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The Energy Crisis- a Marxist view

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This article was written before the most recent phase of the energy crisis. The writer is associated with a group of comrades who recently left the International Socialists.

The development of a Marxist view of the energy crisis can be approached through a critique of the three currently dominant views of the subject: (1) the populist "radical" view — that the U.S. government and the oil monopolies are partners in a giant rip-off to preserve oil corporation prices and profits; (2) the conservative capitalist view — that there actually is a real physical shortage in the offing; and (3) a view, widespread among environmentalists, that shortage or not (there are differing views on this) consumerist society values, including the search for cheap energy, must be resisted as a threat to the quality of life.

To start with the first, the oil monopoly rip-off theory in collaboration with the state. Even most sectors of the Marxist left swallow this theory. Some go even further. To them, the OPEC act of 1973 was an affair staged by Kissinger, et al., to help reverse the U.S.'s declining economic competitive position. This goal would be met by forcing a sharp rise in the price of oil in Europe and Japan, our main competitors, thus increasing *their* price structure relative to that of the U.S. The U.S. would suffer less, according to this "theory," because the others were totally dependent on imported oil, whereas the U.S. provided more than half of its own oil at less than import prices. (Of course, the fact that U.S. prices also increased along with the world price was simply overlooked by these Marxists.)

There are three major objections to this monopoly-rip-off-with-aid-

of-the-state theory: (1) the role of the state in capitalism, (2) empirical economic objections to the theory, and (3) objections rooted in the theory of monopoly — more precisely, in the false theory of monopoly so nearly universal in the left.

Oil and the Theory of the State

The Marxist view of the state is that, in the last analysis, it is an instrument which looks after the interests of the capitalist class as a whole. That is not to say that we think this happens automatically. Not at all. As part of that process of arriving at the interests of the class as a whole, we witness repeated and constant struggles of two kinds: differences as to what the common interests really are (like differences on the war, or on welfare, etc.); and differences arising from different interests among different sectors, different industries, and even *individual* corporate interests, who try to use the state for their own purposes and not those of the capitalist class as a whole. Two current examples come to mind — the fight between the trucking industry and the rest over truck deregulation, and the fight between the gas producers and corporate gas consumers.

So we have to be very careful. In this case, does government policy really represent the long-run interests of capitalism, or has one industry, the oil monopolies, temporarily gained control of the state? It is not hard to see the truth in this case. It can be detected simply by looking at Carter's program. That will show that in fact, at this time, the state is acting, or trying to act, in the interests of the whole class, because it proposes policies which are not, primarily, in the interests of the *oil* corporations.

A main thrust of Carter's many

proposals is to find ways to reduce the demand for oil. This is hardly a policy the oil corporations could want. Similarly, the attempt to find alternatives to oil is again not a policy the oil corporations could favor (with the *possible* and partial exception of those investing in other fields). Nor is the policy to reduce the import of oil and gas a big boon to the major oil corporations which get most of their income from *imported* oil. *Domestic* oil production is shared with a large and influential class of *independent* oil producers who have *always been* for import controls.

The decision to try to reduce oil imports runs counter to giant oil corporations' interests in still another way. The U.S. has a balance of payments problem stemming in part from oil imports. The capitalist class as a whole therefore favors such restrictions to help the balance of payments. The oil corporations have a different and contradictory interest. And in this case, they have clearly lost.

Before proceeding, there is a common objection which should be addressed. "Since the (oil) corporations now also own coal fields and uranium, they no longer need to object to oil import controls." But the fact that a corporation hedges its bets and attempts to secure a falling situation by a second-best fall-back policy does not mean that they welcome the attack on their primary business, but only that they are resigned to it. To which one must add, what about the large sector of the oil industry which owns no coal?

A Second Objection to the monopoly rip-off theory. Not only is the government not encouraging the rip-off, but the oil "monopolies" have in fact been incapable of such a rip-off in the modern period (leaving aside the normal, under capitalism, advantage which any

corporation takes of short supply conditions *in a market economy*). What is the evidence for this unpopular statement?

(1) Even before 1973, i.e., even before OPEC, when the oil corporations were considered nearly all-powerful, profits were not what they were supposed to be. So between 1950 and 1965 the average rate of profit in oil was 11.5%, compared to 10.5% in all manufacturing. But between 1965 and 1973, the oil rate of profit fell to 10.1% vs. the manufacturing rate of 10.4%. Hardly a picture of a *monopoly* rip-off (leaving aside, of course, the fact that all profit is, in a sense, a rip-off).

(2) It is often forgotten that between 1950 and 1969 the price of oil (and electricity) was falling relative to the price of other commodities. Again, this should at least give pause to the rip-off theory.

(3) A similar phenomenon appeared in the prices charged by the other oil "monopoly," OPEC, which despite its "monopoly power" also experienced falling relative prices, i.e., the price of oil rose far less than the rate of inflation during 1973-78.

(4) One has to recall that in fact the so-called monopoly position of the oil corporations had been badly hurt long before the events of 1973. The famous Seven Big Sisters (Exxon, Gulf, et al.) controlled 90% of all oil outside the U.S. 20 years ago. Today that figure has shrunk to 60% (not counting of course the loss of *ownership* of Mid-east oil). So much for the pricing of oil at the whim of the oil monopolists.

There is a Third Objection to the monopoly rip-off theory. The theory rests upon a confusion of monopoly with "concentration and centralization." There can of course be little doubt that capitalism is indeed characterized by increasing concentration and centralization. But it does not in the least follow from this that capitalism is now essentially monopolistic. It is an error to view capitalist society as

one which passes from a stage in which it is "competitive" to a second stage in which it is essentially "monopolistic" (as Paul Sweezy and many others have done; Lenin is ambiguous on this and Bukharin conies pretty close to this error). In fact, capitalism is *both* competitive and monopolistic from its birth, from day one, and continues so to this day. There are two major reasons for this:

(1) Capitalism rests on monopoly from the start with its total monopoly of the means of production (something bourgeois economists deny; they tell us that workers can also, if they wish, hire capital just like anyone else, in the market place). It is *this* monopoly which the capitalists are trying to defend when they resist the formation of unions, since unions are in a sense an attempt to form a counter-monopoly, and, obviously, the existence of a second, related monopoly always weakens an existing one. The more monopolies there are in an economy, the weaker each one is, since each monopoly has to buy from another monopoly as well as sell to it. In this sense, universal monopoly is a contradiction in terms, under capitalism.

(2) Monopoly is organic, built in to "competitive" capitalism in a second fundamental way. The search for profit in a market economy compels capitalists to constantly seek technological change, innovation, including new products. As soon as he succeeds in this process, the capitalist instantly acquires, even if only momentarily (even if prolonged by patents) a real monopoly compared to other capitalists. As a result, his costs are usually cut and he can, *even though charging the normal market price*, make a higher than average profit, *due to* his monopoly over the new technology or new commodity. Of course the victory is temporary. Sooner or later, the new technique spreads to other producers, and so the first capitalist loses his economic edge and with it his monopoly profit. But under capitalism this

process is a permanent one — a constant struggle for monopoly position and a constant loss of that position through competition. And this process continues to characterize capitalism *whether the economic units are small or giant*, i.e., this process is not halted by concentration or centralization. In fact it can be speeded up and intensified by them (as Lenin *did* understand in contrast to Kautsky — the real ancestor of "Marxist" monopoly theory).

There is a parallel here to the Marxist theory of the state. The state does represent the ruling class as a whole, but this rule emerges only out of a process of struggle between different sectors of the class — an unending and constantly shifting struggle despite the fact that (like competition) the intra-class struggle *tends* to end up with class-wide interests dominant and having their will.

It follows from all this that, schematically: (1) prices are essentially NOT set by monopolies. It may appear to be so, but actually they are doing little more than *ratifying* a price set by economic law. Barry Commoner is one of the few ecologists to recognize this and to face up to the fact that oil prices are not a monopoly plot; (2) prices are NOT administered prices (which every liberal believes and so he opposes monopoly, but not capitalism); (3) concentration and centralization do not necessarily lead to monopoly price-fixing; and (4) it is not just prices, but inflation as well, which are NOT a plot by capitalism to get at the workers.

What all this means for how oil prices are actually determined is another matter deserving close attention. Bob Fitch's suggestion that Marx's theory of industrial rent plays a central role in this process is very persuasive.

But one should not leave this abstract view on monopoly without supplementing it, however briefly, with some empirical evidence. Just three points for the present:

First, the history of prices among

the "monopolies." (We have already dealt with the to-some-surprising history of prices and profits in oil, above.) In fact, the "astonishing" history of electricity prices (notoriously monopolistic), in which they have over the past 50 years fallen relative to other prices, is hardly as exceptional as one might think. The history of prices of AT&T is another case — the price of phone service has also dropped relatively. Equally significant are the histories of prices of other "monopolies" such as copper, aluminum, etc. They have fluctuated sharply in response to market conditions in a manner which monopoly theory could hardly explain, as have their profits. The steadily falling prices in the highly concentrated communication-information industry are another case in point.

Second, it is important to call attention (if it is news to anyone) to the history of monopoly in the U.S. in the post-World War II period. A few months ago, one of the last monopolies, Western Union, passed from the scene; the 40-year monopoly situation in the trucking industry is clearly on the road to extinction through deregulation. (The result should pose a real problem for the monopoly theorists, since the *regulated* industry, though monopolistic, was full of relatively "small" companies, while the *deregulated* industry [*demonopolized* in the sense of no longer fixing prices and controlling routes, i.e., more competitive] will certainly become *more* concentrated and centralized —

banking industry in the world; IBM, which a decade ago controlled 65% of the information industry, is now sharply cutting prices, as its share of the market is falling toward 45% — and Japan has not yet entered the scene; the railroads, monopoly and all, have lost out, largely to airplanes, busses and trucks; the airlines have *shared* in the decision to deregulate and are now as competitive an industry as there is or can be; and lastly, the much-vaunted rise of the supermarket and consequent destruction of the small retail stores has been radically misunderstood. It does of course represent a huge case of concentration, but *not* monopolization. Quite the contrary. It is today a less-than-average-profit industry. In a sense, the mom-and-pop store in a ghetto is more of a monopoly than Safeway. The former can and does charge higher prices in large part because it can and does offer monopoly services, such as location, open all hours, and credit to the poor. Indeed, to close this point the Xerox corporation was a real monopoly only briefly, on the basis of its new discoveries, *when it was a relatively small* concern. Today, as a giant in the information industry, it is just one among many, and no longer the glamour stock it once was.

Third, preliminary studies of the history of price-fixing cartels shows a dramatic *decline* in their role over the past 30 years.

Let us proceed to the second theory of the energy crisis — the view that there actually is an oil-gas

capacity to increase food supply. The population would rise geometrically, while the food supply would only increase arithmetically, due to the fact that constantly poorer, less productive land would have to be used to raise food. Within 15 years of his prediction, the world experienced the great potato revolution, vastly increasing the amount of calories which agriculture could generate for the poor and bringing Malthusian fears to an end for a hundred years — until revived by Keynes and other liberals. The latest expression of this view emerged in the famous Club of Rome warning in 1975 about the fatal world food shortage in the works. But by 1977, the Club at least had the decency to apologize and retract its prediction.

The plain fact is that where *capitalist* agriculture exists, the rate of increase in productivity has been double that of industry in recent decades.

Still, we can be told, true enough for food, but oil, unlike food, is a non-renewable resource. Therefore we can not preclude, in theory, the possibility of a *real* oil shortage, a physical one. So let us look at the matter more closely.

The first thing to note is that in just the past ten years, four giant pools of oil have been brought into production: Alaska, the North Sea, Nigeria, and Mexico — enough to raise doubt as to *world* scarcity.

Of course that does not preclude the possibility of a U.S. exhaustion of oil. Still, in 1910, the first of many Senate reports announced that

...universal monopoly is a contradiction in terms...

but *less* monopolized!)

AT&T, the monopoly par excellence, is in the throes of losing that monopoly, due to technological innovation; before the war, there was one aluminum corporation in the U.S. — today there are four; the U.S. banking industry, contrary to expectations, is by far the most competitive, least monopolized

shortage and that depletion is a real threat. This view of a material, natural shortage is just the latest example of an historic bug-a-boo.

Some 40 years or so after Adam Smith, the founder of the science of economics, the economist Malthus arose to warn that population was inevitably bound to outrun the

the U.S. had no more than a 20-year supply of oil reserves. In 1934, a U.S. Senate report warned that there was now, after 24 years of use and drain, "only" a 30-year "reserve." And in recent years, the same prediction: a 30-year reserve is all that is left. Taken together, these reports can only raise doubt as to the actual merit of the re-

ports. And a closer examination will reveal that our doubts are not based on cynicism at all.

To start with, it has to be understood that the term "proven reserves" does not mean what it appears to mean. The term "proven" refers to the amount of oil available for extraction *at a given price and at a given technological level*. If either of these factors were to change, then the amount of "proven reserves" would rise *even without the discovery of a single new well*. Thus, for example, in 1968 U.S. "proven reserves" totalled 40 billion barrels, while at the same time the geologists affirmed that physically there were 150 billion barrels in the pools.

ural" response to declining profits or the search for higher ones. It is this capital shift which is responsible for the "shortage" — a shortage which is mainly political and economic. But is it geological?

If this is the source of the U.S. oil crisis, then why not solve it by the import of oil from areas where production and exploration costs are lower? Unfortunately there are difficulties to this "solution" which recent events in Iran highlight only too well. OPEC oil is not so reliable. To start with, there is the danger that in case of war, U.S. supplies could be endangered. There is the danger of social revolution in a oil-producing country. There are problems arising

of capitalism as a result of its increased dependence upon "foreign" oil in case of war or social revolution.

(2) A tendency will arise to further reduce the rate of growth and technological change. We know that increased wages have as one effect a tendency to increase the use of machinery and labor productivity. The rising cost of energy will have an opposite effect. It will result in slowing down the increase in use of machinery which depends on cheap power, and increase the attractiveness of using labor. But since that labor, at home in the U.S., is high-cost labor, the rising cost of energy will intensify the transfer of capital

...there is no absolute shortage of oil...

Similarly, the amount of reserves even in physical terms is also not absolute. It depends in large measure not only on the price of oil, but on the cost of finding it. So, in 1934, it cost \$20,000 to drill a well; by 1970 the cost had risen to \$1 million, and by 1976 to \$2 million. Between 1965 and 1975, the cost of producing and discovering had risen by 300%. So the actual amount of oil available, or discoverable, is unknown to anyone. We conclude that there is no basis as yet for saying that there is an absolute shortage of oil even in the U.S., much less the world (even leaving aside the oil-bearing shales and sands, and low-grade coal).

But if there is no absolute shortage of oil, there *are* rising costs of production and exploration. One has only to remember that, after having spent \$1.5 billion in the Baltimore Canyon, commercial oil has yet to be found by Exxon or any of the others. It is these rising costs which are real indeed, which are responsible for the *appearance* of an oil shortage in the U.S. — this because a rise in costs tends to result in a shift of capital for exploration and refining to areas outside the U.S. All this is a perfectly "nat-

from the fact that many of these countries are trying to industrialize, and so trying to gear their pace of development and oil exploitation. Too much oil extracted is partially wasted, since it is paid for in devaluating currency (mostly the U.S. dollar). So a barrel of oil underground is worth more than one above and sold. Then there is the danger of an actual exhaustion of oil (a possibility in any given location). And lastly, even in the absence of these difficulties, the U.S. can not force increased oil production to fit its needs. In this post-Vietnam period, the U.S. can not treat Khomeini as it did Mossadeq in 1953.

So the crisis is real, even if not primarily geological, and not a rip-off. It has its roots in the economic mechanism of capitalism, the search for profit and the use of the market as the mechanism for the allocation of resources.

But before looking at the capitalists' solution to their problem, we must look briefly at the consequences of the energy crisis, because these consequences will shape the solution the capitalists opt for.

(1) The first consequence, already alluded to, is the weakening

to low-wage areas, to underdeveloped areas. This means a tendency to slower growth at home. But it also means a general tendency to a slower rate of growth or productivity.

(3) Who will pay for the oil crisis and how? When oil is purchased, it can be paid for in two ways — in dollars or by the export of goods to OPEC countries. Let's take each case separately.

Payment in Dollars. What happens when imports (of oil) exceed exports of goods in return? The result is well known — a negative balance of payments with all the attendant dangers. Not least of these dangers is that the consequent export of U.S. dollars serves as a powerful stimulant to inflation in Europe. This occurs because those dollars are exchanged by their recipients for domestic currency of each country, causing an artificial "unnecessary" currency expansion with inflationary consequences.

However, it is possible that the extra dollars used to pay for the oil will be sent back to the U.S. by OPEC and placed in U.S. banks. In that case the negative balance of payments (and the above scenario) would seem to disappear. But that is hardly the solution it seems to

be. With the declining value of the U.S. dollar, these OPEC funds lose their value, so there can arise a tendency to withdraw them in favor of Swiss or German banks. Should that happen, the U.S. balance of payments could suffer a massive shock at a time when it is already in crisis. This is not just a theoretical possibility. It is exactly what happened to England in 1975. From 1973 to 1975, the Arab states, for historic reasons, kept their surplus funds in British banks. This served to conceal the drastic negative balance of payments England was suffering at the time. When in 1975 the Arabs suddenly withdrew these funds, it sent England into a crisis from which she was saved only by a vast IMF loan.

Payment in Goods. Instead of paying for oil in dollars, OPEC could be, and has in part been, paid by the export of commodities. In that case the question arises, where would these goods come from? And the answer is, much if not all would come from the working class.

This would happen mainly in two ways: *First*, an increased price of energy can and will be met by workers in part by a decrease in their demand for other goods. In this way, resources (labor, raw materials, etc.) are "released" for goods for export to OPEC. (This process is one source of the fact that real wages in the U.S. have not risen in a decade.)

A *second* way in which workers pay for goods which are exchanged for the oil is through the effect of increased energy prices on inflation. We have argued earlier that increased costs can *not* ordinarily be passed on by capitalists in the form of increased prices, because competition would not permit it (and also because under the labor theory of value, increased wages do not produce increased value and therefore do not increase prices). But this does not apply to a cost increase which is universal. Oil, unlike wages, has an international, uniform price. If *all* corporations

experience increased costs due to the rise of oil prices, then competition will not prevent a rise in price (though the value is unchanged). So the general level of prices will rise, and we get inflation. As a result, the capitalists who pay more for goods they buy will also get more for the goods they sell, and so they will break even. But the worker will lose by higher prices. His real wage will fall unless the class struggle intensifies beyond the level it has reached to date in the U.S.

Given the above, we can understand U.S. capital's solutions: (1) conservation (encouraging a decline in demand by increasing the price); (2) increasing prices to encourage increased exploration and thus increased supply; and (3) alternative energy proposals.

The push for nuclear energy (limiting ourselves for the present to nuclear fission, not fusion) brings us to the third theory of the energy crisis — that held by many populists and the ecology movement. There is much that is new and much that is true in their theories. But, as Heine suggested, "what is new there is not true, and what is true is not new." Socialists support the ecology movement, but not uncritically, because that movement focuses on the "excesses" of capitalism and does not see the ecology problem as endemic to capitalism as such. The arguments around nuclear power provide a good example of this.

It is commonly argued that the costs of nuclear energy are greater than the costs of fossil fuel energy generators. But if this is true, then why do the utility corporations opt for nuclear power?

The populist-environmentalist answer is: utilities' profits are determined by state regulatory commissions which set the price of electricity at "cost plus fair return on capital." If the capital costs rise, the utilities will be granted raises in rates and profits to make up for it. As a result, according to

this theory, the more an energy plant costs, the better for the utilities. It is a mindblowing theory (for Marxists) and a false one, because:

(1) In actuality, the utility industry today (and for the past few decades) has displayed an opposite pattern of behavior. First, the utilities have had great difficulty getting capital on the market. The market thus disciplines them. So they can not be "wasteful" of the available capital. Secondly, the utilities have for the past 40 years had a record as a highly efficient industry, one which has experienced the lowest rate of increased prices of any major industry in the U.S. (except for the technologically explosive information industry). From 1947 to 1970, the price of electricity per kilowatt hour rose a mere 5%.

(2) Many studies during the 1950's and early '60's showed that nuclear fission energy was substantially cheaper than fossil energy for plants over 500,000 KWH (average size for a new plant today). This was true even before the six-fold increase in oil costs since 1973. (Uranium fuel costs have risen far more moderately and are a lower share of energy costs in nuclear plants.) Therefore the capitalists were, given the information available at that time, *technically*, in capitalist terms, right to wish to build nuclear plants.

(3) But this "correct" decision of the capitalists was based, as we know, on their out-of-pocket costs, their private costs of production, which do not reflect the real social costs of a nuclear plant (any more than the capitalist cost of mining coal represents its real social cost). Thus, if we add to the normal (capitalist) costs of production the additional costs of disposing of waste fuel (which the government had been expected to absorb); the additional costs of real safety devices; the real insurance costs in case of accident, etc., then the real *social* cost of the plant rises and can easily reach a point where it is

more expensive than a fossil fuel plant.

Until recently, social costs were and could be ignored by the corporations, on the assumption that we, the public, would pay for them, as we pay for other pollution costs of production. But today, as a result of the anti-nuke movement and the rising awareness among the public of the real costs and dangers of nuclear energy, it is increasingly difficult for the utilities to expect that they will be able to shift their costs onto the public. They may well have to absorb these costs and in doing so increase their private costs of production. As a result, the advantages of nuclear energy recede and we witness a sharp decline in the number of plants projected. (The decline in rate of growth of demand for electricity is also in part responsible for this retreat on nuclear power construction.)

The problem reduces itself to the fact that only socialism can scientifically, rationally determine whether or not to build nuclear plants, because only socialism makes economic decisions on the basis of social cost, not private cost. In fact that is a hallmark of socialism. It is an indication of socialism's true rationality, as opposed to the spurious, market rationality of capitalism.

Incidentally, we have here also an example of technology's non-neutral and class character. Under capitalist rationality, "nuclear" is technologically logical; under socialist rationality, nukes are irrational and probably would not be used at all.

(4) The matter can be taken one step further to the issue of nuclear vs. solar energy. Under capitalism today, solar energy is irrational because the *private* costs of solar energy (except for rooftop water-heating units) for generating electricity are far higher than either fossil or nuclear fuel plants. That is why the government spends 20 times as much money researching nuclear (fusion and fission) energy than it does solar energy.

