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Up Against the Polyester Ceiling: The "New" AFL-CIO Organizes — *Itself!*

Kim Moody

IT IS HARD TO IMAGINE TWO EVENTS AS DIFFERENT as the August UPS strike and the September AFL-CIO Convention. The genuine solidarity of 185,000 striking workers forged out of years of grassroots organizing and workplace resistance versus the choreographed solidarity of the 22nd Constitutional Convention of the AFL-CIO. Real grassroots mobilization as an act of self-organization versus an act — sincere, but scripted and directed. A rebellion wearing its heart on its sleeve versus a consolidation of regime and direction in the costume of rebellion.

What unites these two events is more than their common place in the labor movement. It is that both, in their own way, stand for change: in organized labor and in society. Both offer an orientation for the political left, inside and outside the unions, in its search for the lost path to social change and even socialism. What divides these two events and their significance are the methods and ultimately the goals they represent. One is slick, bureaucratic, top-down, and obsessed with technique. The other is straightforward, democratic, grassroots, and increasingly focused on the substance of power. There is more involved here than the "organizing model" versus the "service model," as the debate is often framed within labor circles.

The New Regime Theme

THE PRE-CONVENTION ISSUE OF *AMERICA@WORK*, THE AFL-CIO'S GLOSSY new monthly magazine, laid out federation president John Sweeney's program in a nutshell, "With the percentage of workers who belong to unions at a 60-year low — and wages declining or stagnating for most working families — organizing is the labor movement's top priority." Or, as he underlined this priority at the convention, "everything we do is connected to organizing." This was the central theme of the convention, followed by the new approach to politics. There is a message here that I will return to: it goes, first organize, then worry about the other stuff.

The message was powerfully highlighted by the tightly organized testimony of 80 rank and file workers. Though obviously scripted or at least edited, the show was moving by all accounts. It was moving because of the genuine

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diversity represented, because of the real sacrifice these and thousands of other workers like them are making to organize, and because there is actually more to put on parade these days. The AFL-CIO says it won 2,000 organizing drives in the last two years, though figures for 1997 show total union membership down another 100,000. The organizing message, nevertheless, is genuine and the claim that labor's future depends on its success real.

Even the triumphant UPS strike was framed in terms of organizing. Sweeney told the convention, "You could make a million house calls and run a thousand television commercials and stage a hundred strawberry rallies and still not come close to doing what the UPS strike did for organizing." This extravagant, almost self-deprecating praise was particularly compelling because it is (phone) calls, television commercials, rallies, and other techniques "connected to organizing" that are the heart of the Sweeney program, not disruptive national strikes.

To techniques, must be added money. The federation plans to see $1 billion spent on organizing by the year 2000 by its affiliates and itself. A raise of 5 cents a month in per capita dues was passed to finance the new "member mobilization and education fund," which will produce TV ads to promote unionism. It has already spent $5 million on TV ads run in five cities, described by some as "warm and fuzzy." If these soften the market for unionism, the federation is prepared to spend another $40 million. An additional one cent in percaps will go to spruce up the AFL-CIO headquarters. About $20 million has already been spent to bring the old building up to information age appearance.

The praise of the UPS strike was a matter of political expediency, related not so much to organizing as consolidation. Ironically, Sweeney's executive council majority and future electoral prospects depend on the Teamsters. At the time of the AFL-CIO convention Carey was in deepening trouble. His campaign had taken and even solicited illegal donations, including union funds. Eventually this would lead to Carey's downfall.Carey had made the mistake of choosing high-priced professional political consultants over the rank and file approach that won the 1991 election. These consultants brought with them the old political culture of business unionism as well as the Democrats' money-driven approach to politics. The result was a scandal and Carey and the reform movement paid the price. An intense media campaign with the *Wall Street Journal* and the *New York Times* in the vanguard, along with Republican-led Congressional hearings directed at discrediting Carey and pressuring the court-appointed election officer to disqualify Carey bore fruit in November when he was disqualified as a candidate and forced to leave office in disgrace. The future of the reform movement fell once again to the Teamsters for a Democratic Union, a development that must have dismayed Sweeney.

Carey had delivered the votes that put Sweeney, Rich Trumka, and Linda Chavez-Thompson over the top in 1995. Carey's Teamsters formed a lot of the vertebrae in the backbone of the Sweeney coalition. Not only that, the Teamsters were one of the few unions actually doing the organizing that Sweeny wanted and needed. The image of the 1.5 million member union run by Jimmy Hoffa Junior, friend to Republicans and labor criminals alike, was too threatening. After all, Sweeney had more or less put his own Hoffa-esque friends, like Richard Cordtz or Gus Bevona, behind or at least to the side. Lending moral support to Ron Carey was just good politics.

The other up front theme of the convention was, of course, politics — external, not internal. Here the new idea is to emphasize issues rather than parties. This too came down largely to technique and money: TV ads about issues rather than candidates per se. Candidates will get direct contributions only if they "take a stand" against anti-union employers. No legislative stands are required it seems. In fact, labor spent much more on candidate contributions ($66 million) in the 1995-96 election cycle than on issue ads ($35 million). Traditional lobbying soaked up another $18.5 million. More radical is the idea of training 2,000 union members to run for office by the year 2000. Some see in this approach a step toward political independence. After all, Andy Stern, president of Sweeney's own Service Employees International Union (SEIU), had recently said his union would give to any candidate or party that deserved labor support — Democrat, Republican, Labor Party or New Party.

What is tactically different about the media-heavy approach being advocated and tested by the federation is that while it will still favor the Democrats (Gee, who is more likely to favor an increase in the minimum wage?), it is also seen as a way to pressure on certain issues. Still, it seems clear no new departure in actual politics, as opposed to techniques and tactics, was on the agenda.

To prove it, there was Bill "fast-track" Clinton up on stage. A sign that change may lie down the road came from some delegates and rank and file guests who heckled the President of the United States. This caused Clinton to tell the assembled representatives of the working class that free trade "is about how 4 percent of the world's people can continue to hold 22 percent of the world's wealth," reports *Labor Notes*. No doubt those hecklers whose share of this 22 percent is meager and falling found this neoimperialist confession less than compelling.

What Sweeney and the new leaders are offering as the substance of their political approach was well summarized by Sean Sweeney in *New Labor Forum* (No. 1, Fall 1997), "The new AFL-CIO wishes to restore the type of essentially Keynsian 'social contract' that prevailed in the U.S. during the postwar expansion – the same arrangement, broadly speaking, that top social democrats in other leading economies consider gone forever." It is based on the further assumption that big business is somehow interested in such a national partnership – or that by becoming bigger labor can impose such a partnership on business. Indeed, as discussed below, the whole idea of labor-business partnership is central to the vision that comes from Sweeney.

The Consolidating Model

THE REAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE CONVENTION, HOWEVER, WAS THE CONSOLIDATION of the now-not-so-new leadership and their approach to change and growth. There was no election contest at this convention. The Sweeney-Trumka-Chavez-Thompson team was re-elected by acclamation. Furthermore, the convention voted without dissent to extend the term of office from two years to four. No proposal from the leaders was opposed, while a resolution from the Alameda County Central Labor Council calling for democratic rights for all union members was opposed from the podium and voted down. The revolution moved from year one to Thermidor. The party of rebellion is now the party of order.

What is being consolidated, however, is not simply the positions of the top leaders, but a top-down institutional approach to change and direction. The Sweeney strategy is as Washington-based as Lane Kirkland's or George Meany's. Unlike the Kirkland regime, however, Sweeney has little interest in foreign policy per se, except when it is trade policy. The current AFL-CIO leadership is focused on domestic issues. These, along with organizing, it addresses through the proliferation of DC-based institutes and centers. It is a piece of Beltway culture in which labor tries to create its own think tanks and policy wonks in the image of the Washington professional policy/lobbying establishment.

This was spotted in the observation, cum prediction, about the original "New Voice" platform made by Suzanne Gordon in *Labor Notes* in October 1995:

> For every union problem, there's a new Washington solution — an institute, a task force, a monitoring project, a clearing house, and policy center, a training center, a center for strategic campaigns, a new organizing department (with a office of strategic planning), a strategic planning process ("Committee 2000"), two or three campaign funds, a labor council advisory committee, and a "strike support team of top people" from various union staffs...This platform proclaims that "we must institutionalize the process of change."

Here, right in the platform on which the new leaders based their rebellion, is part of the problem. The depth, breadth, and types of change needed to revitalize organized labor and bring in millions of new members cannot be accomplished by institutionalizing the process of change. The decisions about what kind of unions we want and need cannot be made in institutionally neat and controlled ways. Real change, whether in organized labor or society as a whole, just doesn't happen that way. To institutionalize a complex social process is to kill it. To see leadership as institutionalization is a classic malady of bureaucracy.

The vision of a social movement as institutes, centers, committees, task forces, media marketing, and symbolic (media ready) acts of solidarity is doomed to be a brake on the very process the AFL-CIO leaders propose — including organizing the unorganized. As the rumblings and changes occurring in many unions and workplaces across America reveal, change is a messy process involving conflict within the unions as well as between them and the employers. To institutionalize this side of change is to suppress it, which tends to be the instinct of most union bureaucrats.

Reflecting this essentially bureaucratic vision of change is a deep ideological contradiction. The new leaders are willing to talk of conflict and even to support it, but they are equally committed to the idea of partnerships with business to make America "competitive." While the tone of the convention was combative, the themes of partnership and labor-management cooperation were there throughout. On the one hand, there is the vaguely class-oriented idea that the federation must speak for all "working families" and turn up the "street heat" to organize the millions. On the other hand, as Sweeney put it in his keynote address:

> One of our paramount goals is to help the companies we work for succeed, to work with our employers to creatively increase productivity and quality and to help American companies compete effectively in the new world economy and create new jobs

and new wealth for our families and our communities to share.

Indeed, a recent article in *Business Week* (April 7, 1997) cites the formation of the AFL-CIO's new Center for Workplace Democracy as evidence of the embrace of labor-management cooperation as a paramount goal. A more dramatic and cynical instance of this mood is the labor-management partnership between the AFL-CIO, six of its affiliates, and Kaiser Permanente, the nation's oldest and largest HMO. This partnership includes not only the usual commitments to improve the business, but a promise to promote Kaiser as the preferred HMO for union health plans — not to mention the implication that HMOs, not single payer national health care, are labor's health care system of choice. This was announced in the midst of a life and death fight between Kaiser management and the California Nurses Association in 1996. It came only a year after Kaiser imposed a wage freeze of SEIU Local 250, which represents thousands of its nonprofessional employees.

This tenacious interest in labor-management partnerships is all the more baffling because of the clear track record of corporate double-dealing. A list of the some of the major companies with which unions had established cooperation programs or broader partnerships in the late 1980s or early 1990s includes: Caterpillar, A.E. Staley, Wheeling-Pittsburgh, Boeing, AT&T (which recently put Caterpillar CEO and arch-union-buster Don Fites on its Board), and General Motors to name a few. In short, all of today's most aggressively anti-worker major corporations are yesterday's cooperators.

A necessary corollary to partnership is the exclusion of the brutal reality of today's workplace from the agenda of the new AFL-CIO leadership. The road to competitiveness is being paved over the backs of the workers, as even Wall Streeter Stephen Roach notes. Roach made some waves a couple of years ago when he wrote in the *Wall Street Journal* that the current expansion was based on "slash and burn restructuring strategies that have put extraordinary pressures on the workforce" and predicted a "worker backlash." In the wake of the UPS strike Roach returned to the theme of a "labor-crunch recovery" and argued that this and other strikes meant workers were "saying 'no' to years of corporate cost-cutting directed primarily at the labor force."

While it is certainly true that "America Needs A Raise," as Sweeney argues, America also needs a break. More to the point it needs a unionism that will fight the harsh workplace regime that is the reality of lean production and high performance workplaces. It is inconceivable that the massive expansion of members labor needs to survive and renew can be accomplished by organizations that ignore today's working conditions. Building unionism on economic issues alone in the era of lean production, reengineering, casualization, and gender/race recomposition of the workforce is not likely to create the sort of momentum the leaders of the AFL-CIO talk about. Yet, very little has come from the AFL-CIO, or much of the rest of the labor bureaucracy, on these crucial issues beyond blanket condemnations of downsizing — not even an institute.

Democracy & Organizing the Unorganized

SOMEWHAT MORE SUBTLE, BUT NO LESS IMPORTANT IS THE RELATIONSHIP between

union democracy and mass organizing. Organizing on the scale needed to make the labor movement grow again has never been done primarily by professional organizers. It has always been a matter of workers organizing other workers, as it was in the 1930s and when public sector workers joined unions in large numbers in the 1960s. Even today, as the results of a study done for the new AFL-CIO leadership shows, rank and file union members make better organizers than pros. The study showed that unions won representation elections in 73 percent of the union drives conducted by ordinary members, but only 27 percent of those organized by professional organizers.

This would indicate that even spending millions of dollars in the next few years running hundreds of young people, many of them former students, through the Organizing Institute, and saturating cities with TV ads will not pay off nearly as well as putting some of these resources toward the mobilization of union members to organize their counterparts.

Indeed, some unions are beginning to experiment in member-based organizing drives. The recent and successful drive by the Communications Workers of America (CWA) at USAir, which netted the union 10,000 new members is an example. As a report in *Labor Notes* summed it up, "the drive did not utilize 'blitzes' by paid union staffers from out-of-town, or slick TV and radio ads produced at great expense by Washington, DC union consultants." Instead it relied primarily on a combination of CWA members from telephone and other units and worksite committees of USAir workers. The CWA has established an organizing network of member activists around the country to aid in new organizing.

Not surprisingly, the Teamsters have been using trucker members to organize workers at nonunion Overnite Transportation, one of a number of nonunion freight and package firms that grew during the old guard regime. Whereas the old guard's attempt to organize Overnite using its little army of time-serving "International Organizers" was a bust, Carey's use of rank and filers is working. Similarly, Teamster mechanics at Southwest Airlines helped Continental's 5,000 mechanics join the Teamsters. Now Carey is calling on the members to raise a volunteer "army of 10,000 member-organizers." This will be hard enough for the reforming Teamsters. For unions where democracy, membership control, and leadership accountability are stifled, the likelihood of such a sustained mobilization is slim.

Members who have an influence on the objectives, strategies, and tactics of their organizations are far more likely to devote their scarce free time to organizing others and to be more enthusiastic about their organizations. Unions, of course, can and do mobilize members for specific events or actions even where there is little or no democracy. But to sustain such mobilization over time requires rank and file involvement in decisions as well as specific actions. This kind of mobilization cannot be turned on and off like a water faucet or run by remote control from headquarters.

Organizing as PR and Technique

THE AFL-CIO LEADERS FACE A CONTRADICTION IN THE MATTER OF ORGANIZING. It is the affiliated national and international unions that do the organizing. The federation itself has no mandate to organize. It can train organizers at its

Organizing Institute and use its bully pulpit to convince its affiliates to take up the cause. But it organizes no one. To get around this, the AFL-CIO proposes two tactics: pro-union TV ads in target cities, and coordination of individual unions in local labor market efforts, known as the Union Cities plan, through the Central Labor Councils (CLCs), which are AFL-CIO bodies. This approach appears to be working well in Las Vegas and may take off where CLCs have some semblance of life. But this strategy is, once again, institutional, top-down, and dependent on PR technique.

Whether or not TV ads will legitimize or enhance organizing drives remains to be seen. The problem, however, is that this approach introduces another piece of Washington, DC culture, the professional media consultant. These are the people implicated in the cesspool of political fund raising and the types who took the 1996 Carey campaign and eventually Carey himself into the dumper — and who will not be found in the 1997 Carey campaign. They jack up the price of union organizing and politics, as they do U.S. politics. Far from mobilizing people to organize or struggle, these consultants reinforce a passive politics that goes around direct involvement to indirect media (or mail or phone) appeals. The promiscuous nature of these characters is indicated by the fact that one of the firms contracted by the AFL-CIO to carry out its pro-union media blitz is co-owned by a consultant, Carter Eskew, who worked for USA-NAFTA, the business financed, pro-free trade organization that campaigned for NAFTA passage in 1993. The problem here is not that the AFL-CIO made a bad choice, it is that there really is no choice if you go this route.

The AFL-CIO's approach to organizing also leaves in place the schizophrenia common to much union recruitment in recent years. Unions like the SEIU, the Hotel Employees, and more recently even the building trades are willing to use militant "organizing model" tactics, such as mass demonstrations, civil disobedience, and support mobilizations or "street heat." But once the new union members achieve recognition, the power passes to the hands of the existing union staff or officialdom and the "service model" recommences as ever. The radical organizers are gone and the Business Agents (BA's) and reps take over. The change that is supposed to organize millions is not a change in the unions, their internal culture, or the typical top-down methods of collective bargaining, but in the tactics of recruitment.

The point here is not that the consolidated leadership of the AFL-CIO is no different than their predecessors or do nothing new or innovative. To their credit, they have emphasized diversity and the need to organize low-paid workers of color and immigrant workers. They have done so in spite of the fact that much of the lingering old guard, while silent at the convention, dislikes the whole orientation toward organizing such workers. One AFT delegate, who expressed a particularly racist version of this objection, was quoted in *Labor Notes* as muttering, "Don't they realize that if they push this organizing, the labor movement is going to wind up being a movement of strawberry pickers and chicken pluckers." No doubt there are plenty of union officials who share this view. Or perhaps agree with a nameless Detroit labor official quoted in *American Enterprise* (according to *In These Times*, Nov. 2, 1997), "All the people we thought we got rid of 40 years ago are back in there. It's like the 1930s all over again."

Despite the potential backlash, the Sweeney team has pushed a progres-

sive agenda on social questions. In a significant move the federation embraced the gay and lesbian trade union group, Pride At Work, as an official constituency group, for example. They also continued endorsement of the autonomous Jobs with Justice coalition that set the trend toward "street heat" a decade ago. As with Jobs with Justice, they seem prepared to allow more autonomy to some constituent groups like the Asia Pacific American Labor Alliance and, presumably, Pride at Work, than the Meany-Kirkland regimes allowed for groups like the A. Philip Randolph Institute. What has not changed and is not on the agenda is the bureaucratic reality of both the AFL-CIO and most of its affiliates or the basic distrust of the rank and file.

A sign of this is the fact that very little of all this change at the top filters down below the "suits" at the International Unions and the State and Central Labor Councils. As longtime labor educator Harry Kelber puts it, the AFL-CIO has a "communications problem." It may spend millions "communicating" with the general public, but members remain out of the loop. For all its cheerleading gloss, the monthly *America@Work* goes out to fewer than 1 percent of the federation's members, not even enough to cover the nation's local union officials. The readership of the weekly two-page fax, *Work in Progress* is certainly smaller. The more radical idea of union democracy is simply not in the official picture.

There is, unfortunately, an implicit message that does reach some of the rank and file of labor and which is attractive to many. The subtext of the DC-based approach with its emphasis on technique and expertise is that the business of change, of organizing, of union affairs is best left to the professionals — the quintessential assumption of business unionism's "service model." The attractiveness of this approach was revealed in the large (48 percent) vote for Hoffa in the 1996 Teamster election. Hoffa presented an older cruder version of this message, the original Hoffa version of the "service model," when he said, "You want a union with a lot of money in the bank and a strong leader." The message from Washington is far more sophisticated, but essentially encourages a "leave the driving to us" mentality in spite of all the mobilization rhetoric. For many (current and prospective) members, trained for decades to see the union as a sort of insurance agency or at best a competent representative, and aware of the risks of militancy these days, the message is comforting.

The Polyester Ceiling vs. Brown Collar UPS — Urge

ALMOST ALL UNION CONVENTIONS PRESENT A SYMBOLIC PORTRAIT of the problem. On the floor of the usually massive hall are hundreds or thousands of men and women dressed in jeans and T-shirts, baseball-style jackets and caps. It is a sea of blue denim topped by white or colored cotton (jackets on chair backs) with the occasional crest of colored caps. On the stage are a couple of dozen officers, commanders of the ship ("leave the navigating to us"), and accompanying staffers wearing suits (men and women). Only on some ceremonial occasion or solidarity photo op do these top officers remove the suit jacket and awkwardly pull a slogan T-shirt over their shirt and tie/scarf and don an out-of-character cap. At most times they crown the picture as a sort of polyester ceiling. The symbolism may be unconscious, but it is striking to see.

Like the glass ceiling that bars women and people of color from higher

places throughout society, the real, everyday bureaucratic polyester ceiling presents a barrier to rank and file participation and power. This is not a matter of corruption and it is worse in some unions than others. There are even a scattering of partial exceptions. But it remains the inherited norm of decades of business unionism. It is the socio-political reality of contemporary American unionism that places most union leaders somewhere between the employers they deal with and the members they represent. It is the institutional constant in the equation of trade union conservatism.

The variable is working-class consciousness and self-activity. At most times this is composed of an uneven default consciousness informed by socially conservative ideas (including racist and sexist views) which are, in turn, buffeted or reinforced by social reality and economic circumstances. In the United States, the very concept of class is often buried beneath the surface of this default consciousness. When the social reality and/or economic circumstances become ones of conflict, the default ideas are challenged. Working class self-activity opens new vistas and new possibilities and inevitably comes up against the polyester ceiling. All the indicators point to the emergence of such a situation today and nothing reflects this more than the 15-day UPS strike of August 1997.

The UPS strike reflects three important aspects of change within the U.S. working class. Best known is the rise of the Carey-led reform regime. The Teamsters that confronted UPS in 1997 were very different from those who gave UPS what it wanted between 1982 and 1988. Scores of high-paid timeservers and multiple salary holders had been eliminated, officer and staff salaries reduced, new forums for rank and file participation created, and the top leaders rendered more accountable by the direct vote. Though never acknowledged by the likes of John Sweeney, the heart of this reform process was and is the Teamster for a Democratic Union (TDU), the rank and file organization that fought employers and union bureaucrats alike until 1991 and remains the bosses foe and the conscience and backbone of the reform movement to this day.

The significance of TDU, however, goes beyond its central role in the reform process — as important as that is in prying open the polyester ceiling in that union. This second aspect of changing consciousness involves TDU's rank and file, workplace-based approach. UPS, along with freight, carhauling, and cannery, was one of TDUs main sources of support. For years TDUers fought "Big Brown," as it was known due to the brown uniforms worn by its drivers, as well as the old guard that dominated many UPS Teamster locals. Over a twenty-year span, TDU trained a core of workplace fighters in locals across the country. Unlike the old guard leaders, TDU took the part-timers seriously and taught higher-paid full-time drivers and low-paid part-time sorters to work together in local TDU chapters and on the job.

In the last few years, the TDU approach and the reform process combined to allow acceleration of this rank and file, workplace-based method of organizing. In 1994, when UPS attempted to double the weight sorters and loaders had to handle from 75 pounds to 150, Carey called a quickie strike. It was illegal and many of the old guard locals refused to take their members out, but it was strong enough to impact the company's tight operations severely — a lesson for the future. TDUers, some now local officials, were instrumental in

organizing the strike in many areas.

If the 1994 "wildcat" was a brief dress rehearsal, the real preparation came in the TDU/union response to UPS's attempt to impose team concept beginning in 1995. The attempt to introduce team concept across the UPS system was part of the company's preparation for 1997 bargaining. The company always believed that large numbers of part-timers would cross picket lines and that there was little real unity among its highly diverse workforce that was divided by wages and part-time-full-time status on top of everything else. As in other companies, team concept was meant to cement the loyalty of at least some workers to company goals and further divide its employees.

As Mike Parker reports in *Labor Notes*, "TDU's emphasis on working conditions and contract issues helped prepare a large core of activists to take on company spokespersons. TDU also provided specific education on team concept programs in the industry, so the activist core avoided most of the seduction and traps in these programs." When UPS opened its team concept program in California in January 1995, TDUers were there with TDU and *Labor Notes* materials on the topic (shipped from Detroit overnight by UPS, of course). Soon members were disrupting team meetings and winning rank and file "team leaders" over to the union side. In at least one Michigan center, "team leaders" actually became union contract campaign coordinators — UPS subsequently abolished the teams.

Partly because of the long work of TDU and *Labor Notes* in educating around team concept, and partly because of Carey's own "populist" approach and UPS background, the new Teamster leadership was one of the few in the AFL-CIO that rejected these programs outright. They launched an official, but grassroots educational campaign against their implementation. Teamster staffer Rand Wilson summarized the significance of this fight, "The team concept campaign foreshadowed the contract campaign. UPS geared up its team concept activity as its preparation for the contract and by necessity we had to take them on as part of our preparation." By the time 1997 bargaining came, the UPS workforce had a cadre of experienced rank and file leaders and a membership that understood the issues.

The third aspect was the response of other working-class people to the UPS strike. According to the oft-cited poll, public support ran two-to-one in favor of the strikers. While the UPS strike was not one in need of much outside support, given the leverage the workers had over the company, this support was forthcoming as UPS's non-Teamsters pilots honored and joined the picket lines, as did nonunion FedEx workers and activists from many other unions who visited the picket lines bringing food, drink, and enthusiastic solidarity. The impact on other workers was evident in the wake of the strike as well. One UPS driver told *Convoy-Dispatch*, the TDU paper, of his first day back on the job, "I left for my first stop. When I backed up to the dock at the federal building a group of employees taking their break nearby gave me a standing ovation."

In fact, this sort of consciousness was developing well before the UPS strike. A 1996 poll about support for strikes generally revealed that 46 percent sided with the strikers and only 25 percent with management. This finding was not only remarkably similar to the UPS poll, but in sharp contrast to a 1984 poll that showed 45 percent supporting management against 34 percent for the

strikers. The 1996 results no doubt reflected the widespread support for the plant-level strikes at General Motors demanding additional workers and limits to outsourcing. These strikes began in 1994, where the New Direction's leadership of UAW Local 599 at GM's Buick City in Flint, Michigan, preceded the strike with a prolonged struggle and educational campaign around outsourcing, overwork, downsizing, and the whole conception of lean production, similar in some ways to what TDU had done at UPS. The 1996 Dayton, Ohio GM strike that closed down every GM assembly plant in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico, save one, caught the public's eye and sympathy. So did the Detroit Newspaper strike over similar issues and, indeed, many others in the last couple of years.

There is a lesson here about the formation of class consciousness under contemporary conditions. It is generally assumed on the left that the mass media is a consciousness-killer, a purveyor of bourgeois ideology, and under normal circumstances there is a good deal of truth in this. But working-class people are not nearly as "hegemonized" as much of the left imagines and do not always filter the news the way it is intended. When the media portray "selfish" workers fighting to preserve "their" well-paid jobs, many working-class people no longer internalize the intended message. What more and more people see is themselves or their families — part-timed, overworked, contracted out of work, insecure, and generally subordinated to some "competitiveness" agenda that happens to bring multimillion dollar salaries to top execs and the boot or whip to them. The goals of the UPS strike, full-time jobs for part-timers, limits to contracting out (of driver jobs), secure pensions, were issues in most recent strikes and close to home for million of working-class families. Workers fighting for decent paying full-time jobs are not seen as villains these days, but increasingly by working class people of all races and genders, as heroes — someone you give a standing ovation. The brown collar workers fought the fight for blue and white collar workers across the economy and everyone knew it.

In its most basic form and content, class consciousness is not formed by propaganda or "discourse," but by a combination of self-organization and self-activity, on the one hand, and the experience and recognition of a common and changing condition (itself largely controlled by capital until the resistance grows) that the media may inadvertently spread the news about — except when events are simply blacked out. These struggles and common perceptions are now part of working-class culture in America. They are fueled additionally by the now highly visible fact that the rich are, indeed, getting richer than ever before.

Opportunity for the Left?

THE DISTANCE BETWEEN THIS EMERGING CONSCIOUSNESS and the institutional mentality at the AFL-CIO is undeniable and wide. Insofar as they co-exist in America's only class-based mass organizations, they meet in both cooperation and conflict. They can cooperate in strikes, mass demonstrations, various issue campaigns, an effort like the Labor Party, and elsewhere. Sweeney's promise of financial support for the UPS strike was an example of convergence. The various types of support campaigns, from headquarters-managed corporate

campaigns to more autonomous Jobs with Justice actions, are also points of cooperation. But the points of conflict are no less frequent and run deep beyond simply ideas and consciousness.

When Sweeney promised, but failed to deliver support to the locked-out Staley and Detroit Newspaper workers, conflict of interests were revealed. More generally, the willingness to make concessions, engage in partnership, and ignore the harsh realities of the workplace, creates an on-going conflict that sometimes surfaces as opposition movements among the rank and file. As often, it smolders as a cynicism that limits official mobilizations as much as opposition movements. This old conflict, inflamed by deteriorating living and working conditions, lies beneath what is basically different about the upsurge at UPS and the institutional changes in technique and tactics at the top of the AFL-CIO.

The return of class struggle and the emerging revival of organized labor offer the political left an opportunity to end its isolation and decline. But it also confronts the left with hard choices in political orientation: that between permeation from above and self-activity from below; the easy road to uncritical collaboration with the officialdom or the more difficult one to work with the rank and file.

The choice is not always an easy one for a left long isolated from the working class. The officialdom knows the lingo, most rank and filers don't. John Sweeney is, as a Heritage Foundation study ominously warned, "a card-carrying DSA member," most rank and filers aren't. And indeed, the best contributions to the new book based on the 1996 Columbia teach-in, *Audacious Democracy* edited by Steven Fraser and Joshua Freeman, argue or imply that the new leadership represents a social unionist alternative to traditional business unionism, particularly in upholding racial and gender inclusiveness. This is a mantle with considerable historic attractiveness, but also one that would require a major confrontation at the top not characteristic of this consolidating regime. The book, despite its title and like the real leadership, adroitly avoids the question of such a confrontation as well as of union democracy and membership power.

More immediately, the leadership makes the compelling argument: that organizing comes first if labor is to survive. Before we fret about rank and file rights and power in the unions we need to expand the rank and file in order to get real power in society. Right? Isn't that the way it worked in the 1930s? Wasn't it right to sign-up with John L. Lewis?

Without dragging up the whole permeationist record of the Communist Party of that era, and well aware that organizing really must take place, the answer is still no. No it didn't happen that way in the 1930s. The ranks were out there in the streets before John L. slugged Bill Hutchinson or hired back his old lefty opponents to reorganize the United Mine Workers of America (UMWA) and provide the bureaucratic framework for self-organized local unions in the steel industry. As for the leftists who thought staffing it guaranteed a radical future for the CIO: history is clear that it did not. It tended to be the bureaucracy that carried the left along on its agenda, not the reverse. As John L. himself said about hiring leftists as organizers, "Who gets the bird, the hunter or the dog?" While some Communists and a few other radicals actually became "hunters" in their own right, causing Lewis to have second thoughts,

they too tended to take on the characteristics of the original "hunter." And, lest we forget, with the original pack of "hunters" still in charge, the social unionist agenda went down the toilet, national health care, racial equality, and all. Business unionism didn't lose, it simply modernized.

Major transformations in organized labor are often confusing to the left because, just as labor as a whole has internal tensions and conflicts, the bureaucracy itself is not a monolith. The split of the CIO from the AFL is a very clear example. But it is always the case that some union leaders are less bureaucratic and more progressive than others. There are social unionists, business unionists, and a lot in between. There are certainly times when the left ought to support one leader or group over another: Lewis over Green, Sweeney over Donahue, etc. So, even the current change at the top is welcome given what came before. At the same time, it should be recognized that the change at the top does not significantly alter the tensions between and different interests of the bureaucracy and the rank and file across the labor movement.

In so far as the "change" consolidates ("institutionalizes") a top-down method of operating and organizing characterized by media flash, technique, big spending, and a fundamentally bureaucratic approach to problems that leave the unions as they are, it will fail even in terms of the officialdom's own priorities. For one thing, it will tend to stifle the class consciousness and self-activity that is taking shape and spreading across much of the organized working class. It is this consciousness and self-activity that will bring about the level of organization needed to open greater political possibilities and alternatives.

All of this matters to the left if for no other reason than, like John L. before them, the consolidated leaders of labor are recruiting once again. They are recruiting not only or primarily to staff their institutes, centers, and organizing drives, but to their own political orientation and methods. The siren call of "organize now, leave the other stuff 'til later" is tempting. The desire to be relevant by linking up with a going concern is compelling. And, of course, it would be wrong to ignore the new developments at the top and limit our perspective to the workplace or union meeting, much less deny the central importance of new organizing.

The nature and difficulty of the choices that face the left can be seen in the development of Scholars, Artists & Writers for Social Justice (SAWSJ — pronounced "sausage"), the organization that has grown out of the labor teach-ins of the last two years. The AFL-CIO's reaching out to the left intelligentsia is rightly seen by the organizers of SAWSJ as a positive development. In a way, it is even potentially an alternative to the DC-based, institutional approach as a source of ideas, research, analysis, and expertise. But unlike the institutes and centers clustered around 16th Street in Washington whose staff is likely to be "on the program," SAWSJ inevitably experiences its birth as a combination of broad agreement on supporting the labor movement, on the one hand, and differences over direction, on the other. Debate, particularly public debate, is not something the labor bureaucracy is comfortable with or has a good track record on handling. It becomes even more difficult when the debates focus at least in part precisely on the top-down versus rank and file approaches.

Yet, the value of something like SAWSJ lies precisely in its ability to orga-

nize and foster such debate — not to take a single line (uncritical support), but to incorporate different views by allowing SAWSJ members to express themselves. If, as seems likely, the main activity of SAWSJ will continue to be labor teach-ins, it becomes crucial that dissident voices, including actual rank and file voices, be heard along with the intellectual supporters of the direction of the AFL-CIO leaders. A movement of intellectuals and artists devoted solely to cheer-leading will lose its vitality before long. The temptation to suppress dissident views, however, is strong because the AFL-CIO is not seeking new critics, but more supporters for its approach and its priorities. How SAWSJ will handle this dilemma remains to be seen.

For those who want to go beyond debate, however, and do the work of bringing socialist ideas and organization to a working class, or activist layer of the class, whose consciousness is changing through struggle, making the choice is unavoidable. It is a choice of basic perspectives: bureaucratic or rank and file, top-down or from below, the glitter of influence now or the substance of power down the road. For those who see socialism as the democratic rule of the working class through its own conscious actions and organizations, there really is no choice.

ANNOUNCING THE

AMERICAN WORKERS ALLIANCE

During this century's "Great Depression," three significant unemployed workers' organizations, the Workers Alliance, the Unemployed Councils and the Unemployed League, mobilized the public to demand immediate relief, public works jobs, and the right of the employed to dignity rather than contempt. These organizations helped compel the Roosevelt Administration to create major jobs programs and Social Security. Tens of thousands of veterans of the unemployed movements joined the new industrial unions.

However, by the late 1930s, New Deal administrators (with some help from Communists) succeeded in taming unemployed organizations, diverting their energies from militant struggle to electoral support for the Democratic Party. As a result, the unemployed movement soon disappeared, leaving behind only the memory of a militant movement.

Now, more than a half-century later, a movement of unemployed workers has been reborn. Earlier this year, a number of veterans of labor support work announced a preparatory effort to coalesce a national movement around a job-replacement and job-training program; a new American Workers Alliance calling together casual, seasonal, part-time workers, and the jobless.

The AWA program of demands includes:

- a moratorium on home foreclosure
- a freeze on credit card balances
- a new minimum wage and a minimum of $10/hour for training pay
- the reconversion of closed military bases
- comprehensive adult education programs, day care centers and medical clinics

Get involved!

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Part-time Work: A Mobilizing Issue

Chris Tilly

AT THE CONCLUSION OF THE 1997 STRIKE AT UNITED PARCEL SERVICE, the editorialists of the *Wall Street Journal* offered up a heaping helping of sour grapes:

> Everyone is saying the UPS settlement is a big win for Big Labor, but count us as skeptics. The biggest winner to us looks like the Dick Morris brand of poll-driven, sound-bite modern politics. For what the Teamsters did, in essence, was to borrow the political methods of the Clinton campaign guru and apply them to a strike. They polled and focus-grouped until they found a theme the public seemed to like — the alleged injustice of "part-time work." Then they dispatched well-scrubbed spokespeople to pound the airwaves with this theme every day.... What this strike has revealed more than anything is the paradox of modern union power: Their political clout has increased even as their influence in the private economy has weakened....[But] it can't last. The economic forces that have weakened unions and strengthened the U.S. economy since 1980 continue to move ahead.... So the AFL-CIO should by all means enjoy this triumph over UPS. There won't be many more.[1]

There is much to ponder in this poke at the labor movement. However, I want to focus on one issue in particular: as the *Wall Street Journal* notes, the Teamsters used the issue of part-time jobs to successfully mobilize support for the strike. But in fact, part-time work as a percentage of the workforce has not increased since the late 1980s, and four out of five part-time workers say they want to be working short hours. Why, then, did part-time work turn out to be such a tremendous mobilizing issue?

The answer is that popular perceptions of the part-time problem tap into a much broader and deeper anxiety about job quality. Hours of work are not the key concern; wages, benefits, and job security are. Coupled with a new willingness to consider collective strategies for better jobs, this deeply felt anxiety and anger can form the basis for a continuing labor counterattack to regain what has been lost over the past two decades.

Part-time Work: the Facts

FOR MORE THAN TEN YEARS, UPS HAS SHIFTED RAPIDLY AND DECISIVELY toward a part-time workforce. Part-timers made up 42 percent of the UPS head count in 1986, and 60 percent ten years later, according to the Teamsters.[2] But this makes UPS quite an exceptional employer. Overall, slightly fewer than one worker in five works part-time — about the same as ten years ago (though

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substantially more than in the 1960s or 1970s). Part-time employment rose during the early 1990s recession, as it does in every economic recession (and will once more in the next one) — but fell again as economic growth picked up. Moreover, as noted earlier, most part-time workers choose to work part-time. Only one part-timer out of five is stuck in part-time hours involuntarily. The proportion of part-time workers who would prefer full-time work rises during recessions, but has never amounted to a majority of the part-time workforce.[3]

All of these statements are based on survey data collected by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS). Are the statistics misleading? Yes, in small ways. The BLS only counts you as part-time if you work less than 35 total hours per week in all paid jobs. This overlooks multiple job-holding, since the great majority of second jobs are part-time. Multiple job-holders stand near an all-time high at about five percent of the workforce — but this, too, has changed little (in fact, has slightly decreased) since the late 1980s. The BLS also changed the definition of involuntary part-time employment in 1994, only counting people as involuntary if they are immediately available for full-time hours — reclassifying over a million workers from involuntary to voluntary part-time status (a lot of people, but only about one percent of the workforce).

But basically, the problems of part-time employment are the same as they always have been. Most part-time jobs — whether or not their holders have chosen to work short hours — are second-class jobs. The average part-time hourly wage is about half full-time average. This holds at UPS in particular, where the part-time entry wage was frozen at $8.00 an hour from 1982 until the new contract resulting from the strike. Part-timers are one-quarter as likely as full-timers to receive health benefits from their employers (though in the case of UPS, as in many union workplaces, the union has won a relatively generous benefit package for part-time workers). About four million part-time workers would prefer full-time jobs, but are stuck with short hours. And a much less widely known problem: a roughly equal number of full-time workers would prefer part-time jobs, but are stuck with full-time schedules — unable to obtain the schedule flexibility they need for family or personal reasons. It would be hard to say that any of these problems has worsened since ten years ago.

Temporary Confusion?

DESPITE LITTLE CHANGE IN THE SCOPE AND NATURE of part-time work itself, concern about part-time work has clearly intensified. An important clue about why this has happened is the widespread tendency to confuse part-time and temporary employment. Alec Levenson, an economist at California's Milken Institute, deplores the fact that "part-timers frequently are lumped together with other 'bad' jobs, including temporary and contingent jobs."[4] Indeed, I've found that all kinds of people, from high-ranking managers to TV reporters, get part-time and temporary jobs mixed up.

And temporary work is expanding rapidly. Employment in temporary agencies has expanded twenty-fold since the early 1960s, to the point where Manpower, Inc. employs more people over the course of a year than any other private employer in the country. In addition, the majority of temporary workers, unlike part-timers, are involuntary: they say they would prefer permanent

work. However, the temporary help ranks only amount to two percent of the workforce. Adding in independent contractors, on-call workers, day laborers, and workers provided by contract firms boosts this number to a more substantial eleven percent (three percent of whom are also part-time).[5]

Even more important, all jobs are becoming more "contingent": businesses are disavowing implicit lifetime employment guarantees, and telling workers they are only hired on an as-needed basis. As AT&T geared up to lay off an estimated 40,000 workers in early 1996, Vice President for Human Resources James Meadows told the *New York Times*, "People need to look at themselves as self-employed, as vendors who come to this company to sell their skills." He added, "In AT&T, we have to promote the whole concept of the work force being contingent, though most of the contingent workers are inside of our walls." Instead of "jobs," people increasingly have "projects" or "fields of work," he remarked, leading to a society that is increasingly "jobless but not workless."[6]

So is the public's alarm about part-time employment all just a big mix-up, as economist Levenson would have us believe? No, in fact the fuzzy boundary between part-time and temporary work in the popular mind, while technically incorrect, is actually a fairly accurate reflection of labor market reality. About one-third of temporary agency employees work part-time hours. And second-class part-time jobs typically do not last long — in large part because dissatisfied part-timers are quick to quit.

But people who mix up part-time and temporary work are also reacting to a deeper truth. Part-time jobs, contingent employment, and downsizing are all part of a broader restructuring of jobs. These different aspects have different timing, and have struck different sectors of the economy. But they have similar causes, and similar negative consequences for working families.

The fundamental cause of these changes is a shift in management strategy in the face of growing competitive pressure. The business press puts a particular spin on this shift: instead of guaranteeing a long-term job with regular wage increases, businesses have moved to an "employability" paradigm in which pay is tied to performance and a job is understood to be one short-term step in a job-hopping career. What a job offers is not long-term security but an opportunity to enhance one's long-term employability by learning new skills and taking on new responsibilities. According to management pundits, this does not make jobs better or worse; they are simply different, responding to a changed corporate environment that demands greater flexibility.[7]

But while some groups of workers — particularly those with the most education — benefit from the new paradigm, the overall statistics reveal that the move to "employability" is a net loss for workers. While voluntary quits — true job-hopping — have climbed, what's dramatic is the escalation of involuntary terminations. Permanent layoff rates during 1991-93, nominally years of recovery from a mild recession, were higher than during the deep recession years of 1981-83.[8] In turn, displacement rates for the 1980-92 period as a whole exceeded job loss rates during 1968-79. Between these two periods, the percentage of people laid off increased by one-third, and the percentage fired doubled.[9] The bottom line is bad news for workers' living standards. The median hourly wage for production and nonsupervisory workers has slumped by 13 percent since 1973, after adjusting for inflation.[10] The availability and quality of health insurance and pension benefits have also declined.[11] People who

frequently change jobs earn less, on average, than those who stay at the same job. Upward mobility in income has become less common, whereas downward slides in income have become more widespread.[12] In short, the reality of "employability" is that on the whole it represents a "low road" business strategy: trying to drive down costs by squeezing more out of workers for less. This is the underlying reality that people recognize when they react so strongly to the part-time work issue.

Whom Do You Trust?

THIS "DOWNWAGING" OF AMERICA, AS FORMER SECRETARY OF LABOR ROBERT REICH calls it, has laid the basis for an important shift in public views. In relative terms, Americans have come to trust business less, and unions and government more. The change in views does not represent a sudden loss of faith in corporate America. That trust has been eroding for decades. The percentage of Americans reporting "a great deal" of confidence in major companies slipped from 55 percent in 1966, to 19 percent in 1975, and has stayed at that level ever since.[13] But over those same decades, U.S. confidence in unions and government declined at a similarly precipitous rate. There are plenty of legitimate reasons for this cynicism, of course. The Vietnam War, Watergate, and subsequent decades of government dishonesty and corruption, plus the growing domination of politics by wealthy donors, have undermined faith in government. Narrow business unionism and a lack of internal democracy have weakened support for the labor movement.

In a remarkable study, economist Richard Freeman and political scientist Joel Rogers surveyed workers about their views of labor-management relations. They found that a majority of workers held each of the following views:[14]

• "If more decisions about production and operations were made by employees, instead of managers," their company would be "stronger against its competitors" and "the quality of products or services" would improve.

• However, management does not allow this increased participation because it would threaten managerial power.

• Survey respondents would like to have an organization that is independent of management to represent them and other workers.

• However, they would not like to have a union represent them!

The fact that unions lose most representation elections is due in part to fierce management resistance, in part to inadequate organizing efforts by the unions themselves — but as this survey reveals, it also stems from a profound distrust of unions as representative institutions. A similar distrust of government has fueled repeated tax revolts, starting with California's Proposition 13 in 1979 and continuing to the present. If you don't trust an institution to respond to your needs and wishes, why give it your dues or tax dollars?

The problem, of course, is that distrust of — and abstention from participation in — government and unions, in the absence of other institutions defending workers' interests, has left workers disarmed in the face of capital. There is a fundamental asymmetry here. Distrust of corporate America does not prevent business from functioning: by the rules of survival in a market economy, people must continue dealing with businesses as consumers and workers. On the other hand, withdrawal of participation from government cedes

political control to business, and withdrawal from unions spells the gradual collapse of the labor movement.

Without recourse to government policies or collective bargaining, what options are left for dissatisfied workers? Unvoiced anger? Absolutely: in a recent survey, 60 percent of workers reported that they are not rewarded or recognized for good job performance, and a majority agreed that "employee morale" comes last in the company's list of priorities. "The vitriolic response was amazing," commented a spokesman for the management consulting firm that carried out the study.[15] The popularity of the comic strip "Dilbert" taps this vast wellspring of resentment. (Some managers blame the messenger: a top executive in one company, complaining to me about morale problems, exclaimed, "That damn Dilbert doesn't help things any.") How about theft and sabotage? To be sure: 44 percent of employees in restaurants and fast food services acknowledged they steal cash or merchandise, in another survey. "People want to even the score with their employers," comments Jerald Greenberg, the professor of business ethics who conducted the survey.[16]

New Openness to Collective Responses

BUT THE RESPONSE TO THE UPS STRIKE SIGNALS a tentative new openness to collective responses to business abuses. An ABC News Nightline poll found that 40 percent of Americans sided with the Teamsters in the strike, compared to 30 percent who supported the company; a Fox News poll found a wider spread of 44 to 27 percent.[17] Neither public opinion advantage for the Teamsters was overwhelming, but what's new here is that a plurality actually favored labor over management in a national-level strike. This probably has not happened since the United Mineworkers' coal strike of 1978, if then. The attitude toward government involvement in the workplace is also changing. In the same Nightline poll, 82 percent agreed that part-time workers "should" get the same hourly wage as full-timers for the same work, and 65 percent that part-timers "should" get equal health insurance benefits.[18] "Should," of course, does not necessarily denote backing for legislation. But the massive support for the minimum wage increases passed in 1996 — support that compelled even "free market" Republicans to vote for a wage hike — does demonstrate readiness to endorse government action on job quality. In Massachusetts, a state bill mandating equal pay and proportional benefits for part-time and temporary workers who do equal work is riding a similar groundswell (though business opposition may still block its passage).

Observant business analysts saw this shift coming. Stephen Roach, chief economist for Morgan Stanley, wrote in an October 1995 report entitled "Worker Backlash":

> There can be no mistaking the potential backlash that might ensue from the combined forces of ongoing job losses, limited hiring, stagnant real wages, and adverse shifts in income distribution. As I see it, unless American workers begin to get their "fair" share of the productivity dividend, there is a growing risk of social and economic tension…. The so-called majority of public opinion in favor of deficit reduction — and its associated dismantling of entitlement spending — is about to be drowned out by a groundswell of worker backlash. Workers want more, not less.

A key reason for this backlash is that workers have learned from the experience of decades of stagnating wages and deteriorating job security. But this is not the only reason that worker attitudes have changed. Also contributing to the change is the upsurge of education, organizing, and public discussion on the issue of declining job quality — and proposals for how to address it. In an early salvo, the U.S. Catholic Bishops' 1987 pastoral letter, "Economic Justice for All," espoused the radical notion that the economy should be organized to serve the people, and that unionization, full employment, and economic planning are needed to meet this objective.[19] Prominent public figures from a range of political viewpoints — Jesse Jackson, H. Ross Perot, former Labor Secretary Reich, Pat Buchanan, even at times Bill Clinton and Bob Dole — picked up the populist refrain, denouncing corporate excesses and announcing their determination to help working families right the balance of power. Unions and community organizations have been hammering these themes in tens of thousands of workplaces and communities. In most cases these grassroots efforts have remained invisible to the public, but there have been occasional breakthroughs. For example, "living wage" coalitions joining up local affiliates of ACORN (a national network of community groups), the AFL-CIO, and others have won city ordinances requiring companies that receive city contracts or tax breaks to pay a "living wage" (typically $7.50 an hour or so, the amount a full-time, year-round worker would need to earn to keep a family of four out of poverty). Living wage ordinances have triumphed in Los Angeles, Boston, Baltimore, and Milwaukee, among other places.

And yes, the Teamsters themselves, led by Ron Carey and his team of reformers, can take some credit for heightened awareness of job quality issues, and the problems with part-time work in particular. Contrary to the claim of the *Wall Street Journal* editorialist quoted at the beginning of this article, the Teamsters did not simply fish the issue of part-time work out of a focus group while preparing for the UPS strike. Yes, the Teamsters did poll their membership, and found that part-time and full-time workers shared common ground in their distress about lack of full-time job opportunities and the pay gap between part-time and full-time workers. But the union had been pressing demands about part-time work for years. They raised the issue in negotiations with UPS in 1993, and won a modest commitment to 500 new full-time jobs for part-time workers. In 1994, part-time work was the headline issue as 70,000 Teamsters struck the short-haul carriers that bargain together as Trucking Management, Inc. The union struck to block conversion of full-time jobs to part-time, garnered considerable public support, and won their demand after several weeks on strike. Given UPS's intransigence, the 1997 strike was the next logical step in this progression.

The Teamsters' consciousness-raising about part-time work has played an essential role. However, their framing of the part-time problem is limited by male, blue-collar biases. "Part-Time America Won't Work," proclaimed picket signs across the country. But the problem is not part-time work in itself — it's second class part-time work. Recall that the vast majority of part-time workers — 17 out of 21 million — want to work part-time. Another several million full-time workers would like part-time hours, but don't have access to that flexibility on their job. In short, tens of millions of people — parents of young children, older workers nearing retirement, full-time stu-

dents, and others — want part-time work. While it is a serious problem that some who want full-time work get stuck with part-time hours, the much larger issue is that those who want part-time hours can only get them in a package that typically includes few or no benefits, lower wages, and diminished job security. If the labor movement wants to organize service industries disproportionately populated with women and young adults, unions will have to learn how to communicate with workers who want part-time work as well as those who don't. To their credit, the Teamsters at UPS not only bargained for conversion of part-time jobs to full-time, but also won a one-dollar-an-hour reduction in the wage gap between part-time and full-time workers. Other unions such as the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) have taken this push farther in some contracts, winning workers the flexibility to move back and forth between part-time and full-time jobs without losing pay, benefits, or seniority.

In addition to the bitter economic experience of the last two decades and consciousness-raising from many quarters, a third, more temporary, change has altered public opinion about what can be done to improve jobs. That change is the current buoyancy of the economy, with unemployment dropping to its lowest rate in 24 years. Workers in the midst of a labor shortage tend to get feistier. As a recent *Wall Street Journal* article headlined "Dilbert's revenge" states, "The seesaw of power is tilting from employer to employee."[20] Most of the newfound feistiness takes individual forms: the article bemoans workers' new willingness to demand higher pay and perks and to change jobs if they don't get satisfaction. But a labor shortage also makes workers more willing to strike (if they are unionized), to endorse laws like a minimum wage increase that business lobbyists claim will reduce the number of jobs, perhaps even to take the risk of joining a union. Of course, the effect of a labor shortage on worker consciousness is temporary: the shortage will end, another recession will come, and the seesaw will tilt back toward management. This does not mean that workers' willingness to consider new solutions to lousy jobs will abruptly end. It does mean, however, that labor should take advantage of what could be a short window of opportunity while its hand remains particularly strong, and prepare for some retrenchment when recession strikes.

At the culmination of the UPS strike, a victorious Ron Carey declared, "Working people were on the run, but not anymore. This strike marks a new era."[21] On the other hand, the *Wall Street Journal* editor cited at the outset of this article retorted, "the AFL-CIO should by all means enjoy this triumph over UPS. There won't be many more." Both pronouncements are premature. Certainly, the unexpected burst of support for the UPS strikers is not simply a faddish response to Teamster spinmeisters' manipulation of the issue of part-time work. The outrage over part-time employment reflects a more profound, long-term fear and anger over job quality — especially wages and job security. There is also evidence of a so far limited and fragile shift toward supporting collective solutions — legislation, unionization — for these workplace problems. But it is too early to dub the UPS strike a watershed. Rather, it represents an opening for labor to retake the offensive — an opportunity that can only become a reality if labor and its allies redouble their organizing efforts.

NOTES

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3. For more extensive discussion of the facts about part-time work, including sources, see Chris Tilly, *Half a Job: Bad and Good Part-Time Jobs in a Changing Labor Market* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press 1996).

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17. Christina Duff, "We are so attached to our UPS man, we feel for him," *Wall Street Journal*, August 14, 1997, A1, A6.

18. ABC News Nightline, "Part-time work — Are we all headed in that direction?" ABC Transcript #4231, August 12, 1997, p.3.

19. Jim Stormes, "Common ground: Bishops' letter on economy deserves support," *Dollars and Sense*, September 1987, 13-15.

20. Joann S. Lublin and Joseph B. White, "Dilbert's revenge: Throwing off angst, workers are feeling in control of careers." *Wall Street Journal*, September 11, 1997, A1, A6.

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UPS Strike: A Landmark Victory

Martha Gruelle

AFTER HE WAS RULED INELIGIBLE FOR THE RE-RUN ELECTION for top Teamster office, and facing possible internal-union and criminal charges stemming from his alleged involvement in an illegal campaign-finance scheme, union president Ron Carey took a leave of absence in November 1997. Carey's assertion that he has spent his adult life fighting union corruption may not be enough to refute the claim that he could only have avoided knowing about the money laundering by his hired-gun campaign staff and Washington insiders by looking the other way.

Carey's five-and-a-half-year tenure as Teamsters president may be remembered only for the two big events of his final six months: the revelation of sordid campaign tactics and the triumphant strike against United Parcel Service (UPS) by nearly 200,000 Teamsters — a job action supported by millions of ordinary Americans. On one side we see the difficulty of turning the labor movement around without a clear understanding of rank and file organization, and on the other, we see what organized ranks can do.

It is fitting that the latter point was made at UPS, a company unionized almost from its founding 90 years ago. In 1962, before there was a national labor agreement at UPS, the company easily obtained permission in the Midwest and other areas to hire part-timers and eliminate full-time positions through attrition. Back then, part-timers were paid the same hourly rate as full-time UPSers. Carey and other local leaders in the East struck against the part-time plan and succeeded in maintaining existing full-time slots.

By 1982, national bargaining was the norm at UPS, and then-Teamster-president Roy Williams agreed to a second wage tier. Standard procedure for national UPS contract bargaining was for officials from each side to talk in secret and then ask members to either accept the deal or strike the next day — with no preparation, organization or promise of support. In 1984, Jackie Presser, who had taken over from Williams, concluded talks on an early contract with UPS without even telling local presidents he was negotiating.

The formula that seemed to work for union and company officials alike was to pay full-timers decently while allowing the company to fiddle with work rules and part-timer compensation. During those decades of union cooperation, the company became adept at controlling workers by a combination of strict regimentation and constant campaigning for their loyalty.

The regimentation at UPS is legendary; indeed it is the only side of management style that part-time package sorters tend to see. Not pivoting properly on the sort line or carrying the keys to the package car on the correct

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finger for efficient start-ups, for example, are violations of UPS "methods." While Teamsters can't be disciplined for failing to meet production standards, the "methods" of those not working fast enough are carefully checked and can lead to discipline. That is how production standards are enforced.

But it's not just the ever-present stick that UPS uses so effectively. For full-timers, there's an array of emotional-reinforcement carrots, too. While auto companies have only recently thought about making workers feel good about their jobs; UPS has been doing that for half a century. The company promotes a positive image of its package car drivers, which not only helps sales but impacts morale. With crisp uniforms in the distinctive brown, (to hide dirt, founder Jim Casey decided), a neat appearance, pleasant attitude, and workers who are physically fit, the prototypical UPS driver resembles a boy scout with biceps. By offering a decent-paying blue collar job that provides some status in the community, one top company negotiator could say during bargaining, "All these little nobodies come to work for us and now they think they are somebody."

There's more. The company cultivates the image of being self-run. It's owned by employees mostly managers. And many of those managers are promoted from within. True, the high-level guys only work a package car for a few months during their orientation, but front-line supervisors are often former union members. Thus, the ever-present, if distant, possibility that productivity can get you out of the truck and into a desk job. That's more or less the story of company founder Jim Casey, whose management philosophy most Teamsters know well: Hard work and clean living, he believed, mean success. The company's market dominance is presented as proof, an inducement for team-work; those who identify with the company are on a winning team.

UNTIL AUGUST 1997, THE UNION HADN'T REALLY TESTED which team most workers felt they were on. There had been local and regional strikes against UPS, some quite militant. But there had never been a national strike, and in many parts of the country there had been virtually no union fight-back whatsoever. Were the members ready for it?

