

again take place, anywhere, with so little readiness for heavy repression) an opening to exactly that element of the unknown and unexpected that characterises a situation momentarily beyond all manipulative control, whether by the state or the unions or the "left", when power lies for a moment "in the streets". In 24 hours, Seattle ripped away the "one note" unanimity of the tolerated "public discussion" of international economic issues of the past 20 years or more. Millions of people who never heard of the WTO learned what it was, and what it does, more thoroughly than through decades of peaceful opposition and think-tank chatter. Even strongly protectionist American workers were thrown together in the streets with activists, including worker activists, from 100 countries, and had to confront the human face of the producers of "foreign imports" in a way that had never previously occurred on such a scale, not to mention in such an open situation (as opposed to tedious international trade union conferences of bureaucratic delegations). Teamsters, bare-breasted Amazon lesbian warriors and tree-huggers were thrown together, and talked, on an unprecedented (for the U.S.) scale. The Seattle events gave a concrete target to opponents of the seemingly abstract forces that have made serious action on the appropriate level so difficult for so long. In accounts I heard from people who had been there, and in material I was able to gather, there was a genuine whiff of the spontaneous awakening, in the heat of confrontation, to the power of capital and the state that has not been seen in the U.S. since the sixties, a genuine demonstration by masses in motion of the truth of the Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach, to wit that classical materialism "does not un-



Think globally, smash locally!

derstand sensuous activity as objective". The great majority of demonstrators in Seattle, particularly in the direct action contingents, had not been born or were children when the sixties ended, and had never experienced their own power in the streets in this way, anywhere. Trite as it may sound to the small numbers of sixties activists who still consider themselves revolutionaries, and who are jaded from having been through it all before, a first clubbing, a first tear-gassing, seeing the police go berserk against people detained in a holding cell, a first concrete experience of what bourgeois "rights" really mean when the state tears them up in a confrontational setting, is an irreversible crossing of a threshold, an irreplaceable experience of collective power and of the role of those who job is to repress it. People who go through this, whatever the consciousness or intentions that brought them to Seattle, can never be the same. The brief, ephemeral opening of the sense that "nothing will ever be the same" experienced by some in Seattle and in the wake of Seattle will close again quickly (just as the opening, such as it was, of the LA riots, or that of the December 1995 strike wave in France, closed quickly) without a strategy for a real internationalism, an internationalism in which criticisms of slave labour in China or child labour in India are joined to, e.g. a practical critique of the mushroom-like proliferation of sweatshops and prison labour in the U.S. A perspective encompassing the most oppressed layers of the working class and its allies is always a safeguard against the parochialism, including militant parochialism, which sets the stage for a "reformist" reshuffling of the capitalist deck, as occurred in the 1930's and 1940's. Ever since "1973" closed the era of meaningful "wildcat" direct action on the shop floor of one factory, the workers' movement in the U.S. and many other countries has been groping toward a new concrete terrain on which to fight something beside endless losing local battles against plant closings and downsizing, or outright reactionary battles demanding in effect that the layoffs happen "somewhere else". In their greatly heightened global mobility, the capitalists stole a march on the world working class that more than 25 years of losing and defensive struggles has not yet overcome. If Seattle is in fact to be a positive turning point, at which history did in fact finally turn, it can only be on the path to solidifying and greatly expanding this terrain.

Preliminary Notes on Recent Call Centre Struggles

Call centres are appearing everywhere. Representing a new way of integrating telecommunications and computer technology into the process of reshaping the division of labour, they are predominantly situated in the circulation process of capital – although some are within the production process itself. Bosses and politicians herald them as an example of the future of labour. Britain, whose national economy revolves around the finance sector, has 40% of the total call centres in Europe and this number is increasing every year. It is estimated that there are 350,000 workers employed in 4000 call centres, expected to rise to 500,000 in the next three years.⁽¹⁾

In Brighton, they are literally on every street corner, as well as in the surrounding towns. Sucking-in the student, unemployed and casual workers which make up a large proportion of the local labour-force, a mere cursory glance reveals numerous telemarketing companies, telecommunication companies such as BT, Cable and Wireless and Ericsson, financial companies such as Lloyds/TSB and American Express (the largest employer in the Brighton area), as well as privatised utilities such as Seeboard. In a town like Brighton, with an economy primarily based on the retail and service sectors, call centres are seen by many workers to be a stop gap to something bigger and better (a thousand and one ways of avoiding the fact that you *are* and will *remain* a proletarian). Yet, some of the underlying antagonisms between workers and capital have started to take shape.

Before Xmas, workers at BT struck for the first time in 13 years. Occurring in the 150 and 151 repair (call) centres, it has been claimed as the first strike at a call centre in Britain. A series of three one-day strikes had been called by the Communication Workers' Union (CWU) in protest against the increasing influx of agency workers (seen by the permanent workers for what it was: a strategy for lowering their wages and eventually replacing them with the lower paid agency staff) and the heavy handed pressure and intensification of work that management imposed on the workforce. However, only one of the three-day strikes actually happened, since the CWU and the management naturally came to some sort of agreement over increased union recognition in the workplace.⁽²⁾



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The labour force at BT call centres was at that time supplied by the employment agency, Manpower. However, in March 2000, they lost this contract to Hays Management Consultants, who, though promising not to cut down wages, did exactly that on the first day that they took over from Manpower. After promising that there would be no pay cuts, in one day they slashed at least £30 from most workers' pay packets by reducing the evening rate from time and a half to time and a quarter. Hays had hoped that there would be little reaction to these measures, but subsequent events showed that they were mistaken. On the first day, many workers walked straight out of the job refusing to sign the contract which would mean their acceptance of the pay cut. Others responded by taking other action: large amounts of overseas phone calls were reportedly made, apparently totalling over £15,000. One call was claimed to have been made to the speaking clock in Zimbabwe with the receiver left off the hook over night; as well as this,

well as this, top of the range stock was sent out to householders with faulty BT equipment. Many worked-to-rule, refusing to perform any 'extra' tasks than the ones in their job description. And whereas before the office had been a tense and hostile environment, now it was coloured by workers chatting merrily and putting their feet up disguising their refusal to do any work. Although, it is not possible to measure how many agency staff have left BT in Brighton in the last month, constant recruitment by Hays suggests that they have a constant shortage of staff. And due to the reaction of the workers they have been forced to suspend their pay cuts for at least a few months.

This is only a basic description of last month's worker activities in Brighton — there is not space here to go into more. We are also sure that plenty of other actions, which we are unaware of, took place at other BT call centres all over the country. These tensions could be the precursors of future struggles to come. Take Pembroke Dock in South West Wales for example, where the decline of manufacturing industry has created the space for call centres — specialising in e-commerce — to start moving in, to the extent of renaming the area 'Cyber Bay'.

Pembrokeshire's economy was previously based on the energy industry. Today, out of the four oil refineries, only two remain, whilst the local power station was shut down under pressure from environmental groups, like Friends of the Earth, who protested against the proposed burning of a high-polluting mineral, Orimulsion. While the burning of Orimulsion was obviously not very pleasant, the attitude of the Greenies exposed once again their disgusting ideology: none of them are complaining now that the call centres are being established, while the local people, desperate for any work, are pushed into working in the new sweatshops for £4.60 an hour. With unemployment levels at 13.2% (3) the bosses couldn't be happier: seen on the one hand as providing the local labour-force with the 'opportunity' to escape unemployment, on the other, the call centres are welcomed by the local bourgeois factions as the key to the economic revival of the region which has become like a ghost town since capital abandoned the manufacturing industry. The Pembroke Dock call centre was built even before it had a company to fill it, while due to the low skill levels of the local workforce, a special call centre training camp has been built near by. As in Brighton, employment agencies are to supply the workforce for the new call centre and it is Manpower who have the contract at the present time. How long it will be before the proletariat of South West Wales sees through the bullshit of the myth of the cyber-god of exploitation remains to be seen.

