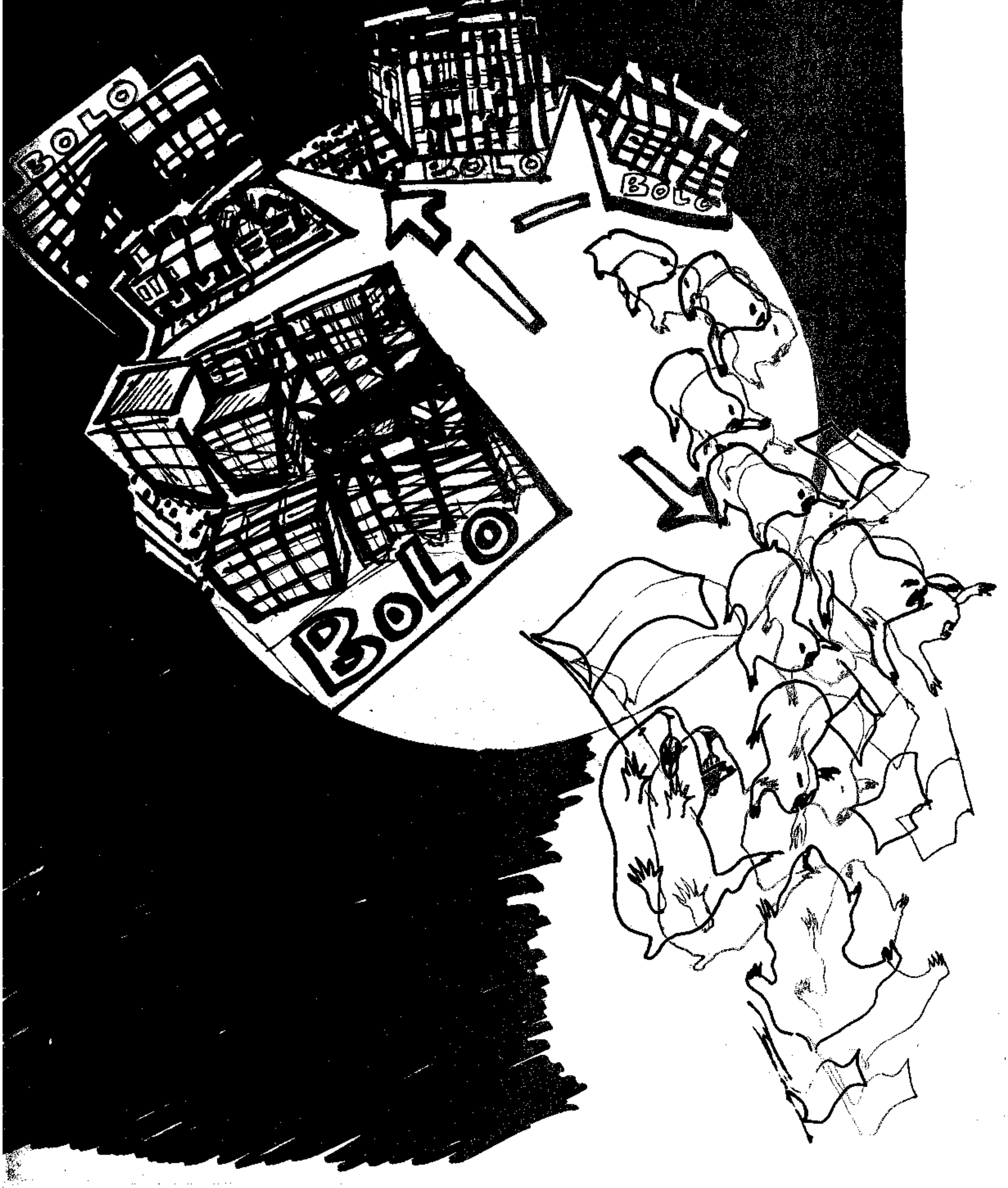
MIDNIGHT NOTES #7



Midnight Notes #7 $2.50

Midnight Notes

P.O. Box 204
Jamaica Plain, MA 02130

Number 7, June 1984

Subscriptions
U.S. & Canada, U.S. $7.00
Elsewhere, U.S.$10
Price
U.S. & Canada, U.S. $2.50
Elsewhere, U.S. $3.50
If ordered from Radical Science Journal,
£2 (RSJ, 28 Freegrove Rd., London
London N7 9RQ)

Back Issues
U.S. & Canada, U.S. $2.00
Elsewhere, U.S. $3.00
From RSJ, £1.5

Back Issues Still Available:
Vol. II, #1: The Work/Energy Crisis and the Apocalypse (#3)
Vol. II, #2: Space Notes (#4)
Vol. III, #1: Computer State Notes (#5)
Vol. IV, #1: Posthumous Notes (#6)
Note: We've switched from a Vol. and # method to a simple # method.

COVER BY:
SHARON HAGGINS DUNN

Graphics thanks to: ibu, Adafi, Akwesasne Notes, Winnie-the-Pooh, Durer, Bosch, Last Year at Marienbad, Jason and the Argonauts.

Distribute Midnight Notes

Midnight Notes is a political tool. For those of you who share politics with us, we ask you to help expand the distribution of Midnight Notes. We would like you to buy in bulk at a lower price, then act as a small distributor. You are not likely to become a distribution magnate, but you will help in the circulation of political discussion and in the continuation of Midnight Notes.

In the U.S. and Canada, you can buy 5 for $10, 10 for $15, more for $1.50 each. Elsewhere, you can buy 5 for $15, 10 for $25, $2.50 each for more, U.S. money please.

Sustain Midnight Notes

We've been coming out irregularly for years now, and friends tell us how pleased they are that we do. Thanks. However, like any journal in opposition to capital, we seem not to make money. Thus, we continue to publish because Midnight Noters and a few friends contribute to the costs (over $1000) of each issue. We could use a few more friends. Please send us money. Amounts of $50 and $100 are particularly helpful; of course we'll accept less, and naturally we'd be very happy to receive more. $50.00 will get you a "lifetime" subscription, though we will continue to hope you have many lives...

Lemming Notes

We begin with the metaphor of the lemmings who, when scarcity sets in, mill about in vast numbers until "nature" produces mass death, reducing the population until scarcity abates. Myth has it that huge numbers of lemmings rush blindly onward, propelling themselves over the cliffs of Scandinavian fjords, looking not where they go nor where they will land. Yet, to stretch and twist the metaphor, we suggest a second myth: that scarcity is for us a myth. Thus our metaphor of the lemming has the left and much of the U.S. working class leaping off a political cliff, driven by a mythical scarcity, a scarcity which exists only in political imagination or will.

Who are we to call the left a bunch of lemmings? The members of Midnight Notes have been in and of the left internationally. Each of us has, to varying extent, been caught in the peculiar logic of the left, and we know how disastrous this logic has been to ourselves and to the class struggle. To the extent we have been able to escape this self-defeating leftism, we have done so because at some point we could step back and say,

"Why am I doing this? What is it I really want? Do the actual struggles of the class, or parts of the class, have anything to do with what I want? Do we all want something close to the same thing, and do we dare to discuss that? Do left programs and practices speak to what I/we want?"

Those readers familiar with our past issues know we've discussed some replies to these questions. We've seen our needs and the underlying motion of the class in the refusal of work and the demand for the wealth we have already produced, an end to capitalist command in all areas of our lives; and we have seen the class struggle make visible the possibilities and the desires.

But, we think, the left in this cycle of struggles has had little or nothing to do with our desires or with the struggles of the class. Rather, despite important action on many issues, the left, at root, ended up attacking the demands of the class and thus helped to destroy a cycle of struggle which propelled capital into deep crisis. That is, the left became an ally of capital against the class. We must see this and critically deal with it if we are to move ahead. If not, the class will again have to by-pass its 'left', as it did in the 1960's.

We are, on some levels, hurt, angry, bitter, perhaps resigned perhaps even amazed that so many of us could so twist and repress our desires until they become not even caricatures of but assaults on what brought many of us into the movement, so that what started as a struggle for freedom ends up as acceptance of the deepest logic of capitalist slavery, the glorification of work and discipline.

Perhaps not all is lost, in the left and in the class. Perhaps lurking over our collective shoulder, like a shadow dimension, is the reality of the dreams we once had and somewhere still have, the "flip side" of our selves. Can we reach it? If so, how can we reach it?

Lemming Notes has four parts: "How Can It Be Possible?" begins to discuss how the strategies of the left attacked the class and helped the right. "The Left Today" discusses how the same strategies, emanating from the same roots, continue to help block class struggle. "Thanatocracy" expands the discussion to ask why the working class now seems to accept and even support capital's attack on itself, why it exhibits a "prejudice for state power." "The Working Class Waves Bye-Bye" reviews Andre Gorz' "Farewell to the Working Class", an abomination combining Stalinism, Social Democracy and ecological alternativism which shamelessly rapes whole movements and presents the results as a great progress and strategy for us. We must say so long, never again, to all Gorz represents, or remain trapped in capital's relations.

After Lemming Notes, we present bolo' bolo, a discussion of how to get out of the crisis and of a possible "second reality." Finally, we conclude by discussing struggles at Medgar Evers College in Brooklyn, N.Y., which we find do push beyond the mere circularity of capitalist realpolitik in which the left is mired.

How Can It Be Possible ?

"How can it be possible?" we keep asking as internationally we live the worst defeat the working class has suffered since World War II. That the defeat is quite real is undeniable. If the collapse in the standard of living in the industrialized countries and the devastating pauperization of the Third World were not enough, the destruction of human lives today and throughout the seventies and eighties should confront even the blindest with this reality. From the millions killed by starvation in Africa and Cambodia, to the thousands tortured in Chile and the Philippines and the extermination of the population in El Salvador, Guatemala, Lebanon and Palestine, our losses in what increasingly appears as a third world war are immense. Equally appalling is the apathy presently reigning in the U.S., which in itself is a defeat.

How can it be possible then? How can it be that thousands are massacred every day, almost under our eyes, and not a cry is raised, the only audible sound being the obscene squabbles of the politicians voicing some "displeasure" and reassuring us the blood is not on their hands. How can it be that in the USA itself millions are suffering and yet all one can hear is the call for more jails or more electric chairs to save the expense of the jails?

Economists will tell their story of interest rates with their clean charts so hygienic that not a limb, not a single death, can show through them. Psychologists have already packaged wholesale explanations ranging from the "me generation" to the alleged achievement by the masses of a "new maturity" in assessing what is or is not possible. All together, the sciences will tell us the issue is so complex that we should never hope to find an answer.

But it seems to us, instead, that the question is more simple. We're being defeated because we have allowed ourselves to be divided, at home and internationally. The forms that these divisions have taken, the means by which they have been achieved, tells the history of the 70's and 80's. The strategy of scarcity, whether accomplished by planned curtailment of resources (oil crisis/underproduction, etc.) or projected in an apocalyptic vision of rapidly diminishing resources coupled with growing over-population, was a classical strategy of division. To the generalization of workers demands (less work, more income) through the 60's, the ruling class has responded with the claim that there is not room enough for everybody--in fact today it is not clear if there is room enough for anybody.

From the very start, that is from the 1974 oil embargo that signalled the beginning of the counter-attack, national chauvinism and racism have been the pillar of all economic strategies. The Arabs, we were told, caused our suffering. The Arabs, in fact, were so much the villains through the 70's, so much identified as the cause of our present and future poverty, that one wonders whether one of the reasons for the indifference presently displayed by the average American in front of the butchery perpetrated against them with their sacred tax dollar is not due to the fact that for years they have been identified as the cause of our present and future poverty. The game of course has been played in reverse as first falling consumption in the USA and now high interest rates are blamed for the economic strangulation of Third World countries and the repressive measures that accompany them.

But the use of national chauvinism to justify a massive attack on the working class did not end with the Arabs. With the valiant assistance of the unions from the UAW to the ILGWU, U.S. capital blamed its own attack on auto and textile workers on the Japanese. At home, capital pitted blacks vs whites, women vs men, women vs blacks, "Americans" vs Mexicans and Vietnamese, documented farmworkers vs "illegal aliens", the elderly vs the young. For years now we have been living in a Hobbesian society where the one is at war with all, and therefore reduced to spending all its energies to erecting fences around itself to protect whatever can be scraped from the pile from the attacks of the surrounding world.

From this point of view, capital's strategy has succeeded. We have been divided from one another, and, thus isolated, more easily brought [illegible] in line. Never has the old truth, that capital conquers only to the extent that it divides, appeared so visibly true. [illegible] the unions have been indispensible accomplices in this process is easy to document. Chavez, the hero of the farm-workers struggles, organizing armed patrols to ke[illegible]ay and fight off "illegal aliens at [illegible] is the most visible, but not the only example of the way in which proletarian struggles have been turned into struggles among proletarians, within a strategic perspective that assumes that whatever they win we lose and must pay for.

This scenario was played over and over through the 70's and continues to be played with the assistance not only of the unions but of wide sections of the "movement", whose strategy has justified a universal competition among different sections of the working class, nationally and internationally.

At the economic level, the critique of consumerism and materialism of the US working class has ideologically cleared the way for the capitalist use of austerity since the mid-70's. This critique, which accused the "over-consumption" by the metropolitan proletariat of being the primary cause for the poverty and exploitation of the Third World was moralistic, racist and sexist. Moralistic because instead of considering class relations it focused on the supposed moral qualities of the working class: greedy, soulless, overindulgent, deprived of class consciousness, egoistic, willingly exploitative and imperialistic. This critique pitted the workers in the metropolis against the workers in the Third World, telling the latter we are the enemy, we are the cause of their exploitation, and they cannot expect anything from us at all. Guilt-tripping was the only strategy left--except we were all encouraged to do with less. Capital of course jumped on the bandwagon of the demand for "lowered expectations."

Now that poverty in the US has become a mass reality on a scale unprecedented since the Depression, we can see the political fallacy inherent in these accusations. We can see that eating one hamburger less in the USA does not add one hamburger to the well-being of the "underdeveloped" countries, as their increasing pauperization daily shows. *Weakening the position of workers in the U.S. does not help the Third World.* It only strengthens capital, giving it more power to discipline both. Today the hamburgers we do not eat, the cars we do not b[illegible] buy instead the weapons used against [illegible] rebellions in El Salvador and Guatemala and pay for the massacres in Lebanon [illegible] well as for more jail and surveillance at home.

This critique was also racist and sexist and divisive with respect to the U.S. proletariat, for it [illegible] not see that "overconsumption" is [illegible] for the vast masses of women, bla[illegible]atinos, immigrants both documented and undocumented, migrant workers and [illegible]y--for whom the attack on [illegible] could only have repressive consequences, justifying further cuts in their standard of living.

Rather than focus on the poverty, absolute and relative, of the working class, and its exploitation by capital, the left focused on its buying power. The left thus ignored a) the working class defense of a hard-won standard of living; b) that capital uses this buying power as a basis of the reproduction of labor power for capital; and c) that at the end of the exhausting work-day (which is far more than [illegible]-4 or 9-5), a worker finds it very hard to be "creative" (as the left wishes them to be), finds it hard to do much more than muster the energy to "consume" in order to relax enough to work again the next day. The left critique also justified the claim that if these people are not better off it is their fault, because abundance is a matter of fact in the USA.

Only capital has a direct interest in accusing the working class or any sector of it of consuming too much. What is too much and who is to decide what proletarian needs are or should be? Most important, do we expect capital to redistribute what we give up into their hands? And if we do not, what purpose does it have to tell workers they are consumeristic, except to weaken their struggle and justify capital's attack on everybody's standard of living?

Equally divisive was the left's attack on the "welfare state"--a bourgeois term to define those programs the working class has won in its struggle over the reappropriation of surplus. The struggles of the unwaged in the sixties--blacks, women and students--forced capital to widen these programs. For the first time, thousands of unwaged proletarians received a social wage for their work, causing a) a shift in the use of tax money from military spending (which decreased compared with the fifties even in the midst of the Vietnam War), and b) a shrinking in the amount of unwaged labor capital could exploit, and consequently the diminished need for inter-proletarian competition for jobs. Last, but not least, the struggle of welfare mothers in the sixties--a direct upshot of the black movement--posed for the first time a key feminist issue: payment by the state for the work women do reproducing the work force. It marked the beginning of a direct confrontation by women with collective capital in the form of the State on the question of reproduction, whereas traditionally women have been treated by capital as appendages of the male wage, whose work can be directed, controlled and organized by the control and organization of the male wage.

From AFDC to SSI to Medicare, none of these programs were ever sufficient for our needs, and benefits were obtained at the price of many controls, as is always the case in every work-wage relation. The strategy of the unwaged was to demand more, to expand on the basis that had been built. The left instead joined capital in attacking the social wage won by this sector as wasteful, parasitic and presumably demeaning because "unearned". In the place of the social wage, unanimously, all brands of the left demanded more jobs. Result: a proletarian struggle for reappropriation of surplus not only was not supported, but was attacked as a form of defeat: welfare recipients were divided in left policies from "real workers", a suicidal step at a time when capital was making every effort to mobilize the "tax payer" against the "lazy bums on welfare". The capitalist ideology that defines only certain jobs as work, thus enabling profit from an immense amount of unpaid labor, was reinforced. Moreover, at a time, particularly around 1971-73 when capital was besieged by blue collar struggles (Lordstown, miners) and blue-collar blues (absenteeism, alienation, dissatisfaction with work), the left emerged as a staunch defender of the glory of work, insisting that only through the job--as defined by capital!--can a worker respectably earn its income and be a part of the working class.

By attacking the basis of women's demands for wealth and autonomy, all the pious mouthings about the "poor" which the left uttered came to naught, for the left agreed with capital that women's work is not real work, thus should not be waged. While the left calls for the "socialization" of housework, capital builds MacDonald's, laundramats, high-cost daycare, frozen dinners, TV's, etc., etc., --all of which are consumed by women working two and three jobs, but only one with a wage. And the women's movement joined in, saying that liberation could only come with that second, waged job.

The "problem" with paying wages for housework, complained the left, is that the money will have to come from the "productive" workers; the left cannot conceive that victories can be won, that wealth can be reappropriated from capital, partly because they assume that the "overconsuming" working class has been bribed by capital. Better, said the left, for the men to keep the wage or for women to work even more (is housework really work?) to get a wage. Moreover, continued the left, housework should not be paid by the state because then the state would exert control over housework--as if, on the one side, the state and capital did not now control (or try to) women's work, and as if, on the other side, the left were opposed to the state when, in fact, virtually every leftist in the U.S. wants the state, only "their" state--in which (at last!) women will become "productive."