For decades, the official Teamster command at UPS was asleep, though some members had been smelling the coffee for years. In the 1970s, a rank and file group called UPSurge organized for better contracts. Later, UPSurge joined the growing Teamsters for a Democratic Union (TDU), which organized around contract and workplace issues in spite of official intimidation. TDU helped drivers fight onerous production standards by distributing log books to record what work was actually accomplished. Although most TDU members at UPS were full-time drivers, they were leaders in reaching out to part-timers, to draw them into the union, coining the slogan "Part Time UPS — Full Time Teamster."

TDU was making UPSers aware that management was out for itself, that it was wrong, for example, to ask delivery drivers to work through lunch and breaks to meet arbitrary standards. In 1987 a majority "No" vote on the contract was a clue that TDU was succeeding. With the union constitution then requiring a two-thirds vote to reject, union president Jackie Presser signed the deal anyway, and many UPSers came to distrust both the company and their union leadership.

That lesson wasn't automatic. It happened because dozens of rank and

filers traveled regularly at their own expense to meet, discuss issues and decide strategy; because hundreds of workplace activists distributed material and talked to co-workers about what was really going on at UPS and in the Teamsters. These rank and filers risked threats of violence, company harassment, and firings, which can stick when both your union rep and your boss want to be rid of you. Their numbers were small, but this was activism at its best.

Then came the big opening: the right to vote for top officers. TDU backed Ron Carey's successful 1991 campaign. His election didn't change the union overnight; but it moved the union toward active democracy. While Carey's 1993 contract negotiations with UPS did not lead to a strike or highlight part-timer issues, Teamsters won improved workplace rights, including the "innocent until proven guilty" clause that keeps most fired workers on the job until the grievance process runs its course. The changes warranted a special "Stewards Guide," printed by the union to bolster contract enforcement on the shop floor. That contract and the union's emphasis on helping stewards were part of the groundwork for the extensive pre-contract organizing by the international and some cooperative locals in 1995-97.

GOING INTO THE 1997 NEGOTIATIONS, TDU UPSERS AGAIN TOOK THE LEAD. International officials wanted to press the company, but weren't sure how strike talk would ring with members. The company had already started warning Teamsters that even mention of a strike would drive away business and cost jobs, and many UPSers had never experienced a strike. But TDU activists had confidence; they printed stickers and windshield signs saying "Ready to Strike...If We Have To," that were in high demand in the spring and summer.

Some even wondered why there was hesitation about striking; UPS presented such a good target. They can't relocate to Third World sweatshops; and while it operates worldwide, only its U.S. operation is profitable. The Teamsters had preserved (or UPS had not fought) a national contract, so they could expect to shut down all the company's profitable operations at once. Further, as most Teamsters know, by far the most profitable piece of UPS business is its time-sensitive next-day and two-day delivery; and even for customers not using those services, reliability is a big factor, so a long strike could have long-term adverse consequences for the company. Since it had raked in some $1 billion in profits the previous year — another fact widely known among the members, UPS could easily have met the union's demands.

But management didn't think it had to, in part because it believed its own rhetoric about "our people." During all those decades when Teamster international officials accepting whatever terms UPS offered, management was busy building company loyalty by offering decent pay and benefits to its full-time workers, all the while insisting on greater productivity. It looked to management as if its paternalism had worked. In 1994, after all, more than half of all locals with members at UPS had scabbed on a nationally called mid-contract strike with leaders of those locals undermining the international leadership for political gain. What UPS management noticed perhaps was that there weren't any wildcat strikers in those old guard locals. And that the political tensions were heightened in early 1997 with the scab leaders' candidate Jimmy Hoffa, Jr., — son of legendary Teamster leader Jimmy, Sr. — preparing to campaign again for the position he had narrowly lost. They should also have no-

ticed that the one-day 1994 strike was 100 percent effective in the locals whose leaders supported it. And they should, perhaps, have been more inclusive of part-time workers when talking about "our people."

Management knew these 110,000 package sorters and truck loaders were alienated from their union — they are mostly young, without union experience, and have neither enough time on the job to learn about the Teamsters nor, for most, the expectation of staying very long. National bargainers hadn't gotten them a starting-rate increase since accepting the second tier in 1982. Few local officials had made any effort to reach out to them, leaving part-timers a potential weak link in union solidarity. The company seemed to take that weakness for granted.

UPS part-time workers are emblematic of the way so many members of the Teamsters and other unions are left out of the life — the discussions, and politics — of the union. The Teamsters Union is only about a quarter truck drivers, and only about half its members are employed in some aspect of moving or warehousing goods. From flight attendants and broccoli canners to plastic knob makers, the majority perform a variety of service and manufacturing jobs.

In Carey's first campaign for Teamster president, he called these hundreds of thousands the "forgotten Teamsters." They're often lower paid and likely to be people of color, immigrants, and women; if they work for a large employer, it's under a local or regional contract — meaning their issues don't get raised on a larger scale. And they're not in the Teamster workplaces with a tradition of union involvement and some expectation of leadership support on workplace issues. Within UPS, it was the part-timers who were the forgotten Teamsters. They have little contact on the job with full-timers and are often viewed as not full union members (though they pay full dues). But part-timers can cast a full ballot in elections. A Michigan part-timer who campaigned for Ron Carey heard from co-workers that the election activity made them feel part of the union for the first time. While there is no data on how or whether part-timers voted, UPS members overall strongly favored Carey in 1991 and 1996. But who knew, as the contract deadline approached last summer, how part-timers would respond?

UPS part-timers have been a second tier of Teamsters, and through the strike they also came to represent the sinking second tier of U.S. employment to a working public increasingly looking over its own shoulder.

"PART-TIME" WORK, WHICH MEANS ANYTHING FROM 15 to 35 or more hours per week, is part of the growth of contingent work — the contracted, casual, temporary, and seasonal work — that is sweeping the economy. As many as 30 percent of workers are in this virtually employed situation, and rarely by choice. The "life-style" magazine stories featuring lawyers and high-tech consultants as examples of Americans becoming independent vendors of their skills are sad jokes to the rental car transporters who must sit in the "shape room" waiting to hear if they'll work that day or not.

Typically, people in contingent jobs get substantially lower hourly pay and benefits than those doing the same work in regular, full-time jobs. Equally valuable to corporations is the flexibility these arrangements provide: no pay for people during slow times — seasonal or, as at UPS, during daily lags in activity — in order to have them on hand for the rush. Workers' compensation

and other liabilities magically disappear; in their place is the freedom to hire and fire at will, with the shimmering promise of a regular full-time job to keep contingent workers doing their best.

As down-sizing and moving plants overseas have stolen job security, those still holding regular jobs are aware they may be down-sized, too. That explains public support for the UPS strike, inspired also by the good relations that brown-shirted delivery drivers tend to develop with customers. Did it matter that the Bureau of Labor Statistics said the portion of the U.S. workforce that is part-time rose only from 14 percent to 18 percent between 1968 and 1996, or that UPS part-timers, unlike other casual workers, got decent health-care benefits. In the eyes of an insecure public, it was about time someone took a stand on second tier work.

Public support for the UPS strike was also helped by the large number of Americans who have worked part-time at UPS at some point; several hundred thousand people a year get a taste of that unpleasant experience, and they spoke up on radio talk shows and with their neighbors last summer. A woman now working for the postal service remembered lasting a week on the UPS package sort and then having to stand in line to turn in a resignation. While public opinion may not have affected UPS management much — their most important customers are other corporations — it did help keep the president from shutting down the strike.

By the time public support gelled, though, the union had already shown it could shut down Big Brown and hold it. (The company estimated no more than 7,000 Teamsters crossing the line, while the union acknowledged perhaps 2,000 workers scabbing, mostly in the South.) More than 95 percent of Teamsters at UPS participated in the strike — in locals run by Carey's foes as well as allies -- and that number didn't shrink appreciably during the 15-day strike. Some working the first days of the strike even joined the picket lines later.

The Teamsters could pull off this strike because the union's real leaders knew the members were ready for it. Preparations were going on 12-18 months before the contract expiration, when the international union hired 18 full-time regional coordinators out of the ranks, surveyed the members, held meetings and rallies about the issues and, through these activities, encouraged rank and file leadership and communication. There was also 20 years of workplace organizing by TDU.

IN THE WAKE OF LAST SUMMER'S STRIKE a few writers and old guard Teamster officials said Carey called the action mostly because of his own political situation: a re-run of last year's election was known then to be likely. Somehow it looked suspicious to them that a labor official does what the members want.

True, the UPS strike was all about Teamster politics, and the next election — regardless of the candidates — will be all about the UPS strike. No Teamster official could afford, politically, to criticize the hugely popular strike. And members next year will be asked directly what kind of union leadership makes that kind of victory most likely in the future.

Junior Hoffa claims that a "strong leader" (as he calls himself) is all it takes to win against the likes of UPS. His rhetoric is clear: it all happens at the bargaining table, and he learned from his father how to act there. The

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Union Politicking in NYC Elections

Michael Hirsch

WITH ALL THE TALK OF A RENOVATED LABOR MOVEMENT bringing a fresh breeze to the country, it smells like the same stale air in New York. City unions that are traditionally political players didn't put on a game face for Ruth Messinger, the doyenne of Manhattan liberal politics and the Democratic Party standard bearer in this fall's near-record low-turnout mayoral election. With almost every union leader falling into line behind the juggernaut of incumbent Republican mayor Rudolph Giuliani, the phone banking, dollar contributions, and get-out-the-vote leg work that are keys to any liberal Democratic upsurge were invested instead in a failed bid to take the nation's only House race this year. There, in the Staten Island-Brooklyn 13th Congressional District race, labor-backed eight-term state assemblyman Eric Vitaliano, a "pro-life" and pro-death-penalty Democrat, attracted only one in three district voters. He did even worse in his effort to succeed retiring Republican star Susan Molinari than did the hapless Messinger in her failure to topple this most corporate-friendly mayor.

Two weeks before the election, Queens Assemblyman Brian McLaughlin, president of the New York City Central Labor Council, the umbrella organization of city AFL-CIO affiliates, announced his federation was joining just about every other major union leader and some 40 elected Democratic Party officials in supporting Giuliani. Their backing went to an almost classic right winger who, in just four years, pared some $5 billion from school capital and operating funds, cut the housing capital budget 54 percent and gutted homeless services by 75 percent while boasting that forcing the poor out of the city through horrific welfare cuts was "not an unspoken part of our strategy. That is our strategy."

McLaughlin did more than grease the skids for the best-placed friend the financial, insurance and real estate sector has. While insisting he never personally "endorsed" the mayor, he clung to Giuliani at campaign stops during the race's final days and joined several other city union leaders on the podium with the mayor at election-night celebrations. Pundits are already calling the former International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers official a possible successor to the now lame-duck Giuliani.

Labor's take on Messinger ranged from what one political director called "aggressive indifference" to outright hostility. Armed with incumbency and inevitability, the mayor not only won the backing of developer-friendly construction unions but numerous city employees unions, too. Messinger, a Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) charter member, even saw her DSA comrade, Stanley Hill, director of the giant American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) District Council 37, jump ship to enthusias-

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tically endorse her opponent. While Hill couldn't easily get his staff to actually campaign hard for the mayor, he didn't have to. Just keeping the labor vote away from Messinger was good enough.

Hill didn't stop there, though. Inedible political breakfasts tried to gin up activists to do the unspeakable, and Hill bragged in a signed post-election editorial (*Public Employee Press* 11/14) about how he "stood with Mayor Giuliani as he gave his victory speech" and of being "proud to represent this union, whose political word is always backed up by the tremendous political support of our dedicated, hard-working activists and volunteers."

Not that a vote for Messinger should be confused with exercising unalloyed principle or independent political initiative. Her trumpeting city-worker productivity schemes — including increasing the work week from 35 to 39 hours and eliminating release time for union stewards — calling for police and teacher raises that would be funded through cuts to lower-paid city workers, and slamming some $600 million in concessions from city unions in 1995 as a sweet deal, ensured that any labor support would be tepid at best.

Some backed the mayor as a reward for boosting policies that would benefit their own members, if no one else's. District Council 37, which never endorsed Ed Koch in his mayoral and gubernatorial outings, did better, many say, under Giuliani than under former Mayor David Dinkins, whose demands for give-backs, layoffs and other threats to job security were less popular than the mayor's proferred, if slim, severance packages.

Lou Albano, president of Local 375, Civil Service Technical Guild of architects and planners, credits the mayor with saving capital programs and fighting for added federal transportation dollars programs vital to his members. About why so many unions support a candidate so ideologically distant from them, Albano said "He's the game in town. And it's nice to have access."

BUT IF LABOR LOVED RUDY IN NEW YORK, SUPPORT FOR VITALIANO REPRESENTED part of labor's larger anti-GOP push in Washington. "Punishing the national Republicans is only part of the strategy for putting labor issues front and center," McLaughlin said. The area's 73,600 union members give it " the highest union density of any congressional district in the state," and make it ripe for labor influence, he added. But that can only work if union households prize their leaderships' endorsements above other loyalties, or if unions begin to speak with one voice about common interests, not just common candidates.

Vitaliano, chair of the Assembly's Government Employees committee, is cozy with both organized labor and — until this year — the Brooklyn Conservative Party organization, which is hardly a friend of unions. His TV ads called him "the experienced conservative Democrat," a message intended to fend off negative ads paid for with $800,000 in contributions from national Republican donors to pump up Staten Island's City Council member Vito Fossella's winning effort to take one of the three closely watched national races this year.

Even Larry Hanley, president of the Staten Island-based Amalgamated Transit Union Local 726 and a fixture in progressive county politics, was on board for the right-wing Democrat. "Vitaliano is bad on life. He's bad on death. But once you get past life and death, he's fine. Molinari tried to gut every protection workers have. From an economic perspective, Vitaliano is the far better choice," Hanley said.

The union thrust in this traditionally conservative district came after their successful 1995 intervention to stop Republican powerhouse Borough President Guy Molinari from upending District Attorney Richard Murphy in 1995. And their more recent coup in electing half the 900-member Staten Island county Democratic committee with union members, giving them what some hope is institutionalized leverage in the county political operation, was partially responsible for getting Staten Island party head and former also-ran Bob Gigante to back away from a primary run against Vitaliano.

Certainly contingent issues were important in the loss. Vitaliano was an inexpressive and fumble-mouthed campaigner who ran a remarkably inept campaign in the Brooklyn section of the district by vacillating on several unpopular land-use projects that Fosella was quick to attack. Yet if labor's only congressional-election drive, which included a last-minute visit by Clinton, was a test-car run in preparation for a nationwide Democratic Party comeback in rust-belt states, the union-made engine in the '97 Vitaliano blew out.

WHILE VITALIANO'S NUMEROUS LABOR ENDORSEMENTS INCLUDED such election-day powerhouses as Hospital Workers 1199, District Council 37 and the United Federation of Teachers, Messinger boasted a scant 10 union endorsements—including the tiny Bridge Painters Union, the Lithographers District 1L, Musicians Local 802, the Connecticut-based Autoworkers Region 9a, Communications Workers Local 1180 and D.C. 37's Local 420, a city hospital workers local whose members failed to win job security from the mayor. The rest were either on board for Giuliani or on the fence. And except for Arthur Cheliotis's politically savvy CWA local, none of Ruth's union supporters could substitute for the field operation her campaign never cohered. Among those declared neutral were such get-out-the-vote warhorses as 1199 and the United Federation of Teachers. UFT spokesperson Anne Millman said the union rarely endorses for the mayoralty. "Supporting Dinkins in '89 was an anomaly," she said.

There may not be a lot of daylight between neutralists and new Giuliani converts, either. As a vice chair of the state Democratic Party, 1199's Dennis Rivera could hardly endorse the Republican nominee. And with his union facing a contract round with the home health care industry—employers heavily funded with public dollars — a vindictive mayor can make things tricky. Rivera peppers his frequent addresses to members with appeals to "realism" and "pragmatism." What could be more pragmatic than not alienating a sure winner?

Or feathering one's nest. If Giuliani's long-shot plans to privatize several of the city's 11 hospitals survive a court challenge, city employees' Local 420 will no longer represent the thousands of affected and newly private-sectored workers. Writing in the *Village Voice* (Nov. 4), Bob Fitch opined that, "As a member of the AFL-CIO's Executive Board, Dennis stands a better chance to prevail in any future jurisdictional dispute" should the sell-off go forward.

Certainly Debs's adage, "Its better to vote for what you want and not get it than to vote for what you don't want and get it," took another beating this year. But by backing the greater of two evils and mutating from liberal Democratic partisans into Giuliani courtesans, many of New York's top union leaders ensured that even the vintage Gompers notion that unions reward friends while punishing enemies was dead on arrival, too.

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION AND THE LEFT

Reginald Wilson

WITH THE ACTION OF THE CALIFORNIA VOTERS ON PROPOSITION 209 and the Supreme Court decisions in the *Hopwood* and *Podberesky* cases, the nation is on the brink of totally abandoning affirmative action as one modest tool for partially remedying centuries of legally sanctioned racial oppression and pervasive and conscious exclusion. The national mood is one of impatient hostility, and an insistence that blacks "just get over" their feelings of victimization. The prevailing myth is that the U.S. is a color blind society in which people are judged by the "content of their character," and while blacks, admittedly, have been shamefully treated in the past, that is dismissed as part of history.

According to opinion polls, this appears to be the view not only of conservatives and the rabid right but, apparently, of the general public. It is reflected in the rush of legislation that has now placed affirmative action in jeopardy in 18 states. It is further reflected in the popularity of books such as Murray and Herrnstein's *The Bell Curve* or Abigail and Stephan Thernstrom's *America in Black and White*.

That is to be expected. After over 20 years of anti-affirmative action bombardment by Presidents Reagan and Bush, adverse rulings by an increasingly conservative Supreme Court and legal attacks mounted by organizations such as the Center for Individual Rights, people have become increasingly hostile to affirmative action.

What is unexpected is the abandonment of affirmative action by many on the left. William Julius Wilson trumpets his bona fides as a socialist, but concludes that affirmative action will only make white people angry. Christopher Jencks believes schooling makes little difference in the life chances of students and finds the gaps between blacks and whites in income and job status due mainly to luck. And a supposedly left journal, *Mother Jones*, fawns rhapsodically over Ward Connerly, the prime proponent among the Regents of the University of California of the elimination of affirmative action, and the architect of the infamous Proposition 209. There are so many instances of the left's disavowal of affirmative action that one wonders if leftists have forgotten the history of the black experience or if, selfishly, they have lapsed into a rough approximation of "I've got mine, Jack, you get yours."

The negative effect of race in society today is too pervasive and profound for any but the most obtuse to fail to see: a 1990 study by the Urban Institute documenting job discrimination found that "unequal treatment of black job seekers was entrenched and widespread, contradicting claims that hiring practices today either favor blacks or are effectively color blind." A 1995 study of university faculty hiring practices found that universities "pulled their ads

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from minority publications regardless of the number of vacancies that occurred," while whites occupy 88 percent of faculty positions. The same year a study of housing discrimination showed that blacks seeking housing in white neighborhoods were discriminated against 50 percent of the time, and Hispanics 35 percent of the time. A 1992 study showed that, despite affirmative action, the majority of blacks and Latinos held the greatest proportion of low-skilled, low-paying jobs in the public and private sector. For example, Latinos made up 56 percent of laborers, but only 5.6 percent of professional workers. A Harvard University report (April, 1997) reveals that since 1991, the United States has experienced "the largest backward movement toward segregation" since the Supreme Court's 1954 school desegregation decision.

"To some, bigotry has to wear a white hood, burn a cross and blatantly exclude minorities from jobs...to qualify as a problem," says David Shipler, author of *A Country of Strangers: Blacks and Whites in America*. Undoubtedly, some whites who went South during the Civil Rights era, fought side by side with blacks against racists and bigots and, in some cases, gave their lives, may have thought that victory was virtually complete with the integration of lunch counters and buses, and securing the right to vote. But at least the left should have understood that those were only the most blatant symbols of oppression and racism, that more difficult and complex battles would have to be fought, especially those relating to the hierarchical class structure of American society and the economy that maintains it. Those who understood this more difficult aspect of the struggle should be doubly ashamed for abandoning it since racism clearly remains deeply rooted and pervasive.

CURRENTLY, CONFLICT OVER HIGHER EDUCATION ADMISSIONS is the most visible part of the struggle because of the publicity surrounding the *Hopwood* decision and the SP-1 order by the University of California Regents. *Hopwood* was a case brought against the University of Texas Law School by Cheryl Hopwood who claimed that blacks with lower scores than hers were admitted to the school while she was rejected. The Fifth Circuit Court ruled in her favor and the decision was appealed to the Supreme Court which refused to hear it. As a result, the Texas decision stands, theoretically having force only in the Fifth Circuit, consisting of Texas, Louisiana and Mississippi.

Almost immediately after the *Hopwood* decision was upheld, the Texas legislature passed a law requiring the University to accept any student who graduated at the top 10 percent of her or his class.

The SP-1 order passed by the Board of Regents of the University of California in 1997 decreed that the university could not use race, ethnicity or gender as a basis for graduate school admissions. That order will apply to undergraduate admissions in 1998.

But the history of conflict about race in higher education started long before these events. For example, City College of New York in the 1920s and 1930s "had done much for earlier groups coming from Europe, [but] it failed to do the same for the new arrivals from the American South and the Caribbean," according to David Lavin who did an in-depth study of City University.* In-

*(David E. Lavin, Richard D. Alba, and Richard A. Silberstein, "Open Admissions and Equal Access: A Study of Ethnic Groups in the City University of New York," *Harvard Educational Review*, Vol. 49, No. 1, February, 1979, pp. 53-92.)

deed, City College was an open access institution in the 19th century; any high-school graduate could attend free of charge. But by the 1960s the admission criteria were so high—a high school average in the upper eighties—that it effectively kept most blacks and Hispanics out despite their rapidly increasing numbers in the population. Not until the massive minority protests of 1969, and the negotiations that followed, was the open-admissions policy begun at the City University of New York (CUNY).

The CUNY experiment was instituted at the same time as serious doubts were being raised about the ability of American education to remedy inequality, particularly between white and non-white ethnic groups. James Coleman's massive study, *Equality of Educational Opportunity,* had in 1996 been published with these sentiments: "[T]he socioeconomic characteristics of children's families were more important than any other factor in determining academic performance." This perspective was reinforced by the use of standardized tests which were regarded as "neutral" and "objective" measures. Compounding these views were the apocalyptic perceptions of such academics as Louis Heller who wrote *The Death of the American University: With Special Reference to the Collapse of City College of New York*. Yet, despite the hostile attitudes of many educational "experts" and school faculties, Lavin could conclude his study with the following observations: "Not only were minority admissions to CUNY greatly increased, but these increases occurred at all levels....Not only did thousands of students enter college as a result, but thousands also graduated."

NEVERTHELESS, OPEN ADMISSIONS WOULD SOON BE ENDED for reasons too complex to be discussed here, except to note that among them was the City of New York's fiscal crisis that served to undermine free tuition and to raise admission standards. But most important is the widespread doubt on the part of educators, both conservative and liberal, about the ability of most minority students to overcome their handicaps and rise to excellence. They differ on the reasons —conservatives suspecting cultural or genetic barriers; liberals citing poverty and inferior schooling — but they agree on the consequences, i.e., the inability of minorities to profit from an elite education. When admitted to elite universities, they are assumed to be displacing more "qualified" applicants. And by "qualified" they mean primarily those with high Scholastic Assessment Test (SAT) scores, or American College Test (ACT) scores, and grade point averages (GPA). Academics, conservative and liberal, have relied on SATs as a measure of "merit" or being "qualified" to such an extent that we must question what is meant by these terms.

Webster's Dictionary defines merit as "to be worthy" or "to be entitled." I have an SAT score of 1100, and yours is 1000. I am more "worthy" than you, more "qualified," more "meritorious," and therefore more entitled to the rewards and privileges of society. A posture in profound contradiction to democracy. As John Livingston, Professor of Government at California State University, says of this tension between meritocracy and democracy: "[M]eritocracy tends to create an elite whose members are indifferent to racial justice and a middle class that may even psychologically require it..."

But a sober study of these arrangements proves the porousness of these definitions and questions the validity of such judgments. There are programs set up to give students instruction above and beyond the usual academic pro-

cess which include tutoring, mentoring and summer programs, among others. Professor Phillip Uri Treisman reports the results of his intervention in a calculus class at the University of California, Berkeley as follows: "After the intervention program, the failure rate for black and Hispanic students was below 4 percent and 66 percent of those students earned a grade of "B" or better in calculus, and they were out-performing the white and Asian students. The students with the lowest SAT scores in the program were out-performing the students with the highest SAT scores who were not in the program." All of which is part of the massive evidence that "merit," "qualified," and "entitled" have become terms of deception and self-deception.

In the words of Christopher Edley, Jr., Professor of Law at Harvard University: "Academics have defaulted in the definition of merit by equating it with the SAT. Thus, it has become the legal basis for defining merit and the academic community has been silently complicit in this, even though we know it not to be true."

Left academics must challenge those definitions of "merit" that accept the status quo and legitimate a social hierarchy. The trappings of standardized tests and the consequent stratification of social classes, no matter how persuasive and long-standing, must not blind us to the necessity of forging a social democracy by eliminating the artificial barriers that separate us from each other.

MY COMMENTS EMPHASIZE THE ASSAULT ON AFFIRMATIVE ACTION in the educational arena because it is academics with whom I am primarily engaged, and it is academics who are, perhaps, the most ambivalent in the current struggle over affirmative action. This is not meant to suggest that only college students are threatened by the possible demise of affirmative action but minority students are certainly among most immediate victims as a result of the recent decisions in Texas and California and they have received little help from their supposed allies on the left who, with a shrinking number of exceptions, have muted their opposition to the assault on affirmative action and, worse still, have in growing numbers joined the reactionary offensive.

Apparently, many in the retreating left are bedizened and seduced by the moralistic aura of such terms as "merit," "qualified," "standards," etc., even when manipulated to serve ends inimical to democracy. Assuredly, another more meretricious motive is that affirmative action in college admissions is perceived by many academics as a threat to their professional careers and elitist self-image. To be sure, higher education itself was anti-democratic in origin, marked by rank and privilege. To remedy this historic injustice demands that academics recognize that they have been the beneficiaries of ancient policies of racial exclusion and oppression. Above all, it is a major responsibility of all those who think of themselves as people of the left to become actively engaged in the struggle to preserve and extend affirmative action programs in their immediate world, and beyond.

Leftists and all progressive academics must be prepared to pay the price of eradicating centuries of injustice even if it entails a degree of personal sacrifice. No matter what the courts do or how the majority of citizens votes all of us must at all times give a ringing endorsement to the struggle for racial justice.

Netanyahu as a Reality

Maxim Ghilan

SINCE BENYAMIN NETANYAHU CAME TO POWER 18 MONTHS AGO it has become fashionable in Left-wing and Liberal circles in Israel and in the West to say the man is weak, does not know what he does, and contradicts himself, promises everything to everybody.

This analysis is quite wrong — except for the last bit.

"Bibi" Netanyahu rose meteorically inside the Likud, destroying the party's old leadership — or at least its strength. He was more dynamic, decisive, shrewder, a better organizer. He unseated the party "Princes" — Benny Begin, son of the late Irgun leader, Dan Meridor, son of the former Irgun Chief of Staff, and others — by dividing and taking over, with the help of a small bunch of henchmen led by the ubiquitous and obnoxious "Yvette" Liebermann, a tough Russian immigrant who used to head clash-squads of Likud and Beitar students.

Yvette Liebermann went on to reorganize the Likud's ranks in his master's image. Bibi and Yvette succeeded in splitting the right-wing party, taking over a majority of its 2000-odd party council by flattering the egos of the smaller honchos and exacerbating the nationalist and violent feelings of rank-and-file activists.

Although a Sabra of Polish-Russian origin himself, and a man who lived a large part of his youth in the United States — doing nobody exactly knows what — Bibi succeeded in becoming identified with the aspirations of Oriental Jews in Israel, who still remain a majority among the dispossessed. He furthermore underpinned vague, nationalistic, as well as egotistical, non-ideological stirrings among the almost one million-strong community of immigrants from the former Soviet Union.

On this double platform of national Jewish-Israeli greed and populist "Wannatoo" greed, Netanyahu succeeded in buttressing his personal position, rising to national power after almost a year-long campaign of rabble-rousing, Peres-cursing and organized popular resistance ladled with such slogans as "Death to Rabin" and "a War Criminal Prime Minister" — culminating in the assassination of the Prime Minister. And in its wake — Netanyahu's electoral victory in the spring of 1996.

A deep hunger for total personal power, nationalistic greed for Arab land and a huge, almost megalomaniacal ego are the three basic drives underpinning Bibi's continued, successful rule — in spite of his repeated and widely

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documented failings and mistakes as a leader.

BENYAMIN NETANYAHU'S FIRST AND FOREMOST OBSESSION deals with the conquest of maximal, personal power — and with how to hold on to it.

To do so, Netanyahu has not hesitated to destroy his own Likud's hegemony over all of the present coalition. In fact, Bibi has shaped purposefully a coalition of many, differing and sometimes contradictory political parties and personal allegiances. None of these elements and personalities may now oppose the checkered whole without losing its or his share of influences and privileges.

There is the Likud itself, cut into ribbons by Bibi, who has not hesitated to expel such luminaries as Benny Begin and Dan Meridor; David Levy's North African petty bourgeois party Gesher; the Orthodox anti-Zionist Agudat Israel Rabbis; MAFDAL, the fanatic Zionist-Orthodox organization of settlers and Kippa-wearing extremists (from which Rabin's assassin, Yigal Amir issued); as well as Natan Sharansky's Israel Be Alyah — the party of Russian "wannatoo" immigrants; the Third Way — a movement of former Labor notables opposed to withdrawal from the Golan Heights; SHASS, the ever-growing Orthodox fundamentalist movement of Oriental Jews led by Rabbi Ovadiah Yossef; and the party of a former Chief of Staff — territorial extremist Rafael Eytan. All these are supported by wider extremist circles, discretely represented through MAFDAL Knesset Members or the Settlers Council of Judea and Samaria and Rehavaam Zeevi aka Ghandi, a former Governor of the West Bank and Adviser on Terror to Prime Ministers. This entourage also includes convicted Jewish terrorists who follow the neo-Nazi teachings of the late Rabbi Kahane of Jewish Defense League fame and settler-Rabbis whose Yeshiva-academies dominate the West Bank and some of whom cursed Rabin and advised fanatics — including assassin Yigal Amir — that it was their religious right, and proper, according to the Talmud, to kill a "persecutor" who tries to give away the land allegedly promised by Yehovah to the Jews.

This coalition of not-so-small splinters of course satisfies substantial financial demands of its checkerboard-electorates. On a wider scale, Netanyahu's coalition facilitates the rise of the Orthodox-Jewish counter-revolution led by three parties — MAFDAL, Agudat Israel and SHASS. A revolution that has already weakened considerably the secular and democratic character of Israeli society and is gradually depriving all non-Orthodox Jews — primarily the Conservative and Reform communities — of personal and civil rights.

An example among dozens. In October, Rabbi Ovadiah Yossef declared that no Orthodox Jew is allowed to go before Israel's High Court of Justice and must ask to be judged by Rabbis instead. Another example: the Orthodox threat to dismantle the Religious Councils which exist in all cities because a female Rabbi, belonging to the Conservative community was elected to the Natanyah religious council.

Netanyahu, who married and divorced his first wife according to Reform law, could not care less. Netanyahu is concerned with personal power and its benefits, not with the religious slant or ideology of his captive supporting partners.

SIMILAR TO HIS SUPPORTING CAST IN ISRAEL, Netanyahu has set up a network of

financial and political support abroad, men whose interests he serves through the present government's rabid "privatization" wave, based on Bibi's own experience as political and economic servant of powerful politicians, spooks and entrepreneurs in America, when he used to live there. Bibi's foreign little helpers include Florida-based Orthodox bingo and real estate magnate Irwin Moskovitz of Ras al Amud ill fame, but also the non-Jewish heads of the Canadian-based multinational newspaper-chain and financial corporate entity called Hollinger's. Australia, too, has become a base from which funds and political help are directed to Bibi's and Yvette's personal machine.

All his supporters abroad — which includes Vice President Al Gore — are either economic reactionaries (wild free market advocates, all) or Jewish-nationalist extremists whose darkest wish is the expulsion of all Gentiles from Israel and the Occupied Territories, and the creation of a de facto Israeli Empire.

Meanwhile, of course, these external supporters get a large slice of Israel's land and economy, just as Sharon somehow got himself a huge farm (whose workers are Arab) and real estate in East Jerusalem.

Here private greed serves the larger purpose — nationalist greed for property and land belonging to others, or having been worked by Gentiles for some eight to twenty centuries. And all of this covered by the emotional pretext of a "return" to the Land of Israel — even to parts of it never ruled over, or even conquered by the Kings of Judea and Israel, during their relatively short-lived kingdoms.

All this, in the name of a mythical promise by God. Who, decidedly, continues to serve as a pretext for one of the basest drives of Man: egotistical, selfish greed.

IS NATIONALIST GREED THE DRIVE BEHIND BIBI'S DESIRE to conquer and rule or vice versa? There is no answer to this question.

Let us ask, however — conquer what, precisely? The Palestinian Autonomy's territories?

Yes, that too. But Bibi has larger pretensions. He and his followers want the Whole Land of Israel (to give the term its proper translation rather than the pithy and inexact "Greater Israel" definition).

This is a territory which, according to the Old Testament as revised and ameliorated by a series of Rabbis and other fanatic "Sages" in the first Millenium, would include not only the whole of present-day Israel and Palestine, west of the Jordan river, including Gaza and the West Bank, but also the Golan Heights; large slices of Lebanon and Syria; and all of the present Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. (Some settler rabbis interpret the alleged Divine Promise to the people of Israel to include, by geographical projection of the biblical quote "From the Sea to the Desert," the whole Arabian peninsula as well as northern Egypt, Sicily and part of Tunis. By virtue of a "Divine Promise" made by Yehovah to the people of Israel...)

By what might not amount to a coincidence, real political and geopolitical considerations defined in 1982 by then Minister of Defense Ariel Sharon (now Number Two man under Netanyahu as Minister of Infrastructures) included the "need" to annex large territories reaching into the Arab-Persian Gulf — in order to take over the oil-rich Emirates, Saudi Arabia, Iraq, all of virtual

Kurdistan and Kuwait. Sharon's and Bibi's "Lebensraum" aspirations were, and remain, an integral if not declared part of the present Israeli leadership's ambitions.

It would seem that, according to realistic geopolitics, such aims are unrealistic, paranoid, essentially wild fantasy. Moreover, bound to fail without American support. Certainly, Washington would not allow such a scheme being attempted by Bibi or other Israeli nationalists — not, that is, *under present conditions*.

Accepted wisdom in the West pretends that mass removal of populations is not possible nowadays, and the takeover of Empire-sized slices of territory won't be condoned by the international community, in this era of American-dominated unipolarity. Such conventional wisdom ignores the realities of the post-World War II 20th century. In the former Yugoslavia; the former Soviet Union; China; India/Pakistan/ Bangladesh; Africa; not forgetting Israel/Palestine where two waves of Arabs have already been "transferred" out of the Jewish-controlled areas between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean. In 1948 and 1967, there was a total of one and a half million Palestinians whose descendants continue to proliferate in the bleakness of refugee camps throughout the Arab world. There was a gap of roughly 20 years between transfers. Another such approximate gap exists between 1967 and 1988.

The real question, thus, is not whether such plans are realistic but, rather, whether Bibi has such plans. And the answer is yes.

BIBI'S "WHOLE ISRAEL STRATEGY," just as that of any other imperialist thinker and politician, is based on what Winston Churchill defined as the Nazi "salami principle" — you cut away, one thin slice after the other, until you have gobbled up the whole sausage.

It must be granted that this strategy was not initiated by Benyamin Netanyahu. Nor is it the exclusive policy of the Israeli right. Zionist salami tactics were first applied by the earliest Zionist and pre-Zionist Jewish settlers a century ago, and refined or perfected by David Ben-Gurion — founder of the State of Israel, in the 30s. They were further defined by Ben Gurion's partners in crime, henchmen such as Yigal Allon, Israel Galili, Golda Meir, Israel Tabenkin — as well as their next-generation followers Moshe Dayan, Yitzhak Rabin and Shimon Peres. "Plan D" for the expulsion of Arabs in 1948 was Allon's brainstorm; so was, in 1967-69, the "Allon Scheme," a plan to cut up the West Bank into Arab batustans or ghettos, surrendered by Jewish settlements and army camps. This scheme is now being implemented on a larger scale by Bibi and Sharon, under the shamelessly explicit definition as "a larger Allon plan." (Another, more modest version of this scheme was developed in the 80s by Sharon as the "Seven Star Plan.")

There are, however, two serious differences between Labor's salami imperialism and Bibi's.

First, Labor's leadership — including the late Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin — wanted to get the largest possible areas, just as the Likud does, but was willing to wait for a period stretching into the future, maybe as long as 20 years, with the Palestinians' own collaboration. This would allow present settlements to grow and expand slowly and almost painlessly. After Rabin and Peres promised Arafat there would be a stop to settlement, over 50,000 new settlers

were funneled into the West Bank and Gaza by the Labor government, from 1993 to its downfall in the spring of 1996.

But this is not news, either. Labor as well as Likud rulers occupied, settled and expropriated tens of thousands of acres inside the 1948 borders as well as in the West Bank and Gaza areas, including Arab East Jerusalem, since the armed Israeli conquest of these areas in 1967. This was done slowly, carefully, through buying off Arabs and, more often, by expropriating land for the sake of "national security." All land controlled by the British Mandate, and before that by the Ottoman Empire, was declared "national land" and its use dedicated exclusively to Jews. Those Arabs who worked such illegally proclaimed "national land" are thrown out, their olive groves and produce destroyed (or taken to Jewish settlements), in total disregard of international law and in particular of the Geneva Conventions.

Labor worked slowly but thoroughly. Bibi works fast, and his time-schedule is months rather than decades. In fact, the first stage of Bibi's accelerated conquest of the Whole Israel Land may be implemented as early as the summer of 1998.

SECOND, LABOR USUALLY HAS TRIED TO WIN OVER OR AT LEAST MOLLIFY non-Palestinian Arab leaders (such as the late Amir Abdallah of Transjordan and his son, King Hussein of Jordan), concentrating on the dispossession of the "people of the land" — the Palestinians. The right, however, does not believe in talking to Arabs, any Arabs. Only in shooting them and controlling them. And in so doing, inflicting a maximum of humiliation.

(One huge exception must be mentioned: in the wake of Israel's near-defeat, during the 1973 Kippur War, newly elected Likud Prime Minister Menachem Begin in 1979 agreed to return the Sinai peninsula and Rafah area to President Anwar Sadat, and thus got a peace agreement with Egypt which lasts to this day. Of course, once the Arab States were divided by Egypt's separate peace, Begin then went on to further put down the Palestinians, to colonize the occupied Golan Heights and West bank and to launch the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon.)

WE THEN HAVE TO DEAL WITH AN INTELLIGENT, relatively young, dynamic and totally fanatic imperialist leader, in control of a huge, highly sophisticated army (albeit one suffering from morale problems), possessing non-conventional weapons and airforce-carriers of mass destruction. A leader with a 50-year national past of conquest, expropriation and expulsion of millions of Arab men, children and women.

Furthermore, this fanatic imperialist leader benefits from a dwindling but still strong capital of international sympathy, based on Gentile guilt and non-Jewish moral empathy with the sons and daughters of Jewish-European genocide victims.

Most important of all, Netanyahu has the almost unconditional — albeit reluctant — support of the U.S. administration; Congress; many American Jews; fundamentalist Protestant christians; and part of the financial and military establishment which exists in a state of symbiotic exploitation of at least a $3.1 billion annual military budget, granted by the U.S. to Israel and largely recycled into the U.S. military and aircraft industry, into military and support-

ive technology and into fat payoffs to Administration officials who get industrial management jobs as soon as they retire. American aid to Israel — to any Israeli regime short of one that would endanger American exploitation of Arab oil — is active as well as "actively passive" — that is, when faced with further Israeli horrors.

TO THE DEBIT SIDE OF NETANYAHU'S LEDGER ARE THE FOLLOWING:

• Growing disruption of Israeli society into a variety of overlapping and opposing components: the Orthodox, the extremist Nationalists, civil society Zionism in the old Rabin-style; Oriental Jews versus Ashkenazi Jews; the rich security-entrepreneur class versus impoverished peripheral development towns; local capitalists against foreign ones taking over and buying out more and more Israeli enterprises, even whole economic sectors, with Bibi's blessings. And above all, a mixture of local and international stock-market wizards playing against the economy for the sake of a few billions or so.

Disruption is moving fast towards dislocation. Seen from this angle, there appears to exist a serious internal threat to Israel's existence, one greater than the danger of military attack from the outside.

• Netanyahu also has to take into account the lowering quality of the "human material" (as is said in Hebrew) which feeds successive waves of army-conscripts. In 1948, few were those shooting themselves in the foot to escape fighting. In 1997's occupied Southern Lebanon the number of young Israeli conscripts doing so is on the increase.

• A change of United States policy is not inconceivable, either. Bill Clinton abhors Bibi, "this impossible man" as he has called him. The President's antipathy is as yet contained by the leading segment of the American financial-military-industrial complex, Israel's staunch ally and symbiote: the banking establishment, war and airforce industry and the local oil producers of the Sunbelt. But things might change if the adversary, old money and Arab oil-based segment of the economy starts to worry about Bibi's and Sharon's "Drang nach Osten" (Drive Eastward).

• Finally, because of the Orthodox revolution in Israel, world Judaism is becoming disenchanted with the present Israeli government. In recent American-Jewish elections to the World Zionist Organization's (WZO) 33rd Congress, non-Orthodox movements got 73.7 percent of the vote: 47.7 percent going to the Reform movement and non-Orthodox. Conservative Judaism got 26 percent. U.S. Jewry represents 29 percent of the Zionist Congress. They will now capture significant positions in the movement (formerly dominated by Israeli Zionists) and have considerable influence when the WZO disburses its annual budget — some $400 million, spent through the Jewish Agency in Israel.

As for Bibi's main American-Jewish partners, the Religious (Orthodox) Zionist movement, it drew no more than 10.8 percent of the American-Jewish Zionist vote. The Likud in America got 1.5 percent; Labor got 3.4 percent; the World Confederation of United Zionists — less than one percent; and the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA) headed by Morton Klein — only 2.9 percent. (Altogether, 111,000 Jews voted in the U.S.)

And in Britain, too, the Jewish leadership is demonstrating clearly and in an exceptionally blunt matter its disagreements with Orthodox-backed Bibi. Inside two years, Bibi may lose most popular Jewish support abroad.

Time, thus, is of the essence. The messianic and psychologically disturbed man now ruling over Israel's destiny is also a gambler — a lucky one at that. Holding almost absolute power, facing very real obstacles and political threats, he might take a big chance with Israeli lives. And with Middle East stability.

Whatever Bibi does, he has to act fast and soon. No later than the fall of next year, when the new Chief of Staff, Matan Wilnai, replaces Amnon Shahak (you cannot win a race while changing horses in mid-course); and when Bibi, after two years as Prime Minister reaches the middle of his term in office. If he wins a great military victory and/or destroys and takes over the Palestinian Autonomy, he will win overwhelmingly in the next elections. If he fails, or just waits, it may be too late for him.

Except if he wins a war. Everybody loves a winner. Even Labor's new leader Ehud Barak — who is basing part of his campaign on denouncing Likud's present and past blunders — has declared himself for a national unity coalition with the right-wing party, a so-called Government of National Unity, in case of war. Barak would then probably become the new government's number two man and Foreign or Defense Minister. The man who would have to justify or lead the next military campaign.

Netanyahu is a dangerous fanatic. He also is strong, smart, and running out of time.

An extremely volatile equation.

Symposium

The Relevance of Marxism On the 150th Anniversary of *The Communist Manifesto*

Introduction

FOR ALL THIS CENTURY AND EARLIER, even before Karl Marx was laid to rest 115 years ago in London's Highgate Cemetery, Marxism (or what is purported to be Marxism) has been given the last rites – over and over again. How dead can Marxism be if there is this profound need to repeatedly disinter the corpse for autopsy after which it is again entombed until its next exhumation?

This has not only been a European phenomenon. Marx-bashing has a long tradition here as well. By mid-century a leading American sociologist was widely acclaimed for convincingly burying American Marxism and skillfully chiseling on its tombstone his prognosis that Marxian socialism here succumbed to inherent and incurable afflictions known as "millinarianism," "chiliasm," and most disastrously, an extreme "eschatological" disorder. An even more malign view of Marxism during those Cold War years was popularized by a new and largely conservative school of Sovietology – itself a product of the Cold War – which not merely tarred but defiled and mutilated Marxism with the poisoned-tip bristles of Stalinism.

Paradoxically, the end of the Cold War did not diminish the assault on Marxism as one might have expected. On the contrary, the implosion of the Communist system inspired a flood of books which sought to use the exposed failures and crimes of Stalinism as proof positive of the bankruptcy of Marxism. And not only of Marxism but of socialism more broadly defined. More than that, the Enlightenment itself was condemned as pernicious and, together with Marxism, held culpable as the ideological parents of Communist totalitarianism.

The political fallout from the disintegration of the Communist Empire is such that even liberals obviously ill-equipped to pass judgment on Marxism feel free to do it violence. Take, as one example, the musings of *The New Yorker*'s Hendrick Hertzberg who shares with his readers his discovery of an "eerie similarity between Marxism and Tofflerism" and with the same sense of wonderment passes on the news that "the tone of what can fairly be called Tofflerism-Gingrichism is uncannily like that of Marxism-Leninism." These atrocious amalgams are followed by the now common canard that "Marxism produced Soviet totalitarianism." (Hendricks does not believe that Marxism is all bad since it "also produced solid, sensible European social democracy." This is truly a vilification of Marx and Marxism, and can only come as a shock to the leaderships of allegedly social democratic parties which long ago repudiated Marxism – and indeed socialism – in theory and practice.)

More disheartening is the number of academic leftists who also find, in the words of one authoritative figure, that "the collapse of the Soviet Union and Eastern European Communism" was a major factor leading to the "death rattle"

of Marxism, which is now deprived of any rightful claim to be "a master discourse of emancipation." How could the collapse of the Soviet Union mark the "death rattle" of Marxism or its loss of status as a "master discourse of emancipation" when the very existence and viability of the Communist system depended on its ability to exterminate within its borders (and sometimes beyond them), all the institutions, parties, personnel, ideology, traditions and memory of Marxism? And since *anti*-Marxism and *anti*-Emancipation was always "the master discourse" of Stalinism, how could the collapse of the Communist world deprive *Marxism* of its rightful claim to be a master discourse of emancipation? Here, note should be made of the even more disquieting element of neo-Stalinism that has penetrated the school of academic post-Marxists who fault Marxism for its "essentialism" and "meganarratives" including its universal democratic values. Thus a number of prominent post-Marxists find democracy an ambiguous and subjective concept, as if democracy were a matter of taste. With democracy dismissed as central to the Marxist project, the Soviet Union even during the time of terror is perceived as a form of socialism.

THESE NECESSARILY SYNOPTIC COMMENTS are not intended to suggest that there is no crisis in Marxism, that its problems lie only in the way it has been misinterpreted and distorted. There are, indeed, real problems and there is a crisis.

Marx foresaw the victory of the proletarian revolution in the more advanced countries Europe during his lifetime. That never happened. Not until a generation after his death, and unpredictably in a relatively backward nation, the Russian proletariat victoriously stormed the heavens, but for only a brief historic moment. What lessons are to be drawn from the failure of the proletariat in the advanced capitalist nations of Europe to follow suit, to rise to the historic occasion that would not only have spared Europe the horror of fascism, nazism and a cataclysmic Second World War, but would have guaranteed the success of the Soviet Revolution and saved the Russian people from the Stalinist nightmare?

The troublesome truth for Marxists is that 150 years after *The Communist Manifesto* there is not a single socialist country in the world; there is not even a single mass revolutionary socialist movement in any corner of the globe. That is symptomatic of the crisis in Marxism.

It is not only this failure of the working class to act as the agency for social transformation but the changing nature of the working class itself which is a legitimate area of concern and debate. And one cannot lightly dismiss the arguments of social movement theorists who fault Marxism for its failure to fully appreciate the unique problems related to ecology, race and gender. There are also areas of Marxian economics and philosophy which remain open to debate. What better time to review the crisis of Marxism than the 150th Anniversary of *The Communist Manifesto*?

In the symposium that follows there are diverse, even conflicting views. That is as planned. Our objective was not to present merely the opinions shared by most members of our editorial board (though not all of us are of a single mind on all relevant problems) but rather to have a discussion and exchange of opinions within the left. We hope that this is the beginning of an ongoing discussion in our pages.

Julius Jacobson, Co-Editor

A Tribute to *The Manifesto*

Loren Goldner

> *Revolution on the continent is ripe and will quickly assume a proletarian form; but will it not be snuffed out in the bud by the nascent capitalisms of Russia and China, where bourgeois society is still in its embryo?*
>
> Letter of Marx to Engels, 1857

COMMUNISM IS NEITHER A DOCTRINE SPRUNG FROM THE HEAD of a world reformer, nor a political organization; it is, as Marx said in *The Manifesto*, "the real movement unfolding before our eyes." In the current climate of the post-1989 "triumph of capitalism," it is not self-evident where that real movement is located today, nor was it evident for some time before that. As long ago as December, 1918, a few weeks before her murder, Rosa Luxemburg wrote in *Rote Fahne*:

> In all previous revolutions, the opposing sides confronted each other openly: class against class, program against program. In the present revolution the troops protecting the old order do not intervene in the name of the ruling classes, but under the flag of a "Social Democratic party." If the central question of the revolution was posed openly and honestly: capitalism or socialism, no doubt or hesitation would be possible today for the great majority of proletarians.

We live in a world in which few if any important questions can be posed "openly and honestly." That world is 25 years into a crisis that has wreaked devastation in much of Latin America and Africa, that has seen serious material retrogression for millions of people in North America and even more in the former "Soviet" bloc (the soviets lost all real power by 1921), and that now menaces western Europe with the "Brazilianization" ("flexible" work force rotation perfected under the 1970s dictatorship) which the capitalist press calls the "American model." The "American model" has meant a 20 percent fall in living standards for 80 percent of the U.S. population since 1973, one-third of the work force reduced to temps and part-timers, and a (predominantly minority) prison population headed for $5 million by the year 2010. However disparate the immediate causes may appear, the names Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, Chechnya, ex-Yugoslavia, Liberia, and Rwanda conjure up realities of barbarous destruction that are all part of a single historical period, and a single world crisis since the early 1970s, in which fragmentation and dissolution ap-

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pear (and are made to appear) as the sole alternatives to the dominant "world order." Since 1985, i.e. the beginning of the Gorbachev period, Russia's average life expectancy has fallen one year per year from 69 to 57, the biggest demographic disaster ever recorded in peacetime.

It is all one world, and it will get worse before it gets better.

THE 1920 AND 1921 (SECOND AND THIRD) CONGRESSES of the Communist International pronounced capitalism a decadent mode of production on a world scale. Subsequent events give this assessment a certain weight. The 1914-1945 period, with two world wars, a global depression, fascism and Stalinism, was a period of (theretofore) unprecedented destruction. The expansion of 1945-1975 has to be seen against the backdrop of that destruction, the latter preparing the way for a new phase of accumulation, and the period since 1973-75, our own, is well on its way to exceeding that destruction. More people in the Third World have died since the 1973 "oil shock" (the event which, more than any other, symbolized the end of the postwar boom) for preventable economic reasons than died in combat in World War II. And it should not be forgotten that even during the post-1945 boom, the world was not at peace for a single year,[1] in total contrast to the classical age of capitalism from 1815 to 1914.

The Communist International made its assessment of the decadence of capitalism in the midst of the last worldwide explosion of the classical workers' movement. The Russian and German revolutions of 1917-1918 were the high water mark of an upsurge that deeply shook 20 countries by 1921.[2] *Nothing* comparable has happened since.

Nothing comparable has happened since, and the world in which we live is paying a terrible price. The 1917-1921 period marked a unity of working-class offensive that dwarfed the preceding international conjunctures, in which communist expression was still in its infancy (1789)[3] or a small minority (1848), or isolated as a minority within one country (the Paris Commune of 1871). Communism, the real movement, was a minority in 1917-1921 as well, but it was able to make its mark on events far more than before or since. Without getting into the question of whether the world was ripe for working-class revolution immediately after World War I (in my opinion, it was not, but, understandably, things were not so clear to the best revolutionaries of the time), 1917-1921 remains the threshold beyond which a future unification of conditions will have to go.

The ebb of the 1917-1921 upsurge quickly gave way to the general framework of counter-revolution (fascism first triumphed in Italy in 1922, Stalinism first triumphed in Russia in 1924-27) in which all potentially comparable movements have been stillborn, or contained, or snuffed out in isolation. Mass movements, obviously, have hardly stood still since 1921.

The Chinese workers were crushed by Chiang kai-shek in Shanghai in 1927. The German working class, whose communist minority was already defeated in 1918-1921 by the joint efforts of Social Democracy and the Freikorps, surrendered to Hitler almost without a fight in 1933. Workers went on the offensive in the U.S., France and Spain between 1934 and 1937, and were contained by the Social Democratic-Stalinist "Popular Front." The Spanish revolution died under the Stalinist-Republican boot in May 1937, to the relief of every major power, fascist, democratic or "socialist." Already in 1933, FDR,

Stalin and Hitler marked the world hegemony of the three major statist strategies (welfare state, Stalinism, fascism) for containing the working class; only the Third World statism of the "national liberation fronts," the Nehrus, Nkrumahs and Sukarnos, (which drew elements of the three others) was lacking until after 1945. The world still lives in the rubble of these variations on the "progressive" "people's state" (Volkstaat), which succumbed to the neo-liberal offensive begun in 1975 and which Marx had already denounced in *The Critique of the Gotha Program* in 1875.

One can measure the difference in the depth of the social explosions following World War I and World War II by the intervening success of this statist containment, which had been prepared and honed through the previous eight decades of history, all variants (including fascism) owing a debt to German Social Democracy and its emblematic figure, Ferdinand Lassalle.[4]

The statist century from 1875 to 1975 was the Social Democratic era. It is over. It will never come back, because capitalism on a world scale no longer has room for it.

And a revolutionary left today, worthy of the communist movement, has to forget the blinders inherited from that past. Blair, Jospin, or Prodi, like Mitterrand, (Felipe) Gonzalez or Papandreou before them, are no more "Social Democratic reformists" than were Margaret Thatcher or Ronald Reagan, whose policies they mimic and tart up in "social" demagogy; they are merely administrators of capitalist austerity, like any other bourgeois politician, inhabiting the dead carcass of a failed movement, who in their many years in power since 1975, often with solid parliamentary majorities, have never implemented a single "reform" anyone remembers. Even in the United States, the old apparatus of pseudo-left containment is gearing up to relive the 1930s, (during which the American working class, it should not need to be pointed out, was defeated) but figures such as Sweeney and Carey are not even of the stature of Walter Reuther, and any "left" government which emerges out of the liberal wing of the Democratic Party, or its ginger people in the Labor Party or New Party, will not even have the staying power of FDR. The real impact of such politics on the actual working class is to increase the appeal of the racist far-right. The latter at times seems to be the only visible group speaking directly to the working-class rage built up during 25 years of crisis, and of which the slick academic-yuppie stratum populating the apparatuses of "Social Democratic reformism" in most countries has barely a clue. In Belgium, in France and in Austria, the far right has already established itself, with a certain working-class base of support, as political arbiters against tacit or overt "grand coalitions" of the official "right" and official "left."

Every generation of communists, beginning with Marx, has made the understandable mistake of believing that it lived in the "final days." Marx was righter than he knew when he described communism as the "old mole," which burrows beneath the surface, seems to have disappeared, and then reappears stronger than ever before. It is necessary to ask where the old mole is today. Marx was righter still when he wrote in *The Eighteenth Brumaire*:

> ...Proletarian revolutions... constantly engage in self-criticism, and in repeated interruptions of their own course. They return to what has apparently already been accomplished in order to begin the task again; with merciless thoroughness they mock

> the inadequate, weak and wretched aspects of their first attempts; they seem to throw their opponent to the ground only to see him draw new strength from the earth and rise again before them, more colossal than ever; they shrink back again and again before the indeterminate immensity of their own goals, until the situation is created in which any retreat is impossible, and the conditions themselves cry out:
>
> Hic Rhodus, hic salta! Here is the rose, here we dance!

THE REMAINDER OF THIS ARTICLE, flowing from the situation in which we find ourselves 150 years after *The Manifesto*, will attempt "to return what has already been accomplished in order to begin the task again."

Social Democracy, Stalinism and the post-World War II bureaucratic-peasant "national liberation fronts" in the Third World were precisely, from 1945 to 1975, the "inadequate, weak and wretched aspects" which were built on the (probably inevitable) defeat of the communist movement after World War I, each in turn anticipated by Marx's 1875 *Critique of the Gotha Program* and the nightmare of the "people's state." Now that that they have all but disappeared,[5] it must be recognized that their colossal failure at least did much to clarify what communism is not, as well as to clarify the difference between the state, property forms, and the political sphere on one side, and the proletariat on the other. History has shown the "working-class political party in power," "nationalized property forms" and even "workers' control of production" to be at best externalities of communism, when the former are not the expressions of the actual Marxian project: the abolition of value, of wage-labor (the status of labor power as a commodity), and of the world market. These in turn are part of the "self-abolition" of the proletariat, the *act* by which the "class with radical chains" abolishes its status as a commodity. Communism consists of

> ...the material elements for the development of the rich individuality which is as all-sided in its production as in its consumption, and whose labor also therefore no longer appears as labor, but as the full development of activity itself.[6]

Nevertheless, the conditions of 1997, on the surface at least, hardly evoke any triumphalism or even optimism about anything except Marx's prediction that the long-term prospects for capitalism were "socialism or barbarism." Today, while it may not be five minutes to midnight, it is late in the day, and the barbarians are winning.