But though solar *private* costs are indeed high, the *social* costs of solar energy are relatively low. That, however, is *and must be* a matter of indifference to the capitalist, since he is only interested in private costs, and so he chooses to produce nuclear plants instead of solar plants, *today*. It must be obvious from what we have said that, once again, to the socialist society, governed as it is by social cost, solar energy is economically preferable to nuclear, and would get priority in research and all else.

(5) In place of this analysis of solar energy, the populist-environmentalist tells us that capitalists reject solar energy because they "can't own the sun," as they do coal mines, etc. Once again, we are asked to regress economically to the days even before Adam Smith.

To start with, capitalists need not own the sunlight to be able to charge for it. They do not charge for coal because "they own it." The cost of coal arises from the fact that labor is involved in making coal available to society — otherwise coal would, like air, be a free good. The same for sunlight. Light, if it is to be used for electricity, must, like coal, be changed by machinery, i.e., by labor, and it is from this necessary use of labor that the capitalist would draw his profit in the light-to-electricity conversion. So free sunlight is no bar to capitalist exploitation of solar power.

It is this understanding of the contradiction between private cost and social cost (an expression of the contradiction between social production and private appropriation) which is at the root of our differences with so many ecologists. Only socialists can understand truly why the capitalists prefer nuclear to solar energy today. And these understandings lead us to propose the need to socialize (which is not the same as nationalize), i.e., (among other things) to begin to use social cost as the measure for decision making.

It remains only to make a few comments of a programmatic character. Marxists will reject Malthusian notions of an objective energy shortage. To the extent that this exists, it is a function of the capitalist mode of production. We therefore reject the plea of theorists of the affluent society that our society consumes too much. Wasteful it certainly is. But it does not follow that we ought to or want to reduce consumption. Quite the contrary. The case for socialism is in part that capitalism can not expand production either adequately or rationally — that the vast majority of humankind is desperately in need of greatly expanded production *and energy*, not a reduction. But it must also be an expansion which does not threaten a planetary catastrophe such as is implicit in fossil-fuel-generated Carbon Dioxide, which could overheat the atmosphere and melt the ice caps.

The necessity of nationalization of the energy industry is apparent today to most Americans, even George Meany. But it must be equally clear that such nationalization, today, would hardly solve anything. Bourgeois nationalization means essentially operating an industry by the rule of the market, and so it changes very little (except when the nationalization is used as an indirect subsidy to the rest of industry). What is needed is (1) a rational, planned exploitation of the available oil on a world scale in the interests of all people, and not a conflict among states and societies over shares of the pie — a conflict which under capitalism is left to the tender mercies of the market and the profit system; and (2) the determination of an efficient, rational energy production on the basis of real, social costs, not the private costs organic to capitalism.

In short, the solution to the energy crisis is inseparable from humankind's struggle to impose its rationality and mastery over nature — the struggle to establish itself as the subject, not the object, of history.

The Anti-nuclear Movement in Mississippi: interview with an activist

Since late last year, Sojourner Truth Organization has been involved in the anti-nuclear movement. STO members helped initiate the Committee Against Nuclear Imperialism in Denver. Although there was some initial resistance to the perspective, our general membership meeting last May affirmed the need for increased involvement in anti-nuclear work, placing special emphasis on building the anti-imperialist potential of the movement.

It is clear that the accident at Three Mile Island drastically changed the anti-nuke movement. Many people for the first time got to see on evening television the way power company and government officials "balanced" their health and safety against the financial costs, and determined public policy accordingly. The revelations of the high levels of cancer in southern Utah, where nuclear weapons were tested in the early fifties, also educated the public about how the reality of the nuclear threat has been deliberately concealed and covered up.

The visible result, the sudden swelling of the ranks of the protest movement, has been dramatic. Nevertheless, with a few exceptions, the most visible sector of the anti-nuke movement has been disproportionately white and middle class in its composition. The most notable exception has been the involvement of Native Americans, some from the very beginning. Black and other third world involvement has been growing recently. A number of Black people joined and built the anti-nuclear protest in southwest Mississippi on June 2.

Urgent Tasks contacted Ken Lawrence, a white activist in Mis-

issippi who helped organize that demonstration, to learn some of the details.

UT: How long has there been anti-nuclear activity in Mississippi?

KL: As far as I know, the first stirrings were in 1973, when a few members of the Sierra Club got together to oppose the plan of the Mississippi Power and Light Company to erect a nuclear power facility at Grand Gulf near Port Gibson, Mississippi. This band of people were almost entirely environmentalists, all white.

UT: What happened after that?

KL: Not much in a mass way until recently. For one thing, there wasn't a lot of public interest in the issue. But for another thing, those who were interested in it specifically and vigorously attacked any leftists or liberals who sought to get involved, while they were willing to tolerate the most traditional white conservatives in their ranks. They limited their approach to making formal, legal protests to the reactor license at the various regulatory hearings and, like everyone else who has pursued that approach, they lost, and just fell apart.

UT: Now things have changed?

KL: Yes. There's been a growing popular awareness and opposition to all aspects of nuclear energy in Mississippi over the past year or so. The issue comes up in a number of different ways.

In southern Mississippi, in the 1960's, a series of atomic bomb tests were set off underground in geological formations called salt

domes, and in the past couple of years, despite assurances by the government that everything's all right and nobody could possibly be harmed by the results of those tests, the water supplies in the area have been found to contain higher than normal levels of tritium — radioactive water. Some of the animals — toads and salamanders in ponds at the surface — have been found to have severe deformities. Now the salt domes in that part of the state have been chosen by the government as the likeliest place for the disposal of high-level radioactive waste, which has prompted the organization of a group in Hattiesburg called Mississippians Against Disposal (MAD), which has been quite vocally opposed to the use of the salt domes for the high-level waste.

In northern Mississippi, the Tennessee Valley Authority has a permit to build a nuclear reactor at Yellow Creek, near luka, and the Sierra Club of North Mississippi, at least the more militant members of it, joined the Catfish Alliance and organized in their part of the state to build the Catfish Alliance in opposition to the Yellow Creek reactor.

Another issue that's come up more recently, which is also focused on the nuclear issue, was the discovery that in northern Mississippi and Alabama more than one hundred thousand houses are built on foundation blocks made from slag furnished by the TVA which has turned out to be radioactive, and there's concern that people can be harmed by the radiation from their own houses.

Then of course there's the continuing interest in the Grand Gulf reactor near Port Gibson.

UT: So actually the organized opposition did begin to pick up before the Three Mile Island incident?

KL: Yes, it did, and the largest manifestation of the organization was the demonstration that was held on March 24 at the site of the Yellow Creek reactor, which some of us who went from Jackson thought was a bad demonstration.

UT: How do you mean it was bad?

KL: Well, it attracted two hundred people, which is quite a lot for Mississippi and Alabama, but it was a demonstration that was hidden from view. No one who wasn't a participant in the demonstration could have been aware that it was going on. It was convened at J. P. Coleman State Park, and then there was a march from Coleman Park to the Yellow Creek reactor site, a mile which is in a remote area. It was done on a day when no one was working. So aside from ourselves and our police spies and escorts, no one else was there to take note. Very few press representatives came, and there was very little reporting of it.

Another thing that some of us were distressed about was that there were only two Black participants, and other aspects of the way it was conducted and the thought behind it were quite disturbing. For example, before the march began, the leaders conducted workshops in non-violence, including role-playing, and in those workshops, we, the demonstrators, were pitted against the local populace, especially the workers, who were automatically presumed to be (a) unanimously in favor of the nuclear reactor, (b) potentially violent antagonists, and (c) irrational and unwilling to listen to what we had to say, so our role-playing consisted of how we, the outsiders, the few who understood the problem of nuclear energy, would deal with these local citizens and workers.



Part of the June 2 demonstration.

Another thing that indicated this same political frame of mind is that we were issued trash bags and asked to pick up all the garbage along the side of the road as we marched, which communicated to anyone who might have noticed that the local people were the ones who threw trash by the side of the road, and we — the far more aware and insightful people — were more saintly as well, since we were the ones who picked up their garbage. There was a positive side, though, to that demonstration, and it's important.

UT: What was that?

KL: After the demonstration was the first statewide organizational meeting of the anti-nuclear movement in the state. There were representatives from Jackson, from Hattiesburg, from several places in north and central Mississippi, including some scattered and rural places, who otherwise, but for the demonstration, might never have been attracted to such a meeting. At that meeting we were able to get most of the disparate groups and individuals to agree to affiliate with a statewide Catfish Alliance, and we discussed a lot of these problems that were bothering many of us.

For example, both Jan Hillegas and I, from Jackson, raised the issue of the lack of Black involvement, and a significant number of people there immediately agreed with us that it was important and

something we'd have to deal with, and there was very little overt disagreement with us on that, so at least in spirit, we prevailed, which was an important gain. We argued that the best possibility for getting that involvement would come if substantial numbers of white anti-nuke activists got involved in Black protests such as the United League activities in a number of places.

Then, after that, we had a discussion of where we, in Mississippi, would conduct our demonstrations in conjunction with the international days of protest on June 2nd, 3rd and 4th. Many of the people, probably most of them who were at the meeting, originally were opposed to having the action include a mass demonstration at the Grand Gulf reactor in Port Gibson, arguing that construction is too far along, the plant is almost finished, we won't be able to stop it, and besides, the people in the local community, which is for the county 74% Black, are apathetic — they don't care about the issue or else they actually want the plant because of the jobs and the revenue it will bring into Claiborne County.

We argued against that. We argued, first of all, that if they were correct, though we doubted they were, that that was an argument for a demonstration there, not against it, since it was even more necessary, then, to educate people about the issue and try to win them to our position. Another point, though, was that we felt, first of all, that there probably was opposi-

tion in the community, and nobody had really bothered to check enough to find it and help organize it.

The second thing we offered as a reason why it was a good target for a demonstration was that in April 1978 there was a tornado that hit the plant under construction and cracked a large hole at the top of the cooling tower, and that since that time the contractor building the cooling tower had stated that the damage made the cooling tower unsafe — that it would need to be torn down and built again from scratch — whereas the power company, eager not to spend any more money than necessary, and eager to get the thing finished as quickly as possible, argued that the tower was not unsafe, and has gone to court to force the contractor to patch up the damage and finish it as quickly as possible. So this would be a good way of showing, better than most places provide as examples, the callous disregard that the power company really has for public safety.

The third issue that we thought would be useful is that the former police chief of Jackson, Lavell Tullus, who was notorious for repressive techniques of police management — for example, his attack on the Republic of New Afrika, which has become an international issue — and also his general tolerance and encouragement of police brutality, is now chief of security for the Grand Gulf nuclear plant. We felt that would help us raise concretely the issue of the threat to civil liberties that is posed by the nuclear industry.

Eventually, the meeting agreed that we should demonstrate at both of the nuclear reactor sites in the state on June 2, and that's what was done. I might add that by the time we left the meeting, people were quite enthusiastic about the possibilities, even though they had started out with other thoughts.

UT: How did Blacks get involved in the demonstration?

KL: The process was actually long and slow, but step by step. We set up an organization in Jackson, affiliated with the Catfish Alliance, called Jacksonians United for Livable Energy Policies (JULEP), and three meetings in Jackson each time affirmed the need to have Blacks involved in the demonstration, in the planning for it, and in the organizing, but nobody really did anything to make it happen.

So finally Jan, not quite knowing what to expect, talked with a professor at Jackson State University who had expressed his reservations about nuclear power. He recommended that she contact Evan Doss, who is the highest Black elected official in Claiborne County — he's the county Tax Assessor-Collector — and ask him what his attitude was about the nuclear power plant there. Doss told her he was 100% opposed to the plant, and he later agreed to be the main speaker at the demonstration, which of course was quite a boost for all of us. Doss put us in touch with a local NAACP leader who helped get the word out.

Shortly after that we received in the mail a notice that the United



Evan Doss, Claiborne County tax assessor-collector, addressed the anti-nuclear rally at Port Gibson on June 2.

League had planned a demonstration for the same day in Lexington, Miss., a continuation of a protest that's been going on since last year. I called Arnett Lewis, the leader of the United League in Lexington, explained to him that we had called a demonstration for that date, that our date was chosen in order to coincide with an international day of protest on this issue, that therefore there was no way we could postpone our demonstration. He immediately agreed that this was an important issue, and he later let us know that he had postponed the United League demonstration a week so that it would not conflict with ours, and so that members of the United League who wanted to come to Port Gibson would be able to participate without abandoning their own protest in Holmes County.

We had a concert in Jackson — an anti-nuclear music festival — to raise money for and call attention to the demonstration. That music festival was held on May 17, and several members of the United League attended and supported it.

Shortly after that, we received an invitation from members of the NAACP in Port Gibson to speak on the issue of nuclear energy and specifically the way in which the Grand Gulf plant was a threat to the people of Port Gibson, Claiborne County, and the surrounding area. I spoke there, and the meeting unanimously endorsed the demonstration. Probably a third of the people at the meeting signed up to publicize the demonstration in the community with posters and leaflets. The main Black newspaper in the state, the *Jackson Advocate*, carried a front-page story about the talk I gave and the NAACP's endorsement of the demonstration, together with a picture of the cooling tower cracked by the tornado. As it turned out, everyone I saw at the NAACP meeting came to the demonstration.

UT: What was the demonstration like?

KL: At any given time, there were probably up to four hundred people present, but given the format where people came and went all day long a lot more people took part overall. My estimate is that about a hundred Blacks took part. The demonstration began at the courthouse in Port Gibson with alternating speakers and musical entertainment, including several anti-nuclear songs (two of them were written and sung by Jan Hillegas).

Evan Doss' speech was well received. He spoke mainly about the fears of the local community and his own fears about the threat to public health and safety, and the fact that there seemed to be no evacuation plan that anyone had been able to learn about in case of an emergency, and that the power company officials didn't seem to be too concerned about keeping everyone in the community informed about what was going on.

My speech was mainly on the political repression related to nuclear power and weapons and about Mississippi Power and Light's racist and reactionary political record.

A full range of topics and politics were covered by the various speakers: one was a local farmer who lives downwind from the reactor site and was concerned about the safety not only of his family but of his livestock and therefore of his livelihood. Some of the people were long-time Sierra Club environmentalists. Wayne James, one of the Republic of New Afrika Eleven incarcerated at Parchman State Penitentiary, sent an anti-nuclear statement which was read. A speaker from Hattiesburg focused on the dangers of waste disposal. And so forth. So every aspect of the issue was touched on in the course of the demonstration.

After the speeches and entertainment at the courthouse, we went by motorcade to the reactor site, and there in front of the damaged cooling tower, with all the newspaper representatives and television cameras, we released helium-filled

balloons with tags on them giving the date and place of release, indicating to anyone who finds one of them downwind that the path of the balloon would be the path of radiation in the event of an accident.

UT: Is it possible that this was a one-shot thing and there won't be much in the way of follow-up?

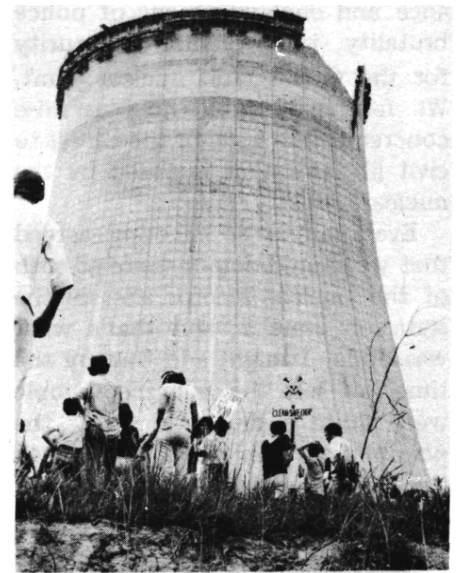
KL: I don't think so. The movement is growing internationally. In Mississippi there are two interesting things that happened right after the demonstration that I'm personally aware of: First is that the week after, the power company held its own meeting at the Port Gibson courthouse and tried to give its refutation of what we had argued during the demonstration. Several of us in different places — Jackson, Hattiesburg, Natchez, and other places where there were anti-nuclear activists — got calls from the people at Port Gibson asking us to show up at that meeting, which we did. The power company representative tried to put down the objections from the community people, arguing that he was a nuclear engineer and knew how safe it was and there was no basis to their fears, saying they were too ignorant and uneducated to be able to state with any knowledge what the problems were.

That didn't satisfy the people. We also argued with him — we who had come from other places — and eventually he tried to shut us up by indicating that we were "outside agitators," but we and the local people responded that we had been asked by citizens of Port Gibson to come and provide this information. After the meeting it was very clear when almost everyone in the room thanked us for coming (it was a long drive in the rain that night) and virtually no one paid any attention to the power company representatives when they left.

The second indication, I think, that this is a matter of growing concern is that the week after the

Port Gibson demonstration was the demonstration that the United League in Lexington had postponed. I was welcomed as an anti-nuclear activist, and was introduced as a speaker at the demonstration as a member of the Mississippi Catfish Alliance, so it was clear that this issue was one of concern to the United League members at their own protest around quite a separate issue.

The movement seems to be growing spontaneously. Our first JULEP meeting after the demonstration was three or four times bigger than any previous one, but continued to suffer from the weakness of being all white, and we're not quite certain about how that situation will be resolved. It's not necessarily a weakness if decisions and activities are determined in close consultation with Black groups like the United League and the Port Gibson NAACP who are concerned, but so far the procedures for doing this have remained informal and personal. Obviously that will have to change. As yet only a few of us in the anti-nuclear movement have participated in United League demonstrations. That will have to change, too, if the Black groups are to have any reason to respect and trust the anti-nuclear organizations.



Editorial

"Unconditional Support" and "Follow Third World Leadership"

Marxist-Leninists in Europe and North America usually manage to "forget" Lenin's clear statement that communists must support "... in deed, not merely in word . . . all revolutionary movements among the dependent and underprivileged nations . . . and in the colonies." When the Communist International made unconditional support for revolutionary anti-colonial movements a condition of affiliation, it assumed — correctly for that period — that the center of the revolutionary process was among the working classes of the developed capitalist states in Europe and North America. This is no longer the case.

Following the defeat and containment of the revolutionary upsurge in the imperialist countries after World War I, the main focus of the revolutionary process shifted to anti-imperialist movements on the periphery of the world capitalist system. Neither the weaknesses and limitations of these movements, nor the ultimate importance of the metropolitan proletariat to the achievement of communism, diminish the present centrality of anti-imperialist national liberation movements.

History has not rendered Lenin's imperative obsolete. It has become more, not less, important for revolutionaries in the imperialist countries. Initially, it was seen as a necessary step towards winning hegemony for the revolutionary proletariat among the working masses — particularly the "toilers of the East." Now it marks the requirement for the class struggle in the imperialist center to be integrated into the general revolutionary movement against the capitalist world system.

Support for national liberation and full equality of peoples is not just one of a number of features of proletarian internationalism. It embodies the practical recognition of the international character of the extraction, appropriation, and distribution of surplus value, and of the actual alignment of forces for and against revolution in the world. In the absence of a proper appreciation of this principle, the workers in the metropolis will not be able decisively to break through the limits of social-democratic reformism.

The rejection, explicit or implicit, of this Leninist understanding of imperialism is a general characteristic of the (white) U.S. left. However, an incorrect opposing view has some currency also. Although it is an infinitely less serious weakness, it can lead to political errors.

Two related concepts are often used to summarize the Leninist conception. Put in slogan form, they are: "follow Third World leadership" and "unconditional support for national liberation." Frequently they are combined to yield: "unconditional support for Third World leadership." There is a basic validity to these concepts, but as they are commonly used they mystify political issues and undercut the very goals they seek to promote.

"Third World leadership" designates a reality. Not only do oppressed peoples and their organizations determine the form and content of their own struggles — a proposition that is widely accepted in words and denied in deeds; the movements of national liberation are the main component of the international class struggle and

decisively influence the class struggle within the imperialist states. This affects, for example, the terrain of the trade union struggle. That there is no wall between national liberation and the class struggle is immediately obvious in this country, where nationally oppressed peoples occupy strategically decisive positions within the working class.

These are important issues which merit elaboration, but our concern here is the element of error, not that of validity, in the use of the concept of "Third World leadership."

The first error is to reduce the revolutionary struggle in the imperialist countries to a question of following Third World leadership, or, more broadly, of solidarity with national liberation. There are two closely connected components of the world revolutionary process: the struggles of the oppressed peoples for national liberation, and the struggles of the proletariat against the bourgeoisie. The former are at the present time the most active component; within the U.S. there exist national liberation struggles that decisively influence the form and content of class struggle, and identification with national liberation is the central element in the emergence of the proletariat as a revolutionary class. However, even in this situation, national liberation is not the totality of the revolutionary process.

Even on the level of tactics, if the specific approaches which proved successful in Vietnam may not be applicable to industrialized semi-colonies like Iran or Argentina, their applicability to a country like the U.S. is even more dubious, and it cannot be assumed that

those who have proven their ability to develop strong revolutionary movements under certain conditions necessarily have the answers for all situations.

Furthermore, while successful national liberation movements represent the most visible hopes for communism, they don't constitute a guarantee of it. Events constantly remind us of the reversibility of national liberation and the tenaciousness of the world capitalist system. The problems of moving from a military-political break with imperialism to the construction of a communist society largely remain to be solved. If this is the case for successful anti-imperialist revolutions, how can the strategy for revolution in imperialist countries be fabricated out of a simple identification with anti-imperialism?

The second error is the confusion of unconditional support for national liberation with an uncritical identification with positions taken by the national liberation leadership or elements of it. Unconditional support involves a conscious subordination of political differences for definite political reasons. The political leadership of national liberation movements must be followed on questions concerning the form and content of the movements they head, not because this leadership is always right, but because it is the social force whose correct and incorrect positions "matter." This has nothing to do with any attribution of infallibility and omniscience. We do liberation movements no favor by disguising disagreements, or, still worse, by evading questions which must be of

concern to all revolutionaries.

Communists and communist groups cannot cede their right to participate critically in the determination of revolutionary policy — not if they wish to remain communist. This is true no matter how insignificant our resources and capabilities appear when contrasted with the organized leadership of mass revolutionary movements. We should note well the disastrous consequences for the movement when genuinely revolutionary forces all over the world abandoned responsibility for all major political questions to the Soviet leadership. And after all, the Soviet party was the party that had made the first successful assault against capitalism and had defended itself in a bloody war against the combined forces of the capitalist world.

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Women and modern capitalism

part two - alienation and objectification

By Alison Edwards

Author's Note

Throughout this article I use male gender words like man and mankind to refer to men and women and to men alone. The meaning should be clear from the context in which the word is used. Although this is a remnant of male supremacy and the invisibility of women, alternative forms of expression are either awkward (he/she) or misleading (I use humankind and humanity to refer to something else in this article). Therefore, with my regrets, mankind for now will have to be adequate.