The flip side of the statist left has been "alternativist" left who, equally enamored of work as the statists, perpetuate the illusion (as we showed in the first two issues of Midnight Notes) that one can simply step outside of capital, that one can go beyond capital and the state by simply ignoring them. But for the majority of people everywhere, "do it yourself" is impossible in the absence of resources, and becomes only a tool for the right to justify reducing welfare, just as mainstream left criticism of the welfare state fed the right-wing criticism of "throwing money at problems", of welfare as "demeaning", of work as "ennobling".

Thus the left critiques in both forms strengthened the power of the state. Rather than demand more from the state in exchange for the work already done, the left criticized the state for bribing the working class and called for more work. This critique facilitated the right wing attack in which the state now "gives" less and is less accessible to working class demands. By attacking the working class precisely on the terrain the working class used in its attack on capital--over the appropriation of the product of work and over the doing of the work itself--by calling for "renunciation" and glorifying work,--the left aided the capitalist defeat of the U.S. working class in the 1970's. The left thus helped re-establish the divisions within the class and aided capital to use the more powerful sectors against the less powerful.

Whether today capital still is in crisis or not is debatable. That we are is dramatically evident in our daily lives. We should ask not what capital's problems are, as the left loves to do, but how can we overcome the ways in which we find ourselves divided.

The crisis is a white working class shooting on blacks because they are convinced that that's the only way to keep their jobs. The crisis is women and blacks fighting around who should go first in thousands of workplaces around the country, both seeing each other as the cause of their poverty and discrimination. The crisis is women being forced to sterilize themselves or to submit to enormous physical and psychological pain to stay in a mine or construction job or chemical plant in order to escape wagelessness or the female wages of the typing pool--this rather than putting their energies for the abolition of these jobs. The crisis is a U.S. working class that now lines up to build weapons because this is the only way that they can put food on the table--which may prompt the question, *What do you have against a mugger?* since robbing and killing a few people is a generous act compared with the destructive power we are willing to create against ourselves and thousands of us in the world for the price of a wage (at an "honest" job, of course). The crisis, finally (?), is a country where the death penalty has become a popular demand to deal with those the system cannot accomodate within the boundaries of productivity--a popular demand because the assumption has prevailed that it is either you or me--there is not enough for both and one of us must go.

Competition is the name of the game and has been through the 70's and 80's. You have to compete, capital has told us since the first oil embargo, because natural resources are shrinking, scarcity is around the corner, everything--coal, oil, gas--is dwindling. We are too many, we consume too much. We are putting unbearable strains on the scanty resources of the earth. The left approved. Those more ecologically minded worried about the earth. The marxist-leninist reminded us of the Third World. In all cases the only possible strategy following from these perspectives was either reduce our numbers or (which in the end amounts to the same thing) reduce our "entitlements". To the extent that this strategy has "succeeded" we are now fighting out--who is to go. And, as usual, those at the bottom pay the highest price.

We would not go so far as to blame the left for the crisis of the working class--the left does not have that importance in the U.S. The class certainly has enough divisions for capital to utilize, with or without the left. But we should not minimize the impact of the left either. In the left, we are dealing with organizers and information-producers who can significantly shape struggles and thus can reduce, hamper, limit, confine, compromise and otherwise damage a movement. Moreover, in the left we find persons who have the time to propose what might be an alternative to what we have now, and to suggest how to get there. The "spontaneous" actions of the class moved toward less work and more income, to a refusal of capitalist command and discipline, to less hierarchy and division in the class. The left glorified work, accused the class of overconsumption, urged discipline and formed organizations frequently little different from the corporation, the school, the army.

Why would anyone struggle for the goals and with the means proposed by the left? The struggles of the 60's and early 70's bypassed what left existed. Rather than help to develop and further what the class actually pushed, the new left recreated the old left with the old demands--and accused the class of having a backwards consciousness and activity. In doing so, the left reaffirmed the capitalist division of the working class and so helped defeat the class and pave the way for Reagan, the right and a new capitalist organization of our exploitation.

The Left Today

We have seen how the left has attacked the actual class struggle, intensified divisions, sown illusions and thus aided the right. We come now to the left's present, to the period most clearly summed up in the left slogan, "Jobs, Peace and Freedom." This slogan, and the program it represents, contains inherent political lies. On the one side, a job is wage-slavery and wage-slaves are neither free nor at peace with their masters; on the other side, capital needs war to enforce discipline and work--slavery--on the working class. The left thus proposes to the working class what is patently impossible. Why?

In the last few years we have seen a growing concensus within the U.S. left, at least in its "official" wing represented by the left-wing Democrats, DSA, NOW (and leftist women's groups), New Left intellectual journals (Socialist Review, URPE, Telos, etc.), anti-nuclear weapons and energy groups (Union of Concerned Scientists, Freeze Campaign, etc.), the Black movement (now mobilized by the Jackson campaign and more generally by elections) and even many of the Leninist-type organizations. They all agree that the best that can be gotten in this period, which perhaps stretches to the 21st century, is a New, New Deal, characterized by jobs--the revival of the old, creaking assembly line, management-union 'corporatism' and worker 'self-management' or 'participation'; peace--a 'reasonable' social-democratic foreign policy, arms-control talks; and freedom--a 'liberal' reproduction policy, egalitarian exploitation of all, a certain type of not-too-repressive state. In varying blends the same story is trooped out and it is the left's contribution to an anti-Reagan, actually anti-transformation, policy that sees the Reagan approach as being too 'destabilizing'--which is not a perception that is exclusively 'leftist.'

The left's program is premised on the total working class defeat which the left's strategies helped to bring about. It takes as essential the mediating role of the present state. It is trying to combine 'austerity' with 'trinkets' like 'workers democracy', 'women's equality', etc., in the context of an old work form. For the left to sell this program to the working class capital's program of wage-deflation, union-busting, budget crisis and militarization must all go through pretty much as planned in order to frighten everyone enough for there to be a general working class belief that nothing more is possible.

But if Reagan and company are successful in carrying out their devaluation of labor, why should capital settle? Why should capital negotiate any New Deal, New or Old? Capital might respect "subsistence" (whatever that is) in the USA, but it certainly does not want to legislate a bottom...unless forced to do so. For the moment, if capital reduces manufacturing wages to $4.50 per hour, it might pause at that level; but even then capital will want a free hand in case of 'emergencies' in order to test a new depth--after all, it is called 'free enterprise'. If capital holds all the free cards, why should it relent? Certainly not on the basis of vague threats issuing from the sybilline lips of Tip O'Neill, to be realized by a left no one pays any attention to.

There can be no social democratic solution unless the working class defeat of the early 1980's is decisively reversed. Reagan's approach has made half-measures and stalemated struggles no basis for dealing. There has to be a huge revival of working class struggle across the board to shake off the rising capitalist self-confidence of the last few years.

BUT, and here we have the crucial point, if the working class makes such a leap in the level of struggle, why should people settle for the left's program of a relatively guaranteed $4.50 per hour with flexitime and anti-discrimination grievance procedures and patched holes in the safety net?

If Marxism predicts anything, it is that the working class struggle in its peaks of victory defines qualitatively new levels of the class relation; this is the famous "progressive" character of the class struggle. The left's program assumes a falsification of the Marxist hypothesis about history: that is, the working class will be able to undermine the present capitalism enough to impose upon capital a leftist program, but not undermine capital too much.

The left has based its program on a very unstable equilibrium, for the tendency of capital is to not allow the system to reach the equilibrium level of the left, while the class struggle which might propel it into the left's equilibrium tends to push it beyond. The left's program, although it appears 'realistic', proposes a most 'unrealistic' solution to the crisis. They hope that Reagan will bite deep enough to hurt, but not too deep; they hope the working class will jump up, but then not jump too hard. But the variables are not controllable, nor do they have a natural tendency to 'balance each other out'. With the end of the downward rigidity of wages and the money illusion, Keyneseanism holds no attraction to capital; but with the mass experience of the end of 'mass industry' a new possibility is open to the working class, although right now it shows itself as deprivation. So the attraction of Keyneseanism to the working class also abates. No one seems to be cooperating with socialism in the 1980's!

Today the left says that no 'demands' beyond minimal subsistence/biological survival can be 'won' (and even this only by alliance with 'progressive' capital to preserve 'civilization'), and to 'win' this requires co-operation with the mediating power of the state. This is the worst possible deal as it combines the social order of the 1950's New Deal with lower wages and more work.

The left, then, accepts the defeat and only seeks to bargain a lower level of defeat for now. The austerity they have morally urged for over a decade has become an increased reality for more and more people; and in the Third World, 'austerity' has become increased starvation.

But a defeat means not only that we eat less well or do not eat at all. In defeat the class picks up the gun--against one another, as Fanon made clear. This is the deepest fact of our defeat, and one's answer to this problem tells one's political story. The left accepts--even urges--the state to be the mediator of the class contradictions within the proletariat.

The death penalty, discussed below, is just one aspect of the state 'mediating' the class division, protecting us against ourselves. But the same thing applies to Russia, the man/woman split, black/white, with the Third World, etc. Are you afraid of Russian tanks, do you want to help the Soviet working class? The Telos crowd says "Support the U.S., it will do the job." Are you angry that men get more money than women, that men rape and get away with it? Many women in the women's movement now say "Cutting the male wage was good, now we're all equal...Rape? Get more and better cops!" Upset about starvation in Africa? Get the government to tax the 'affluent' U.S. working class to send it off to the Sahel. This, after all, is the essence of social democracy in the working class: letting the state deal with our divisions...let government do it. The left in this period has ultimately accepted its role and its horizon in the universe of state power (and in-

deed not even the good old 'revolutionary' state of Lenin--forget about that).

Putting this all together we see that ultimately the left is signing on as cop. For if all you offer are "trinkets with no cargo" then you must be prepared to deal 'realistically' with the ensuing disappointment. For those who are not willing to listen to the left's questionable logic... well, there must be a place for them...

Thus, the left not only has aided the right by its choice of analysis, demands and strategy, not only is at an impasse in which all it can do is function as the left wing of the Democratic party, but also by its choices must also work to discipline any actions in the class which might upset the equilibrium suggested by the left.

This 'logic', once entered into, is hard to then reject because the compromises are too deep. The tragedy is that most of a generation of militants has substantially destroyed itself by accepting the essential logic of capitalism and, at the deepest level, sided with capital against the working class, to bargain over the degree of defeat and the trinkets to be exchanged for acceptance of capitalism. For any on the left who want and think possible the defeat of capitalism in its various guises, the break with the left must be thorough, for the left now is merely the most "human" face of capitalism.

Thanatocracy

Political power then I take to be a right of making laws with penalty of death, and consequently all less penalties for the regulating and preserving of property.--John Locke

Here is life and death set before you: take whether you will.--Gerrard Winstanley

Almost every month now one of our fellow creatures in this country is coldly, matter-of-factly murdered at the hands of the state. Everything indicates that in the months to come we will witness more executions as the Supreme Court has formulated new guidelines to remove possible delays and thus speed up the disposal of hundreds presently waiting on death row. With this, we are preparing to witness a steady slaughter of people the state has declared unfit to live--a slaughter made more horrifying by the callous, hygienic way in which it is conducted: A cold, factual announcement on the news--the first jolt of electricity was administered at 8:30, at 8:44 he was pronounced dead; a [illegible] assurance that the prisoner appeared calm--everything to impress on us the uneventful character of these deaths and by this the roach-like quality of our existence in the eyes of our rulers.

Equally ominous is the lack of any outcry against this barbarity and the apparent eagerness of many respectable citizens to see thousands of their countrymen wiped out from the face of the earth. Where are those touchy-feelings that seemed to endlessly ooze out of the youth in this country? Where are the hundreds who fought to save the whales--are we perhaps too many to justify outrage against this butchery? And where, finally, are the "friends of the earth" who shed tears thinking of all the trees destroyed to print the Sunday New York Times? Aren't we humans worthy of their compassion, if not their political consideration? With the exception of a few religious groups and the campaign by Amnesty International, virtually no mobilization is presently underway among "progressive forces" against this crime. We occasionally hear concerns voiced about the arbitrary nature of its implementation, but no significant opposition to the very existence of the death penalty exists. Why is this the case? But, first of all, why has capital punishment been reinstituted in the U.S.?

* * *

In the fall of 1982, the Nuclear Weapons Freeze Resolution was voted on in referenda throughout the U.S. It did well, and in Massachusetts it did extremely well: almost 75% of the voting electorate supported the Freeze. This was no surprise, as Mass. is considered the "most liberal state in the Union," the home of Kennedy, Tsongas, Markey and Dukakis who were all firmly identified with the Freeze. Not so noticed or mentioned, however, was the result of another state-wide referendum held the same day on the re-introduction of the death penalty: 60% of the same "liberal" electorate voted in favor of it. Thus, about 35% of the voting electorate was for both the Freeze and Capital Punishment.

Who are these pro-execution Freeze supporters, what do they think and why? They do not appear to be "better dead than red" racists; on the contrary, they see themselves as at least "moderate", often "liberal" and "progressive", but above all "prudent" and "reasonable". Their basic assumption is that the state is reasonable too.

True, both the U.S. and the Soviet Union have created arsenals capable of destroying the planet many times over, and this is mad, but it is possible to make our leaders listen and eventually make some kind of a deal. Their real fear is not of Reagan pushing the red button of nuclear apocalypse, but of the black kid who lives in a neighboring housing project and the white drifter they meet on the highway. It is these people, armed with at most a pistol or a knife, and not warheads packed with thermonuclear death, that our prudent voters see as the ultimate danger, as animals without reason.

Reagan, after all, might be "not too bright" or perhaps "senile" or "too ideological", but he does represent the state which is, after all, reasonable, and which protects us. So the prudent voter is willing to have the reasonable state execute the irrational animal because they consider these murderers and rapists and thieves to be beyond any bond of humanity, outside the circle of their understanding, much less identification. These liberal voters conceive it possible to sit with a Chernenko or a Reagan and convince them of their "errors" (which have already led to millions of deaths). But for an Evans or a

Spenkelink, only a poisoned syringe or a burned brain will do.

These same voters maintain that the restoration of the death penalty has come about because "the people" want it. This is their first illusion, that the state bends to the popular will coming from below. The reality however is quite different as can be seen from the fact that many other issues presently claim popular support, from support for enforcement of anti-pollution regulations to an end to the arms race, yet no compliance by "our government" is on the agenda. This first illusion persists because behind all the arguements for capital punishment, it is the <u>prejudice for state power</u> that shapes the thinking of these "prudent and reasonable" voters.

Yet this prejudice is the deepest illusion. The state needs the illusion to impose order and discipline for capital. Appointing the state as the arbiter of life and death legitimizes the state's assumption of the right to destroy individuals whenever they do not fit a certain criterion of socio-economic utility--a principal that, once established, is carried out in every area of social life.

* * *

Supporting the Freeze but calling for Capital Punishment is not merely contradictory; rather, it is a clarifying moment in a suicidal course. The threat to launch a nuclear war is but the last step in a chain of social policies that are directly or indirectly condemning us to die. To grant the state the power to destroy individuals who are considered wasteful for the system is to arm and give a God-like (beyond appeal) power to the very agency that is threatening us all with death. Most of us won't die by the electric chair or by the poisons poured into our water and air by state-licensed factories and chemical dumps. Most of us are killed slowly, the minutes of our lives daily butchered by the way we live. And the state, in all its reasonableness, stands behind the daily slaughter ready to intervene to kill to ensure the perpetuation of this daily death. *DEATH--OUR DEATH--AS A LEGITIMATE MEANS TO ACHIEVE COST-EFFECTIVENESS AND PROFITABILITY AND ORDER IS DAILY ENFORCED ON US IN A THOUSAND DIFFERENT WAYS.*

A clear continuity exists between the present re-institution of the death penalty and the murderous policies the Reagan regime is carrying on against citizens of this country: cutting any means of support for thousands who have nothing to live on while denying that hunger even exists, never mind growing infant mortality; condoning the most outrageous forms of pollution, nuclear contamination, death by toxic waste, death by malnutrition.

Simultaneously, the reasonable voter has almost a determination not to hear about the appalling condition in which many people grow and live in the U.S., to say nothing of other locations of centuries-long beneficence of the U.S. state. As there is no social responsibility for the existence of crime, there is not social responsibility to ensure the well-being of the citizens. If people are poor, it is because they are lazy or inferior. Life is, to echo Reagan's previous incarnation, unfair. If people commit crimes, it is because they are bad--presumably they kill for no reason--and so they do not deserve to live. In any case, "we" cannot afford to keep these worthless animals alive. We are poor and resources are, as the economists remind us, scarce. Anyway, of all resources, humans are cheap and plentiful, particularly poor and uneducated and unemployed ones (perhaps there are too many of them, period, particularly in the "Third World", so...). Our prudent voter concludes that humans--even oneself--are resources to be invested profitably, and where they cannot be so used, they are superfluous.

We see here a massification of a <u>triage</u> mentality: who is fit to live?--the state will decide. The death penalty continues the "social debate" on life and death: the "right to die," the "right to starve or not," "the right to let defective children die or not," the "right to abortion." The state hampers the right to abortion, sterilizes the poor, particularly people of color, and invests in artificial birth research. The state forces parents to raise retarded children with no social support and thus costs parents their very lives whether the parents want this or not. The state kills you in the electric chair while suicide remains illegal even for the condemned. These seeming contradictions are not real contradictions, for behind them the state is attempting to assert absolute control over life and death, over the body, to establish, most fundamentally, that <u>we are state property</u>.

* * *

The death penalty, then, is itself a green light to both the "economic" policies which create mass pauperization in the U.S. and the rest of the world, and the construction of ever more nuclear implements of mass death. Calling on the state to execute murderers assumes the neutrality of the state in a war of all against all, and assumes that the state has no responsibility for the existence and intensification of crime. The state is thus absolved of policies which lead increasing numbers to fall through the "safety net" into social violence.

The death penalty does not eliminate crime, it only eliminates the criminal while leaving the cause of crime intact. Indeed, eliminating crime is the last concern. Street cri[illegible] tageous to the state a[illegible] king class at war withi[illegible]elf, and makes us run to the government [illegible]e saviour, imploring it to control us[illegible], to be more repressive against us. [illegible]y study indicates that the death pena[illegible]oes not deter, and why should it when [illegible]ty has declared war to the death again[illegible] poor, or when every year out of [illegible]0 murders "only" 200 are selected [illegible] (or should the state execute the 20[illegible]). The state can eliminate poverty by e[illegible]nating the poor, eliminate unemployme[illegible] by eliminating the unemployed--but of course not too many, lest the remainder push up the wage bill.

