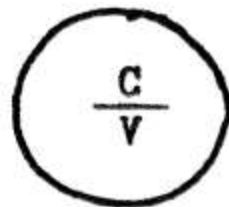


PROPOSAL FOR A MAY-DAY'S EVE CELEBRATION

One of the comrades here, Gérard, has come up with an agitational idea for the night before May Day which has got some of us in FOR OURSELVES quite excited. I wanted to take the trouble to share the idea with all of you, in case you want to join in. International extension and coordination of this intervention can only amplify its effectiveness.

The idea embodies a lot of the elegance and economy that I've always sought and appreciated in terms of a kind of aesthetic of revolutionary practice. We suspect it might return a high yield, in terms of the communication of revolutionary theory, for very little labor-time invested by revolutionaries — a "high productivity" agitational technology.

Simply, the idea, or phase 1 of the idea, is to inscribe the symbol



all over the walls of factories, office-buildings, schools, supermarkets, banks, etc. in as many cities as we can reach all on the same night — to saturate the terrain of capital with this cryptic message signifying its necessary demise. If this could happen internationally, so much the better — a harbinger of the invisible international of the real movement!

Gerard chose $\frac{C}{V}$ for two reasons: (1) because, as many of you know already and as I will elaborate presently,* this ratio — expressing the "living-labor-composition" of capital — symbolizes the dynamic unity of the whole critique of capital; the very hub of the critique of political economy; virtually its condensation into a single symbol. (2) because the average proletarian-in-the-street (not to mention the capitalist media) has never heard of it.

This intervention thus consists in reflecting inside society an explanation of itself and, in particular, of its own current predicament — global depression — of positing a theoretical expression of this society's immanent limits and a prediction of its historically imminent demise. This explanation is not yet generally recognized and comprehended within this society — a fact which is a prime contributor to the

*(See Appendix.)

the predicament itself and the inability to overcome it so far. This intervention into the crisis is, then, an attempt to precipitate a self-reflexive moment within society. The graffito is, to begin with, historically appropriate but meaningless; obscure; esoteric. But its appropriateness, and the conviction of its appropriateness on the part of its purveyors, ^{would be} objectified in its ubiquitous reassertion at every available vacancy in the predominant information spectacle. It is an historically specific and timely expression of the esoteric struggling to become exoteric; an historically appropriate attempt, situated within the developing global crisis of capital, outside of which it would have no chance of arousing interest; no chance of success. (Nor would we have been moved to think of such an idea).

The graffito, appearing everywhere, on walls, billboards, etc. -- its strident repetition on every idle surface-- arouses curiosity. Somebody evidently thinks it's important. The spectacle will be moved to try to satisfy the market formed of this curiosity. This will, of course, unleash the most appalling gush of misinformation and attempts at recuperation. At best, we can hope to see $\frac{C}{V}$ defined -- in service to the current anti-technology and "zero-growth" ideologies sponsored by the bourgeoisie -- as "machines / man" or "technology / people", and perhaps, in a few isolated instances, or in areas with a more astute population or more deep-seated working-class tradition, a comment linking it with "the tendency of Karl Marx' rate of profit to fall" or some such.

But such distortions only invite us to deepen the intervention, to continue ^{with} and up the ante on this shadow-dialogue with the spectacle. Any coverage in newspapers or other media will only alert more people to the graffito who might otherwise have missed or overlooked it. Once the media picks it up, and gives its false answers, we can begin our phase 2; expansions of the symbol.

The English expression for fractional division, "over", admirably facilitates this expansion. We can append, aside the previous inscription, such elaborations as "capital / labour", "dead / living", "past / present", "object / subject", and so on, and such equations as 'capital = sold(alienated)labor' to our original assertion. If public interest and media distortion warrant such continuation, we can follow with wall-stencil texts, and wall-posters, titled with " $\frac{C}{V}$ " and offering amplification in depth; with lapel-buttons, etc. Members of FO plan to issue a pamphlet attempting to explain the depression

which, given sufficient response to this intervention, would bear an illuminated rendering of the sign C/V as the sole inscription on its front cover (title-page title "The Collapse Of A World"). If the timing is right, we might also make the causation of the crisis of capital -- that is, the meaning of C/V -- the theme of the first or second issue of our planned "newspaper"-style periodical.

This intervention confronts the ideology-industry of the ruling social relations with a yet more explicit and visible assertion of their temporal finitude, and a prediction of their approaching collapse. It is always an intriguing -- and strategically valuable -- experiment to confront an ideological system with its own inherent limits, and test its response.

Of course, this kind of "mystery" technique has been employed repeatedly by capitalist publicity in our locale, and probably in yours. In Berkeley, the technique has even been employed for the marketing of certain marginal "oppositional" ideologies (most notably, by the devotees of SILOISM, who inscribed their circle-triangle emblem all about town to announce its arrival in Berkeley, achieving considerable, if shortlived, notoriety).

If it were not for the content of our communication, if we were merely trying to foist some fictitious use-value or particularist ideology on the public, the form would certainly be determined as a mere advertizing gimmick. But here the lure is not only in the form, but in the content, and this backs up and sustains the power of the form: the lure of the esoteric on the historical verge of becoming exoteric. We are not trying to publicize a particular interest -- "spend your money on us, on our commodity" -- but the universal interest ^{in formation} the real movement. We are trying to confront our class with the theory of its own practice. And, as the depression settles deeper into all of our lives, what we are presenting becomes more and more a common interest, and a comprehension of experience shared globally. The mystery here is a real one -- the riddle of prehistory; the still unsolved mystery of our own social practice, and of the misery we are bringing down on our heads without realizing it, by going on being capital.

Proletarian revolution, the material and collective solution of this mystery, depends entirely on the condition that, for the first time, theory as intelligence of human practice be recognized and lived by the species. It requires workers to become dialecticians in practice. Our class needs to comprehend the laws of capital and of its demise -- laws which are, in part, our own practice -- in order to play its essential role in the positive demise of capital, the abolition of its laws, and the (lawful) founding of a new society upon the ruins of those laws; ruins which are ^{the real fruits of prehistory,} the necessary ingredients of

communist society. This social self-understanding is the most material necessary condition of communist revolution, and its possibility is the singularly important fruitionⁿ of all the others.

Gérard and I believe that the experiment herein proposed can make a small contribution to the methodology of removing the barriers in the way of the fulfillment of this essential condition.


Gérard

The Appendix, explaining my understanding of the law of motion of capital centered on the concept of "the organic composition of capital", C/V, will follow this mailing as shortly as may be. Today's my last chance to get this mailing out to you before May 1, and, as I have to be to work by 3:30pm, there'll be no time to finish drafting and to type the Appendix before then. Have fun!


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