Foot binding is no longer practiced in China, but United States office workers limp through crowded streets in four-inch backless high heels. Women report television news in equal numbers to men, but all are young, thin, and decorative, as defined by male chauvinist standards. Birth control has freed women to experience sex purely for pleasure, but group libel of women in the form of pornography denatures her sexual fulfillment and mangles the very meaning of pleasure. Over 45 percent of the United States labor force is women, but on their way to work men everywhere whistle, grunt, or otherwise comment on the attractiveness (or, worse still, on the lack of attractiveness) of their legs, faces, and bodies. Women's household labor and its corollary, the transient labor force, may no longer be a pillar of bourgeois domination, but oppression is still here. In some respects, particularly in sexual objectification — a one-dimensional, stunted view of women's existence for man's pleasure — oppression has increased dramatically.

This section of *Women and Modern Capitalism* will examine why it is extremely unlikely that women will be able to throw off the yoke of male supremacy under capitalism, notwithstanding its tendency to erode the *material* basis of women's oppression and equalize the status of women and men within their respective classes. The essence of this apparent dichotomy lies in an understanding of alienation, "the hallmark of the modern age."¹

Part I of this article examined the material effects of capitalist expansion and corresponding changes in women's traditional role as keeper of home and hearth.

First, capitalism, which historically provided the material conditions for women's oppression, has itself undergone vast changes. These changes have increasingly created the conditions under which women can achieve liberation. The decisive change has been women's emergence from the isolation of the home and entry into the social relations accompanying employment. Second, women's condition itself has vastly improved in the capitalist countries as capitalism has become more and more advanced. Universal public education, equal access to the universities, easily obtainable divorce, and a multitude of convenience products which have virtually done away with housework, all give women control over their lives unequalled anywhere else.²

This equalizing tendency of capi-

talism, however, is only one aspect of its development and expansion. Another, equally significant to women's condition, is its effect on the quality of life people lead. Analysis of the quality of life and changes wrought by World War II and by splitting the atom — decisive and closely related phenomena — is more subjective, and for that reason more difficult than analysis of raw economic change. It calls for answers to what humanity requires for fulfillment and continuity. Consideration of the quality of life demands that one isolate what is universal to the human condition from what can or should be altered by technological innovation or economic planning. These questions tend to be shunned by Marxist organizations as remote to the interests of the working class, and, for that reason, as bourgeois deviations from the task at hand for communists. In fact, however, they are considerations which percolate in the consciousness of every person, albeit in fragmented form, and which form the basis of working class resistance to the degradation of life at the workplace. It is the stuff of which proletarian revolution will be made.

Though alienation of labor (and its ramifications in all aspects of modern life) affects both men and women, it has uniquely affected women by transmogrifying male supremacy from an economic phenomenon with material roots, to a pervasive and entrenched cultural norm principally benefitting men. Whereas once woman had a roughly autonomous sphere of existence, albeit a subordinate one in the home, she is now depicted by an omnipresent and enormously influential mass media as existing principally for man's pleasure and comfort. Whatever other functions she

may be granted — and her choices are greater than ever before — pleasing and titillating man is primary, influencing and shaping all other facets of her life. This section of *Women and Modern Capitalism* will examine this process of change and try to show how male supremacy is more than an ideological hangover from an era in which universal domestic servitude was essential to capitalist accumulation.

Degradation of Labor

While the direction of capitalism has been to improve women's condition as *women*, namely, to tend toward equalizing the status of women and men within each class, this tendency has as its basis the drive to expand capital by expanding the means of production. This growth is accomplished by innovations designed to make production faster, cheaper, and more efficient, and to make workers easier to control. The earliest of these capitalist innovations was the division of labor in manufacturing: the breakdown of the processes that go into making a product into separate and distinct operations performed by separate and distinct workers. Through this separation of the work of manufacturing into component parts and allocation of different parts to different workers, the capitalist was able to make the whole process more efficient by mechanizing each part. Eventual pooling of financial resources permitted technological improvements, from the assembly line to automation and beyond, to eliminate large numbers of workers and to transform the nature of work for those who remain.³ The fact that automation has not created much more general unemployment in the United States is due to its unique position in world affairs. The most heavily automated industries, such as petrochemicals, are simply built outside the U.S., for example, in Puerto Rico, where unemployment is above 40 percent.

Though technological improvement has generally made jobs cleaner, physically easier, and more accessible to less skilled, less educated, and less strong workers, a fact which has potentially opened up whole new areas of work to women, it has accomplished this at the high price of mechanizing, routinizing and degrading those that remain. Though this process has produced greater material wealth and leisure for the working class, and though it has led to proliferation of consumer goods for their enjoyment, as a whole it has worked against the working class. A high standard of living has emerged at the cost of imposing rigid controls on human action, not just at the workplace but throughout society, dissociating man from the earth which supports his life and from the world which he himself has shaped. These assertions, which will be developed further shortly, are more than metaphysical ramblings or religious dogma (though man *has*, until the modern age, universally sought explanation of the nexus between nature and humanity through religion). What differentiates man from other mammals is his ability to fashion tools with which *he himself* can knowingly and intelligently shape his environment. While civilization by its definition demands that man abandon the state of nature (barbarism) to gather in communities, his acts of production — of transforming his environment — remain fundamentally internal to and under the control of his own actions. Transformation of man the toolmaker, whose tools were fashioned by and for the individual craftsman, into man the laborer, whose space and time are minutely and pervasively dictated by the rhythm of machines he operates both for existence (such as the time clock or the punch press) and for pleasure (such as the car or television), is the concrete reality of modern existence. This is the society in which women work, live, and reproduce, and the

society which defines their oppression.

Division of Labor

Because numbers of feminist theorists see women's oppression as a direct result of the "oldest" or "original" division of labor — that between woman and man — it is important to distinguish social division of labor from the division of labor in manufacturing. Mechanical division of labor is not simply a refinement of the social division of labor. It is a wholly different category embodying fundamentally different social relations.

Both radical feminists and socialist feminists incorporate variants of the division of labor theory into their analysis of women's oppression. For the radical feminists, patriarchy created a hierarchy in which men controlled the labor of women in society. This was accomplished through force and control made possible by women's reproductive functions. Through history, the institutions and forms of control have changed, but the power relations have remained basically intact. Pivotal societal relations are those of reproduction, and the sexual division of labor is the principal method of control, with women as the oppressed class. Social change therefore begins with fundamental reorganization of sex roles.

Socialist feminists generally accept the premise that patriarchy created the original hierarchical ordering of society but add that this mechanism of control now operates as an essential, if not *the* essential form of political control for capitalist society.

When one states that capitalism needs patriarchy in order to operate efficiently one is really noting that male supremacy, as a system of sexual hierarchy, supplies capitalism (and systems previous to it) with necessary order and control.

This patriarchal system of control is thus necessary to the smooth functioning of the society and the economic system and hence should not be undermined. This argument is to underscore the importance of the system of cultural, social, economic, and political control that emanates from the system of male supremacy. To the extent the concern with profit and the concern with societal control are inextricably connected (but cannot be reduced to each other), patriarchy and capitalism become an *integral process*; specific elements of each system are necessitated by the other.⁴

Whether the sexual division of labor in primitive society was by definition hierarchical or whether it sometimes assumed egalitarian and sometimes totalitarian forms is unclear from anthropological literature. Assuming, however, for the sake of argument that sexual division of labor *was* inherently hierarchical, it simply is not believable that primitive mechanisms of control — which initially would have assumed intensely personal forms and have been at least partially offset by major aspects of co-operation between men and women necessitated by surviving and surmounting the obstacles of nature — would have been even largely or basically kept intact through the ages. This conclusion assumes that actual techniques of control were learned and consciously retained by men, accepted by women, and adapted in isolation from all the co-operative facets of primitive life. Further, it assumes that such techniques were superimposed on hundreds of successive generations in a virtual vacuum, culminating in the impersonal, specialized, fragmented and near-totalitarian organization of society that increasingly characterizes the modern age. When all

other forms of social relations and relations of production (which are themselves social relations) have changed, it would be extremely coincidental if this one had not. Further, nobody has presented convincing evidence or argument that capitalists *purposefully* adapted male supremacy at any point in capitalist development in order to divide or control the working class, as was done with white supremacy through Black slavery in the seventeenth century and the smashing of Reconstruction in the nineteenth.

What has happened is that the nature of division of labor has itself been transformed, which has changed both the form and content of women's oppression. Patriarchy, the organization of the family in which the male head controls reproduction and production of women and children, has been *undercut* by capitalism, not reinforced by it. In its wake other forms of social control have substantially, though not completely, replaced it. By the same token, what we now experience as male supremacy would at earlier times have been beyond the realm of imagination. What must be examined regarding the division of labor and women's oppression are the changes wrought by the division, segmentation, and resulting intensification of labor on the interdependent

categories of (a) women as workers, (b) women as reproducers, and (c) cultural forms which increasingly not merely reflect but dramatically reinforce and reshape people's concepts of themselves, others, and relations among people. This task requires as a prerequisite a basic overview of the differences between social and manufacturing division of labor and the implications of these differences for society.

Alienation

Human work differs from that of other animals in the complexity of its possibilities.

An animal forms things in accordance with the standard and need of the species to which it belongs, whilst man knows how to produce in accordance with the standard of every species.⁵

"Fish gotta swim and birds gotta fly ..." but man swims like a fish and fishes like a bear, hunts like a lion, flies like a bird, and weaves like a spider.⁶ Since each person cannot perform all tasks even at their most basic level, it is characteristic of human society to divide them into distinct crafts. Such social division of labor historically



Credit: Hazel Hanken LNS

tended to embody a high level of autonomy among the different crafts, in general dividing people as equals in the marketplace. Whether woman's unique craft of childbearing and childrearing enjoyed the equality and autonomy of others, including those embarked upon by women, or whether women were part of the decisions that divided the labor, are less important than the fact that the society as a whole tended to be egalitarian. At the very least, the household realm was organized by women, and within that realm they performed a large variety of tasks recognized as fundamental to existence and survival.

Division of labor in manufacturing, or detail labor, on the other hand, decomposes each step in the process of producing each item so that a laborer performs just one simple operation in its manufacture. What is decisive is not that the operation is separated into its constituent elements, but that different operations are assigned to different workers. It is as though one woman did the courting (in the biological sense), one had the intercourse, a third tended a gestating machine, a fourth transferred baby from gestation to world, etc., and each worker did the same task all the time. Technical innovation permits greater and greater refinement of operations and reduces the level of skill for most jobs so that workers can be trained in days, or minutes. Each step in the labor process is removed from specialized skill and knowledge. The process obscures the very difference between, say, hunter and weaver, by reducing both trades to a series of minute and roughly interchangeable tasks. The process of making the tools that go into killing an animal and the tools that go into fashioning the cloth (and both seem increasingly a product of petrochemicals) can be performed by the same set of workers. Hunter and weaver cease to exist as such.

This minute specialization characteristic of manufacturing division

of labor increasingly pervades all jobs and occupations. Intellectual labor, seen by liberals and academics as the opposite of physical labor in its self-actualizing potential for the doer, has also been segmented by technological innovation, vast bodies of data, and resulting specialization. Although this tendency has been distorted by sociologists, often in an attempt to demonstrate increasing proletarianization of their non-proletarian jobs, it is a good indicator of the breadth with which capitalism distorts all aspects of work, even those generally considered sheltered from its encroachment. Today's physician, M. Deity that he is in the United States, barely even attempts to understand the complex interplay of homeostatic mechanisms that represent health to the whole person. There are heart doctors and heart surgeons. There are baby doctors, baby heart doctors, and baby heart surgeons. Physicians treat patients principally by prescribing drugs solely on authority of sales information from pharmaceutical companies who in turn hire house doctors to pump their products. Hoffman-LaRoche spent \$200 million in ten years to promote valium and commissioned 200 doctors a year to write "scientific studies" about its properties.⁷ What causes human beings to need drugs is generally beyond the scope of the physician, who more and more functions by alleviating pain. (Contemporary dimensions of pain and its absence are uniquely modern and central to a society characterized by alienation and its cultural counterpart: hedonism. It's not just the doctors — it's everybody.

Once the rockets go up, who cares where they come down? It's not my department, says Werner Von Braun!⁸

The implications of the difference between social division of labor and detail division of labor in

manufacturing are enormous. Social division of labor, characteristic of all known human society, assigns a person a job to do — a craft or occupation — and more or less leaves the methods of doing the job to the worker. The worker (or group of workers) retains some level of control over how the job is organized, over pace of work, and over what happens to the finished product, which he or his designate exchanges at the marketplace. Work and community are organized on a human scale. Not so with detail labor, which is a creature of capitalism. There, hierarchical organization is the order of the day, as the individual worker sells not the result of his carefully fashioned product, but his muscle and time — his labor power — and loses control over organization and pace of work, over what is made, and over how it gets distributed. This tendency affects the worker whether he is paid minimum wage at a candy factory or \$9.50 an hour at an auto plant.

. . . within the capitalist system all methods for raising the social productiveness of labor are brought about at the cost of the individual laborer; all means for the development of production transform themselves into means of domination over, and exploitation of, the producers; they mutilate the laborer into a fragment of a man, degrade him to the level of an appendage of a machine, destroy every remnant of charm in his work and turn it into hated toil; they estrange from him the intellectual potentialities of the labor process in the same proportion as science is incorporated in it as an independent power; they distort the conditions under which he works, subject him during the labor process to a despotism more

hateful for its meanness; they transform his life-time into working time, and drag his wife and child beneath the wheels of the Juggernaut of capital. But all methods for the production of surplus-value are at the same time methods of accumulation; and every extension of accumulation becomes again a means for the development of those methods. It follows therefore that in proportion as capital accumulates, the lot of the labourer, be his payment high or low, must grow worse.⁹



Credit: LNS Graphics

This process is more than simple job dissatisfaction, though sociologists still dwell upon how to organize production to increase the workers' pride in their contributions (studies paid for by management to halt the tide of strikes, absenteeism, sabotage, and other assaults on production). What Marx is describing is the process of alienation: the essential degradation of labor which sets in motion a world which separates man not just from his product, but from himself (as his labor belongs to another) and to a significant extent from other people, as what binds person to person in society is common purpose achieved by common effort, largely absent in modern society except in times of crisis or collective resistance. The fact that Marx describes man as principal worker and "wife" and "child" as properly something else is a relatively minor point and, in fact, was true for its time. Child labor and factory work for women with small children, at a time when household functions were an essential and extremely time-consuming part of existence, meant a double shift for women.

Women's Alienated Labor

Part I of this article examined in general terms the ramifications of women's entry into the labor force.

Part of this change for women has meant entry into a labor force increasingly characterized by detail labor and totalitarian organization. Whereas job sectors traditionally occupied by women were at one time characterized by a level of personal control over working conditions adequate to identify worker with management, this is less and less true. Clerical occupations have shifted from an arm of management to detail labor, rationalized and systematized much as with manufacturing industry. Office workers are, by and large, machine operators, and the relationship between boss and worker on the one hand, and *work* and worker on the other, has given way to the impersonal organization and intensification of modern industry. Clerical work in finance, insurance, and government bureaucracy has become highly proletarianized, as has work in communication. Other women's occupations have also been segmented and intensified, though less completely than in manufacturing or clerical labor. Nursing students take psychology courses to learn to "re-late" to patients, but clinical instructors tell them to *try* to take a "minute or two" each day to establish contact with each patient. (To

the extent that any relating occurs, it is parcelled out to psychologists and social workers.) School teachers, whatever their skills and intentions, are part cop, a condition demanded by need for order and control in a society characterized increasingly by disorder and chaos.

One aspect of alienated labor and its increasingly impersonal content is its effect on the task of raising young children, still principally the province of women. Hours spent at work are not the crucial part. Rather, the *content* of such work and its effect on the wholly different pace and activity demanded by children is what is important. Household labor may be isolating and limiting. There is just so much fulfillment one can get from serving meatloaf, watching Sesame Street, or even partaking of a young child's unfolding accomplishments. The creativity once associated with women's sphere in household labor has been reduced precisely by those technical and social advances which have freed her from its confinements — from electrification to public education. Furthermore, the nurturance demanded of a woman is in vast disproportion to what she gets

back, particularly from a man. *But household labor, even in its present, relatively unrewarding form, is not alienated labor.* In addition to the fact that it allows women control over the pace and organization of work, the essential humanity of pregnancy, childbirth, and nurturance of children can provide women with a sense of purpose, continuity, *limited* collectivity, and fulfillment which are fundamental human needs hard to find elsewhere in this society.

The self-actualizing component of *child-rearing*, however, is dramatically diminished by the alienation of the *child-rearer*. The human toll taken by degradation of labor at the workplace — the incessant noise, the fast pace, the monotony, the control — renders the worker barely adequate to the co-operative, open-ended, creative, and emotional demands of raising children. The jarring, anesthetizing, fragmenting effect of labor flattens the worker's affective responses, puts life on a rigid schedule, and demands that family life itself be rationalized and systematized. Alienated labor makes people cranky, crabby, and anxious. The patience and humor demanded of parents can be summoned by the worker only by a supreme effort of will. The educational functions of parenting are beyond the endurance of most workers, and television takes up the slack. All these things affect men as well as women, but it is women who have been conditioned and educated from childhood that raising children is their job. It is women who mourn the loss of the affective ties of parenthood.

Changes wrought by entry of women into this increasingly alienated mass of laborers have given women a substantial measure of independence from men and have put working class women in a strategic position to recognize their revolutionary potential as part of the class. At the same time, however, economic pressures toward uninterrupted labor not only alienate

women as workers — and low paid ones at that — but increasingly dissociate woman from nature as experienced in her relationship to procreation. What is deforming to women is not household labor *per se*, but household labor in an alienated society.

A Question of Biology

Woman is designed to gestate, to bear children, and to nurse her young. It is a good design, it has worked effectively, and, judging from the number of unwanted pregnancies, it is hard to fight. Woman is also designed to do almost everything man can do. Throughout the period of capitalist development these basic facts have been molded, mangled, and made into monstrous myths to conform to the needs of the bourgeoisie vis a vis both working class and affluent women. What is more, a whole series of emotional qualities have been both extrapolated from and superimposed upon women's biological characteristics: inferior intelligence, superior nurturance (for men as well as for infants), gentleness, moodiness, and so forth. Scientific "evidence" of these truths came forth as though by spontaneous combustion. Women have smaller heads; therefore their brains hold less than men's. Women bleed spontaneously every month; therefore they are sick and need to stay close to home. Women lack penises; therefore they are defective men.

By the late nineteenth century the by-then-male medical profession had contributed substantially to male supremacist ideology by defining women not just as inferior and sick, but as medically dangerous to men as well.¹⁰ What is more, these theories managed to justify diametrically opposed views of women of different classes.¹¹ Rich women were too frail to work. Poor immigrant women, however, had strong, robust bodies, especially Black women who worked in the

fields. They were just dirty and disease-ridden: likely to infect meandering middle-class men. The myths come and go as they are needed and themselves affect women's behavior. Perhaps because the "everything else" of woman's design has until recently been denied to women, the fact that the modern age is increasingly characterized by degradation of women's childbearing functions rather than glorification of them has been denied or trivialized by feminists and Marxists alike. The gulf, however, between the ideology of earth-mother-madonna and the reality of woman's dissociated relation to her body and to herself as a sexual, reproducing being biologically equipped to nurture her young, is wide and deep.

This tendency is most apparent in the treatment of Third World women. Attempts to halt the increasing birth rate among Third World people has taken a savage form in its degradation of Third World women. Sterilization abuse is the most blatant form, but there are others. More subtle but also pernicious is the related phenomenon of indiscriminately counselling new teenage mothers how to keep it from happening again. Even assuming good intentions, it seems beyond the comprehension of white medical personnel that a Third World teenage woman might want to have several children at a young age, have the assistance of her own still-young mother during the early years of their lives, and then move on to other things if possible or desirable. These examples would solely indicate oppression of Third World people, not degradation of women as a group, were it not for the fact that the degradation takes other less insidious, more indirect and subtle, but nonetheless compelling forms in relation to white women.

There is growing economic and cultural pressure toward late child-bearing among all classes in the U.S. Fun during youth (before settling

down, the culturally defined antithesis of fun), and self-fulfillment through education, work, and financial security are reasons why middle-class women in particular, but working-class women as well, delay childbearing. This trend exists in spite of abundant evidence that in contemporary society, child-bearing after age 30 is harder, riskier for the mother, less successful, and results in dramatically greater incidence of birth defects among infants. Even these studies, however, have a built-in cultural bias. As women's reproductive system matures in early teen years and the body has substantially reached full growth by age 16 or 18, it seems likely that late teens and early twenties, rather than 20-30, is the optimal biological period for child-bearing. The modern obsession with fun, youth, and self will be examined more closely in the following section on culture. Its liberating aspects for women, however, should not obscure its fundamentally alienated nature: that in spite of the biological detriments, mothering is something you do after you've enjoyed life — something separate from you as "you."

Perhaps the most blatant example of dissociation of women from the experience of reproduction is the way in which birth is handled in this society. For generations the medical establishment, itself a model of technical specialization and innovation, has saved a few lives at the cost of degrading all women and severing early and crucial mother-child bonds. An infant is born in a hospital (a place for the sick and dying) to a drugged mother, shaved, sterilized, and hooked up to several machines. Mother and infant are separated for 6 to 24 hours after birth, while the infant is kept warm in a plastic box under an artificial light. A whole generation or two were convinced they were physically unable to breast-feed their babies — they were too modern, too busy, and too high-strung — in spite of

THEFACTS:

1 HUNDREDS OF THOUSANDS OF AMERICAN WOMEN ARE ALREADY USING ENCORE OVAL™.

Encare Oval™ was introduced in the U.S. to doctors in November 1977, and has drawn the attention of both the medical profession and the public to a greater extent than any contraceptive product since the pill. Gynecologists have been recommending it with high frequency. And Encare Oval already has become the vaginal contraceptive most often recommended by pharmacists. Today, Encare Oval is being used by hundreds of thousands of women, and users surveyed report overwhelming satisfaction. Encare Oval™ users say they find it an answer to their concerns about the pill, IUDs, diaphragms, and aerosol foams.



the fact that the formula fad was initiated by the middle classes, where women by and large were not employed outside the home during the infancy of their children. What is remarkable is that until recently these procedures were taken for granted. There is now a minor retreat from some of the most dehumanizing of these modern aspects of childbirth: fathers are permitted to observe deliveries on certain occasions, breast-feeding is encouraged, and babies are permitted to remain with parents for a short period before being whisked away in the plastic box. Also, drugs during delivery are no longer foisted upon unwilling women, probably more due to malpractice suits than to any understanding of the relation between pain, control, strenuous effort, and ultimate release during the birth process. Humane childbirth, however, is not the order of the day (though a movement has made it an alternative for some women), as the American College of Obstetrics will expel any member who performs a delivery at home. The *fact* of life has taken over entirely from the *quality* of life. It is true that hospitals save some infants' lives when they would not survive without modern technology. It is also true that this intervention itself sometimes harms infants and mothers, and that lives of all babies possible

are saved regardless of the quality of life that a severely damaged infant can expect. What stands out among these facts, however, is that obsession with raw individual existence is unique to the modern age — a phenomenon which can be observed in attempts to extend the natural life span of humans indefinitely, the morbid dread of aging and death, and the absence of an accepted philosophical justification for suicide, which in many states and most religions is a serious crime.