The death penalty reconciles us to a cycle of brutality and revenge that the state is more than happy to manage for i[illegible] own purposes. One of the oldest defens[illegible] of the state has been that by taking [illegible] its anonymous hands the "necessary [illegible] punishment" it overcomes the infini[illegible]le of vendetta. But the death penal[illegible] not put an end to violence, the[illegible] does not bring social peace. [illegible], the state attempts to deflect vi[illegible] diffuse it, and use it to divi[illegible] while making us accept known ki[illegible]ike Weinberger and Reagan as med[illegible] between ourselves and our neighbo[illegible] picks and chooses who is to die[illegible]hen according to its needs, inten[illegible]g social divisions when it can[illegible] afraid of repri[illegible] the statistics: the peak of executions in this century was during the Great Depression (1,667 between 1930-39, among them 819 blacks) while there were next to none from the middle 1960's to the middle 1970's during the height of the Black Movement's power. Similarly, a decisive arguement against capital punishment during the recent Parliamentary debate in England was the fear of retaliation by the IRA.

* * *

The death penalty is a crucial pillar of a society where "thanatocracy" -- rule by death -- is increasingly the form of the state. This has immediate international implications, as well as implications for nuclear war. The policies of the U.S. are crucial in setting a model, a guideline internationally. It counters the NATO trend in which most NATO countries have abolished the death penalty. It legitimizes the butchery that is taking place worldwide by giving the message that if it is the state that kills openly (rather than in hiding through death squads) it is no violation of human rights. And accepting the reasonableness of state murder allows--indeed encourages--events such [illegible]nvasion (the state as pro[illegible]n (sic) lives"); the Lebanese invasion[illegible] neutral hand of reason trying to [illegible]g stability and order--soon to com[illegible] the Persian Gulf?); and the Beirut m[illegible]e, about which the U.S. state co[illegible]t as thought it bore no responsibi[illegible]

As to nu[illegible] war, if the right to execute indiv[illegible]s is granted, why can't this rig[illegible] multiplied in number and concen[illegible] in time, which, after all, is the e[illegible]e of nuclear war? The continued ope[illegible]n of death machines and death rows h[illegible]tes us to an experience essential [illegible]clear war: murder without murderers. [illegible] the same way as the technicians in the [illegible]ssile silos won't even know what what [illegible]le, what city, what country they'll [illegible]up, so in the case of every execution [illegible]ing is done to make it appear as a[illegible]mous death for which nobody has any[illegible]sibility. And not a human being but [illegible]raction--"a criminal", the "enemy"--[illegible]nically disposed of. The condemn[illegible]ooded to erase any trace of humanity[illegible] the execution by chemicals (prelude [illegible]cal warfare) three tubes are inserte[illegible]the condemned's arm; two carry only wa[illegible]e third the poison, and the three [illegible]oners assigned to inject the fluid[illegible]ot know who has the lethal one. [illegible]execution is a little Hiroshima a[illegible]asaki teaching us [illegible] as long as it [illegible]

A thanatocratic society is ripe for nuclear war as the average citizen becomes used to accepting the state as the final arbiter of life and death and cannot see the possibility that social violence can be ended. That there could be a life without brutality just as there could be a life without hunger is implicitly rejected by those who today clamor for the return of the death penalty as a utopian dream. Ironically, this is the very attitude that is needed for the state to prepare people for acceptance of war--people who can watch whole cities and populations (including their own) destroyed, people who will defend and seek to expand the very power that is killing them.

* * *

The death penalty, capital's punishment, rests at the base of a new social contract which capital has been struggling to impose since the early 1970's. The working class in its manifold actions tore up the old social democratic/'welfare state' contract, but has lost the ensuing war over work and wages. Now the class scrambles, each sector, element, person protecting itself. In this scramble, many seek the "moderating" hand of the state to curtail the actions of those dumped on the bottom beneath the safety net who, knife and gun in hand, try to crawl back through the holes to take a piece for themselves; or of those driven mad by the grinding of the system who slash out at others physically weak enough (women, children) to become their victims.

From left to right, from defenceless Social Security recipient to corporate boss, "everyone" calls on the state to ensure "justice" and "order". Under capitalism and the state, order is work and justice is acceptance of one 's role within work and punishment of those who

do not accept. We see then the continuums of the death penalty. On the one side, the state's killing of one leads to acceptance of the state's killing of many and to the right of the state to kill all of us to protect us. On the other side, the state imposes the death penalty as a negative wage, beyond the negative wage of years in prison: the bottom of the wage ladder is not wagelessness, it is execution. The accumulation of capital, of living and dead labor, means one belongs, body and soul, to capital, if not to an individual capital, (what else is wage slavery) and thus to capital's state. To support capital punishment is to ask for our own slavery and death.

* * *

If we have developed an accurate analysis, then political action flows from it. We must make the campaign against the death penalty a critical component of struggle. We can summarize by noting two reasons why:

--the death penalty is central to capital's devaluation of labor power as it sets a negative minimum wage, death, to keep us in line;

--the death penalty enables the state to more forcefully "mediate" the divisions in the class, and thus use them for capital's own ends.

To attack capital's devaluation of our lives and to attack the state's control over our lives, we must attack the death penalty.

How? We suggest, for one, that anti-war groups focus some of their energy and attention on prisons and courts to oppose the death penalty with the same means they have opposed nuclear weapons. Not only would the ensuing publicity and controversy be valuable for countering capital's punishment plans, but also such actions would be effective against the more massive executions capital plans for us in conventional and nuclear war. Moving against the death penalty may well prove a more effective attack on nuclear arms than Freeze marches or civil disobedience at military bases. To stop the death penalty gets to the heart of capitals war-making capabilities.

The international rage at the execution of Caryl Chessman in 1959 stands as one way in which we can mark the start of the struggles of the 1960's. In 1959, university students in California demonstrated against the death penalty; in 1984, students in Florida and Texas have held demonstrations for the death penalty. We need, it seems, to start again. But we ought not to do so simply out of moral horror on behalf of them; rather, our point must be to attack capital and its state by refusing what they do to us.

The Working Class Waves Bye-Bye:

A Proletarian Response to Andre Gorz

How should we respond to Andre Gorz' Farewell to the Working Class ? Is Gorz the theorist of a future revolutionary perspective, as he claims? Or does a hidden agenda lie behind his seeming acceptance of the "abolition of work"? Examining his recent work we find that Gorz is not the innovative revolutionary theorist he seems on the surface. Instead Gorz has created a sophisticated attack on working class power based upon attacking the wage by increasing the area of unwaged labor while calling for a cut in the waged work-day. Further, Gorz' analysis represents a closing of ranks ideologically between the social democratic,stalinist and alternativist or "low energy" sectors of the western left. As Daniel Cohn-Bendit pointed out in an issue of Semiotext, Gorz' work has found particular favor among alternativist circles where the total transformation of society and especially the capacity of the working class to play a revolutionary role are rejected in favor of creating small areas which minimize bureaucratic control. For these reasons, we at Midnight Notes believe a critique of Farewell to the Working Class is in order; Also, Gorz' misrepresentation of an anti-work position provides a good opportunity to clarify some of our own views.

To begin with, Gorz defines work and working class in narrow classically capitalist terms: "Work nowadays refers almost exclusively to activities carried out for a wage." He continues, "Work is essentially carried out for a wage... and entitles the recipient to a quantity of social labour equivalent to that which he or she has sold. (emphasis is ours) Working for a wage amounts to working in order to purchase as much time from society as a whole as it has previously recieved." Before we have finished the second of nine theses which comprise the first chapter, Gorz has made clear his view that, at least in the more industrialized countries, workers are not exploited. Work to Gorz is dull, routine, something he would rather not do himself but it is not exploitation. Far from an accidental slip, this view defines Gorz' position for the rest of the book. If work is exploitation, then struggles against it must be supported. But Gorz opposes, in clear terms, every form of working class struggle for material improvement and every perspective which leads to "social wage" struggles.

> The right to a "social income" for life in part abolishes "forced wage labour" only in favor of a wage system without work (!-M.N.) It replaces, complements...exploitation with welfare, thus the division between Left and Right will, in the future tend to occur less over the issue of the social wage than over the right to autonomous production.

First of all, we say the wage in whatever form is a relation of power. For workers, waged or unwaged, the wage is both the means by which capital hides exploitation, and the relative power of the working class to resist exploitation. Capital exists by imposing unpaid labour time - in other words by getting more labour than the wage pays for,which takes the form of surplus value extracted from both waged workers and unwaged workers such as housewives, students, artists, etc. However Gorz both defines work only as waged work and ignores the unpaid part of waged work itself. He then calls for less waged work-time in order to free more hours, not so we can "rest" more, but so "we may all work" more in our "free time".

We should hardly need, after more than a century, to go back to Marx's debates with those who ignored the importance of the wage struggle in improving the lives and building the power of workers (see Wage Labour and Capital). As for the idea of a wage system "without work", there are at least some of us willing to go on record here and now as endorsing, at least as a minimum program, that the ruling class just mail us our paychecks and let us stay home. But Andre Gorz' opposition to this idea is stated in no uncertain terms: "The demand to 'work less' does not mean or imply the right to 'rest more', but the right to 'live more'"; and two paragraphs later:

> Our watchword may be defined as : Let us work less so that we may all work and do more things by ourselves in our free time. Socially useful labour distributed over all those willing and

able to work will thus cease to be anyone's exclusive or leading activity Instead, people's major occupation may be one or a number of self-defined activities, carried out not for money but for the pleasure or benefit involved.

This last point reminds us of the custom in the U.S.S.R. of requiring several days a year of unwaged "socialist voluntary labour"--with workers normally employed on the specified day recieving no pay for a full day's work. Gorz is in fact afraid that people will take his anti-work rhetoric too seriously and use the opportunity to work less - to work less. The self-proclaimed leading advocate of the abolition of work is rather enamored of the work ethic.

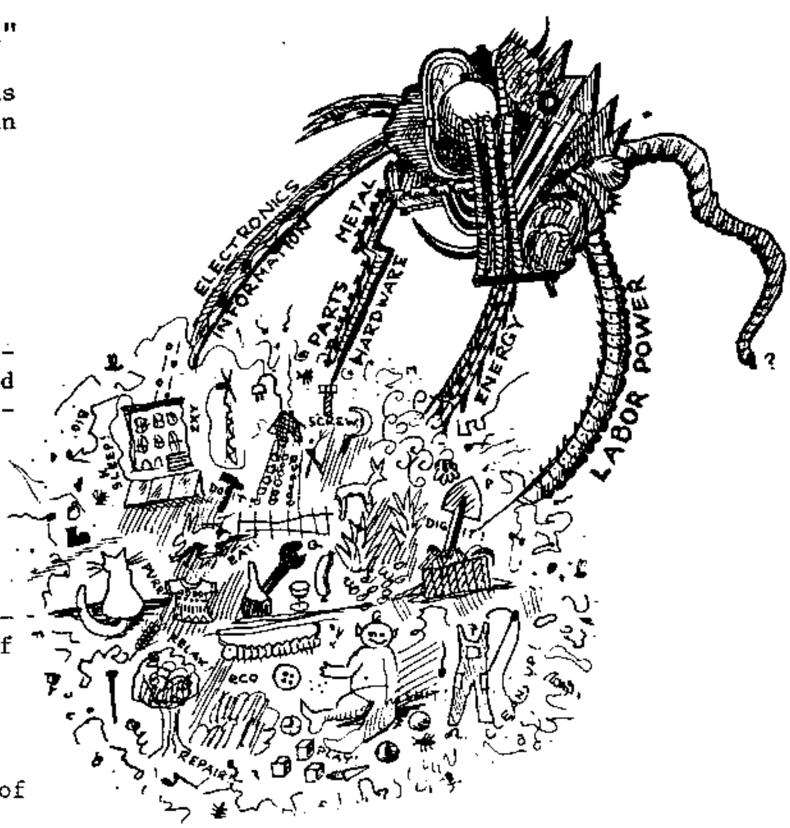
While Gorz would like to emphasize the "newness" of his current views, there is a distinct continuity in his perspective over the last decade or so. Gorz, a Communist Party ideologue in the 1950's, is best known for his work of the 1960's Strategy for Labor. Already in the 1960's Gorz had developed three tendencies which he carries over into his latest work:

1) A disavowal of the wage struggle. Gorz was then arguing that "economic" demands were "consumerist" and limited to the constraints of the system, as distinct from "political" or "structural" reforms which supposedly hastened the transition to socialism - reforms such as workers' control of production which, in the latest phase of the struggles has been encouraged by capital as a way of adding a voluntary luster to lower-waged work - the self-management of poverty. As we shall see, Gorz systematically attacks the working class wage struggle today as well.

2)A productivist outlook on revolution. That is, in the sixties Gorz argued that because traditional production workers did not identify with their work, they would be replaced by the "new working class" of technicians, etc. , who would be led to make the revolution because capitalism limited their ability to realize themselves in their work--a revolution to liberate work from inefficiencies! Now Gorz seeks the reduction of "wage labour"in favor of the development of more productive areas of the unpaid day as we shall see.

3) Seeing the revolutionary program as determined by the latest development of capital, instead of viewing capital as the result of the social struggle. Thus, where Gorz had previously claimed that capital had eliminated the revolutionary potential of production workers, he now argues that capital has eliminated the revolutionary potential of the whole class. In an interview in Semiotext (Vol.4 No.2 1982) Gorz states "One of the things I have tried to show is that the working class has become structurally incapable of taking control of production and society." Gorz' argument is that the way capital has structured the workplace and hierarchically organized labour-power "besides being means of producing, are always means of dominating, of disciplining, and of militarizing the worker." This should not come as news to anyone. Gorz, however, uses this fact as a reason to abandon the possibility of revolution. Gorz assumes a priori that working class autonomy is out of the question. Or put a different way, Gorz' claim is that working class organization can only mirror the hierarchical structure of capital. From the Paris Commune to the whole history of the workers' councils to the structure of Polish Solidarity (which did not stratify members by industry and function but included all employees as members) the evidence goes against Gorz' claim.

The essential point is that Gorz' new "viewpoint" is seen through the eyes of capital- its left eye perhaps, but



certainly capital's. When workers struggled against work, creating today's situation, where capital is forced to abandon certain sectors of work because the pace of struggle became too intense, Gorz opposed these struggles. Now however, Gorz sees capital abolishing work through automation (though he is blind to the transfer of much production work to the backs of third-world workers as well) and believes the "left" must accommodate itself to this progress:

> The error consists in believing that labor, by which I [illegible] heteronomous salaried activity, [illegible]and must remain the essential matter[illegible]'s just not so. According to Ame[illegible] projections within twenty years la[illegible]ime will be less than half that of [illegible]e time. I see the task of the lef[illegible]directing and promoting this process [illegible]e abolition of labor (capital's cur[illegible]rogram--M.N.)in a way which will [illegible]esult in a mass of unemployed on one side, an aristocracy of labor on [illegible] other, and between them a proleta[illegible] which carries out the most distaste[illegible] jobs for forty-five hours a week. Instead let everyone work much less for his salary and thus be free to act in a much more autonomous manner. This means replacing heteronomous, salaried labor with the independent work of freely associated individuals in extended families and neighborhood cooperatives so that autonomous activity based on voluntary cooperation would prevail and market relationships including the sale of labor time would waste away.

The two most important concepts for Gorz' thesis are that the abolition of work is already occurring caused by capitalism itself, and that the working class no longer exists,at least as a social agent. The development of machine technology has always been a weapon of capital's to respond to working class activity. Already Marx had chronicled the introduction of indutrial machines as a counter-revolution against the working class revolt against the length of the work day. What we are witnessing today is not a revolution which merely needs to be managed correctly, but yet another profound indutrial counter-revolution which will be used by capital only to increase the work we all do, both temporally, by the increase in the unwaged part of the work day, and through the vast expansion of spheres of labour-intensive unpaid and low paid work; Gorz encourages both of these increases - first he lectures on the one hand on the need to "endow domestic or family based activities with a new dignity and to lead to the abolition of the sexual division of labor." Then he calls for the development of areas of "autonomous production". "Autonomous production will develop in all those fields where what one can do for oneself in a given period of time is worth more than what one could buy by working the equivalent period of time for a wage." The message of this do-it-yourself attitude, is that perhaps [illegible] has become too "expensive" for us all [illegible] rely on waged "specialists" every ti[illegible]he drain clogs or the house needs [illegible]nting. But expensive in what way? [illegible] position becomes clearer when we[illegible]mine his views on housework and the[illegible]ial wage more closely. Gorz write[illegible]at the main concern of the women's [illegible]ent "can no longer be that of libe[illegible]ng women from housework, but of ext[illegible]ng the non-economic rationality [illegible] housework) beyond the home." [illegible]eed. But Gorz' argument gets wor[illegible] "Indeed if housework were renume[illegible]d at the marginal price of an ho[illegible]s work... the cost of domestic paym[illegible] would be so high as to exceed the [illegible]ities of even the opulent society." [illegible] then, we have finally [illegible]ached [illegible]ds which are revolutionary [illegible] wh[illegible]nnot be met by capital. Their [illegible] not our limits. Clearly Gorz is[illegible] to save the system , not destroy it, [illegible] his attempt to ideologically disarm[illegible]ry single working class struggle is [illegible]imony to this fact.

> [illegible]ing class demands have turned into [illegible]umerist mass demands. An atomized [illegible]alized mass of proletarians demand [illegible]e given by society, or more pre[illegible]ly by the state, what they are unable [illegible]ake, or produce.

[illegible]is position was bad enough in the "aff[illegible]nt" 1960's but to hold it now when mill[illegible]s of people have suffered from decl[illegible]g wages, factory closings, and the dest[illegible]ion of the social wage which are all [illegible] of the austerity programs which Gorz seems so enthusiastic about, amounts to pure and simple class treason. Gorz supports the "abolition of work" while at every turn opposing the refusal of work.

