

Do I contradict myself? Very well then, I contradict myself (I am large, I contain multitudes.)

—Walt Whitman

Since the early nineteenth century with the famous Luddite riots, the working class movement has been debating whether mechanization is liberating or exploitative. This debate is very much alive in the movement today, especially in Europe since 1977. On the one side, the Autonomia-refusal-of-work tendency sees in technological development the hope for the final liberation of humanity for work; on the other side are alternativists of all sorts who, while not necessarily seeing the machine as an evil, are much more interested in understanding and reorganizing our social relations, everyday life and forms of creativity. From the point of view of the former, one of capital's greatest crimes today is in holding back the development of productive forces, of literally destroying a potentially available, high level of productivity because it is not profitable. (As the history of capitalism has shown, again and again, the increase of social wealth can be directly contradictory to the accumulation of value.) For the latter, instead, capital kills the Soul so to speak, for though, and even because, it may provide a high level of technological development, "scientific wonders" and/or remarkable "material" (or what usually passes as material) wellbeing, it creates a world of "dead Souls": Alienation, Loss of Animal Spirits, Desire to Die, desensitization.

Are these mutually exclusive trends? Are we forced to choose between them?

For capitalist development, of course, there is no contradiction between the paths of increasing mechanization and continuing to profit from archaic forms of production by lengthening the work day (killing the Soul and/or the Body). They are but two complementary paths of appropriating surplus time. Mechanization decreases the necessary work time and so increases the ratio of surplus to necessary work, while lengthening the work day simply increases surplus labor tout court. In fact, in order to accumulate the capital necessary to introduce mechanization the work day must be increased somewhere. But this "somewhere" need not be in the same place.

In the "First Great Industrial Revolution" (or better counter-revolution), during which our Luddite ancestors broke into history, the surplus labor time was taken directly out of those workers whose work was mechanized. Not only did the Manchester operatives work with machines but they worked longer and more intensively than previous generations of non-mechanized textile workers. This need not always be the case. Thus the introduction of Atomic Power Plants and Computerized Factories need not, and will not, be "financed" out of the hides of atomic physicists and programmers (though maybe they should!) They are undoubtedly being capitalized by the increased surplus value transferred

to these highly mechanized sectors from the spheres of "shit work" being done in the kitchens, restaurants, basements, sweatshops around the world. Capital has its technocratic and "romantic" sides but their antithesis is bogus: they merely provide models for complementary forms of accumulation. The trick of the capitalist (the so-called "entrepreneurial spirit") is simply to find the right mixture.

But if capital is not forced to choose between the Machine and the Hand, the Soul and the Body why should we?

Capital is flexible, it has a Standard with which to determine its best model of production on the basis of the surplus work it generates. It is neither technocratic nor anti-technocratic, neither liberal nor fascist, not addicted to whisky nor cocaine. This is its historical power: to remain true to itself while shifting with the tides of class force.

What has grown in the last five years, through all the misery of the crisis, all the state terror, all our despair, has been the increasing sophistication and richness with which our standard is being developed and applied. Our standard is quite simple: the refusal of work and its reduction to a minimum. But the application of this standard is far from simple: the European movement (quite self-consciously) and the American movement (where practice is light years ahead of theory as usual) have taken a few steps beyond Marx's description of the immediate post-Luddite period. "It took both time and experience before the workpeople learnt to distinguish between machinery and its employment by capital, and to direct their attacks not against the material instruments of production, but against the mode in which they are used." In the century since Marx, we have seen that the simple formula "Execute the capitalists, Operate the machines" is inadequate for two reasons. First, capital has literally "booby trapped" many machines in such a way that their only form of operation is capitalistic: the nuclear industry and the stock-piled nuclear bombs are fine examples. Not only can they not be used now except capitalistically, but there is no obvious way of getting rid of them non-capitalistically. Second, "previous invisible sectors" of the working class have pointed out that forms of mechanical production that appear to reduce work merely shift work onto less powerful class sectors. Elements of the women's movement have been crucial to this realization, for the typically more "powerful and advanced" technological class sectors are male and thus they rarely take into account the fact that every form of production requires an enormous amount of reproductive work, usually female. What can appear as reduction of work through mechanization may lead to so much trauma,

tension and breakdown in the immediate workers and environment that the work of reproducing those workers and environment increases tremendously. Capital's form has so melded with the instruments of production that the preferred tool of Revolutionary Surgery must become the Laser.