This is a mere preliminary analysis of workers' activities in some of the new 'sweatshops'. The emergence of call centres has been treated by bosses and capitalists from all around as signifying a new composition of social relations, an ideological approach filtered through constant references to the merits of the service and information society. For us, their ideological mutterings are mere disguises for their attempts to constantly expand capital's 'voracious appetite'. It is not in our interests to solve the problems of the economy, but to aim for its complete destruction. For that reason, taking on the proposal made by the German Communist group, Kolinko (4), we intend to investigate call centres as new areas of workers' concentration and thus areas of potential subversive struggles.

We welcome all correspondence, contributions and exchanges.

(1) *Revolutionary Perspectives* #16

(2) Some of us went to the picket line in Brighton where we encountered some disgusting CWU leaflets, calling on workers to work harder for shareholders. This speaks for itself.

(3) In nearby Milford Haven the rate is nearly a fifth of the working population (18.4%), in Tenby it is 14.2% while in Haverfordwest it is less at 7.7%.

(4) The Kolinko proposal can be found at: www.nadir.org/nadir/initiativ/kolinko/index_e.htm

Class War in Barcelona— Jean Barrot

The following text is the translation of a pamphlet of the group Mouvement Communiste, written in 1973 by Jean Barrot (aka Gilles Dauve), as a means of solidarity for some Spanish revolutionaries arrested in Spain facing harsh penalties. It might seem a bizarre selection, considering that the armed struggle (which so much shaped the struggles of the 60's and 70's) is largely non-existent today in Europe, especially so in the UK. Yet, the text does not simply deal with the armed struggle. It deals with the issue of violence in general, not in an abstract way but in clear connection with the social movement of the proletariat. Taking it out of the limited framework of the situation in Spain in the 70's, we believe this text to be a useful critique/analysis of the fetishism of violence, a tendency which is also visible in parts of the direct action scene in Britain.

Introduction to the Greek edition of 1974 (ΠΕΖΟΔΡΟΜΙΟ)

The Spanish State arrested in the end of September 1973 around ten revolutionaries, whom it presented as 'gangsters'. Three of them are threatened with the death penalty. They could be sentenced by a court martial and executed within 48 hours.

If some of them indeed robbed banks, they did so to fund the printing of texts that are circulating in the radical workers' movement of Barcelona. And if a policeman died, that happened after an ambush of the police.

The point is to understand what some proletarians are historically forced to do. Violence is always a means for the satisfaction of a demand: in Spain, where the police shoots unarmed strikers in cold blood, violence appears directly as a social relation. The simple writing of texts or the circulation of pamphlets carries the penalty of many years in prison. Thus those who want to resist exploitation resort to violence more often than in other countries.

Democracy drowns workers struggles through politics and reformism. Fascism has fewer reservations and crushes them with violence. Whoever recognises in the State the monopoly of violence denies the proletarians the right to abolish their condition: wage labour.

Those of the Spanish proletarians who managed to escape into other countries are now wanted by Interpol as criminals. The democratic and fascist States help each other: the international arrest warrants allow their handing over to the Spanish police. Many of them are threatened with the death penalty.

In order for us to save them the truth has to shine about the real -proletarian- nature of their activities. Whoever does not expose the lie becomes a collaborator not only of the Spanish state, but of the French and all the others.

Class War in Barcelona

On the 16th of September 1973, the police caught two Spanish revolutionaries after the attack against a bank near the French border. A wave of arrests in Barcelona followed. During one of them, on the 24th of September, a member of the "guardia civil" was killed, while the culprit of the murder was seriously wounded. The Spanish police and the press want people to believe that it was a bunch of gangsters. There are at least 12 with charges against them, three of which are threatened with the death penalty.

In reality the attack on the bank was part of a series of armed actions, which started a few years ago by various amorphous autonomous groups in the area of Barcelona. The purpose of these actions was to collect money for the support of revolutionary activities in the workers' movement. Anyway, many of the groups signed their actions as "Autonomous Groups of Struggle", thus showing with the common signature the common character of their actions, although they do not in fact consist of a single structured organisation. These actions did not have a political purpose, in the sense that politics consists of actions on others, they did not aim for the coordination

and organisation, the formation of recognised power that seeks a position in society. The bank robberies did not turn the bank robbers into *vendettas* of the spectacle, they did not aspire to capture the imagination, but merely provided the material means for action in a country where a large quantity is often needed. (For example, illegality often makes the publication and circulation of texts difficult and costly). Whoever blames them for their actions is even further back than Proudhon, who knew that property = theft. Of course theft does not destroy property. But it is a means -limited but useful in many cases- for the organisation of the struggle against the world of property. It is totally useless to express *a priori* judgements "in favour" or "against" methods whose use is the matter of circumstances, thus in the final analysis a matter of social conditions. These actions cannot be made irrespective of time and place. It is not by chance that in the beginning of the century the Russian revolutionaries resorted to similar actions in a society swept by brutal repression, in a State which -as the Spanish one today- did not hesitate to drown unarmed workers in blood.

The materialist conception of violence excludes any *principled position*, either in favour of these methods or against them. It does not invert the principles of bourgeois society in order to transform terrorism into an absolute good, nor does it condemn it as an absolute bad.

The revolutionary does not steal in order to give to the poor, like the French maoists who distributed caviar to the immigrants. He steals in order to satisfy a -social- need of the revolution. Of course, to the degree that he explains his action (something that the Spanish comrades did repeatedly by addressing those present in order to express the purposes of the robbery), his action gains a new dimension. It reveals the existence of another social movement, of a different dynamic within society, and this revelation is subversive. But this is a consequence, a mere secondary result. Those who resort to armed violence with the main aim of winning over the spirits or the hearts in order to extort pressure for their official recognition, either fail or they impose themselves as the new power (for example: the Palestinian commandos in the first case, the Irish IRA in the second).

In reality it is capital which by its very nature robs and expropriates, stripping people from their environment at all levels. It denies people, even things (see the polluted nature) from their being in order to integrate them, it transforms them into its objects, its monsters -since they are neither themselves nor solid spanners of capital- and all they know is a divided life and society. It is very natural then that those who rise against capital engage into all sorts of re-appropriations: material, psychological, theoretical, and also economic or financial. So long as capital exists, money remains the privileged mediator of all social activity. So long as the enemy triumphs it imposes its mediation everywhere, without exempting revolutionary activities. In some cases, radical people or groups are inevitably led to the violent appropriation of sums of value, even though their purpose, their same logic and their being, directs itself against all forms of value. This will surprise and scandalize only those who do not need means for action simply because they are not active or those who have a bureaucratic mechanism (state capitalist organisations), or in the extreme cases those who have the support of a State (like the Spanish Communist Party which is supported by Russia).

In parallel with the terrorist actions, the workers' movement of Barcelona developed an effective network of connections, especially with the proletarian libraries and with the active engagement in the autonomous workers' struggles. We would have to remind that after the double defeat of the proletariat (which was crushed after the coordinated attacks of fascism and of anti-fascism), the Spanish proletarian movement experienced a rise at the beginning of the 1960's; this rise was expressed in 1962-65 with the appearance of the "Workers Committees", as a direct result of the wave of spontaneous strikes which started from the mines in the Asturias. In 1966-68 all the traditional parties and organisations infiltrated the Workers' Committees (in fact the CP infiltrated in the state union C.N.S.), took control of their leadership and transformed them into reformist structures. In between 1968 and 1970, the impact of the French and Italian movement, in relation to the Spanish situation, caused within the Workers' Committees a series of ideological struggles, splits, and, in general, developments in the direction of the extreme-left. After, in 1970-73, there is a rise of workers' struggles

which refuse the bureaucratic and hierarchical controls (burning of leaflets, kicking political members out of workers' meetings, etc). Exactly this phenomenon is what the State is trying to attack, by equalising all those charged and those in prison, which it tries at the same time to destroy and to slander (one aim facilitates the latter). It aims at the destruction of one of the expressions of the autonomous action of the Spanish proletariat.