The real genius of Gorz' perspective is that in his attack on social services and wages for housework and his advocacy of "autonomous" production and self-help, Gorz constructs the program for a radical reduction of the cost of reproducing labor power. If we look closely at Gorz' call for reducing the work day, we find the hidden agenda behind it revealed at last:

All in all, at the level of society as

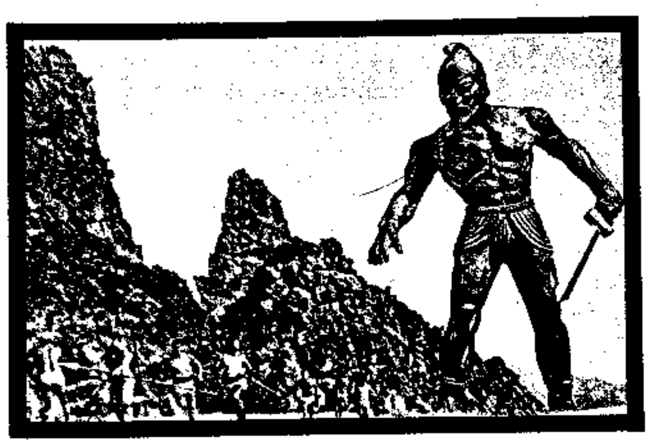
well as the family, the lack of time means impoverishment and extra expenditure. We have barely begun to add up the hidden costs of productivism. More time would make it possible to develop household as well as artistic, cultural, and craft production; it would allow more direct involvement in running neighborhoods or towns, and the creation of cooperative laundries, canteens, kitchen gardens, community workshops. Lastly it would allow much cheaper and more satisfying services to be exchanged within the framework of the neighborhood, housing estate or local cooperative.
(Note the preservation of labor-time as a measure of value - M.N.)

As for Gorz' suggestion that capital itself is abolishing work, we would laugh if the truth weren't so tragic. We have already revealed the creation of more work in the theory of Gorz' program. In the actual world of class conflict, capital's struggle is always to create more work. Gorz mistakes the destruction of certain sectors of the working class (e.g. the relative reduction of assembly-line workers) with the destruction of the class itself. Instead, as M.N. has shown in previous issues, exploitation has been expanded in the reconstituted capitalist economy, spatially with an increase in low-wage sectors of labor - intensive work, and temporally with an increase in the unwaged sector of the work-day (the right wing version of Gorz' program). The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights (recently replaced by Reagan) reports that 152,000 people are slaves in North Carolina alone - yes that's in the year of the space shuttle, the home computer and industrial robots.(Talking Drum Sept. 1983). This is another form of extending the "non-economic rationale" of household labor to other sectors, as was Stalin's network of "autonomous, non-market production." What Gorz really wants is to expand unwaged "housework" while reducing waged commodity production work in a radical reconstruction of capital's accumulation of surplus value: "all work and no pay," capitalism without a money wage. system. We say no thanks.

Finally for Gorz to convince anyone of his thesis that the working class has disappeared politically, he must ignore actual working class struggles. We are told that "Instead of demanding the abolition of wage - labour, the proletariat has come to demand the abolition of all unwaged work." Given the marxist view of exploitation, this seems like perfectly reasonable behavior on the part of the proletariat, since winning the end of unwaged work would mean the end of the system itself. Ironically, Gorz spends much of the book arguing that the working class is no longer a social agent and that the same working class is spending too much time struggling in ways which threaten Gorz' plans. Gorz' solution is to ignore certain struggles entirely. For instance, he writes, "Over the past twenty years the link between the growth of the productive forces and the growth of class antagonism has been broken." This argument of course is contradicted by the French uprising of May 1968, the decade of struggle of the Italian extra-parliamentary left, Solidarity in Poland, the British rebellions of 1981, Liberty City, Miami, the tremendous general strike which toppled the Shah of Iran, and the current struggle of West German workers for a shorter work week, etc.

Gorz dismisses all liberation movements in the third world, (along with the existence of the third world itself) claiming that, "armed violence has never led to a 'people's war' in any country. It has led to counter guerilla campaigns which have usually been able to liquidate both supporters and symapathizers of armed struggle..." We need only mention China, Vietnam, and Nicaragua for a few. Does Gorz expect our brothers and sisters in El Salvador to give up because he's "proven" that armed struggle never succeeds ?

But while Gorz' disavowal of the third-world struggles which have shaped three decades may seem absurd, his rationale is part of an important aspect of his argument, namely, that the state is



invincible, can no longer be done away with. If we are to believe Gorz and agree that our struggles should be to develop autonomous areas of production as he suggests, Gorz must convince us to forsake the struggle over/against the state:

> The existence of a state separate from civil society...is thus the essential prerequisite to the autonomy of civil society. (!- M.N.) The state serves to free civil society and its individual members from tasks which they could only undertake at the price of impairing both individual and social relations. Thus the existence of money and and prices makes it possible to avoid the haggling and mutual suspicion that go along with barter.

Thus Gorz simultaneously proposes the "whithering away of the state" through the elimination of the struggle over the social wage and the fruits of that struggle (e.g."welfare,"etc.), and the need to preserve the state to avoid "anarchy". This bears a striking resemblance to the Reagan program. Gorz has his imaginery Prime Minister tell the public, "The government's vocation is to abdicate into the hands of the people" - an echo of Reagan's self-help rhetoric. It all adds up to more unwaged work. In fact, of course, the state is necessary to insure that all the workers do all the waged and unwaged work Gorz wants us to do in his "Dual Society".

We do not intend to give the reader the impression that because we defend wage struggles in all forms against Gorz' position, that Midnight Notes supports the wage system. However, reality must be taken into account when developing our strategy, and the wage is under brutal attack by capital. The working class cannot abandon the wage while the ruling class still maintains control over the means of reproducing wealth. This would leave us virtually defenseless.

However, struggles which reappropriate wealth would enable us to begin moving toward a society which transcends the work/wage relation. The self-reduction struggles in Italy and elsewhere, lowering the price of commodities through struggle, the "commodity riot" seen in the U.S. ghettos, and similar activities are early examples of this type of struggle. To the extent that we do away with price, and overcome the denial of wealth which forces us to work and be exploited, we can transcend the wage system. But wage struggles must be used to build our power to prepare to raise the stakes. We must not abandon the wage or the struggle for the wage while capital still exists.

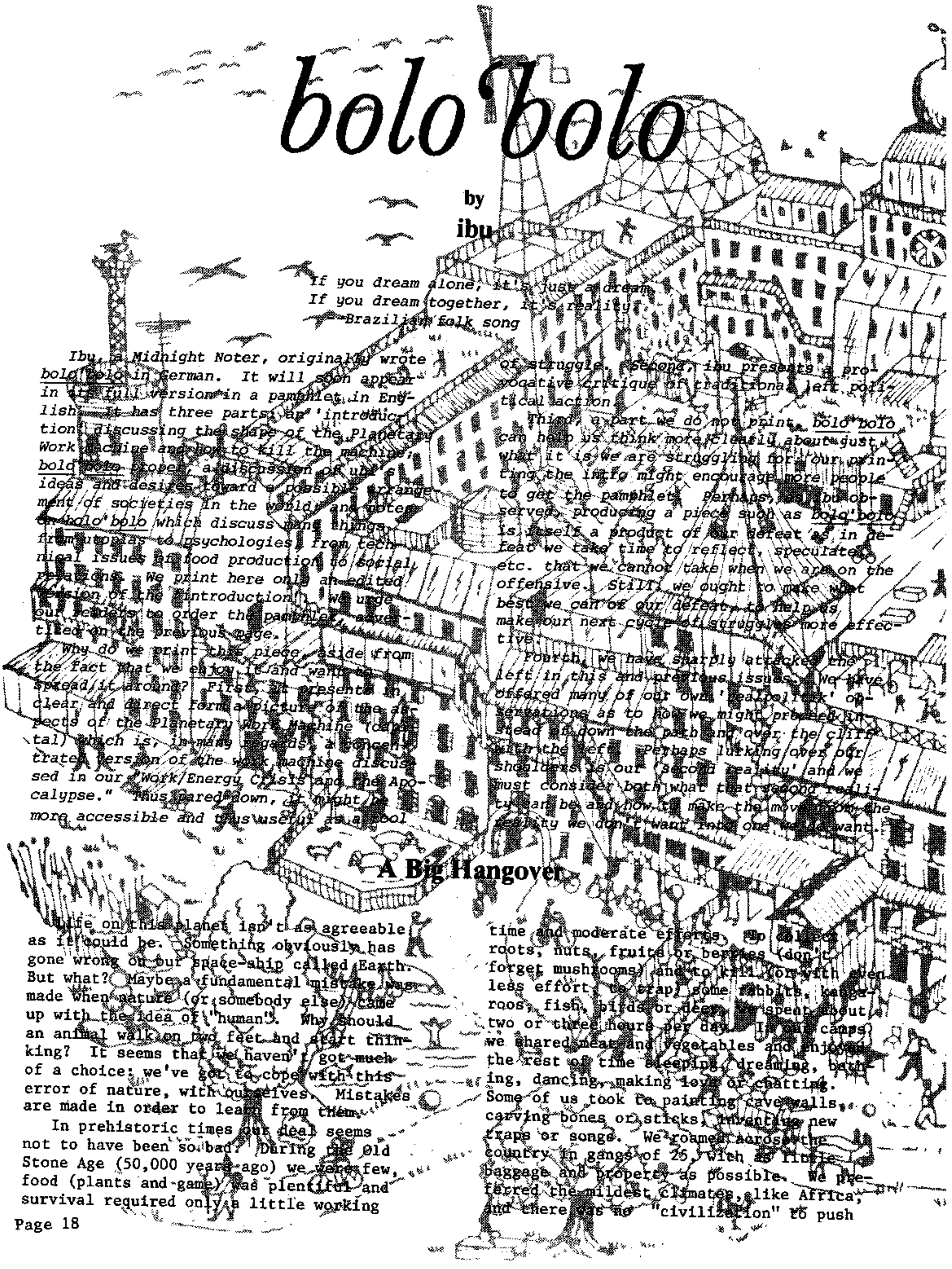
Gorz' program, presented as a radical new suggestion to the revolutionary movement, is in fact an attempt to ideologically unite the stalinist, social-democratic and alternativist forces of the left in a way that can forestall struggles around the refusal of work and install the left as the managers of the working class. Gorz' utopian vision at the end of the book is complete with a (left) president and prime minister who address a passive public to explain the revolution by decree. The two highlights are the creation of bike lanes on the public streets and the banning of television two nights a week - both low energy style demands. Army vans pick up people who are - this being the first day of liberation after all - on their way to work. Is this the best we can do?

We at Midnight Notes have a different vision:

A great ship is about to sail on a beautiful early morning. Assembled on the ship are all of the self proclaimed "marxist" ideologists who, now that the revolution has come, prepare to sail around the world to spread the good word, and build a society which will accept their vision of socialism based upon the joy of endless voluntary work and self-sacrifice. The ship has been named the Pequod in honor of its inevitible destination and in memory of the contributions of Melville and C.L.R. James.*

Suddenly, a huge crowd gathers. It is a mass of Gorz' "atomized, serialized proletarians" come to see the ship leave without any gratitude to the would-be-saviors on board. These workers, standing there on the pier on the first day of victory and liberation, knowing their true class interests, recognize their real "benefactors" for who they are. Laughingly, the crowd promises the ideologists on board the ship, Gorz among them, that everyone will put in as much voluntary work to build socialism as they possibly can. Reassured, the ship sails off and the working class waves bye-bye to the the ideologists. A few people light up joints and crack open beers. A few more go back to bed. A few go start a picnic. A few people carry on some needed services like health care, (and even they only work short shifts). Everyone takes it pretty easy and begins spending some of their spare time thinking up how to build safe machines that can do the work people still do, and inventing new drugs, sex positions and crossword puzzles made up of the names of famous marxist ideologists.

* - see Mariners, Renegades and Castaways by C.L.R. James



bolo'bolo

by

ibu

If you dream alone, it's just a dream.
If you dream together, it's reality.
—Brazilian folk song

Ibu, a Midnight Noter, originally wrote bolo'bolo in German. It will soon appear in its full version in a pamphlet in English. It has three parts: an 'introduction' discussing the shape of the Planetary Work Machine and how to kill the machine; bolo'bolo proper, a discussion of ibu's ideas and desires toward a possible arrangement of societies in the world; and notes on bolo'bolo which discuss many things from utopias to psychologies, from technical issues of food production to social relations. We print here only an edited version of the 'introduction'. We urge our readers to order the pamphlet, advertized on the previous page.

Why do we print this piece, aside from the fact that we enjoy it and want to spread it around? First, it presents in clear and direct form a picture of the aspects of the Planetary Work Machine (capital) which is, in many regards, a concentrated version of the work machine discussed in our "Work/Energy Crisis and the Apocalypse." Thus pared down, it might be more accessible and thus useful as a tool of struggle. Second, ibu presents a provocative critique of traditional left political action.

Third, a part we do not print, bolo'bolo can help us think more clearly about just what it is we are struggling for: our printing the intro might encourage more people to get the pamphlet. Perhaps, as ibu observed, producing a piece such as bolo'bolo is itself a product of our defeat as in defeat we take time to reflect, speculate, etc. that we cannot take when we are on the offensive. Still, we ought to make what best we can of our defeat, to help us make our next cycle of struggles more effective.

Fourth, we have sharply attacked the left in this and previous issues. We have offered many of our own 'realpolitick' observations as to how we might proceed instead of down the path and over the cliff with the left. Perhaps lurking over our shoulders is our 'second reality' and we must consider both what that second reality can be and how to make the move from the reality we don't want into one we do want.

A Big Hangover

Life on this planet isn't as agreeable as it could be. Something obviously has gone wrong on our space-ship called Earth. But what? Maybe a fundamental mistake was made when nature (or somebody else) came up with the idea of "human". Why should an animal walk on two feet and start thinking? It seems that we haven't got much of a choice: we've got to cope with this error of nature, with ourselves. Mistakes are made in order to learn from them.

In prehistoric times our deal seems not to have been so bad. During the Old Stone Age (50,000 years ago) we were few, food (plants and game) was plentiful and survival required only a little working time and moderate efforts. To collect roots, nuts, fruits or berries (don't forget mushrooms) and to kill (or with even less effort, to trap) some rabbits, kangaroos, fish, birds or deer, we spent about two or three hours per day. In our camps we shared meat and vegetables and enjoyed the rest of time sleeping, dreaming, bathing, dancing, making love or chatting. Some of us took to painting cave walls, carving bones or sticks, inventing new traps or songs. We roamed across the country in gangs of 25, with as little baggage and property as possible. We preferred the mildest climates, like Africa, and there was no "civilization" to push

us into deserts, tundras or mountains. The Old Stone Age must have been a good deal--if we can trust the recent anthropological findings--for we stuck to it for several tens of thousands of years--a long and happy period, especially if compared to the 200 years of the actual industrial nightmare.

Then somebody must have started playing around with seeds and plants and invented agriculture. It must have seemed a good idea, for we didn't have to walk far to get enough food. But life became more complicated and toilsome. We had to stay in the same place for at least several months to store the seeds for the next crop and to plan and organize work on the fields. Fields and harvest also had do be defended from our nomadic gatherer/hunter cousins who kept thinking that everything belonged to everybody. Conflicts between farmers, hunters and cattle-breeders arose. We had to explain to the others that we had "worked" to accumulate our provisions--and they didn't even have a word for "work". With planning, withholding of food, defence, fences, organization and the necessity of self-discipline we opened the door to specialized social organisms like priesthood, chiefs, armies. We created fertility-religions with rituals to stay convinced of our lifestyle. The temptation to return to the free life of gatherers/hunters must have always been a threat. Whether it was the patriarchate or matriarchate, we were on the road to statehood.

With the rise of the ancient civilizations in Mesopotamia, India, China and Egypt, the equilibrium between humans and natural resources was definitely ruined. The future breakdown of our spaceship was programmed. Centralized organisms developed their own dynamics and we became the victims of our own creations. Instead of two hours per day we worked ten hours and more on the fields and constructions of Pharoahs and Caesars, we died in their wars and were deported as slaves where they needed us. Those who tried to return to their former freedom were tortured, mutilated, killed.

When they started industrialization, it wasn't any better. To crush the peasant rebellions and the growing independence of the craftsmen in the towns, they introduced the factory-system. Instead of foremen and whips, they used machines. They dictated our rhythm of work, punished us automatically with accidents, kept us under control in huge halls. Once again progress meant working more and under more murderous conditions. The whole society and the whole planet was turned into one big Work-Machine. And this Work-Machine was at the same time a War-Machine for all those within or without who dared to oppose it. War became as industrial as work. Indeed, peace and work have never been compatable: You cannot allow yourelf to be destroyed by work and prevent the same machine from killing others, you cannot refuse your own freedom and not attack the freedom of others. War became as absolute as work.

The early Work-Machine produced strong illusions of a "better future". After all, if the present was so miserable, the future could only be better. Even the working class organizations were convinced that industrialization would lay the basis for a society of more freedom, more free time, more pleasures. Utopians, socialists and communists believed in development and in industry, in "progress". Marx thought that with its help, humans would be able to hunt, make poetry and enjoy life again. Lenin, Stalin, Mao, Castro and others demanded more sacrifices to build a new society. But socialism only turned out to be another trick of the Work-Machine to extend its power in areas where it was lacking. The machine doesn't care if it is managed by transnational companies or state bureaucracies. Its goal is the same everywhere: steal our time to produce steel.

The industrial War-and-Work Machine has definitely ruined our space-ship and its future: the furniture (jungles, woods, lakes, seas) is torn to shreds; our playmates have been exterminated or are sick (whales, birds, tigers, eagles); the air stinks and is out of balance (CO_2, acid rain); the pantries are being emptied (fossile fuels, metals) and self-destruction is programmed (nuclear holocaust). We can't even feed all the passengers of this wrecked vessel. We've been made so nervous and irritable that we're ready for any kind of nationalist, racial or religious war. For many of us, the nuclear holocaust is no longer a threat, but seems to be a welcome deliverance from fear, boredom, oppression and drudgery.

5000 years of civilization and 200 years of accelerated industrial progress have left us with a terrible hangover. "Economy" has become a goal in itself and we're about to be swallowed by it. The hotel terrorizes its guests: But we are guests and hosts at the same time.

The Planetary Work Machine

The monster that we have let grow and that keeps our planet in its grip is the Planetary Work Machine. If we want to transform our spaceship into an agreeable place again, we've got to dismantle this Machine, to repair the damage it has done and to come to some basic agreements on a new start. So our first questions must be: How does the Planetary Work-Machine manage to control us? How is it organized? What are its mechanisms and how can they be destroyed?