IT HAS OFTEN BEEN NOTED, THOUGH RARELY WITH ANY INSIGHT, that Marx's ideas seemed to have greater impact in semi-developed or undeveloped societies, beginning with Germany in the 1850s and extending into Russia in the 1870s, and finally into the colonial, later "third world," by the 1920s, than in the mature capitalist societies (e.g. Great Britain or later the U.S.) which Marx saw as the most likely places for a transition to socialism. Today, when it has been made clear beyond dispute that the "really existing socialism" which resulted from this apparent anomaly was in fact a long statist detour to capitalism (with China as the latest, and most resounding example), the great irony is that any broadly-held vision of a positive alternative beyond liberal democratic capitalism has all but evaporated. But communism, for Marx, was no more a "vision" than a doctrine or a political organization. The issue today, in locating the old mole, is to locate what may be called the "negative presence" of communism, the visible manifestations of the fact that, on a world scale, the

existing forces of production are in revolt against the dominant relations of production.

The most fundamental aspect of the tendency is the inability of capitalism to translate gains in the productivity of labor into gains for society as a whole, forcefully demonstrating that capital is antagonistic to any idea of society.

At times it seems that all contemporary reality conspires to demonstrate the truth of Marx's assertion that capital can only be capital by a relationship to *living* labor.

The manifestations of the post-1973 world crisis in the United States are a perfect illustration of this.

The 8-hour day was a central demand of the U.S. labor movement over a century ago; it was broadly won in the 1930s and 1940s. Since 1973, labor productivity has advanced fairly steadily, and a larger total product is created (on a global scale) by fewer people at lowered costs.

Yet, at the same time, what has happened to the U. S. work force? Real wages have declined by over 20 percent ; the average work week has *increased* by 20 percent (from 39 hours to 47); the eight-hour day has faded away for most employed people while one-tenth of the population is consigned to total marginality. For good measure, the average Americans who paid 15 percent of their income for housing in 1950 are now paying 40-50 percent. Such devastating figures, expressing the long-term movements of the capitalist law of value (and the manifestations of value in profit, interest and ground rent) show beyond any doubt that "progress" for capital has become *retrogression* for society. The capitalist gains in productivity translate into an unabated rollback for the working population. A situation has been created in which capital, to survive, must engender vast social destruction. Such a situation, in which capital must destroy labor power to reassert itself as capital, has been endemic to every capitalist crisis since the beginning, but, until the 20th Century, always on a restricted scale. What is unique and novel about the current crisis is that the scale of this destruction is planetary.

THE FUNDAMENTAL CONTRADICTION OF CAPITALISM is that it needs living labor power as the standard of value, and at the same time its perpetual innovation tends to expel living labor from the production process. From the South Bronx to South Central L.A., millions of ruined and stunted lives are palpable evidence that in this system, human beings exist for the "economy" instead of vice versa, and that human beings of no use to the accumulation of capital are discarded onto the social scrap heap, criminalized, and used by the system to rationalize and legitimate its own barbarism. The simultaneous coexistence of a significantly increased labor productivity and significantly lengthened work week is a flagrant demonstration, beneath and beyond the chatter of politicians, the media and academia, of the priorities of the system.

It is by now largely forgotten that in the months prior to the outbreak of World War I, which set the stage for the first worldwide proletarian surge of 1917-21, virtually every country in the world was heading into deep recession or depression, inaugurating the "thirty years 'War'" of upheaval, 1914-1945. It is, of course, impossible and vain to predict the timing and nature of the next unitary breakdown of the system on a world scale, but it is essential to understand our situation as suspended between the past and future moments of

rupture, as the sole adequate measure from which to judge the day-to-day diggings of the old mole. It is in these situations, as in 1789, 1848, or 1917, that the system becomes vulnerable. And it is essential to see these moments as not merely the mechanistic result of some historical clock, but rather as situations in which the *action* (or its absence) of the working class is decisive in the outcome, a kind of global conjunctural realization of Marx's 11th Thesis on Feuerbach.

THE VICTORY OF COMMUNISM IS IN NO WAY A FOREGONE CONCLUSION. "Socialism or barbarism" remains the most condensed result of scientific thought at the end of the 20th Century. Nevertheless, away from the glitter of capitalist self-congratulation about its undisputed world hegemony, the conditions of the next eruption of the old mole are coming together. 150 years after Marx and Engels wrote *The Manifesto*, this is perhaps the best tribute of all.

NOTES

1. The journalist Patrick Brogan, in *The Fighting Never Stopped: A Comprehensive Guide to World Conflict Since 1945* (New York, 1990) estimated that post-World War II "local wars" in 50 countries had killed more than 20 million people, and that was only through 1989, and thus before many of the conflagrations mentioned above.

2. There was hardly anywhere in the world that was not rocked in some way by the post-World War I upsurge. Lloyd George and the British cabinet were all but convinced that revolution was imminent in January 1919; a period that saw the brief Hungarian and Bavarian soviet republics, potentially revolutionary situations in Vienna and Warsaw, the Italian "Red Year" of 1920, the French strike wave of 1919-20, the 1919 strike wave and Seattle "soviet" in the U.S., the 1918 rice riots in Japan, and many uprisings in the colonial world, culminating in the 1925 Rif war in Morocco and the 1919-1927 years of revolt in China.

3. Cf. C.L..R. James, *The Black Jacobins* (1963), Chs. IV-V, on the remarkable dialectic between slave revolt in the colonies and revolution in the metropolis already present in the epoch of the French Revolution.

4. The erratic Mikhail Agursky, in his erratically brilliant and little-noticed book *The Third Rome: National Bolshevism in the USSR* (Boulder, 1987) wrote: "The real founder of German political socialism was neither Marx nor Engels, but Ferninand Lassalle (1825-1864)... Lassalle was an admirer of the statist socialism that was deeply rooted in Prussian tradition... Lassalle's books and pamphlets became part and parcel of every socialist library in Russia. He became the main channel through which socialist ideas, including Marxism, penetrated Russia at that time. As early as 1869, Herzen singled out Lassalle as a positive example of his defense of the state versus Bakunin's anarchism." (p. 33). In reaction to the Lassallean cast of the early SPD, Engels wrote: "In all these writings, I never describe myself as a social democrat, but as a communist. For Marx, as for me, it is absolutely impossible to use such an elastic expression to designate our own conception." (in *Marx-Engels: La social démocratie allemande*, Paris 1975, p. 7)

5. The remaining Social Democratic parties of any significance, led by the Germans, are falling all over themselves to abandon the "welfare state" which was their hallmark, to fight with the "right" about who best administers neo-liberalism. Their lingering credibility in the working class remains a card which has not been fully played, however frayed it may be after the fiasco of the "Euro-socialist renaissance" proclaimed by Michael Harrington in 1982 when "socialists" ruled in France, Spain and Greece.

6. *Grundrisse*, (1973), p. 325.

The Communist Manifesto And the Russian Revolution

Sean Matgamna

O, sing me not that song again
My lovely Nora, dear,
The strong, the proud defiant strain
It breaks my heart to hear.
Charles J. Kickham*

ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY YEARS ON FROM *The Communist Manifesto*, the specter that haunts the collective imagination of Europe and the world is not the looming *prospect* of communism, but the *experience* of "Communism," that is, Stalinism.

Ours is an age of disillusionment. Not only is "utopia" discredited and abandoned, so also is much of the old liberal idea of progress. This social and political timidity of thought, program, and action, this collective abandonment of hope for anything more than individual "prosperity," is twinned paradoxically in our world with dazzling scientific and technological realities and possibilities. It exists in a world in which humankind has greater technical mastery over nature — including its own physiology — than the old social optimists could imagine even in their highest flights of creative extrapolation and fantasy.

We are living through a tremendous revolution in artificial intelligence and in communications — communications which can bring immense quantities of information, sorted, sifted and collated, quickly to hand, and which might make possible continuous political democracy, on the model of an old city-state or a local Soviet in 1917, for vast populations. We are in the comparatively early stages of a revolution in biological science, and therefore in medicine and healing. Even death can now be pushed back.

Marx and Engels, writing about the specter of communism 150 years ago, and Lenin and Trotsky, organizing the October Revolution in Petrograd 80 years ago, would be as astonished as they would be elated at what is now possible for humankind.

Yet ours is a world where "the tradition of all the dead generations weighs

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like a nightmare on the brain of the living." The typical futuristic romances at the end of the 20th century are despairing, space-Gothic, horror stories, purveying waking nightmares about humankind's future. The science-fiction nightmares — today's mass-consumption anti-utopias — tell the story, as the old utopian and visionary exhortations about the benefits of scientific progress told the earlier story of widespread social optimism.

Take the splendid film *BladeRunner*, with its double parable in the form of a creation story set not in the Garden of Eden, not in an "utopian" paradise, but in the ecological hell of a ruined Earth. Humankind is God the Creator to the androids, who have an essentially human consciousness, a short life, and no power to shape their destiny. Human beings are to them what the forces of recalcitrant nature have been to human beings throughout our history. They fear death, seek understanding, and want contact with their Maker. But humanity, the life-creating God to the androids, has turned the whole Earth into a poisoned, dying world. The God has lost his own Heaven; seeking Heaven, he has found Hell. He is Lucifer, Angel and Devil; he has cast himself out of Paradise, and has himself destroyed that Paradise; he is a tormenting, exterminating nemesis to his human-like creations. He has difficulty distinguishing his creatures from himself.

When one of the outlaw androids, on the run from the exterminator, literally meets his maker, the scientist who designed robots like himself, he rips his head off — as humankind has, seemingly, ripped its own head off, and the Earth's too. Humanity, having become God, is less than human.

Many other examples could be cited. To posterity ours will be an age of miracles and wonders which has somehow nevertheless lost hope of social "miracles," which dreads the future and fears its own creation — an age in which Promethean mankind came to see itself as its own Frankensteinian monster. In our late 20th century world, the future holds only horror and disaster. The paths of scientific glory lead only to nightmare and destruction, creating a world like the abattoir and the crypt. Progress leads to regress; increasing knowledge to greater terror of the unknown; greater technical possibilities of human control, to a world growing more and more beyond human control. Human control over nature leads not to human advancement, but to the ruination of nature. Humankind can only foul its own nest. An earlier age would have looked for the source of the curse, the hidden sin, and the search might lead eventually to a remedy; we do not even do that.

None of this, in its objective causes, is at all mysterious. At the root of the loss of hope is the failure of socialism and communism, the logical social next step, extrapolating from and building on advanced capitalism, that seemed not only logical but desirable and possible to millions over so many decades. But it is not only that. It is also the failure of older prescriptions, or rather the realization of something resembling them with unexpected results. It is — perhaps because of disappointment with old prescriptions for progress — the feeling of a social world of our own creation grown beyond our possibilities of control. We fear atomic power, first as the Bomb and then also as nuclear fuel. We fear that the ecological system in which we live is falling into slow ruin. Third World slum conditions reemerge in the world's most advanced cities, and all our notions of how to control our conditions seem to have failed.

BOURGEOIS DEMOCRACY HAS NOT DEEPENED, INCREASING ITS SOCIAL DIMENSION. On the contrary it has become shallower, more bureaucratized, and more discredited among large numbers of people. In Britain the bourgeoisie is in the process of hijacking the Labor Party, built by the working class over 100 years, and we are learning that even long electoral interest and electoral effort may not affect what happens very much. Bureaucratized politics becomes a cynical profession, overlapping with show-business and advertising.

The growth of international corporations, as powerful as medium-size nation-states, has moved much power of decision and regulation out of the sphere of governments, that is, of existing democracy. Existing governments are not as powerless as they sometimes pretend for political reasons, but the trend is real. "Internationalism" is a means not for extending democracy beyond national limits, but for the emancipation of capitalist enterprise from possible electoral control.

"The first step... is... to win the battle of democracy," said *The Communist Manifesto*. In many countries the working class has "won the battle of democracy" to the extent that it has the vote and wide civil liberties. Yet everywhere the working class is quiescent or in tow to capitalist political formations. In fact the working class has not won "the battle of democracy" as Marx, Engels, and the democrats of the day understood it in 1847-8 — social democracy. The forms of democracy have been turned against the substance.

Marx and Engels advocated battle against vested interests and against hereditary rights and privileges. In our day, the knocking-down of many such vested interests has, as *The Manifesto* put it, "left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous 'cash payment.'" The working class fought for a free press. In Britain, the struggle for an unstamped (untaxed) press occupied militants and incipient socialists in a heroic struggle for many years. They believed that, like the truth, a free press would, by spreading education, enlightenment and reason, make the people free. They got an unstamped press. After a while they got Rothermere. Today we have the Murdoch press. We have television most of which is commerce-driven "wallpaper for the mind" and "chewing gum for the eyes."

A vast destruction of the old apparatus of sexual repression has brought to society, all-pervasive commercialized sexual images like sugar in processed foods.

The working-class movement itself generated its own petty-bourgeois extension, the "labor lieutenants of capital," tied to the system and tying the working class to it.

Of course, *Marxists* never subscribed to the older naive liberal view of steady and inevitable improvement. We have had a darker, less complaisant view of society as it exists, seeing it as a society based on capitalist class exploitation and rent and riven by class struggle — the successor to earlier societies where the class struggle had, in the words of *The Communist Manifesto*, led to either "a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or the common ruin of the contending classes." We foresaw "socialism or barbarism," not inevitable progress. We had hope and the will to fight for the progressive outcome by way of building labor movements and converting labor movements to socialist ideas.

Yet today, Marxism too is in eclipse, unable to offer the creative, active,

conditionally optimistic alternative to the predominant social pessimism that it once counterposed to the sleepwalking bourgeois optimism.

None but the fatuous and naive could ever imagine that a world could be remade — a powerful and immensely flexible and dynamic and adaptable ruling class overthrown — a subordinate class organized and educated in adequate conceptions of the needs of its struggle — without battles and setbacks, massacres and political masquerades, treacheries and usurpations. As Marx put it: "Proletarian revolutions criticize themselves constantly... come back to the apparently accomplished in order to begin it afresh... seem to throw down their adversary only in order that he may draw new strength from the earth and rise again, more gigantic, before them, recoil ever and anon from the indefinite prodigiousness of their own aims..."

The central experience in our growth of hopelessness is, it seems to me, the experience of the Russian Revolution. The problem is not just that it eventually failed, but the peculiarities of its failure, and the horrors of its decades-long "posthumous existence" in the form of Stalinism, an immense empire of systematic lies into which generations fed their hopes and their credulities. The poisonous reality of Stalinism and the vapors unleashed by the collapse of that system taint our world, paralyzing wills and intellects.

Yet none of the problems which generate despair today seem so daunting and insurmountable if only we believe in, and can get enough people to believe in, or believe again in, the possibility that old socialist goals can now be realized. To make firm the intellectual basis for regenerating a powerful will for socialism, we have to understand what has happened to the idea of communism in the last 80 years — that is, we must understand Bolshevism and Stalinism.

II

IN 1917 THE BOLSHEVIKS PROVED IN PRACTICE THAT THE WORKING CLASS could take power. With exemplary courage and determination, they followed the revolutionary policy outlined by Marx in March 1850 on the basis of *The Manifesto* and his active experience in the 1848 revolutions:

> In general they [the Communists] must restrain in every way to the extent of their power the jubilation and enthusiasm for the new order which follows every victorious street battle, by a calm and cold-blooded conception of the situation and by an open distrust of the new government. Side by side with the new official governments, they must simultaneously set up their own revolutionary workers' governments, whether in the form of municipal committees, municipal councils or workers' clubs or workers' committees, so that the bourgeois democratic governments not only immediately lose the support of the workers, but find themselves from the very beginning supervised and threatened by authorities behind which stand the whole mass of the workers. In a word: from the first moment of victory our distrust must no longer be directed against the vanquished reactionary party, but against our previous allies, against the party which seeks to exploit the common victory for itself alone.
>
> But in order to be able energetically and threateningly to oppose this party, whose betrayal of the workers will begin with the first hour of victory, the workers must be armed and organized. The arming of the whole proletariat with muskets, rifles, cannon and ammunition must be carried out at once, and the revival of the old bourgeois militia, directed against the workers, resisted. Where this cannot be effected, the

> workers must endeavor to organize themselves independently as a proletarian guard with chiefs and a general staff elected by themselves and put themselves under orders not of the state but of the revolutionary municipal councils established by the workers. Where workers are employed in state service, they must arm and organize in a separate corps or as a part of the proletarian guard with the chiefs elected by themselves. Arms and munitions must not be given up under any pretext; every attempt at disarmament must if necessary be thwarted by force. Destruction of the influence of the bourgeois democrats upon the workers, immediate independent and armed organization of the workers, creation of the most difficult and compromising possible conditions for the momentarily unavoidable rule of the bourgeois democracy – these are the main points which the proletariat, and consequently the League, must have in mind during and after the coming rising.

In doing so the Bolsheviks vindicated *The Communist Manifesto*. The Stalinist counterrevolution against Bolshevism vindicated the ideas of *The Communist Manifesto* too, but negatively. If Stalinism, official "communism," had anything to do with socialism, then it was as a historical regression to ideas that *The Communist Manifesto* polemicized against, the idea of the "utopian socialists" who believed in going into the wildernesses of America to create socialist colonies which would then demonstrate their superiority in competition with advanced capitalism. The Stalinist drive to create closed-off societies which would compete with capitalism, and from backwardness come to outstrip and surpass it, was a gigantic exercise in utopian colony-building. Although in fact it had nothing to do with socialism, except by negation, it did claim to be socialism, it has had much to do with how socialism is seen now, and it did relate to capitalism by counterposing "force of example to pave the way for the new social Gospel" and by resolving "future history... into the propaganda and the practical carrying out of their social plans."

That was not the approach of the Bolsheviks. They understood what Marx had written in *The Manifesto*: "The theoretical conclusions of the Communists are in no way based on ideas and principles that have been invented, or discovered, by this or that would-be universal reformer. They merely express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes." Or again: "The working class have no ready-made utopias to introduce *par décret du peuple*. They know that in order to work out their own emancipation, and along with it that higher form to which present society is irresistibly tending by its own economical agencies, they will have to pass through long struggles, through a series of historical processes, transforming circumstances and men. They have no ideals to realize, but to set free the elements of the new society with which old collapsing bourgeois society itself is pregnant."

The Bolsheviks did not believe that communism could be created in backwardness and underdevelopment such as that which prevailed in the old Empire of the Czars. They believed, with Marx, that communism had to be built on the foundations, structures, and social potentialities that the most advanced capitalism had created. They knew that "the elements of the new society" were not adequately developed in Russia.

The Bolshevik-led Soviets had state power, but they understood that there were proper limits to the surgical and engineering power of the state in relation to society, that is, the population; their "reshaping reason," armed with the state power, could only reorganize, modify, and set on lines of development.

The obdurate reality of society could not be taken by storm, like political power, but only transformed over time, in the interests of the wage-workers and poor farmers. Society could not be reduced to a *tabula rasa*, a blank slate on which anything could be written. It could not at will be recreated from the ground up. The immense concentration of state power characteristic of Stalinism would have seemed to those who formed the government in October 1917 to be a throwback to Pharaoh's Egypt or pre-Spanish Peru.

The Russian working class was a comparatively small minority in a vast land inhabited by peasants scarcely two generations out of serfdom, a country which was, taken in isolation, one hundred and more years behind advanced Europe. The Bolsheviks would have dismissed as impossible and ridiculous the idea that the workers would or could, having seized power, then begin to construct, in parallel to capitalism, a closed-off society on communist principles. They understood from what they knew of history that in those conditions communist principles could not for long govern society.

They would have branded an attempt at "socialism in one country" as a regression from Marxism to the socialism of the epoch before *The Communist Manifesto* — to the socialism of Robert Owen and Étienne Cabet, of doomed primitive-communist colonies in the backwoods of America.

BY THE MIDDLE OF THE 20TH CENTURY THE ACCEPTED MODEL OF COMMUNISM would become a state-imposed forced march for industrial growth and development, in which an authoritarian or totalitarian state held the proletariat and the whole people in an iron grip of terror and exploitation — essentially playing the role which in Marxist theory the bourgeoisie had embodied in history. This model was supposedly rooted in the 1917 Revolution. But it had nothing to do with the workers' revolution of 1917.

It was not the Bolsheviks' policy, but the policy of those who drowned the Bolshevik revolution in blood, stole its identity and its symbols, and buried it in a falsely marked grave. Before the rise of Stalin's USSR, no Marxist could have put forward such a policy without hearing the voice of the founders of Marxism insisting that in such conditions, no matter what the rulers' intentions were, "all the old crap" of class society — above all, class differentiation and class exploitation — would inevitably return.

Lenin saw the Russian Revolution as part of a larger world, the key parts of which were ripe for communism, and in unity with which Russia would "construct the socialist order." He saw the working-class seizure of power in Russia as a pioneering "moment" in an unfolding revolution of the working class in western Europe, where capitalism had done its progressive historical work. As Rosa Luxemburg, a fervent supporter and loyal though severe critic of Bolshevik rule, put it: the Bolsheviks had taken their stand on international socialism.

But then a gap between intentions and expectations on one side, and uncontrollable reality on the other, opened wide under the feet of the Bolshevik regime, first shook it out of recognizable shape and then pulled it down. Other wills and other intentions and strivings cut across and would ultimately nullify, their will, their hopes, their program — and with it, international communism for the rest of the 20th century.

The working-class revolution in Russia, to which nothing in the way of

communism was possible without the economic and social collaboration of advanced Europe, remained isolated. The revolutions which the Bolsheviks had expected did erupt in Europe, beginning with Germany in November 1918. Soviets appeared all across central Europe, and even as far from Russia as rural Ireland. In 1919 Soviet regimes ruled for a few weeks in Bavaria and Hungary, before being crushed by bourgeois forces.

The strength of the capitalists in some countries, and the strength and loyalty of their "labor lieutenants" in others, isolated the Russian Revolution. Like the lone first soldier over the parapet into the enemy fortress who finds that no one else has got through, the Bolsheviks were doomed.

The Bolsheviks, who had will and determination in greater than common measure, did not submit passively. Historical fatalism was not their tradition. They had had great hopes. But they had never believed that the bourgeoisie would fall like a stone tumbling into an abyss. It would have to be cut down in battle — prolonged battle, so it now seemed. They believed that the war had radically dislocated world capitalism. It had achieved no more than a temporary stability in 1920-21. The objective possibility of European revolution remained. The weakness lay in the "subjective factor," in the state of the labor movements. The victorious Russian revolutionaries would reorganize the workers' movement in the West and strike down the reformists who had been the shield (and, in Germany, also the sword) of the bourgeoisie. Thus, in a paradoxical inversion, they would first rescue the west European revolution, so that then the west European revolution could rescue them. A new workers' International was set up in Moscow in March 1919.

PUBLICLY ADMITTING THAT WORKERS' RULE IN RUSSIA was doomed in the medium term unless the workers took power in the West, the Bolsheviks held on. They did so by way of tremendous exertion against the "other wills" operating inside and outside Russia. Against all their intentions they thereby extemporized a first draft of what the Stalinist counterrevolution, overthrowing the workers' rule, would develop into an elaborate map of history as fantastic as any drawn up by the mid-19th century utopian colony-builders.

Full-scale civil war erupted in mid-1918. It would last for two and a half years. The Reds successfully contested with the counterrevolutionary "Whites" for the allegiance of the peasants in the countryside. Looking back at the revolution through the thick, opaque, bloodily-smeared lens of the Stalinist regime, later commentators have imagined a tyrannical and bureaucratic "Stalinist" state machine inexorably working its tank-like power in a drive to create a totalitarian state. But that is not what happened. That is to read backwards into the history things that did not and could not exist then, to mix up the pages of two different calendars, that of the workers' revolution and that of the Stalinist counterrevolution.

At the beginning, after October 1917, the working-class Soviets firmly controlled only the cities and the major towns. In July 1918 their erstwhile partners in government, the Left Socialist Revolutionaries (SRs), took up arms against the Bolsheviks — they shot and wounded Lenin — because they could not agree to accept peace with Germany on terms dictated from strength by the Kaiser. In order to create the state that existed by, say, 1921, at the end of the civil war, the Soviets and their Bolshevik leaders had to win the leadership

and support of the mass of the people, the peasantry, in a fierce, free competition of ideas, leadership and arms with their bourgeois-landlord opponents, led by Czarist generals like Kolchak, Denikin, and Wrangel. The "Whites" demagogically appealed to one sort of democracy (the Constituent Assembly) against the Soviets. The workers and peasants chose Soviet power against the bourgeoisie and the landlords.

Later in the century, Stalinist parties calling themselves "communist" would take power as already-mighty military-bureaucratic machines, in China for example. The Bolshevik party was not like that. The party that led the revolution was unruly, argumentative, and democratic. As late as 1918 its central administration had a staff of no more than a dozen, for a party with hundreds of thousands of members. The central party files were hurried jottings carried by the secretary, Sverdlov, in his jacket pockets. Only in the civil war and after did the party acquire a strong apparatus.

If the Bolsheviks had not won the competition for the minds and assent of the rural people, they could not have won the armed contest with the White armies and their foreign promoters, sponsors and allies. To civil war was added foreign intervention by the armed forces of no fewer than 14 states. The seriousness of the foreign assaults on the Soviet government varied. They never became a full-scale, coordinated international anti-Bolshevik crusade, but they encouraged the internal armed opposition, fueling it with hope and material aid.

Yet the Bolsheviks did win popular support. The regime rested on it. It could not have survived without it.

In the course of the civil war much changed, including — and this is our central concern here — many of the defining ideas of communism. The exigencies of the civil war and the wars of intervention determined what the Bolsheviks did. Essentially, what was overridden was their democratic-socialist, Soviet-socialist program. Even the highest point reached by Russian capitalism before 1917 had not made the country ripe for socialism; now the civil war wreaked great destruction, pushing Russia backwards even from what seemed possible in 1917. The Soviets had to organize an immense army for self-defense, subordinating all society and industry to the struggle to survive and prevail. A vast bureaucratic administration of society grew up around the maintenance of the Red Army. The Bolsheviks felt obliged to suppress, insofar as they could, the operation of markets, and to substitute a barracks communism-of-backwardness, in which the produce of the peasants was simply seized in order to feed the towns and the armies. This was "war communism."

The regime still had mass popular backing. Throughout the civil war the peasants continued to support the revolutionary government — not without dissatisfaction, bitterness and episodes of militant resistance, to be sure — in the interests of winning the war against the White and foreign armies whose victory would have brought back the landowners to lord it over them once more. They supported the "Bolsheviks" who gave them the land while disliking the armed "Communist" requisitioners of their grain.

The working class itself changed. Much of industry seized up. The revolutionary workers had to staff the new army and the state machine on which survival came to depend. Very soon, it was not in fact the state "of the Paris Commune type" which Lenin, Trotsky and their comrades had aimed to create

in 1917 — free, easy-going self-administration, with minimal bureaucracy — but a heavily bureaucratized state, increasingly modeled on and intertwined with the command structures inseparable from the sort of army they felt obliged to create.

The Soviets, the organs of popular self-rule, also changed. Most of the Menshevik and Social-Revolutionary participants in the 1917 Soviets — the bourgeois-democratic opposition to the Bolshevik-led majority in the days of the October Revolution — actively or passively supported the anti-Soviet armies fighting the Bolshevik government, and therefore left the Soviets or were driven out. The Soviets, like so much of society, had their life and vitality drained out of them and into the work of the army and of organizing a state which administered backwardness and, now, chaos and economic regression.

THE BOLSHEVIKS NEVER THOUGHT THAT RUSSIA COULD BE COMMUNIST ON ITS OWN; but now, out of civil war, something very alien to communism began to develop in the workers' state. It was shaped not by Bolshevik intentions, but by the exigencies of a long and terrible series of wars. Defending the right of free trade unions to help the workers fight that state and resist its giant pressure at the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party in early 1921, Lenin himself called it a "workers' state with bureaucratic deformations." Eighteen months later, the dying Lenin used a striking metaphor for the situation of the Bolshevik party at the head of the state: it was like driving a car in which the wheels did not respond to the steering.

The Bolsheviks undertook now not to "construct the socialist order," as Lenin had promised on October 25, 1917, with the perspective of international working-class revolution in mind, but to survive in power. The ruling party would defend and serve the working class, and develop the backward territory over which they ruled, until working-class revolution in the West would come to their aid and open up better options. The fate of the defeated Communards of 1871, the massacres of communist workers in Germany and Hungary, and the massacres and pogroms unleashed by their own opponents — in the Ukraine, especially, terrible slaughter of Jews was unleashed by the White armies — kept the Bolsheviks in mind of the alternative.

In 1921, three and a half years after the October revolution, war communism — around which some Bolsheviks had woven utopian fantasies that Russia could go from this primitive command-at-gunpoint economy to communism — was supplanted by a "New Economic Policy." Markets — in which self-interest and the drive for the accumulation of wealth would motivate farmers and merchants — were restored, under the ultimate control of the workers' state, which, as Lenin insisted, would hold "the commanding heights" of the economy for the working class. Socialism and communism would, Lenin of course believed, have been better; but the market was more appropriate to the actual level of development than primitive communism of the civil-war economy. Essentially this was a limited bourgeois counterrevolution, controlled and regulated by the workers' state and subjected to its purposes. To control the transition from war communism and to ensure the Bolshevik regime's ability to control events, all other parties, even those such as Julius Martov's Menshevik Internationalists who had never risen against the Soviet government or supported those who had, were banned. The Soviet government became in fact

what it had so far not been either in fact or in theory — a one-party monopoly regime. Theory would catch up. As a logical and necessary corollary of the ban on every other party, the Tenth Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (March 1921) banned factions within the ruling party.

This was a radical departure. In the course of 1917 and the civil war there had been many factions in the Bolshevik party. For example, Bukharin set up a faction in 1918 to oppose Lenin's policy of accepting a forced peace at the hands of Germany, and in the course of the internal party fight the Bukharin faction published a daily factional paper.

The series of emergency measures in 1921 was intended to be a temporary response to an extraordinarily tense and dangerous situation, not the establishment of new norms. But in the sequel, even when in practice the ruling party was intensely faction-ridden, the emergency measures came to be the theoretical norm. And not only for Russia, but also for the non-Russian Communist Parties.

In the first year of the Russian Revolution, Rosa Luxemburg had urged that measures taken by the Bolshevik-Soviet regime in response to its perilous situation should not become the norm, either for the Bolsheviks or for their international supporters. Necessity should not be made virtue, she argued, adding her conviction that Lenin and Trotsky would be the last to think that enforced Bolshevik practice, in a backward country where the proletariat was a minority inhabiting urban atolls in an agrarian sea, should be made the ideal rule of international communism. In fact, however, that is what happened. Communist theory followed where Russian practice pioneered.

Under the regime of the New Economic Policy (NEP), which would last from 1921 until Stalin created the command economy at the end of the 1920s, the struggle occurred that would shape, reshape, and falsify communism for the rest of the 20th century. Under the NEP layers of the ruling party — which in relation to society was already a bureaucracy, based on a much shrunken remnant of the old working class — crystallized into a privileged elite which gropingly developed an awareness of its own distinct interests and slowly began to evolve a new world outlook within a reshaped "Marxism" that became a scholastic ideology.

By 1924 the bureaucracy implicitly broke with the Bolshevik program of international revolution on which, according to the old ideas, the survival of the Russian Revolution depended. Stalin proclaimed "Socialism in One Country," insisting that it was "Marxism" and "Leninism," and that the old ideas were "Trotskyist" heresy. "Trotskyism" would be the hood which the counterrevolution put over the head of Bolshevism as it was led, bound hand and foot and gagged, to the guillotine; for this new gutted "Marxism" was armed with state power. The Stalinist counterrevolution disguised itself as Bolshevism triumphant.

Ban on factions or no ban, all the political struggles, to the end of the 1920s, including the class struggles and incipient class struggles, took place within the political monopoly of the Bolshevik party. Stalin's counterrevolutionary struggle against Leninism took place in the name of Lenin; against equality, in the name of future communist egalitarianism; against Marx, in the name of Marxism; against any form of democracy, in the name of a higher democracy; his enslavement of the workers and the rural population in the

name of working-class rule; his fight against communism, in the name of communism.

Stalinism was, as someone aptly said, the Dictatorship of the Lie. The power of that dictatorship to sap and confuse and disorient is still strong today. This is the spiritual legacy of Stalinism, shaping today's culture of social despair, pessimism, and disillusion just as its physical legacy, the aftermath of Chernobyl and the sulphur-belching factories of Russia and East Germany, still spreads physical ill-health in much of Europe.

The bourgeoisie has retained and adapted the spiritual legacy of Stalinism — its equation of communism with tyranny — and it has to be confronted, not only to grasp history, but to effect change in the here and now.

III

IS CAPITALISM VINDICATED by the disintegration of utopian "state socialism?" No.

The Communist Manifesto contains one of the most profound and heartfelt paeans of praise ever written about capitalism: "It has been the first to show what man's activity can bring about. It has accomplished wonders far surpassing Egyptian pyramids, Roman aqueducts, and Gothic cathedrals." Capitalism gave a tremendous boost to human capacity to change and control our environment and thus created the objective possibility of humanity rising above its "pre-history" out of the social jungle into a classless socialist society.

Marxists criticize the waste and irrationality and savage inhumanity of capitalism, but at the same time see capitalism as the necessary forerunner of socialism. Capitalism has not ceased to be irrational and inhuman, nor have market mechanisms ceased to be blind and wasteful just because of the Stalinist experiment in "state socialism." Wage slavery and exploitation have not ceased to be at the heart and root of capitalism. The possibility and even the inevitability remains of capitalism plunging once again into devastating slumps as in the 30s — and there are 40 million unemployed in western Europe alone now. Capitalism still presides over regular mass slaughters by hunger which are an indictment of any social system.

In the United States, the richest capitalist country in the world, thousands of people sleep on the streets, or make a living only through the drug trade. Third World slum conditions exist side by side with obscene opulence in its leading cities. In Latin America unemployment runs at 40 percent in many cities, workers' living standards have sometimes been halved since the debt crisis broke in 1982, cocaine gangsters rule huge areas, and malnutrition and even starvation are widespread. That "utopian state socialism" failed to bypass capitalism and emerge as a historical alternative to it does not mean that socialism has ceased to be the answer to capitalism!

Stalinism is not a failed attempt to go beyond capitalism on the basis of the achievements of advanced capitalism. It therefore cannot prove by its failure the hopelessness of all such attempts. It was an experience on the fringes of world capitalism, arising out of the defeat of a working class revolution that suffocated under the weight of its own contradictory bureaucratic regime. Stalinism, like capitalism, was part of the pre-history humankind must grow beyond.

Does the experience of Stalinism show that only a free market economy

can give a secure basis for democracy; that without it you get state control, and state control inevitably stifles democracy? No, it does not. To contend that only the market system of the West can be the basis for democracy means that only wage slavery for the masses, together with the phenomenal concentration of wealth — and therefore power — at the top of society, can be the basis of democracy! It is the mirror image of the crazy logic of Stalinism satirized by George Orwell wherein black was white, truth was lies, and bureaucratic tyranny was socialism. Even such democracy as we have in the West owes its existence, not to the class inequalities of the market system, but, on the contrary, to decades and centuries of struggle by the working class. Democracy in capitalism is, as it must be, limited, imperfect, and frequently not very stable.

Nor do Marxists want any part of the bureaucratic state, neither that of a country like the USA or Britain, where the bureaucratic state works in tandem with the bourgeoisie, nor that of the Stalinist systems where the bureaucracy was the sole master of society's wealth.

We advocate a "semi-state" without a standing army, without an entrenched bureaucracy. The Bolsheviks wanted that, too. They could not create it because of the backwardness of the isolated USSR, but it would be entirely possible in a modern technological society such as that in the USA.

Mass self-rule by the producers, dominated neither by a bureaucratic state monopoly nor by the economic rule of the multimillionaires and their officials, is a better form of democracy. It is democracy worth the name. It is socialist democracy.

DOES THE ECONOMIC IMPASSE THAT BROUGHT DOWN STALINISM show that centralized planning cannot work in a complex economy: therefore capitalism is the only possible system? This argument too rests on the lie that Stalinism — the Stalinist command economy — was socialism. The attempt to have the state control everything served the Stalinists, not the working class. Marxists never believed that the working class could take power and simply abolish the market. In 1921 Lenin set the goal of Soviet government as that of occupying "the commanding heights of the economy."

Socialism, once the workers have taken power and abolished wage slavery by taking the major means of production from the capitalist class, would — probably for generations ahead — operate through a combination of planning and market mechanisms — within the broad framework. of a flexible plan. There is a vast difference between an economy where the basic strategic decisions are made by democratic planning — which is certainly possible — and one where they are made by the crazy gyrations of the Stock Exchange.

How quickly a workers' planned economy will be able to make its planning more comprehensive, and move toward replacing the market altogether, must for now be an open question.

IF THE COLLAPSE OF COMMUNISM DOES NOT VINDICATE CAPITALISM, does it vindicate the reformist "social democratic" model of socialism? Is there, in fact, such a model of socialism?

Social democracy defined itself historically not against Stalinism but against Bolshevism. And the social democrats were wrong at every point against Bolshevism. They either supported their own bourgeoisie, even against the

revolutionary communist workers, or temporized and hesitated and thus helped the bourgeoisie to win. It was the social democrats who rescued German capitalism in 1918 and thereby isolated the Russian Revolution. By betraying socialism or dithering in countries like Germany and Italy, the social democrats played the role of historic stepfather to Stalinism.

The Bolsheviks did not lead the workers to power believing socialism could be rooted in Russia; they led the Russian workers on, believing the European workers would follow. The socialist leaders in the West left them in the lurch, amid the Russian backwardness. That was the root cause of the Stalinist counterrevolution.

Whatever the other errors made by the early Communist International, the international Bolshevik current was entirely right against reformist social democracy.

The reformists' criticisms of Stalinism have often, of course, also been correct. They have been right on the same questions on which bourgeois democrats have been right.

But reformist social-democracy is not a different strategy for achieving socialism. Socialism is the replacement of wage-slavery and the capitalist system built on it by a different mainspring — free cooperative self-administering labor. What has that got to do with the achievements of social democratic reform? Since the 1920s, social-democratic parties have abandoned even a verbal commitment to fighting for a socialist system defined as something radically different from capitalism. They aspire at most to modifying capitalism, with a few welfare measures. By the 1990s even this has been called into question. Social democratic leaders in France, Spain, Australia, New Zealand, Italy, Greece and Britain have become no better than pale-pink Thatcherites and Reaganites.

The fight for welfare-state reforms, and the defense of existing welfare state provision, is indeed necessary for socialists. But socialists cannot stop there. And today most social democrats — like the British Labor Party — do not even "start" there.

The only model of socialism restored to its proper shape and color by the disintegration of Stalinism and the open disavowal of socialism by the Stalinists is the only model of socialism that ever deserved the name — the fight to organize the working class as a clear conscious force, a class for itself, to break bourgeois state power and abolish wage slavery. Or, as *The Communist Manifesto* put it, "to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy... to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e. of the proletariat organized as the ruling class... In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."

The Manifesto's Libertarian Vision

Luciana Castellina

TRANSLATED INTO THE LANGUAGES OF ALL THE NATIONS OF THE WORLD, in an infinite number of editions, the key concepts of *The Communist Manifesto*— only 23 pages in its first version — lay down the ethical and cultural foundations of an international political movement whose breadth remains unmatched in history. The last words alone, "Working men of all countries, unite," are among the most famous political bywords ever. It is a text that has shaped, for good or ill, an entire historical epoch. Our century cannot be understood without reference to the impact *The Manifesto* has had on events in the 150 years since its publication. This alone would mark *The Communist Manifesto* as one of the most extraordinary writings of modern times.

While the capitalist system has certainly not collapsed, it is without question very different today from the 19th century model, in no small part because of the political and philosophical impact that those scant 23 pages have had. It is important to recall that at a time when the left despairs of radical change.

It would be overly reductive to maintain that the importance of *The Manifesto* lies solely in the political intent it expresses, its total opposition to the prevailing beliefs and legalities. And although it is self-evidently impossible on the eve of the third millennium to embrace all the perspectives and goals stated therein, without reservation, it is equally inconceivable to fail to be impressed by the continued relevance of *The Manifesto*'s focus, especially when considered in conjunction with the authors' other key writings.

Naturally, it is would be improper to celebrate Marx while overlooking the failure of the revolutions that borrowed their rationale from his thought. However, not only must we remember that Marx always refrained from offering detailed blueprints of socialism, but that he was also fully aware of the very complexity of the revolutionary project needed to surmount existing society. Marx was perhaps the only thinker of his day to fully appreciate the historical link binding capitalism to industrialism recognizing that the former could not be overcome without transcending the latter. For proof, one need only cite this statement: "Production for the sake of production will lose all meaning when the measure of progress will be above all the satisfaction specifically of human need and, in particular, of the generalized need for a non-alienated activity." And it is precisely this perspective that allows Marx, in opposition to the social primitivism so common among his contemporaries, to see the capitalist

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stage of development as the necessary antecedent of a communism which is no longer merely a stage in history, but is, in a larger sense, the negation of all that preceded it — the reign of liberty as opposed to that of necessity.

The very fact that humanity is today emerging at last from the state of generalized want, that new technologies portend a radical reduction in time consumed for mere survival; that the growth of information and communication lays open the possibility of a far-flung decentralization of decision-making and, therefore, of mass participation from below all attest to the perspicacity of *The Manifesto*'s libertarian vision.

I don't want to be misunderstood. A central idea in *The Manifesto* that the development of industrial capitalism would give birth to its own gravedigger, the proletariat, appears more in doubt as the post-industrial age dawns without having awakened the anticipated revolutionary stirrings and passions. We are therefore compelled to evaluate the text critically. In speaking of its continued relevance, I refer rather to the root causes of the troubling problems of our age, related to, but less immediate than, the convulsive class struggles of yesterday, located in the metabolism of the capitalist system itself — in the market, profit and private property. These postmodern contradictions cannot be dealt with without challenging the mechanisms Marx so thoroughly analyzed and denounced.

Just a few examples. Is it possible to reverse the dramatic deterioration of the environment if the market system remains the principal factor in determining economic activities, the enterprise the sole decision-maker, profit the sole criterion of success? Hasn't the gap between North and South, as between rich and poor in the so-called advanced societies, expanded— despite the proven capacity of capitalism to accelerate the growth of the productive forces — proving that poverty is no longer primarily a function of underdevelopment and therefore destined in due course to disappear, but the consequence of specific social relationships and arrangements? And is this not an affirmation restoring credibility to the Marxist theory of progressive immiseration, so long an object of academic ridicule?

As regards democracy, there is no doubt that Marx undervaluated the juridical dimension of liberty. Hence, the frailty of his argument about the dissolution of the state. But democracy signifies more than freedom from arbitrary coercion. It also connotes the right to form meaningful voluntary collectives and institutions. Both these aspects of democracy, in the era of globalization and mass communication, are emptied of real content as the locus of power increasingly shifts from accountable parliamentary structures elsewhere. Doesn't this also redound to the continued truth of Marx's intuition, according to which democracy will be hollowed — that politics will become irrelevant — if the sanctuaries of economic power are not vanquished?

The problem of how to realize a full democracy is perhaps among the most difficult we are called upon to deal with. If it is true that Marx does not provide an exhaustive response in this regard, he nevertheless helps us see the limits of popular sovereignty when reduced by economic forces to a mere electoral exercise. Recognizing, as we must, the universal value of democracy, we are driven by an appreciation of the understanding bequeathed by *The Manifesto* that a full and vibrant democracy, a real democracy, awaits the abolition of the capitalist system.

The Communist Manifesto: Insights and Problems

Murray Bookchin

IT IS POLITICALLY RESTORATIVE TO LOOK WITH A FRESH EYE at *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* (to use its original title), written before Marxism was overlaid by reformist, postmodernist, spiritual, and psychological commentaries. From an examination of this work on its own terms, what emerges is that it is not a "text" intended to be served up for academic deconstruction and convoluted exegesis but rather the manifesto of a party that challenged the existence of capitalist social relations and their underlying class base. The *Manifesto* directly faced the exploitative social order of its time and intended to move a class—the proletariat—to revolutionary action against it.

Bringing theory to the service of building a movement, as Marx and Engels did—indeed, they perceptively interwove basic analytical ideas with programmatic and organizational issues—is becoming alien in the present era, which is sharply dichotomizing the two. To be sure, the existence of "Marxology" as a university discipline today, with its own professoriat and journals, as distinguished from a living practice, is not an entirely unprecedented phenomenon. Kautsky, among others, already began to make this dichotomy as editor of *Die Neue Zeit* in the 1890s. But *Die Neue Zeit,* at least, was the theoretical organ of a mass movement that mobilized hundreds of thousands of people on the German political scene. It was not until recent decades that strictly scholarly Marxian journals appeared that exhibited few or no political intentions and hence provided no basis for a practice engaged in transforming society. The divorce between theory and practice—and the failure of avowed leftists to build a revolutionary public sphere in the past few decades—has led to the debilitation of theory itself, as witness the current acceptance of postmodernist nihilism, Situationist aestheticism, and quite recently, even Eastern spiritualism among a number of self-professed Marxists.

By contrast, the most refreshing feature of *The Manifesto* as a theoretical document is that it candidly and unabashedly addresses lived social relations, not simply their cultural offshoots. Its stylistic magnetism, which made it the inimitable model for so many later programmatic statements by revolutionary movements, lies precisely in its bold candor about the material factors that guide human behavior. Far more than Nietzsche, Marx (who seems to have penned most of *The Manifesto*) wrote with a hammer about the realities of the

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capitalist system that were emerging in his time. The famous opening line—"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles"—is arrestingly declarative, allowing for no equivocation.[1]

Published in a limited German edition of 800 on the eve of the 1848 February Revolution in France, *The Manifesto* synthesized generations of reflection on the root causes of social injustice and conflict. As Marx himself freely acknowledged, the importance that it attaches to class struggles was not new to revolutionary thought. It can be traced back to the Levellers of the English Revolution and even to Lollards such as John Ball in the English Peasant War of the 14th century. Having no direct impact upon the events that made up the stormy year of 1848, *The Manifesto* nonetheless left a lasting imprint upon subsequent working-class movements, providing a definitive standard by which their revolutionary intentions were to be judged. And it placed upon every subsequent revolutionary movement the obligation to make the oppressed conscious of their status—that is to say, to inculcate among the exploited a deep sense of *class consciousness* and to urge them to abolish class society as such.

Pounded out as it was, the opening line of *The Manifesto*—unadorned and unequivocal—immediately fixed the Communist League (for which it was written) as an overtly revolutionary movement. Thereafter, socialist organizations and movements that professed to seek justice for the oppressed had to validate their standing with the emerging working class in its conflict with the bourgeoisie. After the publication of *The Manifesto,* class struggle was taken for granted among such movements, even if they sought to achieve socialism in peaceful and piecemeal ways by making compromises between workers and capitalists.

Moreover, Marx's opening line announced that *The Manifesto* would not obfuscate the real social relations that make up capitalism. Capitalism, *The Manifesto* went on to emphasize, is an unrelentingly exploitative economy that is driven by its competitive relations to colonize the entire world and to bring social life as such face to face with the question of its very ability to survive in the absence of a communist society. Today, when reformism permeates most of the political thinking that goes under the name of leftism, we would do well to recall that Marx and Engels warned, a century and a half ago, that "the bourgeoisie is unfit any longer to be the ruling class in society, and to impose its conditions of existence upon society as an over-riding law," indeed, that "its existence is no longer compatible with society" (pp. 495, 497).*

Parts I ("Bourgeois and Proletarians") and II ("Proletarians and Communists") of *The Manifesto* lay out the main argument of volume one of *Capital,* in

*The Manifesto's case for the bourgeoisie's ultimate inability to take custody of social life rested on its "pauperization" of the proletariat — the famous "immiseration" thesis on which volume 1 of *Capital* was to conclude. With the later emergence of welfare states and their ability to manage crises, capitalism seemed able to prevent itself from sinking into a deep-seated economic crisis, causing this notion of "immiseration" to seem questionable. But the volatility of modern, "neo-liberal" capitalism and the erosion of its methods for crisis-management have brought into question the ability of capitalism to be a self-correcting system. It is far from clear that, in the years ahead, economic collapse (as well as ecological disasters) will be avoided. Capitalism is still very much in flux, and *The Manifesto*'s warnings about "anarchy in production" can by no means be ruled out as a source of massive social unrest.

vivid, clear prose that is as excitingly programmatic as it is brilliantly theoretical. The pithy formulations are impossible to summarize without doing them injustice, while the brilliance with which Marx and Engels demonstrated that capitalism creates the conditions for its inevitable destruction is impossible to capture. The culminating passage of part I contains ideas that are provocative and prescient even for the coming century:

> The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionising the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. . . . Constant revolutionising of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind.
>
> The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connexions everywhere. . . . Modern bourgeois society with its relations of production, of exchange and of property, a society that has conjured up such gigantic means of production and of exchange, is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. (pp. 487, 489)

These lines were written a century and a half ago, when capitalism was hardly the prevalent social order on the European continent, although it had made great inroads into Britain and its ultimate ascendance in France and Germany was foreseeable. Industrial capitalism on the European continent was still embedded in a mixed economy—partly bourgeois, partly feudal, and largely peasant. Nearly all cities were still compact entities, crowded with winding medieval streets and surrounded by walls, and everyday commodities were still fashioned by the hands of skilled artisans. The winter of 1847-48 was still the inception of the bourgeois epoch, not its high point, let alone its end, and the words *globalization* and *multinationalism* were unheard of, even as *The Manifesto* described similar phenomena. The predictions in this passage might have been dismissed as fanciful visions, had they not been placed in the context of *The Manifesto*, which gave them an historical as well as an eductive meaning that previous accounts of capitalism (a word that was still new) had lacked.

These lines demonstrate the power of theory to project itself beyond given conditions into the future—and the theoretical projections of Marx and Engels here became glaring realities many generations later, although remaining unfulfilled even into the new millennium. Paramount is the salient reality that capitalism is the uncontrollable work of historical "sorcery"—a system of production for its own sake—that, while it exists, must eat away at the natural world and drastically remake the planet, probably to the detriment of all lifeforms, including human beings. Without a revolutionary change, its drive as a transformative system—a society that runs on its own, beyond even the control of the bourgeoisie itself—may be modified but cannot be arrested.

No "discourse" on the theoretical or programmatic issues of *The Manifesto* can be meaningful unless it addresses the need for the formation a "revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of

things" (p. 519). "The theory of the Communists," as *The Manifesto* declares, "may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property" (p. 498)—or equivalently, abolition of capitalism, without any reservations. For a communist movement to fall short of this goal, as Marx and Engels understood, would be, not to "approximate" it or to "realistically" modify it, but to abandon it altogether. As the authors of *The Manifesto* were to write in their address to the Communist League after the events of 1848-49, reforms could validly be demanded, but only as a means to ratchet up greater demands that would be impossible for the existing social order to satisfy and that thus would lead to an armed confrontation with the bourgeoisie over the very structure of society.

Nor were the readers of *The Manifesto* in those years—and not even for a generation later—members of the industrial proletariat, to whom the document was addressed. By far the great majority of workers who could understand its message were artisans who aspired to the right to "associate" (in craftlike mutualistic brotherhoods or industrial trade unions) and, among the most advanced workers, to the right to "organize work" cooperatively. This artisanal or associative socialism, as historians have called it, was more cooperative than communistic, rewarding the members of associations according to their work rather than according to their needs.

By contrast, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* made a dramatic leap, unequalled by any contemporary socialistic document. It showed that communism was not merely an ethical desideratum for social justice but a compelling historical necessity, flowing out of the very development of capitalism itself. This leap was reined in by its ten-point minimum program, largely the work of Engels. With its moderate demands, it seems to have been designed for the German workers' movement, which was still allied with the middle classes against the aristocracy. Hence even the most socialistic of the ten demands, the seventh, prudently called for the "extension of factories and instruments of production owned by the state" rather than the collectivization of the economy (p. 505). In a long-range perspective, part II of *The Manifesto* projected the concentration of all productive facilities, including the land, in the "hands of a vast association of the whole nation" (p. 505). Actually, this last phrase, "a vast association of the whole nation," was specific to the English translation; the original German spoke of "associated individuals," a somewhat Proudhonist formulation that would have made the document more acceptable in Germany at the time.

After classes disappear and property has become socialized, *The Manifesto* says, the "public power will lose its political character," that is, its statist form:

> Political power [the state], properly so called, is merely the organised power of one class for oppressing another. If the proletariat in its contest with the bourgeoisie is compelled, by force of circumstances, to organise itself as a class, if, by means of a revolution it makes itself the ruling class, and, as such, sweeps away the old conditions of production by force, then it will, along with these conditions, have swept away the conditions for the existence of class antagonisms and of class generally and will thereby have abolished its own supremacy as a class.
>
> In place of the old bourgeois society with its class and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for

the free development of all. (pp. 505-6)

The Communists who try to achieve these aims, says the document, have no interests "apart from those of the proletariat as a whole" (p. 496). They constitute the most resolute party in the struggle for promoting the welfare of the proletariat, but always viewing the contours of the struggle as a whole, they "everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things." Indeed, they always bring to the front "as the leading question in each [struggle], the property question, no matter what its degree of development at the time" (p. 519).

GIVEN ITS ANALYSIS OF CAPITALISM AS A DOOMED SOCIAL ORDER within which reforms must always be placed in the service of revolution; its resolute commitment to (generally violent) revolution; its view of communism as an associative rather than a state system "in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all," it is only fair to ask what Marx and Engels meant by "political power" in 1847-48. The answer—idiosyncratic in the light of what the two men were to write in later years—is surprisingly libertarian.

In *The Manifesto*, the proletarian "state" that will replace the bourgeois "political power" and initially make the most "despotic inroads on the right of property" will consist of the proletariat raised to "the position of ruling class." More specifically:

> The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralise all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., *of the proletariat organised as the ruling class,* and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible. (emphasis added, p. 504)

This can hardly be called a state in either the usual Marxian or the social anarchist sense of the word. In fact, the implications of this extraordinary formulation have vexed even the ablest of socialist theorists, anarchist as well as Marxist—and they dogged Marx and Engels themselves as a problem up to the last years of their lives. How could an *entire* class, the proletariat organized as a "movement" that would eventually speak for society as a whole, institutionalize itself into a "political" (or state) power? By what concrete institutional forms would this class, whose revolution in contrast to all previous ones would represent "the interest of the immense majority" (p. 495), exercise its economic and political sovereignty?

Until the Paris Commune of 1871, Marx and Engels probably intended for the "political power" that the proletariat would establish to be nothing more than a republic, that is, a *representative* form of government, albeit one rooted in political rights such as recall. Anarchist critics of Marx pointed out with considerable effect that any system of representation would become a statist interest in its own right, one that at best would work against the interests of the working classes (including the peasantry), and that at worst would be a dictatorial power as vicious as the worst bourgeois state machines. Indeed, with political power reinforced by economic power in the form of a nationalized economy, a "workers' republic" might well prove to be a despotism (to use one of Bakunin's more favorite terms) of unparalleled oppression.

Marx and Engels had no effective response to make to this criticism, as we can tell from their correspondence with their German supporters. Nothing in their writings shows that they gave any serious regard to the "assemblyist" tradition established by the Parisian sections during the Great French Revolution, in which the sans culottes, including the poorest and most dispossessed in the French capital, actually exercised collective power in their neighborhood assemblies during the stormy period between the August *journée* of 1792, which eliminated the monarchy, and the June *journée* of 1793, which nearly replaced the Convention with a communalist system of administration under sectional control. This tradition, which lingered in France through most of the 19th century, found no echo in the Marxist literature.

But the Paris Commune of 1871 came as a breath of fresh air to Marx and Engels, who, a generation after *The Manifesto* was published, embraced the Commune as the institutional structure that the proletariat would produce between a capitalist and a communist society, or as Marx put it in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*, "*the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat.*"[2] Marx praised the Commune for introducing the right to recall deputies to the Communal Council (the equivalent of the city council of Paris), the adoption of a skilled worker's wage as reimbursement for participating in the Council, the arming of the people, and very significantly, a "working, not a parliamentary, body, executive and legislative at the same time."[3]

The economic achievements of the Commune were very limited; not only did it fail to socialize the economy, it brought much-needed reforms to the working class only because the more radical Internationalists, who formed a minority of the Communal Council, had to overcome the obstruction of the neo-Jacobins, who supported bourgeois legalities. In its political institutions the Commune was much more of a *municipalist* entity, with strong affinities to anarchist notions of a confederation of communes. It essentially challenged the existence of the French nation-state, calling upon the thousands of communes that dotted France to unite in a Proudhonist contractual network of autonomous communes rather than subject themselves to a centralized state.