Decisively opposed to all forms of reformism and of democratic anti-fascism, these groups and circles had as an eventual aim the proletarian programme of abolishing wage labour and of exchange. It is characteristic that they translated and distributed a series of French communist texts, like J. Barrot's study of the Russian Revolution, the introduction of the book "La Bande a Baader", an article of "Negation", and Beriou's text about Ireland. Moreover, they showed a zealous interest in reading Pannekoek and Bordiga, without however theoretically following one or the other.

With the progress of these actions, some elements who have resorted to robberies decided to abandon such activities. The robberies had proven useful of course at the beginning of the movement (we are not able to say whether their influence was decisive), but in the next phase they were becoming increasingly pointless and dangerous. We ignore today why and how the comrades who were arrested on the 16th September organised another robbery; we therefore refrain from forming an opinion on the matter until more information is available. It is however certain that the State aims with this chance of diminishing the seeds of the totality of those activities" 1) by presenting the actions of armed struggles as gangsterism, but mostly 2) by equalising the most radical elements of the workers' movement who had no relation with these actions with the actual culprits. We have to do whatever is possible to make the truth shine on these two points, without mixing them up.

Revolutionary violence is not another means that is used because other means were proven to be ineffective. Neither is it a defense against an attack, as if we always have to defend a violent action by presenting ourselves as "defensive". The theories of defensive violence simply play the game of the enemy. Moreover, it is not an end in itself and does not find its justification in itself. It is used (as material violence, psychological violence, etc) for the accomplishment of an aim. In this sense it belongs in every society, even in the communist one which will include conflicts since every relation implies a conflict. Neither harmony nor anarchy exist in an absolute and static situation; one determines the other. In the communist society, individuals and groups -who will have the capability of transforming their lives all the time- will have conflicts and at the same time the means to deal with them without hurting or mutilating others or themselves. The very content of "violence" thus gets a sense so new, that the term is used here only for technical reasons: it's the language of the contemporary-prehistoric society.

Violence is the essential character of the existing society against the contradictory nature of capital. Even in periods of prosperity and peace capital destroys goods and people, it leaves certain productive forces unused, it creates hunger. It is well known that the car has killed more French people than the 2nd World War. Violence is also ideological: forcing people to speak a specific language, erasing the local historic past, imposition of a strictly defined sexual practice. Capital even accomplishes the *murder of the dead*, i.e. of the past labour accumulated by previous generations, when it neglects or destroys the material infrastructure that it does not want or does not want to maintain. Capital, simply through its function, deteriorates, and crushes the bodies and spirits. The truncheon is an exemption. The "police State" is a component element and the product of a much more generalised phenomenon.

Collective resistance against capital includes violence as a means for the destruction of oppressive social relations. Or actually, something more: isolation is abolished in a collective practice that is, among others, violent. During the revolution, the human community re-emerges through violence. Violence is a means for the alteration of the relations of production and its use towards that direction is a collective act. Thus, violence becomes a positive way of refusing the social organisation, from the moment it goes it turns against its roots.

Some individuals or groups are forced to organise the collective use of violence in order to impose the satisfaction of their demands. In contemporary France, rarely is the issue of revolutionary violence posed in radical activities; but it becomes an issue of increasing vitality when the struggle against the State, the left and of the extreme left, takes the proportion of an open conflict and it is necessary to impose yourself practically in order to be able to express and to develop certain activities. In Spain, social relations promote a more pressured need to resort to violence, including armed struggle: in this way certain "military" duties are more pressing. But, even in this case, violence is the result of social needs that cannot be met otherwise, and not of the self-empowering logic of military mechanisms, cut off from social life and composed of people who have understood the need to resort to the armed struggle and as a consequence are organised and they recruit for that purpose.

The movement is forced to resort to violence, and in the organisation of this violence, in order to meet certain needs. Of course in this sector, total improvisation leads to failure. But also a constant and specialised organisational form will not have better results. The "preparation" for the use of violence is not the task of organised groups with exactly that perspective: it is a matter of *bonds* and *means* that exists within the proletariat and through it. The proletariat is not only the "outcast" and the negation of this society: in order to refuse its condition, it puts into practice the very means that the "proletarian experience" offers to it, its social existence and its function. It finds within its own being the elements of its programme, but also the means to realise it. At a social level, the armed struggle is conducted mainly in the network of relations that are a consequence of the proletariat's existence. The "preparation" for revolt is mainly a matter of theory, engagement in the social struggles, contribution to the progress of certain ideas, creation of relations and contacts, etc. There is no need for the creation of "specialised" military units with a label and with an organisation aimed at the use of violence. Every single action can be accomplished with the collaboration of individuals and groups which are neither organisationally constructed nor specialised; and it should be judged in accordance to its content and not to the logic of specialised "military" groups. The need for a label means that an organisation of armed struggle adopts as a criterion violence itself and not activities connected to real needs. The Guevara logic of guerilla fighting consists of exactly the creation of a military pole unconnected to any social movement. When a group considers itself the nucleus of a future "revolutionary" army, it acts outside of the proletariat and in most cases against it; it thus tends to be transformed into a micro-power, to a kind of preliminary State which stands as a candidate for the replacement of the old state mechanism.

In Spain there is a direct connection between revolutionary activity and "military" infrastructure, since every activity comes into conflict from the very beginning with the military violence of the State (repression of strikes, of gatherings/demonstrations, of the distribution of texts, etc). The necessity of a "military" infrastructure, i.e. of an organisation of violence, is thus obvious. But there exists a problem: what sort of infrastructure? In our opinion this infrastructure should not be an end in itself, but should be the instrument that allows the realisation of the rest of the activities, because it is them that play the decisive role. When for example a brochure is printed the problem is for it to circulate, and not to maintain a "military" structure which might be necessary for bringing it in the country from abroad. The revolutionary organisation organises the various specific duties that compose its reason of existence, and not itself. Its aim is not hijacking struggles in order to include them into its *accomplishments*: on the contrary, it makes sure that its activity theoretically and materially belongs to all, and that it helps, to an increasing extent, the initiatives which do not stem from itself and are beyond its control. *Political* organisations do the exact opposite. It should be added that the former way of organisation proves to be more effective against repression.

Of course there can be groups of struggle, but only as means for the class struggle. The purpose is the most effective possible expression of the subversive perspectives within the social struggles -which include the potential for armed struggle within this framework- and not the existence of well-organised and ready-for-all military groups. In the latter case, the groups that were formed outside the proletariat will remain external to it. The organisation of the organisation, on the one hand, and the organisation of the specific activities on the other, result into totally different relations within the social movement and the working class.

The practice of the Spanish revolutionaries did not aim either at the formation of a military mechanism nor to terrorism against individuals or buildings which represent the existing order of things, but the accomplishment of a limited material function. But every activity reproduces the conditions of its existence which tend to perpetuate it beyond the limits of its function. The less powerful is the social movement, the more the means are transformed into objectives. Thus the organisation of armed activities in illegality tends to create its own self-empowering logic: new financial needs, reasons for new robberies, etc. The only way for one to escape this dynamic is to have a clear conception of the targets of the movement. It is much more important to create groups of workers and to perform robberies if they think that it is useful, than to organise a military mechanism. The decisive criterion is not *either* centralisation *or* autonomy: the importance lies in the content of their activities. If they proclaim themselves as a constant and specialised mechanism, they lose all contact with the social struggles. There is the proletariat that struggles and there are individuals who organise themselves and might potentially decide to commit a robbery; not a military organisation from which stem all the rest as logical consequences. When it is necessary the social movement resorts to violence. And [translator's note: illegible word], those who do not use it, explain it and justify it theoretically.