It is a Planetary Machine: it eats in Africa, digests in Asia and shits in Europe. It is planned and regulated by international companies; the banking system; the circuit of fuels, raw materials and other goods. There are a lot of illusions about nations, states, blocs, First, Second, Third or Fourth World--these are only minor subdivisions, parts of the same machinery. Of course there are distinct wheels and transmissions that exert pressure, tensions and frictions on each other. The Machine is built on the basis of its inner contradictions: workers/capital, private capital/state capital (capitalism/socialism), development/underdevelopment, misery/waste, war/peace, women/men, etc. The Machine is not a homogenous structure, it uses its internal contradictions to expand its control and refine its instruments. Unlike fascist or theocratic systems or like Orwell's 1984, the Work-Machine permits a "sane" level of resistance, unrest, provocation and rebellion. It digests unions, radical parties, protest movements, demonstrations and democratic changes of regimes. If democracy doesn't function, it uses dictatorship. If its legitimation is in crisis, it has camps, prisons and torture in reserve. All these modalities are not essential for understanding the functioning of the machine.

The principle that governs all activities of the Machine is economy. But what is economy? Unpersonal, indirect exchange of crystalized life-time. We spend our time producing some part which is assembled with other parts by somebody we don't know to make a device that, in turn, is bought by somebody else we don't know for an unknown goal. The circuit of these scraps of life is regulated according to the working time that has been invested in its raw materials, its production and in us. The means of measurement is money. Those who produce and exchange have no control over their common product and so we have situations where rebellious workers are shot by exactly those guns they helped to produce. Every commodity is a weapon against us, every supermarket an arsenal, every factory a battleground. This is the dynamic of the Work-Machine: split society into isolated individuals, 'blackmail' us each separately with the wage or violence; use our working time according to its plans. Economy means expansion of control by the Machine over its parts, making the parts more and more dependent on the Machine.

We are all parts of the Planetary Work Machine--we are the Machine. We represent it against each other. Whether we are developed or not, waged or not, working alone or as employees--we serve its purpose. Where there is no industry, we "produce" workers to export to industrial zones. Africa has produced slaves for America, Turkey produces workers for Germany, Pakistan for Kuwait, Ghana for Nigeria, Morocco for France, Mexico for the U.S. Untouched areas can be used as scenary for the international tourist business: Indians on reservations, Polynesians, Balinese, Aborigines. Those who try to get out of the Machine fulfill the function of picturesque "outsiders" (bums, hippies, yogis). As long as there is the Machine, we're inside of it. It has destroyed or mutilated almost all traditional societies or driven them into a demoralizing defensive position. If you try to retreat to a "deserted" valley in order to live quietly on some subsistence farming, you'll be found by a tax-collector, a draft-agent or by the police. With its tentacles the Machine can reach virtually every place on this planet within hours. Not even in the most remote part of the Gobi desert can you be sure to take an unobserved shit.

The Three Essential Elements

Examining the Machine more closely, we can distinguish three essential functions, three components of the international work-force and three "deals" the Machine offers to different fractions of ourselves. These functions (A,B,C) can be characterized as follows:

A) Information: planning, design, guidance, management, science, communication, politics, production of ideas, ideologies, religions, art, etc.: the collective brain and nerve-system of the Machine.

B) Production: industrial and agricultural production of goods, execution of plans, fragmented work, circulation of energy.

C) Reproduction: production and maintenance of A-, B-, and C-workers, making children, education, housework, services, entertainment, sex, recreation, medical care, etc.

All these functions are essential to the Machine. If one of them fails, it will sooner or later be paralyzed. Around these functions the Machine has created three types of workers, although overlap occurs; e.g., reproduction requires more than one type of worker. The three types of worker are divided by their wage-level, 'privileges', education, social status, etc., as follows:

A) Technical-intellectual workers, mostly located in advanced (western) industrial countries; highly "qualified", mostly white, male and well-paid; e.g., computer engineers.
B) Industrial workers and employees, located in not yet "de-industrialized" areas, in "threshold countries", socialist countries; average or miserably paid, male or female, of varying "qualifications"; auto-workers, elect[illegible] assembly-workers (female).
C) Fluctuant workers, oscillating between small agriculture and s[illegible] jobs, service workers, housewives, unemployed, criminals, hustlers; [illegible]ely women and people of color without regular income in metropolitan slums, in the Third World, often at the edge of starvation.

All these types of workers are present in all parts of the world, just in different proportions. Nevertheless it is possible to distinguish three zones with a typically high proportion of the respective type of workers:

A-workers: advanced industrial [illegible] countries: U.S., Europe [illegible]
B-workers: socialist countries or industrializing countries [illegible]R, Eastern Europe, Taiwan, S[illegible]re.
C-workers: Third World, agricultural or "underdeveloped" areas in Africa, Asia and South America and in slums everywhere.

The "Three Worlds" are present everywhere. In New York there are neighborhoods that can be considered parts of the Third World. In Brazil there are industrial zones, in socialist countries there are strong A-elements. But there is a difference between the United States and Bolivia, between Sweden and Laos, etc.

The Machine's power to control is based on its ability to play the different types of workers against each other. High wages and 'priviledges' are not conceded because the Machine particularly likes certain kinds of workers more than others. Social stratification is used for the purpose of maintenance of the whole system.

The three kinds of workers are afraid of each other. They are kept divided by prejudices, racism, jealousy, political and religious ideologies and economic interests. The A- and B- workers among us are afraid of losing their standard of living, their cars, houses and jobs. At the same time they complain about stress and envy "idle" C-workers. C-workers in turn dream about consumer goods, stable jobs and an "easy" life. All these divisions are exploited by the machine in various ways.

The Machine no longer even needs an extra ruling class to maintain its power. Private capitalists, bourgeois, aristocrats and chiefs are mere left-overs without any decisive influence on the material execution of power. The machine can do without capitalists and owners, as the example of the socialist states and state enterprises in the West demonstrates. They're not the problem. The real oppres[illegible] organs of the Machine are other wor[illegible]lice, soldiers, officials, managers. [illegible] always confronted with the metamorph[illegible]f our own kind.

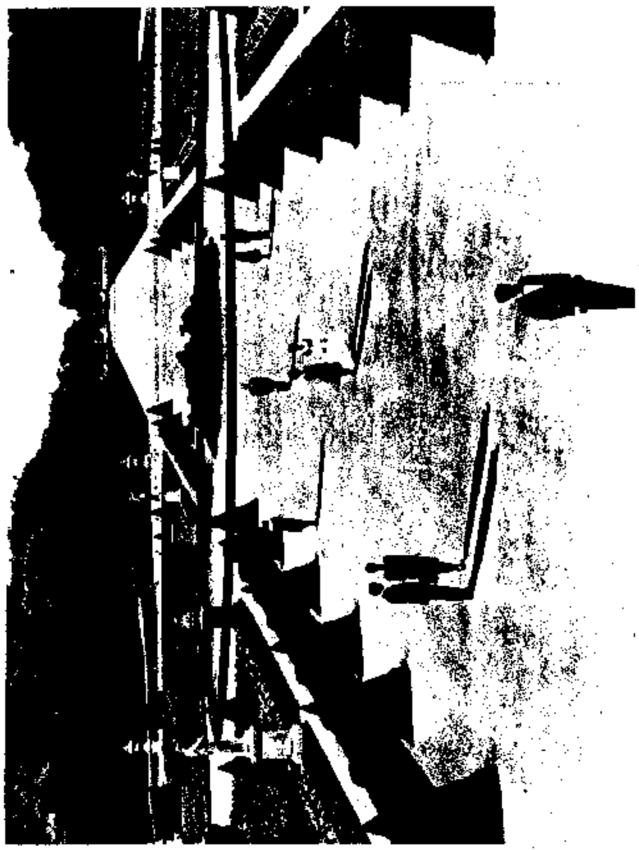
The Plan[illegible] Work-Machine is a social mechanism in w[illegible] people are pitted one against the othe[illegible] guarantee its functioning. So we m[illegible] ask ourselves: Why do we put up with t[illegible] Machine? Why do we accept a kind of li[illegible]e obviously don't like? What are the a[illegible]tages that make us forget our disconte[illegible]?

The contradictions [illegible] make the Machine work are the same internal contra[illegible] faced by every worker: they're [illegible]dictions. Of course the Machine "kn[illegible] we don't like this life and that it i[illegible]nough just to repress our wishes. If [illegible]e simply based on repression, producti[illegible] would be low and the costs of supervi[illegible] would be too high. That's why the cha[illegible]l-slave system was abolished. In rea[illegible], one half of us accepts the Machine's [illegible]al and the other half revolts agains[illegible].

The Machine does have something to offer. We give it a part of our life-time, but not all. In return, it gives us a certain amount of goods, but not as much as we want and not exactly what we want. Every type of worker has its own deal and every worker has its extra-deal again, depending on its job and specific situation. As everybody thinks s/he is better off than somebody else (there's always somebody who is worse off), s/he sticks to her/his own deal and distrusts all changes. So the inner inertia of the Machine protects it against reforms and revolutions.

Only when a deal becomes too unequal does dissatisfaction and readiness to change the situation arise. The actual crisis, which is visible mainly on the economic level, is caused by the fact that all deals the system has to offer have become unacceptable. A-, B-, and C-workers have protested recently, each in its own way, against the respective deals. Not only the poor but also the rich are dissatisfied. The Machine is about to lose its perspective. The mechanism of internal division and mutual repulsion is about to collapse. Repulsion is turning against the Machine itself.

(The remainder of this section, "Three Deals in Crisis," discusses in detail the particular deals made by each type of worker. We have omitted it from this printing due to lack of space. The deals discussed are titled "The A-Deal: Disappointed at consumer society"; "The B-Deal: Frustrated by socialism"; "The C-deal: The development of misery". This entire section is in the pamphlet from Autonomedia.)



Disappointed A-workers out of touch with C-workers and B-workers.

The End of Realpolitik

Misery in the Third World, frustration in the socialist countries, deception in the West; the main dynamic of the Machine is actually reciprocal discontent and the logic of the lesser evil. What can we do? Reformist politicians propose to change the Machine, to make it more humane and agreeable by using its <u>own</u> mechanisms. Political realism tells us to proceed by little steps. Thus, the microelectronic 'revolution' is supposed to give us the means for reforms. Misery shall be transformed into mobilization, frustration into activism and disappointment shall be the basis of change of consciousness. Some of the reformist proposals sound quite good: 20-hour-work-week, equal distribution of work, guaranteed minimal income (e.g. negative income tax), elimination of unemployment, use of free time for mutual and decentralized self-administration in enterprises and neighborhoods, creation of an "autonomous" sector with low-productivity-small-enterprises, investments in middle and soft technologies (also for the Third World), reduction of private traffic, conservation of energy (no nukes, insulation, coal), investments in solar energy and public transportation, less animal proteins (more self-sufficiency in the Third World), recycling of raw materials (aluminum), disarmament, etc.. These proposals are reasonable even realizable and certainly not extravagant. They form more or less the official or secret program of the alternativist-socialist-green-pacifist movements in Western Europe and the United States (and in other countries). Should it be realized, the Work-Machine would look much more bearable. But even these "radical" programs only imply a new adjustment of the Machine, not its destruction. As long as the Machine (the hard, heteronomous sector) exists, self-management and "autonomy" can only serve as a kind of recreational area for the repair of exhausted workers. And who can prevent us from being ruined in 20 hours as much as we've been in 40? *As long as the monster isn't pushed into space, it'll continue devouring us.*

Additionally the political system is designed to block such proposals or to transform reforms into a new impulse for the development of the Machine. The best illustration of this fact is the politics of reformist parties. As soon as the Left gets the power (e.g. in France, Greece, Spain, Bolivia, etc..) it gets entangled in the jungle of "realities" and economic necessities and it has no choice other than to enforce exactly those austerity-programs it attacked when the Right was in charge. Instead of Giscard it's Mitterrand who sends the police against striking workers. Socialists have always been good policeministers. The "recovery of the economy" (i.e. of the Work-Machine) is the basis of all national politics, and reforms have to prove that they encourage investments, create jobs, increase productivity, etc.. The more "new movements" enter Realpolitik (as the Greens in Germany), the more they get into the logic of a "healthy economy", or they disappear from the political game. Besides destroyed illusions, increased resignation and general apathy, reformist politics don't achieve anything. The Work-

Machine is planetary and all its parts are interconnected; any national reformist policy will simply increase international competition, play the workers of different countries against each other and make more perfect the control over us.

It is exactly this experience that has led more and more voters to support neo-conservative politicians like Reagan, Thatcher or Kohl. The most cynical representatives of the logic of economy are preferred to leftist tinkerers. The self-confidence of the Machine has become shaky. Nobody dares fully believe any longer in its future, but everybody clings to it. The fear of experiment is greater than the belief in demagogical promises. Why reform a system that's going to collapse anyway? Why not try to enjoy the few positive aspects of respective personal or national deals with the Machine? Thus why not put in charge positive, confident, conservative politicians? They don't even promise to solve such problems as unemployment, hunger, pollution, the nuclear arms race. Or if they do, they make clear that those are not their priorities. They're not elected to solve problems, but to represent confidence and continuity. For the "recovery", only a little calm, stability and positive rhetoric is needed: the security to cash in on the profits made by present investments. Under these conditions the recovery will be much more terrible than the crisis. We don't have to believe in Reagan or Kohl, just keep smiling together with them and forget about our doubts. The Work-Machine supports doubts badly in this situation, and with the neo-conservative regimes we're at least left alone until the end of the next recovery or catastrophe. Besides agitation, bad mood and remorses, the Left hasn't anything better to offer. *Realpolitik has become unrealistic, because reality is at a turning point.*

All or Nothing

The Planetary Work-Machine is omnipresent and it cannot be stopped by politics. So, will the Machine be our destiny until we die at 65 or 71? Will that have been our life? Have we imagined it like this? Is ironical resignation the only way out, as it helps us to hide our decepiton during the few years we still have to live? Maybe everything's okay and we're just a little bit too dramatic.

Let's not fool ourselves: even if we mobilize all our spirit of sacrifice and all our courage, we can't achieve anything. The Machine is perfectly equipped against political Kamakazes, as the fate of the RAF, the Red Brigades, the [illegible] Tupamaros and others have shown. It can coexist with armed resistence and transform it into a motor of its perfection. Our attitude isn't a moral problem, not for us and even less for the Machine.

Whether we kill ourselves, manage to get an extra-deal, find an opening or a refuge, win in the lottery, throw Molotow-cocktails, join a left-wing party, scratch ourselves behind the ear or run amok, we're finished. In this reality there's nothing to get. Opportunism doesn't pay off. Career is a bad risk as it causes ulcers, psychoses, marriages, obligations. Bailing out means self-exploitation, ghetto, meetings. Cleverness is fatiguing. Stupidity is annoying.

It would be logical to ask ourselves questions like these: "How would I like to live?" "In What kind of society or nonsociety would I feel comfortable?" "What are my wishes and desires, independent from their realizability?" And all this not in a remote future (reformists always talk about the next 20 years) but in our lifetime, while we're still in good health, let's say within five years...

Dreams, ideal visions, utopias, yearnings, alternatives; aren't those just new illusions to seduce us once again into participating in progress? Don't we know them from the neolithic, the 17th century and today from science-fiction and fantasy-literature? Do we succumb again to the charm of history? Isn't future the only thought of the Machine? Is there only the choice between joining the Machine's dreams or refusing any activity?

There are kinds of desires that are censured scientifically, morally, politically when they arise. The ruling reality tries to stamp them out. These are the dreams of the <u>second reality</u>.

Reformists tell us that it's shortsighted and egoistic to follow our own wishes. We should fight for the future of our children. We should renounce (car, vacations, heating and our needs and desires) and work hard, so that they'll have a better life. This is a curious logic. Isn't it exactly the renunciation and sacrifice of our parent - generation, their hard work in the 50s and 60s, that has caused the mess that we are in today? <u>We're</u> those children, for whom they have suffered and worked. For us, our parents bore two wars, a crisis, and built the nuclear bomb. They were not egoistic, they obeyed. Anything built on sacrifice and renunciation just demands more sacrifices and more renunciation. Because our parents haven't respected their egoism, they cannot respect ours... *It is not the*

Third or Fourth World that is the most underdeveloped, its our egoism of wishes.

Other political moralists could object that we're not allowed to dream of utopias while millions die of starvation, others are tortured in camps, deported and massacred, or deprived of the most basic human rights. While the spoiled children of the consumer society compile their list of wishes, others don't even know how to write or have the time to wish. Yet, some of us die of heroin and others commit suicide or are mentally ill: whose misery is more serious? Can we measure misery? And even if there wasn't any misery: are our desires unreal, because others are worse off or because we think we could be worse off? Precisely when we act only to prevent the worst or because "others" are worse off, we make it possible and let it happen. In this way we're always forced to react on the initiatives of the Machine. There's always an outrageous scandal, an incredible impertinence, a provocation that cannot be left unanswered. And thus our 70 years go by- and those of the others who are "worse" off. The Machine can keep us busy, because it wants to prevent us from becoming aware of our immoral dreams. When we act for ourselves, the Machine gets into trouble. As long as we only (re-)act on the basis of "moral differences" we'll be powerless dented wheels, exploding molecules in the engine of development. And as we're weak, the Machine has more power to exploit the weaker ones.

Moralism is a weapon of the Machine, realism is another. The Machine has formed reality and it has trained us to perceive reality in the Machine's way. Since Descartes and Newton it has digitalized our thoughts and reality; it has laid yes/no-patterns over the world and our spirit. We believe in reality because we're used to it. As long as we accept the Machine's reality we're used to it. As long as we accept the digital culture to pulverize our dreams, sentiments and ideas. Dreams and utopias are sterilized in novels, films and commercialized music. But reality is in crisis, every day there are more cracks and the yes/no- alternative turns more and more into simply an apocalyptic threat. The Machine's ultimate reality is its self-destruction.

Our reality, the second reality of old and new dreams, cannot be caught in the yes/no-net. It refuses apocalypse and status quo at the same time. Apocalypse or Evangel, end of the world or utopia, all or nothing: there aren't any other realist possibilities. In this reality, we choose one or the other lightheartedly. But in between attitudes like "hope", "confidence" or "patience" are just ridiculous and pure self-deceit. There's no hope. We have to choose now.