Marx embraced this municipalist Commune, and in substance its call for a confederation of communes (without using the compromising word *confederation*, which his anarchist opponents employed), as a political structure in which "the old centralised government in the provinces" would, following Paris as a model, "have to give way to the self-government of the producers"—presumably a proletarian dictatorship. Each delegate from the various communes would be bound "by the *mandat impératif* (formal instructions) of his constituents," a strictly anarchist concept that reduced a delegate from a parliamentary representative or deputy to a mere agent of the people, in whose voice he was expected to speak and vote.[4]

Marx's assertion that the central government would retain "few but important functions" was brave but hardly credible—and even James Guillaume, one of Bakunin's closest associates, regarded Marx's favorable appraisal of the Commune's libertarian features as the basis for a reconciliation between Marxists and anarchists in the First International. Engels, in an 1875 letter to August Bebel criticizing the Gotha Program (which had just been adopted by the German Social Democrats), even urged that instead of "People's State," the program use a "good old German word," *Gemeinwesen*, "which can very well do

service for the French 'Commune,'" although he said little about its substance.[5]

In time, and not without vacillation, Marx went back on his favorable account of the Commune.[6] There is little doubt that he returned to the support for republican institutions that had marked his political views in the aftermath of the revolutions of 1848. In the last years of his life, without saying much on the subject of the Commune, he clearly still favored incorporating into the republic many of the features—the pay scale for deputies, the right to recall, the need to arm the working class, and the *mandat impératif*—that he had praised in *The Civil War in France*. But the extent to which he thought a worker's state should be centralized and how much authority he thought it should enjoy remained unanswered questions upon his death.

REPUBLICAN INSTITUTIONS, HOWEVER MUCH THEY ARE INTENDED TO EXPRESS the interests of the workers, necessarily place policy-making in the hands of deputies and categorically do not constitute a "proletariat organised as a ruling class." If public policy, as distinguished from administrative activities, is not made by the people mobilized into assemblies and confederally coordinated by agents on a local, regional, and national basis, then a democracy in the precise sense of the term does not exist. The powers that people enjoy under such circumstances can be usurped without difficulty. Some anarchists will always find fault with any form of institutional social organization, but if the people are to acquire real power over their lives and society, they must establish—and in the past they have, for brief periods of time established—well-ordered institutions in which they themselves directly formulate the policies of their communities and, in the case of their regions, elect confederal functionaries, revocable and strictly controllable, who will execute them. Only in this sense can a class, especially one committed to the abolition of classes, be mobilized *as a class* to manage society.

Apart from their writings in erstwhile support of the Paris Commune, neither Marx nor Engels ever resolved the problem of the political institutions for proletarian rule that they set for themselves in *The Manifesto*: the problem of how a class, still less the mass of the people in bourgeois society, will take over the reins of power *as* a class or a people. In 1905 the Russian workers came up with their own solution to the question of a political institution for class power: the Petrograd Soviet. This citywide soviet, which emerged in the Russian capital in the 1905 Revolution, was an approximation of the assemblies that had appeared in the Great French Revolution. Had it remained merely a municipal council, it would have differed little from the Paris Commune, although it was much more working class in character.

But the Petrograd Soviet also sank deep roots in the city's factories and was guided, through strike committees and shop committees, directly by the workers themselves. More than Lenin, it was Leon Trotsky, one of its last and certainly its most prominent chairmen, who saw in the soviet not only the institution that could mobilize the proletariat as a class but provide the transitional political and economic bridge from a capitalist to a socialist society. Lenin's view of the soviet was more instrumental: he regarded it merely as a means for educating the working class and enlisting it in the service of the Bolshevik party.

Not until 1917 did Lenin decisively change his view about the soviets and

come to regard them as institutions of working-class power. Even so, he wavered during the July events, when the Bolshevik leaders were imprisoned as a result of a premature spontaneous insurrection, but by the autumn of 1917 he had returned to the goal of a soviet government. For a time he suggested that a soviet government might include *all* the soviet parties—Mensheviks and Socialist Revolutionaries of all kinds as well as Bolsheviks—but by the end of 1918, the Bolsheviks ruled the newly established soviet state entirely alone and eventually turned the soviets into docile instruments of their party apparatus.

The question of the institutions of political and social management by a class as a whole—and eventually by citizens in a classless society—has no easy resolution. Plainly it is not answered adequately by Proudhon's system of federalism, which is too incoherent and vague and retains too many bourgeois features, such as contract and individual proprietorship, to provide a truly revolutionary solution. The solutions that later anarchists, more collectivist than the Proudhonists, offered are pregnant with possibilities, but they too suffer from a lack of definition and articulation.

For their part, anarchosyndicalists have offered workers' control of industry as the most viable revolutionary alternative to the state, adducing the takeover of factories and agricultural land as evidence of its feasibility. An adequate account of its possibilities and limitations would require another article.[7] But as social elements for a liberatory society, workers' control has basic problems—not only their parochialism and the highly visible decline in numbers of the manufacturing working class but most especially their tendency to turn into competitive collectively owned capitalistic enterprises. Mere economic control of plants and factories is only one side of the coin of a revolutionary transformation, a lesson the Spanish anarchosyndicalists learned only too dramatically in 1936-37, when, despite the greatest collectivization experiment in history, they failed to eliminate the bourgeois state—only to find that it returned in May 1937, forcibly demolishing the powerful anarchist enclaves in Catalonia and Aragon.

What seems necessary are the institutions of a democratic politics—to use the word *politics* in its Hellenic sense, not as a euphemism for modern-day Republican statecraft. I refer to a politics that would create local assemblies of the people and confederate them in purely administrative councils, in order to constitute a counterpower to the nation-state. How such a counterpower could be established and could function falls outside the province of this article; far too many important details, both historical and logistical, would be lost in a brief summary of this "assemblyist" position.[8]

That the issue of the institutions of class rule was even raised in *The Manifesto of the Communist Party* is one aspect of the document that makes it as living in 1998 as it was in 1848. That Marx and Engels, with their theoretical depth, foresaw the trajectory of capitalist development, in terms that are even more relevant today than in their own day, would be enough to make the work a tour de force in the realm of political thought. Both its great insights and its vexing problems live on with us to this day. The tragedy of Marxism is that it was blind to the insights of social anarchism and that later revolutionaries failed, at crucial moments in history, to incorporate the insights of both forms of socialism and go beyond them.

NOTES

1. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *Manifesto of the Communist Party,* in *Collected Works,* vol. 6 (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1976), p. 482. All citations from *The Manifesto* herein are drawn from this translation, giving page numbers.

2. Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Programme* in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works,* vol. 24, p. 95; emphasis in the original.

3. Karl Marx, *The Civil War in France,* in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works,* vol. 22, 331.

4. Ibid., p. 332.

5. Engels, "Letter to August Bebel, March 18-28, 1875," in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works,* vol. 24, p. 71.

6. See Marx's letter to Ferdinand Domela Nieuwenhuis, February 22, 1881, in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works,* vol. 46, pp. 65-66.

7. My full assessment appears in "The Ghost of Anarcho-Syndicalism," *Anarchist Studies,* vol. 1 (1993), pp. 3-24.

8. For a revolutionary politics by which people can manage their affairs through direct-democratic popular assemblies in confederations — or what I have called libertarian municipalism—the reader may care to consult my book *From Urbanization to Cities* (1987; London and New York: Cassell, 1996) as well as Janet Biehl's *The Politics of Social Ecology: Libertarian Municipalism* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1997). Recent theories of "strong democracy" and the like presuppose the existence of the state and tend to defer to the notion that present-day society is too "complex" to permit a direct democracy, thereby offering no serious challenge to the existing social order.

After Marxism, Marx: *The Manifesto* After 150 Years

Paul Mattick, Jr.

I DOUBT THAT ANYONE BELIEVES ANYMORE that history has come to an end; Francis Fukuyama's fifteen minutes are long over. But it would be hard to deny that Marxism has come to an end — Marxism as a political doctrine and program, or rather, a set of related doctrines and programs. Marxism in this sense was the theoretical correlate of what I like to call the Historical Left: the labor parties, unions, and radical sects that crystallized out of the workers' movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries. While all three types of organization still exist, of course, the parties with real political weight have long abandoned socialism, unionism is not only decisively nonradical but in retreat everywhere, and the sects have at best a virtual reality in little-visited corners of

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the internet. In this sense the Left too has come to an end, for all practical purposes, in the period since the Second World War.

In its disappearance the Historical Left took with it Marxism as worldview, as theory of history, as guide to or justification of political strategy and tactics. It has left a theoretical residue, a ghost of its former self, which has settled in academe. We have Marxist (or *marxisant*) art history, literary criticism, anthropology, and even (or above all) economics. The one piece of theory missing, strikingly enough, is that to which Marx actually dedicated most of his mental energy: the critique of political economy. A glance through recent volumes like *Marxism in the Postmodern Age* or *Whither Marxism?*[1] turns up not a single essay on this topic and barely a mention of it. Even the adepts of "Marxist economics" for the most part substitute adaptations of academically acceptable approaches for Marx's own theoretical procedures. Equally absent is discussion of the goal Marx meant his critique to serve: communism, by which he meant the coincident abolition of wage labor and the state. And yet, no less a post-middlebrow trend spotter than *The New Yorker* has seen fit to hail Marx as "The Next Thinker."[2] Whether or not this prediction is accurate, the 150th anniversary of the publication of *The Communist Manifesto* provides a good occasion to consider the question of Marx's relevance to our present and future.

To be accurate, *The Manifesto* should be credited jointly to Marx and Engels. Whatever their later divergences with respect to such matters as the dialectics of nature or the erection of "Marxism" into a totalizing doctrine, *The Manifesto* exhibits the exhilarating cross-fertilization produced by the political, intellectual, and personal friendship of the Zweimännerpartei in the 1840s. In particular, as Richard Hunt has cogently argued, Engels should be credited with the historically concrete view of the modern state as a "committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie" that appears in their joint work, replacing the more abstract concept of the state to be found in Marx's earlier writings.[3]

THE *Manifesto* IS AN ATTEMPT TO APPLY A GENERAL CONCEPTION of modern social transformation to the understanding of a specific situation, Europe in general and Germany in particular in 1848. An 1872 republication of *The Manifesto* in German in the wake of the Paris Commune was the opportunity for a new preface in which the authors wrote that the document's political program, as well as its analysis of the political situation, had become "out of date." With respect to such matters they judged *The Manifesto* "a historic document which we do not feel we have any right to alter." Nonetheless, they thought, "the general principles expounded in the document are on the whole as correct today as ever."[4]

Have the 125 years since then called the general principles into question?

The greatest theoretical weakness of *The Manifesto*, perhaps, is the undeveloped character of its economic theory. Periodic crises are explained as due to overproduction, to be overcome by the destruction of productive forces and the expansion of the market. On the other hand, while a lifetime's work was to deepen Marx's critique of political economy — so that, notably, crisis was understood in terms of the fundamental dynamic of the extraction and accumulation of surplus value — he never altered his emphasis on the centrality of

crisis to the generation of revolutionary energies. For Marx, consciousness is embedded in social practice. Thus, revolutionary movements are not produced by thinkers, however great, but by the pressure of circumstances on the masses of people whose activity would have to radically change if social life was to be transformed.

Fundamental to *The Manifesto*'s argument is the proposition that "our epoch, the epoch of the bourgeoisie, possesses . . . this distinctive feature: it has simplified the class antagonisms,"[5] producing a conflict between two great classes. Marx and Engels believed that capitalist development was eliminating all pre-modern class groupings not defined by wage-labor or capital, driving the middle strata — shopkeepers, artisans, peasants — into the proletariat. At the same time, distinctions within the working class, such as those of nationality, sex, and income, were being destroyed. Here again, it is interesting to compare this picture to that elaborated by Marx in later years. Greater experience made it clear that the relative impoverishment Marx predicted did not imply absolute impoverishment for the working class as a whole. While Marx never wrote the book on wage labor intended to follow *Capital*, his later theory had adequate room for the range of wages and conditions differentiating groups of workers. And the emphasis he (and Engels) placed in their journalism and political commentary on the anti-Irish chauvinism of English workers — and the anti-black attitudes of Irish-Americans — demonstrates his realism about the limits of proletarian unity.

Looking back, we can see the error in *The Manifesto*'s declaration that capitalism "substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation" for earlier forms of exploitation "veiled by religious and political illusions," as it leaves "no other nexus between man and man . . . than callous 'cash payment'" (487). For one thing, old illusions persist: capitalism has not, as Marx and Engels proclaimed it had, "drowned the most heavenly ecstasies of religious fervor" and "philistine sentimentalism, in the icy water of egotistical calculation" (487). Indeed, it has found ways to combine them. Even more important, though less often acknowledged, capitalism has produced new modes of illusion. As Marx himself was to demonstrate in detail in *Capital*, economics provides the most important of the ideological coverings of bourgeois reality, so that exploitation itself, for example, is hailed as the provision of "work" — i.e., waged labor — to otherwise dependent people. The emergence of economics as the central modern ideology (with other important ideological structures, like art, largely defined in contrast to it) represents in the world of thought an equivalent for the centrality of "cash payment" in actual social relations.

If it is hardly true, to take an important example, that "differences of age and sex have no longer any distinctive social validity for the working class," (491) the integration of women into the paid labor force steadily proceeds, throughout the world, with attendant demands on consciousness. While it is jarring to read in the moment of "family values" the judgment that "the bourgeoisie has torn away from the family its sentimental veil," the reality to which conservative sloganeering represents one response is that of the actual unworkability of the touted ideal. With parents segregated in nursing homes and sunbelt condos, children abandoned to commercial entertainments by hard-working parents, single-parent families condemned to poverty and opprobrium, actual family life, whatever the fine phrases of politicians and pundits, is in-

deed under the sway of the "cash nexus."

OF COURSE, *The Manifesto*'S DESCRIPTION OF CAPITALISM was meant as a depiction of trends. As such it is so accurate that it often reads like a commentary on the news of the day. "Globalization" may be the slogan of the moment, but in 1848 Marx and Engels described how "the bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country," extending even to the formation of a "world literature" from national and local literatures (488). They write of urbanization and the agglomeration of population in large centers; the formation of transnational corporations; the continuing acceleration of technological change. If "welfare reform" is the latest governmental mania this only confirms in a new way *The Manifesto*'s prediction that capital cannot economically exploit the totality of the labor force: The bourgeoisie, it says, "is unfit to rule because it is incompetent to assure an existence to its slave within his slavery, because it cannot help letting him sink into such a state, that it has to feed him, instead of being fed by him" (495-6). This holds no less at a time when the ruling class is experimenting again with not feeding him (or, more often, her). Finally, though the confidence with which Marx and Engels asserted the ineluctability of economic crisis was not so long ago shared by very few, even within the Left, it is today coming to seem alarmingly reasonable to many.

However, *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*, as its title indicates, was not primarily an analysis of capitalist society, but a call for its overthrow. Marx and Engels felt that overthrow was on the historical agenda when they wrote. In the mid-1840s Engels predicted the end of capitalism, at least in England, by 1852-53; and 17 years later Marx worried that he had taken so long to write his book on economics that the coming "turbulent movements" would rob it of any interest, by abolishing its subject-matter.[6] If these expectations turned out to be seriously over-optimistic, to put it mildly, one great virtue of *The Manifesto* is its clear indication of reasons why.

As Hal Draper emphasizes in his indispensable book, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, "Marx and Engels took as their governing aim not the aspiration for a certain type of future society, but the position of a social class as an embodiment of humanity's interests"; they "stated their political aim not in terms of a desired change in social system (socialism) but in terms of a change in class power (proletarian rule)."[7] This is why they do not identify the "communist party" as the possessor of a particular doctrine or program: its theoretical conclusions "are in no way based on ideas or principles that have been invented . . . by this or that would-be universal reformer" but "express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle . . . " (498).

Communists are those who take as their aim the seizure of social power by the wage-earning working class. Marx and Engels believed this aim to be implicit in the class struggle that is an unavoidable feature of modern society. No matter how successful the workers may be at any moment in winning improvements in their conditions of work and life, their needs remain subordinated to those of capital, so that gains won in times of prosperity will be swept away as the conditions for capital accumulation decline again. (The present moment, with its worldwide lowering of wages, increase in the intensity of

labor, and rollback of social welfare measures, is only too striking an example.) The demand that the workers' welfare not be subordinated to that of capital implies the abolition of capital as a social form. This is what Marx and Engels meant by calling the class struggle "a political struggle" (493): Insofar as the state represents the interest of bourgeois society as a whole (as opposed to the particular interests that vie for control of the state) a revolutionary workers' movement, in attacking class society as such, must come into conflict with the state, as well as with exploitation at the individual point of production.

By its nature, the overthrow of the capitalist order cannot be accomplished piecemeal. A proletarian revolution would be radically different from the social transformation that brought the bourgeoisie to power. Capitalist production could develop within feudal society, as a new mode of exploitation, providing benefits to the older ruling estates as well as to the rising bourgeois class. But proletarians, whose condition as those who must work for wages is defined by non-ownership of means of production and distribution, cannot gradually accumulate decisive economic and so social power. That they could, in the form of cooperatives, trade unions, or political organizations, was one of the master illusions of the Historical Left. The sad history of these attempts has only confirmed the striking judgment of *The Manifesto*: "that the *first step* in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy" (504, emphasis added). This is the step that will demand solutions, collectively formulated in practice, to the problem of organizing society on a new basis.

IT IS HARDLY SURPRISING, THEN, THAT THE REVOLUTION Marx and Engels awaited with such impatience in the 1840s has yet to take place: the scale of action, and its risks, are very great. As they thought, only an experience of dire necessity would force people to confront the foundations of life as they know it. Since 1848 the massive upheavals in which one can identify elements pointing at transcendence of the existing social reality have in fact come in response to economic difficulties, generally accompanied by military defeats weakening the ruling powers. These experiences also largely confirm *The Manifesto*'s insistence that proletarian liberation must be accomplished by the workers themselves: over the last hundred years the organizations and ideas of the Historical Left have turned out to be a part of the modernization and regulation of exploitation rather than its abolition. And to the extent that movements one can call communist in Marx's sense arose in our century they were largely independent of and even in opposition to the institutions of the Left.

In this respect, too, history has justified *The Manifesto*'s vision of capitalism as the organizer of its own overthrow. For the characteristic forms of organization created by workers — the workplace councils, area committees, industrial coordinations, etc. — have been based on the fundamental structures of capitalist society: enterprise, city (and neighborhood), industry. But their fate demonstrated as clearly the impotence of organization and consciousness to carry and extend the revolutionary process in the absence of an adequate basis in social experience for the idea that workers can control their own history. The working class has not so far been willing to take its fate in its own hands, away from those of political, union, and business professionals.

THE TONE OF VOICE THAT MAKES *The Manifesto* SO EXCITING TO READ — the irony, anger, and energy that express the authors' conviction of the nearness of revolutionary change — also gives it the air of a document from a scarce-remembered time (I feel like something of a crank and an alien just using words like "proletariat" and "revolution" today). Yet the world is now in many ways more like the world described in *The Manifesto* than when Marx wrote, with a global capitalism and a majority working class in all developed countries. The problems created by capitalism, notably the poverty, relative and absolute, imposed on the vast majority of the earth's population, remain the same, though they face us on a frighteningly larger scale. The available solution remains the same as well: the creation of a new society by "the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority" (495). We encounter these problems and this solution in a radically new guise, given above all the obsolescence of earlier forms of organization and ideological conceptions. Written before the Historical Left emerged in its now dead or dying forms, Marx's and Engels's old text paradoxically speaks with the voice of youth. Will it be answered in the future by new ideas and actions aiming at "the forcible overthrow of all existing social conditions"? That is the question to which, as *The Manifesto* insists, the global working class alone can give an answer.

NOTES

1. Antonio Callari et al. (eds.) *Marxism in the Postmodern Age* (New York: The Guilford Press, 1995); Bernd Magnus and Stephen Cullenberg (eds.) *Whither Marxism?* (New York: Routledge, 1995).

2. John Cassidy, "The Next Thinker. The Return of Karl Marx," *The New Yorker*, October 20 and 27, 1997, pp. 248-259.

3. Richard N. Hunt, *The Political Ideas of Marx and Engel*, Vol. I, *Marxism and Totalitarian Democracy, 1818-1850* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974), pp. 124 ff.

4. D. Ryazanoff (ed.), *The Communist Manifesto of Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), pp. 260-261.

5. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, "*Manifesto* of the Communist Party," in K. Marx and F. Engels, *Collected Works*, Vol. 6 (New York: International Publishers, 1976), p. 405. Further references to this text will be given in parentheses.

6. For Engels, see Hunt, p. 140; Marx to F. Lasalle, February 22, 1858, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Correspondence* (Moscow: Foreign Languages Publishing House, n.d.), p. 125.

7. Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*, Vol. II, *The Politics of Social Classes* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1978), p. 24.

Beyond Civil Society

John Ehrenberg

THE CONTEMPORARY OBSESSION WITH "CIVIL SOCIETY" began with the attempt of dissident East European intellectuals to develop a credible theoretical grounding in the early 1980s. As they began to describe the crisis of Soviet-style communism as "the revolt of civil society against the state," it became clear that they understood "civil society" as the anti-communist opposition organized in forums, associations and similar bodies. Two sets of claims came to characterize the period, both of which drew on classical liberalism and were indebted to the Cold War's literature on mass society and totalitarianism:

1. "Actual existing socialism" has degenerated into a bureaucratically-driven commitment to central economic planning for its own sake, systematic stifling of initiative, hypocritical claims of service to the working class, and a grasping state apparatus which crushes all authentic movement emerging spontaneously from "society." Socialism in power is little more than a state-driven strategy of industrializing backward societies according to the requirements of iron and steel.

2. At a more basic level, Marxism's stated intention to "transform" civil society expresses an inherent disposition toward statist totalitarianism. Its claim that the state can represent the general good stands behind its voluntarism, lack of limits, tendency to politicize everything, indifference to the content of socialist democracy, contempt for privacy, and suspicious disposition to crush, direct or absorb democratic initiatives which originate in "civil society."

This anti-statist skepticism about politics spread to Western Europe and then to the United States, where it has now achieved near-canonical status. Marxism, we are assured, is an outmoded ideology, socialism a dangerous fantasy, and the centrality of the working class a remnant of a vanished "Fordist" past. The coalition politics of local struggles define the practical and theoretical boundaries of contemporary democratic politics.

Two conceptions of civil society dominate modern social and political thought, and both are rooted in liberal democratic theory. It was Adam Smith who first articulated the classical bourgeois understanding of it as a market-organized sphere of necessity which is driven by the self-interested motion of individual proprietors, but Smith drew heavily on Locke's earlier position that civil society is constituted by property, labor, exchange and consumption. The rapid development of markets soon encouraged bourgeois political economists to theorize civil society as an autonomous self-governing sphere which can

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transform individual strivings for particular advantage into the public good. Hegel built his theory of the state and civil society on this understanding, and Marx's development of Hegel continues to inform the thinking of much of the left.

The second, and related, strand of liberal thinking is Tocqueville's notion that civil society is an intermediate sphere of voluntary association sustained by an informal culture of self-organization and cooperation. His finding that Americans are uniquely disposed to associate in defense of local interests has rested at the heart of the effort to reconcile liberty with equality for some time. This view informed a good deal of the civil society literature of Eastern Europe and, supplemented by Madison, has become integrated with pluralism and communitarianism in the United States.

These two intellectual currents interact with a third, which at its most vulgar and simple-minded suggests that "we" should be nice to each other. Politicians should get some training in "civil discourse," local television stations shouldn't lead off every newscast with lurid talk about crime and violence, political campaigns shouldn't be so "negative," and we shouldn't reach for a gun after being cut off on the highway. After 15 years of telling the lower orders how to behave, the language of civil society is now available to teach us manners.

After all is said and done, though, the central proposition animating the contemporary American fascination with civil society is the Tocquevillian claim that an intermediate sphere of voluntary associations, local activity and mediating institutions provides the only durable grounding for democratic activity. The state is the most important threat to freedom and the left's desire to subject the market to democratic supervision continues its retrograde tendency to dance with the devil. If contemporary life teaches us anything, it is that democratizing civil society has become more central to coherent progressive politics than it has been for some time, and Marx's and Engels's notion that it is constituted by market and class explains why *The Communist Manifesto* is as important today as it was a century and a half ago. Following their path toward social democracy will illuminate some central questions of contemporary politics.

"Real, Practical Emancipation"

HEGEL UNDERSTOOD CIVIL SOCIETY AS THE NETWORK of market relations which was constituted by necessity and mediated between family and state. But its moral content was always compromised because its root in competitive private acquisitiveness threatened to dissolve into universal chaos. Unable to overcome the pull of particularism or solve its chronic pauperism, civil society required the ethical moment of the state.

Like many social thinkers of the period, Marx shared a common desire to mitigate civil society's chaotic destructiveness; his crucial step was to wonder whether the state could do the job which Hegel had assigned it. His early experience with the Prussian censors suggested that the state was a false universal and that the network of material interests centered in property-shaped politics rather than the other way around.

The French Revolution had emptied religion, craft, residence, property,

and the like of formal political meaning and made them characteristics of private individuals. But the persistence of the 19th century's "social question" made it clear that formally freeing the state from society simultaneously liberated society from the state. If public affairs were no longer explicitly determined by religion or property, then religion and property could develop free of political restrictions. Their hold over man was not weakened by their formal separation from politics; on the contrary, emptying them of formal political content had strengthened them. The apparent independence of civil society means that "the state can free itself from a restriction without man being really free from this restriction, that the state can be a free state without man being a free man." ["On the Jewish Question," (OJQ) *Collected Works* 3:152] As important as it was, political emancipation did not go far enough; "man was not freed from religion, he received religious freedom. He was not freed from property, he received freedom of property. He was not freed from the egoism of business, he received freedom to engage in business."(OJQ 167)

More is required for freedom than changes in politics or religiosity. "Political emancipation is, of course, a big step forward. True, it is not the final form of human emancipation in general, but it is the final form of human emancipation within the hitherto existing world order. It goes without saying that we are speaking here of real, practical emancipation." (OJQ 155) As important as it was, bourgeois political democracy did not touch the social foundations of the market. Private property was the heart of the problem, and Marx and Engels soon turned their attention to the social force capable of abolishing it and bring "the hitherto existing world order" to a close.

Earlier social critics had tended to focus on the poorest, hardest working, largest, or most exploited part of the laboring population. Marx and Engels changed socialism's view of agency forever because they directed their attention to a propertyless proletariat which lived at the heart of modern life. Furthermore, they were interested in it precisely because it was the living negation of civil society. Marx's early criticism of Hegel's state became the criticism of bourgeois society and "merely political" revolution yielded to radical social transformation. This is what the Tenth Thesis on Feuerbach meant when it observed that "the standpoint of the old materialism is 'civil' society; the standpoint of the new is human society, or associated humanity."["Theses on Feuerbach" 5:8]

To say that the "ultimate result" of the communist movement is the abolition of classes is to summarize the Marxist theory of social revolution. But the criticism of "merely political" revolutions did not lead to the abandonment of all political activity, and it remained for *The Communist Manifesto* to clarify the role of political affairs in a proletarian revolution whose raison d'etre was social transformation. Driven by the position that the bourgeoisie can be defeated economically only if it is first defeated politically, Marx and Engels made it clear that "the immediate aim of the Communists is the same as that of all the other proletarian parties: formation of the proletariat into a class, overthrow of the bourgeois supremacy, conquest of political power by the proletariat." ["*Communist Manifesto*" 6:498] In so doing, they articulated the orientation toward politics which the contemporary left so badly needs.

The Leading Role of Politics

The Communist Manifesto's CALL FOR ABOLISHING EXISTING PROPERTY RELATIONS was not unique; indeed, the bourgeoisie had demanded the same thing in its struggle against the feudal aristocracy. It was the attack on all private property in the means of production which set the proletarian revolution apart from its predecessors. The workers' initial demand for the regulation or abolition of specifically bourgeois property was simple enough. "But modern bourgeois property is the final and most complete expression of the system of producing and appropriating products, that is based on class antagonisms, on the exploitation of the many by the few. In this sense, the theory of the communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property." [*CM*, 498] The proletariat is the only class whose revolution must move beyond the replacement of one form of private property by another:

> All the preceding classes that got the upper hand, sought to fortify their already acquired status by subjecting society at large to their conditions of appropriation. The proletarians cannot become masters of the productive forces of society, except by abolishing their own previous mode of appropriation, and thereby also every other previous mode of appropriation. They have nothing of their own to fortify; their mission is to destroy all previous securities for, and insurance of, individual property.
>
> All previous historical movements were movements of minorities, or in the interest of minorities. The proletarian revolution is the self-conscious, independent movement of the immense majority, in the interest of the immense majority. The proletariat, the lowest stratum of our present society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself up, without the whole superincumbent strata of official society being sprung into the air. [*CM*, 495]

His insistence on the leading role of politics in social transformation characterized Marx's claim that the proletarian revolution would be different from its predecessors. Bourgeois revolutions had broken out after the more or less finished forms of the capitalist order had slowly grown within the structures of feudal society. Bourgeois property and bourgeois production had largely supplanted feudal property and feudal production prior to the outbreak of the "open" revolutionary assault on the feudal state. The basic task of the democratic revolutions was reduced to breaking the political supremacy of the aristocracy, a supremacy which had already been undermined by the lengthy crisis of feudal economy. Since the basic structures of bourgeois social relations were largely in place before political power passed to the bourgeoisie itself, the "open" political revolution did little more than adjust an obsolete superstructure to an already-transformed base. This is why *The Manifesto* described bourgeois revolutions as the last in a series of political transformations which replaced one form of private property in the means of production with another, more highly developed, form. The very real incompatibility between them notwithstanding, their common root in private ownership explains why feudalism grew out of slavery and why capitalism had its material and social roots in the feudal order.

But it is because the finished forms of the socialist order cannot be spontaneously generated within the boundaries of private property that the tasks and historical rhythm of the socialist revolution differ so markedly from those of its predecessors. The deepest contradiction of Marxist politics is that social-

ist revolution begins before the social and material conditions for its completion are in place. Karl Kautsky may have described Leninism as "Tartar Marxism," but the difficulties which the Bolsheviks faced are endemic to the socialist project as such. This is why Marx and Engels suggested that the proletarian revolution would become more radical even after its apparent "victory":

> . . . the first step in the revolution by the working class, is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy.
>
> The working class will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organized as the ruling class; and to increase the total of productive forces as rapidly as possible.
>
> Of course, in the beginning, this cannot be effected except by means of despotic inroads on the rights of property, and on the conditions of bourgeois production; by means of measures, therefore, which appear economically insufficient and untenable, but which, in the course of the movement, outstrip themselves, necessitate further inroads upon the old social order, and are unavoidable as a means of entirely revolutionizing the mode of production. [*CM*, 504]

The "ultimate results" of the workers' revolution might be social in character but its "immediate goal" is a political one. As important as the proletarian state was to Marx, it must be remembered how much he hated the institution on which he placed such emphasis. The whole point of the use of state power is to set the conditions for its disappearance, but this has proven to be the most profound difficulty faced by socialist theory and practice. The use of state power "against" the state is one of the most deeply contradictory aspects of Marx's understanding of socialism, but it has long been a contradiction of real life.

Beyond Civil Society

IT IS PRECISELY *The Communist Manifesto*'S CALL FOR comprehensive state-oriented political activity which is lost in the current fascination with civil society. It is doubtless true that intermediate associations and voluntary organizations constrain state power and perform many vital democratic tasks. We wouldn't know much about the plight of the whales or the danger of land mines without them. The problem is that the theorists of civil society have overplayed their hand. One doesn't have to be a Marxist to understand Tocqueville's limits, and a critique of civil society has become the most important project for the democratic and socialist left alike. Consider some findings of some of the more insightful American social scientists:

• Grant McConnell's *Private Power and American Democacy* makes the classic claim that local units are not necessarily more democratic than larger ones. Localism and decentralization often tend to strengthen pre-existing inequality and work to the advantage of local elites. The more local the politics, the more discriminatory they frequently are. There is nothing to support the pluralist fantasy that the existence of a center of power will automatically call forth a center of countervailing power, since many interests do not get represented or organized. Citizens' ability to organize and be heard is heavily constituted by class. The real danger to democracy is private power, and only public power

can control it.

• Jane Mansbridge's *Beyond Adversary Democracy* suggests that localism has powerful tendencies which work against conflict. A close analysis of Tocqueville's town meetings demonstrate that the male, wealthy, educated and powerful are assumed to be the most capable of discovering, articulating, and organizing the common interest. Locally-based face-to-face democracies do not protect individuality or tend toward the democratization of power just because they are local.

• More recently, Sidney Verba's, Kay Schlozman's, and Henry Brady's acclaimed *Voice and Equality* demonstrates that the factors (money, time, and "civic skills") that foster political participation originate in "civil society" (families, schools, jobs, voluntary organizations, churches). At the same time, almost all the deep structural factors in civil society work to reinforce and multiply already-existing inequality. The common factor of them all is class, the most salient explanation for the wide differences in political participation which mark American politics.

A conservative political climate has stimulated the recent interest in "civil society" and the accompanying faith in the market. Increasingly marked by diversity, fragmentation, and differentiation, capitalism is characterized by sharpening divisions between classes, the rapid reorganization of work and marginalization of large sections of the population, fierce competition between "leaner" and more specialized enterprises, a weakened labor movement, and an enervated political left.

It's also characterized by a historically unprecedented concentration and centralization of wealth. *Top Heavy*, Edward Wolff's much-discussed study for the Brookings Institution, demonstrates what we already know: the United States is the most unequal industrialized society on earth. The top 1 percent of the social pyramid controlled about 20 percent of the country's net worth in 1970 but now owns 42 percent. In 1989, this top 1 percent — 834,000 households with about $5.7 trillion of net worth — was worth more than the bottom 90 percent of Americans — 84 million households with about $4.8 trillion of net worth. A 1996 University of Michigan study revealed the same thing: inequality in the distribution of wealth in America has reached a 70-year high. It is greater than at any time since the end of the 1920s, *before the introduction of progressive taxation*.

What's the response of the left to all this?

Aping the anti-statist orientation of the right, communitarianism asks us to embrace a romanticized 19th-century vision of a small-town rural social order constituted by localism and particular interest. Postmodernism continues its subversive posturing with a "cultural" critique of capitalism and a hostility to history, politics, the Enlightenment, reason, and all "metanarratives." Almost all parties to the civil society debate agree that knowledge is local, identity and "difference" are the key categories in modern social life, human relations are constituted by language and "discourse," "culture" is the site of struggle, and no single agent of human liberation can even be theorized. Fragmentation and discontinuity mean that there is no objective basis for collective action toward a common end which cuts across the multiple, shifting and self-defined "identities" constituting the social world. The best one can hope for are the coalition politics of a moderate pluralism. "Civil society," populated

by voluntary organizations, the family, press, political parties, social movements, and forms of communication whose structure and content are not shaped by the imperatives of class or oriented toward the state, is now the arena of "post-Marxist" and "post-Fordist" democratic theory and action. There are no more collective agents, class no longer drives politics, and isolated individuals and eclectically-organized groups struggle to find and create meaning for themselves. Mutualism, localism, self-limitation and solidarity are the new public values of democratic practice; theorists of civil society mimic the right's claim that culture has replaced work as the decisive locus of modern life and that the left's traditional emphasis on the use of state power to limit the market is a dangerous fantasy which leads straight to the Gulag. A marked tendency to exempt the market from democratic struggle or public control reflects the hostility of "civil society" theories to the breadth of view and comprehensiveness of scope which only politics can provide.

Given recent history's dramatic demonstration of how political power can be used by a highly organized and conscious ruling class, it is an odd time to be claiming that the state and the politics of social class are no longer relevant to the left. In a time of an unprecedented and unrelenting state-led assault on living standards and the imposition of an accelerating austerity program which is well into its second decade, it's rather odd to hear the "left" say that the traditional political orientation of socialism is obsolete. The penetration of the market into ever-wider spheres of life and their subjugation to the totalizing logic of accumulation make it clearer than ever that the state's separation from civil society throws people back on a market whose destructiveness increases as democratic supervision recedes. It's as if it were 1848 all over again. There is no way to avoid the intractable problem that, however dangerous it is, the state is the only weapon by which a democratic social order is even a vague possibility. A period which relentlessly glorifies private strivings and denigrates public action needs to be reminded of the Greek discovery that it is politics which makes us more than idiots. If the history of modern democracy teaches us anything, it is that "socialism in one neighborhood" is not an adequate slogan for the left.

The gradual revival of the labor movement will shatter the left intelligentsia's fascination with culture, identity and civil society soon enough, but in the meantime it is essential to reassert the generality and comprehensiveness of political struggle against — and for — the state. Whether conceived of as Tocqueville's mediating associations or as Hegel's "system of needs," the most important issue with which the left should be concerned is the extension of democracy into civil society. The political core of *The Communist Manifesto* remains as central to human emancipation as it was a century and a half ago.

Marxism's Anniversary, Long Live (a piece of) Marxism!

Michael Albert

PERHAPS THE MOST REMARKABLE THING ABOUT THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF *The Communist Manifesto* is that, well, who cares? The answer is: nearly no one. More, nearly no one would care about Marx's birthday or Lenin's, or about the birthday of the Russian, Chinese, or even Cuban revolutions (in the industrialized West, anyhow), or about any other related event one might propose to celebrate — say *Das Kapital*'s birthday, for example, whenever that might be.

The reason is certainly the crumbling of the Soviet Empire, but this just raises a new question. Given that the Soviet Empire was a dungeon, why did its fall — a good thing as in the phrase "one down, one to go" — shove Marxism down history's memory hole? Is the correlation between dictatorship, ecological decay, social homogenization, and many other vile features of Soviet history, on the one side, and the body of thought labeled Marxism and Marxism-Leninism on the other side, an unfair rap? Should the court of intellectual evaluation find Marxism and Marxism-Leninism innocent of responsibility for the Soviet debacle? Or, if there are damning connections, is there nonetheless a baby to preserve while discarding the bath water in these ideologies? More extreme, as postmodernists argue, could the problem be the very fact that Marxism and Marxism-Leninism are ideologies? Should we dispense with all attempts to explain history beyond singular descriptions? Should we entirely forego trying to envision the future — deciding not only that the Soviet model was a horror, but that any visionary model is doomed to a similar fate by the very nature of looking forward beyond our range?

To answer these questions, one has to carefully evaluate Marxism as a theory of history and particularly economics, and Leninism as a view of how to overcome capitalism, putting in its place socialism, communism, the dictatorship of the proletariat, etc. Over the years, Robin Hahnel and I have spent considerable time doing this. Here I can only summarize the conclusions we have argued in depth and detail elsewhere:

1. Marxist dialectics at its best is an overly obscure methodological reminder to think holistically and historically; at its worst it's a philosophically absurd drain on creativity and range of perception.

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2. Historical Materialism's main claims are denied by history. Its lesser claims are not entirely wrong, but when "real existing people" utilize the concepts of historical materialism they inexorably arrive at an economistic and mechanical view of society, systematically under-valuing and misunderstanding social relations of gender, political, cultural, and ecological origin and import.

3. Marxist class theory has disguised the importance of the coordinator (professional-managerial or technocratic) class and its antagonisms with the working class and with capital, and has in this way long obstructed class analysis of the Soviet, Eastern European, and Third World non-capitalist economies, and of capitalism itself.

4. The Labor Theory of Value misunderstands the determination of wages, prices, and profits in capitalist economies and turns activists' thought away from a needed social-relations view of capitalist exchange. The dynamics of the workplace and market are largely functions of bargaining power and social control, categories essentially ignored by the labor theory of value.

5. Marxist crisis theory, in all its variants, distorts understanding of capitalist economies and anti-capitalist prospects by seeing intrinsic collapse where no such prospect exists and orienting activists away from the importance of their own organizing as the basis for change, that is far more promising.

6. Regarding visions of desirable societies, Marxism is particularly obstructive. First there is Marxism's general taboo against "utopian" speculation. Second, Marxism presumes that if economic relations are desirable other social relations will fall into place. Third, Marxism is permanently confused about what constitutes an equitable distribution of income — "from each according to ability to each according to need" is not a viable economic guide (it is utopian and curtails needed information transfer) and "from each according to work and to each according to contribution to the social product" is not a morally worthy maxim (it rewards productivity, including genetic endowment, beyond effort and sacrifice). And fourth, Marxism approves hierarchical relations of production and command planning as means of allocation.

7. Marxism's injunctions regarding economic goals taken cumulatively amount to advocating what we call a coordinator mode of production that elevates administrators, intellectual workers, planners, etc., to ruling class status. This Marxist economic goal uses the label socialist to appeal to workers, but does not structurally implement socialist ideals (much as the political goal of bourgeois movements uses the label democratic to rally support from diverse sectors, but does not structurally implement democratic ideals).

8. Finally, Leninism is a natural outgrowth of Marxism employed by people in capitalist societies, and Marxism-Leninism, far from being the "theory and strategy for the working class," is, instead, by its focus, concepts, values, and goals, the "theory and strategy for the coordinator (professional-managerial, technocratic) class."

SO WE CAN SEE WHY WITH THE DEMISE OF THE SOVIET MODEL, allegiance to Marxism and Marxism-Leninism might also wane, since these ideologies were indeed aimed in their principles, concepts, thought, and vision (though not the deepest aspirations of many of their advocates), at this model. So, what's the problem? Out with the model, out with the theory and strategy seeking it.

Makes sense, doesn't it?

Well, yes, but only to a point. When theories fail in explaining reality or guiding practice, they do need to be corrected or jettisoned. And, in the case of Marxism and Marxism-Leninism, the faults are basic to the underlying concepts so that correcting them is not just tinkering with the system. That is, after dispensing with dialectical materialism, historical materialism, the labor theory of value, the limited understanding of class, Leninist strategy, and the (Soviet- or market-based) Marxist model, we would say that whatever you do next you won't have enough left of what was there before to retain the old name. So, yes, it is time — actually way past time — to get on with something new.

But, when theories fail in explaining reality or guiding practice, it does not follow that every claim they make, every concept they offer, and every analysis they undertake must be jettisoned. Quite the contrary, more likely much will resurface as still valid (though perhaps recast somewhat) in any new and better intellectual framework.

And this is the frustrating problem for those of us who, over the years, have in a principled manner combated the economism and other inadequacies of Marxism. Now that people are finally eager to move on — oh no, there goes that baby down the bath drain! Because for all the inadequacies of Marxism, the theory got two things very right: First, private ownership of the means of production is inevitably alienating and exploitative. And second, allocation via markets must be abolished if we are to achieve a desirable economy. Yet many who call themselves radical political economists have somehow forgotten these two important lessons. And since any radical political economy that no longer understands these fundamental flaws of capitalism is doomed to oblivion, this is a very serious problem. Unless it is corrected, "radical political economy" will cease to be radical and join non-radical institutionalism as another minor intellectual opponent of the neoclassical mainstream.

Capitalist profits (based on private ownership of the means of production) are not morally justifiable. At a point in time "the economy" is capable of producing a surplus of goods and services beyond those necessary to reproduce all inputs used, that is, "the economy" is potentially productive. It is potentially productive because of the cumulative effects of innovations dating back to prehistory, but the important point is that this potential productivity is, for the present generation, a public good. It belongs no more to one person or group than another. It is our common economic inheritance. Under capitalist rules, to convert this potential productivity into an actual social surplus, capitalists must permit workers access to the means of production and workers must toil under capitalist management. Capitalists then accrue part of the social surplus from those who exert and sacrifice to produce it by exploiting the leverage capitalist ownership of the means of production grants them. Bargaining power conveyed to them by their property rights allows capitalists to take the social surplus as profit. In contrast, morality-based claims on the economy's productive potential arise only from personal sacrifice toward increasing or manifesting society's productivity potential, or, in other words, only from work, something not part of capitalists' job description.

Whether one calls the result the "fundamental Marxist theorem" or the "fundamental Sraffian theorem" is secondary. What is primary is that profits

come from exploiting workers and that capitalists accrue them by power, not effort and sacrifice. So those who countenance a "positive" role for a private sector in a sought after new economy or who praise the virtues of "mixed economies" could benefit quite a bit from "re-reading" Marx. Of course, they can get this insight elsewhere as well, which is fine. What isn't fine, however, is jettisoning the insight that private ownership of the means of production is an abominable economic structure on the idiotic grounds that the insight is part of Marxism and we must now, finally, do better than Marxism does.

BUT THE TENDENCY TO GO "SOFT" ON PRIVATE OWNERSHIP is relatively minor in scope and impact compared to the contemporary economists' stampede to embrace markets, wherein an astonishing proportion of radical political economists have opted to join the international, conservative, free market jubilee. For example, in the debate over what constitutes a desirable economy — illogically unleashed by the crises of Soviet style economies — there are basically four schools of thought advocating, respectively: 1) public enterprise market models, 2) mixed economy market models, 3) centrally planned models and 4) democratic or participatory planning models. Marx would no doubt be surprised that the majority sentiment among modern-day Marxists lies with the first two schools. Sentiment is so strongly supportive of market visions, in fact, that among Marxists there is a more active debate between different versions of market models than between markets and planning.

Needless to say, as proponents of participatory planning, we can only wish that some of our colleagues who used to suggest that we needed to apply ourselves more vigorously to the study of Marx, would take their own advice. In the (earlier) words of Frank Roosevelt, a recent convert to market socialism himself:

> Marx, the greatest socialist thinker we have had so far, was adamantly opposed to allowing any role for markets in socialism: "Within the cooperative society based on common ownership of the means of production, the producers do not exchange their products," he said in his *Critique of the Gotha* Program (1875). And Engels concurred: 'The seizure of the means of production by society puts an end to commodity production . . . which is replaced by conscious organization on a planed basis." *Anti-Dühring* (1878).

In our opinion, whether he was the "greatest socialist thinker" or not, Marx took what Roosevelt calls "the abolitionist position" regarding markets with good reason. And if our colleagues enamored of markets can break their free market spell more effectively by re-reading Marx and Engels than by reading current day critics, we do not hesitate to prescribe the antidote of their choice.

While only some of our opposition to markets derives from Marx, he provided more than a good start. Again, we are happy to use Frank Roosevelt's formulation of five reasons Marx opposed markets:

1. Markets inexorably lead to social inequality and class divisions — hence to domination, exploitation, alienation.

2. Because decisions regarding output rates are taken by individuals or firms without any social coordination a market economy will tend to be unstable... thus failing to utilize its human and material resources consistently over time, i.e. waste.

3. Markets gradually turn everything into a commodity and thus corrupt and undermine social morality and community.

4. When commodity production (i.e. the market) is the dominant way of organizing economic activity in a given society, human relationships will necessarily be characterized by alienation. Production for use is the necessary foundation for fully human relationships.

5. Reliance upon the market mechanism for coordinating economic activities prevents a society — and the individuals in it — from achieving freedom in the fullest sense of the word.

While Frank Roosevelt would like to convince himself otherwise, every one of these objections to markets is as sound, if not more sound, today than when Marx formulated them over a hundred years ago. To these liabilities, in addition, we would add a number of others, including, briefly, environmental inadequacies, private effect exceptionality, and both the absence of reasonable structures for expression of preferences and the inexorable bending of preferences in an individualist manner. We would also note that regarding point (1), the class division that markets create is not that between capitalists and workers (engendered by private ownership of the means of production) but that between what we call coordinators and workers, a feature of central planning as well.

But, in any event, regarding the body of work written by Marx and all subsequent Marxists, our conclusion is no different from anyone else's! If we concentrate on the right passages Marx and chosen representatives of the Marxist heritage will have a positive (though limited) role to play in the future of radical political economy. If we focus on the wrong passages, however, Marxology will be counterproductive.

BUT WHAT ABOUT THE LAST SET OF QUESTIONS WE NOTED at the outset of this article? That is, what about the critique of Marxism that says its faults derive from the fact that it is ideology or vision per se? This view is, to put it bluntly and briefly, a well meaning insight run amuck.

Why is the view "well meaning"? Well, when most postmodernists and others (for example, those who suffered the boot of Bolshevism in the Eastern Bloc) argue against developing a framework to understand history or to put forth a vision that we might aspire to attain, they are rebelling against the hubris and authoritarianism of sectarianism. And opposing sectarianism is good, to be sure.

What's "amuck" about the view? It goes from rejecting excessive confidence in our analyses and projections, and, particularly, arrogance in stomping out alternatives, to rejecting the very idea of having analyses or projections at all. Again, to overuse the metaphor — there goes the baby with the bath water. Surely the solution to bad analysis and bad vision is better analysis and better vision — not none of either. And surely the solution to arrogant assertion of analysis or vision is openness to diverse perspectives and a good process for comparing and learning from options, not curtailing all options a priori.

To reject thinking about history with an eye to discerning patterns that

help us understand our place and our options, and to reject envisioning better institutions that give us norms for valuation now and aims to aspire to by our practice, is to literally de-brain ourselves. An amazing proposal! Yes, if one could show that the acts of thinking, of looking for patterns, of envisioning, etc., whether all together or each separately by their very nature caused those engaging in them to inexorably become Stalinist thugs, the postmodernists would have a case. But this is utter nonsense, which is why no postmodernist or other proponent of the "no theory, no vision" stance has ever even bothered to try to make such a case.

The Marxism problem is not solved by jettisoning everything that Marx and/or Marxists have ever thought or said. Nor is it solved by jettisoning the agenda of trying to understand history or to envision a better future and aspire to create it in light of our thoughts about it and our values and experiences as we proceed. No, the Marxism problem is solved by doing better, and if there is anything that respects the best of *The Communist Manifesto*, or Marx's own birthday, or the publishing of *Das Kapital*, or any other event you care to name in this pantheon, getting on with doing it better is that thing.

A Future for Marxism

Nancy Fraser

ON THIS 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF *The Communist Manifesto*, it is difficult to avoid the sobering question: Does Marxism have any future in our apparently "postsocialist" age?

Here is my answer in a nutshell: Marxism as the metanarrative or master discourse of oppositional politics in capitalist societies is finished. So is Marxism as a totalizing theory of the system dynamics, crisis tendencies, and conflict potentials in capitalist societies. Rather, we have witnessed the rise of a new, postmarxian field of critical theorizing. Prominent components of this field include poststructuralist theories of discourse, feminist theories, and new critical theories of race and ethnicity. To be sure, the final form of this field, including the degree to which it will remain a set of multiple overlapping discourses rather than a single more unified discourse, is not yet apparent. But one thing is clear. The only possible future for Marxism is as one contributing strand among others in this new postmarxian field. This requires a new modesty for Marxism, a willingness to open itself up to other bodies of critical thought, to reconstruct itself in the light of their insights, and generally to enter into fruitful exchanges with them.

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That, however, is only one side of the story. The other side is that the insights of Marxism are indispensable to the new postmarxian field. Thus, the other contributing strands in that field need to open themselves up to Marxism in turn. Specifically, poststructuralist discourse theories need to situate their project in relation to macro-sociological structural theorizing, including political economy and institutional analysis. Likewise, feminist theories and critical "race" theories need to attend to class dynamics and to the global political-economic processes that help shape gender and racial inequality. To forget or ignore Marxism, rather than to transform and incorporate it, is to condemn critical theorizing to untenable, pre-Marxian modes of thought.

To grasp this thesis, we should recall that Marxism always insisted on a close connection between theory and practice. It sought, in the words of Marx, to provide "the self-clarification of the struggles and wishes of the age." If we take this admirable commitment seriously, as I think we should, then we need to begin by noting the relative decline of traditional working class struggles in our age and the rise of struggles that don't fit the Marxian story of history. I mean the so-called "new social movements" such as feminism, the movements for gay and lesbian liberation, the peace and ecology movements, anti-racist movements, and various other movements—some progressive and some reactionary—that are organized around ethnicity and nationality. These movements depart from the Marxian understanding of class struggle in part because they focalize aspects of identity other than class. In addition, they evince concerns and aspirations that are askew of, and in some cases at odds with, the Marxist focus on production. Unless we are prepared to dismiss these movements as expressions of "false consciousness" or "artificial negativity," then we must ask some hard questions about Marxist theory.

THE MOST OBVIOUS AND MOST DIFFICULT QUESTIONS CONCERN THE STATUS of the category of "class." Marxism always invoked this category at two levels and in two forms. First, it invoked class as an objective theoretical category that can be ascribed to social actors by an observer irrespective of the actors' self-descriptions and self-understandings; here, the working class, for example, is the class of persons who own no property in the means of production but only their labor power and who play a specific, objectively specifiable role in the circuit of surplus value realization by selling their labor power for wages.

In the Marxian tradition, this sense has been called the "class-in-itself" and contrasted with the "class-for-itself." As the Hegelian locution suggests, the latter conception is supposed to capture the self-understanding of social actors, their collective social identity and participation in a mobilized social group. Here, the working class is a self-identified, mobilized collective entity that seeks to intervene in political and social life.

Having invoked the category of class at these two levels and in these two forms, Marxism had to theorize the relation between them. What is the relationship between the working class as an objective theoretical entity and the existence (or nonexistence) of the working class as a mobilized group with a collective identity? Virtually all versions of Marxism have assumed that the theoretical class should (eventually) call forth or blossom into the mobilized group. If it did not, then the theory had to explain why not. What intervening and interfering circumstances prevented the class-in-itself from becoming the

class-for-itself? It was largely in this negative space that Marxism located the problematics of consciousness and culture, ideology and discourse. They were of interest, it seemed, primarily in order to explain why what should be happening wasn't.

In the light of historical developments, East and West, we need to rethink these assumptions. One problem is how to conceptualize the construction of people's social identities and the formation of social groups. Certainly, we should reject the untenable view that collective social identities are somehow secreted by the structural positions of social actors. Instead, we should assume that identities are culturally *constructed*. By this I mean that they arise from relatively autonomous, contingent cultural processes that escape structural determination. Thus, where Marxism posited convergence between structural position and group mobilization and affiliation, we should assume instead the relative autonomy of identities from structure and the relative contingency of processes by which affiliations are formed and groups mobilized.

It follows that the new, postmarxian field of critical theorizing will need to provide a prominent place for the study of culture and, thus, for the study of discourse. Discourse, after all, is the cultural medium in which social identities are formed and re-formed. It is also the medium in which interests are constructed and represented and the medium in which social groups are created and mobilized. Thus, we will need to understand how cultural meanings are produced, circulated, and transformed in society. Insofar as poststructuralist discourse theories offer conceptual tools that promote such understanding, they can make important contributions to critical theorizing.

Moreover, insofar as we begin to theorize not from the movement that Marxism predicted should be politically salient, but rather from the movements that actually *are* politically salient, then we need to rethink the relationship among class, gender, and race-ethnicity. This means rejecting the untenable view that accords political and theoretical primacy to class over gender and "race," both at the level of collective identity and at the level of social structure. As collective identities that inform social movements, gender, "race," and class are entirely on a par with one another, since all three are *constructed* outcomes of contingent cultural processes that are relatively *autonomous* vis-a-vis social structure. (This excludes not only class essentialism but also gender essentialism and racial-ethnic essentialism.)

But it does not follow that class identities, gender identities, and racial-ethnic identities are mutually exclusive and independent of one another. Rather, each focalizes a register of discourse that is pervasively elaborated throughout modern culture. Strands from all three registers are interwoven in the social identities of social actors. Thus, the identity of every social actor is simultaneously gendered, raced and classed. When one of these strands is precipitated to center stage as the focus of some group mobilization and political affiliation, the others do not thereby cease to be operative. Rather, they continue to shape the salient strand in crucial if implicit ways. Thus, the class-focused identities that Marxism treated as primary were always already also gendered and raced. Likewise, gender-focused identities of interest to feminists are also raced and classed, while racially or ethnically-focused identities are also classed and gendered. So none of these movements can be adequately understood through a single lens.

In addition, the structural meaning of class also needs reconstruction. Political-economy, for example, should theorize gender and race-ethnicity as axes of exploitation, given first, the gender- and race-segmented character of labor markets and second, the structural position of people whose labor is either wholly or partly composed of unwaged work that contributes indirectly to the realization of surplus value.

I do not mean to imply that the structural side of critical theory can be limited to political economy. Certainly, the circuit of surplus value extraction is an important subsystem in capitalist societies, and one that is causally efficacious. But it is not the only such subsystem. In addition, there is the subsystem of the state apparatus. Moreover, other areas of life that are not formally institutionalized as differentiated subsystems may nonetheless be profitably subject to structural analysis. Prime candidates for such analysis are domestic arenas, kinship networks, sexual relations, public spheres, and the secondary associations of civil society.

FINALLY, WE COME TO THE QUESTION OF THE NORMATIVE DIMENSION. Marxism assumed that the fundamental injustice of capitalist society was exploitation. The remedy, accordingly, was socialist redistribution, the deep restructuring of the political-economy so as to abolish class divisions and differentials. Today, however, many mobilized groups assume that the fundamental injustice of contemporary society is cultural misrecognition of group difference. The remedy in their view is "the politics of recognition," the revaluation of devalued group identities or perhaps the deconstruction of the very terms in which group differences are currently elaborated. Usually, Marxism and multiculturalism are constructed as mutually exlusive, antithetical alternatives. We are effectively asked to choose between redistribution and recognition, class politics and identity politics, socialism and multiculturalism.

These, however, are false antitheses. Justice today requires both redistribution and recognition, as neither alone is sufficient. Thus, another crucial task is to figure out how to combine them — both theoretically and practically. This, in my view, is the key political question of our day: How can we develop a coherent programmatic political orientation that integrates redistribution and recognition? How can we develop a framework that integrates what remains cogent and unsurpassable in the socialist vision with what is cogent and irrefutable in the new, apparently "postsocialist" multicultural vision?

