the author adapting a long-range view of the shop floor relations existing at Linden in the post WW2 period. This viewpoint has the merit of placing what on the surface might appear only as individual decisions within a wider social context. By choosing this perspective, the reader can see how choices made at the point of the buy-out offer were rooted in and shaped by both the harsh disciplinary relations existing at this plant for quite some time as well as by the ways in which workers responded individually and collectively to the continual attempts to manipulate and control them.

One striking and overriding theme that emerges throughout "Farewell To the Factory" is the total disdain most workers felt toward their jobs – a disdain frequently bordering on active hatred. Throughout the book, workers consistently and bitterly refer to working at GM as comparable to prison, slavery, the military or a concentration camp; they describe their seniority as " time served." Despite having relatively high wages, fringe benefits and pensions, these autoworkers were far from being bought-off or content. And if the routine, numbing nature of the assembly-line was reluctantly tolerated as unchangeable,

the continual daily skirmishes with management, embodied in the hated presence of the front-line foremen, were not so graciously accepted. As one worker who accepted the buy-out put it,

> "I'm thrilled that I'm out of there – what can I say? The place was a hellhole. I really hated it. It was very belittling. It seemed like they were always trying to play games with you, always trying to degrade you ..." (quoted p.3)

In the late 1980s, as part of the United Auto Workers (UAW)-General Motors National Agreement, which followed massive concessions imposed in 1982 in return for UAW demands for job security, GM initiated the lump sum buy-out program at Linden. Nearly 25% of the plants' workforce accepted the proposition – a much higher figure than at other GM plants where GM made equivalent offers. The vast majority of this group of workers were relatively younger workers with low seniority – members of what Milkman refers to as "the Lordstown generation". (1)

When asked why they chose to leave, the number one reason cited by all respondents was concern about job security. Closely following were responses indicating an intense dislike of working at GM. Ranking third in respondent's answers was a desire to start their own business.

Of those who left. white male workers who became self-employed – often as a result of extending informal micro-enterprises they had established part-time while working at GM as a means of supplementing unemployment benefits during frequent lay-offs- tended to fare better. Blacks, women and those who accepted another form of wage labor disproportionately underwent a decrease in earnings. Often workers in these three groupings experienced periods of downward mobility, even if none of the respondents became truly impoverished. Yet when first interviewed after leaving the plant, only 20% regretted their decisions to accept GMs' severance package (although this figure rose to 38% in the course of the three interviews conducted over the five year study period).

In the last section, Milkman examines what effect the 'postfordist' introduction of new technology and the emphasis in new management phraseology on "workers' participation" has had on the workers who remained in a traditionally authoritarian Fordist plant like Linden. For one, if introducing new technology led to some measurable job loss, far more jobs have been lost at Linden to outsourcing of auto-part production to sub-contractors and a shift toward reducing the number of parts used in assembling current car models. Secondly, even the introduction by management of 'jointness' in shop floor relations has instead often had the opposite effect. As she perceptively notes, "rather than enhancing productivity and commitment as intended, the largely unrealized principle of participation became a tool of critique that workers appropriated to attack management practices" (p. 138). And finally, after all the restructuring and largely fictitious emphasis on

worker upskilling, nearly 45% of workers surveyed still rated their jobs as boring or monotonous "often" or "all the time" – a 10% increase from the 35% who responded positively to these same questions BEFORE the changeover at GM.

Sometimes the accumulated anger at the stringent regimentation and constant stream of daily humiliations appeared openly and combatively – as in several post-W.W.2 wildcat strikes and in the formation of an oppositional caucus outside of the UAW local in the seventies. Other times, it circulated covertly and in more underground forms – as it surely does today. But judging from the evidence gathered here, a deep and fundamental alienation from the work process continues to resonate in worker's attitudes at Linden.

Although the strength of the UAW has waxed and waned in the period examined, one is struck by how little traditional union bargaining could impact on these everyday issues of anger and frustration. At best, the UAW brokered better wages and trade-offs for conditions workers endured as near-slavery but never dreamed of encroaching on management prerogatives to set these standards.

(1) A reference to the frequent absenteeism, slow-downs and sabotage of production which took place among younger workers at the Lordstown, Ohio General Motors plant in 1971-1972; actions symptomatic of a wider 'blue collar blues' in U.S. factories at the time.

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