The danger would be to recreate, under the pretext of practical necessities, a new type of a *professional revolutionary*, who stands out of the proletariat, not by inserting consciousness to it, but by fulfilling a duty that the proletariat, "left to its own powers" is unable to fulfil. We would thus revive "leninism", by substituting a violent act of the proletariat (to which we belong) the activity of groups (whether centralised or autonomous) composed by specialists of violence. The history of the movement shows that the groups of struggle that are organised outside of the proletariat end up, regardless of their good intentions, to autonomise themselves from the class struggle, by recruiting people very different from revolutionary proletarians and acting on their own behalf: for money, for self-projection or simply for their survival. This is what happened to the Bolsheviks. The understanding of the phenomenon is a necessary precondition of a radical critique of leninism.

Revolt destroys people and goods, but with the purpose of destroying a social relation and to the degree that it succeeds. Violence and destruction are not identical. Violence is mainly the appropriation of something with dynamic means. Revolutionary violence is a collective appropriation. Although capital needs to destroy in order to triumph, the communist movement on the contrary means the control of people over their lives. The "positivist" or "rational" or "humanitarian" conceptions neglect the real problem.

State-capitalists insist on the acquisition of power, whereas the point is the acquisition of the ability to act, to transform the world and ourselves. We do not need structures of power, but the power to change the structures. Moreover, they speak about arming the proletariat without connecting that to the *content* of the movement. Civil war plays the game of capital when it does turn against it. The problem is not arming the workers and their armed struggle, but the use of their weapons against commodity relations and the State. Civil war is not the absolute good opposed to the absolute bad of the imperialist war. A civil war can be totally *capitalist* and in fact posits two factions of the bourgeois state as opposed. The criterion for its evaluation should be the productive relations and the army: so long as commodity relations, and the military violence that upholds them, triumph, there is no movement towards the direction of social subversion. We always have to pose the question *what does violence do, what do the workers do*, even if they are organised in militias; if they support a power that maintains capital, it is nothing but a more developed form for the integration of workers to the State. The war in Spain brought into opposition two forms of the development of capital, different but anti-proletarian nonetheless. As soon as the workers' militias, that were formed to fight Franco's coup, accepted to be integrated in the democratic State, they made peace and they prepared a double defeat: against Democracy (crushing of the proletariat of Barcelona in May 1937) and against the nationalists. In this case the proletarian movement was once again a matter of content and only after that a matter of form.

In non-revolutionary periods, radical groups may have as a duty —among others and when it is needed— an organised violent practice. But they cannot act as an armed faction or a military part of the proletariat. Simply

these revolutionaries remain proletarians like the others, who are led to enter a moment of armed struggle that results in a certain degree of illegality. The danger is for them to consider themselves as a separate and autonomous group, destined to use violence indefinitely. If they proclaim themselves and they act as *specialists* of violence, they will have a monopoly over it and they will detach themselves from the real social needs that exist in the subversive movement. Indeed they will tend not even to express their own needs. In relation to the rest of the proletariat, they will be transformed into a new power which seeks its recognition, as a mechanism which is at first military and then political.

The term "terrorism" could be used in a wide sense as the use of terrorism: in this sense capital is by nature terroristic. In the narrow sense, as a particular practice or some times strategy, it is the application of violence in the vulnerable parts of society. When it is not a constituent element of a social movement it leads to a violence detached from social relations. In countries where there is a harsh repression and in which the working class is atomised, there is a dynamic of terrorism in the cities that soon appears as the conflict between two mechanisms: of course victory belongs to the State. In the same way as workers often consider political struggles as a world above them, they often observe the conflict between the State and the terrorists, counting the victims. In the best of cases they feel a moral solidarity. We can in fact wonder if this conflict doesn't actually help in maintaining the social problem as secondary.

The means can potentially be transformed into the aim: here's a truth that does not only apply to violence. Theory, for example, a means for understanding and acting more effectively, can be reduced to a substitute for action. The results of this phenomenon are nonetheless very serious in the case of violence. Nobody can play with the "armed struggle". There are actions which, even though the point is not to "condemn" them (that is the function of judges), we can neither support them or consider them a positive fact. Capital desires the *self-destruction* of radical minorities. It forces certain revolutionaries to feel that they can no longer stand it: a way of neutralising them is to force them to take up arms against it. We are not referring to "*agent provocateurs*", but to social pressure. In such a case we cannot say that certain comrades were forced to act in this way and that's all. For a function of the social movement, as well as of the revolutionary groups, is to organise the resistance against these pressures. Of course theory does not fix everything. The understanding of a thing does not mean that a correspondent practice will follow. But theory is a part of practice and that we cannot ignore. Those who condone or refuse to criticise any violent act, fall into the trap of capital.

There are two illusions. It is thought that violence, because it is more directly related with reality, transforms it more than, for example, texts. But violence, in the same way as texts, can be used as a substitute of another practice. To be revolutionary has as a criterion a real tendency towards subverting the existent. Baader initially wanted to awaken the German proletariat, but he found himself isolated, not numerically but *socially*. At this point we have to deal with the other illusion, concerning the violence of the "masses". The criterion is never numerical. A small numbered minority can accomplish positive violent actions, if it is part of a social movement (something that applies to non-violent acts as well). Subversive action does not need to find refuge within the masses nor does it try to impress them with particular actions. By definition, those who oppose "minority violence" to the "violence of the masses", use the term masses while referring to the mechanisms that organise them, the big parties and the trade unions.

The more contradictory society becomes, the more it separates and atomises people, the more it intensifies the need for a community. Violence is revolutionary and it contributes to the formation of the human community only when it attacks against the foundations of the existing society. When it merely maintains illusions of pseudo-community, it is counter-revolutionary and it leads either to the destruction of subversive groups or to their transformation into extra power structures.

These observations are nothing but a small contribution to the discussion of the problem and they were collected hastily with the purpose of helping the Spanish comrades. Those imprisoned need, on the one hand, the

truth to shine in relation to the revolutionary character of their energies and also the press to be notified of their case so that pressure can be exerted to the court; on the other hand, the revolutionary movement has to take care of their defence and the clarification of their actions. "Revolutionary" help cannot but come from the subversive elements themselves. In fact the second duty is a precondition for the first one, for it is not possible to expect the left or the extreme-left to essentially help people who fight against them.

Solidarity has no meaning outside of a practice: for that reason the usual campaigns "against repression" are by definition self-advertising actions of the organisations undertaking them. The individual can only offer his sympathy and the organisations that specialise in solidarity gather these individuals without doing anything. Solidarity suffices itself with organising solidarity. It is in fact highly reactionary when it condemns "scandals", at the moment when the supposed scandalous fact is a simple result of a cause which is conveniently placed outside the scope of critique. They thus end up denouncing or re-arranging the most obvious facts of social repression, while at the same time they save or modernise the whole.

Properly speaking the revolutionary movement does not organise any particular support. Its members – individuals or groups- support each other naturally through their activities and give each other the necessary help. The problem of "support" is only existent for those outside of the revolutionary movement. The subversive movement supports only those who need help through deepening its action, both in the field of relations and contacts and in the field of theory.