My aim is not to propose and defend a specific programmatic conception of how the several kinds of critical theorizing listed here should be linked or integrated with one another. That is not a task for a single individual. But I do mean to claim that all the various kinds of theorizing I have been discussing will need to find a place somewhere on the postmarxian map. In order that Marxism, too, be assured of a place there, it will have to be in dialogue with the range of feminist theorizing, of critical "race" theorizing, and of poststructuralist discourse theorizing. My deeper point is to defend the possibility — indeed the necessity — of a future for Marxism in the new postmarxian field of critical theorizing.

Marxism in the Age of Information

David McNally

WE LIVE, SO WE ARE TOLD THESE DAYS, at the end of one thing or another — at the end of history, of the Cold War, of the business cycle, of the class struggle. All the reference points, all the historical markers by which we situate ourselves lie behind us; they have come and gone. Never again will people experience years like 1848, 1917, 1936-37, 1968 or 1989. We have come after the great events; we are the people of the "post" age. Previous generations may have defined themselves in terms of momentous episodes in human history; they may have drawn inspiration from dramatic narratives built around the advance of freedom, the resistance to fascism, or the struggle for socialism; but we shall not. Whatever purchase on historical reality these narratives might once have had, they are now empty, the stuff of nostalgia. We live, so the pundits tell us, in an epoch beyond capitalism and its crises, and beyond the class conflicts these once generated. We are post-historical, post-modern, post-Marxist.

Many readers will recognize these claims as staples of the social theory known as "postmodernism." Often dressed up in an obscure academic jargon, these ideas also live a popularized existence outside the universities: in the rambling speculations of futurists, and in the "expert" opinions that grace talk-shows and newspaper columns. It is tempting to dismiss all of this as just the old end-of-ideology thesis recycled. But there is a danger in this curt dismissal. For postmodernism comes with a peculiar kind of economic and social theory of late capitalism, one that exercises a certain power of attraction on the left. Momentous economic and technological changes have so reshaped the economy and the nature of work, claim the postmodernists, that Marx's analysis of capitalism and its contradictions has been rendered obsolete.

Let me acknowledge the vital obligation of Marxists to analyze the major transformations which have been taking place in world economy, the organization of work, and class experience. If Marxism is not to be treated as a dogma, if it is to do more than repeat timeless formulas, these changes need to be properly evaluated. Unwittingly, however, the postmodernist analysis of these developments vindicates a central part of Marx's critique of capitalism: his theory of commodity fetishism. So entranced are the postmodernists by changes in technologies of information and financial transaction that they have fallen for a fetishized view of economic life which effaces the lived reality of labor. If we are to illuminate what is happening to social and economic life today, we will need to do so by building upon Marx's powerful critique of commodity

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fetishism. The 150th anniversary of *The Communist Manifesto* seems an appropriate occasion for examining how we might criticially develop this essential part of the Marxian legacy.

The End of Political Economy?

AT THE HEART OF POSTMODERNISM IS THE IDEA that we no longer live in a world dominated by the production of commodities. The flow of information is said to have replaced the production of material goods. In this analysis, the computer chip, the fax modem, fiber-optics, and virtual technologies emerge as the key sources of wealth in the new information economy. With the ostensible disappearance of the steel mill, the assembly line and the typing pool, labor too is said to pass away as computer systems and new technologies suffice to create and disseminate the digitized bits of information that drive economic life.

In this spirit, Jean Baudrillard has proclaimed the age of a virtual economy in which signs and images have replaced commodities. Whereas classic capitalism involved a shift from the production of use-values to the production of exchange-values, so exchange-value has been superseded to-day by "sign-value" as a result of the absorption of commodities by signs. In the era of advertising and conspicuous consumption, people are said to buy products not for their physical properties, but for what they signify — images of happiness, health, beauty, eroticism, status. The connection of these images to real, material things is entirely arbitrary and accidental. The economic universe we inhabit is now based simply on our desire for (and identification with) commodified images. It does not matter that we actually go to Disneyland; just that we wear the signs. Indeed, nothing matters except that we endlessly consume the corporate images and logos that keep the wheels of the system going around. In 1867 Marx argued that capitalism presents itself in the first instance as "an immense accumulation of commodities." But, say the postmodernists, in the cybernetic, digital economy of the computer, the microchip, the fax, the VCR and fiber-optics, the system consists of an immense accumulation of images. As a result, the distinction between appearance and reality has dissolved. There is no longer any underlying reality to which images and copies refer. Appearance is reality.[1]

All of this leads to the most dramatic of "post" conclusions, the claim that we've come to the end of everything real: "The end of labor. The end of production. The end of political economy," says Baudrillard. The only reality is the virtual reality: we are in "an economy freed from 'Economics' and given over to pure speculation; a virtual economy emancipated from real economies." The world we inhabit is thus a "hyperreal" one. All experience today is simulated. Television and video do not represent (or misrepresent) real events; there is no reality outside their virtual constructions. When Baudrillard announced that "the Gulf war did not happen," he meant it — there was no reality outside what appeared on our television screens. And this brings us to more endings. Since real events no longer exist, we have arrived at "the end of the scene of the historical, the end of the scene of the political, the end of the scene of fantasy, the end of the scene of the body."[2]

Again, I caution my impatient reader. The temptation is strong to dismiss this as so much nonsense. Yet, Baudrillard arrives at these conclusions by way

of a line of reasoning that is widespread on the left at the moment: the idea that we live in a new era — a post-capitalist information economy — in which capital buzzes the globe in micro-seconds, following circuits of digitized information, no longer bothered by the material constraints of space. Capital, for Baudrillard as for much recent commentary, is purely speculative, no longer hampered by the limits set by nature, geography, transportation systems or rebellious laborers. Capital is now entirely autonomous; it is "utterly detached from production and its real conditions: a pure, empty form" with no purpose other than its own endless reproduction and proliferation. Electronic financial transactions are the true form of capital today. Having broken free from production, financial capital orbits the globe flitting from currency to currency and from stock exchange to stock exchange: "Money is now the only genuine artificial satellite. A pure artifact, it enjoys a truly astral mobility; and it is instantaneously convertible. . . it rises and sets like some artificial sun."[3]

Remarkably similar lines of argument can be found in recent writings by Jacques Derrida, a high priest of postmodernism and perhaps the most influential philosopher of the past 20 years. Derrida too proclaims that ours is "the age of value as monetary sign." Money today is dematerialized; it takes the form of paper currencies, checks, credit cards and coded signatures. There is nothing fixed and stable (like gold) that anchors all these immaterial monetary forms; they are not "backed up" by anything real; they are taken on faith, and faith alone. Counterfeit money, fraudulent signatures, bad checks all function as "real" money. There is no longer any point in trying to differentiate the real from the unreal (such as fraudulent paper money) since anything taken on faith is real. Money for Derrida circulates in a world of its own making without reference to an underlying reality like socio-material production. Capital can thus create itself out of itself, can expand without the intervention of labor: "Counterfeit money can become true capital. Is not the truth of capital, then, inasmuch as it produces interest without labor, by working all by itself as we say, counterfeit money?" In modern capitalism, in other words, capital can be created without material processes, without labor. Like literary creation, a favorite example of postmodernists, capital can create itself fantastically; it can issue "from a simulacrum, from a copy of a copy (phantasma)."[4]

It follows from this postmodernist analysis that Marx is hopelessly naive. At the heart of Marx's critique of political economy, after all, is the idea that the alienated world of commodities and money — of prices, profits, wages, rents, interest rates, and stock markets — can be traced back to the concrete labors of real human individuals who constitute the working class. That is why Marx's analysis of "the fetishism of the commodity" figures so centrally in this critique. Because the wealth produced by workers escapes their control, because it comes to dominate them in an alien form (as capital), capitalism generates a world of fetishes in which the powers of labor adhere to specters like money, stocks, and capital. The task of de-fetishizing for Marx thus involves a labor of remembrance, a determined effort to reconstruct the processes by which labor is subsumed by things in order to remind ourselves that none of these are possible without the laboring activity of wage-laborers. And this critical task of remembrance entails a practical, revolutionary conclusion: that the emancipation of labor is possible precisely because workers do create the powers that dominate them. At the heart of Marx's theory of fetishism, in

other words, is the notion that the working class can reclaim the world it has produced, albeit under conditions of alienation.

But for the postmodernists, all of this is crucially flawed. If we've come to the end of production and political economy, then all talk of labor reclaiming the world it has produced is pure nostalgia. Labor no longer produces anything. In the age of information, there are only fetishes, images and specters; all talk of any deeper reality is deceptive. Indeed, Marx's great error, according to Derrida, is that he sought to bring the realm of phantoms and fetishes "back to the world of labor production and exchange."[5] But the postmodernists know better. In the universe of self-orbiting money, we've come to the end of labor and, hence, the end of Marxism.

And, yet, some nagging doubts remain. Aren't Derrida, Baudrillard & Co. in a bit of a hurry to usher the human body and its labors off the stage? Aren't they reproducing the classic bourgeois forgetfulness of labor that Marx set out to disrupt? Haven't the postmodernists, in their haste to have done with things like laboring bodies, elided some of the fundamental experiences to which these bodies speak — notably the lived experience of class?

Marxist and Postmodern Fetishes

LET US THEN RETURN TO MARX FOR A MOMENT, and to his theory of the commodity as he sets it out in the first chapter of Volume One of Capital. Commodities, he tells us, have a twofold character: they are use-values (objects of utility) and exchange-values. Use values, Marx proceeds, do not determine exchange values. It is not the usefulness of things which governs their values in exchange (otherwise air would have a high exchange-value and diamonds a low one). Exchange value is thus determined in abstraction from concrete use values. And when the capitalist market makes this abstraction from the use value of a thing, "all its sensuous characteristics are extinguished." At the same time, the market also abstracts from the unique, concrete features of the labor that produced the commodity. When commodities exchange, this involves an abstraction from the unique characteristics of the weaving, spinning, joining, baking, etc. that produced them. All these discrete, concrete acts of labor "are all together reduced to the same kind of labor, human labor in the abstract." What counts on the market is not the unique work involved in producing a commodity, but how much that labor represents when compared to all other acts of social labor. Concrete labor counts, in other words, simply as a quantum of total (abstract) social labor. And this entails its translation into the competitive terms of the market which simply judges it as so many units of homogeneous (abstract) social labor. In order to undergo this translation, to be quantified in terms of abstract human labor, the commodity (and the concrete labor that produced it) must be expressed in terms of a universal equivalent, or money. "The language of commodities" is thus a thoroughly alienated one — the value of a commodity expresses itself only by taking the form of an entity outside itself (money) which represents abstract labor.

Money is thus an index of the alienation specific to capitalist society. In this fetishized economic universe, commodities cannot circulate and wage-laborers cannot survive unless they exchange with money. As the material form of abstract labor, money thus dominates the whole of economic life. And bour-

geois economics is little more than the translation of this fact into theory. Marx's critique of political economy is designed to undermine capital's claims to complete autonomy. As money, says Marx, capital is merely an alienated and abstracted form of concrete labor. The task of de-fetishizing critique is to remind us of that, to demonstrate the incoherence of bourgeois forms of thought which try to efface and forget the lived reality of labor. The language of commodities — which bourgeois thought takes at face value — is an alienated and refracted form of "the language of real life," the language of labor and human life-activity.[6] Marx's critique of political economy thus translates the language of commodities into the language of labor. And in doing so, it solves "the riddle of money" by showing that (like speculative philosophy) its desire for pure autonomy conceals its ties to labor and human practical activity.

So when Derrida writes that counterfeit money is "the truth of capital . . . inasmuch as it produces interest without labor, by working all by itself," he reproduces the very fetishism that Marx exposed, the inversion by which powers are projected onto capital which in fact derive from living labor. Indeed, one of the most explosive arguments developed in the manuscripts that make up the third volume of *Capital* seems in retrospect almost to have been written with the postmodernists in mind. Marx argues there that interest-bearing capital predominates in the analysis of vulgar economics because it is the purest fetish, that form of capital which appears to escape any connection to human labor. Because productive capital often needs access to money capital (to borrow in order to finance investment), the surplus value generated by wage-labor is generally divided between interest (payment to money capital) and entrepreneurial profit, as well as rent. While the source of interest is surplus labor, this connection is deeply obscured. Interest seems to accrue to money by virtue of some magical, inherent property of money itself. As a result, interest-bearing capital gives rise to the most extreme fetishism:

> Capital appears as a mysterious and self-creating source of interest, of its own increase. . . In interest-bearing capital, therefore, this automatic fetish is elaborated into its pure form, self-valorizing value, money breeding money, and in this form it no longer bears any mark of its origin. The social relation is consummated in the relationship of a thing, money, to itself. . . . The fetish character of capital and the representation of this capital fetish is now complete.[7]

This form of capital, Marx continues, is "a godsend" for "vulgar economics, which seeks to present capital as an independent source of value." The fetishized categories of vulgar economy thus constitute a bourgeois myth of "self-birth." Determined to deny its origins in an "other" — in this case labor — capital claims the capacity to give birth to itself and all its offspring. In vulgar economy capital becomes a raging Nietzschean, an insatiable will-to-power that denies all otherness, that refuses to acknowledge its origin in labor, and that claims authorship of all the conditions of its existence.

Marx's insistence on tracing fetishes back to concrete human labor is what makes his critique of political economy a materialist one. Too often, however, this critique is misunderstood as a form of vulgar reductionism in which everything is reduced to matter or to an unchanging "base." It is certainly true that vulgar, mechanical materialism was characteristic of the Stalinized "Marxism" that dominated the left for a whole historical period. But a responsible reading indicates that Marx was interested not in reductionism, but in show-

ing that the problems of philosophy and politics come back to questions of practical human activity. Marx seeks not to reduce phenomena to a thing called "the base" or "the economy," but, rather, to tease out the way in which all social phenomena refer to human practice and to the specific social processes and dynamics that define it in a given context: "Where speculation ends," write Marx and Engels in *The German Ideology*, "where real life starts, there consequently begins real, positive science, the expounding of the practical activity, of the practical processes of human development . . . When the reality is described, a self-sufficient philosophy loses its medium of existence."[8]

It is here that Marx's critique poses such a radical challenge to postmodernism and conventional philosophy. By challenging its aspiration to make itself "self-sufficient," Marx forces philosophy into contact with that "other" that precedes it: human practico-material activity. And he does the same thing with capital's desire to deny its basis in labor. But postmodernism resists these moves. It shares with much of philosophy a desire to substitute de-materialized abstractions (such as "difference," "the sign," or "simulation") for concrete practices. And in the same spirit it takes capital's latest fetishes at face value. Nowhere is this more true than in its treatment of the so-called information economy.

Laboring People in the Information Economy

POSTMODERNISM IS ENTRANCED BY THE IDEA of an information economy. Here more than anywhere else we allegedly encounter the end of labor and political economy, even the end of the body. According to Baudrillard, the information economy has transcended bodies, replacing them with electronic extensions of the brain: "This is the time of miniaturization, telecommand and the microprocession of time, bodies, pleasures . . . this body, our body, often appears simply superfluous, basically useless in its extension . . . since today everything is concentrated in the brain and genetic codes."[9] But is it? Is everything concentrated in the brain today? Have bodies become basically useless? Or has Baudrillard simply managed to ignore laboring bodies whose presence is effaced by the fetishistic circuits of commoditized information? While these questions invite an extensive analysis, let me simply use a few examples to indicate the ways in which postmodernists like Baudrillard elide issues of labor — and class.

I take, first, the case of Equidata Philippines, a U.S.-owned firm that employs over 100 college-educated data punchers who input a minimum of 10,000 characters an hour for $150 per month plus medical care. I refer, secondly, to the evidence turned up by union organizers in Silicon Valley (Palo Alto, CA) which shows that almost one-third of the area workforce makes less than $15,000 (U.S.) per year. During the 1980s, computer giants in the Valley fired in-house janitors and switched to non-union contractors paying about $5 per hour, inciting the Justice for Janitors campaign launched by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) which has gone some way to reversing this corporate offensive. Thirdly, I want to draw attention to the gendered nature of much of this work, especially where "homeworking" is concerned. One recent study points out, for example, that Blue Cross, California Western States Life Insurance Co., and Wisconsin Physician Services Insurance Corp.

are all using "cottage keyers," overwhelmingly women, working 50-60 hour weeks at home, making perhaps $100 per week after deductions. Finally, I want also to note the epidemic of Repetitive Strain Injuries (RSIs) among workers using information technology. RSIs are now the most common workplace injury in America; some U.S. unions suggest that between 11 and 22 million workers have been affected.

A postmodernism fixated by information technology sees none of this, since to draw attention to these (gendered and racialized) processes of labor and exploitation is to insist upon something "real" that underpins the spectral movements of signs and digitized information. Moreover, the workers to whom I've drawn attention do not conform to the paradigm of a postmodern information economy. These are not the systems analysts, computer programmers and electronics engineers who figure so prominently in postmodern cyber-hype. The people I've described do not simply have their brains attached to digital information systems; they labor with their bodies, often suffering injuries, liver tumors (common among workers in computer chip factories), and the general physical stress associated with routinization of physical activity. Moreover, these are not anomalous cases. According to reasonable estimates, it is largely menial jobs that will see the greatest growth between now and 2005: cashiers, janitors and cleaners, salespersons, waiters and waitresses, and so on. Jobs like these, not the "digital workplace," are the future for millions of people. And, interestingly, these are some of the very areas where people have resorted to that classic form of working class resistance: unionization. Recent union organizing victories in Canada, for example, include a Walmart store, a handful of Starbucks Coffee bars, a McDonald's, and a Suzy Shier clothing store.

One of the reasons for renewing a critical and anti-dogmatic Marxism is because of the resources it offers for informing and enriching these kinds of class experiences and class struggles. By tracing the ways in which capitalism rests upon the productive activity of wage-laborers, a critical Marxist is drawn to investigate and analyze the new configurations of capital, work and class relations. Yet all such matters completely elude postmodernism. Hypnotized by the buzz of financial capital and information systems, postmodernism has declared the end of labor, political economy and class struggle. In so doing it has positioned itself as another version of the liberal denial of labor and the lived experience of social class. A central purpose of Marx's defetishizing critique was to illuminate precisely these realities. But more than this, it was designed to demonstrate that those who forge the chains that bind them — the workers of the world — also possess the power to break those chains.

The metaphor of chains animates the closing passages of *The Communist Manifesto* where Marx announces that the workers have "nothing to lose but their chains." But those passages are equally enlivened by the image of liberation, the view that the working class is capable of its own emancipation. This practical conclusion — that liberation from the chains of capitalism is possible — is rejected by the main theorists of postmodernism. Derrida, for instance, has stated that he "would hesitate to use such terms as 'liberation'." And this, ultimately, is where postmodernism fully rejoins the liberalism it often mocks.

In the end, then, Marxism and postmodernism arrive, not surprisingly, at a fundamental political divide. Entranced by computers and digitized finan-

cial movements, postmodernism rejects attention to labor and class struggle only to arrive at a liberal repudiation of all projects for emancipation from capitalism. Committed, on the other hand, to defetishizing capital's spectral movements, Marxism turns our attention to the realm of labor and class experience. And in so doing, it strives to shape an emancipatory political project based upon the self-organization of the working class. Seventy years after the appearance of *The Manifesto*, Rosa Luxemburg re-articulated this project in terms of the images that inform that text from 1848 — the image of the chains that bind the working class, and the image of working class self-emancipation. "Socialism will not and cannot be created by decrees," she insisted, "nor can it be created by any government, however socialist. Socialism must be created by the masses, by every worker. Where the chains of capitalism are forged, there they must be broken. Only that is socialism, and only thus can socialism be created." One hundred and fifty years after the publication of *The Communist Manifesto*, this vision remains the indispensable contribution of Marxism to all struggles for human liberation.

NOTES

1. Jean Baudrillard, *The Transparency of Evil: Essays on Extreme Phenomena*, trans. James Benedict (London and New York: Verso Books, 1993), p. 58.

2. Jean Baudrillard, *Symbolic Exchange and Death*, trans. Iain Hamilton Grant and Mike Gane (London: Sage Publications, 1993), p. 20; *Transparency*, p. 34; and Jean Baudrillard, *Fatal Strategies*, trans. Philip Beitchman and W. G. J. Niesluchowski (New York and London: Semiotext(e)/Pluto, 1990), p. 25. For an important critique of Baudrillard's commentaries on the Gulf War see Christopher Norris, *Uncritical Theory: Postmodernism, Intellectuals and the Gulf War* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1992), esp. Ch. 1 and Postscript.

3. Baudrillard, *Transparency of Evil*, p. 33.

4. Jacques Derrida, *Given Time: I. Counterfeit Money*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), pp. 124, 110, 129, 124, 161.

5. Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx*, trans. Peggy Kamuf (New York: Routledge, 1994), p. 170.

6. For some thoughts on Marxism and language see my "Language, History and Class Struggle" in *In Defense of History: Marxism and the Postmodern Agenda*, eds. Ellen Meiksins Wood and John Bellamy Foster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1997), pp. 26-42.

7. Karl Marx, *Capital*, v. 3, trans. David Fernbach (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1991), p. 516, hereafter cited in the text as C3.

8. Ibid., p. 43.

9. Jean Baudrillard, "The ecstasy of communication" in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. H. Foster (Port Townsend, Wash: Bay Press, 1983), p. 129.

Interpreting the World (Without Necessarily Changing It)

Barbara Epstein

EVEN MARX'S MOST ABSTRUSE WORKS OF PHILOSOPHICAL CRITICISM were suffused with the intention of ending "man's inhumanity to man" — a perspective given its most ringing expression in *The Communist Manifesto,* where intellectual analysis and the call to action are fused. The unity of theory and practice has remained a basic precept of Marxism. Still, the distance between them has grown considerably over the course of the 20th century. Massive social changes since Marx's time call for corresponding changes in theory. And transforming theory requires at least some degree of autonomy from the more immediate demands of political practice (themselves, in turn, driven by theoretical assumptions). Yet there is a danger that the gap between interpretation and the world it interprets will continue to grow — so that left theory, unanchored by practice, takes leave of reality. Marxist poststructuralism, which has recently emerged as a trend among left intellectuals, appropriately asks how Marxism should be rethought. But it is also a striking instance of the divorce of theory from the practice of social change.

Poststructuralism first emerged among Parisian thinkers of the late 60s and early 70s as an intellectual counter to Marxism — which they did not always distinguish from the rigid and Stalinist French Communist Party. Throughout the 70s and 80s, as poststructuralism drifted across the Atlantic and took hold in intellectual circles in the U.S., it continued to define itself against the legacy of Marx. Though a few theorists maintained ties to Marxism, in general poststructuralist discourse equated Marx's legacy with "orthodox Marxism," dismissed as naively economistic. Over the last decade or so, the relationship between Marxism and poststructuralism has grown more complicated: articulations of Marxist poststructuralism have become dominant in some sectors of radical or progressive intellectual activity. No doubt many leftists simply ignore the literature of Marxist structuralism and its poststructuralist successor. Often it is intimidatingly dense, obscure, and jargon-ridden. Yet regardless of how widely read (or ignored) this material may be, it raises an issue crucial to left politics — though rarely addressed explicitly. To put it in the argot of the academy: is it a good idea to make anti-essentialism the intellectual basis of left analysis?

GRASPING THE TERMS OF THIS ARGUMENT REQUIRES A DETOUR through recent intellectual history. Both structuralism and its successors began with a sharp re-

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jection of the humanist Marxism most frequently associated with the work of Jean-Paul Sartre, which placed the human being ("man" in the vocabulary of the day) at the center of philosophy and politics. Marxism á la Sartre insisted on the capacity of individual humans to act to change their circumstances. Structuralist thinkers rejected this view. They argued that humans are not simply *constrained* by structures, linguistic or social. Rather, people are actually *constituted* (that is, produced) by those structures — and so cannot free themselves from, or act outside, the force-fields of language, culture, and society. Thus the structures, not human beings, should be the focus of philosophy.

Especially important for subsequent radical thinkers was the work of Louis Althusser, who sought to create a Marxist structuralism which recognized the decisive role of economic forces yet did not ignore the role of non-economic structures. "Vulgar Marxism" stressed the determination of the superstructure by the base. Humanist Marxism, if not ignoring economic reality entirely, emphasized the freedom of the human subject. Althusser's "anti-humanist" Marxism presented a concept of *overdetermination*: individuals were determined of intersecting structures, not all of them economic. Althusser insisted, though, that economic forces were determinative "in the last instance" (leading many to ask how we would know when we had arrived at "the last instance"). Social phenomena were not manifestations of a single "essence" (whether that be human freedom, for the Sartreans, or economic infrastructure, for orthodox Marxists). The search for such an essence was, at best, irrelevant to political struggles; at worst, the structuralist Marxists thought, essentialism was the last refuge of ideology.

Poststructuralists have continued along the route mapped by structuralist anti-humanism — and they have pushed the concept of overdetermination even further than Althusser did, until they arrive at an anti-foundationalism that rejects the possibility of basic causes. Althusser believed that some causes had more weight than others; he, at least, regarded economic forces as decisive "in the last instance," whatever that might mean. The rigorous anti-essentialism of poststructuralism — including the Marxist variety — argues that all causes are equal, that no social force can be assigned a greater weight than any other. This current of thinking has converged with — and sometimes explicitly drawn upon — Nietzsche's view of the will to power as the ground of human relations, his suspicion of rationality, and his rejection of universal knowledge and of the rational subject

FOR INTELLECTUALS IN THE UNITED STATES, THIS GENERAL THEORETICAL TREND crystallized with the publication of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward a Radical Democratic Politics* (1985)[1] and the founding, in 1988, of the journal *Rethinking Marxism*. Laclau and Mouffe argue that Marx's view of the working class as the bearer of socialism introduced an essentialism that distorted the Marxist perspective generally, creating the basis for Leninist and Stalinist authoritarianism. They argue that political identities and positions must be understood, not as the product of economic forces, but as the discursive effects of political practices and conflicts. For Laclau and Mouffe, radical democratic politics must draw from, yet profoundly revise, Antonio Gramsci's conception of hegemony. They regard him as a precursor of anti-essentialism — though one not, unfortunately, quite free

of essentialist conceptions. In particular, there is the problem that, for Gramsci, the working class must play a central role in the construction of a socialist or left hegemonic project. Laclau and Mouffe's theoretical work severs the Marxist link between class and economic forces (essentialist notions, in their view), and culture and politics (sites of discourse, of the open and unfixed, the terrain of construction rather than constraint or determinacy).

If *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* offered the manifesto for the intellectual mini-movement that has formed around Marxist poststructuralism, the major institutional expression of this movement has been the journal *Rethinking Marxism*, (*RM*) which over the past decades has sponsered a series of national conferences. Not every paper in *Rethinking Marxism* (or presented at its conferences) has been directed at a synthesis of Marxism and poststructuralism; yet *RM* remains the major site for the development of this perspective. Political economy has been the main concern of the *RM* project, followed by politics. The effect, whatever the region of the interventions, has been to define anti-essentialist perspectives as necessary for left or radical politics. Radicalism thus becomes identified with re-interpretation or skepticism; radical politics is equated with cultural politics.

SOME MARXIST POSTSTRUCTURALISTS HAVE CRITICIZED LACLAU AND MOUFFE for rejecting class and consigning the category of the economic to the realm of essentialism. Jonathan Diskin and Blair Sandler, for instance, argue that class and the economy should be rethought in anti-essentialist terms, rather than simply discarded[2]. They point out that Marx understood economic concepts (such as class and commodity) not as fixed, but as constructed by, and expressions of, social relations. Diskin and Sandler nevertheless see Laclau and Mouffe as contributing to their own project of developing an anti-essentialist understanding of political economy and politics.

This project is continued by Stephen Resnick and Richard Wolff, both editors and founders of *Rethinking Marxism*. Their book *Knowledge and Class: A Marxian Critique of Political Economy*[3] treats the debate over economic determinism as central to the development of Marxism. Marx and Engels rejected simplistic models of economic determinism, but the question remains unresolved within Marxism. Some Marxists subsequently adopted an economistic perspective (Eduard Bernstein and others associated with the Second International); and many Marxist-identified movements have assumed a direct relationship between class position and politics. Resnick and Wolff argue that only a minority of Marxists have rejected the equation between Marxism and economic determinism — though this minority subsumes a lengthy and various list of theorists, including Lukacs, Korsch, Gramsci, Reich, the Frankfurt School theorists, Marcuse, and Sartre. Many of these figures have espoused philosophies in which some (suprahistorical) conception of "man" or "the human project" is treated as the core of history. As an alternative, Resnick and Wolff call for a anti- or non-essentialist Marxism, guided by a concept of overdetermination *in extremis* — the mutual construction of all social processes, a rejection of any division between cause and effect, or of the identification of any realm of society as finally determinant over any other.

Resnick and Wolff acknowledge that Marxism places class at the center of social analysis, so that other categories (race and gender, for instance) are

secondary to it. They defend this on grounds that every theory must have a point of entry. Class, they write, is that point for Marxism. This concession seems far removed from Marx's view of class exploitation as the root of social injustice, and his passionate opposition to it. Judging one's account of reality by whether or not it adheres to a strict standard of anti-essentialism produces a theory uninterested in reality. A theory that turns in on itself in this way also quickly becomes dogmatic. Resnick and Wolff show where theory can go when driven by the pursuit of anti-essentialism, unmitigated by any recognition of an underlying reality. Althusser's concept of overdetermination did not prevent him from recognizing that some causes have more weight than others. By Resnick and Wolff's standards, this is an essentialist view.

The project of developing an anti-essentialist political economy is also taken up by J.K. Gibson-Graham in *The End of Capitalism (as we knew it): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*[4] Gibson-Graham describes her work as influenced by poststructuralist feminist theory and post-Marxism (a term subsuming poststructuralist Marxism). Gibson-Graham criticizes Marxism for conceiving capitalism as a system: theory thereby bestows on capital a degree of power it would not possess if it were discursively constructed as, for instance, just one set of practices among many others. She argues that

> it is the way capitalism has been "thought" that has made it so difficult for people to imagine its supersession. It is therefore the ways in which capitalism is known that we wish to delegitimize and displace...If it were possible to inhabit a heterogeneous and open-ended economic space whose identity was not fixed or singular (the space potentially to be vacated by a capitalism that is necessarily and naturally hegemonic) then a vision of noncapitalist economic practices as existing and widespread might be able to be born; and in the context of such a vision, a new anticapitalist politics might emerge. . . (ibid. p. 5)

Gibson-Graham describes her project as an effort to challenge "essentialist" representations of capitalism. The virtually uncontested dominance of capitalism

> can be seen as a complex product of a variety of discursive commitments, including organicist social conceptions, heroic historical narratives, evolutionary scenarios of social development, and essentialist, phallocentric, or binary patterns of thinking. It is through these discursive figurings and alignments that capitalism is constituted as large, powerful, persistent, active, expansive, dynamic, transformtive; systemic, self-reproducing, rational, lawful, self-rectifying; organized and organizing, centered and decentering...victorious and ascendant, self-identical, self-expressive, full, definite, real, positive, and capable of conferring identity and meaning. (ibid. p. 4)

It is not at all clear from this account whether or not Graham-Gibson makes any real distinction between the discourse *about* capitalism and capitalism itself. She insists that "it is the way capitalism has been 'thought' that has made it so difficult for people to imagine its supercession. It is therefore the ways in which capitalism is known that we wish to deligitimize and displace...." She hopes to make the economy less subject to "definitional closure" — to open up a heterogeneous, open-ended space, neither fixed nor singular, in the place of a capitalism "that is necessarily and naturally hegemonic." This would enable a vision of noncapitalist economic practices to emerge, thereby furthering an anti-capitalist politics. (ibid. pp. 4-5)

Gibson-Graham anticipates the charge that this account of the Marxist

view of capitalism is built on exaggerations and distortions. (It would be difficult to find a Marxist who regards capitalism as naturally hegemonic and untranscendable, simply because it is a system). Gibson-Graham concedes that that she has presented a straw man — "or more accurately a bizarre and monstrous being that will never be found in pure form in any other text." Even so, the monster must be challenged. And because it has been discursively created, the challenge itself, according to Gibson-Graham, must be discursive.

"The question becomes," she writes, "what to do with the monster? Should we refine it, cut it down to size, render it once more acceptable, unremarkable, invisibly visible?" No, she writes; for in doing so, we might lose sight of its grotesqueness. Capitalism — refined and redefined — would still be capable of "relegating noncapitalism to a space of necessary weakness and defeat." Gibson-Graham calls for an anti-essentialist project of "supplanting the discourse of capitalist hegemony with a plurality and heterogeneity of economic forms." (ibid. pp. 8-10) Capitalist production, then, should be seen as only one set of economic practices among many — not as an integral system encompassing and subordinating "non-capitalist" forms such as self-employment and household economy, but as something on a par with these and other alternative forms.

By this account, the U.S. economy is no longer capitalist. Instead, it is a site of diverse economic practices — none with more power to shape society than any others. Capitalism has been brought under control; discursively, at least, it is largely de-fanged. We can challenge capitalism, it seems, by refusing to believe that it holds sway over our society. Gibson-Graham argues her political economy on grounds that her commitment to an anti-essentialist perspective requires it — not that it makes reality more intelligible.

A FINAL EXAMPLE OF POST-STRUCTURALIST/ANTI-ESSENTIALIST MARXISM comes in "Wounded Attachments" by Wendy Brown, a critique of "identity politics" as a species of moralism endemic to the United States in the late 20th century. Arguing that the proliferation and politicization of identities is a product of history, Brown ponders why "identity's desire for recognition [so often seems] to breed a politics of recrimination and rancor...a tendency to reproach power rather than aspire to it, to disdain freedom rather than practice it?"[5] She argues that liberalism — as a philosophy, and as incarnated in the liberal state — was based on a détente between the particular and the universal in which particularistic "I"s reconciled themselves with an abstract, ostensibly contentless, "we." In the late 20th century, this reconciliation has largely unravelled. The state has lost its appearance of universality, and individual citizens have largely ceased to identify with the state in any substantive way. And so, Brown argues, the varieties of identity politics flourish in the gap that has opened up between the state and the individual.

Many on the left regard gender, race, and sexuality as continuations of — or, at times, as substitutes for — the left politics traditionally grounded in working-class struggles. Yet Brown, to the contrary, sees the new identity-claims as tied to a relegitimation of capitalism. Identity politics protest against the exclusion of various groups from what is taken to be white, middle-class life in the U.S.: relative prosperity, a patriarchal, privatized nuclear family. While seeming to protest against institutionalized norms, identity politics actually presents a notion of "justice that reinscribes a bourgeois (masculinist)

ideal as its measure." (ibid. p. 59)

The result, Brown argues, is a politics of resentment rather than social transformation. Late 20th-century America is characterized by the "desacralization" of society (and widespread sense of loss of meaning), the fragmentation of associations and networks, and the increasingly pervasive power of capital and of the bureaucratized state. In such conditions, Nietszche's view of ressentiment takes on a new relevance: fed by a paralyzed sense of merely *reacting* to frustrations, ressentiment converts the feeling of powerlessness into the conviction of moral superiority. This is, Brown writes, "the reworking of pain into a negative form of action." Exclusion or suffering become its only weapon.

Brown is right that much of what now passes for radical politics is based on values that are, in origin, bourgeois. Given the absence of a coherent challenge to capitalism from the left, how could it be otherwise? Brown differentiates her critique of identity politics from that of "a nostalgic and broken humanist left" as well as reactionary attacks on it from the right. She wants to shift from the position-assuming activity of "dispensing blame" to a politics that involves "inhabit[ing] a necessarily agonistic theater . . . discursively forging an alternative future."[6] Yet one might well describe this call for a "discursive" politics as the renunciation of attempts to locate and address the sources of continuing subjugation. Brown is perceptive when describing the worst of identity politics. And in a culture in which victim status confers symbolic power, such claims become political capital. But movements for social change are based on protest against injustices to particular groups. It is hard to imagine such a movement that does not at times hold onto injuries of the past as legitimation for its present claims against society. (Many of these injuries continue, if in new forms, and need to be addressed). Nor does protest lead only to resentment and moralism; it can also foster a commitment to a better world for everyone, based on encompassing, or universal, conceptions of truth and justice. Brown misses the difference between moralism and morality. The former poisons radical politics, the latter is necessary to it.

THE INTERVENTIONS OF POSTSTRUCTURALIST MARXISTS into economic and political THOUGHT show a provocative, but also troubling, orientation toward play. Their thinking emphasizes the openness of possibilities; it questions restraints, and denies inherent connections between causes and effects. This approach is appealing when it sets itself against intellectual rigidity. It asks whether there might not be more possibilities than have been considered, more paths to explore than allowed for in existing theory. Yet skepticism is not a sufficient basis for radicalism, nor is playfulness. An intellectual practice so grounded will tend to sail off into the stratosphere — losing any connection with actual or possible social struggles, and with the goal of egalitarian social change as a whole. Poststructuralism (whether Marxist or otherwise) is playful at its best, sectarian at worst; and the slide from one to the other can take place very quickly. Anti-essentialism is hardly the only dogma to plague the left intellectual world; but it does seem to be the leading contender today. And if those who are in positions of power and influence have clear, coherent, explicit goals, while the left understands politics as a game of escalating skeptical questioning, it is not hard to figure out who is going to prevail.

Another danger of understanding politics as play is that, in losing sight of

concrete goals, it sifts into play in a different sense: namely, playing the game. In many large universities the powers-that-be have set the terms: either compete for corporate funds (or, following the same market-driven logic, for stardom or celebrity status), or accept loss of resources and prestige. The question for left academics is: do we challenge these choices or do we play the game to best advantage, putting aside the question of what the consequences may be?

So far the left within the universities has either played the game or failed to challenge it. There has been little collective effort to present an alternative agenda from the left. Few left academics are in the fields where the pursuit of large corporate funds is an option. But many are caught up in the star system — a few as stars, some as would-be stars, and much larger numbers as audience. Participation in the star system vastly outweighs any critique of the way in which it has accelerated stratification and promoted a pursuit of the new and trendy that connotes a commodification of knowledge. The university is probably the only institution where the left is large and prominent, and where it noticeably makes a difference whether radicals challenge these trends or accommodate themselves to them.

The habit of collective action has mostly receded into memory, and the links that might make it possible have become quite frayed. Current trends in theory reflect this situation more than they cause it, but they also play a role in perpetuating it. A conception of politics that drains it of a sense of urgency and regards coherent goals with skepticism helps to tip the balance toward accommodation. Rejecting anti-essentialism as the guiding principle of left analysis and politics means reviving and expanding socialist humanism. This does not mean simply bringing back outmoded versions of humanism (in which the white, propertied, patriarchal male stands for humanity, and the western Enlightenment is presented as the only legitimate cultural model). But it does mean linking socialism to the effort to construct a better society — better for humans, and better for the natural environment. Any socialist criticism of the existing order brings us into the domain of moral values. More urgently than the interpretation of interpretations, we need a discussion of how to define those values, what a better society might look like, and how to get there.

NOTES

1. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Toward a Radical Democratic Politics*, London: Verso, 1985

2. Jonathan Diskin and Blair Sandler, "Essentialism and the Economy in the Post-Marxist Imaginary: Reopening the Sutures," *Rethinking Marxism* Vol. 6, No. 3, 28-47.

3. Stephen A. Resnick and Richard D. Wolff, *Knowledge and Class: A Marxian Critique of Political Economy*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987. See especially chapters one, "A Marxist Theory," pp. 1-37, and two, "Marxian Epistemology," pp. 38-108.

4. J.K. Gibson-Graham, T*he End of Capitalism (as we knew it): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1996. "Gibson-Graham" is the writing persona of Julie Graham and Katherine Gibson.

5. Wendy Brown, *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1995: pp. 54-55.

6. Brown, pp. 75-76. For a lengthier discussion of what Brown regards as the incompatibility of politics, including radical politics, on the one hand, and truth and morality on the other, and of the relation she draws between truth, morality, and "ressentiment," see the previous essay in *States of Injury, Postmodern Exposures, Feminist Hesitations*.

The Manifesto Remains a Guide

Ian Birchall

THE FIRST THING THAT STRIKES ONE ABOUT *THE Communist Manifesto* is its modernity. Marx[1] wrote the text in January 1848, struggling to meet a deadline imposed by the Central Committee of the Communist League, which rather ominously threatened that "further measures" would be taken against him if he failed to deliver his manuscript.[2] But the world described in it is more familiar to readers in 1998 than to Marx's contemporaries:

> All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industries, whose introduction becomes a life and death question for all civilised nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn from the remotest zones; industries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe... In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations... National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature. [488][3]

There is nothing here to shock a Wall Street trader anxiously awaiting news from the Hong Kong stock market or a regular airline passenger who finds the same movies showing in virtually every city of the world. But to a reader in 1848, Marx's picture of a cosmopolitan, industrialized world must have seemed bizarrely, if not frighteningly, futuristic. In 1850 London and Paris were the only European cities with over one million inhabitants, and only in Great Britain, France, Belgium, Holland and the Italian States did more than five percent of the population live in towns of over a hundred thousand. In 1851 England became the first country where the urban population exceeded the rural. In 1845 only three countries outside Europe had railways; the electric telegraph had been invented, but was not widely used until after 1848; in 1846 total tonnage of steamships was less than five percent of what it was to be thirty years later. In 1848 news took a minimum of five days to travel from Paris to Vienna, and in 1852 a letter from London took 12 days to reach New York and 45 to reach San Francisco.[4]

This is not to transform Marx into a Nostradamus. It is indeed easy to identify mistaken predictions in Marx's text. The lower middle class did not "sink gradually into the proletariat" [491] in anything like the smooth manner foreseen by Marx. The confident assertion that "the bourgeois revolution in

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Germany will be but the prelude to an immediately following proletarian revolution" [519] was not proved correct by events in 1848, nor yet in 1918-23. That revolution, which would have spared us the Holocaust, is still awaited. Indeed, Marx and Engels totally failed to foresee the dramatic economic boom that followed 1848 and foiled the expectations of revolutionaries for a couple of decades.

But to mock Marx with the wisdom of hindsight is no more fruitful than to treat his work as prophetic revelation. Marx's insights, and their limitations, may be best appreciated by comparing some of the themes in his work with the ideas of one of his most gifted contemporaries.

Benjamin Disraeli (1804-81), novelist and Conservative Prime Minister, was, in his day, a far more prominent figure than Marx. In his novel *Sybil*, published just three years before *The Communist Manifesto*, Disraeli, through the words of his character Stephen Morley, a left-wing journalist, described Queen Victoria's Britain as not one nation, but two:

> Two nations; between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets... THE RICH AND THE POOR.[5]

The rhetoric of "one nation" has long been invoked by the British Conservative Party; now that the Labor Party has finally repudiated Marx as hopelessly out of date, it too appeals to Disraeli. Indeed Marx, who dismissed Disraeli's "Young England" grouping with a flippant phrase under the heading of "feudal socialism" [508], was undoubtedly guilty of underestimating his contemporary's significance.

For Marx the dynamic of the market produced modern industry and a world economy – "the markets kept ever growing, the demand ever rising." [485] As a result "the bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country." [488] And hence he asserts that "the working men have no country," [502][6] backing this up with the claim that "national differences and antagonisms between people are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, to freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life corresponding thereto." [503]

Disraeli, the champion of "one nation," put nation before class, calling the Conservative Party the "national party" and claiming that the English working classes

> ... are proud of belonging to a great country, and wish to maintain its greatness — ... they are proud of belonging to an Imperial country, and are resolved to maintain, if they can, their empire — ... they believe on the whole that the greatness and the empire of England are to be attributed to the ancient institutions of the land.[7]

In the short term, Disraeli was clearly in the right. It was their underestimation of the strength of various European nationalisms, especially within the Hapsburg Empire, that led Marx and Engels to misjudge the revolutionary potential of 1848. Disraeli, despite some dubious formulations about "blood" and "race," had a better grasp of the power of nationalism. Marx himself was forced to recognize that internationalism did not come easy in his Inaugural Address of the Working Men's International Association in 1864:

> Past experience has shown how disregard of that bond of brotherhood which ought to exist between the workmen of different countries, and incite them to stand firmly by each other in all their struggles for emancipation, will be chastised by the common discomfiture of their incoherent efforts.[8]

And despite the best efforts of Marx and his many internationalist successors, the power of nationalism has continued to exercise enormous influence throughout the 20th century.

Yet it would be wrong to dismiss the appeal "WORKING MEN OF ALL COUNTRIES, UNITE!"as mere sentimental naiveté. Nationalism as it has developed in the modern world is not a spontaneous product of the blood; it was fought for throughout two centuries by politicians and educationists, who strove to instil a sense of nationhood where none existed naturally. National "traditions" were invented, national identities were laboriously created. As a historian of 19th-century France records:

> In 1864, an inspector of education, touring in the mountains of the Lozère, asked the children at a village school: "In what country is the Lozère situated?" Not a single pupil knew the answer. "Are you English or Russian?" he demanded. They could not say.[9]

It was not by a process of natural growth that the grandchildren of those peasants went to the trenches 50 years later; it was the result of a long, hard struggle by political and cultural means to create loyalty to the nation state, and a failure by socialist internationalists to effectively counter that loyalty.

Already in 1848 Marx conceded the "organisation of the proletarians into a class... is continually being upset again by the competition between the workers themselves." [493] He doubtless did not foresee the grim forms such competition could take when it manifested itself as national antagonism. Yet precisely, as Marx perceived, that ebb and flow was not preordained, but was determined by struggle. The worst explosions of nationalism came when workers had been defeated on the terrain of class struggle. The poisonous growth of Nazism came only after a period in which, from 1918 to 1923, German workers had repeatedly united to contend for proletarian power.[10] In the late 1980s there was a wave of major strikes in Yugoslavia, often bringing together workers of different national groups. Only when this movement ended in failure did the horrific national conflicts emerge.[11]

Yet Marx's account has never looked so plausible as in the last years of the 20th century. Disraeli's cherished Empire is long gone, together with all the other empires built and stolen in the 19th century. The British ruling élite is deeply split as the British economy is inevitably drawn into the European Community, and politicians fear that the loss of "national sovereignty" may mean their own redundancy. Nationalism remains a ferocious and destructive force, yet it does so in a world which is more interdependent, economically and culturally, than ever before. The real tragedy of the break-up of Yugoslavia is that it was an unnecessary anachronism.

IN THE PASSAGE CITED AT THE BEGINNING OF THIS ARTICLE Marx seems to be prefiguring the much discussed "globalization" of the 1990s.[12] But there is one important reservation to be made. In many accounts of globalization the nation state is seen as being in process of disappearing. Marx, however, was quite

clear about the centrality and the nature of the state machine. "The executive of the modern State is but a committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie." [486] This implies an increasingly internationalized world in which the machinery of the nation state remains an essential focus of power, a contradictory set-up which could well culminate in a lethal explosion of world competition. In the face of this, Marx's account of an internationalist solution remains a viable alternative, ever more possible and ever more necessary.

For Marx, the advance of the market did not only undermine nationalism, but the whole structure of ideas and institutions that maintained the social order:

> The bourgeoisie, wherever it has got the upper hand, has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations... for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation.
>
> The bourgeoisie has stripped of its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverent awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-labourers. [487]

Once again Marx's view is powerfully evocative of a future still distant at the time he wrote. The poets and priests, scientists and lawyers of 1848 could scarcely have imagined the pressures of commercialization — and the consequent diminution of "reverent awe" that their successors would experience in the 1990s.

Again Marx stands in sharp contrast to Disraeli, who was a reforming conservative, but who sought reform precisely in order to conserve. Disraeli understood all too well that Victorian decency could not allow exploitation to be stripped naked; hence his stress on the importance of the monarchy and, despite the occasional eccentricities of his theology, his concern that the church should be "a main remedial agency in our present state."[13]

Disraeli's recognition of the need for ideological defense of the existing order offers a confirmation of Marx's view that the bourgeoisie's practice undermines the legitimacy of its own rule. Yet his conclusions are visibly too optimistic:

> ... all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his relations with his kind. [487]

For Marx the scenario seemed relatively simple. The bourgeoisie, in its ruthless pursuit of profit, cut away the antiquated superstitions and practices that had maintained earlier social orders. But by doing so, it destroyed the basis for any deference that the working people might feel for their "superiors." Working people, conscious that the functioning of society was possible only through their labor, would feel no compunction about asserting their power through a withdrawal of that labor. A railway owner who cuts safety procedures to increase profits has no moral basis for complaint when ambulance drivers go on strike.

Things did not turn out so simply. The slow decline of religious ideas already visible in the mid-19th century did not automatically make space for a secular socialist alternative. As Marx himself pointed out, "the ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class." [503] In the absence of socialist ideas, new ideologies have arisen to prop up exploitation; in the cases of both Nazism and Stalinism they have claimed legitimacy by pretending to

be forms of socialism. Revived religious fundamentalisms have gained enormous influence. The priests and poets of Marx's day have been supplemented and outnumbered by employees of a massive ideological industry, dedicated to what the Wobblies called "head fixing" through the printed and televised word.

YET THE CONTRADICTION IDENTIFIED BY MARX REMAINS POTENT. Capitalism still needs the "reverent awe" of the masses but cannot allow it to stand in the way of a higher profit. This was illustrated in brutal fashion by the recent death of Princess Diana. Diana had been turned into a commodity in a manner unprecedented in the history of the British monarchy. When she died there was visible awareness among sections of the British ruling class that they had gone too far. Of course the corpse was immediately marketed — Elton John's lament for a dead princess topped the charts for several weeks before being ousted, in a piece of ironic symbolism, by a song about a Barbie doll! But the British monarchy has now been permanently "stripped of its halo" — and if the hereditary principle is fatally undermined who knows what other subversive ideas may gain currency.

One particularly important manifestation of this contradiction is the family. When Marx observed "the practical absence of the family among the proletarians" [501] he was noting a problem equally acute for the defenders of the existing order. In Disraeli's *Sybil*, the radical priest St Lys observes:

> We have removed woman from her sphere; we may have reduced wages by her introduction into the market of labour; but under these circumstances what we call domestic life is a condition impossible to be realized for the people of this country; and we must not therefore be surprised that they seek solace or rather refuge in the beer-shop."[14]

In the short term the upholders of the family fought back. A hundred years and more after *The Manifesto*, divorce, let alone illegitimacy, still implied a terrible stigma for "respectable" working-class families. And Marx certainly underestimated the ideological grip of male supremacy. Even today, many a working-class woman would be surprised by Marx's claim that "differences of age and sex have no longer any distinctive validity for the working class" [491] — if, after a day in the factory and an evening of domestic labor, she had time to read it.

Yet, as with the question of nationalism, Marx's analysis had a remarkable predictive power. The anguished defense of "family values" by the conservative right confirms that Marx was essentially correct in seeing that capitalist society would ultimately undermine the family, despite its importance for preserving the established order.

THE MOST IMPORTANT CLAIM OF ALL IN *The Manifesto* concerns the role of the working class. Marx's great originality, which distinguished him from both conservatives and his contemporary socialists, was his insistence on the active role of the working class in transforming not only its own conditions of life, but those of humanity as a whole:

> The proletariat, the lowest stratum of our present society, cannot stir, cannot raise itself up, without the whole superincumbent strata of official society being sprung into the air. [495]

Again the contrast with Disraeli is instructive. Disraeli, far more perceptively than most of his contemporaries, observed the terrible sufferings of the early working class. He recognized the importance of working-class organization, and saw the necessity of incorporating the working class into the existing order. On one occasion he wrote to the members of a workingmen's club: "None are so interested in maintaining the institutions of the country as the working classes."[15] But in *Sybil* his aristocratic spokesperson Egremont dismisses any notion of self-emancipation:

> The People are not strong; the People never can be strong. Their attempts at self-vindication will end only in their suffering and confusion.[16]

It was this question of the agency of the working class that separated Marx from the various brands of socialism which he so scathingly dismissed in the third section of *The Manifesto*. Saint-Simon grouped workers and capitalists together in opposition to the aristocracy; Blanqui lumped peasants and workers together as proletarians. The élitist socialist Robert Owen, who saw all children as "passive and wonderfully contrived compounds, which... may be formed collectively into any human character,"[17] insisted that workers were "too ignorant and inexperienced to find a remedy to the existing evils."[18]

It was against Owen that Marx had argued in the third Thesis on Feuerbach that "the coincidence of the changing of circumstances and of human activity or self-change can be conceived and rationally understood only as *revolutionary practice*."[19] In other words, workers change themselves in the process of changing society — a truth confirmed in thousands of struggles, great and small.

This assertion of the active nature of the working class, that workers are agents as well as victims, runs throughout *The Manifesto* and Marx's other writings, and is summed up in the phrase that summarizes Marx's achievement: "the emancipation of the working classes must be conquered by the working classes themselves."[20]

In the 1888 edition of *The Manifesto* Marx noted that in 1848 the proletariat was "as yet in its infancy." [515] But Marx saw what others had missed because he involved himself in the existing organizations of the working class. In August 1844 he wrote to Feuerbach:

> You would have to attend one of the meetings of the French workers to appreciate the pure freshness, the nobility which burst forth from these toil-worn men.[21]

Of course Marx can be criticized here too for shortening the timescale, for seeing working-class triumph as imminent. But what is important is his identification of the active and creative role the working class was to play over the next 150 years. The Paris Commune of 1871, when workers governed the city through recallable delegates, was followed by the Russian Revolution, the first years of which, despite foreign intervention and bureaucratic distortion, offer a model of what workers' democracy could be. Workers' democracy surfaced again in Spain in 1936-37 and in Hungary in 1956. And in recent years workers' struggles have thrown up new organizations — the French action committees of 1968, the Chilean *cordones* of 1973, the Portuguese workers' commissions of 1974-75, the Iranian *Shoras* of 1979 and the rise of Solidarity in Poland in 1980.[22]

But the story is not only of the high points. The millions of hours of effort

that went into the molecular process of building up trade-union organization, of fighting small and often unrecorded strikes are also part of the history of working-class self-activity. Despite repeated claims that "class" is dead, class struggle resurfaces time and again to disturb the defenders of the existing order — in the French strikes of 1995, the South Korean strikes of early 1997 and the victorious UPS strike in the USA later that year.

IT IS FASHIONABLE TO PRONOUNCE MARX OBSOLETE; yet often the enthusiasm with which this is done suggests a wish-fulfillment that confirms Marx's continuing relevance. Of course Marx's writings are not infallible or the expression of revealed truth — and hopefully we are finished once and for all with the kind of politics that found it necessary to claim they were.

But read critically, *The Communist Manifesto* remains a devastating critique of its own society and of ours, of the principle of the market to which we are now told there is no alternative. The collapse of the Soviet Union is said to refute Marx. Yet it would be hard to think of a historical figure more opposed to the self-emancipation of the working class than Joseph Stalin. "Socialism in one country" failed, not because it abolished the market, but because it failed to escape the world market that Marx so vividly described, a world market mediated through arms race and international trade, which turned the workers' state into its opposite, bureaucratic and tyrannical state capitalism.

We need not waste much time on Marx's claim that the bourgeoisie's "fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable." [496] Since Hiroshima it has been impossible to take the inevitability of socialism seriously. Perhaps Marx meant the sentence simply as an inspiring rhetorical flourish. If he really believed it, then so much the worse for Marx.

Rather more significant is the fact that Marx recalls that all previous class struggles have ended "either in a revolutionary re-constitution of society at large, or in the common ruin of the contending classes." [482]

The phrase "common ruin of the contending classes" is far more meaningful today than when Marx wrote it. Hundreds of novels and films have attempted to envisage the effects of nuclear extermination. The long-term threats to the environment become ever more precisely documented. Bosnia and Rwanda provide vivid scenarios of how the "ruin" can occur. Such futures are very real. Indeed, a gambler observing Planet Earth from some safe location in outer space might be well advised to bet on "common ruin". But those of us who would not be able to collect our winnings from such a bet can only continue to fight for a co-operative socialist alternative to the market whose destructive tendencies Marx so acutely analysed. In that fight *The Communist Manifesto* will continue to be a valuable guide.

NOTES

1. The original edition bore no author's name. While Marx seems to have been solely responsible for the final draft, Engels' indirect contribution cannot be doubted. This should be borne in mind when the name Marx alone is used.

2. D. Riazanov, *Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels* (New York, 1973), p 78.

3. All quotations from Marx and Engels are taken from *Collected Works* (London/Moscow, 1975ff). *The Communist Manifesto* appears in volume VI, pp 477-519. Page references to *The Communist Manifesto* are given in square brackets in the text.

4. Statistics from E.J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution* (London, 1962) and *The Age of Capital* (London, 1975).

5. B. Disraeli, *Sybil* (Harmondsworth, 1980), p 96.

6. Marx undoubtedly did not believe that working women *do* have a country. I have kept the terminology of the standard translations, even where they may offend modern readers. In some cases the English "man" may correspond to the gender-free "*Mensch*" in German.

7. R .Blake, *Disraeli* (London, 1969), p 523.

8. *Collected Works*, XX 12.

9. T. Zeldin, *Intellect and Pride* (Oxford, 1980), p 3.

10. The fullest account of German workers' struggles in this period is in P. Broué, *Révolution en Allemagne* (Paris, 1971); an English translation is currently being prepared by Porcupine Press.

11. See D. Blackie, "The Road to Hell," *International Socialism* No. 53 (1991).

12. For a critique of the more lurid and pessimistic visions of globalization see C. Harman, "Globalisation: a critique of a new orthodoxy," *International Socialism* No. 73 (1996).