Nothingness has become a realistic possibility, more absolute than nihilists have dared to dream. In this regard the Machine's achievement must be acknowledged. Finally we've got nothingness! We can kill all of us together! We don't have to survive! Nothingness is about to become a realistic way of life with its own philosophy (Cioran, Schopenhauer, Buddhism, Glucksmann), its fashion (black, uncomfortable), music, housing style, painting, etc.. Apocalyptists, nihilists, pessimists and misanthropists have good arguments for their attitude. After all, if we transform into values "life", "nature" or "mankind", there are only totalitarian risks, biocracy or eco-fascism. When we sacrifice freedom to survival, new ideologies of renunciation arise and contaminate all dreams and desires. The pessimists are the real free, happy and generous. The world will never be supportable again without the possibility of its self-destruction, as the life of the individual is a burden without the possible exit of suicide. Nothingness is here to stay.

On the other hand "all" is also quite appealing. It is much less probable than nothingness, badly defined and poorly thought out. It is ridiculous, megalomanic and self-conceited. Maybe it's only around to make nothingness more attractive.

bolo'bolo

bolo'bolo is part of (my) second reality. It's strictly subjective, because the reality of dreams can never be objective.

Is bolo'bolo all or nothing? It's both and none of them. It's a trip into second reality like Yapfaz, Kwendolm, Takmas and Ul-So. Down there there's a lot of room for many dreams. bolo'bolo is one of those unrealistic, amoral, egoistic maneuvers of diversion from the struggle against the worst. bolo'bolo is also a modest proposal for the new arrangements in the spaceship after the Machine's disappearance. Though it started as a mere collection of wishes, a lot of considerations on their realization have accumulated around it. bolo'bolo can be realized worldwide within five years, if we start now. It guarantees a soft landing in the second reality. None of us will starve, freeze or die earlier than we would today in the transition period. *There's very little risk.*

Of course general conceptions of a post-industrial civilization are not lacking in these days. Be it the eruption of the Age of Aquarius, the change of paradigms, ecotopia, new networks, rhizoms, decentralized structures, soft society, new poverty, small circuits, third waves, prosumer societies: the ecological or alternativist literature grows rapidly. Allegedly soft conspiracies are going on and the new society is already being born in communes, sects, citizens' initiatives, alternative enterprises and block associations. In all these publications and experiments there are a lot of good and useful ideas, ready to be stolen and incorporated into bolo'bolo. But many of these futures or futuribles (as the French say) are not very appetizing: they stink of renunciation, moralism, new efforts, toilsome rethinking, modesty and self-limitation. Of course there are limits. *But why should there be limits of pleasure and adventure? Why are most alternativists only talking about new responsabilities and almost never about new possibilities?*

One of the slogans of the alternativists is: Think globally, act locally. Why not think and act globally and locally? There are a lot of conceptions and ideas, but what's lacking is a practical global (and local) proposal, a kind of common language. There has to be an agreement on some basic elements, if we don't want to stumble into the Machine's next trap. In this regard, modesty and (academic) prudence is a virtue that threatens to disarm us. Why be modest in the face of impending catastrophe?

bolo'bolo might not be the best and most detailed and certainly not a definitive proposal for a new arrangement of our spaceship. But it is not so bad and can be acceptable to many people. I'm for trying it as a first attempt and seeing later what happens.

Substruction

In case we like bolo'bolo, the next question will be: How can it be realized? Isn't it just another real-political proposal? In fact, bolo'bolo cannot be realized with politics, there's another road, a range of roads, to be followed.

If we deal with the Machine, the first problem is obviously a negative one: how can we paralyze and eliminate the Machine's control (i.e., the Machine itself) in such a way that bolo'bolo can unfold without being destroyed in its beginnings? We can call this aspect of our strategy disassembly or subversion. The Planetary Work Machine has got to be dismantled--carefully, because we don't want to perish with it. Let's not forget, that we're part of the Machine, that it is us. We want to destroy the Machine but not ourselves. We only want to destroy our function for the Machine Subversion means to change the relationship among us (the three types of workers) and towards the Machine (which in turn faces each type of worker as a total system). It is subversion and not attack, because we're all inside the Machine and have to block it from there. It will never confront us as an external enemy. There will never be a front-line, nor headquarters, nor uniforms.

Subversion alone will always be a failure, because with its help we might paralyze a certain sector of the Machine, destroy one of its functions, but it will be able to reconquer it and occupy it again. Every space obtained by subversion has to be filled by us with something "new", something "constructive". We cannot hope to eliminate first the Machine and then--in an "empty" space--to establish bolo'bolo: we'd always come too late. Provisional elements of bolo'bolo, seedlings of its structures, must occupy all free interstices, abandoned areas, conquered bases and prefigure the new relationships. Construction has to be combined with subversion into one process: substruction. *Construction should never be a pretext to renounce subversion.* Subversion alone creates only straw-fires, historical dates and heroes, but it doesn't leave concrete results. Construction and subversion are both forms of tacit or open collaboration with the Machine.

Dysco

Dealing first with subversion, we have to state that every type of worker, every functionary of the Machine and every part of the world has its own specific potential of subversion. There are different ways of doing damage to the Machine and not everybody has the same possibilities. A planetary menu of subversion could be described as follows:

A- Dysinformation: sabotage (of hardware or programs), theft of machine-time (for games or private purposes), defective design or planning, indiscretions (e.g. Ellsberg and the Watergate scandal), desertions (scientists, officials), refusal of selection (teachers), mismanagement, treason, ideological deviation, false information (to superiors); effects can be immediate or long [illegible] years).

B-Dysproduction: opting out [illegible] sabotage, strikes, sick-leaves, shop-floor assemblies, demonstrations in the factories, mobility, occupations (e.g., the struggles of [illegible] Polish workers); effects--medium term (weeks, months).

C-Dysruption: riots, street blockades, violent acts, flight, divorces, domestic rows, looting, gueriila [illegible] ting, arson (e.g., Sao P[illegible] Soweto, El Salvador); effects--short term (hours, days).

Of course all these acts also have long-term effects; here we are only talking about their direct impact as forms of activity. Any of these types of subversion can damage the Machine, can even paralyze it temporarily. However, each of them can be neutralized by lack or multiplication of the two others, because their impact is different depending on time and space. Dysinformation remains inefficient if it's not applied to the production or physical circulation of goods or services. In that case it becomes purely an i[illegible] game and destroys itself. [illegible] can always be crushed because nobody prevents the police from intervening by dysruptive actions. Dysruption is quickly finished, because the Machine controls supply from its production-sector. The Machine knows that there will always be subversion against it, that the deal between it and the different types of workers will always have to be bargained for and fought out again. It only tries to stagger the attacks of the three sectors so that we cannot support and expand our struggles to multiply each other and become a kind of counter-machine.

Workers who have just won a strike (dysproduction) are angry at unemployed demonstators who prevent them with a street blockade from getting to their factory on time. A firm goes bankrupt and the workers complain about engineers and managers. But it was a substructive engineer who willingly produced a bad design and a manager who wanted to sabotage the firm. The workers lose their jobs, take part in unempoyment demonstrations, there are riots...police (workers) do their job. The Machine transforms the isolated attacks of different sectors into idle motion. For the machine, nothing is more instructive than attacks and nothing more dangerous than long periods of calm, because in this case it does not know what is going on inside the organisms of its own body. The Machine cannot exist without a certain level of sickness and dysfunction. Partial strug[illegible] me[illegible] of control and a kind of [illegible]omet[illegible]hat provides it with imagination and dynamism. If necessary, it can even provoke struggles to test its instruments of control.

Dysinformation, dysproduction and dysruption would have to be joined on a mass level in order to produce a critical situation for the Machine. Such a deadly conjuncture can only come into being by the overcoming of the separation of the three functions and [illegible]he separation can only [illegible] through struggles in the various sectors. There should emerge a kind of communication with which the Machine is not designed to deal: dyscommunication. The name of the final game against the Machine is [illegible] ABC-Dysco.

Where can such ABC-dysco-knots develop? Hardly where the workers meet in their Machine-functions, i.e. at the workplace, in the supermarket, in the household. A factory is organized division and the unions only mirror this division, but don't overcome it. On the job the different interests are particularly accentuated: wage, position, hierarchy and priviledges all build up walls in the factories and offices [illegible] isolated from each other, the noise level is too high, the tasks absorbing. ABC-dysco is not likely to happen in the economic core of the Machine.

But there are domains of life--for the Machine mostly marginal domains--that are more propitious for dysco. The machine hasn't digitalized and rationalized everything: religion, mystic experience, language, native place, nature, sexuality, all kinds of spleens, crazy ideas, fancies. *Life as a whole slips away from the Machine's patterns.* Of course the machine is aware of its insufficiency in these fields and tries to functionalize them economically. Religion becomes sect-business, nature can be exploited by tourism and sport, the love for one's country degenerates into an ideological prëtext for weapons industries, sexuality is commercialized by the sex-business, etc. There's no need that couldn't be turned into a commodity, but as a commodity it gets reduced and mutilated.

Certain needs, however, are particularly inappropriate for mass-production, above all those of authentic, personal experience. The conversion succeeds only partially, and more and more people are becoming aware of "the rest". The success of the environmental movements, of the peace movement, of ethnic or regionalist movements, of certain forms of "new religiousness" (progressive or pacifist churches), or homosexual subcultures, is probably due to this insufficiency. Wherever identities are newly discovered or created that lie beyond the logic of economy, there have been ABC-knots. As 'war objectors', intellectuals, employees, women and men have met. Homosexuals gather regardless of their jobs. Indians, Basques or Armenians struggle together--"a kind of new nationalism" (or regionalism) overcomes job and educational barriers. The Black Madonna of Czestochowa might have contributed to unite Polish workers, intellectuals and farmers. It is no accident that in recent times such types of movements have reached high levels of strength. Their substructive power is based on the multiplication of ABC-encounters that have been possible in their framework. One of the first reactions of the Machine has always been to play off against each other the elements of these encounters and to reestablish the old mechanism of mutual repulsion.

The above-mentioned movements have only produced superficial and short-lived ABC-dysco. In most cases the different types just touched each other on a few occasions and slipped back once again into their everyday division. Those of us involved created more mythologies than realities. In order to exist longer and to exert a substantial influence, we should also be able to fulfill everyday tasks outside of the Machine: we should also comprise the constructive side of substruction. We should attempt the organization of mutual help, of moneyless exchange, of services, of concrete cultural functions in neighborhoods. In this context we should create anticipations of bolos, of barter-agreements, of independent food-supply, etc. Ideologies (or religions) are not strong enough to overcome barriers such as income, education and position. As ABC-types, we have to compromise ourselves in every-day life. Certain levels of self-sufficiency, of independence from state and economy, must be reached to stabilize such dysco-knots. We cannot work 40 hours per week and still have the time and energy for neighborhood-initiatives. ABC-knots can't just be cultural decorations, they should be able to replace at least a little fraction of money-income to get some free time. What these ABC-dysco-knots can look like practically can only be discovered through practice. Perhaps they will be neighborhood-centres, food-conspiracies, farmer/craftsman exchanges, energy coops, communal baths, car-pools, etc. All kinds of meeting points that can bring together all three types of workers on the basis of common interests are possible ABC-dyscos. (Midnight Notes reminds the reader of ibu's warning that subversion must not be avoided in the guise of con-

struction: the two must be united as substruction.)

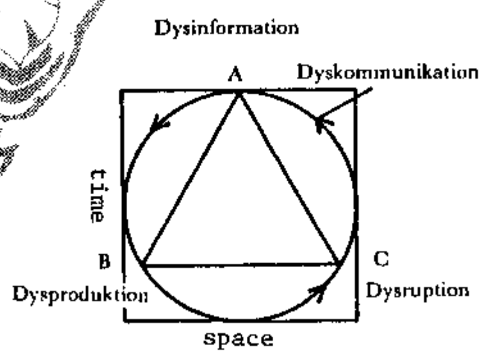
The totality of such ABC-Knots will disintegrate the machine, produce new conjunctures of subversion, keep in motion all kinds of movements in an invisible manner. Diversity, invisibility, flexibility, lack of names, flags and labels, refusal of pride of honour, avoidance of political behaviour and representative temptations can protect such knots from the eyes and hands of the Machine. Information, experiences and practical instruments can be shared in this way. ABC-dysco-knots can be laboratories for new, puzzling and surprising forms of action as they can use all three functions and the respective dysfunctions of the Machine. Even the brain of the Machine doesn't have access to this wealth of information, because it must keep divided the thinking about itself (principle of competencies and divided responsibility). ABC-dysco-knots are not a party, not even a kind of movement, coalition or umbrella-organization. They're just themselves, the cumulation of their single effects. They might meet in punctual mass-movements, test their strength and the reaction of the Machine, and then disappear again in every-day-life. They combine their forces where they meet each other in practical tasks. They're not an anti-Machine-movement, they are the content and material basis of the destruction of the Machine.

Due to their conscious non-organizedness, ABC-knots are always able to create surprises. *Surprise is vital,* as we're in a fundamental disadvantage in face of the Machine: we can be 'blackmailed' by the constant threats of death or suicide pronounced by the Planetary Machine. It cannot be denied that guerilla-warfare as a means of subversion can be necessary in certain circumstances (where the Machine already is killing). The more ABC-knots, networks and tissues there are, the more the Machine's instinct of death is awakened. *But it's already part of our defeat if we have to face the Machine with heroism and readiness for sacrifice.* Somehow we have to accept the Machine's 'blackmailing'. Whenever the Machine starts killing, we should retreat. We shouldn't frighten it. *It must die in a moment when it doesn't expect it.* This sounds defeatist, but it is one of the lessons we can learn from Chile, from Granada, from Poland: when the struggle can be put on the police or military level, we're about to lose. *Or if we win, it's exactly our police or military aspect that will have won and not ourselves: we'll get a "revolutionary" military dictatorship.* When the Machine takes to mere killing, we have obviously made a mistake. We should never forget, *that we are also those that shoot. We're never in front of an enemy, we are the enemy.* This fact has nothing to do with non-violence-ideologies: you can be very violent and still not kill each other.

Damage (to the machine) and violence are not necessarily linked. It wouldn't serve us either to put flowers into the soldiers' button-holes or to be nice to the police. They cannot be cheated by symbolism, by arguments and ideologies - they're like us. But maybe the policeman has neighbors, the general is gay, the soldier has heard that his sister is active in some ABC-dysco knot. When there are enough dyscos, there are as many security-leaks and risks for the Machine. We've got to be careful, practical and discreet.

When the Machine kills, there aren't yet enough ABC-dysco-knots. Too many parts of its organism are still in good health and it can hope to save itself by a violent operation. The Machine won't die of a heart-attack, but it can die of ABC-cancer, becoming aware of it when it's too late for any operation or radiation. These are the rules of the game. Those who don't respect them, must quit the game (and will be heroes).

Substruction is a (general) strategy is a form of practical meditation. It can be the following Yantra, that combines substruction (movement aspect) and bolo (the future basic community):



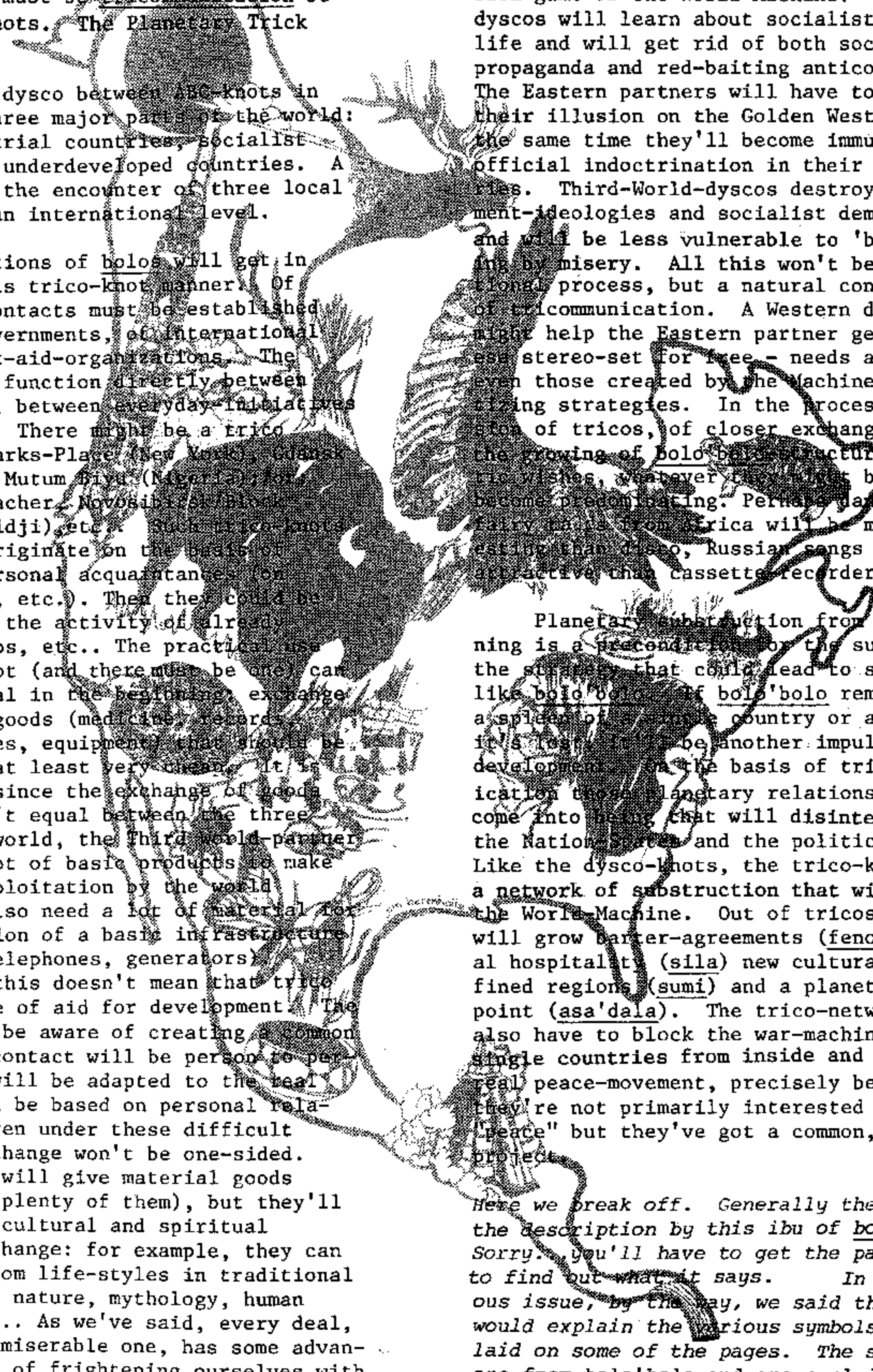
Substruktion

Trico

The Work-Machine has Planetary character, so a successful bolo'bolo-strategy must also be planetary from the beginning. Purely local, regional or even national dysco-knots will never be sufficient to paralyse the World-Machine as a whole. West, East and South must start simultaneously to subvert their respective functions inside the Machine and to create new constructive anticipations. What is true for the three types of workers on a micro-level is also true for the three parts of the world on a macro-level. There must be planetary dysco-knots. There must be tricommunication between dysco-knots. The Planetary Trick is trico.