It goes without saying that when we fight for the accused to have a "political" trial we do not demand any sort of privilege for the "political" prisoners as opposed to the "criminal" prisoners. We might identify in their gangsterism capital's extreme tendency to live with clear cons and to create businesses without capital, and in turn show that the accused of Barcelona are not gangsters. Yet that is far from demanding any form of superiority of the "political" prisoners as against the "criminal" ones. As if any person who knows how to reproduce some Marx quotes has an advantage over others!! "Political" prisoners are not superior from the others. We do not demand this quality to be recognised in the name of a principle, but as a tactical means for decreasing their penalties.

Mouvement Communiste, 1973

Beasts of Burden– Antagonism Press 1999



This pamphlet appeared recently with the expressed aim of being read by 'people interested in animal liberation who want to consider why animal exploitation exists, as well as how', and 'by those who define themselves as anarchists or communists who either dismiss animal liberation altogether or personally sympathise with it but don't see how it relates to their broader political stance'. Its overall argument is that animal and human exploitation are intrinsically related, and that the fight for communism is inseparable to the struggle against animal exploitation.

In general terms the pamphlet is very good. It traces the history of animal exploitation and it attempts to link that with the history of human exploitation by capital (and not only). A variety of valid points are made: the practice of animal exploitation is directly linked to the needs of capital and its ongoing quest for profit, instead of being characterised as an abstract 'evilness' of humans in general against animals.

More particularly, the author identifies that there exists a striking commonality between the exploitation of

humans and animals, and this is traced back to capital's domination over our lives and its subordination of every human or animal need to the needs of valorisation. The author thus says at some point: "...with animals and with humans, the factory system aims to restrict the movement of the body to maximise profit", or, further on, "...[both animals and humans are treated as] an inert, unthinking object, whose creative, bodily, emotional needs are ignored...".

Furthermore, the practice of mass extermination is linked to the treatment of 'unproductive' and 'redundant' (from capital's point of view) humans and animals. Vivisection, this disgusting element of advanced capitalism, is openly linked to particular interests of capital, whereas medical research (whether it uses animals for experiments or not) is exposed for what it really is: a profit-oriented business which "...would rather let people die than allow their patented products to be made available on a non-profit basis".

Moreover, animal exploitation is shown to be interrelated to capital's projection of itself through commodity fetishism. The fact that animals are only seen as commodities with a 'natural' exchange value attached to them, instead of living organisms (in the same way that humans are seen as such) is stressed, as well as the way in which capital's marketing practices manage to conceal this ("...pork not pig, beef not cow").

Coming to the analysis of political struggles, certain aspects of animal liberation are strongly criticised. The practice of boycotting particular companies for their part in animal exploitation is correctly discredited as a misleading view which ignores the totality of capitalism, while the disgusting practice of attacking workers in animal factories as equally responsible for the maltreatment of animals is shown to be a fucked up practice which shows a "...lack of understanding of the dynamics of present day society, of a class analysis...".

Finally, the author is quick to renounce any notion of 'animal rights' in the same way that 'human rights' are attacked as a capitalist construction aimed at disguising existing inequalities and exploitation, and as an institutional construction for the facilitation of capital's domination.

However, despite these valid points the article encounters a number of problems when trying to argue that "...the development and maintenance of capitalism as a system that exploits humans is in some ways dependent upon the abuse of animals."

In tracing the history of animal exploitation, the author makes the remark that in primitive societies, humans were initially vegetarian, thus trying to assert that there is something natural about choosing this sort of diet. Yet, he fails to recognise that in these primitive societies most habits were determined by necessity and not by a conscious and moralistic choice. A totally unjustified glorification of primitive societies follows from this approach, resulting in the author saying that "...[primitive] communities typically live in a harmonious relationship with their environment; it is their home and their provider and it is not their interest to destroy it, by for instance, exterminating animal species". Again, the author mistakenly glorifies the primitive community by presenting only one aspect of it and ignoring that this 'harmonious' relationship was also dangerous, limited and dictated by a kind of necessity which we have nothing to be jealous for. The wild characteristics of animals of that period, which the author addresses in a positive way, also resulted in the constant fear of humans of being consumed by them, and was also partially responsible for people's choice to 'domesticate' themselves and the animals. Moreover, to claim that people's harmonious relationship with their environment led them to refrain from destroying it implies that 'people' (in general) today *have* an interest in destroying the environment, an attitude which comes in contradiction with the way in which the author later on links the destruction of the environment with the *class* nature of society and not with 'people's' attitude in general.

At another point, the author quotes Cammate who argues that "...out of the 'animal husbandry' grew both the notion of property and exchange value", a view which wrongly implies that exchange value (i.e. the mode of appearance of things produced *as commodities*) existed long before production was generalised commodity-

production.

It becomes increasingly apparent that, in analysing the origins of animal abuse, the author exaggerates its development and argues things like "From the earliest stages of domestication meat consumption was the conspicuous display of dominant ruling power" (our emphasis), thus implying that even *today*, the same social status is given to meat-eating. Moreover, this exaggeration reaches ridiculous levels, when the author implies that even the practice of war between humans was only made possible because of the domestication of animals and the attachment of value to their ownership. The fact that conflicts over things of value was the origin of war between humans is clearly irrelevant of what *exactly* these things were.

This reversal of subject and object is further committed by the author, when he argues that primitive accumulation primarily dependent on the animal industry, in the sense that peasants were driven off from their land in order to make room for sheep. Although primitive accumulation was generated through the exclusion of peasants from the land, to argue that the animal industry was its primal motor only results in mystifying the origin of capitalism. Sheep were only an expression of capital's development and *not* its underlying motor. The author exacerbates the argument when claiming that "the animal industry was the starting motor of primitive accumulation, without which the subsequent gains for the ruling class (the creation of a proletariat, access to mineral wealth, etc) may not have been accomplished". The fact that sheep happened to be vital for primitive accumulation in its starting points does not imply in any way that capitalism would not have developed if animals were not regarded as commodities.

Coming to a more contemporary analysis of capitalist social relations, the author states that "...the development of the factory for humans in the modern period was influenced by [the] long history of factory farming", and that "...the origins of the assembly line production are to be found in the US beef packing yards of the late 19th century". To say that the assembly line production process started in one part of industry and later influenced others because of its effectiveness in innovating capitalist production, again says nothing about the actual *product* of this industry. And although it may be the case that "...Henry Ford acknowledged that the idea for the automobile assembly line 'came in a general way from the overhead trolley that the Chicago packers used in dressing beef'...", this is irrelevant. The fact that the first industry to use assembly-line organisation of labour was animal-related does not mean that it could not have been another industry. There is nothing inherent in the animal industry which makes it the cutting edge of technological/exploitative innovations in the factory system, and thus the link between the development of the factory system and animal abuse seems, to say the least, highly coincidental.

In his examination of the animal liberation movement, the author argues that there is something inherently subversive in its practice, something which is initially based on the fact that "...given that we have argued for the centrality of animals to capitalism, a movement challenging the position of animals could hardly help but impact on capital". However, if that centrality is challenged, the argument collapses.

In a way it is right to argue that "...saving [the] animals from suffering and an early death directly confronts the logic of capital, abolishing their status as products, commodities and raw materials by reinstating them as living beings outside of the system of production and exchange". From another standpoint though, the same argument could be made for shoplifting, which, in a similar way abolishes the exchange value of commodities, and reinstates (in a sense) their use-value. Yet, it would hardly be plausible to argue that capitalism is threatened by it. However positive shoplifting is, it essentially expresses a need for 'free consumption' of the existing commodities, and not a subversive relation to a system of commodity production. The re-appropriation of *some* commodities does not necessarily imply a starting point for a generalised critique of capital in its totality, and saving some animals from a lab is no more a pathway to revolutionary consciousness than a variety of other situations, which might even occur in meat-eating environments.