13. *Tancred*, quoted Blake, *op cit*, p 201.

14. *Sybil*, p 144

15. Quoted A Briggs, *Victorian People* (Harmondsworth, 1965), p 303.

16. *Sybil*, p 334.

17. Quoted GDH Cole, *Robert Owen* (London, 1925), p 100.

18. Quoted D. McNally, *Against the Market* (London, 1993), p 113.

19. *Collected Works*, V 4.

20. *Collected Works*, XX 14.

21. *Collected Works*, III 355

22. For social explosions raising the question of workers' power in the last thirty years, see C .Barker (ed.), *Revolutionary Rehearsals* (London, 1987).

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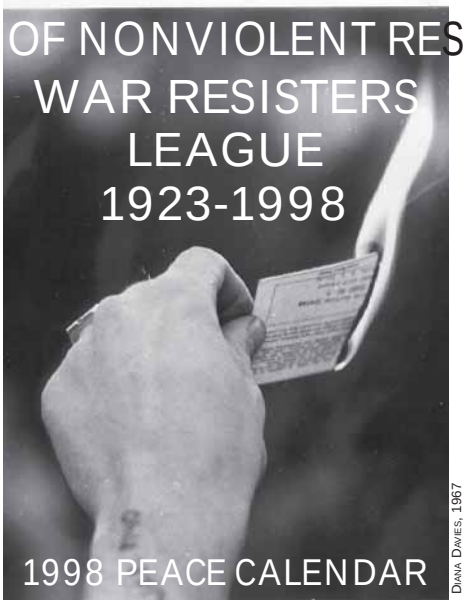

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Marxism — The Divided Legacy

Carl Boggs

AT A TIME WHEN THE REQUIEM FOR MARXISM has already been delivered, when the "death of socialism" has become an article of faith among pundits from every point on the ideological spectrum, the great revolutionary legacy begun by *The Communist Manifesto* seems to have staved off its gloomy fate. In an era of heightened economic globalization marked by ever-harsher class exploitation accompanied by the spread of market tyranny into the remotest areas of the world, the familiar observation by Marx and Engels that the bourgeois epoch *mus*t lead to growing class antagonisms, that "naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation" is the logical outcome of market-driven capitalist accumulation, seems almost prosaic.[1] In the 1990s there is little doubt concerning the veracity of Marx's statement that the world's population has become increasingly enslaved by the power of the global market, or that bourgeois modes of development lead everywhere to massive concentration of economic and political power — often in the name of "democracy"?[2] Precisely a century and a half following publication of *The Manifesto*, it is hardly difficult to see that the "ghost of Marx hovers over the global landscape," to borrow William Greider's apt phrase.[3]

The case for a Marxist theory that can help elucidate the contemporary historical situation is actually not very difficult to sustain. What better conceptual framework to provide a critical, systemic analysis of the capitalist political economy, global markets, and explosive class forces which are presently transforming the international social and political terrain? The reality is that economic globalization is nothing but shorthand for expanded multinational corporate hegemony with all of its inevitable consequences: sharpening class divisions, a world of increasing poverty and unemployment, social dislocations, rampant civic violence, and worldwide ecological crisis. While intensified corporate colonization is cloaked in an ethos of progress and abundance, the darker side of accumulation becomes more and more visible: social decay in the midst of prosperity, huge slums that encircle modern, technocratic urban enclaves like Mexico City, Sao Paolo, Bangkok, Manila, and Seoul, environmental blight that is out of control, deepening atomization and disempowerment that accompanies greater centralization of elite power. Capitalist development in the modern setting thus gives rise to exactly what Marx

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and Engels anticipated — predatory market control extending to every realm of society, every corner of the planet. Their words could not have been more prophetic: "The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere."[4]

Regardless of the dramatic changes in capitalist society since the mid-19th century, from great technological innovations to expanded state (and bureaucratic) power to a vastly-altered workforce, the very essence of capitalism — its basic modus operandi — has remained consistent. The system continues to be driven by the perpetual struggle for markets and profits worldwide, by the insatiable thirst for power in all its manifestations. New conditions scarcely alter the way capitalism reproduces class antagonisms in its wake, the way it imposes the power of commodities over social, cultural, and political life, the way it consumes resources mainly for the benefit of privileged interests. Further, in an era when multinational corporations have been able to reinforce their global dominion by means of huge mergers, strategic alliances, and the communications revolution — not to mention their stranglehold over national governments and world institutions — the universe we inhabit will be shaped by more downsizing, social cutbacks, assaults on wages, union busting, and stripping away of public regulations. In this milieu the classical Marxist critique may well appear to be more rather than less relevant to the contemporary situation. Thus David Korten's scathing indictment of global capitalism, written in 1995, could easily have been lifted from *The Manifesto*: "The world is increasingly divided between those who enjoy opulent affluence and those who live in dehumanizing poverty, servitude, and economic insecurity. While top corporate managers, investment bankers, financial speculators, athletes, and celebrities bring down multimillion dollar annual incomes, approximately one billion of the world's people struggle in desperation to live on less than one dollar a day."[5] Moreover, it seems evident that the well-known apocalyptic vision found in a good deal of classical Marxist literature persists today — witness Greider's reference to a "global system of finance and commerce {moving} in a reckless footrace with history, plunging toward some sort of dreadful reckoning with its own contradictions, pulling everyone else along with it."[6] The fact that neither Korten nor Greider can be described as "Marxists" only lends greater power to their statements, giving more credence to claims that Marxism remains very much alive in the harsh, destructive, Hobbesian capitalist world we have inherited.

Even leaving aside such claims, however, the continuing vitality of Marxist theory at the end of the twentieth century is easy enough to demonstrate. In the first place, the outpouring of books, journals, articles, and other materials devoted to Marxism in some form is probably greater today than at any earlier period. It is virtually impossible to find sophisticated analyses of the global economy, state power, class structure, and social movements that does not build upon or at least refer extensively to Marxism in some guise. Vital intellectual and political currents — feminism, ecology, race theory, cultural criticism, semiotics, postmodernism — cannot be properly grasped except in the context of their ongoing exchanges and dialogues with Marxism. In modern academia, such disciplines as sociology, history, economics, anthropology, urban planning, and film studies have been fundamentally reshaped by Marxist themes and categories. Discourses related to economic modernization, colo-

nialism, class formation, the culture industry, and social change have been powerfully enriched and revitalized by Marxist contributions. Even the briefest listing of seminal *contemporary* Marxist or Marxist-inspired texts would require far more space than is available here.

BUT WHAT IS TO BE SAID ABOUT THE FASHIONABLE POSTMODERN TRANSCENDENCE of that most universalizing of all grand theories, Marxism, which at an earlier time emerged as one of the compelling metanarratives of modern history? Surely what once appeared to be a totalizing worldview has lost the status that Sartre claimed for it as "the philosophy of our epoch." At the same time, in a strangely dialectical twist of intellectual evolution, "transcendence" seems to have gone hand-in-hand with *immersion*. Thus Jean Baudrillard has carved out his own theoretical niche in great measure by devoting his energies to *refuting* Marx. Michel Foucault's famous poststructural turn employed categories (power, knowledge, local resistance) that took on more specific historical meaning when coupled with the "macro" categories of Marxism: mode of production, commodity exchange, class formation, alienation. His presumed subversion of Marxist theory really amounted to a process of supplementation, or filling out, of a more ambitious conceptual framework. One of the most widely-acclaimed postmodern texts, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, is permeated through and through with ideas derived from Antonio Gramsci who, after all these years, would still appear to belong squarely within the Marxist tradition.[7] Recent efforts to develop a postmodern-flavored cultural studies along lines of the *Stuart Hall* anthology typically contain running dialogues with Marxism around themes of ideology, culture, feminism, race/ethnicity, and global studies — replete in this case too with abundant Gramscian references and influences.[8] Postmodern feminists such as Judith Butler, Luce Irigaray, Donna Harraway, and Drucilla Cornell wind up conducting much of their theoretical departures within at least an implicit dialogue with the Marxist classics. As Teresa Ebert observes in her demolition of "ludic" (postmodern) versions of feminism: "For all its complicity with entrepreneurial anarchism, ludic theory is haunted by Marx and historical materialism — a haunting that Derrida examines in his text *Spectres of Marx*."[9] Indeed the well-known "ghost" of Marx hovers over so much of the present-day intellectual landscape.

Of course the ultimate validity of Marxism, as with any social theory, lies in its capacity to generate fruitful analyses of historical conditions that will better enable us to understand those conditions and, hopefully, transform them. The value of *The Manifesto* or any other text cannot be judged on the basis of abstract philosophical tenets or general hypotheses; theory must lead to concrete analyses of historical trends which, emphatically in the case of Marxism, can furnish a grounding for political opposition. Since Marxism was erected on a dialectical foundation, moreover, theory was never viewed as simply a matter of pure speculation or source of critique but was seen, not only by Marx himself but by a long line of later Marxists, to be a project of social transformation linking theory and practice, subject and object, analysis and vision, social being and consciousness. Lacking this dialectical unity, Marxism degenerates into yet another signpost in the history of ideas with no clearer grasp of social processes that can be found in the work of thinkers like Machiavelli,

Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, and John Stuart Mill — thinkers who never conceived of philosophy as a material force that might change the world, as Marx had so explicitly stated in his Eleventh Thesis on Feuerbach.

Indeed Marxism always contained three interrelated elements — a critical and dialectical philosophy, a critique of (mainly capitalist) political economy, and a project of social transformation. It was never conceived to be merely one of these, even at the hands of neo-positivists like Plekhanov, Martov, Kautsky, and the late Engels, but embraced a holistic outlook deeply rooted in politics, in revolutionary process, in what Gramsci would later define as the "philosophy of praxis." The *Manifesto* itself offered not only a systemic analysis of historical forces at work in mid-nineteenth century Europe, but was a call to battle designed to mobilize every conceivable moral and political resource; the two dimensions were inseparable. Out of the ashes of a decaying capitalism a new world was in the making. Out of the intensifying class divisions of bourgeois society would emerge a new universal agency in a maturing proletariat, making it possible for "workers of the world [to] unite" and overthrow the ruling forces. Setting aside the credibility of Marx's enormous optimism at the time, *The Manifesto* clearly assumed as a foregone conclusion that the very logic of capitalism would generate conditions favorable to socialism, which would precede full communism. From this standpoint, therefore, theory or critique as such could have no independent status, no self-contained validity. Put in more dialectical terms, the proof of theory for Marx and Engels had to lie in its particular historical expression, in its convergence with social and political practice. As he wrote in the Second Thesis on Feuerbach: "The question whether objective truth can be attributed to human thinking is not a question of theory but is a *practical* question. Man must prove the truth, that is, the reality and power, the this-sidedness of his thinking in practice. The dispute over the reality or non-reality of thinking which is isolated from practice is a purely *scholastic* question."[10]

If we take Marx at his word and examine theory on its own terms, according to its own internal premises, we are sooner or later forced to look beyond the critique of political economy with an eye to judging the historical record of actual movements, parties, and states as it relates to the Marxian project of social transformation. Here it is necessary to go beyond a pure analysis of economic processes, into the realm of consciousness formation and political action — or, more accurately, into the complex dialectical relationship between social being and consciousness. As Ron Aronson points out: "We should certainly insist on seeing what successes have been produced in the name of the theory that sought not to comprehend, but to change, reality."[11]

ADOPTING THIS PERSPECTIVE — THAT IS, VIEWING MARXISM as a holistic theory to be assessed in terms of concrete (political) results — the historical record is one marked with great futility. Today, less than a century after the peak historical moment of Marxist-inspired oppositonal struggles and revolutions, global capitalism stands no longer threatened by the "specter of Communism" or by any radical tendency associated with the Marxist tradition. In the modern world it is rather difficult to locate movements, unions, parties, and governments that embody that great revolutionary vision of *The Manifesto*. For much of the 20th century one could argue, as Sartre did, for the hegemony of Marxist

discourse, but only religious faith could sustain such a notion in the 1990s; if the "ghost" of Marx still lingers over the terrain, it is now more as critique of political economy than as project of social transformation. The unity of theory and practice so central to the entire Marxist edifice has been dissolved.

Marxism did provide the theoretical basis of early European Social Democracy and then a series of Communist revolutions in the underdeveloped world, inspired as much by Lenin's theory of imperialism and organizational vanguardism as by Marx's analysis of (relatively) mature capitalist economies. In these cases theory served as a framework within which programs could be set forth and political strategies debated; it was a necessary component of movement or party identity. The ascent to power of electorally-successful Social Democratic parties, along with the dramatic triumph of the Bolshevik Revolution, gave strong impetus to anti-capitalist struggles around the world. Since the 1970s (some would even say 1930s), however, the Marxist trajectory has been mainly downward: the Social Democrats, wedded to a Bernsteinian parliamentary strategy and evolutionary reformism, wound up assimilated within the institutions of bourgeois society; having become reconciled to the status of loyal opposition. (A similar logic overtook even the largest non-ruling Communist parties, in countries like France and Italy, during the post-World War II years.) Even the pretense of Marxist identity was officially dropped by the SPD and other Social Democratic parties by the late 1950s. As for the Communist regimes, the more recent collapse of Soviet-style governments merely illustrated in apocalyptic form what deep contradictions (economic, political, and cultural) had been building for decades. Those ostensibly "Marxist-Leninist" systems which remain are nothing more than residual examples of bureaucratic centralism (Cuba, North Korea) or some variant of state capitalism (China, Vietnam). None of these "models" embrace anything remotely close to the historic Marxist project of revolutionary transformation.

There were, of course, a few variants of the famous "third path" — most notably syndicalism and Council Communism, which adhered more faithfully to the classical Marxian ideals of proletarian self-emancipation and workers' control; their "model" was grounded in the strategy of local insurgency at the point of production, bypassing bureaucratic entanglements at the level of party system and state apparatus. In contrast to both Social Democracy and Leninism, this radical alternative embraced a strict definition of proletarian mobilization with the intent of capturing the democratic essence of socialism. Unfortunately, the fate of the European radical left in the period 1910-1940 provided little source of inspiration to future generations: many council forms wound up integrated into established union and party structures (Germany), others disintegrated by virtue of their own localist spontaneism (Italy), while still others were crushed under the coercive weight of state power or rival organizations (Russia, Spain). Later incarnations of the council tradition (the new left, various anarchist and reborn council movements) surfaced distinctly outside of (and usually against) the Marxist left.

This latter point requires further elaboration: although world capitalism since the 1970s is probably more consolidated than ever, those oppostional forces and movements which have been most visible — around civil rights, feminism, ecological renewal, peace and non-intervention, gay rights, community activism, youth culture, etc. — rarely find in Marxism (or class struggle)

important sources of mobilization or identity; many are fervently anti-Marxist. Throughout the advanced capitalist world (with the possible exception of Italy), identities linked to race or ethnicity, gender, and locale seem to be more politically compelling than do those associated with class. In other parts of the world highly volatile expressions of nationalism, religion, and regionalism enter the picture. For Marxists still bent on upholding, in all cases, the primacy of class and class struggle, it is always easy to argue that such forces and movements could or should have class identity, but contemporary history is not especially friendly to assertions of this sort; the future turns out to be an elusive realm indeed. Hopes and promises revolving around the slippery concept of "potential consciousness" become little more than myths substituting for concrete analysis.

Space limitations here do not permit me to elucidate in any detail why Marxism has given rise to such a divided legacy — why we encounter such a vast disjuncture between those objective conditions amenable to a Marxist critique of global capitalism, and the paucity today of subjective responses consonant with a developed Marxist politics. Surely the world order has not become any less exploitative or destructive. Most of the general arguments for why revolutionary class politics has floundered are well-known — for example, extensive post-Fordist changes in the economy and social structure, decline of the manufacturing sector and with it a strategic weakening of the industrial workforce, technological restructuring, the hegemonic influence of the mass media and culture industry, the great expansion of state and bureaucratic power, and fluidity of capital owing in part to globalization of the market to name the most obvious. (Whether the explosion of identity-based movements is a natural reflection of post-Fordist changes, or simply represents further obstacles to a unified class-based politics, is a crucial issue but need not be addressed here.) It is no longer helpful to insist that such conditions pertain only to the most highly-industrialized countries insofar as globalization has reproduced them in even the remotest areas of the world, as Marx and Engels themselves anticipated. Nor can an adequate response look to the presumed "immaturity" of the proletariat, corrupt leaders, or temporary detours resulting from momentary historical misfortunes. Even Marxists as dedicated as Gramsci, Lukacs, and Marcuse recognized, long ago, that the workings of ideological hegemony amounted to far more than short-term obstacles along the unilinear path to socialist revolution; hegemony constituted a durable element of the cultural and political landscape that would raise *fundamental* problems for the development of class consciousness.

This question raises even deeper problems that go to the very core of Marxist theory. Marx and Engels assumed, in *The Manifesto* and elsewhere, that the very logic of capitalist development would generate conditions of proletarian class consciousness necessary for a unified socialist project. Whether one looks to some version of crisis theory, or to a gradual transformation of civil society leading to revolution — or some combination of these — there is no way of sidestepping the intractable question of class consciousness. The fact that no cohesive working-class movement or party has ever, by itself, been able to wrestle economic and political power from the bourgeoisie renders this problem all the more critical. It is a concern that takes us well beyond the familiar terrain of class exploitation, or indeed felt class resentment, anger, and mili-

tancy. History clearly reveals that class antagonisms can lead to an infinite variety of subjective outcomes, depending upon what mediations enter the picture; many outcomes involve a *retreat* from politics, while others remain confined to the limits of bourgeois hegemony. Lenin, reflecting upon this dilemma (in *What is to be Done*?) two decades before Gramsci and Lukacs, knew this dynamic quite well. Conditions favoring proletarian radicalization were indeed always problematic, not something that could be taken for granted. The immensely crucial issue of how class consciousness is formed and what precisely it entails — that is, how workers are transformed into a cohesive social force capable of "making history" — constitutes perhaps the most flawed sphere of Marxist theory.

THE FLAW LIES IN THE FACT THAT MARX AND ENGELS never adequately confronted the question of class consciousness, in part because of their largely productivist (and objectivist) biases, in part because they appeared to believe that the very maturation of capitalism would, sooner or later, give rise to a unified, anti-capitalist proletarian majority. Whatever the assumptions underlying their efforts to establish a historical connection between social being and consciousness, they were obviously shaped by an overly-simplified (and rationalist) understanding of social psychology. Indeed the issue was hardly deemed worthy of analysis within classical Marxism and was now and then dismissed with contempt. They never even ventured a definition of class consciousness, presumably leaving that to the "idealists." In *The Manifesto* they write, almost whimsically, that ". . . the theory of the Communists may be summed up in the single sentence: Abolition of private property."[12] The disarming simplicity of such passages implies an altogether natural, organic connection between social being and consciousness, between objective conditions and subjective responses. There is absolutely no sense of historical mediations or variable political outcomes. Moreover, leaving aside the necessarily abstract and nebulous character of such a stated objective, one is struck by its essentially *negative* formulation; any positive elements of social transformation are merely taken for granted.

We know from reading *Capital*, from an understanding of the role of commodity fetishism, that workers are psychologically subordinated to and engulfed by the economic system, but there are no real clues as to how they will *transcend* such enslavement. In *The Manifesto* Marx and Engels speak of how "masses of laborers, crowded into the factory, are organized like soldiers. As privates of the industrial army they are placed under the command of a perfect hierarchy of officers and sergeants."[13] The discourse of political economy naturally enters into the logic of transcendence, but cannot alone provide answers. Marx in fact realized that the proletariat, confined to the immediacy of its social circumstances, could never arrive at a complete vision of the whole system much less effectively struggle for its overthrow.

Genuine (i.e., *revolutionary*) class consciousness was possible only to the degree the proletariat was able to emerge from its own immediacy, from its partial and fragmented position vis-a-vis capital. What Marx failed to provide, or even discuss, were the mechanisms whereby class consciousness is produced and sustained within bourgeois society. Was it possible, given the tyranny of the commodity, for workers to develop a mature, oppositional aware-

ness by virtue of intrinsic necessity, based on elements already present within the very matrix of the capitalist system? How could the proletariat come to triumph over those very conditions responsible for its pulverization and impotence? Reliance upon the spontaneous self-activity of workers was surely an inadequate schema, as Lenin and then Gramsci would later affirm. At the same time, any temptation to inject a powerful external element into the mix of consciousness —for example, some form of vanguard party — raised the specter of Jacobin-style substitutionism or, in Marx's own vocabulary, "Blanquism." In any event, the entire theoretical field of consciousness formation was left to subsequent generations of Marxists and leftists to debate and try to resolve politically, with often tragic consequences. Meanwhile, the epic theme of proletarian universality (and with it Marxist totality) disintegrated in the wake of the historical failures mentioned above.

From our own historical vantage-point, we can see that Marx and Engels could not possibly have resolved this theoretical predicament; their "solution" was an unwavering, almost religious, faith in the progressive workings of history. The later trajectory of Marxist debates — and socialist politics — illuminated in even greater relief the massive quagmire produced by the "consciousness" question. The always-seductive reformist option, as Lenin rightly understood, could never give rise to proletarian universality insofar as it remained forever trapped within the confines of bourgeois ideology. The "orthodox" crisis scenario advanced by Kautsky and (with a spontaneist twist) Luxemburg presumed, incorrectly as it turned out, that capitalist breakdown leading to social upheaval would generate mass revolutionary consciousness. Tragically enough, systemic crisis more often favored the authoritarian right than the insurgent left, as in Italy, Germany, and Spain between the wars. As for the heroic but ill-fated Council Communists: only in a few isolated instances can one point to the kinds of large-scale, cohesive working-class mobilizations that fit the spontaneist model — Petrograd during and briefly after World War I, Turin during 1918-1920, Barcelona in 1936-1939, perhaps a few others — and these were typically short-lived, never to be duplicated as a basis of political strategy. The only "successful" resolution of the class-consciousness impasse was of course the Leninist one — substitution of an organized vanguard for a self-emancipating proletariat — but history now tells us this was ultimately a false resolution which cannot be laid only at the doorstep of Stalin. Jacobinism gives rise not to socialism but to bureaucratic centralism, as both Luxemburg and Pannekoek predicted and as Marx himself no doubt would have predicted. A Gramscian "synthesis" grounded in the concept of "organic intellectual" did seem to merge the elements of class self-activity and vanguard initiative. But aside from Gramsci's own drift toward Jacobinism (witness the "myth prince"), his schema has never produced any viable strategic alternative — and now appears nullified by modern circumstances such as the fluidity of capital and fragmentation of civil society that undermine organicity at every turn.[14]

The profound disjuncture between the mounting social contradictions of global capitalism (already foreseen by Marx) and the feeble character of anti-system opposition (scarcely intelligible within a Marxian framework) goes to the heart of the contemporary paradox. The stubborn absence of any dialectical linkage between social being and consciousness, between theory and practice, between subject and object, dissolves the very universality essential to

Marxism as a project of social transformation. Reduced to a (still powerful) critique of political economy, Marxism becomes precisely what so many structuralists and modern-day academic Marxists have labored strenuously to achieve — a partial, objectivist, depoliticized body of theory bearing little relationship to the Promethean historical vision set forth in *The Manifesto*. A Marxism without dialectics, as Lukacs noted, amounts to just another one-dimensional bourgeois theory. Any agenda of the sort embellished in *The Manifesto* would necessarily be detached from theoretical statements which, as Marx and Engels put it, must "express, in general terms, actual relations springing from an existing class struggle, from a historical movement going on under our very eyes."[15] What tremendous distance we have traversed from the dialectical vision of *The Manifesto* to the (often incomprehensible) scholasticism of modern academic Marxism!

THERE IS NO AVOIDING THE CONCLUSION THAT WE HAVE ENTERED, many of us reluctantly, into a post-Marxist universe where concepts and issues are less settled, where the very framework of radical thought and action demands perpetual renewal in a way that calls into question much received wisdom. Does this mean that the entire Marxist tradition is now obsolete, superseded only by a postmodern quagmire? Hardly. As I argue at the outset, Marxism remains indispensable to a critique of (global) political economy, an understanding of commodity production, and a theory of class relations despite the loss of dialectical totality and drastically altered historical conditions. Yet, lacking this totality, Marxism today represents just one of many diverse currents that must surely enter into any future post-Marxist radicalism. We have not reached the point, as Jurgen Habermas and many postmodernists contend, where the whole Marxist edifice can simply be junked — and we are unlikely to reach that point so long as capitalism has not been abolished. In a post-Marxist milieu we can expect to confront a multiplicity of themes which the Marxist tradition either ignored or reduced to supposedly underlying material forces: bureaucracy, domination, ecology, patriarchy, race and ethnic relations, culture, sexuality. Gazing about the world scene in the 1990s, it is not difficult to identify significant movements, parties, and even governments that embrace at least some of these agendas together with some elements of Marxism, including the African National Congress, some renovated Socialist parties in Eastern Europe, labor struggles in Brazil, insurrectionary groups in Mexico, guerilla activity in the Philippines and Latin America, European Green parties, large sectors of the Italian left, and scattered popular movements or NGOs around the globe. To pretend that any of these forces embody a rebirth of Marxist universality, however, is to enter a world of fantasy.

As the ghost of Marxism continues to float over and through the global landscape well into the twenty-first century, it will be a far more partial and relativized presence than before; it could well evolve into an unrecognizable variant of the original theory. Yet Marx and Engels themselves affirmed that theory would have to be reconstituted with each new historical period. In Eric Hobsbawm's words: "Marx did not say the last word — far from it — but he did say the first word, and we are still obliged to continue the discourse he inaugurated."[16]

NOTES

1. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "*Manifesto* of the Communist Party," in Robert C. Tucker, ed., *The Marx-Engels Reader* (New York: Norton and Norton, 1972), p. 337.
2. *Manifesto*, p. 339.
3. William Greider, *One World, Ready or Not* (New York: Simon and Shuster, 1997) p 39.
4. *Manifesto*, p. 33.
5. David Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World* (West Hartford, Conn.: Kumarian Press, 1995), p. 20.
6. Greider, *One World*, p. 316.
7. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (London:Verso, 1985).
8. David Morley and Kuan-Hsing Chen, *Stuart Hall: Critical Dialogues in Cultural Studies* (London: Routledge, 1996).
9. Teresa Ebert, *Ludic Feminism* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996) p 225.
10. Marx, "Theses on Feuerbach," in Tucker, op. cit., p. 108.
11. Ronald Aronson, *After Marxism* (New York: Guilford, 1995), p. 43.
12. *Manifesto*, p. 346.
13. *Manifesto*, p. 341.
14. For a more extensive discussion of Gramsci's theory in the context of its Jacobin limitations, see my *The Two Revolutions: Gramsci and the Dilemmas of Western Marxism* (Boston: South End Press, 1984), ch. 7.
15. *Manifesto*, p. 346.
16. Eric Hobsbawm, *On History* (New York: The New Press, 1997), p. 168.

The Reopening of Marx's System

Edward S. Herman

BACK IN 1889, A BOOK BY THE AUSTRIAN ECONOMIST Eugen von Bohm-Bawerk was translated into English with the dismissive title, *Karl Marx and the Close of His System*, and Marx has been attacked and his system buried and reburied by a stream of mainstream economists ever since. For contemporary critics, the coup de grace to Marxism was provided by the collapse of the Soviet Union and the global setbacks to socialist movements over the past decade. History is over; capitalism has won.

We should note, however, that there were two Karl Marx's. One was the activist and enlightenment optimist, who foresaw an imminent collapse of a brutal capitalism and the ushering in of a classless state and utopia. This Marx was seriously mistaken; capitalism had far more vitality than he perceived, a "dictatorship of the proletariat" does not evolve easily into a democratic community, and classless utopias are still purely imagined communities that the human race will be hard put to construct.

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The second Karl Marx was an exceptionally intelligent and learned observer and analyst of capitalism. This Marx's integration of the dynamics of technological change, political economy, and macro and micro economics provided a formidable system of thought that has never been refuted. It is true that here also he failed to give adequate weight to the impact of rapid economic growth, unionization and capitalist democracy in yielding substantial wage increases and welfare state benefits to the working class. But this only requires qualifications that leave the essential analytical structure intact. Furthermore, Marx's errors in forecasting capitalist evolution may have to be reassessed in the light of developments in the post-"socialist threat" era.

Capitalism's victory has been quickly followed by more aggressive class warfare, strong tendencies toward income polarization and immiseration of large numbers, and global attacks on the social wage and welfare state. This suggests that the era of rising wages and welfare state benefits may have been a long interlude. With globalization and the collapse of the "socialist" world greatly strengthening capital, Marx's theory of immiseration may turn out to be a valid long-run forecast. Even if this bleak possibility is not realized, the enhanced power and freedom of action of capital have given Marxian economics a new salience.

This is suggested not only by the more favorable global investment climate and renewed aggressiveness of capital, but also by the statements of international financier George Soros and other representatives of capital, warning that capital may be overreaching and calling for restraint in the interests of avoiding social upheavals. Morgan Stanley economist Stephen Roach refers to "slash and burn corporate restructuring" and "worker backlash" in admonishing his corporate confreres. A report of a group of young French managers, expressing conviction "that non-regulated capitalism will explode as communism exploded," calls for a new social contract that would reduce growing social divisions. The World Bank and IMF repeatedly warn that poverty is increasing and that more attention should be paid to this and to education—while of course supporting policies (privatization, budget cuts, tight money, focus on exports) that contribute to the persistence of poverty, increasing inequality, and huge educational deficits.

The Marxian Core. The beauty of the Marxian system, and the reason for its continued and perhaps increased vitality, is its focus on the core elements and dynamic and evolving character of capitalism. It may be useful to review briefly the basic ideas and their applicability in the New World Order.

1. *The profit and accumulation drive.* For Marx, accumulation was "The Moses and all the prophets" of the capitalist class. Capitalists are "rational misers," who seek profits to invest and enlarge their capital stock, in an incessant quest that is the heart of the capitalist process. (Profit maximization is also central to orthodox economics, but traditionally in a static system, with given technology and factor prices, and with profits supposedly "competed away" leaving only a "normal rate of return" to owners.) Bottom line pressures and the drive toward profitable growth have hardly slackened with the maturation of capitalism. Centralization of corporate control and displacement of family-owned firms by giants with diffused ownership, hired managers, divisional organization, and profit centers and targets have increased the impersonality and bottom line drive of business. The growth of financial markets and institu-

tions, with their strong pressure for profit performance, and the associated emergence of a takeover market, has also intensified the profit focus.

Competition works in the same direction. While concentration has limited competition in some sectors, it persists, threatens and worries managers everywhere. New products, new technologies, entrants from abroad, and breakdowns in agreements among rivals, cause seemingly impregnable giants like GM and IBM to undergo serious losses. Competition and its threat keeps all managers nervous and seeking opportunities to cut costs or expand sales.

The idea that corporations would become more caring and "responsible" as capitalism matured is a fallacy that serves the system's ideological needs, but which is confuted by experience, by the factors just discussed, and by theory—notably, Marxian theory.

2. *Technological change as a system imperative.* Marx saw with great clarity that capitalism was characterized by a continuous revolution of the means of production. This is propelled by the profit drive, the constant pressure and threat of competition, and the incessant need to cut labor costs which makes capitalism a dynamic and technologically progressive system, but one in which capital designs the technical change to serve its needs, while labor bears the main social costs of the dynamism.

Technological change today continues to serve capital; the new information technology is being used to replace skilled labor with machines and software programs. It has also permitted better managerial monitoring and control of the work force and made the use of contingent labor and spatial dispersal of work easier. This deskilling, reengineering of work, and associated downsizing and outsourcing has been carried out with the enthusiastic support of the stock market and at least tacit support of the political establishment. In the capitalist tradition, and helped along by the weakened condition of the labor movement, there has been minimal concern over the cost in labor's losses and insecurity. (For a good account of these developments, see Simon Head, "The New, Ruthless Economy," *New York Review of Books*, Feb. 29, 1996.)

3. *Reserve army mechanism.* Marx put great weight on capital's desire and need for slack labor markets. Technological change and cyclical downturns were the key mechanisms whereby this was accomplished in his system. The former is as important as ever; and the latter also plays a major role in its modern variant, in which an adequate level of unemployment and underemployment is maintained by deliberate policy action to keep the labor market loose enough to restrain wage increases. This may be supplemented by controlled recessions that give labor a more serious jolt, as in the Reagan-Volcker tight money program and deliberately imposed recessions of 1980 and 1981-82. It may be supplemented by union busting activities (Patco, NLRB actions, permitting private union-busting in violation of the law); by privatization and shrinking government, thereby diminishing a relatively protected labor sector; and by policies weakening the safety net and forcing more people into the job market.

4. *Globalization.* Marx was well aware that capitalism was from the beginning a global system, and he stressed both its shattering impact on the imperial colonies and the role of overseas looting in "primitive accumulation." The New World Order presents a stage of globalization not envisaged by Marx, where corporations have branches and subsidiaries abroad and increasingly

make investment and production decisions on a global basis. In Marxian terms, the reserve army of labor is being globalized, with firms able to tap pools of cheap labor in Mexico, Indonesia, the Philippines, and China, and bargain for terms friendly to investors across national borders as they have long done among cities and states within countries.

Obviously, this cross-border extension of the reserve army fits the Marxian model distressingly well, with capital gaining a new bargaining advantage and threatening steady downward pressure on wages and working conditions in the high wage countries. The organizational challenge to labor is immense.

The threat to labor is exacerbated by the political/economic effects of globalization, with the nation state, like labor, pressured and threatened by the mobility of finance as well as industrial capital. Policies not helpful to capital will be punished by market movements that raise interest rates, lower exchange rates, and shift investment abroad. The welfare state is placed under permanent siege in favor of the de facto "corporate welfare state."

5. *Instability and crises.* Marx believed that the dynamism of capitalism, its unplanned nature, structural imbalances, and tendency toward speculative excesses, made the system inherently unstable and crisis prone. And he thought instability would increase and help bring capitalism to an end. But while the system has been unstable, since World War II it has done well in containing recessions and periodic mini-crises. Nevertheless, the immense global credit structure, pervasive speculation and innovative forms of risk-taking, privatization and the shrinkage of the role and power of governments, global interdependence, and the absence of a global lender of last resort, make the system vulnerable as never before. The current Southeast Asian crisis has for the first time combined credit and speculative excesses with an environmental crisis, in which the smoke pall from uncontrolled Indonesian fires has curtailed economic activity and frightened foreign investors over a wide area. The dynamic, exploitative and unplanned nature of global capitalism make further unpleasant combinations and surprises highly likely. What their final outcome will be remains a puzzle.

6. *Control of the state.* Marxian theory has always had a huge edge over mainstream economic thought in that the state is treated as the subject of analysis, not as an external force whose decisions and actions are above the battle. In a class society the state tends to be dominated by the class with preeminent economic power, whose interests become the "national interest," and state policy follows accordingly.

This type of analysis is surely pertinent to understanding the New World Order, where capital's political aims are clear and the new instruments at its command are potent. Through its enhanced bargaining position with, and disciplinary powers over, states, and through its control of the IMF, World Bank and World Trade Organization (WTO), capital is imposing counterrevolutionary politics everywhere, featuring privatization, fiscal and monetary conservatism, and cutbacks in the welfare state. It has stripped democracy of substance by enforcing a condition where there are "no other options," making social democratic politicians into servants of neoliberal policies. Capital has reversed the earlier postwar willingness and need to share productivity gains with the majority; now the only worry is social order, which it and its agents may be inclined to maintain more by the use of force than serious economic

concessions.

7. *Domination of superstructure of law and ideology.* Marx saw law and ideology as a reflection of class power and interest, and he often sneered at the bought scribblers of the press and academia. He was well aware of the capacity of established ideas and institutions to confuse and pacify the working class, and Gramsci's analysis of ideological hegemony was developed within a Marxian framework.

That analysis is highly relevant today, and much left critique focuses on media commercialization and concentration, the culture of entertainment and diversion, the weakening and defanging of the public sphere, and the naturalness with which the market-based media impose the dominant ideology and marginalize dissent. A modern development of note has been the corporate funding of a large network of think tanks, to elevate the status of conservative thinkers and saturate the media and intellectual environment with their market-friendly ideas. This operation of the market and division of labor in helping manufacture consent to corporate ideology, while problematic for orthodox thought, which envisages ideas competing on a level playing field, fits Marxian analysis very comfortably.

In the evolution and working of the law as well, the power of class interest has also long made for an uneven playing field, as illustrated by the reworking of the 14th amendment, designed to help the former slaves but converted into a protection for the rights of the corporate "person," and the 1976 decision Buckley vs Valeo, which made corporate election spending a right under the First Amendment. Money shapes laws, regulation, and law enforcement, so that even well intended legislation can be nullified and transmuted into corporate service through deliberately ambiguous language that allows reshaping by litigation. In the application of the law, the legal industry has been ever more intensively mobilized to serve the corporate community through techniques of delay and harassment that have resulted in large-scale abuse (for an outstanding account, see Ralph Nader and Wesley J. Smith, *No Contest: Corporate Lawyers and the Perversion of Justice in America*)

MARXIAN THOUGHT HAS ALWAYS BEEN USEFUL IN ANALYZING the workings of capitalism, with its focus on the core elements of capitalism and its view of capitalism as a dynamic system. With capitalism now freed from some of its earlier constraints, and with the entire globe as its bailiwick and source of a reserve army, this purer and more ruthless capitalism may be making the law of increasing immiseration a reality. Whether or not this is so, capitalism at work can be much better understood within a Marxian frame than by reading Paul Samuelson, Paul Krugman, Milton Friedman, or the 1997 Nobel laureates who have enlightened the world on the theory of options.

Socialism as Self-Emancipation

Nancy Holmstrom

IN HIS 1872 PREFACE TO *The Communist Manifesto*, 25 years after its first publication, Engels declared that its general principles remained as correct as ever, though the practical application of the principles would always depend on the specific historic conditions that prevailed. I want to concentrate on one of those basic principles: namely, that for Marx, socialism is a mode of production involving the democratic rule of the working class. Given the history of the past 150 years, it is more important than ever before that we clarify and reaffirm this principle.

In *The Manifesto* Marx and Engels explained that "the first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of the ruling class, to win the battle of democracy." This pronouncement should be taken to refer both to the goal of a revolution by the working class and the means to it, similar to Marx's first rule for the International Workingmen's Association: "The emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself." As Hal Draper illustrated in his classic essay on the "Two Souls of Socialism," this conception of socialism-from-below was never dominant among those calling themselves socialists, but it has appeared and reappeared at times of working class struggle. Since Stalinism has discredited the very idea of socialism in the minds of so many, it is even more crucial today than in Marx and Engels' day to develop a vision of socialism that is both attractive and plausible. But a necessary preliminary to developing visions of this kind — ideal or transitional — is being clear about the fundamental character of the socialist mode of production. Socialists need to be committed to democracy as both means and ends and to understand what this commitment really entails.

IN RECENT YEARS, PROPONENTS OF "MARKET SOCIALISM" HAVE LAID CLAIM to socialism's democratic mantle, arguing that their approach is much more practical than the traditional socialist goal of democratic planning, described by Marx as "the associated producers rationally regulating their interchange with nature, bringing it under their common control." It is not at all certain, however, that market socialists have developed a meaningful alternative to Marx's conception of socialism. The term "market socialism" has been used to characterize societies, real or projected, with essentially different class structures. Thus in the late 70s and early 80s proponents of market socialism, such as Janos Kornai, talked of reforming the bureaucratic economies of Eastern Europe by intro-

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ducing market relations, the result of which was to be market socialism. China was also supposed to move to market socialism through the introduction of market reforms. From another perspective, proposals by some market socialists in the West, for example John Roemer in his *A Future for Socialism*, sound little different from welfare state capitalist societies like Sweden, but with more cooperatives. Other models, such as those described in David Miller's *Market, State, and Community* and David Schweickart's *Against Capitalism*, call for more radical changes, like democratic control over production, investment, and income distribution within an enterprise, and a mixture of ownership forms.

For the most part, market socialists pay scant attention to the problem of transition, reflecting their uncertainty as to whether market socialism is envisioned as a reform of capitalism or of a bureaucratic economy or as a revolutionary social transformation. But supporters of market socialism have yet to adequately explain how such a system would come into being, how it would work, how it should be evaluated morally and politically, and indeed, whether it is even feasible in its own terms. Thus, in China, the market was introduced, but the result has not been a new system that could meaningfully be called market socialism. Instead what has developed is an unstable mix of state bureaucratic elements and capitalism — of the most primitive and patriarchal sort — with the capitalist sector clearly ascendant. Similar failures to reform the bureaucratic economies of Eastern Europe have led early proponents of market socialism like Kornai to conclude that it was a "vain hope." As Richard Smith has argued ("The Chinese Race to Capitalism," *New Left Review*, May/June 1993), what the Chinese case demonstrates is that how a market works, indeed the very meaning of the term, depends on the mode of production of which it is part.

THESE CONFUSIONS REFLECT A FAILURE TO UNDERSTAND WHAT IS, ARGUABLY, the central explanatory concept of Marxism: the "mode of production." In all class societies a ruling class exploits the direct producers. But how they do it is different, and for Marx, that makes all the difference. For as he says in *Capital*, volume III,

> It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers — a relationship whose actual form always naturally corresponds to a definite stage of development of the ways and means of labor and hence its social productive power — which holds the innermost secret, the hidden foundation of the entire social structure and hence also of the political form of the sovereignty-dependency relationship, in short, of the state in each case.

The concept of the mode of production, then, focuses on the surplus extractive relations that are at the very core of economic life. (See Ellen Meiksins Wood, *Democracy Against Capitalism*.) Thus, for example, capitalism leads to the development of the productive forces because it is a system of expanding reproduction and their development is a way of increasing surplus value; feudalism, on the other hand, did not lead to development because there were limits to the surplus feudal lords could utilize to buy knights and build castles. Likewise, the reason the market did not make the state sector in China more efficient is that behavior that is irrational from the standpoint of capitalist economies, such as maximizing growth regardless of demand, was entirely

rational in China given the structure of bureaucratic social relations. So too, what role a market could play in a socialist mode of production depends on just how that mode of production is understood.

The simplest characterization of the socialist mode of production then is that, in contrast to all class societies, there is no ruling class that extracts surplus labor from the direct producers, since the direct producers are the ruling class. While capitalism assumes a separation of economic and political power, a society based on socialist principles must have the working class constitute both the dominant socio-economic power and the ruling political power — and not just in name, as is the case in the bureaucratic mode of production, but in fact.

This definition of socialism as working-class rule is strikingly different from definitions offered by numerous other socialists, from the Utopians to self-declared Marxists, for whom working-class rule was not essential to socialism. Many definitions of "socialism" amount simply to post-capitalism, an economy that disallows private ownership of the major means of production and that has no juridically recognized social divisions. Such a broad and negative definition serves neither the explanatory nor the political purposes Marx intended (why one should struggle for it is unclear) and is compatible with bureaucratic class rule. The key point is that it is working-class control of the economy and the government that defines socialism, rather than participation, a much vaguer and weaker concept often invoked to show that some society or other is "a people's democracy." Both capitalist and bureaucratic societies permit some degree of "participation," for as the slogan in France in May '68 went, "I participate, you participate, he/she participates, we participate ...they profit." They profit because they control — and that is what the working class needs to do to ensure that no one else profits from their labor.

But as to how exactly the working class would exercise its power, Marx notoriously said very little. In the example of the Paris Commune, however, where for the first time in history working people took power and started to displace the old government machinery with their own, Marx announced that he had found "the political form ... under which to work out the economic emancipation of labor." It is striking that throughout the 20th century, wherever the working class has contended for power, similar institutions have sprung into being, such as the soviets in Russia in 1905 and 1917, and the workers' councils in Hungary in 1956.

It is important to make clear that in a socialist society, "direct producers" would include all those who live by their labor, in and out of the home, since "productive labor" would no longer be restricted to labor productive of surplus value. Even today when, unlike in the 19th century, women form the majority of the proletariat in the newly industrialized nations, there is an unfortunate tendency to view "direct producers" as predominantly male. Clarifying the broader meaning of "productive labor" under socialism should help combat this common misconception. And this broader meaning should be institutionalized in community and consumer councils, in addition to (wage) workers' councils.

THE STRUGGLE FOR DIRECT DEMOCRATIC CONTROL OF THE STATE BY WORKING PEOPLE goes far beyond liberal democracy because it transcends the narrow political

and legal sphere to which democracy in the liberal sense is necessarily restricted. By extending democracy to the economy, the political and legal sphere are thereby transformed as well. For this reason debates as to whether socialist democracy is different in kind or merely degree from liberal democracy are somewhat beside the point. Extending democracy to the economic realm would require a revolutionary transformation of capitalist social relations. Nevertheless, just as socialism would include the best of capitalist technology, so it would include the best aspects of liberal democracy. And since the working class is not a single homogeneous entity with identical ideas and interests, the expression of its interests requires a multi-party system.

Given this understanding of the socialist mode of production, there could be some role for a market, if that was democratically decided. However, proponents of market socialism envision a society in which the market is the basic regulator of economic life. And that, in my opinion, is less clearly compatible with socialism. Market socialists believe it is possible to obtain the advantages of the capitalist market without its drawbacks: the extreme inequalities, instability, and environmental problems. In this view, voters could just decide to limit economic inequalities or switch from fossil fuels to solar energy, and so on. Such actions strike me as highly unlikely. And if voters really could make these decisions against the competitive pressure of the world market — if they could decide, for example, to discontinue use of fossil fuels, despite relative abundance and a tremendous investment in their production — then it is not clear what it means to say that the economy's basic dynamic is provided by the market. Clearly more work needs to be done by proponents of democratic planning and of market socialism. But any consideration of a role for a market within socialism must flow from an appreciation of the basic nature of a socialist society.

A fundamental socialist principle is the "self-emancipation of the working class," and this needs to be understood as the means as well as the ends of a socialist revolution. Marxists have often been accused of believing that "the ends justify the means," and it is true that many sincere people who considered themselves Marxists have justified the most appalling actions in the belief that they were necessary to achieve a more egalitarian and humane society. But this is an extremely undialectical view of the relation between cause and effect. A more accurate view recognizes the extent to which the means determine the ends. Since Marx and Engels were aiming for a society ruled by the working class, only self-emancipatory means could be effective in leading to it. As Rosa Luxemburg put it in her pamphlet "The Russian Revolution":

> socialist democracy is not something which begins only in the promised land after the foundations of socialist economy are created; it does not come as some sort of Christmas present for the worthy....

When we turn to substantive political questions, of course, the real problem is knowing just what the effects are of different courses of action. But being clear about the goal and about the interdependence of means and ends at least establishes the criterion according to which socialists should evaluate different options and would certainly have ruled out many actions carried out in the name of Marxism.

AS FOR SPECIFIC PROPOSALS, ENGELS' CAUTION IN HIS 1872 *PREFACE* is all important: the practical application of *The Manifesto*'s principles would always depend on the specific historical conditions prevailing at a given time and place. Nevertheless, when we focus on the question of what means are necessary to achieve the end of self-emancipation, the importance of grass-roots involvement and democratic control cannot be over-emphasized. If every cook can govern, it will only be through a great deal of practice, and first of all a belief that she or he can govern and should govern. A recent study by Kate Bronfenbrenner and Tom Juravich ("Union Tactics Matter: The Impact of Union Tactics on Certification Elections, First Contracts, and Membership Rates," Institute for the Study of Labor Organizations) showed that the single most important variable in determining success in union organizing drives was the degree to which workers were mobilized and involved in all kinds of activities, from rank-and-file organizing committees, housecalls, frequent meetings, to militant actions. Successful efforts were less likely to focus on traditional bread and butter issues, than on issues such as fairness and dignity, because — I suspect — these are the issues crucial to transforming peoples' sense of themselves, as human beings worthy of better things and capable of achieving them.

For similar reasons, struggles for new or improved public services should be combined with the demand that they be under the control of their recipients. Healthcare and education are obvious examples today. Not only would the services be more likely to meet their needs, but much more important is that the recipients would have a different relationship to the programs that would impact on their consciousness. They would be active rather than passive; the programs would be "theirs" instead of an impersonal bureaucracy's, and they would feel empowered, not helpless. Of course control of public services is much more difficult to win than the services themselves, as innumerable examples attest. But the difficulty of winning control is all the more reason to struggle for it. As Rosa Luxemburg stressed throughout her work, until a socialist revolution is successful, the most important result of any working class struggle is building working class self-confidence and organization through practical experience. In her words: "Activity itself educates the masses." This conception of the importance of working class mobilization radicalizes the struggle for reforms and expresses an understanding of self-emancipation as both means and ends of a socialist revolution.

If we are to save the idea of socialism from the grotesque experience of Stalinism, it is essential as part of our struggles against capitalism, that we develop a desirable and realistic vision of socialism. The question of the role of a market in socialism must be placed within the framework sketched above or else, as we have seen, profound confusions are bound to result. Clarity on these fundamental ideas of Marxism and emphasis on preparing working people to become the ruling class is the only way to ensure that the next time around, the battle for democracy will not be lost.

The Spectre of Financial Crisis And the Failure of the Left

Roslyn Wallach Bologh and Leonard Mell

KARL MARX FELT IT IMPERATIVE TO DEVOTE ONE SECTION OUT OF FOUR of *The Communist Manifesto* to a harsh criticism of other so-called socialisms. That part is divided into three sections: Reactionary Socialism, Bourgeois Socialism, and Critical-Utopian Socialism and Communism. Marx wrote that the French socialist literature, in the hands of the Germans, "lost all its immediate practical significance, and assumed a purely literary aspect" (Marx, in Tucker, p. 494). This critique has important significance for developments in contemporary social theory, specifically, but not exclusively, postmodernist theory.

As late as 1879, Marx again wrote of these "true" socialists: "nothing remains as a basis for socialism but 'true love of humanity' and empty phraseology about 'justice'" (Marx, in Tucker, p. 554).[1] The relevance of this to some of today's "new social movements" cannot be missed. Marx places this "true socialism" under the heading of "reactionary socialism." It is reactionary, in part, because these critics "hurled the traditional anathemas against liberalism, against representative government, against bourgeois competition, bourgeois freedom of the press, bourgeois legislation, bourgeois liberty and equality, and ... preach[ed] to the masses that they had nothing to gain, and everything to lose, by this bourgeois movement" (p. 495). Today the same "anathemas" are hurled against these features of bourgeois society, but all too often the hurlers similarly fail to represent the interests of the working class.

Today, we face the spectre of international financial crisis.[2] However, most of the left, aside from hurling anathemas, is unprepared to respond to financial and economic crisis. Moreover, the current state of critical thinking in the U.S. blocks the development of a rational and effective response.

Today, we need critical thinking on the role of credit in the economy: how it is created, allocated, and used. We need to be able to explain the role of credit in financing speculative bubbles that cause currency devaluations, stock market crashes, and financial and economic crises. We need to understand the role of the Federal Reserve System and the banking system in creating credit. We need to understand how international banks work; what they do with money capital. We need to understand the international spread of financial crisis following a currency devaluation. We need to understand the threat to standards

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of living everywhere from the improper use of credit. Most of all we need to be prepared with a rational, viable, alternative to the current credit structures.

Much of the left in the U.S. has been diverted into the kind of thinking that precludes focusing on political economy in any but a reactive way. Critics, both on the left and on the right, attack national and international financial institutions such as the Federal Reserve System (the Fed), the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization (WTO). Both from the left and the right, critics target the Trilateral Commission and the Council on Foreign Relations as cabals for imposing their rule on the world. But only the right dares press for an alternative. The left offers only critique and resistance, an essentially defensive posture.

The radical right considers these institutions threats to the savings of hard working Americans and to American national sovereignty. The Federal Reserve, the International Financial Institutions, and these Foreign Affairs Commissions and Councils, in the view of the radical right, all aim to transfer the wealth of those who earned it to those who did not, redistributing wealth within the United States and from the United States to Third World nations. According to the radical right, these institutions have been created by international bankers and socialists intent on creating a world government and increasing their own power.

The radical right recommends eliminating all these institutions or American participation in them, replacement of The Federal Reserve's issuance of fiat currency with a gold standard, abolition of government-funded social services, elimination of the progressive income tax, and reliance on the free market to discipline investors.

These measures might avoid speculative bubbles and inflation caused by the creation of credit, but would instead seriously contract the amount of credit available for growth and development. Such measures would favor creditors over debtors, and would cause a severe and protracted national and international economic downturn. However, in the face of a financial or economic crisis caused by the massive miscreation and misuse of credit by the current financial institutions, these recommendations will appear to be a rational solution. Moreover, this solution promises not only a way out of crisis and stagnation, but growth and prosperity for the U.S. economy. Hence in a period of crisis or stagnation, and in the absence of any viable alternative, it will seem more and more appealing and necessary. The left, on the other side, offers no persuasive, viable alternative.

BOTH THE NATURE OF THE CRITIQUE AND THE SOLUTIONS to the problem proposed by both left and right are inadequate. We trace the failure of the left to developments in academia over the last 30 years, in particular the move to a focus on identity, representation, and domination.

The collective wisdom of the academic left includes the following five key elements. One is the primacy given to domination, power, oppression. Two: the stress on recognition or identity and cultural representation. Three: the treatment of all knowledge and science as positivistic, empiricist, objectivist, patriarchal, Eurocentric discourse made up of representations and floating signifiers. Four: the advocacy of a more real democracy, in which all voices can be heard, such as grass roots, community based initiatives and small scale cooperative

enterprises. Five: the stress on redistribution to rectify social and economic inequality. We are going to argue that this collective wisdom is not only inadequate; it is fundamentally misguided. As such, it threatens to misguide us in a confrontation with economic crisis and a radical right economic agenda.

To understand how we have come to this pass, we need to understand the historical evolution of the left. We have to understand how western Marxism's focus on social evolution, individual and societal development, alienation and dialectical reason became submerged and replaced with domination as the core concern. In the process, reason and the analysis of political economy were replaced with the analysis of representation and culture. The goal of expanded economic reproduction was replaced by the goal of redistribution.

We will not rehash the history of the 1960s except to say that the anti-authoritarianism of the new left spoke to our generation in our very souls, especially to the women. We wanted freedom; we wanted liberation and empowerment. We felt we had been silenced, our voices, and needs ignored — for generations. We wanted to be heard and heeded. These wants motivated the women's movement just as they motivated the black nationalist movement.

However, there are problems with stressing domination and liberation. One, the stress on domination contributes to a sense of victimization and resentment. Two, the notion of liberation from domination has no content. Liberation of what? Of will? Of desires? The struggle for liberation has become a call for radical democracy — giving voice to all. But the question remains, democracy for what; liberation for what; self-government for what? What interests will the voices represent? Libertinism? Anarchism? Competing interests in more equitable shares of a shrinking pie? How would equity be determined? What happens when there is a conflict of voices, of wills, desires or interests — a struggle for recognition of opposing wills and opposing voices? Without some higher notion than egoistic self-interest to appeal to, without a substantive notion of reason and dialectical development, how will conflicts be resolved? By formal, procedural democracy?

We have been led to distrust reason, to conflate creative reason with formal rationality, and to see all knowledge and reason as texts or discourses or representations that hide or express narrow or private self-interest and relations of power. We are led to believe that there is no essence or truth that reason or art could express; all reason and art are nothing more than free floating signifiers. We are being led to believe that just as there is no ultimate reality, no ultimate essence, no ultimate truth, or ultimate desire, there is no ultimate signified except will or desire itself. All truth is merely will to power. Hence we came to see all reason and art as nothing more than politics by other means, a struggle of wills to impose themselves.[3] Reducing everything in this way produces cynicism and denies the possibility of judging or evaluating competing claims except by non-rational, subjective identification with the particular interests being advocated or the party making the claim.

Cynically or resentfully reducing everything to power politics means that self-identity could be created only negatively against all forms of domination, including external and internalized representations of women, of blacks, of gays, etc. as inferior, subordinate, or destructive and dangerous. Thus, cultural politics became the source of our identity; we could identify only with the critique of representations. Politics became cultural politics grounded in a desire

for recognition. However, a struggle for the recognition of empty identities ultimately becomes a meaningless struggle, a struggle over meaningless displays of respect. This has been illustrated here in the states by the killing of one person by another who did not like the disrespectful way the first one looked at him. The same dynamic is occurring between ethnic groups, between different regions within the same nation state, and between nation states. The problem is not that people fight with each other, nor even that they fight for respect or honor; the problem is that they do not have an uplifting, inspiring, substantive, universalizing notion with which to identify and on which to base their claims to respect or honor and for which they are willing to fight. And that is especially true on the left.

A struggle for recognition or against domination by people who share no common substantive idea or ideal, no universal principle that provides direction, purpose, and meaning results ultimately in a Hobbesian world of mutual suspicion, a war of each against all that "ceaseth only in death." Getting people to argue over recognition or identity has the effect of a divide-and-conquer strategy. It is not a way to unite people. Only a shared commitment to a universal principle that offers hope, can give people a shared identity that can unite them in a progressive way.

Even the politics of anti-imperialism that was the legacy of the anti-Vietnam war movement of the New Left ultimately became reduced to the politics of representation. Neocolonialism was conceptualized as an imperialist imposition of cultural representations that degraded and disempowered the formerly colonized peoples.