This reification of life itself has a grotesque contradictory aspect in modern society, however. Lest any person have thought that life as the highest good overrides economic considerations of capitalism, the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island would have set him straight. The increasingly greater attempts to strike a balance between cost and benefit were seen there in their most horrifying form — the balancing of the cost (in dollars and impact) of evacuating hundreds of thousands of people in central Pennsylvania versus the chance that things would be okay (meaning nothing immediately cataclysmic would occur). In a square-off between individual life and capitalism the individual is vanquished, a fact with revolutionary implications for a nation of people imbued with the ideology of the sanctity of life.

A humanly organized society would recognize that during the infancy of a child, a woman cannot live by a clock. After a year of paid "leave," it would provide another year or two of part-time work suitable in pace and control to nurturing children part-time. A humanly conceived vision of the new society should provide appropriate flexibility for fathers as well. Such demands would even be consistent with capitalism were it not for the curious notion of a property right in one's job made law by American trade unionism.

Like much of woman's oppression, dissociation from her bodily

functions takes largely a psychological form, negatively shaping woman's self-concept in an age when a positive and happy "self" are the measure of one's worth. It is now known, for example, that postpartum depression, for years attributed to women's neurotic rejection of motherhood or to hormonal change, almost never occurs in mothers who deliver their infants at home with control over the birth process and over their subsequent relationship to the baby.

The biological self-contempt of women has been (and still is, to a large extent) truly remarkable. The contortions women go through for beauty is one example. No one likes her own body the way it is. What is more, it took a revolutionary movement to smoke out the universal self-doubt and get women talking and admitting to their best friends, let alone to men, that they feared they were frigid or built wrong or otherwise defective because they weren't having orgasms routinely or at all during intercourse. Such is not the case with men, whose biological function is glorified.

It is compelling testimony of the extent to which women's biological function has been degraded that a whole sector of the movement sees the liberation of women not in a balancing of reproductive tasks, on the one hand, and physical and mental labor (work) on the other, but on the annihilation of women as reproducers of children.¹² That it is within the realm of human capability to create life artificially does not mean such techniques should be used. Such a vision is the quintessence of alienation and the attempt to escape the human condition as we know it. Though not intended as such, it is thoroughly consistent with totalitarianism, not just through the obvious mechanism of eugenics, but through the obliteration of all human differences in the name of equality.

Biological alienation of women has been a critical part of the trans-



"We're making a baby!"

formation of male supremacy from an economic necessity for capital to an ideological crutch for men. Objectification of woman's body for man's pleasure and everything that follows from this mangled view of woman is utterly inconsistent with woman's natural relation to reproduction.

Force of Ideology

Ideology is a powerful social force. Once established it does more than justify prevailing economic patterns. It wends its way into law, religious dogma, norms and mores of a society. It invades and shapes individual consciousness. It takes on a life of its own and becomes firmly rooted in mass consciousness long after its material basis has disappeared. The Protestant ethic of work and frugality persists in the U.S. in spite of the fact that the economy runs on credit.

This relative independence of the superstructure cannot be underestimated. Ideas may be derived from material events, but ideas themselves are instrumental things. A powerful enough ideology becomes so firmly embedded in the minds of men through law, morality, art, science, religion, and philosophy, that it can itself help shape the further course of events of a civilization.

... an ideology gnawed at, worried to the bone, argued about, dissected, and re-

stated by an army of essayists, moralists, and intellectuals becomes a force in its own right.¹³

Such has been the fate of male supremacy, which has persisted in spite of the erosion of its material base. Male supremacy is more than just a few centuries of accumulated prejudice. It is a few centuries of accumulated prejudice uniquely transformed and transmogrified to keep humanity afloat in a culture of nothing.

So far this article has tried to show how the relationship of the individual to his work is not a phenomenon that can be separated from other aspects of human existence. Fundamentally, work which satisfies no creative human urge, but is performed only to satisfy wants wholly unrelated to the nature of that work, and which at the same time belongs not to the worker himself, but to another, dissociates that worker from himself. Alienated labor transforms man's essential humanity into non-human property of another. The dissociation between one's work and any observable shaping of his world denies the essence of his human condition, for through the world one makes, one affirms his existence.

Man, who produces his living, has become in large part object: a product of his production. In the U.S., where capitalism has reached an advanced stage, the working class is on the whole monetarily affluent, at least by world standards. This affluence finds its outlet in an extreme form of mass consumption. Change in a fast-moving cycle of obsolescence and newness is not just the norm, but the objective. One positive and potentially revolutionary aspect of this basically alienated and alienating process — that of having rather than being or making — has been discussed in Part I. The feast of consumer goods in the U.S. has brought women, once essential to capitalism as

homemakers, out of the home and into the working class in their own right. But a negative aspect exists as well. A culture of mass consumption has become a culture of hedonism: fun, excitement, glamour, and sunshine. California. It has gone a long way in freezing women as objects to consume.

Contemporary mass culture did not come to be simply because there were capitalists producing luxuries that had to be bought to keep their industries in business. The cultural transformation of modern society is a complex interaction of events and circumstances. Revolutions in technology brought electric appliances to most people's houses, simplifying the tasks needed for existence. Mass production on the assembly line made enough products available and low enough in cost to reach most workers. Development of advertising and marketing refined and institutionalized manipulation of people's tastes and wants. Growth of finance and the business of credit put previously inaccessible luxuries within reach of the entire working class. Television carefully packaged it all and delivered it to the homes of people who could receive well-researched messages without being able to answer them. Vast road networks and air travel shrunk the globe, making small-town, independent culture a thing of the past. These circumstances transformed people's lives, glorified change and progress, and made the abstract principle of equality which had always been an ideological foundation of U.S. society an apparent material reality to the U.S. working class. A culture based on abstinence and future salvation through work was transformed into one of hedonism and fun *now* through consumption. It was the answer to the degradation of labor and alienation of modern man. The powerlessness and meaninglessness of people's lives found apparent power and meaning through consumption of goods and plain old fun.

Cultural Transformations of Male Supremacy

Advertising and marketing are the most extraordinary phenomena of our time. Five hundred years from now (assuming we've not incinerated the planet before then) cultural anthropologists and historians won't bother much with our films, books, and articles. They will look at our colorful advertisements and catchy jingles to decipher what our culture was all about. The American mass media exists to sell: to sell audiences to advertisers, and social institutions and advertisers to audiences. The actual ads are only half the sale; television programming and magazine content are the other half. They merchandise ads that sell the products. Family shows sell fast foods and detergents. Late night detective shows sell fast cars and beer that tastes like detergents.

The content of the sales pitch, however, must to a large extent give the people what they want to hear. It must appeal to present motives and goals of the audience: youth, glamour, sex, romance and fun. Although the media reflects, maintains, and rigidly reinforces cultural values, it cannot fundamentally alter the audience's view of itself and its world. The extent to which these present "values" are reinforced, particularly among youth, at whom mass culture and media alike are largely aimed, is Orwellian. Teen-age youth were recently polled on attitudes toward parents and toward television figures. Seventy-five percent wanted to trade in their old parents for new models: Burt Reynolds for father and one of Charlie's Angels for mother.

Television is the principal source of information for a majority of the U.S. people. Alienated man, already dissociated from himself, from other men, from feelings, and ultimately from reality, anesthetizes himself in front of the tube. The average person spends something

like six hours a day watching television. TV news presents data from all over the world, but that data is edited and re-edited to maintain the audience and to sell products. As such, it is flat, emotionless, unobjectionable, and banal. Murder and war are presented studiously and deliberately with less affect than sports. Exceptions are startling. In the final days before Somoza fled to the United States, the impromptu execution of an ABC news reporter by a Nicaraguan national guardsman was shown straight. It was hideous and chilling. The cameraman-turned-reporter by the luck of the position of the camera told the story in a shaking voice. Anchorpeople were rendered momentarily speechless. But such candor is extremely rare.

A young man at the time of Socrates would have far greater contact with the realities of life and death than would any of the TV wet-nursed generation. War, death, famine, sickness, indeed all of life's experiences, would have been very close to his perception every time he stepped out of the front door; life at its best and worst awaited him in the streets — real life, not ersatz illusions of real life misrepresented, in the words of Coca-Cola's latest banality as "The Real Thing!"¹⁴

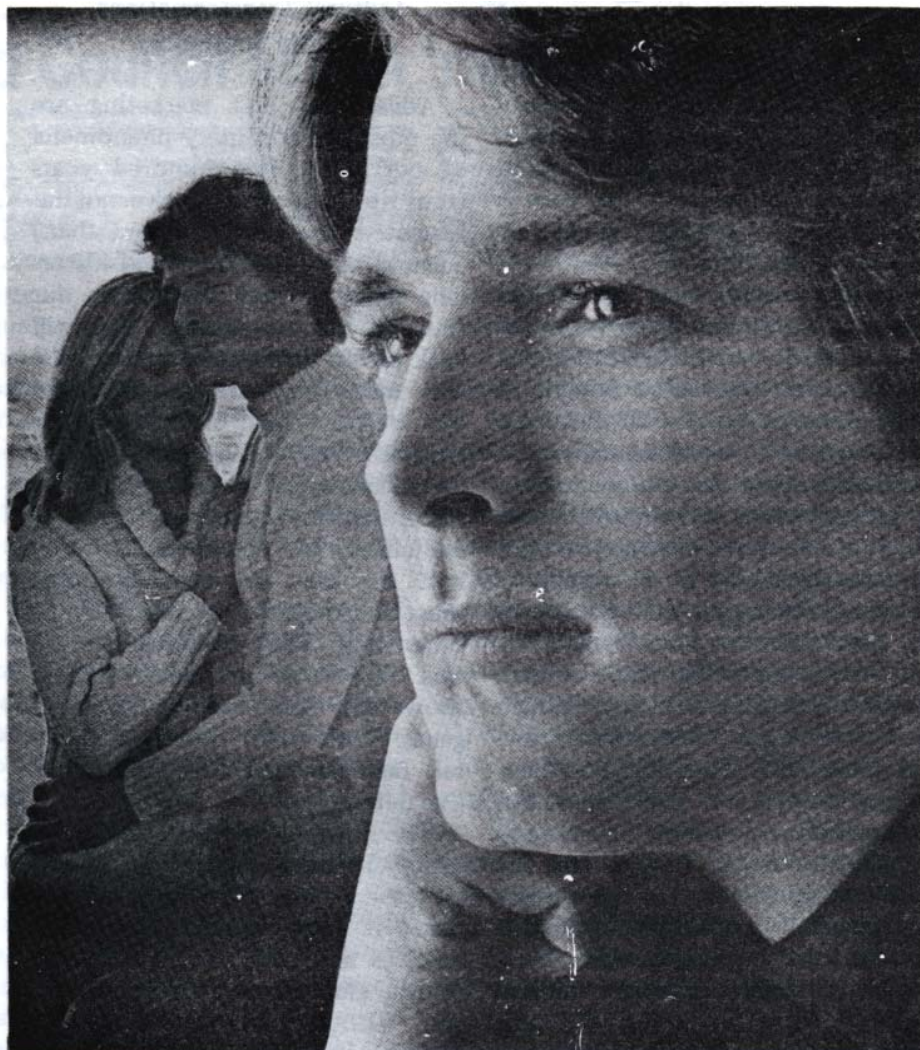
Contemporary advertising, with contemporary TV shows, sells sex. More precisely, it sells commodities through the vehicle of selling sex. Even where the ad looks straightforward, chances are it is selling sex. An entrancing book, *Subliminal Seduction*, shows how it is done. Images of sexual activity and words like S E X and F U C K lurk in dark corners of most advertisements. The mind is quicker than the eye, and it receives these messages at the level of the sub-conscious

Far from paranoid fantasy, it is proven that it works. *Wind Song* may whisper your message (to him) but it shouts FUCK at *your* subconscious. (Relax and look for K's in hair and folds of clothing. Turn the magazine around slowly. Gradually, the F U and C become clear to your conscious mind.)

Subliminal advertising is the norm and its message overwhelmingly is sale of skillfully prepared illusions about ourselves and our world. Primary among the illusions is that of abstract woman. Complaints have been made. The government is aware of the practice and refuses to acknowledge it, at least publicly. Privately it is no doubt spending millions to use this remarkable method of mass persuasion for its own ends and perfect similar techniques for aural penetration.

What has a world of hedonism, constantly maintained and reinforced at both conscious and subconscious levels through mass communication, done to the ideology of male supremacy? It has taken a powerful set of prejudices about women based on years of women's utility for capitalism and remodeled and marketed them. Shiny new cultural conceptions of women fit the modern age — one of fashion, travel and romance. Woman's role is still predominantly to serve man, but where it was once to serve, honor and obey by maintaining his home, children and parents, it is now to serve, prop and bolster by providing a judicious blend of sex, excitement and compassion. Where woman once was to serve man (and capital) by being faithful as a bird-dog and having babies, she now serves man by being his very own sex-kitten, free to come and go (with him) as she pleases, unfettered by children or job or sick parents. Women are sex objects — unthinkable less than 100 years ago — and sex sells goods.

TV programming irons women flat, though the woman is the latest polyester blend of modernity and



YOUR WIND SONG STAYS ON HIS MIND.

Wind Song
Perfume by Prince Matchabelli

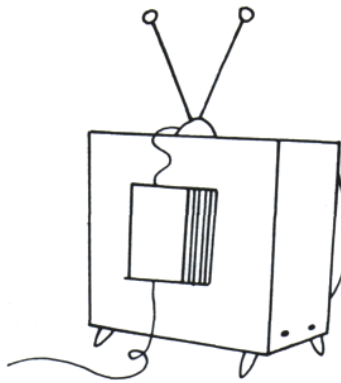
femininity, and as the ads tell you, polyester doesn't need ironing. If she is mother and house-wife, she makes herself even *more* attractive (to him) by going back to school for a degree (Abby in "Eight is Enough"; Kate in "Family"). If she is defined by her job, she still is the nurturing and understanding character of the show — the one with common sense ("Alice," "Mary Tyler Moore," Billie of "Lou Grant"). Alternatively, she is fast and groovy ("Charlie's An-

gels") or a zany kook ("Rhoda"). Even those shows that try to nourish the audience with some insight into humanity dwarf women. M*A*S*H has occasional moments of tenderness and real insight, but its women are (a) castrating bitches, (b) pretty faces, or (c) occasional gorgeous, capable, insightful perfection, overflowing with the milk of human kindness. "Lou Grant's" Billie is lovely. She is the new breed of actress, the model of what every middle-class working woman should

be. She's so perfect she even has a few harmless flaws. Middle-class men fall in love with her (she's single, of course). And any woman who tried to be that perfect would break out in hives. Detective and crime shows are the worst. Women there are nothing but pretty faces. Girls want Charlie's Angel to be their mother. What do men want?

Movies, which provide slightly better possibilities for all characters because of length and absence of commercial interruption, aren't much better for women. *An Unmarried Woman* was highly praised for Jill Clayburgh's portrayal of a life crisis for a many-faceted woman. But though she certainly was trying to find her place in the world after a divorce (from a man so ridiculous it was incomprehensible that any woman, let alone a desirable one, would be upset at his leaving), and though she had a job *and* a child *and* warm friendships with other women *and* a divorced woman's typical crew of male companions, her entire world view was herself. What is more, within that frame of reference her relations to men were dominant. This is a big improvement over movies that show woman only as object (of man) but it is still woefully inadequate.

Women's fashion similarly demonstrates this change. Seductive dress, with annual planned obsolescence, is a sign of the time. While there is an increasing tendency to try to market men's clothes similarly, it has not taken hold in the way that women's fashion has. Women working in offices frequently replace large sections of their wardrobes annually. This year's item is dungarees, fashioned by Gloria Vanderbilt and others into designer jeans and sold for \$50.00. Through products marketed to make women pleasing to men, from make-up to vaginal deodorants, women market *themselves* to be pleasing to men. Woman as object of exchange has returned, in new form.



"This is the first time I've stayed up to watch 'Wonder Woman.' Until now, I'd always assumed it was a show about a divorced woman who raised two kids while running a household and advancing herself in the business world."

The culture of hedonism is the culture of sex and beauty and fun. Absence of fun is cause for anxiety, depression and self-doubt. But for women, this fun is hard to come by — even harder than it is for men, who are by no means "happy" even on the illusory terms prescribed by contemporary culture. Birth control pills unleashed an era of sexual freedom for women, but in a culture where women are universally objectified sexually, this freedom has often meant coercion by men to be free and happy by having sexual relations with them. Someone discovered that women were capable of multiple orgasms, and the woman who doesn't want more than one is back where she started, before she discovered the fraud of the vaginal orgasm: lying and wondering what's wrong with her. Women's self-concepts are colored by absence of fun in a culture where fun is a measure of worth. And the single greatest cause of funlessness is manlessness.

The culture of hedonism is the most recent expression of man's escape from the world. This flight *into* "self" is not inconsistent with dissociation of alienated man *from* himself. The category of "self" has changed from its zenith of harmony and oneness with the environment — through the interplay of individual thought, mutual dialogue, and collective action (as distinguished from normative behavior), all pointed toward shaping the future world

— to disharmony and flight from the environment through exclusive concern with *me* and *now*. The escape may have originated with capitalism and the need to defer worldly enjoyment, substituting instead worry and concern about one's salvation. But it has reached its apogee in absence of concern beyond one's own lifetime and one's own thing.

Love

If alienation as embodied in contemporary culture has transformed male supremacy from an ideology with a material basis in utility for capitalism to one with a psychological basis in utility for men, in so doing it has transmogrified love. In its raw form, love is a closeness and intimacy between two people which demands privacy not just for its expression but for its existence. It is based on expression of one's inner self, and knowledge of the loved one's inner self, unfettered by considerations of one's achievements or shortcomings. It is the "expectation and need to be received as given."¹⁶ It is this transcendence of worldly things, achieved through the passion of the love relationship, which distinguishes love from friendship, respect, compassion, or tenderness, though these expressions of affect can run deep and thereby serve as reasonably reliable substitutes for love.

Transcendence of worldliness is a rare phenomenon in any society where one's existence depends on attention to the daily exigencies of living, whether it is "working" for a living or subsisting on man's own collective efforts. This is what makes love between adults at most a transitory phenomenon, if it is experienced at all. If love cannot be transformed by love itself into respect, compassion and friendship, the relationship between lovers in proximity to one another must end. Where successful transformation occurs, generally through the mutuality of successfully working through the joys and disappointments of living, love may resurface from time to time, enriching the lovers through its unique power of mutual self-revelation and self-affirmation.

Because love transcends worldly considerations, it forges a powerful bond between lovers. But this bond, by its unique expectation of mutual self-revelation, depends on absolute trust between lovers. This mutual trust is what renders the actors equal. As soon as one doubts the strength of the bond, the relationship of love is transformed into one of power: a relationship between lover and lovee, with power vested in the lovee. For this reason, love can endure for much longer periods between adult and child than between adult lovers. Even there, however, parental duties of education and discipline, and the child's drive toward ever-increasing autonomy, must eventually weaken the bond and transform the relationship into one characterized principally by mutual friendship, respect, and tenderness. Failure to do so infantilizes the relationship, as illustrated by the male chauvinist and anti-semitic but nonetheless probing and revealing confessions of *Portnoy's Complaint*.

Love between citizens of the *polis* was said to be the highest form of love in Athenian Greece. The structure of Greek society freed its citizens, all men, from the banal necessities of existence,

which were performed in the private realm of the household by women and slaves. This opportunity for a life shaped by thought and political action gave the Greek citizen the time and space to experience love, which in subsequent societies up to the modern age has been principally reserved for poets and artists. It was not until the development and refinement of the private life ushered in by the modern age that the whole range of subjective human emotions and private feelings could be fully developed.¹⁷ Its contradiction, however, is that while it has the potential of enormously enriching and nourishing the individual, this flight into "self" occurs because of and at the expense of the erosion of public life in the sense of man's control of his time and space — of his labor and the products of his labor. In other words, in an era of the primacy of human relations, the people who make up society as a whole live a life characterized by degradation of labor, powerlessness, and meaninglessness, all of which undermine the emotional potential of those relations.

During the eras when the household was an economic unit and marriages were arranged by parents, woman was an object of exchange. Love, if it existed at all between spouses, was not part of the culture. Later, when there was more apparent freedom of choice in selecting partners, women still tended to seek out mates for economic security, and marrying within one's social milieu as well as one's class was the norm. Free choice had a narrow meaning, and love was subordinated to expediency, whether that took the form of survival or comfort. A woman may no longer have been crudely sold by her father but she sold herself through her promise of domestic ability. It is the modern age that in theory permits both marriage based on mutual love and mutual love elsewhere than in marriage. But contemporary culture twists and de-

forms this apparent equality between the sexes, so that while the potential for love is within reach, woman again is objectified — this time sold as the ideal-girl-next-door-sex-bunny-earth-mother and now, wage earner as well.

In the words of *Enjoli*, Charles of the Ritz perfume, she can

. . . feed the kids and the gerbils. Pass out the kisses. And get to work by 5 of 9. [She] can bring home the bacon. Fry it up in a pan. And never let him forget he's a man! Because [she's] a woman!¹⁸

What is unique to the contemporary notion of love is its public character, where by its nature love is private. The other side of this distortion is that the whole panoply of human affective ties is merged into the now-deformed category of love, which loses its transcendental meaning. This change is more than the deterioration of language (as in "I love my Oscar Meyer bologna sandwich"). It is a sophisticated, well-marketed response to material conditions which have alienated man from man and so thoroughly flattened emotional responses of the vast majority of adults that the rich nuances of feeling of which human beings are capable are lost in a sea of isolation and self-estrangement. In their place is glamour, fun, and, at best, romance (which, unlike love, is public: the illusion of love created by external excitement and adventure).