Following the general argument that humans and animals are equally mistreated by capital, and that the exploitation of the former is interrelated to that of the latter since both are considered as commodities, no obvious connection is made between the struggle of proletarians against capital and the struggle for the liberation of animals. Nobody would deny that animals are treated in despicable ways, and that this stems from them being seen as commodities. But this does not convincingly result in equating the struggle for the liberation of animals with the movement of communism. (1) In other words, although it is indeed shown that generalised animal abuse is as much a result of capitalist social relations, reading the pamphlet did not result in realising the inseparability between the struggle for communism and that of animal exploitation. It merely re-asserted the fact that animals are as much commodified as humans.

Communism is in fact the reconciliation of man and nature, and the end of the domination of one by another. Yet, the arguments brought forward in *Beasts of Burden* never manage to confront the inherent moralism of the animal liberation ideology, regardless of whether it can be shown that animal abuse is historically constituted.

At times when revolutionary practice is strikingly absent from our everyday life, when the movement that abolishes existing conditions appears to be in (temporary) retreat, and when the animal liberation movement attracts more people than struggles against capital per se, the pamphlet seems misplaced. Unless, that is, it convinces activists of animal liberation to reconsider the class character of animal abuse and to direct their attacks towards the society which gives birth to such practices and not merely one of its appearances.

(1) At some point in the pamphlet, the author argues that "...Marxist political economy adopted the enlightened project of the domination of nature in its entirety with the natural world being perceived as an unlimited raw material for industrial progress", but with the development of capitalism and the ongoing destruction of the ecological system, "...some communists have begun to criticise this model". In fact, communists criticised and fought against this Stalinist model which identified revolution with the development of the productive forces and industrialism long before the destruction of the environment became the starting point of such a critique, and even for Marx communism "...as fully developed naturalism, equals humanism, and as fully developed humanism equals naturalism..." (Early Writings).

Reflections on June 18th

June 18 saw the biggest riot in London in years. A broad alliance of mostly ecological groups had called for a "carnival against capital" as on that day the political character masks of the world's eight biggest economies had their annual summit in Cologne, Germany. The event itself was as diverse as the alliance that had initiated it. Many enjoyed the sound-systems, some got pissed, others smashed up London's financial centre. This disrespect for private property and the cops is certainly correct; however, in what relation does the actual street fighting stand to the political contents of the campaign that led up to June 18? Is the whole "party as protest" approach an adequate form of resistance?

"Reflections on June 18", a booklet published last October, brings together a near twenty "contributions on the politics behind the events that occurred in the city of London on June 18". It is fortunately not preoccupied with the technical details that often substitute analysis, and it hardly bursts of riot euphoria. Quite the reverse — "paulp." thus writes: "it has always been a mistake to fetishise street rioting...and constantly try to read something social revolutionary in it. (...) Smashing windows is smashing windows...and throwing things at police is throwing things at police, a buzz yes, but none of these things automatically imply the refusal of capitalist wage labour and commodities, the creation of common wealth and the building of world human community." Instead of celebrating J18 for the damage done, most pieces develop critique of J18 in regard to both the ideological contents of the pre-J 18 propaganda as well as in terms of the form of activism and street party.

As far as the content of the mobilisation is concerned, many contributions underscore the critique we advanced in

our last two issues (which are, by the way, also included in the booklet), i.e. most importantly the highly problematic notion of "globalisation" and its implications. Too often when people talk about "global capitalism", it seems that what they reject is not so much the noun but the adjective: as if *local* or *national* capitalism was any better. Dutch activists point out that "the critique of free trade has long been a speciality of the extreme right, and has proven to easily turn anti-Semitic"; a point supported by the forceful polemic by George Forrestier which, amongst many other things, takes issue with the anti-Semitic implications of the "fetishistic and reductionist attack on financial capital". The focus on the evil bankers the J18 propaganda had is obviously something that many find, if not even dangerous, then at least completely misleading. It manifests a reified view on capital which misses the crucial point: that capital is a social relation we all reproduce permanently by working or buying commodities. Thus, a series of articles stresses the necessity to attack wage-labour and the state instead of joining the ranks of those lefty reformist ideologues who oppose democratic state regulation to "globalisation", symbolised by the cosmopolitan, a-national financial centres. Whilst it is a nice surprise to see this central ideological notion of J18 being under massive attack, it in fact gets redundant after a while - some articles merely reassert the points made by others but don't come up with new arguments.

If capital is not the sum of evil corporations and banks but a totality of social relations, then this also affects questions of strategy and forms of resistance. An article titled "Give up activism" states: "Our methods...are still the same as if we were taking on a specific corporation or development, despite the fact that capitalism is not at all the same sort of thing and the ways in which one might bring down a particular company are not at all the same as the ways in which you might bring down capitalism. (...) So we have the bizarre spectacle of 'doing an action' against capitalism - an utterly inadequate practice." The point is not to combine existing particular campaigns kept running by activists. Rather, the role of the activist, an expert in social change, in itself is quite problematic because it considers capital and revolutionary opposition to it "an issue" separated from her life just as chopping rain forests or road construction is "an issue". Yet capital is not something in the vicious city - "them" - where you can go and protest, but it is virtually everywhere and most importantly it is based on our everyday practice. What is involved here is also the relation between the activist community and what is often patronisingly referred to as "ordinary people". While it is true that revolution won't come about by everybody becoming activists, the claim that "...of course class struggle is happening all the time" sounds like whistling in the dark. It is telling that the same contribution ends by stating that "activism is a form partly forced upon us by weakness", i.e. the downturn in (class) struggle. "It may be that it (activism) is only capable of being corrected by a general upsurge in struggle when we won't be weirdos and freaks any more" - so, there we have the "us" again that the author set out to question by reference to class struggle which is initially presented to be almost something as a law of nature (here: second nature, i.e. society). Another contribution suggests that the contemporary proletarian silence "is not apathy at all" but a sign of collective intelligence as they have learnt the hard way over decades not to get dragged into every limited partial struggle, particularly in cases where there is no chance of winning." (paulp., Mustn't grumble).

However, the booklet mainly represents the diverse and contradictory positions around J18. While "Give up activism" belongs to the most inspiring pieces in the booklet as it criticises the political forms of the direct action scene fundamentally, the following text comes up with a lengthy proposal for how to make activist campaign politics even better - i.e. it wants to make things worse by not only keeping the focus on finance capital, but furthermore concentrating on nodal points instead of aiming at its totality because this "remains an abstract proposition for most people". This is the patronising way in which teachers talk about how to enlighten their pupils - make it simple!

There are a bunch of stupid contributions like that one, but as a whole, "reflections on june 18" is encouraging through its sharp criticisms which alone can get us further. However, it remains a mystery to us that the Kosovo war which hardly found the attention of the activist community busily preparing for the big event is quite absent from these critical contributions - because for us this lack of involvement in the anti-war-movement says as much about the shortcomings of the direct action scene as does the critical analysis of J18

propaganda and activist forms.

*Workers Against Work: Labour in Paris and Barcelona
During the Popular Fronts,*

Michael Seidman, University of California Press

This 400 page book is also available in a much shortened pamphlet version, which is probably easier to get hold of, and despite sounding dull as shit it's actually really interesting. It deals with the situations in France and Spain during their Popular Front governments of the 1930's, focusing on developments in Paris and Barcelona, drawing out the differences and similarities between the two. As Michael Seidman points out, there are a lot of books available on this period in both countries – what distinguishes this one is its focus on the everyday lives of workers, rather than the actions of the unions, political parties, military forces etc that usually make history. What this reveals is that workers consistently tried to avoid work as best they could, a fact that's usually been hidden or ignored by the left.