ONCE THE MOVE FROM A FOCUS ON PRODUCTION TO A FOCUS on domination and cultural politics was accomplished, the left lost its identity; it became dispersed into all the tendencies that opposed domination; it became subsumed under groups who could better identify and critique the kinds of domination they were experiencing. Given the complacency and conservatism of labor, and the view that all peoples needed to be able to speak for themselves, all the left could do was join and support all these formerly and currently oppressed groups. This expanded the notion of the left, but also emptied it of meaning. Instead of a left, there was an array of groups, whose identities themselves were in question, all struggling for liberation and recognition.

The old Marxian perspective had focused on the potential for rational production. It explained how the class relations of production fettered the forces of production, how the private interest of property owners in maintaining and increasing their wealth held back the potential for a much more expansive production of real human wealth, how the private interests of the few opposed the collective interests of the whole.

This old Marxian perspective has been so thoroughly attacked in the name of critical, radical, theory, that it is now rejected even by the left. The Marxian productivist ethic promised bountifulness, premised on a faith in creative reason and creative development. Marx conceived such development as the free development and realization of creative potential. Faith in creative reason, creative production, and ongoing development, including the development of new higher-order human needs, is now considered suspect.

This Marxian perspective is considered old fashioned in light of the envi-

ronmental crisis and in light of the damage done to the Third World in the name of development. Instead of distinguishing a dialectical notion of social and economic development from a capitalist notion, the very notion of development has become discredited. Moreover, faith in creative reason and creative development, which is the only way we can solve environmental, medical, economic, and social problems, has been attacked as metaphysical and hence untenable, an embarrassment.

Armed with the Frankfurt School's critique of instrumental reason as the rationality of both capitalism and Soviet communism, the left attacked the tradition of reason, denouncing it as nothing but a guise for domination, and in so doing continued the process of removing the ground from under its own feet. It completed this process by extending the critique of reason to the critique of expanded production. From the side of environmentalism, expanding production was seen as harmful and destructive; from the side of postcolonialism, expanding production was seen as furthering the colonizing, imperialist ambitions of capitalists, and from the side of feminism and black nationalism, the stress on production was seen as subordinating gender and race to class. However, rejecting the tradition of reason and the need for a rational organization of expanded economic reproduction ultimately favors the market as the only possible mechanism for regulating production and exchange.

The left has been left with a subjective, moralizing stress on redistribution and a sloganeering anti-capitalism, expressed as anti-corporate power and greed. And so it rails against downsizing, restructuring, reforming, outsourcing, liberalizing, deregulating, and privatizing. But it has no convincing analysis of the economic crisis and no alternative theory for resolving the crisis. Yet it is that crisis that is affecting the ways that corporate power is being deployed: from restructuring, downsizing, contracting out, and fighting for deregulation and free trade agreements, to mergers, acquisitions and investment in non-productive, currency speculation, speculative financial instruments, new financial products and credit mechanisms.

All that the left can advocate is opposition and resistance on the one hand, and redistribution or socialism on the other. But the socialism that is advocated includes no program or set of ideas for a more productive mode of production; it is essentially a program for redistribution of a relatively shrinking economic pie. There are no serious arguments presented for using credit in a massively productive way. There is no notion out there of a struggle to massively expand economic reproduction, to create a massively larger pie that could be distributed more equitably and produced more humanely without compromising future sustainability, a world united in cooperative striving to create new wealth, and in so doing create and realize new human needs and new human possibilities, a world committed to ongoing social and individual self-development. That is what the left should be addressing and expounding. There is no notion out there of the dangers of billions of dollars in credit going to non-rationally planned projects, to speculative investing in fictitious capital and currency devaluations, causing financial collapse in vulnerable nations and threatening global economic contraction. That is what the left should be critiquing.

HOWEVER, THE CONVENTIONAL WISDOM OF THE LEFT is that a redistributionist

ethic is the one thing needed to solve all our economic and consequently social problems. The focus is on the greed of corporations that are making big profits while wages are kept low. The answer offered by the left is to take from the corporations in the form of higher wages and higher taxes, and use those taxes for social services to remedy the gap between rich and poor. This philosophy is not credible in the current period. Nor was it credible to Marx as he pointed out in his critique of the stress on "equitable distribution" in his *Critique of the Gotha Program*.[4] The contemporary social welfare state that was founded on a Keynesian stimulative and redistributionist ethic is in crisis throughout Europe and the U.S. But rather than acknowledge that Keynesian welfare state economics is in crisis, the left has tended to treat the crisis as a political one. It counsels resistance against restructuring, denounces the agents of restructuring, and blames social democratic parties for failing to hold the line against the political opposition.

The left has not highlighted the inability of capitalist production to substantially increase the rate of real economic growth. The left has not thought through an alternative rational plan for not only increasing the rate of growth, but for increasing the rate at which growth increases, a plan for creating a veritable modern day Renaissance, nor thought through why that is necessary and how it is possible. Instead, much of the left has joined with many ecologists in calling for less production, less consumption, and a scaled down standard of living — at least for the West.

There are some on the left who argue for accepting the inevitability of fewer and fewer jobs due to technology; they argue for demanding that the relatively shrinking economic pie be redistributed to accommodate an ever increasing number of unemployed people made redundant by technology. The recent downturn in unemployment belies this argument. Aside from the downturn in unemployment, it is telling that the argument regarding the-end-of-work was made at a time of crumbling infrastructure, dying cities, inadequate and insufficient housing, schools, and childcare facilities, a time when we should be demanding that *more* people be employed productively in such needed work, a time when we should be pointing out the irrationality of high unemployment and underemployment (especially in urban areas like New York City where unemployment rates remain high) when so many needs are going unmet, not just here but around the world, the irrationality of having the capacity for expanding production to meet the needs of all and yet not utilizing that productive capacity.

This acceptance and promulgation of the-end-of-work argument reflects the loss of a productionist ethic on the left, and the loss of rational thinking about how to solve the problems we face. It also reflects the loss of the Marxian tradition of calling attention to the core contradictions of capitalism as the basis of a scorching critique and a rational alternative. Without a productionist ethic, the left ends up with a philosophy of scarcity, the logical outcome of which is Malthusianism.

The only alternative to Malthusianism that the left offers today is a moralistic injunction to sacrifice and share a pie (that includes natural resources) that increasingly gets smaller and smaller relative to population, relative to productive capacity, and relative to creative potential. However, Malthus was proved wrong even in his lifetime. Throughout history, creative discoveries of

"resources," and development of new more powerful forces and relations of production, have always solved the population and ecological problems. Today, instead of relying on chance discovery or creative invention to move us forward, if we want to avoid a Malthusian, Hobbesian future, we must self-consciously plan for creative discovery. As we continue to advance productively, we must continue to advance scientifically so that we can solve the problems of any fixed mode of production and move to a more advanced mode.

For people who perceive the world's wealth and resources to be fixed, limited, and already divided up, then war or appropriation by force, appears to be the only way to attain increased wealth and glory. The alternative is to conceive of wealth as a matter of ongoing productive growth and development, on both the individual and societal level. This alternative requires investment in material and mental infrastructure: rebuilding our cities, advancement of science, development of technology, education of our population — young and old — and nurturing of children so that they can learn and contribute creatively and productively to the continued advancement of the whole.

WE HAVE REACHED A POINT WHERE FINANCIAL INSTRUMENTS and military weaponry can be deployed with great speed. This means crisis can spread almost instantaneously, allowing no time to prepare to head it off. That is why the situation today is so urgent. We must solve not only the environmental crisis and the economic crisis, but a potential, global, financial crisis and the crisis of geopolitical and civil warfare, violence, and lawlessness. These all create a downward spiral of economic and social devastation, environmental destruction, disease, famine, warfare, the displacement and migration of peoples and diseases, all of which threaten to escalate and spread to the rest of the world. The rise of reactionary, fascist movements in Europe is fueled by a defensive fear of hordes of new immigrants, desperate to escape these environmental, economic, and political disasters, bringing with them disease, poverty, social pathology, competition for jobs, and a drain on the economy.

At a time when the problems confronting us are of global dimensions, a consequence of the evolution of free market capitalism, the solutions many on the left are offering are small scale, limited in scope, and ultimately supportive of free market capitalism. The scope of the problem is big, and it needs big thinking; it needs big ideas; ideas that can compete with those of global capitalism. Not only are the problems big problems, the power that rules is big power; it is the power over military might, over the deployment of ingenious instruments of destruction; it is the power of massive capital and the deployment of ingenious instruments of credit and finance. Real large-scale power is becoming greater not lesser, more concentrated, not less concentrated, more centralized, not decentralized, and globalized not localized, while controlled by fewer and fewer people who for the most part go unnamed and unchallenged.

The problems and power we confront are of a scope that endangers the world and its future. To head off the danger, we need to be able to democratically control that power. This means we need to comprehend the workings of big power, of big financial institutions, and of geopolitics, so as to employ that big power in the service of human freedom, conceived substantively as continued social and individual self-development. To gain democratic control, we need to affect the hearts and minds of many people. To do that we need big ideas

and a big heart. The right has reason to celebrate the fact that they have the ideas and the left does not.

THE LEFT'S STRESS ON EXPERIENTIAL, EXISTENTIAL LIBERTARIANISM AND LOCALISM has meant a complete loss of control over a larger intellectual framework that encompasses the large processes and powers of political economy. Without such an effective intellectual framework, democracy has no substantive meaning; it becomes a celebration of differences and the rise of competing factions representing competing particularistic, local interests, while the wheels of political economy continue to grind people down and turn them against each other.

The notion of real substantive democracy committed to expanded economic reproduction differs radically from the empty notion of "radical democracy" that is being proposed in many quarters.[5] We need to create in the global and local economy a rate of growth that is increasing exponentially, rationally, and intelligently. And growth must be redefined as the increased production and reproduction of real human wealth understood in terms of human development. The anarchy, subjectivism, and nihilism that is the legacy of the New Left and the new social movements must become as much of an anathema to a new and revitalized left as the authoritarianism of the old left was to the New Left.

On the cultural level the left must rediscover the humanist tradition of creative, dialectical reason. This tradition encompasses science, art, human development — both individual and societal— human drama, and human character. We need to revive the idea that the development of each is the condition for the development of all, and that the development of all, that is, of the whole, is the condition for the development of each. These are the principles of humanism to which all who desire progressive ends must identify and inscribe on their banner. Instead of stressing libertarian freedom from domination, we must stress the freedom and necessity of human creative development and social evolution.

At this time, the only way to move forward is to prepare for the next financial and economic crisis. That means changing our focus on identity and cultural representations of what are called "incommensurate differences" to a humanist identity centered on creating a society and culture that is committed to self-consciously fostering human, social, economic, scientific, and technological development, an identity with a mission. Sociological research has discovered essentially two kinds of self-esteem or social honor associated with two different social strata: The privileged rely on their "being" or style of life, in today's idiom, their "group identity," as the source of their social honor; the disprivileged on their "mission." Every slowing down of technological and economic transformation, such that the bases for the acquisition and distribution of goods become relatively fixed, which means social stratification becomes ossified, leads to an emphasis on social honor, and not purely economic position, as the basis of social stratification.[6]

Without a mission, the disprivileged are thrown back on trying to raise or protect the honor of their static "identity." Without a sense of mission, they end up in the reactionary politics of the privileged, defending whatever minimal privileges they have against the encroachments of others, and fighting to increase those privileges by displacing or plundering others, a zero sum game,

with dangerous implications. Right now, there are 35 wars occurring around the world; all of them wars of "identity" groups, within nation states and between nation states. These are not class struggles or progressive struggles.

"Experience teaches that claims to prestige have always played into the origin of wars...The prestige of power, as such, means in practice the glory of power over other communities" (Weber, in Gerth and Mills, 1946: p. 160). In today's world, this is not a progressive source of prestige or self-esteem.

MARX REPEATEDLY STRESSED THAT THE GREATEST REVOLUTIONARY FORCE in human history and human development is the development of forces of production. When the forces of production, the capacity for increased production, are held back by private interests, the collective interest of the whole requires that these private interests be replaced by a more universal interest. He continually referred to commercial crises as the indicator of this contradiction and the occasion for accomplishing progressive or revolutionary social change.

Today, we are again being confronted with a problem that economists define as overcapacity, overdevelopment of the forces of production, or what Marx in *The Manifesto* called the absurdity of a crisis of overproduction under capitalism. This is a problem under anarchic capitalism, not a problem of real overproduction. We need to address this contradiction in light of the international financial crises that are currently besetting the world and threatening to plunge it into economic crisis.

At a time of financial and economic crisis, we must be ready to challenge the system with its own internal contradictions: financial crises, economic contraction, and increased economic polarization, all of which, in today's world, implicate the creation, allocation, and use of credit. We must be ready to advance a rational resolution to these contradictions: a democratic steering of credit so as to promote a dynamic, creative, developing society, and dynamic, creative, developing human beings — or what Marx calls real human wealth.

Only from identification with, participation in, and contribution to social development through creative power, including participation in steering credit to projects that make possible real growth and development, is a progressive, rational, and moral sense of self-esteem (identity) and (creative) power possible. Most critical is the democratic steering of credit so as to create massive financial and human investment in infrastructure and scientific research and technological development.

NOTES

1. See Karl Marx, "Circular Letter to Bebel, Liebknecht, Bracke, and Others," titled, "The *Manifesto* of the Three Zurichers," in Robert Tucker, *The Marx-Engels Reader* (W.W. Norton, New York: 1978)549-555, especially p. 554.

2. See Louis Uchitelle, "Global Good Times, Meet the Global Glut" in "The Week in Review," of *The New York Times*, November 16, 1997, p. 3. Even before the Southeast Asia crisis, Martin Feldstein, Ed., *The Risk of Economic Crisis*, University of Chicago Press, 1991, was writing, "The danger of a financial and economic crisis is more prominent in the thinking of policy officials and business leaders than in the research of professional economists" p. ix. He continues, "policy officials and leaders of the private business sector worry a great deal about the risk of major breakdowns in the functioning of the economy. Many of the conditions and the events of the 19980s...have contributed to the fear of an impending major economic crisis," p. 1. He explains, economic depressions in the U.S. "have in

every case been either preceded or accompanied by a recognizable financial crisis" (p. 21).

3. See Roslyn Wallach Bologh and Leonard Mell, "Modernism, Postmodernism, and the New World (Dis)Order: A Dialectical Analysis and Alternative," *Critical Sociology*, Vol. 20, No. 2 (1994). See also Marx, who writes of German philosophers, "the utterance of the will of the revolutionary French bourgeoisie signified in their eyes the law of pure Will, of Will as it was bound to be, of true human Will generally. The work of the German *literati* consisted solely in bringing the new French ideas into harmony with their ancient philosophical conscience, or rather, in annexing the French ideas without deserting their own philosophic point of view" ("*The Communist Manifesto,*" under "German, or 'True' Socialism," in Tucker, p. 494). See also Shadia B. Drury's *Alexandre Kojeve, The Roots of Postmodern Politics,* St. Martin's Press, 1994, for an account of how Alexandre Kojeve promulgated a Heideggerian and Nietzschean, so-called Marxist, reading of Hegel, that influenced French leftists in Europe who were the founders of the postmodern tradition. Thus we see these ideas coming full circle from the revolutionary French bourgeoisie to German philosophy and German *literati* and back again, to French philosophy and French *literati*, each time becoming more removed from the original political conditions that gave rise to them, and each time becoming more *reactionary*, despite the banner of "true" socialism, "critical criticism," or "progressive" social movements.

4. See p. 10-11, *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Karl Marx, International Publishers, 1938.

5. See Roslyn Wallach Bologh and Leonard Mell, "Organizing Against the 'Contract with America:' A Dialectical Perspective," *Humanity and Society*, Vol. 19, No. 4: 1995.

6. Max Weber, "Class, Status, Party," in Gerth and Mills, *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology,"* (Oxford University Press: New York: 1946) 190, 194.

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The Manifesto's Strength and Flaws

James Petras

THE SPECIFICITY OF POLITICAL AND CULTURAL INFLUENCES IN BRINGING ABOUT the socialist revolution and the contingent nature of political and social consciousness is manifest not only in Marx and Engels" practice, such as their building the First International, but in their basic writings as well. Almost two-thirds of *The Manifesto*, for example, is dedicated to explaining the political and social relations between "Proletarians and Communists" and to criticizing other political and social theories of socialism.

Marx and Engels" "method" in *The Manifesto* is to first outline the basic underlying socio-economic processes, the emerging structures of capitalist development, and the resulting social structure. The fundamental "materialist" basis for their conclusion that socialism was possible was rooted in the changes implicit in the growth of capitalism: the increasing "socialization of production" and the increasing transformation of labor into wage labor. Socialism for them is thus derived from tendencies immanent in capitalism — the growing inter-dependence and cooperation of producers and the tendency for the private appropriation of profits to clash with the growing social nature of production and distribution. As production became more socialized, more dependent on the cooperation of labor, both skilled and unskilled, capitalists became less relevant for production and their role in appropriating wealth from a propertyless proletariat strictly parasitic. This "materialist" basis of socialism, based as it was on the real processes of development, was the foundation for their critique of "utopian" and "ethical socialists" who simply superimposed their private ideas and values on society.

Today "utopian" socialism is back, with socialist goals and values tacked on to feminist, ethnic, ecological and other sectoral social movements that encompass few if any of the social attributes that might lead them toward a democratic collectivist society.

The so-called debate on Marx and Engels' "determinism" versus "voluntarism" is a false one. In the sense that socialism is built on the real transformations engendered in society by capitalism they are determinists. Without these basic economic and social conditions socialism — the self-emancipation of labor by labor — would not be possible. But these conditions in themselves are not sufficient for a socialist revolution. Marx and Engels understood that economic processes only enable the promise of freedom and abundance. They knew that similar material conditions can produce divergent sub-

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jective responses, that the transformation of economic conditions and the organization of classes for socialist revolution depended on political education and practice, and that without a theoretical and analytical critique of capitalism and of the many erroneous ideological alternatives, there would be no socialist revolution. That is what *The Communist Manifesto* is all about.

Written in 1848, at a time of impending revolutionary upheaval, conditions required that these "subjective," "voluntaristic" and political elements in *The Manifesto* weighed so heavily. From the abstract theory of societal development and the more concrete movements of the capitalist economy, *The Manifesto* proceeds to the specificity of capitalist social relations and class formation, then to political and ideological principles and finally to the conjunctural ideological and political alliances.

Linking together this line of reasoning is *class* as the fundamental unit of analysis, while the point of departure for elaborating the revolutionary alternative is based on class exploitation, struggle and emancipation. It is from this general analysis of class relations, that Marx and Engels introduce their discussion of the oppression of women, children and people of color.

Their class analysis has held up much better than either the "revisionist" socialism of Bernstein and Kautsky or the ideas of the various post-World War II reformists. While Marx and Engels analyzed the "rigidities" of capitalism — the tendencies toward deepening polarization and inequality — their revisionist critics emphasized its "flexibility" and "adaptability." While they stressed the centrality of class struggle and the "specter" of Communism in shaping the policies of capitalism, the reformers emphasized the internal transformations of capitalism, its evolution toward "maturity" — the culmination of which was the welfare state.

From today's perspective, it is easy to see that the welfare state was not an advanced stage of capitalism, but a temporary condition shaped by the class struggle, that "welfare capitalism" could be reversed and that social reforms would be abolished with the dissipation of the specter of Communism. Few in fact predicted that work and social life would begin to revert to 19th century pre-Communist conditions. Marx and Engels' analysis of class struggle as the basis of social advance and the decline of class struggle as the condition for social regression and the return of savage capitalism has been vindicated. The internal logic of inequality, poverty, unmitigated exploitation and unilateral domination that Marx derived from his historical analysis of capitalism has reached its apogee in the late 1990's.

IN OPPOSITION TO THE PETTY BOURGEOIS SOCIALISTS, Marx and Engels saw that "reforms" were possible but reversible, and always conditioned by class relations. They saw that reforms were not "cumulative"; that democracy was not in contradiction to capitalism but an appropriate shell for the bourgeois to rule when it was not in conflict with property relations. The question of "democracy" was a class question, embedded in a broader matrix of property and state institutions. As long as "democracy" was able to sustain class rule and did not alter the class character of state institutions (judiciary, military, central bank, etc.) it was compatible with capitalist development. For Marx, enduring reforms and substantive democracy were only possible when the workers controlled the state.

The *Manifesto* captures their method of extrapolating polarities, the juxtaposition of alternatives and the identification of complex and combined forms of exploitation. Each of these methods has profound relevance to an analysis of contemporary capitalism: today, as in 1848 modern technology, manufacturing, sweatshops and home production are subsumed under the dominance of capital. The emergence of large scale corporate enterprises controlling retail trade, restaurants, law firms, and medical programs, have simplified class relations, creating a society of bourgeoisie and wage workers.

The internationalization of capitalism, referred to as "globalization" has undermined local industries and created a new social division of labor and "world market" much along the lines of *The Manifesto*'s analysis..

The concentration of decision-making in executive bodies of the State (the Central Bank, President, etc.) and the reduction of citizens and congressional representatives to passive commentators and impotent by-standers was central to Marx's understanding of bourgeois politics.

The reduction of all relations to the cash nexus (to "self-interest") has reached unprecedented levels, particularly in the U.S. Corporations abandon cities, and relocate in cheaper investment sites; pensioners are abandoned when corporate executives abscond with the funds; hospitals reject the ill when payments are not forthcoming; children who are not productive are cut off welfare payments, etc.

"Callous cash payments" are increasingly conditional, temporary and smaller. Multiple employment, extra hours, shorter vacations, less leisure time reflect the contemporary combination of extensive and intensive forms of exploitation. In the past, only in times of revolutionary upheaval or general social disruption, did capital resort to temporary concessions.

Today the bourgeoisie relies on "post-capitalist" rhetoric to veil the regression to early forms of *enganchadores* exploitation. The return of labor contractors, similar to the 19th century Brazilian rubber and Peruvian sugar plantations, and the labor contracts of peons for construction projects in China in the early part of the 20th century find their place in the booming "sub-contracting" and "temporary employment" enterprises throughout today's world.

The deep structures of capital that Marx and Engeles uncovered explain this apparent "circular" or cyclical nature of capitalism. Stripped of class organization and consciousness, and the disappearance of the specter of Communism, capital has returned to its "normal manner" of maximizing exploitation and profits.

Thus two methods of exploitation are combined: the reversion to earlier forms of extensive exploitation (return of household labor, labor contractors, longer hours, etc.) and the introduction of high speed information systems. "The bourgeoisie," Marx wrote, "cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production and thereby relations of production." But revolutionizing is possible by combining it with a restoration of early technologically backward forms of production.

Marx in his description of the "globalization of capitalism" captures only one side of the dialectical — the international movements of capitalism:

> The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connection everywhere. The bourgeoisie has, through its exploitation of the

> world market, given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. It has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. *In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations.* The bourgeoisie, by the rapid improvement of all the instruments of production, by the immensely facilitated means of communication draws all even the most barbarian nations into civilization. In a word, it (the bourgeoisie) creates a world after its own image.

Marx and Engels were wrong in their belief that the growth of industry would take place through the collapse of national boundaries and the unrestrained flows of capital. The protectionist policies of the U.S., Germany and Japan were to demonstrate the contrary shortly after *The Manifesto* was published. Moreover the flows of capital were not merely products of technical progress (rapid improvement of the means of production or the means of communication) but imposed by the invading armed forces of the capital-exporting countries.

And Marx and Engels have a peculiar idea of "inter-dependency" in which one region exports slaves and raw materials with little value added and other countries and regions accumulate capital. Their description of imperialist countries as "civilized" and the exploited colonial countries as "barbarian" is based on a gross simplification of the nature of capital. Capital's movements, expansion, and technology are stripped of their political dimension, social relations and historical moment. The irony is that their conception of capitalist globalization is more in tune with contemporary free market ideology than any historical, materialist understanding.

The sequence of capitalist expansion, destruction of traditional bonds and global integration was, according to Marx, the process of creating a unified working class, conscious of its class interests and linked across national boundaries. His chain of reasoning lacks a clear understanding of the importance the traditions and social bonds preceding capitalism played in creating social solidarity for confronting capitalism and sustaining class consciousness. When Marx describes the bourgeoisie as reducing human relations to the "cash nexus" as a prelude to the development of class consciousness, he is essentially describing the condition of the U.S. working class — probably the least willing and able to identify its source of exploitation let along struggle against it. The stripping of older beliefs — what Marx and Engels unfortunately call "philistine sentimentalism" — includes the sense of community and not necessarily belief in a "natural superior." Thus the assumption that the "everlasting insecurity and agitation" that *The Manifesto*'s authors associate with capital's "revolutionizing of the means of production" does not necessarily "compel [man] to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life and his relations with his kind." In fact, economic processes are having the opposite effects in deepening reaction, atomizing labor, stimulating ethnic warfare and undermining a vast swath of economic production throughout Latin America, Africa, the ex-USSR and elsewhere.

Thus the centrality of "tradition" and culture and community in defining the formation of class consciousness is lost before Marx and Engels' sweeping and uncritical celebration of the revolutionary potential of the development of

the forces of production.

Similarly, the savaging of the Third World labor force occurring under the aegis of the internationalization of capital has not led to greater class consciousness or "civilized" behavior. One look at free trade zones should dissuade anyone of that notion. Instead, it has broken existing class ties and fostered greater deference and servility.

Bourgeois globalization has not created "a world in its own image" as Marx and Engels argued. Today these are the "sentimental pieties" printed out in World Bank public relations handouts trumpeting the "modernization" of the Third World.

Their lack of a sense of class consciousness directly related to the producers and not derived from the capitalist processes of production explains the difficulties many "Marxists" have in creating an alternative to capitalism. Today capitalists don't "call into existence the men who will wield the weapons" to deal a death blow to capitalism. They create millions of frightened, uncertain, temporary workers, tied to the cash nexus. To become a Marxist in the sense of realizing the goals of *The Manifesto*, one must reject Marx and Engels' false assumptions about the "revolutionary role" of the bourgeoisie. To move toward working class action, their conception of the transformation of workers into a revolutionary class must be subjected to the harshest criticism.

Where Marx and Engels say that "man's consciousness changes with every change in the conditions of his material existence, in his social relations and in his social life" the changes that capitalism has wrought have undermined the construction of a revolutionary consciousness at every point. The notion that the bourgeoisie revolutionizes production through competition and in the course "forces" the workers to "confront" their conditions and subsequently join together is false on all counts. The most important change is not the revolutionizing of production, but the transformation of political and social relations throughout the world in a fashion that undermines the possibility of "material recognition of proletarians."

To speak of the relevance of *The Manifesto* today, one must move from the brilliant economic analysis to the revolutionary conclusions by constructing a new theory of revolutionary action.

MARXISM DOES EXPLAIN THE MAJOR STRUCTURAL CHANGES TAKING PLACE in the capitalist world economy. Nevertheless, unless Marxist theorists come to terms with the vast changes in class structures, technologies, and state/civil society relations that have taken place over the last quarter of the century, their conceptual framework will become irrelevant in analyzing the contemporary world and in fashioning a cogent alternative. A review of the contemporary structural processes in relation to basic concepts will illustrate the relevance of Marxism.

• *The concentration and centralization of capital within countries and across regions. During the 1980s and 1990s an unprecedented wave of mergers and acquisitions took place.* The mergers and buyouts accompanying the growth of global enterprises are another indication of the "laws of capitalism."

• *The intensification and extension of exploitation accompanying capitalist expansion and competition* The decline of income, longer working hours, the elimination of health, pension, vacations, and other benefits accompanied by

the growth of labor productivity attest to the relevance of Marxist analysis. Indeed, wage-salary and all-around capitalist exploitation have increased under "globalization" to unprecedented levels throughout the world. In the U.S., weekly wages declined by more that 10 percent between 1973 and 1996. The average worker in the U.S. in 1987 worked 163 hours more per year than in 1969.

Japan's economic performance displays a wide gap between increasing productivity and stagnant real wages. While Japanese manufacturing labor productivity went up 117.3 percent between 1975-84, the index in real wages increased only by 5.9 percent in the same ten year period. At the same time, Japan's industrial workers work 11 to 13 percent longer hours than workers in Britain and the U.S., and 31 percent longer than their counterparts in Germany.

Marx's analysis of the relationship between capitalist expansion and the deterioration of working class living standards is particularly relevant: "The more...capital grows, the more the division of labour... expands. The more the division of labour...expands, the more competition among the workers expands and the more their wages contract."

• *Growing class inequalities and social polarization.* In Europe, the U.S., Latin America, and Asia "free market" policies have broken the social safety nets and contributed to the growth of concentrated wealth and a growing subproletariat, attesting to their analysis of growing class inequalities and social polarization. Wealth has shifted dramatically in the last 20 years to the upper echelons of the corporate and financial world. In the West, "globalization" is rapidly dividing societies into two sharply differentiated social classes in a similar fashion to the general trends in the Third World and the post-Communist societies. Simply put, the rich are getting richer and the poor are growing poorer. In 1992, the top fifth of U.S. families received 51.3 percent of the income while the bottom fifth got only 6.5 percent. However, there is an even greater inequality in wealth compared to income. Patterns of concentration of wealth in the U.S. reveal that the richest 10 percent are in possession of over 87 percent of all wealth. This phenomenon of inequality is worsening rapidly on a global level. In Chile, for instance, one of the so-called "economic miracle" stories in the line-item accounting of the IMF and the World Bank, the richest 10 percent of the population in 1990 increased its share of the national income to 47 percent from 36 percent in 1970.

• *Growing inter-capitalist competition* The trade wars and formation of rival blocs by the major capitalist rivals and the re-emergence of inter-imperialist rivalries undermine neo-classical notions of complementary harmonious market relations.

• *The tendencies of capitalism to crises and stagnation.* With the decline of the war economies, the absence of major innovations capable of stimulating growth, the growing debts and fiscal deficits, declining productivity and a narrowing consumer base, the inherent tendencies to crises have come to the fore.

Major European countries such as France, Belgium, and Germany are all faced with double-digit unemployment rates, while Spain has over 20 percent and many of the post-Communist nations in Eastern Europe are as high as 30 percent. In the U.S., the under-employed, the working poor and unemployed account for 37 percent of the labor force. The tremendous pace of job destruc-

tion in the era of "globalization" is interconnected to the internal logic of the capitalist system — over-accumulation and failure to utilize productive capacity. The recent trends in late capitalism — deindustrialization, the ascendancy of financial and speculative capital, capital flight, are producing a surplus labor force, available for low-paid wage work. The long wave of technological innovation and the sustained economic development generated during the "golden era" of postwar capitalism ran its course some 20 years ago. Since capital is now reproduced through investments in the "paper economy" — stock markets, international currency markets, and all sorts of financial and otherwise non-productive transactions.

• *Imperialism as a dominant feature in defining relations between advanced and less developed capitalist states.* The subordination of eastern Europe and the ex-USSR to western European and U.S. capital is evident in the pillage of their economies. The increasing penetration and subordination of the Chinese market by Japan, Hong Kong and Taiwan are testimony to the fact that global expansion — imperialism — is the driving force of our epoch. Global capital accumulation creates imperialized relationships and subjects all national economies in the less developed countries to the interests of foreign capital.

• *Class struggle as the motor force of history.* "Competitiveness" and "labor flexibility," major notions in practically every bourgeois political discourse today, describe the shifts in the labor/capital relationship. For the past two decades, the capitalist class and its state representatives have engaged in a virulent class war converting permanent workers into temporaries, changing work rules and taking absolute control over the conditions of work. The minimum response by labor and trade unions does not obscure the essence of the process, a struggle by the ruling classes to impose their power and prerogatives over wage workers and establish the terms of production and reproduction.

• *Class nature of the state.* The overwhelming emphasis of state policy has been to increase the rate of profit for the dominant capitalist class. The "restructuring" of labor has been promoted by state policies in order to weaken labor unions. Capital movements have been subsidized by state tax policies. Capital concentration is aided by state "de-regulation." Private losses have been subsidized through state raids on the public treasury. The major shifts in income are based on the power of the state to intervene on behalf of capital.

In sum the directions of change, the dynamics of state-class relations, the process of international expansion, the structure of the market and the emerging organizational forms of the principal socio-economic actors can best be understood through the lens of the Marxist concepts.

Nevertheless, the comprehensive explanatory power of classical Marxism needs to be adapted and modified in the contemporary world in order to come to terms with the changes that have taken place both within its "historical categories" and outside.

VAST CHANGES HAVE TAKEN PLACE OVER THE PAST TWO DECADES in the class structure, in the labor process, the application of technology, the structure and organization of capital, the ideology and organization of classes, the family, the organization of cities, and in the organization of power in the global political economy.

(1) In the advanced capitalist countries and in major regions in Eastern Europe, Latin America, the ex-USSR and Africa, stable wage workers and stable long-term, large-scale capital investors are a shrinking minority. In the advanced capitalist countries there is a growing number of low-paid, temporary "contract" wage workers and professionals in the services. High-tech means of production and distribution are operated by low-paid service workers and "maintained" and "directed" by a thin strata of permanent high-paid workers and executives. In the Third World a growing mass of low paid "self-employed" service workers produce and distribute cheap goods.

(2) The combined development of capital-intensive high-tech and labor-intensive sweatshop labor has produced a global chain of production and alternative investment sites for capital. The globalization of production has been accompanied by a selective investment of capital "inward and downward," exploiting "immigrant" labor within national boundaries. The concentration and centralization of capital on a global scale and the development of new technologies is accompanied by the revival of pre-capitalist modes of production based on the extensive exploitation of labor.

(3) The strengthening of the nation-state as an instrument for the international expansion of capital has been accompanied by the erosion of the national economy. The diversion of resources — state and private — to global markets has led to the fiscal crisis of the state and massive cutbacks in salaries and social spending. As global competition increases, domestic society deteriorates.

(4) The decline of wages of male labor has led to the massive entrance of female labor into the non-household work force to counter the tendency toward immiseration.

(5) The expansion of production of food, clothing and electronics in low-wage Third World areas and their importation into the advanced capitalist world provides low priced consumer items, thus "compensating" for wage declines. Lower paid wage earners in the West still have access to consumer goods despite decreases in income because of low price consumer imports and easy credit.

Over time, however, low-cost imports are displacing low-wage production workers and limiting their access to goods and services. The "second stage," from the declining wage, low-cost consumerism to low-wage declining consumerism phase, is part of the transition from phase one of "free-market capitalism" during the 1980s to phase two in the 1990s.

(6) In the U.S., changes in the labor process have not only lowered the wages and working conditions of wage workers but have significantly affected salaried professionals, employees and technicians. The decline of the middle class is evidenced in the erosion of stable well-paid employment, the elimination of health and pension benefits and the emergence of temporary contract labor among professionals, executives and others. Proletarianization of the middle class, however, has not been accompanied by any sense of class solidarity. Past class experiences weigh heavily on consciousness. The politics of class resentment at "falling" is much stronger than identification with wage workers in the same class position.

(7) The demise of Soviet Communism and the transformation of Social Democracy into a vehicle of neo-liberalism has undermined a traditional refer-

ence point for the working class. Moreover, the absence of the Communist welfare model has encouraged the capitalist states to eliminate welfare programs in the West. The emergence of ex-Communist and ex-Social Democratic spokespersons for neo-liberalism has added "authority" to the argument that there are "no alternatives" to "free market" capitalism. This dramatic ideological shift and the discrediting of previous Social Democratic and Communist ideologies requires a new ideological discourse.

(8) The international movements of capital have drained the nation state of revenues and lowered wages, thus generating a fiscal crisis — the growth of fiscal deficits that, in turn, become a pretext for the reduction or elimination of the "social wage." The "redundancy" of labor in the high-tech and de-industrialized economy becomes an incentive to lower investment in education of health and housing. Exploitation of the domestic economy becomes a necessary condition for sustaining empires.

(9) The re-organization of the labor process has greatly transformed the relation between capital and labor. Capital is eliminating multiple layers of management and administration between top executives and production workers to lower costs. The remaining managers and engineers are increasingly part of the labor-force on the production floor. The differences in income, power and privileges remain, but the hierarchy of production has been transformed and the immediate managers are more integrated into the workplace.

(10) New technology and information systems have further transformed work relations, the labor process and income distribution within parameters defined by the dominant forms of corporate capital. The new technologies widen the scope and increase the speed of large-scale speculative movements of finance capital across the globe. They do not exist as autonomous forces defining a new "information society." High-tech information systems in the context of the ascendancy of financial, real-estate and insurance capital, provides more outlets for the speedy de-industrialization of labor, and the growth of rich investment bankers and low paid service workers.

The massive entrance of female workers into the labor force, at a time when wages are declining, social services are being eliminated and geographical mobility becomes obligatory for employment, heightens conflict in the family and redefines the content of working class socio-political agendas. The "feminization of the labor force" means that the old family division of labor no longer operates: both partners suffer the same "emotional stresses" at work, both lack emotional cushions at home. The inequalities and stress in the workplace can result in greater solidarity and equality in the household or more frequent and violent ruptures — depending on whether the aggression is centered externally or internally.

(11) High-tech monopsony industries (particularly those dependent on the military) are extremely vulnerable to severe crises. High-tech industries whose technology is designed to produce very specialized products are subject to political exigencies of the buyer and the obsolescence of their products. The non-adaptability of some high-tech products can lead to the closing down of entire firms and to the outmodedness of the elaborate technology. The example of a fully automated/robotized plant producing million dollar sonars for the military is a case in point. When the military budgets declined, as the Cold War ended, naval demand for sonars ended, factories were closed, and the highly

skilled labor force became redundant. The downward mobility of the new high-tech labor force in aeronautics and related military industries defines part of the new class realities.

THE POLITICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF *The Manifesto* IS FOUND in its brilliant analysis of the structure and impact of capitalism on wage workers. The continued relevance of class as a basic unit of analysis, class struggle as the fundamental transformative process and socialism as the logical and coherent alternative to capitalism makes *The Manifesto* a central document in our time.

The *Manifesto* is not a finished document — its lacunae are large and need to be filled in by an analysis of the independent social and cultural matrix that nurtures or denies class consciousness. But with a left spinning its wheels inventing utopias or imputing revolutionary intent to sectoral reformers, a return to the basic contradictions of capitalism that *The Manifesto* outlines is essential in providing a material grounding for an alternative democratic collectivist society. In place of vague concepts floating over the growing concentration of property and wealth, *The Manifesto* specifies the increasing socialization of work, provides a critique of capitalism in all of its variants and a systemic alternative — communism. It remains to be seen if its intellectual lead can be enriched and its political vision realized.

Past and Present of *The Manifesto*

Michael Löwy

"MARXISM IS DEFINITIVELY DEAD FOR HUMANITY." We have often heard this, or similar statements during the past few years. They are repeated again and again by professors and journalists, economists and politicians, philosophers and columnists. But they are not quite new. In fact, this precise phrase was uttered in 1907 by the Italian philosopher, Benedetto Croce. Apparently his medical diagnosis was not entirely accurate, since ten years later, the "deceased" was to show an unexpected vitality in the streets of Petrograd, and indeed throughout Europe.

Marxism was, is and will remain, as long as capitalism exists, an irreplaceable tool for understanding and changing the world. Marxism remains a guiding torch for the oppressed and downtrodden everywhere. As long as we live in a capitalist world, there is no way to confront it, to grasp its contradictions, and to fight against it without Marx. This does not mean, of course, that there are no problems or limitations in Marx's work, or that Marxists have nothing to learn from other forms of emancipatory thought and experience.

The Communist Manifesto is the best known of Marxist writings. No other book, excepting the Bible, has been so often translated and re-edited. It does not have much in common with the Bible, of course, except the prophetic denunciation of social injustice. Like Isaiah and Amos, Marx and Engels raised their voices against the iniquities of the rich and powerful, and sided with the poor and the humble. Like Daniel, they saw the writing on the wall of the New Babylon: *Mene, Mene, Tekel Upharsin*: your days are counted. But unlike the Old Testament prophets, they did not pin their hopes on any god, messiah, or supreme savior: the liberation of the oppressed will be the work of the oppressed themselves.

Obviously, there are many passages, ideas, and arguments in *The Manifesto* that have become obsolete, that need to be criticized and de-constructed. But the main thrust of the document, its central kernel, its *spirit* — there is such a thing as the "spirit" of a piece of writing — is not only still relevant: it is *more relevant* today than 150 years ago.

Take the example of internationalism. Proletarian internationalism is one of the central themes of *The Manifesto* that has inspired the imagination of successive generations. It is not accidental that the final words of the document, "Proletarians of all countries, unite!" have become the rallying cry of the most radical currents in the labor movement during the past 150 years.

For Marx and Engels, internationalism was not only an important aspect

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of their strategy for the socialist movement, it was also an expression of their revolutionary humanism, for which human emancipation was the supreme value and the final aim. They were truly "cosmopolitans," insofar as the entire world, without borders or national barriers, was the horizon of their thinking and action, and the content of their revolutionary utopia. In *The German Ideology*, written only two years before *The Manifesto*, they insisted that only a communist revolution, which must necessarily be *world-historical* would "liberate the separate individuals from the various national and local barriers, bring them into practical connection with the production (including intellectual production) of the whole world, and make it possible for them to acquire the capacity to enjoy this all-sided production of the whole earth (the creation of man)."

But *The Manifesto* offered not only utopia, but *a diagnosis of the contemporary world*. Capitalism, they argued, was in the process of unifying the world, submitting the whole planet to its sway. The bourgeoisie "compels all nations, on pain of extinction, to adopt the bourgeois mode of production; it compels them to introduce what it calls civilization into their midst, i.e., to become bourgeois themselves. In one world, it creates a world after its own image." That was, to a large extent, in 1848, an anticipation of future trends. It is *much truer today* than 150 years ago.

Never before had capital, as now, commanded such a complete, absolute, integral, universal, unlimited and unfettered power over the whole world. Never before could it, to such an extent, impose its rules, policies, dogmas and interests on all nations of the globe. Never before have such a dense network of institutions — such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, and the World Trade Organization — existed to control, govern, and administer the life of humanity according to the rules of capitalist free markets and profit-making. Never before were all spheres of human life — social intercourse, culture, art, politics, sexuality, health, education, entertainment — so thoroughly and deeply immersed in the (capitalist) "icy waters of egoistic calculation."

This is why *The Communist Manifesto* was never as relevant as it is now, at the end of the 20th century. Yet the document suffers from serious shortcomings, which flow not from an excess of revolutionary zeal, as most critics of Marxism pretend, but on the contrary, from an insufficiently critical stance toward modern bourgeois/industrial civilization. Let me provide a few examples.

1. In a typically Euro-centric fashion, Marx and Engels praised the bourgeoisie for drawing "all, even the most barbarian, nations into civilization." They seem to consider the colonial domination of the West part of the bourgeoisie's historical "civilizing" role: "Just as it has made the country dependent on the towns, so it has made barbarian and semi-barbarian countries dependent on the civilized ones, nations of peasants on nations of bourgeois, the East on the West."

In later writings, Marx would take a much more critical stance toward Western colonialism in India and China, but one would have to wait for the modern theorists of imperialism — Rosa Luxemburg and Lenin — for a Marxist indictment of "bourgeois civilization" from the vantage point of its victims.

2. Inspired by bourgeois "free-trade optimism," and by a strongly economistic approach, Marx and Engels wrongly predicted that "national dif-

ferences, and antagonisms between peoples, are daily more and more vanishing, owing to the development of the bourgeoisie, the freedom of commerce, to the world market, to uniformity in the mode of production and in the conditions of life hitherto."

The record of the 20th century hardly confirms this forecast. In fact, historical experience — particularly of Ireland — would soon teach Marx and Engels that the reign of the bourgeoisie and of the capitalist market do not abolish, but rather intensify, national conflicts.

3. Paying homage to the bourgeoisie for its unprecedented capacity to create productive forces, Marx and Engels celebrate the "subjection of nature's forces to man" and the "clearing of whole continents for cultivation." The destruction of the natural environment by capitalist industry, the danger for ecological equilibrium of the unlimited development of the bourgeois productive forces was beyond their intellectual horizon. More generally, they seem to conceive the revolution as breaking the "fetters" to the development of productive forces represented by the bourgeois relations of production, without perceiving the need to revolutionize the structure of the productive forces themselves.

This shortcoming was only partially corrected by Marx and Engels, as well as by later Marxists. It is only during the last few decades, with the rise of eco-socialism, that serious attempts have been made to integrate the fundamental insights of ecology into the framework of Marxist theory.

HOWEVER, IN SPITE OF THESE MISTAKES AND LIMITATIONS, the basic insights of *The Communist Manifesto* are accurate: capitalism, the bourgeois mode of production, submits the whole world to its pitiless rule, through the unlimited extension of the world market. As a world system, it can only be defeated by the world-historical action of its victims, the international proletariat and its allies.

Marx and Engels did not only write "Proletarians of all countries, unite!" in the concluding lines of their *Manifesto*. They also tried to give an organized and concrete expression to internationalist solidarity, first by assembling German, French and English revolutionaries around the Communist League in 1847-1848 and later by contributing to the building of the International Association of Workingmen (1864). Successive internationals suffered from crises, bureaucratic deformation, and isolation. But it is simply not true that only nationalism and national identities have shaped political events — internationalism remained a powerful driving force throughout the 20th century. During the first years after the October Revolution — as long as Lenin and Trotsky were at the head of the Soviet state — and, later, around the International Brigades in Spain, there were impressive waves of active internationalism. More recently, in the solidarity with the Vietnamese revolution, or in the upheavals of 1968, one could see, particularly among the young, an astonishing upsurge of internationalism.

Today, more than in the past, and much more than during the period of *The Manifesto*, the urgent problems of the epoch are international. The challenges represented by capitalist globalization, neo-liberalism, the uncontrolled games of the financial markets, the accumulated debt of Third World countries, the pauperization of vast numbers of people in Africa, Asia, and Latin

America, the degradation of the environment, the threat of ecological crisis — to mention only a few examples — require planetary solutions.

This does not mean that the movement for social change does not begin at the level of one, or a few nations, or that movements for national liberation are not legitimate. But contemporary struggles are, to an unprecedented degree, interdependent and interrelated, from one end of the planet to the other. How else can one explain that strikes for better wages and union rights in South Korea so directly concern workers and trade unionists in France and the United States? The only answer to the capitalist blackmail of delocalization and "competitiveness" is organized and effective international labor solidarity.

At the same time, the old internationalism of "blocs" and "guiding states" — such as the USSR, China, and Albania — is dead and buried. It was the instrument of narrow-minded national bureaucracies, which deceived millions of people throughout the world. It is time for a new beginning, to preserve the best of the internationalist traditions of the past.

One can see, here and there, the seeds of a new internationalism, independent of any state or military alliance. Radical trade unionists, left-wing socialists, de-Stalinized communists, non-sectarian Trotskyists and anarchists are looking for ways to renew the tradition of proletarian internationalism. New internationalist sensibilities appear in social movements with a planetary dimension such as feminism and ecology, in anti-racist movements, in NGOs that fight for human rights or in solidarity with the Third World. A sample of active representatives of these tendencies was gathered at the Intercontinental Conference for Humanity and against Neo-liberalism convened in the mountains of Chiapas in July 1996 by the Zapatista Army of National Liberation (EZLN) — a revolutionary movement that was able to combine, in a unique and successful way, the local, i.e., the indigenous struggle in Chiapas, with the national, i.e., Mexico, and the international, i.e., the struggle against neo-liberalism.

It is from the convergence of the renewal of the socialist and anti-imperialist tradition of proletarian internationalism, and the humanist, ecological, feminist and democratic aspirations of the new social movements that the internationalism of the next century may emerge.

Rethinking the History of Marxism

Eli Zaretsky

ANY DISCUSSION OF MARX OR MARXISM MUST ADDRESS the harm done to millions of individuals, to whole peoples and to the collective Enlightenment project of progress and reform by the "actually existing Marxisms" of Russia, China and elsewhere. This harm cannot be separated from an evaluation of Marx's own thought. Once this point is addressed, however, there is still a vast amount to discuss. My essay is in three parts. First, I delineate my view of Marx's unique contribution to our understanding of modernity. I then turn to the question of the relevance of Marx today, speaking from my experience of helping to found and, from 1969 to 1976, editing an influential Marxist journal (*Socialist Revolution*, today called *Socialist Review*). Finally, I return to the failure of 20th century Marxian socialism.

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KARL MARX'S GREATEST CONTRIBUTION LAY IN HIS EFFORTS to conceptualize capitalism not, as it presents itself, as an economic system, but rather as a social system, a system of social relations. Because capitalism is so deeply organized around economic categories, Marx spent much of his life trying to demonstrate that such everyday, taken-for-granted, concepts as price or profit were actually social categories. He tried to show, first, that they had a history; second, that this history was not merely contingent but showed evidence of determinate structure and contradiction; third, that because capitalism was a social system it was also a cultural system, i.e., a system of meanings and value orientations and finally, that this structure — capitalism — could be criticized on normative grounds, i.e., as unjust.

Needless, to say, Marx did not fully succeed in his efforts. To argue that Marx understood culture in the way that we, who write after Weber, Durkheim, Freud, Foucault or Derrida understand culture would be absurd. To argue that Marx had a normative theory that comprehends the importance that we attach to pluralism would be equally absurd. But to see his limitations requires that we spell his contribution out.

When I say that Marx tried to conceptualize capitalism historically, I mean he began with a general conception of the historical process and he tried to

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grasp capitalism within that process. His conception drew on Scottish social evolutionists such as Adam Ferguson, on Hegel, and on some economic theory, such as that of Locke and the physiocrats. In broad terms, he assumed human societies were involved in a specific form of interaction with the environment, one which relied on their particular species characteristics of creativity, culture and history. This exchange with nature is not performed by individuals, as in Locke's famous defense of private property, but in determinate social relations. Capitalism is to be understood as made up of such relations.[1]

Clearly, this is no theory of history. A deeper understanding of the mind, and of the evolution of the mind, such as we get with Darwin, Freud and evolutionary psychology, would certainly have helped, as would Weber's insistence on the powerful influence of charismatic reorientations of meaning. But what is important is not to have a theory of history but to think historically. That is what Marx did in regard to capitalism. He did not trace the history of money or of markets or of bourgeois conceptions of human nature. He tried to grasp capitalism itself as an historical fact, and that effort distinguishes the Marxist tradition. Let me spell this out more precisely by reference to the concepts value, labor-power and capital.

The importance of the concept of value lies in historicizing, defamiliarizing and contextualizing a social process that we take for granted today, that of exchange. Exchange first developed between societies. When representatives of different societies encountered one another, they had no means of determining commensurability. Alvise da Cadamosto, a Viennese trading under a Portuguese charter in Senegal in the 1450s, observed of the Senegalese: "Gold is much prized among them...nevertheless, they traded it cheaply, taking in exchange articles of little value in our eyes."[2] Value is the outcome of a process of abstraction from concrete objects to the common human expenditure that creates them. It is that which makes objects commensurable and allows them to be traded. Marx's particular use of the concept lay in its historicization of exchange within society — i.e., the historicization of market or commodity-producing societies. Thus the concept of value was an attempt to grasp the internal connections between such diverse processes as the breakdown of feudalism, the beginnings of imperialism, primitive accumulation and the rise of cities, insofar as cities were markets.

Capitalism is a society in which labor power becomes a commodity. Thus, Marx believed his greatest contribution was distinguishing labor and labor power. Just as the notion of value brought into sway the whole panorama of imperialism and the spread of the market, so the buying and selling of labor power is necessary for a rigorous conceptualization of the separation of work and life in modern social organization, i.e., for defining the specificity of the economic. The transition from a commodity producing, market society to a capitalist society, is a transition from the family as a commodity producing unit to the family as a means of reproducing labor power. Just as the concept of value was an attempt to theorize the common element in the origins of markets, so the buying and selling of labor power was an effort to grasp the common element in the rise of the factory system and the creation of the working class.

Finally, capital is congealed labor power. It is the labor power accumulated above and beyond that which is necessary to reproduce the social system, including reproducing it at high levels of "prosperity." The notion of capi-

tal is a way of grasping the dynamics of modern capitalist societies themselves: the transformations of their class relations, the emergence of the modern state, the growth of the world system and of a world wide commodity based culture. Because capital was an essentially new phenomenon when Marx wrote, we have in his work only the beginnings of an understanding of how it functioned in the industrial epoch. We do, however, have many subsequent attempts such as those of Immanuel Wallerstein, Perry Anderson, Eric Hobsbawm, Juliet Mitchell, Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, Eugene Genovese, Daniel Bell, Christopher Lasch and many others.

In summary then Marx gave us a way of thinking about capitalism that was simultaneously historical and theoretical. Capital is not money; labor power is not time; value is not labor. These are empirically or historically based theoretical concepts: they derive their meaning from related concepts rather than corresponding directly to empirical reality, but they derive their validity from their explanatory power and, especially, from the way they encourage us to see relations and connections between admittedly diverse phenomena.

Let me turn, then, to my third point, namely that Marx's notion of capitalism is "cultural." For Marx, the commodity and the capital/labor relation were always conceptualized as meaningful products of human agency. Since such fields as anthropology, psychoanalysis, semiotics and the sociology of culture barely existed when Marx wrote, it is obvious that Marx did not have the concepts necessary to analyze culture. But his analysis of capitalism is centered on the problem of whether modern men and women recognize their collective product, their collective achievement and relations with one another.

Most of those who, since the 1970s, have rejected Marxist thought as "deterministic" have too limited a conception of culture. They do not see that the draining of cultural depth, the elimination of meaning, the fetishism, reification and objectification that occurs in the process of exchange, class formation and capital expansion are themselves to be understood culturally. Thus one often hears, from critics of Marx, that the economy itself is "cultural." But this is invariably the preface to an analysis of fashion, texts, sexual identity, theater or anything else but the economy. What remains to be studied is the "culture" of the "economy" itself, something which, includes but cannot be reduced to, such meaning-destroying operations as commodification.[3]

Finally, let me turn to the question of whether there is a normative basis for the critique of capitalism in Marx's work. Of my four points, this is the most problematic. In his early work, Marx relied on the idea of alienation that he derived from Hegel and Feuerbach. That idea included the assumption of a pre-existent whole, one that had been disrupted by political-economic society but that would be restored, albeit at a higher level. The idea of alienation was teleological: it presupposed the availability of a common, authoritative conception of the good life, one, for example, that was based in meaningful labor or rooted in communal and collective experiences and institutions. It discouraged an understanding of the value of liberty, as opposed to equality; it led to a callow and dishonest dismissal of liberal achievements and it helped sustain totalitarianism. At the same time, it is important to see that Marx himself broke with the idea of alienation in writing *Capital* and that his analysis of capitalism does not rest on the idea of alienation. I will turn now to the question of the relevance of Marx's thought today.

I WAS INTRODUCED TO MARXIST IDEAS BY THE HISTORIAN Martin J. Sklar in 1965 and at first found them unpalatable and implausible. In 1969, at the invitation of James Weinstein, I left my position as an Assistant Professor of History at Wells College in New York, and became the first Managing Editor of *Socialist Revolution*, a position I occupied for seven years. Although there were certainly utopian and apocalyptic wishes associated with *Socialist Revolution* in its early years — as its title made clear — the journal itself rested on a coherent set of ideas expressed in the earliest editorials, in James O'Connor's work on the Fiscal Crisis of the State, John Judis's and James Weinstein's political arguments, Samuel Bowles, Herb Gintis and Patricia Michaels (Linda Zaretsky) on education, Fred Block and Larry Hirschorn on disaccumulationist post-industrialism, my own "Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life" and many other early works. Although the journal itself may no longer hold to these ideas, and although its editors have long gone their separate ways, I will summarize my understanding of these ideas here.

To begin with, we broke completely with what we then called "orthodox Marxism," which we despised for its apologies for the Soviet system, its shallow thinking and its absence of a theoretical understanding of capitalism and of the specificity of the American experience. I have since modified my views in two respects: I have more respect for American Communism of the past, and I am self-critical for not being *more* anti-Communist in regard to the Soviet Union and, especially, Eastern Europe.

In contrast to "orthodox Marxism," our key idea was that capitalism had changed so that it was no longer based on industry and the industrial proletariat alone. The capitalist social system had to be reunderstood in terms of the *diversity* of the different groups that made it up, as well as of the *contradictions* that were to be found among them. These groups included students, educated workers, third world nations, racialized subgroups, housewives and women within the home, young people and others. Because of the change in capitalism, the basis for the critique of capitalism would have to change. Marx's view was never economistic, but now more than ever, issues of the meaning of life, of status, and of what soon came to be called identity, were central to any critical perspective. Democracy was the heart of the critical project, as we articulated it, first because of the diversity of needs that had to be represented and second, because democracy was itself a fundamental need of modern men and women. Not only did we respect — critically — the traditions of participatory democracy of the New Left, but we were also among the first groups arguing for the significance of electoral and pressure group politics.

To grasp why the idea of capitalism, and therefore Marx, was so important to us, it is necessary to recall the situation in the country and the world in 1969. The degree, diversity and depth of dissatisfaction with the current system was extraordinary. Protests were massive, explosive and global. Yet, they had no coherence. Issues came and went: Vietnam, ecology, lifestyle, race, culture, women's liberation. There was no way to relate them. The Marxism that we were interested in was scarcely one that would *reduce* the diversity of New Left including early, pre-separatist feminism and ecology to the "economy." On the contrary, we sought a broad historical conception that would explain and relate the diversity and distinctiveness of a vast range of groups and issues.

We also rejected New Left anti-intellectualism. We wanted a journal that

would have a certain distance from "the movement" and that would take up such broad, general problems as race, women's emancipation, education, urbanization and global power politics in terms of an historical conception of capitalism. The great value would be to relate and to contextualize these issues: to respect their distinctiveness, but also to show their global (in all senses) interconnections. We even had, in Sklar's notion of disaccumulation, an embryonic idea of the particular character of the stage of capitalism — "post-industrial," "post-modern," "post-colonial," "global" — that we were then, in the early 1970s, entering upon.