What man accepts as love is flattery on one hand, and compassion and sacrifice on the other. What woman accepts as love is flattery on one hand, and the chance to give compassion on the other. The latter, however, is an opportunity she rarely gets, as man cannot receive compassion unless he is demonstrably vulnerable, something men don't like to be. Thus, the emotional tempo, dynamics

and rhythm of the relationship follow the needs of the man.

Although women are entering the labor force in greater numbers than ever before, cultural definitions and expectations still peg them as society's compassion-givers. Tenderness, compassion, and altruism are noble emotions when freely given and received. What deforms women is not just the fact that so often they are a one-way ticket to intimacy, but that culturally enforced compassion often emanates not from genuine understanding or deeply felt tenderness, but from feelings of inadequacy, guilt, and low self-esteem.¹⁹

Society characterized by alienation and a culture of hedonism distorts and denatures humanity, not just women. But its transformation of the ideology of male supremacy already present in capitalist society has affected women uniquely and ruthlessly. A world of men rendered powerless by their relation to their own labor and its products is a nation of men possessing some highly unattractive qualities. The remnant of male supremacy's functional base — power — has been replaced by sexual prowess and material wealth. One result has been fear of inadequacy and corresponding self-consciousness, fear, and hatred of women. That men's hatred and fear of women has always found some form of cultural expression, whether by degrading religious dogma or by torturing women in difficult labor, does not take away from its present form. Man's self-affirmation is overwhelmingly centered in his sexuality, and the desirability of "his" woman (measured, of course, by male chauvinist standards) is its public proof. For women, this means conforming to a standard presented as physically attractive and psychically fulfilling to a man. Man's present insecurity has led to boundless emotional greed, to be fulfilled by women, and to an illusion of inner strength, manifested by denial of emotional vulnerability. All the fuss contemporary

psychologists make about how men can't cry may in one sense be warranted (dissociation from one's feelings is a painful condition, leading to more generalized depression and anxiety), but a person conceals his emotions to maintain power over others.²⁰ To reveal sadness, humility or despair on the one hand, or great tenderness or ecstasy on the other — those feelings which lend themselves to emotional catharsis — is to reveal part of one's humanity: one's fundamental need for other human beings. What men could gain in mutuality and universality by revealing their essential selves, they sacrifice for power — the illusion of mastery and control of feelings, and its corresponding autonomy.

These inhuman qualities are peculiar to the modern age. What is more, they are increasingly affecting women as well as men. In one rather narrow respect this is a progressive step for women. To the extent that these traits are equalized among men and women, woman will no longer be the one-sided emotional prop for society, with its attendant objectification and relegation to a subordinate place in the world. At a more profound level, however, loss of affect is yet another symptom of increasing alienation and immiseration of people in a capitalist or at least a capitalist-dominated world. And its effects are felt most keenly by children, who are denied the full range of human emotions and feelings by parents unable to react to them spontaneously and fully.

Escape From Earth

Hannah Arendt, one of the great phenomenologists of the century, commented on man's launching of the first earth-born object into the universe, as follows:

This event, second in importance to no other, not even to the splitting of the atom, would have been

greeted with unmitigated joy, if it had not been for the uncomfortable military and political circumstances attending it. But, curiously enough, this joy was not triumphal; it was not pride or awe at the tremendousness of human power and mastery which filled the hearts of men, who now, when they looked up from the earth toward the skies, could behold there a thing of their own making. The immediate reaction . . . was relief about the first 'step toward escape from men's imprisonment to the earth.'²¹

Flight from the confines of earth to the infinity of the universe is the other side of flight from the world into the *me* and *now* of self. Realizing the construct of centuries of Christianity before it, with belief in immortality of the soul which literally flies into the great beyond upon death of the worldly creature, flight from earth gives man the potential to escape the human condition. Man's flight from worldly concerns into a narrow and present self provides the cushion for an alienated world in which neither man's labor nor his product is part of himself, nor he part of them. Man's flight from the planet itself provides hope that what has been lost on earth can be rediscovered among the constellations. It provides a vision of yet a new age: the return of pioneering exploration, this time directed at conquering the universe, now that earth has been explored, conquered, expropriated, and used up. This fantasy world of escape is the negation of the negation: alienated man once again becomes part of his environment. But the environment is beyond himself, and self is a virtually new being, bearing almost no relation to the present condition of humankind. This vision explains the popular appeal of science fiction, which captured the human imagination years before

its realization in space exploration on the one hand, and creation of life, now in experimental stages of recombinant DNA research, on the other.

This uneasy duality of a concrete present which knows no past or future and a visionary future which transcends present knowledge is where comfortable resting ground is found in man's dissociation from his environment. Modern man has gone a long way toward destroying earth that supports his life. He can no longer rely on the elements necessary for survival: air, food, and water. What is more, he knowingly not only continues the process but escalates it. This process would be unthinkable among people in touch with their environment. Yet it is a worldwide phenomenon that knows no political distinctions. The average, seat-of-the-pants philosophical justification is (a) it won't affect *my* life; (b) when things get bad enough, we'll find a new technology to reverse the damage; and (c) by that time we'll probably be able to move on out to the universe and leave earth behind, anyway. Psychologists call it denial (of reality by repression of its presence into the subconscious), but it is more than that. It is a political phenomenon which allows capitalist expansion to eke out the last few generations of its existence. What humanity gives up in a future as we know it, individual man takes back in consumer goods and a culture of fun. Though the situation is most advanced in the United States, it is a worldwide and planetary problem.

Modern political, economic, and scientific events are global in scope. A few examples of this shrinkage of earth should suffice. The most obvious is military technology. In 1945 the U.S. dropped an atomic bomb on Hiroshima and over 100,000 human beings met gruesome, deaths. It had taken 600,000 people to produce the bomb and capital expenditures for atomic power had already been made.²² The atomic age was here to stay.

Today much deadlier bombs are poised and ready to go, by virtual automation. The U.S. Navy's newest floating cities can be operated with crews of 28 and such bombs launched. Every country economically capable is part of this global arms industry of planned obsolescence, each at the mercy of all others' ability to destroy by remote control organic life on earth.

Five tons of plutonium settled into earth and water of the northern hemisphere between 1953 and 1963 during atomic bomb testing by the United States and Russia. More has been added since then in both northern and southern hemispheres by France and China.²³ Plutonium, whose "acceptable body dose" is less than one millionth of a gram (which can still cause cancer 10-30 years after it is inhaled), has a half-life of 24,300 years!

Finally, on a less immediately apocalyptic scale, the universal drive toward modernization required in a world where no country is self-sufficient any longer and each must compete in the world market (or markets — whether there is one or several is controversial) has led to efficiency as a criterion for development. And placing a priority of efficiency is antithetical to democracy and workers' control. Alienation of modern labor characterizes all countries, including those generally defined as socialist.

Is This Socialism?

In the U.S.S.R. women account for more than 80 percent of the doctors, the fact most frequently presented, in contrast to a meager 7 percent in the U.S., to demonstrate equality for women in the Soviet Union. The fact that any occupation is composed of 80 percent rather than roughly 50 percent women should make one ask why.

Medicine is a nurturing profession. It is also a dirty and smelly one. At some levels and at some times in modern society it can be

stimulating, such as diagnosis, and if a doctor makes a sick person well, it can undoubtedly be rewarding for her. But medicine, in spite of its unnecessarily long education and apprenticeship is not an unusually attractive job *per se*. It is unique to the U.S. that the doctor is viewed — and paid — as a god, which may explain the unconscionably high cost and poor quality of U.S. health care. If one looks further, occupational segregation in the U.S.S.R. and other "socialist" countries is the order of the day. In Czechoslovakia, women form 98 percent of nursing students, 87 percent of office work students, and 98 percent of education majors.

And by the mid-1960's, when women accounted for 60 percent of the medical students and 90 percent of pharmacology students, the average doctor's pay was lower than that of a worker in heavy industry, where women comprise only 8 percent of the workforce.²⁴

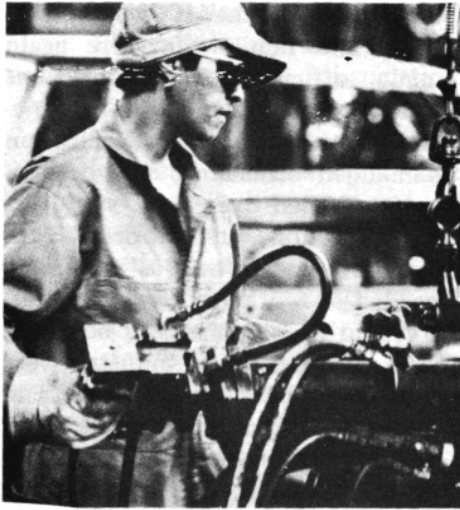
Examples of both inequality at the workplace and extra burdens for women in the home abound for "socialist" countries. In the U.S.S.R., from the time of the first 5-year plan (1928), need for labor demanded recruitment of women into all sectors of the workforce. This need was intensified by collectivization, purges and World War II, and by 1959, 30 percent of Soviet households were headed by women and virtually all women worked. Notwithstanding these facts, patterns of employment are remarkably similar to those in western capitalist countries. Women fill jobs in "women's" occupations: teaching, health, and other services. Fifty percent work in agriculture, but very few in agricultural specialties.²⁵ The high number employed in engineering (roughly half the engineers) is likely a result of the extremely heavy emphasis on fast scientific development throughout the Soviet Union. There, like elsewhere in the economy, women are concentrated at the lowest levels of skill and authority.

On the homefront, women work

a double shift. Early revolutionary promise of a new social order freeing women from domestic drudgery by socializing housework was never fulfilled. Furthermore, emphasis on rapid modernization and heavy industry relegated consumer industries to a very minor place. Electrical appliances are not yet universal. In many places refrigerators are luxuries, not to mention automobiles or convenience foods. Laundry is washed by hand. In 1973 in Czechoslovakia 70 percent of the households had refrigerators and 85 percent had washing machines (much higher than in Poland or Hungary)²⁶, but they were spotty in functioning and hard to service, involving waits of three months. Apparently nationalization of small businesses, such as electricians and mechanics, occurred without socialist substitutes for them.

In the U.S.S.R. women's participation in industry and throughout the economy is not reflected in higher levels of government. Though women participate heavily at the local level, only one woman has served on the Politbureau (the highest governing body), less than 4 percent sit on the central committee, and almost none serve in upper-level ministry functions. Sixty years and three generations after the revolution, in a society governed so totally from the top, this fact speaks volumes about women's condition.

Nowhere in the Soviet bloc countries has the revolutionary goal of shifting domestic work from family to society happened. The only communal service that has been widely developed is public child care, which varies substantially from country to country. Czechoslovakia gives mothers a six-month paid maternity leave and six additional months without pay. Nurseries take children at six months, but in 1966 only 9.7 percent of children under age 2 attended them. Further, extensive studies on their effects questioned the wisdom of nurseries for children under 18 months and were largely negative on use for children



under one year. Hungary, on the other hand, provides three years of allowance for mothers, so infant care need not be socialized at all.

Cuba has perhaps come closer in its *circulo* program to freeing women from traditional restraints than other countries. Such was its principal goal.

Circulos infantiles permit a great majority of mothers to free themselves partially from tedious housework which frequently impedes their permanent development and improvement. Women who are tied down by housework end up enclosing themselves in a world so limited that they lose contact with life itself — living at its margins and reducing their scope of interest to the solution of never-ending daily needs. In this way they daily narrow their vital areas, hold back their development and exchange living for routine vegetating.²⁷

Cuban *circulos* take infants at 45 days (when the mothers' maternity leaves end) and attempt from the beginning to instill values of the revolution in them. Cognitive development, behavioral maturation, and group socialization are emphasized, as are nutrition and cleanliness. A more free-wheeling but less efficient

experiment in creative, less structured nurseries (*jardines*) was abandoned in 1971. Under direction of the Federation of Cuban Women (itself a telling fact), the number of centers has grown gradually since 1961.

Despite the shortcomings, gains in child care, particularly in a nation where such large numbers of trained personnel in all fields grabbed the first plane to Miami after the revolution, have been impressive. Less impressive is the extent to which this change has affected women's unequal status, both at home and at the workplace. As in other countries, women are concentrated in women's occupations and do the housework at home.²⁸ In addition, one must ask whether it is truly liberating for a woman to take her six-week-old infant to a school with a ten-to-one staff ratio so that she can return to her job, or whether need for labor rather than a vision of a new society determines what passes as liberating for women.

Perhaps the most interesting changes in women's condition have occurred in China, precisely because government policies have twice changed so radically within a relatively short period of time. During the period of the Great Leap Forward, the People's Communes had considerable success socializing some areas of housework, as sewing centers and dining rooms, as well as nurseries, were part of the Commune. Cultural Revolution fighters fought against the custom of peasant women marrying out to their husband's village because the custom discouraged education and technical training for women (who would take their skills and knowledge elsewhere, in contrast to men of the village). All aspects of inequality were challenged, and both sex-role signs and coupling behavior began to disappear. Now, in what is called women's "second liberation" by Chinese officials, the campaign of marrying out (a project of purged Chiang Ch'ing) has fallen, romantic

relationships are again in existence (not in itself a bad sign, as repression of sexuality is generally nothing but an attempt to increase workers' productivity) and women wear make-up and curl their hair. As part of China's policy of economic development and modernization, Western consumerism has been imported to instill in the population a picture of an attractive new world and to provide workers goods to buy with their newly earned yuan. What is so startling is the almost instantaneous change in consciousness that appears to have taken place by the smashing of the Gang of Four and the new economic policy of the ruling party.

These few observations and examples cannot themselves prove much. The lot of women in these countries, however, does not appear to differ qualitatively from that of women in the capitalist countries. And quantitatively, consumer goods provided by advanced capitalism have made women's condition in those countries *less* burdensome than elsewhere. What emerges as a pattern as one reads about women particularly in the U.S.S.R. and China, but in other "socialist" countries as well, is that during a period of revolutionary upsurge consciousness changes. A vision of a new and better society is projected and people *want* to take chances and try ways of living to realize that vision. In the U.S.S.R. new laws gave women formal legal equality and more. Marriage and divorce were simple registration processes. Either partner could adopt the name of the other or both could retain their own names. There was free abortion on demand. Experimental living arrangements replaced the rule of the family, and the expectation expressed in the 1919 program of the Bolshevik Party was that all household work would be socialized. For a short time people seized control of their lives and all ideas were in flux.

Gains of the revolution, however, were reversed almost from the

beginning. By the 1930's motherhood and family life were again made official policy. Abortions were made illegal and criminal sanctions imposed. Fast modernization demanded efficiency, and efficiency triumphed over democracy, experimentation, and workers' control. Women as well as men were needed as workers in heavy industry, and developments of both services and consumer industry were put on the back burner. Society in general, not just the condition of women, lost its revolutionary character and assumed totalitarian form. A generation of Bolsheviks was eliminated by purges, and millions of peasants were slaughtered during collectivization of agriculture. Art and propaganda became synonymous, as the art *form* became reactionary and the content ascetic and compulsively anti-pornographic.³⁰ Strict laws were passed against homosexuality. The promise of socialism was never realized. The U.S.S.R. is still a totalitarian state, though its form is not as extreme as it was under Stalin. A privileged class still governs and workers' power, the definition of socialism, is *at least* as remote in the U.S.S.R. as in the U.S.A.

Such seems to be the case in China as well, though the process fifty years later is different. The modern age has shrunk the globe, technologically, economically, and culturally. What was accomplished in the U.S.S.R. by extreme brutality and repression bordering on fascism can be much more smoothly and efficiently achieved in the modern age. Ironically, what repression occurred seems to have been a byproduct of the Cultural Revolution — the attempt to keep China *out* of the world economy through revolutionary internal development, particularly disappearance of distinctions between town and country and physical and mental labor. This general upheaval and challenge to the existing order of things created conditions of motion and change. Under these conditions, inequality in social relations among women

and men was ripe for attack. In the process, however, what was excessively repressed was mental labor and, therefore, individual difference and independent thought.

The political choices required of a country entering what has become a world market greatly facilitate rapid economic growth. U.S. investments and trade, eagerly lavished upon China, are accompanied by U.S. culture and consumer goods. (There is no abstract reason why Coca-Cola and feminine Western fashions had to be imported along with International Harvester.) Modernization is further facilitated by a remarkable combination of an ethic of hard work instilled during the Cultural Revolutions (Chinese tourists in the U.S. are reported to like McDonald's because it lets a worker take a short lunch break), and a newly imported Western culture promising glamour, romance, and fun. Feminist visitors report that people in Chinese cities spend Saturday night browsing and buying in the People's Department Stores. In choosing to take the fastest and easiest path to modernization, China has forfeited its potential as a proletarian state. The emerging proletariat is laboring and buying while the Party is organizing production and distribution, now a worldwide phenomenon. Other emerging aspects of class society, such as back pay for scientists and technicians sent to the countryside to do agricultural labor during the Cultural Revolution, are a part of the very efficient process of organizing production. So are rollbacks in the attacks on male supremacy.

Faced with the prospect of lives with less physical hardship, and a higher standard of living, not to mention the promise of fun and glamour, it is not likely Chinese women will want to challenge it — or men — for equality. Class struggle in China for the time being has ended. In its absence such a challenge would demand action, not routine behavior. And the Cultural Revolution seems to have spawned

a nation of very hard-working and docile people. At least for now.

Whether socialism (as distinguished from the fight *for* socialism) can liberate women is still an open question. What seems clear, however, is that the need for rapid modernization and the corresponding need for greater and greater efficiency is not conducive to women's emancipation. In the absence of either socialization of housework or widespread consumer goods to take the burden off domestic work, women are likely to remain oppressed by their household tasks.

Autonomous Women's Movement

If any independent thinker doubts the validity of an autonomous women's movement, an exchange between a feminist member of a 1978 women's tour to China and a Chinese host should set him straight. During a briefing on the crimes of the Gang of Four — a lecture which denounced the "bad and evil counter-revolutionary crimes" of Chiang Ch'ing, Mao's fourth wife, while revising history to deny similar left policies of Mao himself — a member of the tour group asked (on the last night) "What was the matter with old man Mao? Couldn't he control his wife?"³¹ When tour after tour of U.S. leftists, M-L, returns from China, its members uttering not a critical syllable, the independence of the women's movement is ample evidence of its validity.

In 1968 New York radical feminists protested and picketed the Miss America Pageant. Women threw high heels, girdles, and "other instruments of female torture" into a freedom trash can, and women's liberation exploded all over the world.³² No aspect of male supremacy went unchallenged, from inequality at work to oppression in bed. Consciousness-raising freed a whole generation of women (not just those who participated in consciousness-raising groups) from self-doubt, as women stopped worrying and started acting. Nobody

even peripherally connected to the early years of the movement will ever forget how good it felt!

The women's movement, like most of the predominantly white left of the 1960's, was never a working class movement, though working class women participated in some sections of it. Unlike the Marxist left, however, it didn't pretend to be (at least not until later, when attacked by the left as reformist because of its class composition, and when entered by the left at the same time looking for recruits). This fact should not obscure its revolutionary content, however. Women's liberation in its early years was militant, angry, and thoroughly political. It penetrated every aspect of its members' lives and shook their conception (and practice) of personal and social relations to the roots. The excitement and dynamism of this activity generated new activity, and new members, as hundreds of thousands of women seized control of part of their lives and confronted the world as subject rather than as object.

What gains for women have been made in the last decade are attributable to the early radical feminists and to the example set by the Civil Rights movement shortly before. Legal abortion and the right to sexual enjoyment are just two of the areas where the gains have so far remained (though abortion has been made very burdensome and difficult for poor and disproportionately Black and other Third World women by laws denying Medicaid payment for abortion). Others have been in part eroded, such as liberation from oppressive dress codes, as women once again are wearing high heels and feminine fashions.

Radical feminism of the 1960's began with the rage of left women at their treatment within the movement. Its contribution to revolutionary thought was recognition of the fact that because the personal is political there are no individual solutions to male supremacy and its



unique invasion of all aspects of social relations. It was the tactic of consciousness-raising that brought this realization to large numbers of women, who found an organizational form for collective challenge to male supremacy in the rebirth of the autonomous women's movement. As if to justify its existence, the left savagely ridiculed the women's movement in its early days. Later, the male-dominated left learned the movement was here to stay and took a different approach toward it.

Although the practice of radical feminism provided the most advanced form of challenge to male supremacy *per se*, it faltered when it tried to justify its existence theoretically. Because women's oppression is demonstrable in every arena of life, feminists concluded that women comprise an oppressed class. Because Engels said male supremacy pre-dated capitalism, feminists concluded that it was the model for and principal cause of hierarchical division of labor under capitalism. The strategic conclusions that flow from the conception of women as an oppressed class, however, are not compatible with those necessary for revolutionary change needed to free women from

their oppression. There is no evidence or even reason to believe that the relatively privileged women of the middle classes, living and working separately from working-class women, but jointly with middle-class men, their oppressors, are inclined to renounce their comfortable lives to join a movement of working-class women. Nor is there evidence or reason to believe that working-class women, let alone Black or other Third World women, see their oppression as defined primarily by their gender.

This article has suggested a perspective from which women's condition can be understood as a complex and interrelated set of changes occurring within the confines of developing capitalist society. Most of these changes have tended to equalize the status of women and men within their respective classes. Entry of women as a group into social relations of production, technological advances, development of consumer goods, erosion of the need for child labor and large families, and universal public education all have made instrumental changes in women's material condition and women's consciousness. These changes themselves, however, have led to increasing degradation of all labor with its inevitable result of alienation and dissociation of humanity from the shaping of its world. Women's condition is affected as much by the latter, negative aspects of change as by the former, positive ones. And while alienation dehumanizes men as well as women, it has taken a particularly degenerate and oppressive form in objectification of women.

What is left of male supremacy as it once existed is this conception of woman as man's object. The form this objectification takes is milder in terms of toil than in any previous period. Women born and raised in the U.S. since World War II rarely, if ever, expect to live a life serving men by their domestic labor. What they *do* expect, however, is to make attracting and keeping a man (or series of men) a

principal component of their existence — the aspect of their lives around which all other aspects center. This oppression is most apparent in teen-age and pre-teen women and girls. Their pre-occupation and obsession with their bodies, their hair, their clothes, and their ability to find boy-friends obscures all other facets of their lives.