Trico is dysco between ABC-knots in each of the three major parts of the world: western industrial countries, socialist countries and underdeveloped countries. A trico-knot is the encounter of three local ABC-knots on an international level.

Anticipations of bolos will get in contact in this trico-knot manner. Of course these contacts must be established outside of governments, of international or development-aid-organizations. The contacts must function directly between neighborhoods, between everyday-initiatives of all kinds. There might be a trico between St. Marks-Place (New York), Gdansk North-East 7, Mutum Biyu (Nigeria) or Zurich-Stauffacher, Novosibirsk/Block A 23, Vuma (Fidji), etc. Such trico-knots could first originate on the basis of accidental personal acquaintances (on tourist trips, etc.). Then they could be multiplied by the activity of already existing tricos, etc.. The practical use of a trico-knot (and there must be one) can be very trivial in the beginning: exchange of necessary goods (medicine, records, spices, clothes, equipment) that should be moneyless or at least very cheap. It is obvious that since the exchange of goods presently isn't equal between the three parts of the world, the Third-World-partner will need a lot of basic products to make up for the exploitation by the world market, and also need a lot of material for the construction of a basic infrastructure (fountains, telephones, generators). Nevertheless this doesn't mean that trico is just a type of aid for development. The partners will be aware of creating a common project, the contact will be person to person, the aid will be adapted to the real needs and will be based on personal relationships. Even under these difficult conditions exchange won't be one-sided. A-dysco-knots will give material goods (as they have plenty of them), but they'll get much more cultural and spiritual "goods" in exchange: for example, they can learn a lot from life-styles in traditional villages about nature, mythology, human relations, etc.. As we've said, every deal, even the most miserable one, has some advantages: instead of frightening ourselves with the disadvantages of other deals, we'll exchange those elements that are still valuable and strong.



The trico-knots permit the participating ABC-dysco-knots to unmask the mutual illusions of their deals and to stop the division-game of the World-Machine. Western dyscos will learn about socialist everyday-life and will get rid of both socialist propaganda and red-baiting anticommunism. The Eastern partners will have to give up their illusion on the Golden West and at the same time they'll become immune to the official indoctrination in their own countries. Third-World-dyscos destroy development-ideologies and socialist demagoguery and will be less vulnerable to 'blackmailing by misery. All this won't be an educational process, but a natural consequence of tricommunication. A Western dysco-knot might help the Eastern partner get a Japanese stereo-set for free - needs are needs - even those created by the Machines's advertizing strategies. In the process of expansion of tricos, of closer exchange and of the growing of bolo infrastructures, authentic wishes, whatever they might be, will become predominating. Perhaps dances and fairy tales from Africa will be more interesting than disco, Russian songs more attractive than cassette recorders.

Planetary substruction from the beginning is a precondition for the success of the strategy that could lead to something like bolo'bolo. If bolo'bolo remains just a spleen of a single country or a region, it's lost. It'll be another impulse for development. On the basis of tricommunication those planetary relationships come into being that will disintegrate the Nation-States and the political blocks. Like the dysco-knots, the trico-knots form a network of substruction that will paralyze the World-Machine. Out of tricos there will grow barter-agreements (fenos), general hospitality (sila) new culturally defined regions (sumi) and a planetary meeting point (asa'dala). The trico-network will also have to block the war-machines of the single countries from inside and thus be the real peace-movement, precisely because they're not primarily interested in "peace" but they've got a common, positive project.

Here we break off. Generally the rest is the description by this ibu of bolo'bolo. Sorry, you'll have to get the pamphlet to find out what it says. In our previous issue, by the way, we said that we would explain the various symbols we overlaid on some of the pages. The symbols are from bolo'bolo and are explained in the forthcoming pamphlet.

Struggles at Medgar Evers College

In April, 1982, students at Medgar Evers College (MEC) in Brooklyn, N.Y., began a 110-day sit-in which culminated in the removal of MEC president Richard Trent. The students had substantial support from faculty members and community groups. They sparked a movement which continues at MEC and has had an effect throughout the City University of New York (CUNY) of which MEC is a part. Because MEC is 95% Black and 73% female, the MEC struggle has been one of women and of Blacks. As such, it has generated support across groups whose ability to coalesce in the past had been hampered by the societal divisions of White and Black, of men and women.

The Struggles

STILL SEPARATE AND UNEQUAL

Medgar Evers College opened as part of the response to the educational demands in New York City, in Brooklyn in particular, of Blacks and Latinos, in the 1960's. People of color fought for access to improved education, expressed in the movement for community control of public schools and in demands for increased access to CUNY. CUNY operates both four-year (Senior) and two-year (Community) colleges for undergraduates. In response to Third World pressure, CUNY first instituted the SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation, Knowledge) program for Senior Colleges and the College Discovery program for Community Colleges, which increased non-White participation, but not enough to meet the demands. In 1970, CUNY instituted open admissions and, to meet the enrollment explosion, expanded old campuses and opened new campuses.

Central Brooklyn, the largest Black community in the Western Hemisphere, needed a college. MEC opened in 1971 as a Senior College. Various community groups were involved in the initial effort to select the president, a position which by CUNY procedure is particularly powerful in the first five years of a college's life. According to Job Mashariki, now president of the Black Veterans for Social Justice (an organization associated with the Brooklyn Black United Front), who was involved in the selection process, the community representatives selected one candidate; the Board of Trustees of CUNY (Board) chose another who they thought would be loyal to them. In the ensuing struggle, the Board declared that the community groups did not represent the community, and then created a "puppet community organization" who approved a new Board selection, Richard Trent. As a result, said Mashariki, althought MEC was located in the community, under Trent "the college never really represented the interests of the community." (1)

Trent began his administration under fire. In 1973, an effort by faculty members to remove Trent failed. Trent responded with a purge of many faculty. As a result, observed faculty member Safiya Bendele, while the faculty of 1982 was "international" with "a lot of Third World members and a lot of women" (55% women), they did not have power and many had "a colonial mentality." When the student strike erupted on March 16, 1982, many faculty held classes and even penalized the strikers. However, among the faculty were "pockets of creativity," usually people who had been active in the sixties, had a collective consciousness and were particularly supportive of students.

The 2800-member student-body, largely Black and female, drawn mainly from central Brooklyn, has an average age of 29. Nearly two-thirds of the women are mothers. Many, as is common in CUNY generally, are also waged-workers. Thus many students have, in effect, three jobs: mother, student and wage-earner.

The conditions under which the students attend MEC are difficult. First, finances are tight. The "fiscal crisis" of the late 70's ended such programs as SEEK, which provided living money to attend college, and led to the imposition of tuition, all at a time in which most sectors of the U.S. working class, and particularly the poor, and therefore non-Whites, were having their real incomes sharply reduced. (2)

Second, MEC is now housed in two overcrowded old buildings, a rented-out former factory and a 100-year-old high school; when it opened, MEC had seven buildings. After years of agitation, the state has allocated $22 million to build one new structure. This is only half the amount being spent on a science building at mostly-White Queens College. (3) The estimated completion for the new building keeps being pushed back, from 1980 to 1984 and now to 1987. Though it is called the "new campus" it will house only one-third of the current MEC population.

Third, the college provided no day-care facilities although nearly half the students and much of the faculty and staff are mothers. A 1974 commission concluded that MEC "could not thrive without day care." (4) CUNY generally has been unresponsive. While 20% of CUNY students have young children, the 1982 CUNY budget requested no funds for child care.

For those students who, despite overwork, poverty, poor campus facilities and no day-care, do enroll in MEC, the quality of education itself has been under attack. In 1976, "for alleged budgetary reasons," the Board changed MEC from a Senior to a Community College, though most students were and are enrolled in four-year programs (80% in 1982-83). The change in status was the "reason" to provide fewer funds: two-year colleges receive less money for programs, are not eligible for certain curriculum funding, faculty work loads are higher, and many students in four-year programs have to take courses on other campuses to meet graduation requirements. The most recent cutbacks have enlarged class sizes to 40-45 and cut the curriculum 15%. In a period in which computers are becoming omni-present, training in their use has lagged at MEC. Since 1976, two other colleges have been upgraded to Senior status, despite the "budgetary problems", but MEC remains at community college level.

FOR BLACK, COMMUNITY EDUCATION

Through the struggle, a number of inter-related issues have emerged over the manner in which education serves the Central Brooklyn community. Black Studies, Women's Studies and college patronage of Central Brooklyn resources are particularly representative of this.

MEC students have long demanded a Black Studies program. Although CUNY has claimed that interest in the field has waned, Job Mashariki maintains that the administration feared that Black Studies would become predominant at CUNY, rendering many of the tenured faculty obsolete, and so has actively structured college curricula to keep Black students from taking Black Studies. For example, at N.Y. Technical College, there are more Black students in Black Studies than in all other departments combined, yet Black Studies has fewer staff than any other department. At MEC, Black Studies is a program registered into via electives--not a department. The mandatory Core Curriculum for "liberal arts" effectively blocks out Black Studies except as electives, and places it under other departments, such as sociology. In short, Mashariki calls the claim of falling interest in Black Studies "racist propaganda."

The Black Studies concept proposed by students and faculty would make Black Studies the focus of the college, not simply another department. They say that because MEC is a world college in its faculty and student composition, it should be Afro-centered, focussing on the Black people of Africa, the U.S. and the Caribbean; today, two-thirds of Central Brooklyn and of the student body are Caribbean-born. According to this concept, other programs, such as computer studies, business or nursing, would be integrated into Black Studies--and not the other way around. Donald Turner, editor of the school paper Adafi, said the program would therefore relate to "being Black in America, in this world, being of African descent." When opponents of Black Studies say it will not aid economic development, Mashariki replies, "'White Studies' has not helped."

Medgar Evers students protest appointment of Dr. Paul.

Supporters say a Black Studies program that includes a variety of academic disciplines focused around what it means to be of African descent would bring the college into a new relationship with the larger community. Turner noted that though MEC was born out of community struggles and was supposed to be controlled by the community and responsible to its self-defined needs, MEC has not devised programs to deal with community problems such as high (50%) unemployment and poverty--particularly the chronic poverty of female-headed households.

The immediate and long-term needs of community women are finally being addressed by the MEC Center for Women's Development, opened on student and faculty initiative in April, 1983. It is directed by Safiya Bendele of MEC who is also head of the women's section of the Black United Front. The Center will provide counseling services around educational, work and personal needs. "It will also develop a Black Women's Studies curriculum to initiate 'new theoretical and methodological study' of 'all aspects of Black Women's past and present condition and position,' and to 'expand the content and direction of all other disciplines and courses--particularly that of Black Studies and of historically white-defined Women's Studies." (5)

Another area of contention has been around where MEC spent its money. When MEC opened, a number of community groups expected a large portion of MEC's budget to be spent in the Central Brooklyn community by contracting for services, supplies, books, etc. However, these funds were directed toward White-run businesses outside the community.

Thus, while students, faculty and community groups sought to make MEC serve the community through Black Studies, Women's Studies and the use of its resources, MEC policy, especially under Trent, has not reflected this. Donald Turner termed the Board "colonialists" in their view of MEC's role in the community. Students have charged that the mission of the college became, in fact, to watch and to manipulate its surrounding community. As we shall see, the struggle has brought the community into the college in new ways as elements in MEC have moved to bring the college into the community to serve the community.

MET AND UNMET DEMANDS

The demands of the strike, then, rose readily out of concrete situations and experiences. The first demand was the removal of Trent. He left, but the Board, without consulting MEC, appointed Dennis Paul as Acting President and suspended the Governance Plan of the college for the first time in CUNY history, giving Paul dictatorial power. Paul's first major move was to deny re-hiring to four activist faculty and tenure to three of the four who were up for tenure. The four, Dr. Zala Chandler, Safiya Bendele, Linda de Jesus and Delridge Hunter, fought for their jobs with strong MEC and community support. The four were re-hired and the three given tenure.

A second demand has been partially met. During the 1982, 110-day occupation, students set up a drop-in child care center in the president's office. Since then, on student impetus, the center has won a Head Start contract to serve children of a certain age-group. Students continued to fund a drop-in program for those ineligible for the Head Start program. This spring, the child care center has obtained additional federal funds.

A third demand, for the women's center, has also been met, as noted above. Through the 1983-84 school year, the college only funded one staff member for the Center for Women's Development, despite thorough demonstration of the need for counseling, office facilities, library resources and programming. The new president has promised increased financial and staff support for the Center. (6)


1982, students march on Supreme Court (Adafi).

The Coalition to Save Medgar Evers College made as primary the demand for a Black woman president. They did not win this demand. The three finalists for the job did include one black woman. A group of Black and White male faculty, who dominate the faculty organization, clearly opposed a woman president, although the faculty committee agreed that all three candidates were highly qualified. This committee recommended Jay Carrington Chunn, who was selected by the Board and took office March 1, 1984.

Chunn has openly acknowledged that he obtained his position due to the power of the Coalition. He has supported child care and the Women's Center. He has appointed Black women, including Coalition member Zala Chandler, to important administration positions. He is negotiating a return to Senior College status, which he has said will be restored within a year. Safiya Bendele says the Coalition views the gains under Chunn as demonstration of the Coalition's strength, and thinks that while Chunn is necessarily responsible to the Board, he will take a stand on behalf of MEC, with the support of the Coalition.

Many Coalition demands remains unfulfilled. Although some repairs have been made, the buildings are in poor shape and equipment is in short supply. Groundbreaking for the new building occurred this year, but that building remains no less inadequate. However, MEC has obtained a $7.5 million grant to design a new campus. Chunn agrees with the Coalition on the need for a complete campus for an expanded student body. The computer program remains under discussion. Funds for support services and tutoring have not been allocated. Class sizes remain huge.

The demand for a Black Studies focus remains in negotiation. While the Coalition sees the need for a specific department to focus on Africa and the diaspora, Chunn thinks Black Studies simply should be integrated throughout the curriculum The Coalition believes this will be inadequate. To integrate Black Studies into the curriculum will take time; much of the progress will depend on in-service training for faculty, some of whom will certainly oppose it. While all aspects of curriculum should relate to Black Studies, the specific Africana approach must be used both to push the specific knowledge of Africa and the diaspora and to be a base from which to push integration of Black Studies into the curriculum as a whole. Without a base area, integration can too easily become disconnected, passing references with, on the other, a few scattered courses which concentrate on the Black experience.

The demand for a Black woman's curriculum has met concerted opposition from the same male clique who opposed hiring a woman president. Women designed one course which has not been implemented because new courses must progress through five levels of committee (virtually unheard of in U.S. academia) and the committees have slowed the progress of the course. Nonetheless, while continuing to push for the one course, the women have been designing a full curriculum for Black Women's Studies.

This male clique dominates the faculty despite not being a majority. In December 1983, Paul decided not to re-hire three activists, even though the faculty as a whole had voted to re-appoint everyone as Paul was known to be leaving. Behind the scenes, members of this clique worked to ensure the non-reappointments of the activists. However, with Coalition support, Chunn overturned Paul's decision. This clique also denied promotions to two Coalition members, Andree McLaughlin and Zala Chandler. The Coalition has confronted the sexism openly and directly, but has not yet developed the power to stop the reactionary group. (7)

The remaining unaddressed demands will be responded to on the basis of college and community pressure on the CUNY Board. The Coalition, though its form has changed with the arrival of the more cooperative Chunn, remains strong and active. They remain willing to return to direct action should Chunn or the Board block continued progress. And the effects of the struggles at MEC have generalized, raising university-wide issues. It has moreover provided a material basis for increasing practical unity between Whites, particularly White women's groups, and Blacks, particularly, as at MEC, Black women.

The Organizations

THE COALITION

The progressive organization of struggle at MEC is the Student-Faculty-Community-Alumni Coalition to Save Medgar Evers College. As such, it includes both people from MEC and from the wider Brooklyn community. According to a number of Coalition activists, crucial support has come from established Black political figures and groups involved in previous New York City Black community struggles, particularly around education. As the students largely come from Central Brooklyn, contacts with community groups have always been strong.

When the 1982 sit-in began, the City responded with a show of police force--cruisers, armed plainclothes police on campus, rumors of SWAT team assaults, etc. So, as Job Mashariki explained, "The call went out to the Black community to support the Black institution and Black students." One group which responded in numbers was the Black Veterans for Social Justice. The City then decided not to deal with the situation with police force because of a "hard core element" present in the school. Thus, community support was crucial in preventing the City from physically crushing the strike, as it was later that fall when it prevented Acting President Paul from firing the four faculty members.

While there is certainly no guarantee that a victory such as Trent's ouster will lead to further victories, or even further struggles, the ouster of Trent was only one among a set of demands aimed at profound reorganization of MEC. The removal of Trent, the establishment of day care and women's centers, helped students and faculty see that struggles could be won and could produce change. "After Trent was forced to resign, people realized that something can actually be done if you really try," said student Lillian Brewster. "Now most students are at least interested in what's going on."(8)

The struggle to oust Trent also opened the college to the community in new ways. Events were held almost nightly to which the community was invited. Classes were used to plan those events, thus bringing students and faculty together to build programs with and for the community. In the midst of strike and sit-in, more students and parents came to the 1982 graduation than had come to any previous one. The college remains open to the community, another tangible gain from the movement. The Coalition continues to be active in the Black community around issues such as homelessness and hunger, working with groups such as the Black Veterans, the United Front and Black Single Mothers.

The fact that MEC students are residents of the immediate community has also helped to prevent the graduation of one class from becoming the "graduation of the struggle." Activists at MEC are concerned that incoming students remain involved and informed about the college's history. Through Adafi, the college newspaper, open meetings, classes and special events such as a celebration of the second anniversary of the struggle held April 20, 1984, students and community are reminded of the story, the gains and the continuing needs. Interest in the events has been widely demonstrated by CUNY students from other campuses.