Personally, I think it's a tragedy that the journal abandoned this project, as it did somewhere around 1973. There were many reasons why this happened, including the desire of several of the original editors for a more directly political influence, the power of identity politics, especially in San Francisco where the journal was centered, and the more general influence of American eclecticism, consumerism and positivism on thinking of a European provenance. None of these, however, cast doubt on the value of the original conception, only on its viability. Anyone who doubts that a journal of this sort could have survived from the 60s to the 90s should reflect on the intellectual seriousness and continued vitality of the Australian journal *Arena* or the British *New Left Review*. The absence of such a journal in the United States is one reason for the present day incoherence of many discussions of multiculturalism, as well as those concerning "globalization." Where those discussions are coherent — as in *Dissent* or *American Prospect* — they generally remain within a late 20th century liberal paradigm for which the concept of capitalism is an irrelevancy. While I do not believe that only a "Marxist" framework is valuable, the absence of such a framework is harmful.

In spite of the early collapse of the original project for *SR*, the Neo-Marxisms that developed in the 1960s did have a vast but largely unacknowledged and unstudied impact on the radical thought of the past three decades — feminism, "critical race theory," "queer theory," certain versions of post-structuralism, etc. In Europe, the continuities with the 1960s are clearer than they are in the United States, but they certainly are important here.

The journal *Socialist Review* is an example. This descendant of *Socialist Revolution* scarcely shares the original project in the way, for example, that *New Left Review* continues a project that began in the 1950s. Here, I can also speak from personal experience, since my work on the family was foundational for a whole school of feminist theory and women's history — the school that begins with the impact of industrialization on the creation of the 19th century public/private division. Thus, in spite of the manifest break between the Marxism of the 1960s and early 70s and the movements that exist today, there is latent continuity. A journal should have been able to survive, but the vast social breaks that occurred in the early 70s, especially those associated with the emergence of the women's movement, were inevitable. These breaks bear on my final point, the failure of 20th century Marxism as a political tendency, and the outlook for Marxism in the next century.

THE NEED FOR A THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL UNDERSTANDING OF CAPITALISM at present is clear when we consider globalization. We are living in a period in which the spheres of politics and culture, which had been relatively autono-

mous from one another and from the economy, are being eroded. As a result, decisions that were previously the outcome of complex processes involving different logics — class, tradition, status, power — are now being reduced to one totalizing economic/instrumental/rational choice logic. This has set in motion contradictions over such matters as the future of democracy, the meaning of national and other identities, the relevance of government and the family. If we are not able to theorize globalization in the kind of flexible but broad historical way in which Marxists theorized industrialization, we will never be able to keep alive a critical tradition. Ultimately, the question we have to keep in mind is not so much "globalization," as capitalism: that is, we have to understand globalization within a broad and deep historical perspective.

To this end, I will conclude by suggesting some of the normative grounds on whose basis we can maintain a critical relation to capitalism. Julia Kristeva has recently reminded us that there are two kinds of freedom.[4] The first is the freedom that comes from living rationally in a causally determined world. This is the freedom that comes from rational choice in the market place and, contrary to much of Marxism, it is a real freedom. The second is the freedom that is made possible as we pass beyond relations of necessity. This is the freedom that shows itself in individual singularity: in personal experience, in creativity, love, friendship, responsibility. In the early epoch of capitalism, the two freedoms went together — that was the great strength of liberalism. But in our day, they are increasingly divergent and although Marx only somewhat grasped the distinction between these two types of freedom, we need to keep Marx's thinking alive if we are to preserve it.

As I have argued in *Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life* as well as in other works, it is the advance of capitalism itself that has brought the contradiction between these two types of freedom to the fore. The key is to understand the changes in the nature of the family and of personal life. What we are living through is the historical rise of what I call "personal life": the experience, central to modernity, of having a personal identity distinct from one's place in the family and the social division of labor. Previously, the family was the primary site organizing production and reproduction. As a result, the individual's sense of identity was largely rooted in his or her place in the family. The *separation* of the family from the workplace, which is to say the rise of industrial capitalism, gave rise to new forms of privacy and intimacy which, over time, became associated with the possibility and goal of personal life as distinct from the family or as entailing changes in the family. Globalization is the epoch in which personal life is becoming hegemonic.[5] Understanding this change is central to the critique of capitalism today.

It is not, as Marx thought, that capitalism will produce world-wide immiseration, depressions, imperialism and war. It may, and it may not. It is certain that capitalism will produce inequality but as John Rawls, Isaiah Berlin and others have rightly argued, equality is only one value against which we must consider other values such as liberty and even efficiency. Nonetheless, without jettisoning the argument for equality there are three additional arguments to be made against capitalism on behalf of Kristeva's second conception of human freedom, the one I identify with the rise of personal life.

First, freedom as mere control over the environment is freedom as conformity to the market, i.e., to causal necessity. We need a conception of freedom

that reminds us of the constraints of the system, and the possibility of passing beyond it. Certainly, the imagination will never be wholly commodified, but if there is no sense of a societal alternative to the existing system, then we lose that which is distinctively modern. Historically, the anarchist, the romantic artist, the revolutionary, and the rebel reminded us of the possibility of passing beyond the market-based possibilities of the present. Today, our creations threaten to become, like the creations of premodern societies, celebrations of the existing system of power, because they celebrate nothing more than an individual self.

Second, we need to keep capitalism in critical perspective if we are to think about the nature of the choices available to us. Liberalism of the Rawlsian or Habermasian sort, though necessary, rests on a single conception of freedom, that of choice or autonomy but the choices that are available are prestructured and prelimited by capitalism itself. Nothing more clearly demonstrates the limits of contemporary liberal thought than the fact that communitarianism and multiculturalism are the only critiques it has generated. We need to be able to think critically about contemporary society without necessarily being a member of a minority group.

Third, a meaningful human life requires collective institutions, and not merely instrumentally organized ones. Here, it is necessary to distinguish private property, which is fundamental to freedom, with capitalism, meaning a society in which the disposition of social concerns such as health, education and culture are determined by profit alone. It will be impossible to develop such essentially collective institutions without a critical understanding of capitalism. We require social welfare for those who need it, and a general sense of the common good.

The great blows leveled against Marxism, first in the 1960s and 70s, and then in 1989, were struck on behalf of particularity, singularity, and individual freedom. The issue was not that the Marxist tradition was "racist" or "sexist": the relation of both orthodox Marxism and the Neo-Marxisms of the 1960s to race, sex and nationality is far more complicated than is usually acknowledged. The issue is that capitalism itself produced new possibilities for freedom as well as new constraints on those possibilities. The failure to understand the depth of the human need for freedom was intrinsically linked to the horror of the "actually existing socialisms" of the 20th century. But if we allow a globalizing capitalism to take its own course, without attempting to understand and critique it as a whole, we will not be true to our deepest intuitions.

NOTES

1. The best contemporary interpretation of Marx's thought, Moishe Postone's *Time, Labor and Social Determination*, nonetheless misses this dimension.

2. Alvise da Cadamosto, *Voyages* (London; Hakluyt Society, 1937) p. 68 quoted in William Pietz, "The Problem of the Fetish," *Res*, I, p. 9.

3. Exceptions — true cultural analyses of the capitalist market — include Jean Christophe Agnew, *Worlds Apart: The Theatre and the Market* and Lester Little, *Religious Poverty and the Middle Ages*.

4. Julia Kristeva, "Europhobia or Europhilia," lecture delivered at N.Y.U., Nov. 7, 1997.

5. I argue this at length in my forthcoming *Psychoanalysis and the Emergence of Modern Personal Life* (Knopf, 1998).

COMMUNISM OR "SOCIALISM"? A RETURN TO MARX AND ENGELS

Paul Robeson, Jr.

THE 150TH ANNIVERSARY OF *THE Communist Manifesto*, written jointly by Marx and Engels, is a fitting historical moment at which to compare Marx's communist theory with the socialist theory developed by Lenin and his successors, all of whom are called (I believe erroneously) Marxists. This comparison is all the more pertinent as the world reaches the threshold of the 21st century, since it is the onset of the high-tech information age that, for the first time, makes possible the transition from capitalism to communism envisioned by the founders of Marxism.

First, Marx's definitions of socialism and communism differed greatly from Lenin's. Second, the relationship between socialism and communism specified by Marx and Engels differs fundamentally from the one elaborated by Lenin and other radical socialists who became communists.

Third, the distinction between communist and socialist theory is critical because *The Communist Manifesto* was a powerful rebuttal to the socialist theory of that time, and socialist theory since then has been proven sorely inadequate. The present historical time demands a modern theory of communism to replace a failed socialist ideology, and, in my opinion, the only solid ideological foundation for a communist movement today is to be found in *The Manifesto* and in other writings by Marx and Engels.

Today's paralyzing ideological disarray on the left stems primarily from more than a century of confusion about three fundamental issues: 1. Marx's definitions of communism and socialism; 2. Marx's definition of the political system that must be established in order to eliminate capitalism after a workers' revolution; 3. the thorough refutation by Marx and Engels of the ideas upon which the social order commonly called socialism is based.

Engels, in his introduction to the 1888 English edition of *The Manifesto*, wrote: "We could not have called it a socialist manifesto." He went on to describe socialists as "adherents of various utopian systems" and as "the most multifarious social quacks." He described socialism as "a middle-class movement," contrasted to communism which he defined as "a working-class movement." And he added: "As our notion, from the very beginning, was that 'the emancipation of the working class must be the act of the working class itself,' there could be no doubt as to which of the names we must take." In other words, socialists were missionaries to the working class, whereas communists were empowerers of the working class.

Both Marx and Engels consistently criticized the ideology and program of their contemporary proponents of what is still called socialism. Marx's famous

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Critique of the Gotha Program was a landmark in their campaign to replace socialist programs with communist ones. Nevertheless, all of the major socialist and communist leaders since Marx and Engels, including Lenin, were unable to break free of the socialist ideas that the two founders of communism fought against so hard. Now is the time to discard what is commonly called socialism, since history has demonstrated this ideology and this social order to be a failure. And in discarding the familiar but failed socialism, it will be necessary to discard most of Lenin and to reclaim most of Marx and Engels.

MARX DEFINED SOCIALISM AS THE *human condition* established after two phases of communism have overcome the need of and desire for private property. Lenin defined socialism as a *socioeconomic system* whose political and economic foundations are merely transitional to Marx's first phase of communism.

As Marx put it in his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844:

> Socialism is man's positive *self-consciousness*, no longer mediated through the annulment of religion, just as real life is man's positive reality, no longer mediated through the annulment of private property, through communism. . . . Communism is the . . . actual phase necessary for the next stage of historical development in the process of human emancipation. . . .Communism is the necessary pattern and dynamic principle of the immediate future, but communism as such is not the goal of human development – which goal is the structure of human society. (emphasis in original)

Here "human society" means *socialist-minded society*; Marx is saying that socialism is the end, whereas communism is the means. Communism is an "actual phase" of society prior to the next historical stage of human development, whereas socialism is "man's positive self-consciousness." Communism is about economic and political systems, whereas socialism is about human development. Communism is about classes and parties, but socialism is about people.

Thus, contrary to the current belief in both socialist and communist circles that socialism is the transition to communism, Marx wrote the opposite: communism is the transition to socialism.

Lenin departed fundamentally from this Marxist description of the relationship between socialism and communism. In *The State and Revolution*, Lenin merged socialism with the first phase of communism by quoting selectively from Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program* and then claiming, incorrectly, that "the social order termed by Marx the first phase of communism" was "usually called socialism." In an attempt to substantiate this erroneous claim, Lenin reduced Marx's first phase of communism to three principles: 1. common ownership of the means of production; 2. "from each according to his ability, and to each according to his labor"; 3. "the distribution of products" is not yet equal. All three concepts differ from counterparts in Marx's *Critique of the Gotha Program*.

First, Marx specified that the means of production must be owned by "the association of producers," whereas Lenin's imprecise term "common ownership" has consistently been interpreted to mean state ownership — something that Marx and Engels rejected out of hand.

Second, Marx's formulation is "from each according to his ability, and to each according to his labor power." This is quite different from Lenin's "to each according to his labor": Marx's "labor power" is measured solely by the length and intensity of labor, whereas Lenin's "labor" is measured by the value of the commodities it produces. According to Marx, payment for labor is the hall-

mark of capitalism, whereas payment for labor power is the hallmark of the first stage of communism. Therefore the "socialist" society Lenin described has a basic capitalist feature because it pays wages for labor.

Third, Marx was critical of the socialist idea, repeated by Lenin, that distribution of products is central; Marx's view was that conditions of production are more essential, and it is incorrect to "make a fuss" about distribution:

> The distribution of the means of consumption at any time is only a consequence of the distribution of the conditions of production themselves. The latter distribution, however, is a feature of the mode of production itself. . . . If the material conditions of production are the co-operative property of the workers themselves, then this . . . results in a different distribution of the means of production . . . .

Put another way, the most important thing is the direct control of the means and conditions of production by the producers themselves, rather than by the State or by the Party.

THE Communist Manifesto WAS A MAJOR TURNING POINT in the history of communism because it proposed a transition to the first phase of communism by way of direct workers' power instead of through government power. The program of *The Manifesto* advanced far beyond the previous socialist ones, since those were aimed at making the transition only to what is commonly called socialism. They did not call for rule by the workers as a class and therefore could not, according to Marx, eliminate capitalism. They called only for a popular government, based on a parliamentary majority led by a workers' Party, which would nationalize the privately owned means of production and establish Lenin's principle of "from each according to his ability, from each according to his labor." However, the government, and not the workers themselves, would control the means of production.

The Manifesto calls for a communist revolution in place of a socialist revolution, and aims at transition to the first phase of communism rather than to what is called socialism. Thus, direct workers' power would guarantee Marx's principle: "from each according to his ability, to each according to his *labor power*." Marx and Engels described direct political rule by workers as follows:

> . . . The first step in the revolution by the working class is to raise the proletariat to the position of ruling class, to win the battle of democracy. The proletariat will use its political supremacy to wrest, by degrees, all capital from the bourgeoisie, to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the State, i.e., of the proletariat organized as ruling class . . . .

The definition of the State as "the proletariat organized as ruling class" is incompatible with Lenin's rule by a workers' Party. Both Marx and Engels left no doubt as to their opposition to the concept of Party rule.

Marx, in a speech to a delegation of German workers in 1869, declared:

> . . . Trade unions ought never to be attached to a political association or place themselves under its tutelage; to do so would be to deal themselves a mortal blow . . . . *Any* political party, whatever its nature and *without exception*, can only hold the enthusiasm of the workers for a short time; unions, on the other hand, lay hold on the masses in a more enduring way; *they alone* are capable of representing a true working-class party. (emphasis in original)

Engels was emphatic in describing Marx's "dictatorship of the proletariat" as *rule by a democratically elected popular majority*. In his 1890 introduction to Marx's *The Civil War In France* he wrote: "Look at the Paris Commune. That was the Dictatorship of the Proletariat. . . ." In a letter written to Karl Kautsky in 1891 criticizing the "Erfurt Program," Engels categorically sided with democracy over dictatorship:

> Our party and the working class cannot achieve rule except under the form of a *democratic republic*. The latter is even the specific form of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

It is important to note the meaning both Marx and Engels attached to the word "dictatorship" in the phrase "dictatorship of the proletariat." They meant a dictatorship of a workers' parliamentary majority under constitutional rules — a dictatorship only in the sense of *unrestricted majority rule*. This is in principle the same as the dictatorship of a town meeting or of a parliamentary majority; although its weakness lies in a lack of permanent guarantees of the rights of individuals and minorities, such a dictatorship has little in common with a Party dictatorship or a one-man dictatorship.

THE CUMULATIVE EVIDENCE THAT LENIN DEPARTED FROM THE THEORY OF Marx and Engels is overwhelming, and therefore the term "Marxism-Leninism" is an artificial theoretical term. Originally, the name was invented by Stalin to serve as an ideological cover for his one-man dictatorship; today it serves as the last ideological refuge for the remnants of Stalinism. However, its origins lie in Lenin's departures from Marxist principles; Stalin merely magnified these departures until they became grotesque.

It was obvious to Lenin that the socio-political conditions of backward Russia precluded any possibility of making the transition to Marx's first phase of communism. Its requirements of 1) political rule by *workers as a class*, rather than through a *workers' party*, and 2) the payment of all workers for their *labor power*, rather than for the *value* of their labor (that is, everyone would have to be paid strictly according to the time and intensity of their labor, rather than according to the value of what they produce) remain wildly utopian even today. Consequently, Lenin developed a new, non-Marxist theoretical framework for a transition from private capitalism under a Tsarist autocracy to a social order he considered achievable under the social conditions of Russia in 1917-1918.

Lenin himself described this system as state capitalism under a Communist Party dictatorship. From this "threshold" he proposed to advance via "what is commonly called socialism" to Marx's actual first phase of communism by gradually transferring power from the Party to the workers. The workers themselves would gradually take over control of the means of production. The outlines of this latter reform program can be seen in his "New Economic Policy" of 1921-1922, and especially in his famous "Testament" of 1923.

These reform attempts failed so badly that Lenin's entire program for making a Soviet transition to what is called socialism must be called into question. My view is that *both* Marx's first phase of communism *and* what is called socialism were unattainable at the time of the 1917 revolutions in Russia. Lenin acted on his mistaken belief that what is called socialism could be imposed by a temporary Party dictatorship. Tragically, the Party dictatorship became a one-man dictatorship, and state capitalism became permanent un-

der the name of "socialism in one country."

With the benefit of hindsight, it can now be said that the only viable option which could have been pursued successfully from the outset of the October Revolution was social democracy — a coalition workers' and peasants' government with a mixed economy similar to the economic system developed under Lenin's "New Economic Policy." However, this system did not last because its reforms were destroyed by the evolution of the Party dictatorship into Stalin's personal despotism. It could have lasted only in a popular democratic republic in which power was shared in accordance with free elections. And to exercise this option the Bolshevik Party would have had to accept a junior partnership in a coalition if it lost an election. This is something Lenin, in my opinion mistakenly, refused to do under any circumstances.

The historical lesson of this experience is that *The Manifesto*'s admonition to "establish democracy" was correct under all conditions and the establishment of a party dictatorship was wrong under all conditions. Put another way, capitalism can never be overcome except by democratic political rule through (using Marx's words) an association of producers. According to Marx and Engels, the foremost task of any workers' revolution must be to establish direct popular democracy within the political framework of a democratic republic.

The failure of the Party dictatorship places in question the society produced by this dictatorship — the society which disintegrated along with the Soviet Union. Soviet historians have called it "command socialism," "real socialism," and just plain "socialism," but, revealingly, not "democratic socialism." Gorbachev's "democratic socialism" is a democratic republic and a mixed economy with both state and private ownership of property. This socialism is what should be called socialism today; it is also what was called socialism before Lenin and the Soviet experience altered its content. In short, it is traditional social democracy.

At the same time, it is the social order that Marx and Engels envisioned as the main prerequisite for the *communist* revolution aimed at establishing Marx's "dictatorship of the proletariat." In Marxist terms, the attempt to make the transition from capitalism to the first stage of communism can *begin* only a*fter* rule by "the association of producers" has been instituted through the dictatorship of the proletariat. And even then, says Marx, the transition is long, arduous and by no means certain. History has now demonstrated that any attempt to circumvent or shorten the process of establishing social democracy (or "democratic socialism") as the indispensable prerequisite for the communist revolution always leads to failure.

This explains the decisive role of political reform, rather than economic reform, in the Soviet Union; this is why "glasnost," rather than "perestroika," caused the undoing of the Stalinist system. What remains, however, is the question of how to define that system in Marxist terms. Here Lenin has, perhaps inadvertently, provided a clear answer.

On the eve of the Bolshevik Party's seizure of power in October of 1917, Lenin spoke about "workers' control" under a "state" ruled by the Party; his address was titled "Can the *Bolsheviks* Retain State Power?," rather than "Can the *Workers* Retain State Power?"

Two years later, in the midst of civil war and famine, Lenin acknowledged that even the "workers' participation" acceptable to Constitutional Democrats

had not been achieved under the Bolshevik Party dictatorship. He added the criticism that "The Soviets, which by virtue of their program are organs of government *by the working people*, are in fact organs for the working people by the advanced section of the proletariat."

Three years after that, in 1922, when the civil war had been won and the ensuing famine was over, Lenin admitted that even "socialism's threshold" — state capitalism — had not been reached, and he advocated an even closer identification of the Party with the state. Addressing the Eleventh Party Congress, he said:

> . . . We refuse to understand that when we say "state" we mean ourselves . . . . State capitalism is capitalism which we shall be able to restrain and the limits of which we shall be able to fix. This state capitalism is connected with the state, and . . . we are the state.

This speech signaled Lenin's decision to intensify the Party dictatorship by fusing the Party apparatus with the state apparatus. And since he spoke these words just two months after appointing Stalin General Secretary of the Party, he handed Stalin control of an all-powerful bureaucracy. This was the apparatus used by Stalin to impose his personal dictatorship, and it was the same apparatus that Lenin attacked too late in his "Last Testament." The result was that Stalin imposed a ferociously dictatorial *state capitalism* (erroneously called "command socialism") on the Soviet Union — a state capitalism that lasted until Gorbachev destroyed its political roots in 1988-1990.

CONTEMPORARY MARXISM FIRST SURFACED AS A MASS PHENOMENON in Poland in 1980 when the "Solidarity" workers' movement temporarily seized political power. It is worth noting that when President Gorbachev replied to Foreign Minister Shevardnadze's dramatic resignation speech to the Soviet Parliament in December of 1990, he recalled that: "Ten years ago . . . life called for us to go through . . . heated debates in order to arrive at an understanding that we must use the chance to start changing everything in society."

"Ten years ago" coincided with the rise of "Solidarity" — Marx had penetrated the top level of the Soviet Communist Party. Later, he traveled farther East to rise in the persons of Chinese reform Communists like the late Hu Yaobang who was hounded to death, and Zhao Ziyang who paid with his political life for his sympathetic visit to the demonstrators in Tiananmen Square.

Today, having stopped in Lithuania, in Poland for a second time, and most recently in Hungary, Marx is traveling inexorably westward. Right now he is probably stirring things up in East Germany, and he will inevitably cross the English Channel and even the Atlantic Ocean. For the 21st Century is Marx's time.

Lenin pushed a revolution too far and died a decade too soon; Khrushchev seized his time and risked his physical life to end Stalinism's terror; Gorbachev came at the right time and sacrificed his political life to return political power to the people. But Marx was a century and a half *before* his time. Lenin was Russia's great revolutionary; Khrushchev was her great reformer; Gorbachev will be remembered as her great liberator. But Marx and Engels founded the theory of a popular parliamentary democracy which is destined to challenge liberal democracy around the world in the 21st century.

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Book Reviews

Environmentalism and Electoral Politics

EARTH FOR SALE: RECLAIMING ECOLOGY IN THE AGE OF CORPORATE GREENWASH by Brian Tokar. Boston: South End Press, 1997. $18.00.

Reviewed by Lorna Salzman

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTIVISTS HAVE MUCH TO BE GRATEFUL FOR with the publication of Brian Tokar's "Earth for Sale," a comprehensive analysis of the origins and accomplishments of the three-decade old environmental movement and its transformation into the Green movement. Tokar pulls no punches in detailing the contradictions, compromises and ultimate defanging of the Washington-based nationally recognized groups — the so-called Beltway Biggies — against whom the frustrated, locally-based groups must frequently struggle in order to get out their far more progressive message.

He presents an incisive recapitulation of environmentalism in the U.S. and how, against the stiff odds offered by traditional liberalism and reformism, it is evolving into a powerful engine for radical social change. The reasons for this, as delineated by Tokar, lie in the convergence of various strands of American political theory and thought, including ecology, ecofeminism, bioregionalism, environmental justice, and human rights. The early history of environmentalism to casual eyes, on the contrary, carried no such promise; its halcyon days of the 1970s were spent passing laws, enforcing regulations, establishing processes for citizen participation (if not control), entreating bureaucracies, recruiting members and grants, and assuming the garb of professionalism that it shamelessly wears today.(I myself was proud to have been part of this early history, without which the world and its inhabitants would doubtless have been plundered and poisoned beyond rescue). In those days the Left made it a matter of principle to attack environmentalists as anti-growth, anti-technology and anti-social justice, though they were proven wrong, so wrong

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that ultimately the Left had to scramble furiously to acknowledge the inherent potential of environmentalism for stimulating radical societal change. To his credit, Tokar was in fact one of the first Leftists to understand this and this book is a testament to his broad comprehension of the interconnections of social change movements and the power of the environmental message.

At this crucial time, 20 years after the codification of environmental laws and statutes, made possible by a post-Vietnam populace sensitized to a broad range of human rights violations here and abroad, environmentalism outside of local communities and urban minority enclaves is under heavy attack, and with good reason. Like Tokar, arguably the first important Left theorist (or second, after his former mentor Murray Bookchin) to acknowledge the potential of ecology for investing radical social change with a coherent philosophy, many environmental activists (but not enough of them on the Left) understand clearly that environmentalism is not middle-class consumers protecting their open space and pretty views but a broad movement posing fundamental challenges — and positing fundamental change — to the very premises upon which the U.S. materialist, growth-obsessed consumer society is based.

At the same time, the power structure, whether corporate or government, has also recognized that ecology, as a precept and organizing principle, more than any other movement (Left explicitly included) threatens the status quo and in response has gone to extreme lengths to discredit all manifestations of environmentalism, directly as well as indirectly via surrogates in academia and the media. One of their more successful efforts has been the deliberate defanging, if not subversion, of the nationally based groups such as Natural Resources Defense Council, Environmental Defense Fund, National Audubon Society, World Wildlife Fund, to name a few of the groups often called the "Gang of Ten," supported by the large foundations which in turn are dependent upon suspect corporate investment portfolios.

Tokar spends much of his time detailing the literal sell-outs of these groups, whose status with Congress and the White House as well as with influential corporations and foundations depends upon their good behavior, that is, upon their not confronting thorny issues of corporate crimes, resource ownership and control, and social justice and human rights — in other words, ignoring all those irksome social "externalities" that grow out of environmental disputes and which, if addressed, could unsettle large segments of the population in uncontrollable ways.

Against this backdrop Tokar sketches what he sees as the three main forces in the environmental movement: environmental justice, forest activism, and Third World human rights and ecology movements. (Ironically some environmental justice theorists, in *Race, Poverty & Environment* have attacked forest activism as antithetical to their concerns — a rather shortsighted analysis indicating their failure to recognize that corporate exploiters are the common enemy). Forest activism seems to be today's direct-action avant-garde, replacing the anti-nuclear power movement which was arguably the first manifestation in the U.S. of a true populist revival and one whose long-term significance Tokar, formerly active in the anti-nuclear Clamshell Alliance, is well qualified to judge.

AFTER EXAMINING THESE THREE FORCES IN PRESENT-DAY ENVIRONMENTALISM, Tokar

then moves on to their social and political implications and to his own prescriptions for how these forces can work together and be mutually supportive in a new environmentalism unifying ecology, democracy and social justice across communities, professions and borders. Indeed, for those of us who sometimes feel we are back in pre-Earth Day times, the amazing courage of individuals like the late Ken Saro-Wiwa of Nigeria, Wangari Maathai of Kenya, and the late Chico Mendes of Brazil, supported by the insights and theories of people like Vandana Shiva of India and Edward Goldsmith of the UK, often seems to be the only encouraging and positive indication of any progress in raising public environmental consciousness. It appears that the Third World is in fact leading the way in theory and practice, and that U.S. and western Europe "liberals" are reluctant to demand a meaningful redistribution of power, wealth and resources — the minimal prerequisite to an ecological and socially just society. The affluent consumer society, complacent workers, and accumulators of wealth do not willingly give up their privileges and perks.

Tokar's prescriptions for change in the U.S., however, fall short of the mark and are not really adequate to the huge task of reclaiming democracy, the necessary (if not sufficient) precursor of an ecological society. This is not to say that his prescriptions are wrong. On the contrary; they are diverse and imperative. In his chapter entitled "Ecology, Community and Democracy," he expounds on the need for grassroots networks, inter-movement cooperation, holistic issue-oriented politics, international links, new economic and political structures, and, overall, a "reconstructive ecological vision," stressing that "in a green economy, ecological and ethical values need to become the centerpiece of economic and social decisions." This is welcome news indeed, and in stark contrast to the belabored Leftist economism which perpetually defined access to wealth as the *sine qua non* of a liberated society. In this respect Tokar shows himself to be as far ahead of the Left as ... well, as the Greens, for example.

Yet something is missing, and a very big "something" it is: electoral politics. Tokar's antipathy to electoral politics both binds and blinds him — it binds him to the astigmatic Left and blinds him to the need for Greens to shake off cynicism and apathy — although he seems not to experience any discomfort from this particular straitjacket. But it is doubly striking by its absence from his proscriptions for achieving a "democratic culture." At first reading Tokar seems to put himself squarely in the traditional American populist corner, with resounding statements like these that any New England Yankee could be proud of:

> In the absence of a civic culture of active democratic engagement, we are in danger of losing touch with the most basic inheritance of the democratic revolutions of the 17th and 18th centuries, what political analyst Daniel Singer has described as "the conviction that society, and therefore life, can be radically altered by political action."

Tokar continues:

> Neither democracy nor ecological sanity is well served by a political culture in which most people have withdrawn from the public sphere...

Yet Tokar's stance and that of much of the Left, in particular the Green Party USA (GPUSA), which is waging war against electorally oriented Greens, in essence calls for such a withdrawal from the public sphere, or at least that

part of it we call public office. Tokar's mentor Murray Bookchin has railed against all forms of such electoral indulgence and figuratively expelled another of his acolytes, Howie Hawkins, the leading intellectual theorist of the GPUSA, from his presence for Hawkins' involvement in electoral politics (he recently ran on a cross-party slate in Syracuse NY). What Tokar mourns, as do most Left Greens, is the lack of a mass-based social movement in tight control of not only the Green movement (that is, action and projects) but of Green parties and electoral efforts as well. This, of course, would be heartily applauded by corporations, Democrats and Republicans, as well as by those who traditionally regard any and all electoral efforts as dirty, shameful and corrupt. But what better way to let the corrupt continue to dominate our civic life, one might well ask, than to keep radical activists shut out of politics?

FOR SOME YEARS I HAVE PONDERED ON THE EERIE RESEMBLANCE of the Left Greens and the New Age movement. This ostensibly contradictory combination — called in the UK the "Marxists-Lentilists" — destroyed the incipient Green Party in the UK and almost destroyed the U.S. Green movement in the early 1990s and at this very moment is intent on monkey-wrenching the post-Nader electoral efforts. What could they possibly have in common? If one were a New Ager — in a loose sense, those for whom reality resides in "personal transformation" and inner beliefs — one would also applaud Tokar's distaste for electoral politics. The U.S. Left could well be called today's "secular fundamentalists" as they try to deconstruct ideologies and movements that are anathema to their own and "locate" politically acceptable "truths" within individuals rather than society or the external world.

Like the New Age movement, the Left, while stridently in favor of social change, is basically apolitical in that it seeks, through non-electoral work, to reform individual behavior, preferably in the direction of mass random political agitation, rather than engaging in a struggle to change or take over existing institutions or political offices. In this respect they show an almost naive faith in individual choice and action (except with regard to those who choose to run for public office). In fact, the supernatural in New Age thought parallels in an uncanny way the political correctness paradigm of deconstructionists in that both of these bodies of thought are presented as incontestable articles of faith (while actually being irrational or unfalsifiable in the Popperian sense). The oppressive life experiences of individuals or groups who have been victimized, apparently "privilege" their views and opinions in much the same way as the opinions of New Age gurus or their transformed followers are embraced as dogma. Small wonder that both the Left and the New Age movement scorn ecologically based thought and action, for it is totally antithetical to deconstructionism in its focus on real objects, real systems and real-world relationships.

Seldom has cynicism and political autism been so fervently enshrined as it is by those on the Left who decry even fleeting contact with national electoral politics. Yet Tokar's book makes such a reasonable-sounding argument for such a withdrawal that many readers will no doubt be persuaded by his calls for social, economic and ethical change to be brought about solely by local activism, issue campaigns, alternative economic structures and alliances, unified by ecological and ethical exigencies. One could scarcely ask for more, that

is, unless one asks different kinds of questions and seeks different kinds of answers. Ultimately the Green movement Tokar favors is not really a collective phenomenon toward a common objective but a static one of a myriad of separate actions toward that vague objective called a Green society. In the Tokar\Left world of optimistic open-ended, free-form Green movement work — unlike the tawdry, tough, demanding, consuming and costly world of electoral politics — all you have to do is stand on a corner waving a placard and you will have succeeded, in one way or another. How very different such an act would be if, while you stood on the corner, there were also people carrying candidate petitions, citizens lobbying their officials, Green candidates debating major party incumbents, or a Green slate challenging an unresponsive city council. Ultimately the Green Movement model that Tokar, the GPUSA and the Left Greens support is a deconstructed one, whose shape and significance are determined only by individual actions and subjective criteria of success. And Tokar would allow a Green Party to exist only if controlled by that same vague body of individuals spread across fifty states who describe themselves as "Green" — hardly a prescription for true grassroots democracy. In this politically deconstructed world, it IS easy being Green.

Tokar himself, of course, made Green history last year with a biting attack in *Z* magazine on Ralph Nader's "white male" presidential campaign. The attack, which was in fact silly and unwarranted, was really an opportunity to disparage not Nader personally but those who worked for him, whom Tokar characterized as "a thoroughly unaccountable cast of aspiring political operators acting in (Nader's) name, (who) have used this effort to try and reshape Green politics in the US into a demoralizing mold of politics-as-usual." Nader himself is attacked for his failure to embrace the strident demands of the identity politics gangs: ecofeminists, gays, people of color. Indeed, Nader, who explicitly stated that his campaign would address those issues that affect all Americans, not just special interest groups, should have been *lauded* for his principled refusal to pander to such splinter-group politicking.

NOTWITHSTANDING ALL THIS, "Earth for Sale" is right on top of the Green compost heap for its broad historical understanding of the origins, internal contradictions and challenges facing U.S. environmentalism. I do not use the word "heap" in a derogatory sense; on the contrary, environmental history and theory need all the heat and light they can get to nourish the movement. Like organic compost, political theory compost is comprised of many dirty little ingredients that, when first turned over, appear unattractive. But ultimately they must be unearthed in the interest of the health of the movement under cultivation. Tokar's insights and first-hand experience will be extremely valuable to newly minted Greens seeking to understand where the movement came from and where it might be headed.

"Family Values" & the Shorter Work Week

THE TIME BIND: WHEN WORK BECOMES HOME AND HOME BECOMES WORK by Arlie Russell Hochschild (Henry Holt and Company, New York, 1997), 316pp.

Reviewed by Joanne Landy

WHATEVER HAPPENED TO LABOR'S STRUGGLE FOR A SHORTER WORK WEEK? Should a renewed call for fewer and more flexible working hours be justified primarily by pointing to the needs of working families? Should women be urged to subordinate their work outside the home to their role as mothers? Do contemporary feminism and the left have a radical critique of "family values" and society's view of the home, work, and needs of women? How can we invent a better future?

Arlie Hochschild's latest book invites us to confront all of these questions. She argues that, as women have entered the labor force in massive numbers over the past three decades, they have unfortunately embraced the male view of work as an opportunity to escape from life at home. Because working mothers are adopting the traditional male belief that work is superior to family life, Hochschild says, they are making the disastrous mistake of failing to resist corporate demands for inflexible hours and full-time work. Children are the chief victims of this trend; they are suffering from what she calls a "time famine" because both parents are away from home so much of the day.

In the interest of America's children, then, Hochschild calls for men and women to join together in building a "time movement" to force corporations to adopt family-friendly policies, particularly in regard to scheduling work time. Earlier time movements, such as the struggle for the eight-hour day, didn't focus on the family — perhaps, Hochschild suggests, because most unionized workers (generally male) in those days were not directly responsible for the care of their children. She says that this time around the claims of family must be central to the demand for shorter and more flexible working hours.

Hochschild's assertion that American women are voluntarily choosing to work longer hours is based on research she conducted over three years at a Fortune 500 corporation she calls "Amerco" to protect the anonymity of the company and the 130 employees she interviewed. Amerco was nationally known for its family-friendly policies, so Hochschild was struck by the fact that very few employees actually took advantage of its offer of flextime, part-time work, parental leave and other accommodations to working parents.

The failure of working mothers at Amerco to cut back on their hours could not be attributed primarily to economic pressures or to coercion from Amerco management, Hochschild says. Rather, she writes, her interviews showed that these women often felt that work was a haven from domestic tensions, ten-

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sions that to a significant extent were caused by the refusal of their husbands to take their share of responsibility for the home. By putting in many hours of work themselves, women were trying to force their husbands to do more childcare and housework.

Hochschild never confronts the possibility that many women work long hours because they find a high degree of fulfillment in their jobs. In contrast to her general point of view, consider Katha Pollitt's insightful remarks in a recent *Nation* article (November 24, 1997):

> ...working mothers have to stop apologizing. We should dismantle the notion that in the best of all possible worlds, we would all be staying home....We need to say that women work not just to keep the wolf from the door but because we enjoy our jobs, our salaries, the prospect of a more interesting and secure future than we would have with rusted skills, less seniority, less experience... (Pollitt was commenting on the Massachusetts "nanny trial" in the fall of 1997, a subject to which we will return.)

Hochschild is doubtless right that women sometimes work more than they need to or enjoy, in an attempt to make it harder for their husbands to evade their domestic obligations; in my view — though she would probably disagree — this is a highly legitimate strategy for women in a society that tells men in so many ways that they are entitled to do little or nothing at home. Hochschild's contention that more and more working mothers in this country work long hours largely because they see their jobs as a way to get away from the tensions of an unresolved domestic gender war may be completely true for some women and partially true; nevertheless, for many the trend she describes is vastly overdrawn.

HOCHSCHILD'S THESIS IS BASED ON SLIM EVIDENCE INDEED. In the first place, Amerco is hardly typical of American business, so it is difficult to generalize from its experience. The companies most women work for don't even *claim* to offer flexible or reduced work hours to meet the personal or family needs of their employees. But reading what Amerco's employees told Hochschild about the realities of life at this much-touted progressive corporation casts doubt on whether her thesis is true even there: beneath the veneer of the company's liberalism, those who sought more time for themselves or their families often endangered not only their ability to get ahead but their very job security. Hochschild admits that top-level executives at Amerco as well as supervisors on the ground were frequently hostile to the implementation of officially-endorsed policies allowing flextime, parental leave, job-sharing and shorter hours. Moreover, Amerco workers reported that the culture of the company rewarded "face time," i.e. the number of hours people worked on site, and employees who put in less than full time — in fact, who failed to work extra hours — would rarely be properly recognized or compensated by the company. In addition, the threat of relocation of Amerco's manufacturing facility hung over hourly employees: one such worker, whom Hochschild calls Becky Winters, told her that she was afraid that the company might move operations to Mexico (p.154). Only a foolhardy employee would single herself out for negative attention by working fewer hours if radical downsizing loomed on the horizon.

Most Amerco workers were not as explicit as Becky about being afraid of layoffs. In fact, most said in interviews with Hochschild that when they chose to work full-time in standard shifts they weren't motivated by such fears (p.29),

assertions that Hochschild takes at face value. But she herself notes that in fact 10 percent of Amerco's total work force were given pink slips in January 1995, just five years after Hochschild started her research. While there may have been no way of predicting with certainty that these layoffs were in the offing, the pervasiveness of downsizing during the last few years meant that most workers with even a minimal level of awareness at Amerco or any other enterprise cannot have been unmindful that they risked unemployment — whether or not they openly expressed their apprehension.

In fact, in addition to fears of layoffs, stagnating and, in many instances, declining wages in the last 20 years have also pushed large numbers of women to work full time. Nonetheless much research shows that, despite economic constraints many workers — male and female — would work shorter hours if they could, again contradicting Hochschild's thesis. For example, in her 1995 article in *Nieman Reports*, Juliet Schor notes that polls taken in the previous ten years show that 15 to 17 percent of all workers would prefer to work fewer hours, even if it meant less money — but would have to change jobs in order to do so. In a survey Schor conducted at Bell South in Atlanta, half the respondents said it was impossible for them to change hours within their current jobs, and another 25 percent said it would be very difficult — though more than a fifth of them would work less if they could. Other studies reveal similar findings: for example, one cited by Rosalind C. Barnett and Caryl Rivers in their critical discussion of *The Time Bind* in the Fall 1997 issue of *Dissent* shows that of 6,000 workers at Du Pont, 50 percent of women and 45 percent of men took some version of flexible hours or stayed in jobs that would give them time with their families. A study at Merck found comparable results. (In this issue of *New Politics*, Chris Tilly shows that close to 4 million American workers currently working full time would rather work less, but can't due to employer inflexibility.)

Putting together evidence from Amerco and data from the larger American work force, Hochschild's assertion that mothers work as much as they do primarily because they want to is highly simplistic at best. But the more fundamental problem with *The Time Bind* is Hochschild's belief that there is something wrong with women having the *desire* to spend the bulk of their time away from home — whether in a rewarding job or in pursuing other personal interests. While she never baldly states this view, it pervades the book, with accusatory words like "escape" used to describe women's motives for being at work for many hours, and inevitably pejorative terms like "outsourcing" and "deskilling" employed to describe mothers' ingenuity in finding new ways to meet many of their children's needs while they are at work.

HOCHSCHILD NOTES THAT FOR MANY WOMEN, MEANINGFUL FRIENDSHIPS often blossom on the job, but rather than being pleased by such relationships she seems uneasy about this and other "family-like ties of workers" (p.42), whether encouraged by the company or undertaken spontaneously by co-workers. For her the growing attractions of the workplace are part of the menacing process of work becoming home and home becoming work that she signals in the title of the book. The American home is being undermined, bit by bit:

> There are many substitutes for family services — summer camp for children or retirement homes for the elderly, to mention two — that have already become accept-

> able features of modern life...Some of these replace the practical activities of a 1950s housewife. In some parts of the country, a family can now phone in a dinner order to a child's daycare center in the morning and pick up both the child and the meal (in an ovenproof container) in the evening. Bright Horizons [a daycare company working with corporations around the country] offers a dry-cleaning service based on the same principle...A Centreville, Maryland service called Kids in Motion gets children from school to after-school activities. Beck and Call, an errand-running service based in Warren, New Jersey, does "just about any errand you can think of"...The time-starved mother (sic) is being forced more and more to choose between being a parent and buying a commodified version of parenthood from someone else. (pp. 230-232)

Hochschild's dismay is palpable. But why is she so distressed by what others (including myself) would see as liberatory assistance available — and none too soon — to harried working parents? It is difficult not to conclude that she is drawn to the image of the old-style family with mother in her place protecting the home — described by Christopher Lasch as "a haven in a heartless world." Though elsewhere in *The Time Bind* (and more forcefully and unambiguously in her far superior 1989 book *The Second Shift*) she states that she favors equally-shared responsibility by both parents, the nostalgia comes through loud and clear in another passage:

> If Total Quality [the new social engineering and team work strategy employed by many corporations] called for "reskilling" the worker in an "enriched" job environment, capitalism and technological developments have long been gradually deskilling parents at home. Over time, store-bought goods have replaced homespun cloth, homemade soap and candles, home-cured meats and home-baked foods. Instant mixes, frozen dinners, and take-out meals have replaced Mother's recipes. Daycare for children, retirement homes for the elderly, wilderness camps for delinquent children, even psychotherapy are, in a way, commercial substitutes for jobs a mother once did in the home. If, under Total Quality, "enriched" jobs call for more skill at work, household chores have over the years become fewer and easier to do. (p.209)

Oh, for the days when we spent hour after hour making our own soap and candles!

Hochschild fails to come to terms with the challenges of the radical feminism of the 1960s and 70s to society's assumptions about family and childrearing. True women's emancipation makes the old family model, or anything resembling it, impossible. The essential character of that kind of family arose out of the fact that the child's primary parent believed she should derive her core sense of identity from being a mother. Even if men share equally in domestic responsibilities — a minimum requirement for women's broader equality — mature adults, female or male, cannot be expected to submerge their identities in their children as the stay-at-home mom once did, or was supposed to.

Reading Hochschild makes me wonder what happened to the visionary thinking about childrearing that absorbed so many of our hours in the 60s and 70s. Rather than worrying that the modern socially-engineered workplace has become a seductive alternative to the home, as it seems Hochschild does, people concerned with women's liberty need to think about ways to fulfill children's needs for love, warmth and attention that take into account the strong probability that in general neither men nor women, if they are free to choose, will find a life revolving mainly around their children fully satisfying. This doesn't mean that emancipated parents won't love their children, but under condi-

tions of freedom it is likely that most will love them as part of lives filled with concerns and relationships outside as well as within the home, on and off the job. In turn, parents need not be the only adults caring for children: extended families, friends and neighbors, people who don't want to have children but would like to be with them on a more limited basis — all of these, in addition to well-trained, well-paid and well-respected childcare workers, could share in raising the young.

The Time Bind is an ambiguous book, conveying the ambivalence of its author. Hochschild does say that there is no turning back: women are in the workplace to stay, and happier when they work outside the home. But the thrust and tone of the book point in the opposite direction: the way she deals with the question of childcare exemplifies this fact. While, at one point, Hochschild seems accepting of childcare for up to six or seven hours a day, and mentions, if only in passing, that many European governments devote substantial resources to subsidizing childcare for working parents, it is significant that she gives very little attention to how to launch a crusade to make childcare in America more affordable, more accessible, and of better quality. In today's climate, with its virulent right-wing attack on working mothers and childcare in the name of "family values" — the sharp attacks on the child's working mother in the Massachusetts nanny trial is a case in point — such an attitude is very damaging to mothers who are making enormous progress today in freeing themselves from a legacy of terrible sexist subordination. It is critical to defend childcare as an indispensable element of women's emerging liberation, even as we insist on improvement in its quality through increased levels of governmental support and higher wages for those who care for children.

Arlie Hochschild is right when she says we need a time movement to turn back growing corporate demands for overtime and, beyond resistance, to demand flexible work schedules and a shorter work week. And she is right to challenge the labor movement, feminists, and all who can see how important it is to fight for a workplace that doesn't cannibalize people's lives, to conduct such a struggle.

But how should we frame such a time movement in America, as we join our counterparts in Europe who are mounting a struggle for a shorter work week? Many on the left and even some in the women's movement seem to think that we can outsmart and outflank the right by rationalizing the demand for shorter hours first and foremost in terms of the needs of working families. But this is a short-sighted strategy that cedes crucial ground to the "family values" gang, and it will inevitably come back to haunt us if we try to pursue it. Of course, workers with people dependent on them — whether children, elderly parents, ill spouses or spouse equivalents — have special needs for time that employers should be required by a determined coalition of working people and the broader public to accommodate. But the core justification for a shorter work week, for flexible hours, for substantial vacations and for frequent sabbaticals for all working people should be the simple, unadorned fact that in addition to decent jobs and meaningful work individuals need an abundance of free time for their lives off the job. We shouldn't be afraid to state this obvious but very anti-capitalist truth, for the sake both of our immediate futures and of the new socialist society we hope to build.

The author wishes to thank Jesse Lemisch.

Solidarity with East Timor

EAST TIMOR'S UNFINISHED STRUGGLE: INSIDE THE TIMORESE RESISTANCE by Constâncio Pinto and Matthew Jardine, Boston, MA: South End Press. $16.00pb.

Reviewed by Stephen R. Shalom

ON A BASIC HUMANITARIAN LEVEL, EAST TIMOR, A TINY COUNTRY half-way around the world, commands our attention because it has been the scene of one of the greatest bloodlettings in modern history compared to total population. More than a quarter of the territory's people died as a result of Indonesia's 1975 invasion and subsequent pacification campaign, a proportional toll exceeding the horrendous losses of the Soviet Union or Poland in World War II, or of Koreans, Vietnamese, or Afghanis confronting civil war and superpower intervention.

But East Timor is important as well for at least three other reasons. First, the Timorese struggle is an inspiring example of people's ability to persevere against tremendous odds to keep alive the hope of self-determination and freedom. Second, East Timor provides a stark case of indifference and even complicity on the part of many of the world's governments in the face of monstrous atrocities. And, third, East Timor represents a remarkable instance of real international solidarity, where grassroots organizations around the world have been able to lend critical support to people under siege, and where continued efforts can still be of immense help.

East Timor's Unfinished Struggle: Inside the Timorese Resistance by Constâncio Pinto and Matthew Jardine is a valuable introduction to each of these concerns.

When Indonesian troops invaded East Timor in December 1975, Pinto was twelve years old, but, like so many of East Timor's 700,000 people, he joined the resistance. By 1990 he had risen to head the underground component of the National Council of Maubere Resistance (NCMR), the predominant coalition of Timorese independence organizations. In 1992, with Indonesian intelligence close on his trail, he was able to escape from East Timor and make his way to the United States. Pinto's narrative description of his life and of the Timorese resistance makes up the bulk of the book.

Matthew Jardine, a U.S. writer and activist who works with the East Timor Action Network, has contributed an introductory essay, an epilogue, and explanatory notes to Pinto's story.

For most people, East Timor could as well be on Mars, and for many on the left, East Timor is a slogan but not much more. Pinto's first-hand account thus has the great virtue of bringing the Timorese struggle to life, showing us real

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people fighting their all-too-real oppressors. We are given a genuine feel for Timorese society, and an understanding (better than a sociological report) of such things as the role of the Catholic Church and the position of women. No one reading Pinto's chronicle can fail to be moved by his remarkable commitment and courage.

The Timorese struggle is not, however, simply the story of a few heroic leaders. It is a struggle that could only have lasted this long with incredible popular support. The Indonesians continually claim that only a small group of communists oppose their conquest, but Jardine and Pinto provide compelling evidence against this view.

In 1974 there were three significant political parties in East Timor: FRETILIN, a left-wing organization, the UDT, a more conservative grouping, and APODETI, the smallest of the three and largely an agent of Indonesian intelligence. Serious observers agree that by early 1975 FRETILIN was easily the most popular party in the country. In January 1975, FRETILIN and the UDT formed a coalition to push for independence from Portugal (the colonial ruler), while APODETI called for integration into Indonesia. In August 1975, the UDT turned on FRETILIN and tried to take sole power, but FRETILIN won the brief civil war. As Indonesian subversion escalated, FRETILIN declared independence from Portugal in late November 1975. A few days later Indonesia launched its all-out invasion.

The resistance to the Indonesians was so determined that despite the deaths of more than 200,000 people, the Timorese fought on. In 1986, the UDT and FRETILIN reunited in a wider coalition, the NCMR, indicating the broad support for independence among the population. And the ability of the underground to stage independence demonstrations at key times (during the visit of the Pope or of the U.S. ambassador, for example) despite horrendous repression and the ease with which members of the underground have been able to travel the length of the country is further proof of popular backing. The best evidence, however, of the extent of the support for independence is the peace plan advanced by the NCMR (reprinted as an appendix to the book), which calls for a referendum by which the population can choose between independence, free association with, or integration into, Indonesia. That the resistance favors such a referendum and the Indonesians are decisively opposed tells us a great deal about Timorese sentiment.

When FRETILIN declared independence back in November 1975, they had hoped that widespread foreign recognition would forestall the anticipated Indonesian attack. There were promises of "certain recognition" within ten days from 25 countries, including China, the Soviet Union, Cuba, East Germany, Norway, Sweden and Brazil. However, only the other former Portuguese colonies — Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, and Cape Verde — granted prompt recognition.

THE U.S. ROLE WAS FAR MORE PERNICIOUS and was consistent with Washington's long-standing support for the Suharto dictatorship in Indonesia. In the late 50s, when it became clear that Indonesia's nationalist leader, Sukarno, would not be subservient to Western interests, the United States worked to undermine his regime, carrying out what was then the largest U.S. covert operation since World War II, a sordid affair thoroughly documented by Audrey R. and

George McT. Kahin in their recent book, *Subversion as Foreign Policy* (New Press, 1995). The operation was a failure, but then in 1965 the Indonesian army deposed Sukarno in a bloody coup, slaughtering in the process at least half a million people. Washington not only provided arms to the killers during the massacre, but, as Kathy Kadane established in a report for States News Service in May 1990, U.S. officials supplied the army with lists of leaders of the Indonesian Communist Party who were then butchered. It was out of this carnage — which the CIA called "one of the worst mass murders of the 20th century" — that General Suharto came to power, with gushing approval from the United States.

On the eve of Indonesia's 1975 invasion of East Timor, U.S. President Gerald Ford and Secretary of State Kissinger were in Jakarta visiting Suharto. Kissinger later claimed that East Timor wasn't even discussed in their meetings, but this is a palpable lie, as journalist Allan Nairn (who has contributed a powerful foreword to the Pinto-Jardine book) has documented, showing that in fact Washington gave Suharto a green light to invade. Ninety percent of the weaponry used by the Indonesian forces in their invasion was from the United States (despite a U.S. law that prohibits the use of its military aid for offensive purposes). And the arms flow continued, and indeed increased, under the presidency of Democrat Jimmy Carter, the self-proclaimed champion of human rights. The United States also lent diplomatic support to Indonesia. In the United Nations, U.S. ambassador Daniel Patrick Moynihan successfully worked, as he boasted in his memoirs, to make sure that the international organization was ineffectual in challenging Jakarta's invasion.

In another useful book by Jardine, *East Timor: Genocide in Paradise* (Odonian Press, 1995), the unsavory records of other major countries are summarized. Australia has provided military aid to Indonesia and, after becoming the only country to formally recognize Indonesian sovereignty over East Timor, negotiated with Jakarta to divide up East Timor's off-shore oil resources. Britain may now be Indonesia's largest arms supplier, Japan is its largest source of economic aid and its largest foreign investor, and Canada provides Jakarta with both economic and military aid. The Netherlands and Germany are also major weapons suppliers.

Portugal became one of East Timor's few international supporters, but in 1975 it had acquiesced in the Indonesian takeover. José Ramos-Horta, East Timor's chief foreign representative, has explained that in 1975 the Portuguese president and prime minister were pro-Soviet and favored East Timor's becoming part of Indonesia because Moscow-Jakarta relations were very close. (See Peter Carey and G. Carter Bentley, eds., *East Timor at the Crossroads* [University of Hawaii Press, 1995], pp. 162, 188.)

With most major governments seeing little self-interest in supporting Timorese self-determination, the prospects may seem exceedingly grim, because East Timor — with one third of one percent of the population of Indonesia — can never hope to defeat Indonesia militarily. And each year, as more and more Indonesians move (or are moved) into conquered East Timor, Timorese identity is further swallowed up. However, an international grassroots movement has developed, especially since 1991, that has been able to bring phenomenal pressure to bear on the world's governments, and this movement may yet be able to help the people of East Timor achieve their freedom.

In November 1991, marchers at a funeral procession in East Timor unfurled independence banners. Despite the presence of foreign media, among them Americans Allan Nairn and Amy Goodman, Indonesian troops opened fire and slaughtered more than 200 people. But the journalists and photographers who survived managed to get the dramatic story of the Santa Cruz massacre carried on television stations worldwide. These events energized solidarity groups in many countries, which accelerated their agitation on behalf of East Timor. (Charles Scheiner, a stalwart of the U.S.-based East Timor Action Network, has contributed a list of contact addresses for some of these groups as an appendix to the Pinto-Jardine volume.)

Incredibly, the solidarity groups have been able to win some legislative battles to cut military aid to Jakarta and get some favorable votes in international bodies. The political costs to western governments of unqualified backing for Indonesia have grown. And these citizen-based efforts to raise the public profile of the East Timor issue were in no small measure responsible for the award of the 1996 Nobel Peace Prize to José Ramos-Horta and Bishop Carlos Filipe Ximenes Belo, East Timor's spiritual leader. Mainstream media, which had worked mightily for years to suppress the facts about East Timor, were now forced to give it serious attention.

With U.S. President Bill Clinton embarrassed by the exposure of his campaign contributions from Indonesia, there is a real possibility that public pressure can isolate Jakarta diplomatically. The NCMR's call for a self-determination referendum in East Timor is no longer a utopian hope. Such an outcome, however, will require sustained and heightened political activity from progressives. This book by Pinto and Jardine should prove a useful tool in this effort.

UPS Strike/*continued from page 31*

Carey team on the other hand envisioned a member-run movement that has not yet been achieved; but the UPS strike shows the progress so far.

It's true corruption cannot be overlooked, and the Carey slate must carry the weight of trusting people whose principles succumbed to convenience and profit, leading to nullification of the first vote. But these two visions of union power — Hoffa's "strong leader" versus the Carey team's "membership control" — define the deepest differences at stake in this election. Which way the Teamsters go will have important implications for the rest of labor and society.

Progressive unionists tend to blanch at the prospect of Junior Hoffa winning control of the Teamsters — the expected weakening of the new AFL-CIO leadership, the Teamsters' large PAC money going who-knows-where (previous Teamster heads endorsed Republicans, and Hoffa himself supported Pat Buchanan's presidential bid), and old-guard local officials given free reign to bleed treasuries and blackball dissidents.

A bigger set-back would be the Teamsters giving up on building the kind of union democracy that just this year squeezed 10,000 new full-time jobs out of The Tightest Ship in the Shipping Business and thrilled American workers to the potential of their own collective power.

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