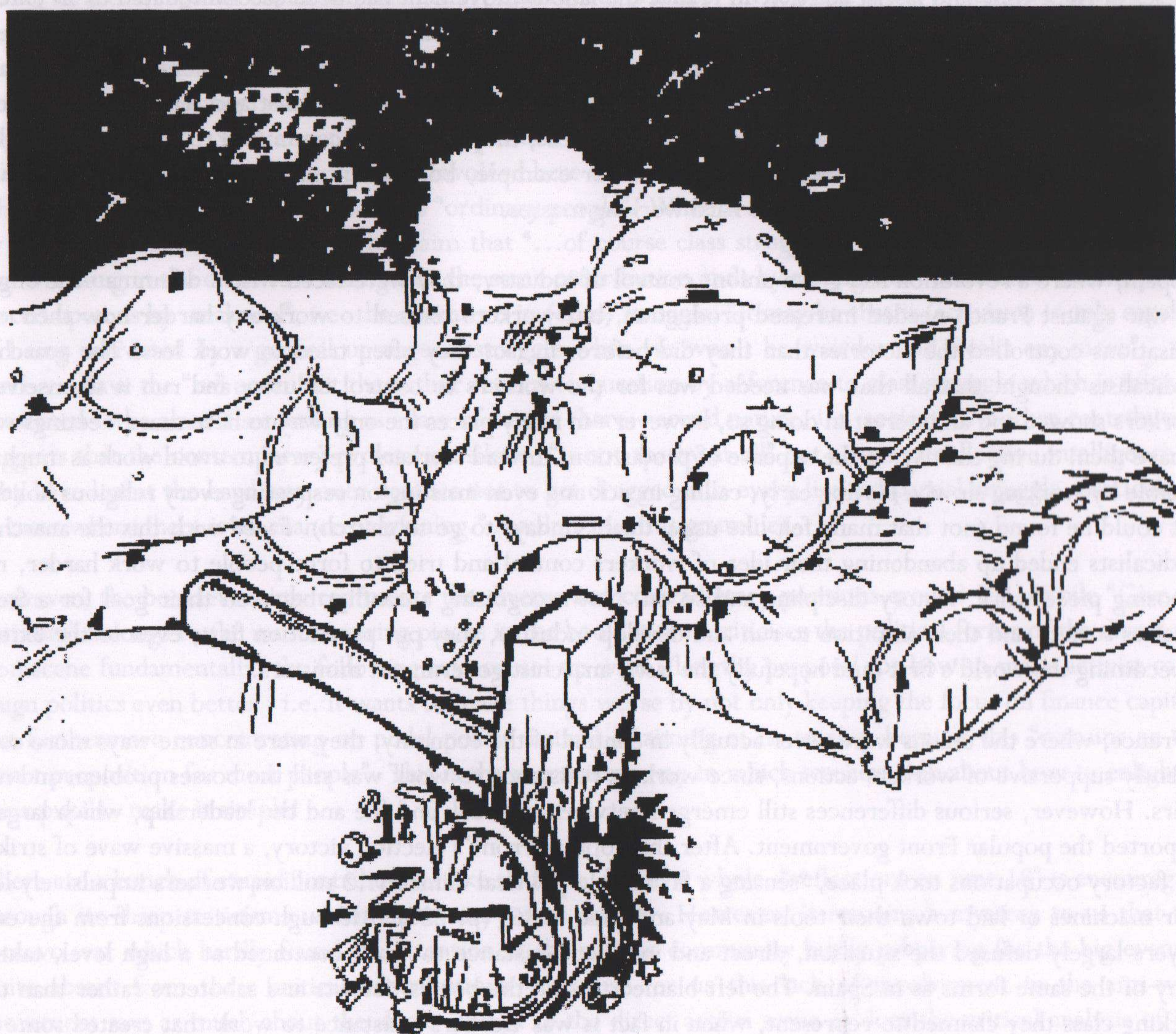
France and Spain in the 1930's were in very different situations. In France a dynamic bourgeoisie had created a modern industrial economy, separated church and state and generally put the military under firm civilian rule. In Spain, however, even the most modernised areas as Catalonia were economically backward compared to France, the clergy was still a very powerful conservative force and the armed services were almost autonomous centres of right wing and fascist activity. In France the labour movement had been accommodated to an extent and was geared towards reformism, while in Spain it had little choice but revolutionary struggle. Despite these differences in both countries there was a widespread refusal of work, which proved a problem for both the anarcho-syndicalists who controlled most Barcelona unions and their reformist socialist and communist counterparts in France. Although they had many political differences, they were both committed to an ideology of glorifying work and developing the productive forces. For example, both resented capitalists as 'unproductive' and 'parasites', contrasting them with the hard working masses.

In Spain, where a revolution had given unions control of industry, they were faced with a dilemma – the ongoing war against Franco needed increased production, but workers refused to work any harder now their organisations controlled the factories than they did before. In fact they often tried to work less! The anarcho-syndicalists thought that all that was needed was for the workers to control industry and run it themselves. Workers showed sod all interest in doing so, however – in many places the only way to have mass meetings was to have them during the day, at the expense of production. Instead workers preferred to avoid work as much as possible by working slowly, leaving early, calling in sick and even insisting on respecting every religious holiday that could be found (not that many felt like using their Sundays to go to church). Faced with this the anarcho-syndicalists ended up abandoning their idea of workers control and tried to force people to work harder, re-imposing piece-work, factory discipline and so on. Not recognising a conflict between their goal for a free, stateless society and their ambition to run and develop industry, they put production first, even to the extent of becoming the world's first (and hopefully the last!) anarchist government ministers.

In France, where the unions were never actually in control of the economy, they were in some ways more consistently supportive of workers actions, since workers resistance to work was still the bosses problem and not theirs. However, serious differences still emerged between the rank and file and the leadership, which largely supported the popular Front government. After the Popular Front's election victory, a massive wave of strikes and factory occupations took place, "sensing a favourable political climate...2 million workers impulsively left their machines or laid down their tools in May and June 1936" (p. 220). Although concessions from the employers largely defused the situation, direct and indirect resistance to work continued at a high level, taking many of the same forms as in Spain. The left blamed this on the bosses, fascists and saboteurs rather than the working class they claimed to represent, when in fact it was workers resistance to work that created some of

the Popular Front's most difficult problems. While enjoying the Popular Front's reforms, such as the creation of the weekend as holiday, workers refused to take up their side of the 'deal' and take on the left's vision of happy proles working harder. Instead they tried to reduce their worktime still and the state to maintain and increase production, eventually managing to restore a large measure of work discipline.

By revealing this hidden history of working class people refusing to identify themselves as workers, Seidman contributes to our understanding of what revolutionary change actually means. By glorifying production and the role of 'worker', groups with the best intentions ended up forcing actual working class people into the roles and factories they rejected. People will not willingly work at things they don't like, even if they *can* control their own workplaces, and no amount of revolutionary speeches or even revolutionary situations seems to change that. (The fact that such an obvious statement should sound surprising coming from most left/revolutionary groups shows just how many myths they've created about working people). Given that people won't work at the kind of shitty jobs that form the basis of the economy unless they're forced to, (whether just by having to survive in a world of wages and commodities or by more blatant coercion as well) we come to a choice between maintaining the state, perhaps dressed up as workers councils, unions etc and the industrial system, or getting rid of both. Seidman concludes that the State can't be abolished until a science fiction utopia of robotic production has been achieved, but there's no reason to take the current level of industry as a given. Just what level of technology and production people would want to maintain in a free, classless society we can't say, but it's safe bet that it wouldn't include the heavy industry and factory system developed by the inhuman needs of capital and currently fucking up both workers health and eco-systems around the world.