Present cultural definitions of women, in turn, have an impact on all other aspects of women's existence. Although capitalism has gone a long way toward materially equalizing the status of women and men, the process is not yet complete. What is more, it is slowed down and held back by omnipresent propaganda about women. Alienation of sexuality takes its most extreme form in the high incidence and media glorification of rape: the ultimate degradation of woman. Media images of women as (1) sexy, (2) compassionate, and (3) nothing much else except victims, affect women and conceptions of women. These, in turn, reinforce a still-sex-segregated job market and women's access to positions of power and control.

Women are not now, nor have they ever been, a class. Although advanced capitalism and contemporary culture have eroded some of the gross class distinctions of the early period of rapid industrial expansion, where rich women were idle and pampered, and poor, immigrant women worked 14 hours a day, women still are not uniformly oppressed. All women are, however, victims of some form of male supremacy. Beyond the state of objectification, women's condition is a special case of mankind's state of alienation. Degradation of women as childbearers is its unique contribution to women's condition. In other ways, women experience alienation in qualitatively similar ways to men, though childrearing tasks, still more women's sphere than men's, are made more difficult and less rewarding in a society characterized by alienation.

There is no super-theory of women's liberation separate from liberation of a whole society defined, transformed, and rendered powerless by degradation of labor. The single most significant factor contributing to women's overall oppression under advanced capitalism, including her oppression *as woman*, is alienation of labor. At the same time, however, present forms of sexual and emotional objectification of women constantly reinforced by a uniquely manipulative and ever-present mass media, potentially transcend capitalism, frozen in the minds of men. Male supremacy, despite its diminishing utility for capitalism, has taken on a life of its own. It is for this reason that women as revolutionaries sometimes have to fight along with men as workers or as members of other autonomous movements, and sometimes against men as women. The notion that women's only legitimate struggle is for power *as women* ignores the reality even of women's oppression. At its root it is based on assumptions — sometimes implicit and subtle, and sometimes bold and straightforward — of women's moral superiority, something which empirically seems false, which is not susceptible to measurement, and even if it were, which disregards the fact that women are poorly situated to lead and carry out a revolution *as women*.

On the other hand, the notion that women's only legitimate struggle is as part of the working class also ignores the reality of women's oppression. Male supremacy benefits men. What is more, it is deeply rooted in culture and psyche. Most of what once was male supremacy has withered away, but what remains is powerful and hard to shake off. There is no evidence that men will give up their remaining privileges as men without being forced to. If they were inclined in this direction, the revolutionary upsurge of the 1960's would have led to much more lasting and much more widespread changes, particularly in personal relations. Further-

more, because male supremacy is not the hub of world oppression, it is generally relegated to secondary or tertiary status as a revolutionary issue. To be challenged at all, male supremacy must be fought by women.

Perhaps most important to understanding the significance of the independent women's movement is that socialism is not primarily a government or a way to organize society. It is not *something* that liberates anybody. Socialism cannot be separated from the fight *for* socialism. Through action and collective struggle, people regain contact with themselves as human beings. The struggle becomes one's labor, and the modern chains of alienation are broken by a new form of individual control over one's immediate life situation and through acting in concert with other people. It is as part of this process that an autonomous women's movement has revolutionary potential both for challenging male supremacy and as a separate part of a working-class movement.

The decisive importance of this self-activity of women's struggle has been underplayed by contemporary Marxists. Following Lenin's lead, they see women's emancipation as a result of socialism, not as part of the process of fighting for and building it.

Women are crushed by their domestic drudgery, and only socialism can relieve them from this drudgery, when we shall pass on from small household economy and to social tilling of the soil.³³

It is in part this conception of socialism as a state which frees women, which allowed Lenin in his time and others at present to relegate women's concerns with social and personal relations to the indefinite future.

The record of your sins,
Clara, is even worse. I have

been told that at the evenings arranged for reading and discussion with working women, sex and marriage problems come first. They are said to be the main objects of interest in your political instruction and educational work. I could not believe my ears when I heard that. The first state of proletarian dictatorship is battling with the counter-revolutionaries of the whole world. The situation in Germany itself calls for the greatest unity of all proletarian revolutionary forces, so that they can repel the counter-revolution which is pushing on. But active, Communist women are busy discussing sex problems and the forms of marriage — 'past, present, and future.' . . .³⁴

This is a position which is particularly offensive, given the pressures of selflessness which have burdened women for centuries. While Lenin's argument may have been reasonable for the time, given the fact that the country was plagued by starvation and disease, as well as by counter-revolution, it was fundamentally wrong. It is *only* during periods of major upheaval, where people's attitudes, assumptions, and beliefs about everything are in a state of flux, and where people are taking control of their lives, that the effects of male chauvinism on women can be fully recognized and analyzed, and where male supremacy can be successfully challenged. Revolutionary history of women as feminists and as leaders bears out this point. Women's oppression is everywhere relevant early on in revolutionary periods when all prevailing ideas are challenged. After seizure of state power, when the party attempts to consolidate its victory, women have frequently been criticized, stifled, or purged for ultra-leftism as well as for feminism. In China it was Ting Ling

in '42 and Chiang Ch'ing in '76; in Russia, Kollontai and Zetkin; in Germany, Rosa Luxemburg.

The form that rollback of militancy has taken previously has been exclusive concentration on worn-en's participation in production, while extolling virtues of the family (previously condemned as bourgeois) as the stable base from which to engage in production. As has been shown, this situation cannot be duplicated in advanced capitalist countries, where women's entry into production has occurred as part of the development of capitalism. Its likely form, seen capsulized already, is exclusive concentration on protecting the environment from further pillage. With all air, water, and food in various states of contamination, it is a situation of primary need to reverse the damage. However, the technological developments of advanced industrial capitalism which have raped the environment, have also substantially liberated women from domestic drudgery. Electrification demands massive use of energy, as does production of consumer goods. Fifty percent of Chicago's energy needs are met by its nuclear power plants, while wastes pile up and poison earth and water. Automobiles, permit shopping in quantity, while exhaust pollutes the air. Pampers, paper plates, and no-care clothing all take energy to make and are wasteful, and paper products deplete the land of trees faster than they can be replaced. Cheap plastic goods are not biodegradable and in part remain forever solid litter, giving off noxious fumes when burned.

There is a strand of feminism that addresses these questions. It is composed largely of middle-class women in their 30's who were part of the early women's movement in the '60's and who are now having children. These are women who promote home birth as women's control over a critical part of their lives. They also frown upon bottle-feeding for infants and use of Pampers, as unnatural and wasteful.

2 aldermen demand Council act on 'rape emergency'

By Harry Golden Jr. and Jim Casey

Two aldermen Friday called for a City Council investigation of ways to cope with a rape emergency.

The demand came a few hours after armed rapists abducted two West Side women who were waiting for CTA buses to take them to work. The women were the latest among a series of recent rape victims.

At a City Hall press conference, Aldermen Tyrone McFolling (17th) and Clifford P. Kelley (20th) portrayed present law enforcement measures as unable to cope with a surge in rape cases.

W. Grenshaw, where one beat her on the face and the other raped her.

Earlier Thursday evening, a 13-year-old North Side girl reported she was raped after two men talked her into getting into their car at Roscoe and Hamilton. She said one of

the men slapped and raped her in an alley near 63d and Western.

She was released at 2759 W. 47th, where she appealed to patrons in a tavern who called police.

TWO MEN were arrested and charged with rape late

Thursday after a telephone operator at a South Side motel heard the screams of a rape victim who had succeeded in knocking a telephone off the hook while she was being attacked in one of the motel's rooms.

Police said the 17-year-old

victim, a high school student, had accepted an auto ride from one of the two men; the second had joined them in the car, and then they had driven to Roberts Motel, 3756 S. Michigan.

There they dragged the girl into one of the rooms, forced her to watch pornographic films, then attacked her, investigators said.

Police, summoned to the motel by the switchboard operator, arrested Stephen Edwards, 30, 6718 S. Claremont, and Irving Robinson, 37, of 2701 S. Indiana,

There is an obvious humanizing and therefore progressive aspect to this movement, though it is a form of cultural feminism which sees individual solutions to political problems. Its potential, however, is scary. Energy conservation, safety, and environmental clean-up will require real and substantial sacrifices. Women-, presently degraded as childbearers, are in a vulnerable place, and return to a more human form of childbearing and child-rearing could easily serve as the ideological justification for returning women to a subordinate place in the home, waiting until *later* to challenge male supremacy. The spectre of Earth-mother-for-the-revolution is not a pretty one. Only an independent women's movement composed of women from all classes can safeguard women's interests *as women* and challenge as oppressive what limits women's choice regarding reproduction and childbearing.

Strategy for Revolution

Because women's condition is inextricably tied to the state of society in general, women, to gain liberation, must be part of any movement for revolutionary change. At the same time they need a movement that speaks to the needs of all women, something the present women's movement — largely white and middle-class — fails to do. For these reasons the

present movement for women's equality must develop a strategy oriented toward maximizing the possibility that (a) a period of revolutionary upheaval will come about and result in successful realignment of class forces, and (b) that women will at that time be in a position decisively to challenge male supremacy.

The strategic importance of Black and other Third World liberation movements *for women* has been analyzed in previous publications of Sojourner Truth Organization.³⁵ Of all possible struggles in which a popular victory would fatally weaken capitalism, the Black movement has the greatest potential for success. For this reason the women's movement should develop a strategy which supports the Black and other liberation movements and increases their likelihood of success, maximizing potential for alliances with Black and other Third World women. A second reason for such an orientation — and one which is important if one disagrees with the previous estimate of revolutionary forces in the U.S. or with the concept of revolutionary upheaval as the principal time in which male supremacy can be defeated ideologically — is that a movement that successfully challenges male supremacy must be a movement which includes Black and other Third World women, most of whom define their oppression as mainly national or racial. General strategy for revolution determines how an independent women's movement picks its issues and tactics. Practical work should optimally be focused on areas which disproportionately affect Third World women, whether or not Third World women choose to

participate at this time. Issues which in any way undermine the potential of Black and other Third World liberation movements must be rejected whether or not they have organizing potential for women, because in so weakening those movements, they retard the struggle against male supremacy as well.

The movement of white women against rape is an example of organizing which, though sincerely addressing real issues of male supremacy, undermines Black and other Third World liberation movements. This estimate is explained and analyzed in detail in the afterword to the second edition of *Rape, Racism, and The White Women's Movement: An Answer to Susan Brownmiller*.³⁶ Briefly, although rape is the ultimate form of objectification of women, it is not susceptible in this society to a political solution. Mass movements can close shops, stop wars, and topple governments. They cannot, however, end individual crime. There are only two ways to stop rape or even halt its rapid increase. One is to end male supremacy so that men do not want to rape women. The other is by force: physical force of defense, which is not possible all the time, or a police presence so overwhelming and enforcement so total that nobody dares commit any crime, including crime within his own house. Mass movements such as the present "Take Back The Night" actions do neither. What they do is lend credence to police demands for larger budgets, more personnel, more jails, and more efficient courts, whether or not they explicitly make such demands. The anti-rape movement has made a few contributions to women's welfare, notably pressuring hospitals to deal

in a humane manner with rape victims. Recently, women have been attacking media images of women as deserving victims of macho violence, a good approach to fighting male supremacy. At the same time, however, it has buttressed "safe streets" campaigns which in a racist society mean more Black people getting arrested by white cops, more police shootings, and more Third World people going to jail whether or not they have committed any crime.

When the majority of rape victims in cities are Black, and the bulk of the movement against rape is white, this organizing amounts to using racism to build up the ranks of the movement. Such is not the case when Black or other Third World women organize in Third World communities to end crime. This organization is a move toward a united community and is generally accompanied by justifiable demands not for more police, but for more Black police, who are presumed less likely to shoot and themselves incite violence (though this is not always the case).

Fighting male supremacy at its most outrageous point is not necessarily the best way to end it. On the contrary, it will require an upheaval of revolutionary proportions to challenge deeply rooted ideas of male domination and to redefine thoroughly people's conceptions of community and collective responsibility. Without such a revolution, women's liberation means nothing. With it, male supremacy and the crime of rape will be buried by women, once and for all.

Footnotes

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Symposium: Was U.S. slavery

Slaves were not proletarians

By Martin Glaberman

The pamphlet on *Marx on American Slavery* presses to make one basic point: that the slaves were proletarians. I think it does this by stretching the meaning of a number of quotations from Marx as far as they can conceivably go in that direction — and sometimes further than they can go.

Before going into the specific quotations, a general observation is necessary. Marx spends a lot of time, in *Capital* and elsewhere, to distinguish the form of labor under capitalism from all other forms of labor as "free" labor or wage labor. Disputes about the meaning of par-

ticular quotes cannot change that or the crucial importance of that definition of wage labor to the law of value and to the laws of motion of capitalist society. The law of value depends on the sale of labor power as *opposed to* the sale of the laborer. See, in particular, Chapter XXVI of *Capital*.

The opening quotation, from *The Poverty of Philosophy*, says that "Direct slavery is just as much the pivot of bourgeois industry as machinery, credits, etc." The problem is the ambiguity of the word "pivot." This obviously does not mean that slavery is necessary to the normal functioning of capitalism — otherwise, how explain that

capitalism has gotten along without slavery for over 100 years. Pivot, therefore, does not imply that it is *internal* to the system in the same way that machinery and credit are. Historically, slavery related to capitalism in two ways at two somewhat different periods. First, as primitive accumulation (in the slave trade and the sugar plantations). Second, a bit later, the *product* of cotton culture was crucial to the textile industry. There was a relatively short period, roughly 1820 or so to the Civil War, when cotton was both important for industry and dominated by slavery. But neither capitalism in general nor (continued on page 38)

Review of "Marx on American Slavery"

by Theoretical Review

Marx on American Slavery is a short pamphlet written by Ken Lawrence and supported by the Sojourner Truth Organization, a small Marxist organization based in Chicago. The basic thesis of Lawrence is that the slave system of the ante-bellum South was actually capitalist. The southern social formation was capitalist because the "slave owners are capitalist, the slaves are proletarians," and because, according to Lawrence, the capitalist mode of production always "consumes and dominates and transforms various other modes of production, including slavery, *through its mode of circulation*." (Our emphasis) Although the viewpoint presented in this pamphlet is only that of a small organization, it is generally accepted by other communist groups and by certain Marxist historians who have attempted to apply this analysis to parts of the "Third World" such as Latin America.

Lawrence's analysis of Southern

slavery suffers from two fundamental flaws. First, he assembles quotations from different works of Marx in an unsystematic and uncritical way; and second, there is a complete lack of a historical materialist analysis of the development of the southern social formation.

Concerning his assemblage of quotations from Marx, he is unable to prove his position since there is no critical reading of those passages quoted and there is no systematic integration of the writings of Marx on the subject into a scientific understanding of what determines the character of a social formation, or of a mode of production, either slave or capitalist.

For example, in order to show that "slaves are proletarians" he must quote from the *Poverty of Philosophy* (1847), a work written before Marx's scientific study of capitalism which he published in *Capital*. In the *Poverty of Philosophy* Marx writes "feudalism had its proletariat — serfdom." From this single imprecise statement the con-

clusion is drawn that slaves too are "proletarians" since, according to Lawrence, "it does not matter which period we are discussing." This is the exact opposite of a conclusion which a Marxist would draw since the proletariat is not just the oppressed class of any mode of production, but the oppressed and exploited class which is specific to capitalism. He also misreads other quotations from Marx such as the one from *Theories of Surplus Value*, where Marx clearly states that the South was capitalist "only in the formal sense, since the slavery of Negroes precludes free wage-labor, which is the basis of capitalist production."

The second flaw of Lawrence's approach is that he does not develop a historical materialist analysis of the Southern social formation; but rather in a typically dogmatist style, he states his proposition (in this case, the capitalist nature of the South) with only the necessary quotations from the "classics" as support for his thesis. Of course his excuse is that this pamphlet is on

capitalist?

Marx on American slavery, not on the South. But this use, or rather misuse, of Marx certainly does no justice to Marx himself nor to Marxist science — historical materialism.

Lawrence does not even attempt to analyse the modes of production, relations of production, level of development of the productive forces, social relations, political relations or ideological structures of the ante-bellum South. He fails completely to grasp the complexity of the Southern social formation in which there co-existed both slave and capitalist modes of production; under the domination of the slave mode of production. The existence of these two modes of production in the same social formation accounts for the development of contradictory relations, and capitalist forms of production and distribution.

Lawrence tries to establish that, since the commodities produced by

the slave system were sold on the international capitalist market, this external exchange relationship somehow transformed the slave mode of production into a capitalist one. What he fails to understand is that, although the slave-produced commodities may have sold on the international capitalist market, this *exchange* relationship did not alter the nature of *production* relationships in the South. The domination of slave relations of production meant the domination of the slave mode of production.

The basis of that mode is that the slaves themselves were bought and sold as commodities by the slave owners. Their labor-power was not the commodity, as was the case of the wage-laborers in the capitalist North. The slave mode of production had its own relations of production, an underdeveloped level of productive forces, and specific political and ideological

structures. The contradiction between the totality of these relations and that of the capitalist North in the end led to the Civil War. Marx clearly recognized this development since he characterized the Civil War as a "struggle between two social systems, between the system of slavery and the system of free labor (capitalism)."¹

Although there exists a need for Marxists to study the development of pre-capitalist modes of production and societies in general and their historical forms in the USA in particular, this pamphlet by Lawrence and the STO does not begin to fill the gap in this area nor does it provide the correct approach to reading Marx's work on these subjects.

Notes

¹Karl Marx, *On America and the Civil War*. (McGraw Hill, 1972), p. 93.

Reply, and a challenge to Left historians

By Ken Lawrence

I

For some time Professor Eugene D. Genovese has proclaimed himself a Marxist and has achieved a substantial reputation in the historians' profession under that mantle. Such a claim ordinarily would not merit a great deal of attention in the revolutionary movement. After all, we are concerned with Marxism as a guide to action, not primarily as an academic exercise. As for historians, few of them possess the training necessary to judge Genovese's claim, and why should they?

At a symposium on slavery at the University of Mississippi in 1975, I discovered that Genovese offered only scant evidence that

he's a Marxist — mainly that he believes class (not racial or national) struggles are the motor force of history (sometimes, as we shall see below), and that he is familiar with some of the better-known writings of Antonio Gramsci.

Normally Marxists would not consider this very meaningful evidence. Marx himself noted that it was bourgeois political economy which discovered class struggles while his own contribution had been the understanding that these struggles necessarily lead to the revolutionary overthrow of class society and, in the case of bourgeois society, its replacement by a proletarian dictatorship.

Nearly all of Genovese's writings about Marx — the few he has published, and some he hasn't — are antagonistic to Marx's views. De-

spite this odd situation, he has achieved some influence in the left movement generally and among Marxists in particular, and he currently edits a weighty and expensive academic quarterly called *Marxist Perspectives*.

It was to this concern that I addressed myself in 1975 when I first drafted my essay "Karl Marx and American Slavery." While I had admired Genovese's courage for opposing the Vietnam War even to the extent of being fired by Rutgers University, I felt that his influence on the left was unwarranted and possibly dangerous (as when he provided a "left" cover for the Canadian government to expel radical West Indian students from Sir George Williams University and to deport them for protesting against (continued on page 40)

Glaberman

(continued from page 36)

was absolutely dependent on slavery. Cotton came from other parts of the world without slavery (Egypt, India, etc.) and came from the U.S. after slavery.

The next paragraph begs the question to be proved. A quote from the *Communist Manifesto*, which applies to all social systems, is assumed to apply to "modern" slavery in spite of the fact that Marx is later quoted as calling modern slavery under capitalism an "anomaly." In any case, if modern slavery is an independent complete social system which rose, stagnated and declined — independent of capitalism — then it becomes even more difficult to see how labor under this system could be the same as under capitalism.

I don't understand what the quote from the *Grundrisse* on page 2 is supposed to mean. It seems to mean that slavery is the "antithesis" of bourgeois society and appears only as "vanishing moments," that is, as exceptions. Nor do I see how the footnoted quote from *Theories of Surplus Value* qualifies the other quote in any way that is meaningful to the point of the pamphlet. I note in passing that Marx seems to ignore, here and elsewhere, the existence of tribal societies (primitive communism) in North America before the advent of capitalism.

The middle paragraph on page 3 repeats the misinterpretation of pivot discussed above. ". . . He nevertheless devoted more of his writing to machinery," seems to imply that slavery, machinery, etc. should be given equal space in discussing the functioning or laws of motion of bourgeois society. It is hard to see why. The explanation of why Marx didn't give slavery equal space with other things is in the next two sentences: "That is probably because he thought that 'the history of the productive organs of man' would be the history 'of organs that are the material

basis of all social organization.' Yet, at the time he wrote *Capital*, Marx lamented that 'Hitherto there is no such book.'" When we examine these selections in their context, however, we find that it has nothing to do with why Marx did not devote more space to slavery. The full quote is as follows:

A critical history of technology would show how little any of the inventions of the 18th century are the work of a single individual. Hitherto there is no such book. Darwin has interested us in the history of Nature's Technology, i.e., in the formation of the organs of plants and animals, which organs serve as instruments of production for sustaining life. Does not the history of the productive organs of man, of organs that are the material basis of all social organizations, deserve equal attention? And would not such a history be easier to compile . . .?" *Capital*, I, 406, footnote.

The points 4), 5), and 6) on pages four and five seem to imply that the quote from Marx in the middle of page four refers to slave plantations as large-scale capitalist agriculture. In fact it does not refer to slavery at all but to the period following the end of slavery. The paragraph from which that quote comes has two additional sentences: "2. In particular however: Mechanics, the really scientific basis of large-scale industry, had reached a certain degree of perfection during the eighteenth century. The development of chemistry, geology and physiology, the sciences that *directly* form the specific basis of agriculture rather than of industry, . . . does not take place till the nineteenth century and especially the later decades." And the last half of the nineteenth century is, of course, when the transformation of

agriculture into large-scale, capitalist agriculture took place, in the U.S., England, etc.

Point 5), page five: that machinery is an ingredient of modern industry is a tautology but point (b) is confused. New World slavery — in sugar plantations — was an ingredient in the industrial revolution as primitive accumulation. The importance of cotton followed the industrial revolution — to feed the textile mills.

Point 6), page 5: slavery in the southern U.S. was "commercial" before the rise of the cotton industry. Sugar, rice, tobacco, and cotton were all grown on slave plantations for sale. The rise of the cotton industry in England did not transform slavery in the U.S. into a form of "commercial exploitation." It expanded the demand for cotton and therefore determined that that would become the main cash crop of the south. What made that expansion possible on a large scale was the development of the cotton gin.