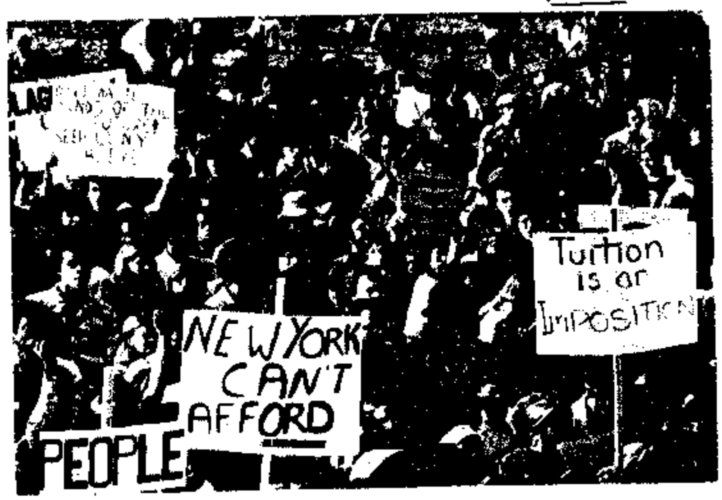
Participants see the process as one in which the struggle can be institutionalized in the child care center, the Women's Center, a Black Studies program. The goal, as one participant explained, is that "the consciousness of the struggle will become the consciousness of the institution itself."

With Chunn as president, this goal has taken a new form. For nearly two years the main aspect of the Coalition was confrontation, direct action, demands. With an apparently sympathetic president, the Coalition has re-shaped itself to meet the challenge of rebuilding the college. Persons and groups have focused energy on areas such as Women's Studies and Black Studies, in designing and implementing new programs to meet community needs.

Certainly not all has proceeded smoothly within the ranks of the Coalition. For example, as Safiya Bendele pointed out, male support for the struggle dwindled in reaction to the demand for a Black woman president, as this demand was not seen by some men as "serious." However, one male student said he thought that most male students supported the demand. The external opposition to women's demands has been seen in the actions of some male faculty.

Men's reaction, in the coalition, to the active role of women and the prominence of women's demands has often been positive, as indicated in comments made at the forum on MEC. One man explained that during the sit-in there were conflicts around sex roles. He said that, for example, one man who refused to do the dishes was told he would not eat and, by the end, was both cooking and cleaning.

(Adafi)



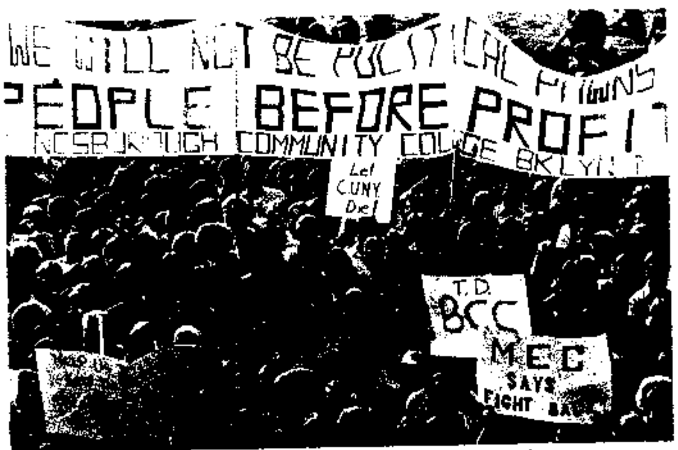
A second man stated that it was "healthy" that the struggle was largely led by women, while another observed that "we have mothers, so taking leadership from Black women is nothing new," although he acknowledged that men "get accultured to other things." Another man stated that it would "be a male chauvinist, sexist assumption" to say that women need men to lead them. A man referred back to the strong leadership of women in the Ocean Hill-Brownsville struggles for community control of schools in the late 1960's.

While dialog initiated by the Coalition has not ended sexism at MEC, what is important is that women's issues were and remain central issues, not "side issues" to be negotiated away for more "important" things. Women have increased their power through the struggle, as have men who support the women. The message is that women's demands are vital to Black women and that Black women will not compromise them.

Another important dialog opened up by

the struggle concerns class conflict within the Black community. As MEC struggles revealed, knowledge about Blacks who do the bidding of the White power structure was certainly present, but the cases of Trent and Paul, both Black, have apparently deepened this understanding. One MEC graduate described Trent as the representative of the Black petit-bourgeois.

These kinds of experiences shed light on confusing historical events and trends, such as the Miami rebellion of 1980 when Black rioters refused to listen to "established" Black leadership, and the current renewed emphasis on mass Black participation in elections which has seen Black, cross-class victories in Chicago and elsewhere in the past year, as well as the Jackson campaign.



(Adafi)

THE SUPPORT COMMITTEE

Widening support for the MEC struggle will be important in winning more of their demands. And a basis for widening the support by expanding the number of fronts and areas of terrain in the struggle apparently does exist.

"The issues being fought at Medgar Evers are problems relevant to every CUNY campus," explained Nancy Roemer, a professor at Brooklyn College. (9) Among the issues are those of racial, sex and sexual-preference discrimination in hiring, tenure and promotion; sexual harassment of women faculty and students; unequal distribution of funds throughout CUNY, support for Black and Women's studies; and day care. For example, while over 20% of CUNY students have young children, no child care funds were requested by the Board in its 1982 budget.

The MEC struggle and the potential for expansion across CUNY helped to encourage the development of yet another alliance, the Women's Committee to Support MEC. This alliance has brought together women of diverse political histories, straight and Lesbian, mostly White, to develop support for MEC with explicit regard for the self-defined needs of Black women. While some early indications of such an alliance between Black and White women could be seen in struggles around the SEEK program and in struggles at CUNY's Hostos College in the late 1970's, nothing has lasted or generalized across CUNY.

As Barbara Omolade of the Coalition observed, "Five, even three years ago we wouldn't have been able to get such a group of people together. There would have been resistance to characterizing Medgar Evers College as a 'feminist' issue. This inability made a real division in the world-wide struggle against the oppression of women and people of color... There is a deepening awareness. White women are beginning to hear and see the perspectives of women of color around their own oppression and their own feminist definitions." (10)

" The issues (at MEC) are common to all women...and have helped us to see we do have common causes just as women, regardless of color," explained Rhonda Vanzant, MEC student president in 1982-83. (11) Andrea Doremus, a member of the support committee, commented that MEC "offers a concrete chance to take action...a unique experience for Black and White women to work together and to raise issues of race and sex simultaneously," a comment echoed by other activists in both the Coalition and the support committee. (12)

From this alliance, Black and White women have articulated some basic understandings about feminism. They assert every woman's right to control both her body and her social relations in such areas as reproductive and lesbian rights, fighting violence against women, and community demands around education, housing, job discrimination, child care, welfare rights and racism.

Importantly, these issues are largely, in practice, poor people's demands--class demands. Thus, concretely, MEC activism catalyzes the inter-relation of sex, race and class. Those at the bottom of the U.S. social hierarchy (women of color) are asserting their needs under their own leadership and making alliances to attain their goals.

The Women's Committee to Support MEC started in the fall of 1982 in response to Coalition requests for support from feminist activists. It has been an organization mostly of White women, with some Blacks involved around specific issues and men involved in short-term work. The Committee sees itself as involved in combatting racism, which they consider a responsibility of progressive and feminist Whites, by helping to publicize the college's plight and efforts to save it, and to raise certain issues throughout CUNY and New York City.

One effort to generalize MEC battles has centered on demands for child care. This past year, students at City College of CUNY occupied their administration offices to demand day care. They were joined by students from MEC.

A second focus has been to directly link instances of racism and sexism at CUNY. The support committee sponsored a forum in June, 1983 which featured as speakers Pat Oldham, a woman denied tenure at Hostos College in the Bronx (95% Black and Latino, 70% women); Dr. Andree McLaughlin, a Black female associate professor at MEC who has been active in the Coalition; Lilia Melani, an assistant professor at Brooklyn College who had recently won part of an important class action sex-discrimination suit (Melani v. the Board of Higher Education) after a ten-year court battle with CUNY; and a "representative from the community struggle for a qualified Chancellor of the N.Y. City Schools."

MEC women themselves have pushed CUNY to hire more women and people of color as the percentages at most CUNY units are very low: 78% of all faculty in the system are white males, and women and people of color are predominantly on the lower levels. (13) Simultaneously, they have critically examined women's studies in CUNY and uncovered racism in most of the current curricula which has resulted in not much attention being paid to women of color and their perspectives.

With the change in focus at MEC from confrontation to institution building, the support committee has ceased formal operation, although a large network of people remain who can act to support MEC should the need arise again. Perhaps more important than even the valuable immediate support for MEC has been the political example set by the support committee. In an interview, Safiya Bendele viewed the support as "a positive example" which is "all too rare" of White women actively supporting Black women on issues defined and shaped by the Black women themselves. The Coalition hopes that in future struggles, such as those around day care, racism and sexism at CUNY, such forms of coalition and support can expand.

Political Conclusions

In this period in the U.S., even the most pressing struggles seem to have difficulty continuing, never mind expanding. It is still too early to know if the case of MEC will remain largely isolated or whether, as it is beginning to appear, the demands at MEC, representative in large part of demands by women and Blacks throughout CUNY and beyond, will generalize and erupt elsewhere.

Even if the struggle does not manage to expand in a major way, we can point to several important aspects of the struggle to consider in the future. For one, unity between MEC and the Brooklyn Black community, as expressed in the Coalition, means both community support for the struggle at MEC and efforts to make MEC a college of and for the community, thus to erase old boundaries and to create a different kind of a college. Second, the MEC activists have proposed conceptions of Black Studies and Women's Studies which seek to re-define the content of those areas, in practice and in theory, and use them in the struggle for third world self-determination and women's self-determination. These efforts challenge the nature and structure of academics in the U.S.

Third, as one male student put it, "The practice of struggle as a process of overcoming sexism," emerged as a central element in Black campus and community struggles and indicates a deeper level in combatting sexism in the Black movement. Fourth, the ability of Black and White women, including White lesbians, to find a means to join together pushes the women's movement into new terrain. The concreteness of the tasks has provided a basis for unity and a vehicle for discussion. The Black movement of the 1960's was in many ways the central impetus to the subsequent college, cultural, left and women's movements among Whites, and many Whites first entered the struggle as activists by supporting Blacks. Years of experience, of gains and defeats, is now enabling support not simply from "guilt" but from a clearer understanding of the need for unity and the basis for such unity.

The struggles at MEC should also have powerful meaning for the left. Job Mashariki has observed that, with Reagan, the "whole left moved right." As we discussed in Lemming Notes in this issue, we agree this rightward motion has been true of many, from the "left" of the Democratic Party through the social democrats/democratic socialists to self-described Leninists and progressive community groups. Often this has been true of Black leaders and organizations as well as White. This rightward motion has been rejected by at least some people, and the struggle at MEC has been part of that rejection.

Consider the Freeze "movement". In the same period as the June 12, 1982 Anti-War rally was building in a method which revealed entrenched racism by a large part of that coalition, the smaller, far less heralded Women's Committee to Support MEC took the initiative to support the demands of Black, working class women because they understood them as central to their own demands as women in the U.S.

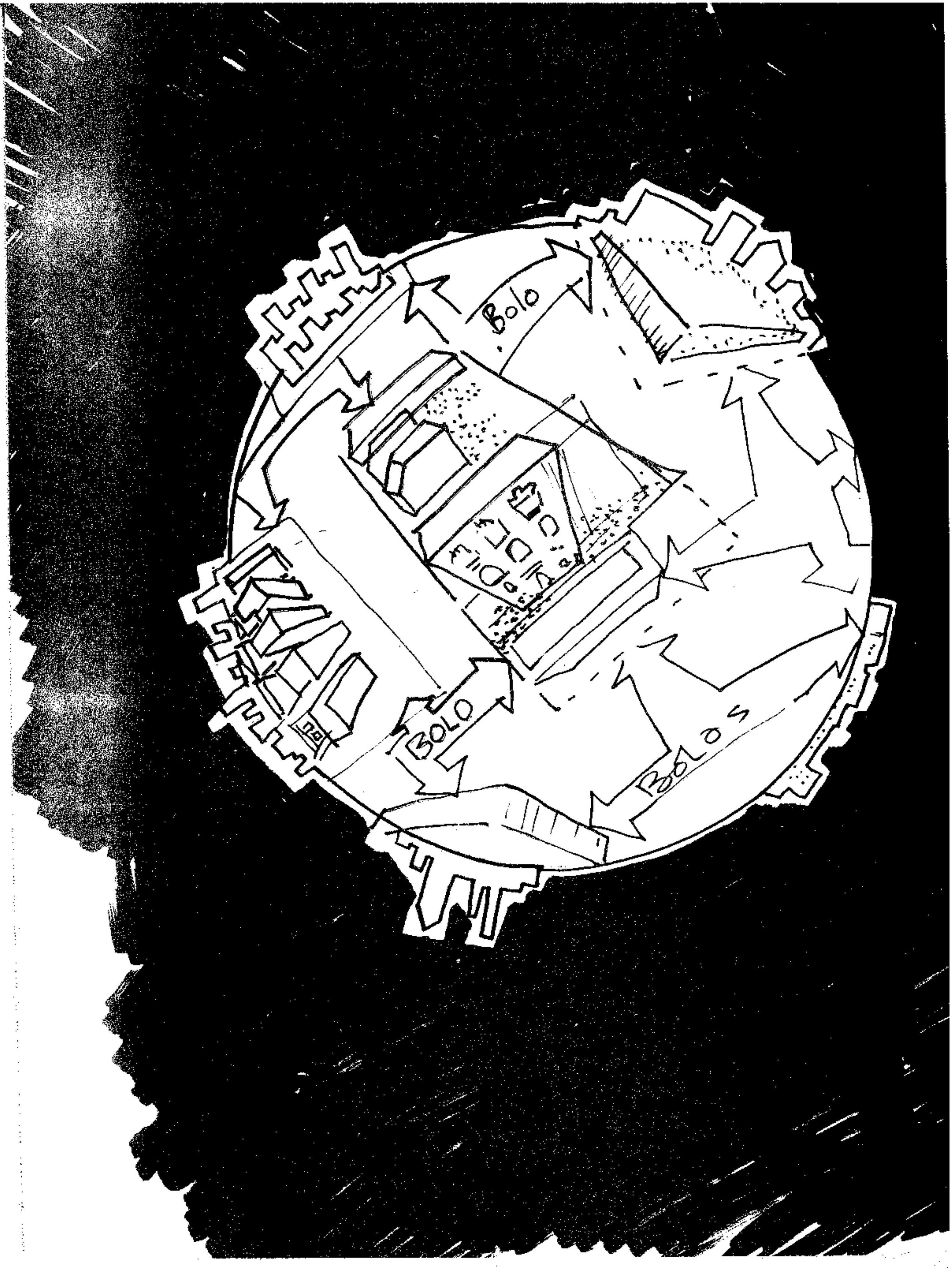
June 12, whatever else it might have been, represented a massive act of class collaboration and, as such occasions always have been in the U.S., a tendency to capitulate to racism. Only when Third World activists, supported by a minority of Whites, indicated they would leave the June 12 coalition and hold a separate rally did the "mainstream" left and peace groups stop opposing significant Third World participation. The "mainstream" White organizers--"Whites who did not want to deal with the issue of social justice in New York City," as Job Mashariki phrased it--wanted N.Y. Mayor Koch to speak at the rally. He was blocked from appearing on stage by the Black United Front and the Black Veterans. Wanting Koch to speak flagrantly indicates the racism and class collaboration of much of the left. (14)

The MEC Coalition, rather than practice collaboration, attacked the agents of collaboration, Trent and Paul. Rather than call for unity with anyone in the hopes of survival-as-usual, the Coalition unleashed a struggle which has made significant gains, gains which we see as more substantial and lasting than the Chimerical wisps of meaningless Congressional resolutions or a few slightly more liberal pigs eating in a Washington trough. A real struggle may risk more, but only a real struggle can win anything. And the Support Committee, rather than ignore racism, actively took on the tasks of combatting racism and building alliances between White women and Blacks, particularly Black women, by supporting their demands in practice.

The struggle at MEC, small as it so far may be, has importance beyond its size, because in a period of retreat and collaboration the Coalition and its supporters have mounted an offensive. Rather than suppress a variety of demands, the MEC struggle has been a process in which the combination of autonomous self-definition of needs and struggles can be the basis for building coalitions which support the self-definition and enable a unity of action which can produce both gains against the enemy and deepened understanding and trust within the working class as a whole.

Notes

1. A major source of information for this piece was a Forum on Medgar Evers College, held at the N.Y. Marxist School, March 18, 1983. Quotations, unless otherwise attributed, are from statements made at the forum.
2. For analysis of the fiscal crisis of N.Y. City which understands that crisis as a response to working class struggle, see Donna Demac and Philip Mattera, "Developing and Underdeveloping New York: The 'Fiscal Crisis' and the Imposition of Austerity" in Zerowork 2, Fall, 1977.
3. During the fiscal crisis, as part of the "bailout" of NYC, the state assumed control over CUNY. Queens College was one of the four old, main Senior Colleges, along with City, Brooklyn and Hunter. Because Queens is in a White area and is not easy to reach by public transportation, Queens alone has remained substantially White in student population.
4. Guardian, N.Y., N.Y., Dec. 22, 1982
5. Womanews, N.Y., N.Y., June, 1983, Sally Chew, "Medgar Evers Keeps Fighting"
6. Interview with Safiya Bendele, June 5, 1984.
7. Adafi, Student Newspaper at Medgar Evers College, January/February 1984, May/June 1984, (1150 Carroll St., Brooklyn, NY 11225); and interview with Safiya Bendele, op. cit.
8. Womanews, December/January 1983, Andrea Doremus, "Administration Tightens Grip on Medgar Evers"
9. CARASA News, January/February 1983, Sally Bermanzohn, "Support for Medgar Evers in Women's Movement"
10. Ibid.
11. Guardian, op. cit.
12. Womanews, November 1982, Andrea Doremus, "Medgar Evers Struggle Snowballs"
13. Adafi, May/June 1984, p.12
14. "Freezing the Movement" in Posthumous Notes: Midnight Notes Vol. IV, #1.


Bolo
BOLO
Bolos