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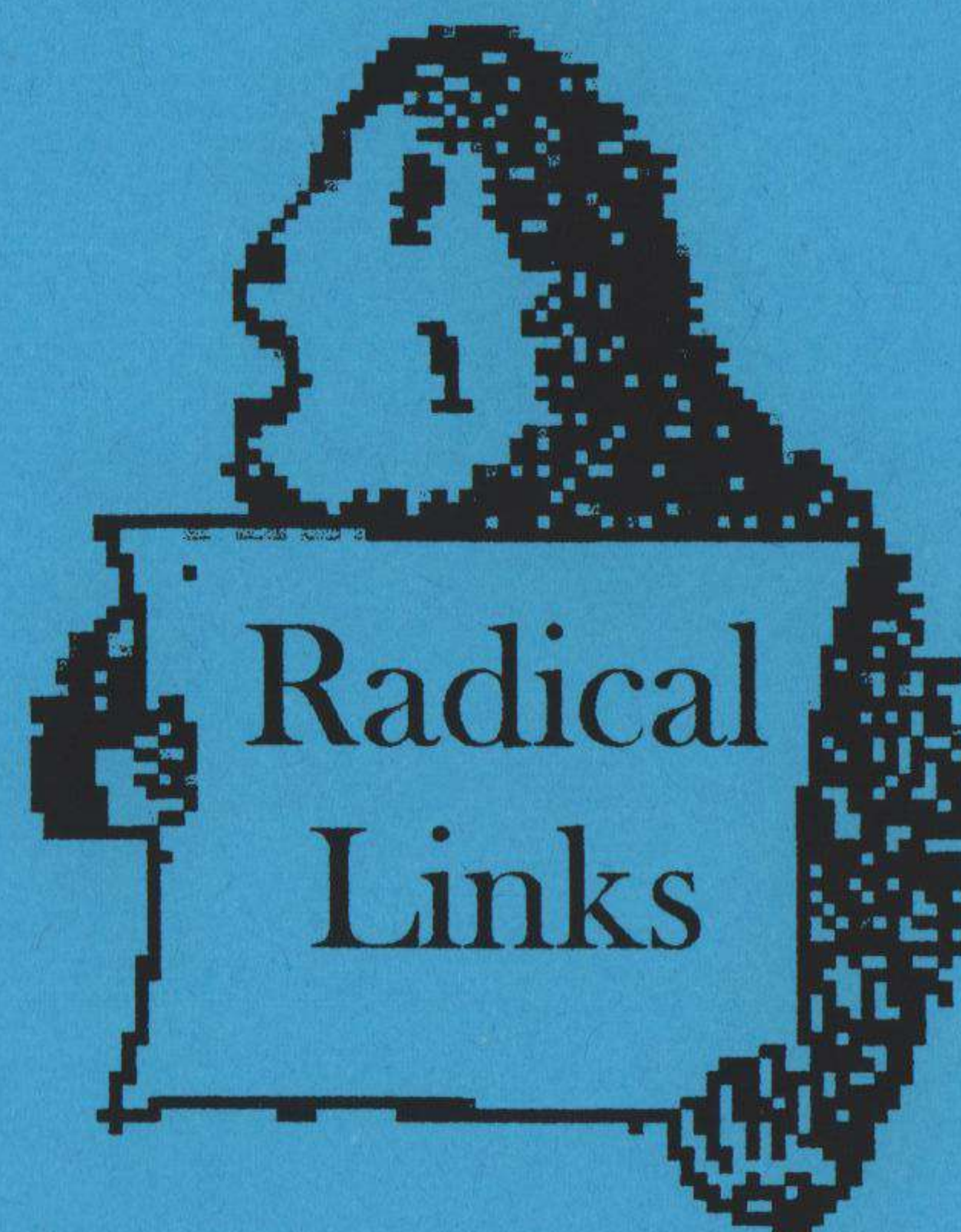
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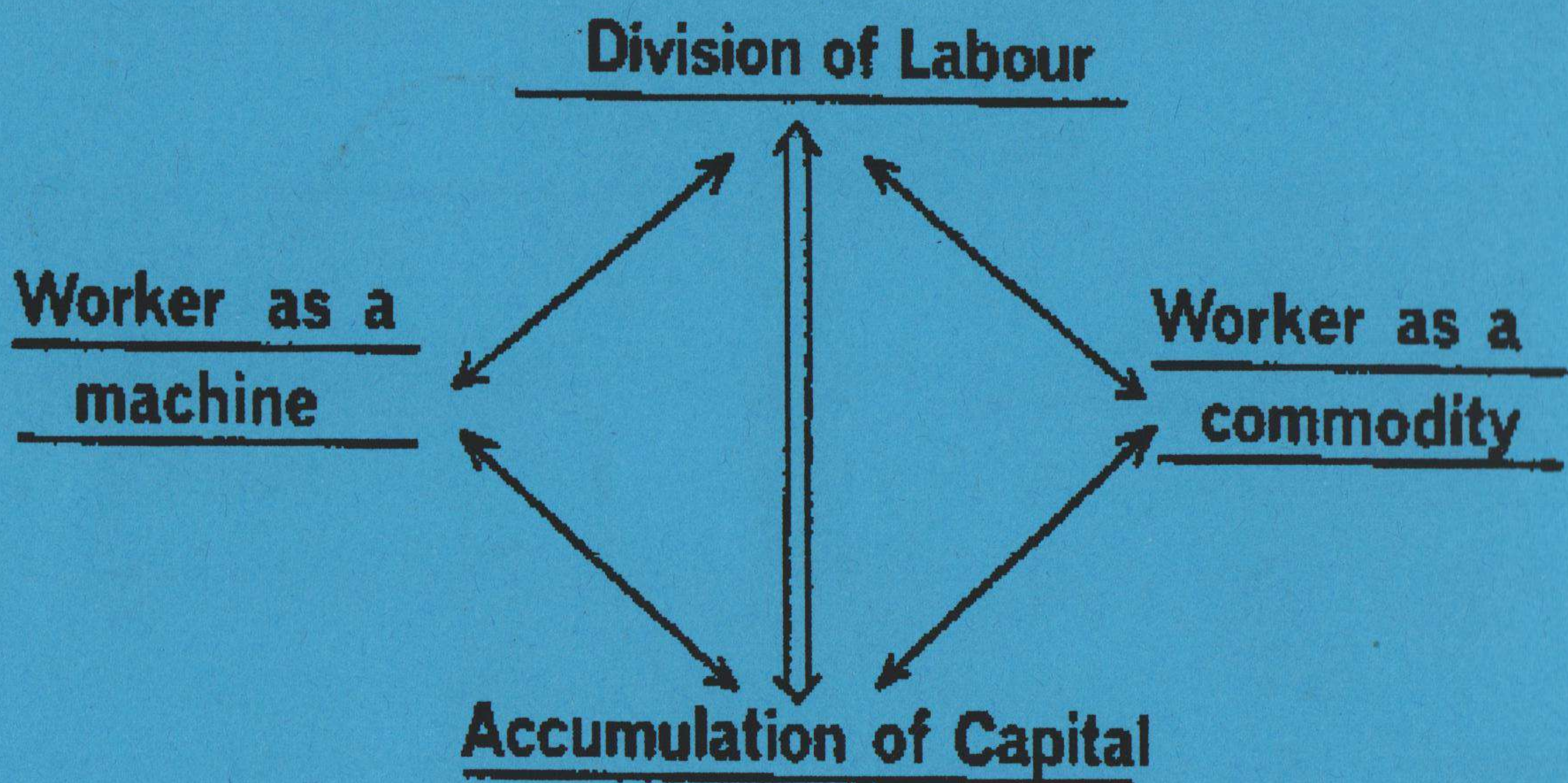
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