The quotation that begins Section II, page five, is interpreted in point 1) on page six as meaning that "In the early period, merchants, not industrialists, dominate the rise of capitalism. This relationship generally results in a slave society." The antique world (the ancient world) is not the world that gives rise to or leads to capitalism. The sentence which follows the quote as given makes that distinction evident. "However, in the modern world, it [that is, commerce] results in the capitalist mode of production." So that the quote from Marx does not deal with "the rise of capitalism" but with the effects of commerce and how these effects differ in ancient and in modern times. To say that "this relationship generally results in a slave society" wipes out that distinction.

In the quote on page six beginning with, "as soon as people . . ." Marx is clearly distinguishing slave labor from wage labor. He does not say more than that the product is

drawn into the capitalist market. The interpretation of point 2) on that page is not warranted. The international market transforms all *products* into commodities. Marx says absolutely nothing about transforming *forms of labor*. A query: when was Negro labor in the U.S. directed to immediate local consumption? The intensity of exploitation increases after the cotton gin and the cotton manufacturing industry, but production was for cash crops long before.

The quote on page six beginning 'causes violent crises ...' relates only to completely non-capitalist societies that are invaded by the international market. The example used by Marx is India. The implication here and in the interpretation of point 4) that this somehow applies to the U.S. South is not warranted.

evident that this means that slavery is possible, not as a form of labor consistent with wage labor, but as an anomaly. Second it seems evident that the only sense that slavery can be considered as a "pivot" of industrial capitalism is in terms of its product, not in terms of its mode of labor.

The second quote on page eight needs to be amplified: "Still, this error is in no way greater than that of e.g., all philologists who speak of *capital* in antiquity, of Roman, Greek capitalists. This is only another way of expressing that labor in Rome and Greece was *free*, which these gentlemen would hardly wish to assert. The fact that we now not only call the plantation owners in America capitalists, but that they *are* capitalists, is based on their existence as anomalies within a world market based on free la-

labor which produced them.

The quote which follows does not give the meaning that Marx intended. Here is the section expanded: "No matter whether a commodity is the product of slavery, of peasants (Chinese, Indian ryots), of communes (Dutch East Indies), or of state enterprise (such as existed in former epochs of Russian history on the basis of serfdom), or of half-savage hunting tribes, etc., commodities and money of such modes of production, when coming in contact with commodities and money representing industrial capital, enter as much into its rotation as into that of surplus-values embodied in the commodity-capital. The character of the process of production from which they emanate is immaterial. They perform the function of commodities on the market, and enter into the

...anomalies within a world market based on free labor...

The quotation that begins Section III, page seven, starts with the words, "In real history, wage labor arises, . . ." etc. To change in real history to generally speaking seems to me to modify Marx's meaning by allowing for exceptions that are not indicated.

The next quote (page seven) follows a long paragraph which discusses wage labor as the condition for capital. Then comes the full paragraph which contains the quote: "So long as *both* sides exchange their labor with one another in the form of *objectified* labor, the relation is impossible; it is likewise impossible if *living labor capacity* itself appears as the property of the other side, hence as not engaged in exchange. (The fact that slavery is possible at individual points within the bourgeois system of production does not contradict this. However, slavery is then possible there only because it does not exist at other points; and appears as an anomaly opposite the bourgeois system itself.)" First, it seems

bor." This seems to mean that U.S. slave owners are capitalists because of an anomaly, an exception, because they sell their products on the world market. But the labor that produces that product is slave labor, not wage labor.

In saying that slaves are proletarians, a quote is footnoted which clearly uses proletarian or proletariat in a general and not in a scientific sense, in which Marx makes no distinction between any forms of labor. Would anyone want to argue that it made no difference to Marx what the form of labor was? That slave, serf, free or tribal labor were all interchangeable? This use of the word proletariat cannot be equated with the specific use of proletariat to mean wage labor.

The next quotation is somewhat misleading. The first sentence comes a long paragraph before the rest and relates to *capitalist* production, not production in general. The rest of the quote refers to the physical appearance of commodities and does not relate to the mode of

cycles of industrial capital as well as into those of the surplus-value carried by it. It is true universal character of the commodities, the world character of the market, which distinguishes the process of rotation of the industrial capital."

The meaning seems pretty clear: wealth, from any other social system, can be incorporated into the "rotation" of capital through the world market — without, in itself, changing the nature of these other social systems, labor forms, etc. Slaves, peasants, communards, etc. remain slaves, peasants, communards, etc. They do not become wage laborers, proletarians. The interpretations of points 3) and 4) are unjustified. Whatever Marx says about slave owners or the products of slaves, he *never* equates slave labor with wage labor and the stretching of his meaning in that direction serves no valid purpose.

There is also a problem with the short quotation on page ten about spoliation of the soil, but since it does not relate to my main point,

I will simply urge readers to go to the original quotation and interpret it for themselves.

What is the point to this extended exercise in quotations from Marx? There are several points:

1. Fundamental to all of Marxism is Marx's analysis of capitalism, in particular the law of value. This depends on his definition of labor under capitalism as "free" labor, wage labor, etc. The nature of capitalism and the nature of the proletarian revolution stem from that. Anything which distorts or waters down the meaning of those concepts makes the whole structure of Marxism meaningless.

2. There has been a tendency, stemming from the New Left, to identify virtually all sections of society as proletarians — middle-class students, college professors, etc., etc. There is nothing in Marxism that excludes non-proletarians from being radical or even, in certain circumstances, revolutionary. National revolutions, for example, in Lenin's view, even when led by the bourgeoisie, were justifiable and should be supported. There is no need to redefine every section of society as proletarian in order to justify giving support or to understand it as revolutionary.

3. The Marxian definition of

wage labor and the law of value has been eroded in other directions, for example, by the wages for housework people, who define housework as value-producing. Exploitation is not equivalent to wage labor.

4. Finally, although this is not contained in the pamphlet under discussion, there is the problem of the consequences of the theory. Was Black Reconstruction in the South the most radical form of bourgeois democracy or was it the dictatorship of the proletariat? Is there any point in heading in the latter direction? I don't think so.

Reply, and a challenge

(continued from page 37)

a racist professor, or when he aimed his fire at radicals who organized against the banning of Herbert Aptheker by the history faculty and administration of Yale University).

I had planned to write a book-length polemic against Genovese, exposing his bogus Marxism in theory and practice. Since his reputation derives mostly from his writings on slavery, primarily in the Southern United States, my first chapter was an affirmative statement summarizing Marx's views on that subject. I intended to follow with a chapter contrasting Genovese's views with Marx's. After that, with his credentials shattered, I would have proceeded to dissect his political views on subjects ranging from his interpretation of Gramsci to his defense of fascists, and on the anti-communism that informs his hidden agenda, neatly covered by cleverly worded asides supporting Stalin and criticizing supposedly dogmatic or sectarian leftists.

I circulated, in draft form, the first chapter. I sought comments and criticisms from a broad range of Marxists, some friends and some strangers, before proceeding with the rest of the work. Several encouraged me to publish the essay

by itself — the most insistent of these was George Rawick. Eventually I decided to publish the second draft, incorporating several of the criticisms but still seeking more, as an article in *Political Discussion* number two, and then in pamphlet form, under review here.

As often happens to many of us, the course of revolutionary events established different priorities for me, and I never returned to the book. (But see the *Urgent Tasks* editors' response to a letter from the Tucson Marxist-Leninist Collective in *Urgent Tasks* number one, page 32, for the direction of my argument.) The problem I intended to address has faded in importance: on the left Genovese's influence has narrowed considerably and is currently generally confined to academic Marxists and advocates of the rightwing variants of Eurocommunism. He has on several occasions in private correspondence and in person promised to reply to my essay, but hasn't ever done so. More recently he has begun to retreat from some of his own worst political and historical declarations of past years.

Many others have offered criticisms which definitely would have been incorporated had I ever final-

ized the work. Herbert Aptheker regretted that I had neglected to include Marx's letter on the importance of a slave revolt in Missouri to American political developments in 1859, and Marx's insistence on the special importance of the use of Black troops in the Civil War; Noel Ignatin made a similar observation on my omission of the significance Marx attached to John Brown's raid on Harper's Ferry. These critics and many other correspondents — Philip Foner was another — were all warmly encouraging.

I knew this series of one-sided, generally favorable responses would not continue unchallenged, however. Even if Genovese himself maintained his silence, someone was bound to come forward to defend the position I was attacking — after all, it had gained broad acceptance in the years since his book *The Political Economy of Slavery* was first published, and up until my pamphlet appeared he had this field pretty much to himself. (Of course elements of Genovese's position had been discredited. For example, Aptheker and others smashed him when he denied the importance of slave revolts. But the polemics against him had generally been limited to proving that slaves in the United States, like all other oppressed classes in history, did engage in revolutionary struggle. It was never necessary to address

Genovese's argument that U.S. slavery was feudal or seigniorial in order to defeat him.)

II

The first answer to my pamphlet was presented by the Tucson Marxist-Leninist Collective (TMLC) in an unsigned review in issue one of *Theoretical Review*, it is reprinted here. It suffers from the popular vulgarization of Marxism that characterizes so much of the left in the U.S. today. As such it deserves no comment whatever, and stands entirely refuted by contrast to Martin Glaberman's critique, which is a serious and thoughtful attempt to accomplish the same political end.

Before proceeding to my reply to Glaberman, however, one point in the TMLC review does merit an aside. Since the topic of the pamphlet is Marx's view of American slavery, not someone else's (i.e., not Genovese's, not mine, nor any latter-day Marxist's — these would have been addressed in subsequent chapters which never appeared), it was necessary for the anonymous reviewer to take a stab at tying her/his view to Marx's own. This was done by a single, forged quotation:

[Marx] characterized the Civil War as a "struggle between two social systems, between the system of slavery and the system of free labor (capitalism)."

The "(capitalism)" which TMLC's polemicist places ahead of the period and inside the quotation marks does not appear in Marx — indeed it is precisely the point at issue. Naturally, if such a statement *could* be found in Marx it *would* tend to refute my interpretation of his position, but I have never found such an assertion. The very opposite is true — every reference to U.S. slavery I have found in Marx's writings tends to support the view that he saw it as agrarian capitalism — a historical successor

to mercantile capitalism, and furnishing the foundation for its own successor (not inevitably, but in the course of real events), *industrial* capitalism. This is the other social system to which Marx refers.

(On the other hand, those who wish to oppose my argument by resorting to the Marxist Talmud can find some support in Frederick Engels' "Draft of a Communist Confession of Faith," written in June of 1847. In it, Engels asked, "In what way does the proletariat differ from the slave?" He answered:

The slave is sold once and for all, the proletariat has to sell himself by the day and by the hour. The slave is the property of one master and for that very reason has a guaranteed subsistence, however wretched it may be. The proletariat is, so to speak, the slave of the entire bourgeois *class*, not of one master, and therefore has no guaranteed subsistence, since nobody buys his labour if he does not need it. The slave is accounted a *thing* and not a member of civil society. The proletariat is recognised as a *person*, as a member of civil society. The slave *may*, therefore, have a better subsistence than the proletariat but the latter stands at a higher stage of development. The slave frees himself by *becoming a proletarian*, abolishing from the totality of property relationships *only* the relationship of *slavery*. The proletariat can free himself only by *abolishing property in general*. [Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, 6:100.]

A revised version of this essay was published later the same year as "Principles of Communism." Engels repeated the question and slightly

expanded his answer. [6:343-4.] This text is the strongest support I can find in Marxist gospel for the position my critics argue; I consider it to be an oversimplification at best, and inconsistent with the view developed by Marx.)

We are now well past the arguments with Genovese; no doubt he would be embarrassed by the defense of his position advanced by TMLC. (Ironically, one of Genovese's most hated critics on the left, Staughton Lynd, shares his general understanding of the class nature of slavery.) From here on I'll address the specific points at issue, a debate which now has a significant life of its own, rather than the politics which prompted 'the debate initially, which is no longer of interest.

III

Martin Glaberman's critique, published here for the first time though actually written some time ago, is undoubtedly the most persuasive defense of the Genovese line.*

He begins by referring to Chapter XXVI of *Capital*, the chapter on primitive accumulation. Interestingly, whereas Glaberman views this as Marx's statement of a universal law, Marx himself specifically denied this intent:

The chapter on primitive accumulation does not pretend to do more than trace the path by which, *in Western Europe*, the capitalist order of economy emerged from the womb of the feudal order of economy. [Marx and Engels, *Selected*

*In personal correspondence, Hal Draper has effectively argued many of the same points presented here by Glaberman, though their views are not precisely the same. On the other hand, some of the arguments I present here were strengthened by Draper's insights. I mean this article to be a long-overdue reply to all my critics, all of whose remarks were gratefully received.

Correspondence, Moscow: 1965, page 312. Emphasis added.]

Of course free wage labor is of crucial importance to capitalism, but that is not to say that all of capitalism's labor is free. ("Free," of course, in Marx's double sense: both slaves and corvee workers are "free" of ownership of the means of production, and therefore "freer," in Marx's meaning, than serfs, though less "free" than wage laborers.) We will return to this matter later, in a discussion of its revolutionary implications.

Glaberman seems to think that Marx's reference to slavery as "the pivot of bourgeois industry" was ambiguous, perhaps even careless, and that it does not imply an essential quality. Actually, this is an argument which Marx had developed earlier in a December 28, 1846 letter to P. V. Annenkov, which he left almost verbatim in *The Poverty of Philosophy*. [See Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, pages 40-41.]

Although *Poverty of Philosophy* was an early work, it appeared in later editions with changes by both Marx and Engels. In those editions, precise economic terminology was added. For example, "labor power" is substituted for "labor." Both original and revised versions are indicated in the new *Collected Works*. The passage I quoted was not changed, but Engels did add a footnote to it in 1885, saying that it was perfectly correct when it was written, but it was no longer true when the North became industrialized and when the South's cotton monopoly faced competition from India, Egypt, Brazil, etc. Then, says Engels, the abolition of slavery became possible. I quoted the entire Engels footnote on page 13 of the pamphlet.

As it happens, we need not rely on this Engels footnote for a reading of Marx's mind. Writing in 1850, Marx himself spelled out his meaning explicitly, leaving no room for misinterpretation:

If just a moderate loss in one year's cotton crop and the prospect of a second has been enough to excite serious alarm amidst the rejoicing over prosperity, a few consecutive years in which the cotton crop really does fail are bound to reduce the whole of civilized society to a temporary state of barbarism. The golden age and the iron age are long past; it was reserved for the nineteenth century, with its intelligence, world markets and colossal productive resources, to usher in the *cotton age*. At the same time, the English bourgeoisie has felt more forcefully than ever the power which the United States exercised over it, as a result of its hitherto unbroken monopoly of cotton production. It has immediately applied itself to the task of breaking this monopoly. Not only in the East Indies, but also in Natal, the northern region of Australia and all parts of the world where climate and conditions allow cotton to be grown, it is to be encouraged in every way. At the same time, that section of the English bourgeoisie kindly disposed towards the Negro has made the following discovery: "That the prosperity of Manchester is dependent on the treatment of slaves in Texas, Alabama and Louisiana is as curious as it is alarming." (*Economist*, 21 September 1850). That the decisive branch of English industry is based upon the existence of slavery in the southern states of the American union, that a Negro revolt in these areas could ruin the whole system of production as it exists today is, of course, an extremely depressing fact for the people who spent 20

million pounds a few years ago on Negro emancipation in their own colonies. However, this fact leads to the only realistic solution of the slave question, which has recently again been the cause of such long and violent debate in the American Congress. American cotton production is based on slavery. As soon as the industry reaches a point where it cannot tolerate the United States' cotton monopoly any longer, cotton will be successfully mass-produced in other countries, and it is hardly possible to achieve this anywhere today except with *free workers*. But as soon as the free labor of other countries can deliver sufficient supplies of cotton to industry more cheaply than the slave labour of the United States, then American slavery will be broken together with the American cotton monopoly and the slaves will be emancipated, because they will have become useless as slaves, [Karl Marx, *The Revolutions of 1848* (edited by David Fernbach), Vintage: 1974, pages 296-297.]

As things turned out in real history, however, the sequence of events did not meet Marx's expectation. Slavery was overthrown in the United States long before the U.S. monopoly on cotton production was broken. (Glaberman is simply mistaken in his assumptions about Egypt and India. Egypt's cotton exports to Britain did not reach 100,000 bales annually until after the U.S. Civil War, while U.S. production for Britain in the antebellum decade ranged from 1.1 to 2.5 million bales per year; furthermore, half of Egypt's production was the silky long-staple variety primarily used for luxury goods. India's export level reached 680,000 bales in its best ante-

bellum year — very exceptional — and this was mostly short-staple cotton of a much harsher quality than that from the U.S. The only other important competitor was slave-grown Brazilian cotton, whose best ante-bellum yield was 138,000 bales. The U.S. monopoly was so secure that British imports fell from 3.3 million bales in 1860 and 3 million in 1861 to 1.4 million in 1862 — an economic disaster. Britain's crash program to develop alternative sources of raw cotton and to break the Union blockade of the South resulted in a gradual increase to 2.7 million bales in 1865, leaping to 3.7 million the following year.)

Further confirmation of my interpretation is found in another statement, written in 1861. Though U.S. slavery was a fetter to American capitalism, it remained an essential of British capitalism. Marx wrote, "The second pivot of English industry was the slave-grown cotton of the United States. The present American crisis forces them to enlarge their field of supply and emancipate cotton from slave-breeding and slave-consuming oligarchies. As long as the English cotton manufacturers depended on slave-grown cotton, it could be truthfully asserted that they rested on a two-fold slavery, the indirect slavery of the white man in England and the direct slavery of the black man on the other side of the Atlantic." [*American Journalism of Marx and Engels*, The New American Library: 1966, page 227.]

It is difficult to understand Glaberman's quibble with the quote from the *Communist Manifesto*. Indeed, slavery was an anomaly to capitalism, but that does not mean it was characterized by an absence of revolutionary class struggle, as he seems to imply. (And my entire argument is that modern slavery, though an anomaly, was *not* independent of capitalism despite its distinct history.**) In 1847 Marx wrote that the slave economy "will provoke the most fearful conflicts in the southern states of republican

North America." [Marx and Engels, *Collected Works*, 6:325.] In 1860 he wrote to Engels that "the biggest things that are happening in the world today are on the one hand the movement of the slaves in America started by the death of John Brown, and on the other the movement of the serfs in Russia." He cited a slave revolt in Missouri as confirmation, and Engels agreed. [Marx and Engels, *The Civil War in the United States*, page 221.] He called the struggle against slavery the moving power of U.S. history for half a century, as I indicated in the pamphlet on page 14, and on the same page I cited his old-age opinion that the struggle "reaches its maximum in the slave system." It is clear that the quote from the *Manifesto* is particularly appropriate, and that, if anything, one of the most anomalous aspects of U.S. slavery was its revolutionary potential.

The point of the quote from the *Grundrisse* and the qualifying footnote from *Theories of Surplus Value* is that U.S. capitalism did not evolve from feudalism. The footnoted qualifier could be developed to show that although this is literally true, there were some pre-capitalist restraints on U.S. development. What appears at "vanishing moments" isn't slavery (! I'm astonished that someone as versed in Marx as Glaberman is could suggest such a thing), but primarily refers to things like the tendency of the yeomanry to sell its surplus product "below cost" on the capitalist market. I am showing, in this passage, that not only did Marx say that slavery was capitalist; he also said that the U.S. did not pass through a pre-capitalist stage of development.

As for the Native American societies, it is true that Marx does not do them justice — as societies in themselves, or whose land was stolen by European conquest — but he does discuss their role in primitive accumulation, referring in passing to the entombment of the aboriginal population in the mines.

Judging by what is currently available in English, Marx seems to have devoted about as much attention to slavery as he did to machinery, perhaps more, from his early works through the mid-1850's, by which time he believed that slavery had gone from being an essential of U.S. capitalism (1847) to a fetter on it (roughly 1857). Thereafter he devoted more attention to machinery. I believe this is because his priorities were determined not primarily to interpret the world, but to change it. As to the cotton gin, it has been reified into slavery's *bete noire* primarily by bourgeois historians and technocrats who seek to remove responsibility for the unspeakable cruelties of slavery from the ruling class and blame Eli Whitney instead. Actually the gin was one of many almost simultaneous inventions — the spinning jenny, the power loom, the steam engine, etc. — which gave birth to the industrial revolution. The principle of the gin was known and used in antiquity. Whitney's refinement, the saw gin, was widely duplicated (and improved) by others who had never seen his invention. All these technological developments taken together were essentials of the industrial revolution. One cannot imagine anything comparable to the modern age

**Though it isn't directly pertinent to this debate, it may be helpful to some readers to realize that the interpretation of history I share with Ted Alien and others is considerably more complex than the argument here. We contend that the English colonial (later-to-be-U.S.) bourgeoisie in Virginia introduced and maintained slavery along racial lines as a specific means of controlling labor — white as well as Black — through the institution of white supremacy. Again, what may have been anomalous in one context may still have been essential to the bourgeoisie in another. The existence of a bourgeois society consisting of free laborers racially distinct from slaves allowed the bourgeoisie to develop its hegemonic power to a degree unmatched in the world in subtlety, complexity, and effectiveness — and whose legacy of enduring white supremacy still burdens us all.

based on the production of linsey-woolsey or silk. So Glaberman's statement that the "importance of cotton followed the industrial revolution — to feed the textile mills" has no useful meaning for me. If he means to suggest that the industrial revolution could have been based on anything that might have been mechanized, I do not agree. On the other hand, ginning was still an essentially agrarian task: i.e., it was limited to natural (annual) cycles whose productivity could not be substantially altered by a technological revolution — and has not been to the present day. Carding, spinning, weaving, and sewing were all susceptible to exponential increases in productivity. It is this distinction that ultimately subordinated the former to the latter. "Industrial" describes the mechanically advanced process; agricultural production cannot meet this standard no matter how "large scale."

The quote from *Capital* which differentiates mercantile and industrial capitalism is much more general than Glaberman believes. It does not simply juxtapose antiquity with modern times, but instead contrasts pre-capitalist times (from antiquity on) with capitalism.*** One would have to ignore real history, in which the domination of merchants' capital *did* result in slavery well into the nineteenth century, in order to permit Glaberman's reading. Above all, Marx was a realist, and the quoted statement was an observation of fact, not a promulgation of an economic principle.

Glaberman believes I exaggerate the thoroughgoing changes wrought on all forms of production once industry has become dominant. He thinks Marx says nothing more than that the products of agriculture become commodities. But here is how Marx analyzed a comparable situation in 1852:

Under the Bourbons, *big landed property* had governed, with its priests and

lackeys; under the Orleans, high finance, large-scale industry, large-scale trade, that is, *capital*, with its retinue of lawyers, professors and smooth-tongued orators. The Legitimate Monarchy was merely the political expression of the hereditary rule of the lords of the soil, as the July Monarchy was only the political expression of the usurped rule of the bourgeois *parvenus*. What kept the two factions apart, therefore, was not any so-called principles, it was their material conditions of existence, two different kinds of property, it was the old contrast between town and country, the rivalry between capital and landed property. That at the same time old memories, personal enmities, fears and hopes, prejudices and illusions, sympathies and antipathies, convictions, articles of faith and principles bound them to one or the other royal house, who denies this? Upon the different forms of property, upon the social conditions of existence, rises an entire superstructure of distinct and peculiarly formed sentiments, illusions, modes of thought and views of life. The entire class creates and forms them out of its material foundations and out of the corresponding social relations. The single individual, who derives them through tradition and upbringing, may imagine that they form the real motives and the starting point of his activity. While Orleanists and Legitimists, while each faction sought to make itself and the other believe that it was loyalty to their two royal houses which separated them, facts later

proved that it was rather their divided interests which forbade the uniting of the two royal houses. And as in private life one differentiates between what a man thinks and says of himself and what he really is and does, so in historical struggles one must distinguish still more the phrases and fancies of parties from their real organism and their real interests, their conception of themselves, from their reality. Orleanists and Legitimists found themselves side by side in the republic, with equal claims. If each side wished to effect the *restoration* of its *own* royal house against the other, that merely signified that each of the *two great interests* into which the *bourgeoisie* is split — landed property and capital — sought to restore its own supremacy and the subordination of the other. We speak of two interests of the bourgeoisie, for large landed property, despite its feudal coquetry and pride of race, has been rendered thoroughly bourgeois by

***Hal Draper called to my attention an important flaw in my discussion of ancient slavery:

. . . your statement that "almost all peoples" developed through slavery is ethnocentric; the statement applies only to "almost all peoples" of the Occident. At any rate, Marx's studies led him to the opinion that the "archaic formation of society" bifurcated into two main lines of development, one of which was characteristic of the East and led through Oriental despotism and the "Asiatic" mode of production, while the other led through slavery, typically in Europe.

Draper has elaborated on this point in his multi-volume work, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution*.

the development of modern society. [Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, Moscow: n.d., pages 47-48.]

Even had Marx not elaborated on his thinking, it is difficult to see how his statement that "the civilized horrors of over-work are grafted on the barbaric horrors of slavery" thus transforming a patriarchal labor system into one which calculated the "using up of his life in 7 years' of labor" can be read as a mere statement that "the *product* is drawn into the capitalist market." Yes, the world market transforms all products into commodities, but cheap commodities, in turn, break down all social barriers and force social transformations everywhere "under penalty of death," Marx wrote.

One of the lines I elided in the earlier quote Glaberman objected to says, "Commerce therefore has everywhere more or less of a dissolving influence on the producing organizations, which it finds at hand and whose different forms are mainly carried on with a view to immediate use." As to slavery in the U.S., it was devoted to cash crops long before the rise of the cotton industry (in the South, that is; not in the North). But the important distinction to be made is that during the earlier period the plantations were virtually self-sufficient in food, fodder, clothes, lumber, household goods, etc. Later, and especially with the rise of the Cotton Kingdom, these items were largely imported, as an increasing proportion of land was devoted to fiber production. Contrary to what Glaberman writes, this shift did in fact cause violent crises in the U.S. South. (Marx made a general statement, which I quoted, and then turned to India as one illustration, "for example.") The Panic of 1837 could not have been so devastating at the time 2 to 3 decades earlier when nearly every plantation was food-sufficient. But with every available acre devoted to cotton,

the collapse meant economic ruin. This situation is a nearly exact parallel to the situation in India during the U.S. Civil War that Marx uses as his example.

My use of "Generally speaking" to introduce Marx's quote on the origin of wage labor does no violence to his meaning. He introduces it with "In real history" because he is arguing against Bastiat's fairytale that has modern society arising out of nomadic society. Marx did not intend his statement to be immutable, as any number of qualifying statements drawn from his writings would show, but he did mean it to be the usual historic process. Here is how Marx himself responded to a critic who interpreted *Capital* in the same way Glaberman does:

Now what application to Russia could my critic make of this historical sketch? Only this: If Russia is tending to become a capitalist nation after the example of the West-European countries — and during the last few years she has been taking a lot of trouble in this direction — she will not succeed without having first transformed a good part of her peasants into proletarians; and after that, once taken to the bosom of the capitalist regime, she will experience its pitiless laws like other profane peoples. That is all. But that is too little for my critic. He feels. he absolutely must metamorphose my historical sketch of the genesis of capitalism in Western Europe into an historico-philosophic theory of the general path every people is fated to tread, whatever the historical circumstances in which it finds itself, in order that it may ultimately arrive at the form of economy which ensures, together with the greatest expan-

sion of the productive powers of social labour, the most complete development of man. But I beg his pardon. (He is both honouring and shaming me too much.) Let us take an example.

In several parts of *Capital* I allude to the fate which overtook the plebeians of ancient Rome. They were originally free peasants, each cultivating his own piece of land on his own account. In the course of Roman history they were expropriated. The same movement which divorced them from their means of production and subsistence involved the formation not only of big landed property but also of big money capital. And so one fine morning there were to be found on the one hand free men, stripped of everything except their labour power, and on the other, in order to exploit this labour, those who held all the acquired wealth in their possession. What happened? The Roman proletarians became not wage labourers but a *mob* of do-nothings more abject than the former "poor whites" in the South of the United States, and alongside of them there developed a mode of production which was not capitalist but based on slavery. Thus events strikingly analogous but taking place in different historical surroundings led to totally different results. By studying each of these forms of evolution separately and then comparing them one can easily find the clue to this phenomenon, but one will never arrive there by using as one's master key a general historico-philosophical theory, the supreme virtue of which consists in being

super-historical. [Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence*, page 313]

Glaberman has mystified a quote from the *Grundrisse* in which Marx says that the planters are capitalists. Lengthening the quote does not serve any purpose in clarifying that observation. Curiously, he ignored the quote from *Theories of Surplus Value*, cited in the footnote to the passage, that says substantially the same thing in yet another context. There is nothing here or anywhere else that suggests that because a thing is anomalous (atypical) it cannot be essential (pivotal). Similarly, it ought to be obvious that an essential ingredient in one era may be obsolete and detrimental in another.

Next Glaberman objects to my quote from the *Poverty of Philosophy* about feudalism's proletariat. I will again state that the book was later revised by both Marx and Engels. The reference to a feudal "proletariat" appears twice in it. Marx did not change either reference. Engels left one alone, and changed the other to "the working class of feudal times." I will accept both formulations as acceptable and interchangeable. The passage from Marx's correspondence just cited above provides one example of his use of the term proletariat that Glaberman wouldn't approve. He also wrote, "It is characteristic that, in general, real forced labor *displays in the most brutal form, most clearly the essential features of wage-labor.*" [*Theories of Surplus Value*, III, page 400] In *Capital* III, page 394 [Kerr edition], Marx writes of "wage workers and proletarians" whose surplus-labor is absorbed "on the basis of the old mode of production." *The German Ideology* also refers to the plebeians of ancient Rome as "a proletarian rabble" [page 34], and later refers to proletarians "— at any rate in the modern form —" which implies that there were others [page 416]. I am satisfied that for my purposes, at least (determining the revolution-

ary potential of U.S. slaves), I have not done violence to Marx's meaning. No doubt there are other studies which can benefit more from considering the differences between waged and slave labor, rather than the similarities. Here is the point:

As soon as this process of transformation has sufficiently decomposed the old society from top to bottom, as soon as the labourers are turned into proletarians, their means of labour into capital, as soon as the capitalist mode of production stands on its own feet, then the further socialisation of labour and further transformation of the land and other means of production into socially exploited and, therefore, common means of production, as well as the further expropriation of private proprietors, takes a new form. That which is now to be expropriated is no longer the labourer working for himself, but the capitalist exploiting many labourers. This expropriation is accomplished by the action of the immanent laws of capitalistic production itself, by the centralisation of capital. One capitalist always kills many. Hand in hand with this centralisation, or this expropriation of many capitalists by few, develop, on an ever extending scale, the cooperative form of the labour-process, the conscious technical application of science, the methodical cultivation of the soil, the transformation of the instruments of labour into instruments of labour only usable in common, the economising of all means of production by their use as the means of production of combined, socialised labour,

the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world-market, and this, the international character of the capitalistic regime. Along with the constantly diminishing number of the magnates of capital, who usurp and monopolise all advantages of this process of transformation, grows the mass of misery, oppression, slavery, degradation, exploitation; but with this too grows the revolt of the working-class, a class always increasing in numbers, and disciplined, united, organised by the very mechanism of the process of capitalist production itself. The monopoly of capital becomes a fetter upon the mode of production, which has sprung up and flourished along with, and under it. Centralisation of the means of production and socialisation of labour at last reach a point where they become incompatible with their capitalist integument. This integument is burst asunder. The knell of capitalist private property sounds. The expropriators are expropriated. [Marx, *Capital* I (Kerr edition), pages 836-837.]

Can that passage stand as a description of the ante-bellum South? Or did it only apply to England and New England?

Marx's reference to the spoliation of the soil is pertinent to Genovese's argument, since it is clear that Marx did not consider it an essential of Southern agriculture, while Genovese does. Glaberman's final challenge, concerning the meaning of Black Reconstruction, will be addressed below.

IV

What about Lenin's views on all this? Eugene Genovese has prom-

ised to take full account of my criticisms when he reworks his political economy; we shall see. Meanwhile he has responded so far only to say, "I do wonder about your disposal of Lenin's observation of the 'feudal' (his word, not mine) significance of slavery in the development of American capitalism." [personal letter, February 2, 1976.] In a situation of this sort there is a strong temptation to respond by asking why it is necessary to shift ground to Lenin without first settling accounts with Marx.

Actually, I had confronted precisely this question the month before I drafted the article on Marx, in preparation for it. Discussing the difficulty of rendering Marx's interpretation, I wrote (to George Rawick):

The real need is to integrate Marx's observation in *The Poverty of Philosophy* that "direct slavery is just as much the pivot of bourgeois industry as machinery, credits, etc. . . . Without slavery North America, the most progressive of countries, would be transformed into a patriarchal country" with Lenin's perceptive understanding of the complexities of U.S. agriculture in *Capitalism and Agriculture in the United States of America*, where he shows that the South was feudal relative to the North and West, despite "large scale" production in the South. [Volume 22, especially pages 30 and 32].

In his notebooks for this article [Volume 40], Lenin refers to slaveholding as "Transition from feudalism to capitalism" [pages 412 and 475]. He shows that large farms growing cereal have low income, while smaller dairy farms have higher income [416-417], and concludes from this

that the latter must spend more for labor per farm, therefore are more capitalist [419]. He considers America to be the best example of capitalist agriculture, with "fewer bonds with the Middle Ages, with the soilbound laborer" [420], but he says that the South has "The lowest development of capitalism." [459] He summarizes the development in the U.S. as follows [475]: "*Displacement of all the small and all the medium ones. Displacement of the latifundia (1,000 and more). Growth of big capitalist farms (175-500; 500-1,000).*" [Lenin's emphasis; numbers are acres.]

. . . showing a particular trait of capitalism would not be sufficient. Marx himself showed that various aspects emerged early, as when he said that the first general form of wage-labor was soldiers' pay [Marx, *Grundrisse* (David McLellan, editor), page 58]. . . . He wrote, "If we now talk of plantation-owners in America as capitalists, if they *are* capitalists, this is due to the fact that they exist as anomalies within a world market based upon free labor." [Hobsbawm's *Pre-Capitalist Economic Forms*, page 119.] In *Capital* III [Kerr, page 934] he says that capitalist conceptions predominate on American plantations. Clearly there is a need to view some aspects of slavery as pre-capitalist and other aspects as capitalist. But these considerations do not all merit equal weight. Marx pointed out that the rise of the cotton industry transformed slavery in the U.S. from "the earlier, more or less patriarchal slavery, into a

system of commercial exploitation. In fact, the veiled slavery of the wage-earners in Europe needed, for its pedestal, slavery pure and simple in the new world." (*Capital I* [Kerr], page 833). [personal letter, May 8, 1975.]

Since I had not changed my opinion on this, indeed I still haven't, I quoted it in my reply to Genovese, and added this:

Here is my present understanding: All economic categories are abstractions, and therefore, to a certain extent one-sided and false. In the last *Radical America* Marty Glaberman writes that a definition is not a fact; it's either useful or it isn't. Engels, in one of the introductions to *Capital I*, shows that dialectics sometimes requires definitions of terms to change. These ideas are involved in this discussion.

Capitalism is a lot of things: a system of production, a system of distribution, a system of labor, a system of property ownership, etc. Moreover, it is constantly developing and changing. That was also true of feudalism, though its "natural economy" rendered its development always visible, while capitalist relations are characteristically concealed.

For Lenin to peel off the rind and reveal the inner workings, not just of the momentary realities of capitalist agriculture, but of its *development*, he needed a word whose definition implied a backward, earlier stage of existence, *whether or not that stage had actually existed* in a particular place. The term he used was feudalism. (Apparently. I

wish I knew some Russian so I could understand any idiomatic subtleties that might occur in his analysis.) But he nearly always qualifies the term with a parenthetical "or, what is nearly the same thing," etc.

It should not be surprising that one area of production, cotton, which in one epoch is such a vital part of dynamic capitalism (during the industrial revolution) should fade in importance, and therefore lag in development, in another (imperialism). The latter period is the theater of Lenin's discussion; ours is the former, and the definitions, to be useful, must reflect that.

The crux of our debate centers on the importance of the class struggle to the development of the antebellum South. In order to resolve that, it is necessary to portray accurately the distinct aspects of the contending classes. . . .

In discussing the individual laborer, is it more helpful to view her/him as analogous to a serf or to an industrial proletarian? That depends on your purpose. Slaves and serfs both till the

soil; industrial workers usually don't. But serfs, who typically develop into a peasant class, own, or legitimately aspire to own, land and tools. Industrial workers typically own only their labor power. Slaves don't even own that — as Marx said, they are an anachronism. Some peasant struggles may be attenuated by those sectors of their class who fight to retain their property; slaves can only struggle for a change in the property relations (and therefore a change in the system of production). To writers of idylls, slaves will be peasants; to the rest of us, they are proletarians. On the other hand, proletarian or not, if their product loses its strategic significance then their overall social leverage tends to decline also. Though the struggle may continue to be as sharp as before (it might be measured roughly by the lynching rate), the development of other sectors may advance more rapidly, leaving the cotton kingdom relatively backward — a semi-colony, as Lenin implies. Even there, as he demonstrates, there is a

forward development of capitalism, [personal letter, February 20, 1976] These remain the terms of the debate. All the critics of my interpretation of Marx oppose the suggestion that slaves are proletarians. The implication of their position is that no matter how revolutionary slaves might have been, they were backward relative to free (white) wage earners; the latter's struggles were (objectively, at least) fights for socialism, while the slaves could only win, at best, a radical form of capitalism as the fruit of their victory. I reject this position root and branch. One must torture the facts of Reconstruction to find support for the Genovese argument, echoed here by the Tucson Marxist-Leninist Collective and Martin Glaberman.

V

Was Black Reconstruction the revolutionary proletarian dictatorship that W. E. B. DuBois thought it was?

I find his argument convincing, at least in the cases of South Carolina and parts of Mississippi, possibly elsewhere. Those Marxists who argue a different view have not directly countered his argument with evidence; rather, they have attempted to read history backward from their contemporary political needs.****

the Marxist policy during and after the Civil War was for the oppressed to unite with the industrial bourgeoisie against the plantation owners.

Marx's policy was the opposite. He strove to build an independent proletarian movement. When a bunch of English industrial aristocrats attacked American slavery, he wrote an article denouncing them, which appeared in the February 9, 1853 *New York Daily Tribune*:

The enemy of British wages slavery has a right to condemn Negro slavery; a Duchess of Sutherland, a Duke of Athol, a Manchester cotton lord — never! [The American Journalism of Marx and Engels, page 65]

****Ironically, these arguments, like Genovese's, are a substantial departure from Marx's. Noel Ignatin wrote:

James S. Allen regards the Civil War and Reconstruction as a bourgeois-democratic revolution. Flowing from this conception, Alien dismisses any of DuBois' suggestions that the toiling masses were serious contenders for power, and views the former slaves as "allies of the bourgeoisie." The only labor opposition to bourgeois policy that Alien regards as significant were the socialist forces around William Sylvis and the National Labor Union. Consistent with his view of the period as a bour-

geois revolution, he naturally places the responsibility for its defeat on the betrayal by the bourgeoisie in 1877.

Although Allen never explicitly makes the point (and in fact says things which tend in the opposite direction), his book, written in 1937, was used to support the Communist Party's policy of alliance with Roosevelt against the "fascist" forces. In part, the Party was hoping and expecting that Roosevelt could be pressured to take the steps to complete the "unfinished tasks" of Reconstruction.

Allen was arguing, by implication, that

We have to admit, however, that very little work has been done in the past 45 years to support DuBois' position. Using a novel approach, Noel Ignatin developed a study guide for evaluating DuBois and James S. Allen in terms of each other's interpretation of Reconstruction (see "A Study Guide to Reconstruction," *Urgent Tasks* number three); using this method, the superiority of DuBois' insight is apparent to most students. But this doesn't constitute proof.

Here is an area of scholarship — virtually unexplored territory — where Marxist historians could make a significant contribution to our understanding, one that would be of much greater political importance than most of their research. One likely method to approach the question is comparative history, extensively applied to answer many less important historical questions, particularly concerning New World slavery.

Several possible comparisons will come immediately to mind: Black Reconstruction in the U.S. could fruitfully be contrasted with emancipation and reconstruction in Brazil, say, or Cape Colony (South Africa). A comparison could be made with the emancipation of Russian serfs. Some scholars have already begun to explore the similarities and differences in these histories, though not yet with our questions in mind, but I think the most explicit way to address the problem is to measure the Civil War and Black Reconstruction by the revolution during those same years which Marx and Engels themselves called the proletarian dictatorship — the Paris Commune — and by Radical Reconstruction's ties to the communist movement of its day.

This will be a costly and tedious job if it is done well, and will require a careful search in many archives in Europe and America. Nevertheless, there are a few promising leads.

Many are to be found in *The First International in America* by Samuel Bernstein (Augustus M.

Kelley, New York: 1962). Some of the early members of the International were involved in the radical antislavery movement. Wendell Phillips may have been a member, [pages 26 and 82]

Also enlisted in the Council's service was Richard J. Hinton of Washington, D.C., who had been with John Brown in the raid on Harper's Ferry, and subsequently had been an officer in the Kansas Colored Regiment [page 31]

After the Civil War, some radical Republicans affiliated with the International, notably the French-speaking sections:

The part of Franco-Americans in the International Association of the fifties has been looked at. Many of them, like other exiles in the United States, had taken up the abolitionist cause and fought in the Union Army. The War over, they organized themselves in St. Louis, first as Camp Fremont for the defense of republican institutions, should they be threatened, and subsequently as the French Radical Club, [page 40]

In November 1868 they formed the Union republicaine de langue francaise. "It held, for example, that the labor question could never be settled without full equality for Negroes." [page 41]

(Other International members in the U.S. were against Reconstruction and opposed the radical Republicans with a call for a labor party. Thus the National Colored Labor Convention in December 1869 voted to send a delegate to the fifth congress of the First International, but in 1871 the (Black) National Labor Union withdrew from affiliation after the International voted to convene a labor

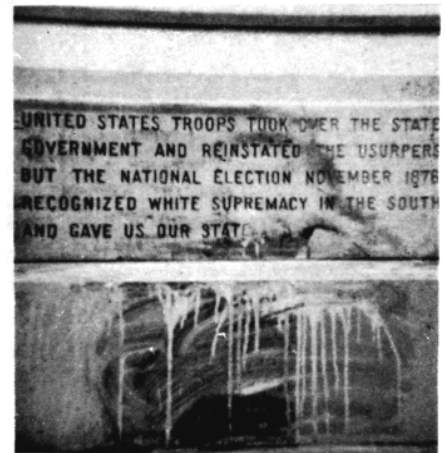
party convention in 1871.)

Perhaps the most explicit and conscious link between the two revolutions was Section 15, admitted to the International in July 1871, which had grown out of the International and Republican Club of New Orleans. The Club's newspaper, *La Commune*, vigorously defended the Communards. Minutes of the First International's General Council refer to the paper and to correspondence with the Club. On October 10, 1871, Benjamin LeMoussu, a French worker and member of the Paris Commune, was appointed the General Council's corresponding secretary for the French-speaking sections in America. [See *The General Council of the First International (Volume 4) 1870-1871 — Minutes*, Moscow: 1974, and *The Hague Congress of the First International, September 2-7, 1872 — Minutes and Documents*, Moscow: 1976.]

One thing is certain: Black Reconstruction and the Paris Commune shared a similar fate — both



This monument to white supremacy still stands in New Orleans.



drowned in blood. Today, at the foot of Canal Street in New Orleans stands a tall monument to white supremacy, commemorating the members of the Crescent City White League who participated in the coup d'etat of September 14, 1874. Inscriptions on the statue say:

In the signal victory of the 14th of September, we must acknowledge with profound gratitude the hand of a kind and merciful God . . . McEnery and Penn having been elected governor and lieutenant governor by the white people, were duly installed by this overthrow of carpetbag government

ousting the usurpers, Gov. Kellogg (white), Lt. Gov. Antoine (colored).

United States troops took over the state government and reinstated the usurpers but the national election November 1876 recognized white supremacy and gave us our state.

(A plaque on the ground beside the obelisk added as a footnote in 1974 says that although the battle and the monument are "important parts of New Orleans history," its message is "contrary to the philosophy and beliefs of present-day New Orleans." Nevertheless it still stands.)

It is difficult for me to believe

that intelligent Marxist scholars really believe that the bourgeoisie backed these right-wing terrorists simply to overthrow bourgeois democracy; the rulers must have perceived a real threat to their authority. The real problem is the "American blindspot" of which DuBois wrote. Few white Marxists seem willing to accept the notion that newly emancipated Black Southerners could have embarked on a revolution far in advance of their white fellow workers of the industrial North. More than a century has passed since the final overthrow of Black Reconstruction; it is high time someone examined in detail its full revolutionary implications.

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