The growth of analytic power has gone through the tributary of struggles marked by Italy in 1977, the anti-nuke and energy price revolts of 1978-79 in the U.S. and Europe, the Space Wars in Zurich of 1980, and the anti-police, anti-military riots in England, Holland and Germany in 1981. These nodes of conflict forced the movement into confrontation with itself as well as with capital; they forced us to sharpen up our standard. Each of these moments brought into the struggle against capital new social strata, new mixtures and social possibilities, but always presented us with contradictory impulses with respect to technology. On the one side, elements of the movement argued for "pushing" the system to intensify its technological development in order to further reduce the necessary labor time in production and thus increase the potential social wealth (free time). On the other side, there has been a demand for new social forms to fulfil our desires now, to experience in all its richness, the social being and relationships appropriate to a working class on the way out of the capitalist era. Is this a looming contradiction between the new "forces" and "relations" of social production? Is the Revolutionary Body and Soul at odds? No, not with any finality, because they are interwoven expressions of the refusal of work. However, in the concrete struggle, tensions exist.

Take the Zurich movement of the last two years. Though Zurich is a monetary center supreme, where the "dominance of formal over real society" was apparently total, packets of alternativists, punks and high-tech personnel melted and exploded in its center. In a city where "the work of most people is language, mostly figures" the movement used the crudest (physical blockage, appropriation and escape) to the most refined (ironic sabotage of TV, telephonic and computational transmission) methods to undermine this language-work.

But a capitalist "pull out" from Zurich in response to the struggle would put the alliance of work refusers to the test. For though the alternativists might welcome the chance to introduce a new "human-centered" form of production/reproduction, large sections of the working class will, if given a choice, stick with capital and the state with "its" technology unless the technological wealth of the last half millenium can be reintegrated into the new social mode.

These are the contradiction and questions that Midnight Notes receives and transmits to the movement. Thus "Strange Victories" and "No Future Notes" (vol. 1, n.1,2) argued that the class composition of the anti-nuke movement in the U.S. inevitably limited the demands and depth of action against capital's crisis Plan. No "strange loop" was being fashioned by the movement in order to "tangle" the class hierarchies because it remained and remains to this day a movement essentially of

the "upper" workers. Thus, the main proposal of the movement, "the solar transition", is invariably offered up with an austerity rhetoric telling us that we are "overconsuming" and, in Tom Hayden's words, discovering that "people have a basic need for real work." It might be very well for Mr. Hayden and his friends who spend their time talking about work but have managed to get away pretty nicely from doing it. But this simply will not do for the blacks, hispanics, women, immigrants, assembly line workers, miners and youth of this country. They have worked too much already and have consumed to little of life! Atleast Reagan offers wealth and less work for a few "lucky ones", Hayden envisions "socially useful" drudgery for all: his vision is a vision of work without end, not of the end of work. But this is by no means an isolated mistake, rather this pro-work, pro-austerity line is an underlying unity between elements of the anti-nuke movement and proponents of labor intensive capitalist development. This resulted in the inability to shape a "strange loop" between the white riot of Levittown, the black riot of Miami and the anti-nuke demos of 1979-80. The social vacuum thus created added a huge force to the Reagan initiative.

On the eve of the Reagan election in "Work/Energy Crisis and the Apocalypse" (MN, vol.2, n. 1) we tried to decode the crisis plan of capital by deducting out all the apocalyptic rhetoric about "Nature's limits" to see the refusal of work as the driving force of the Crisis. In doing so, we revealed capitalist science as both a tool of planning to overcome the refusal of work and a continuing reflection of capitalist crises.

Then in "Space Notes" (MN vol.2, n.2) we brought the movement of the 'dissatisfied' in Zurich and Northern Europe into focus. They form one of the first decisive struggles of this period because they operate outside the job and emphasize the question of 'life style': how and where living is to be done, the wages and working conditions of life. Through their informational guerrilla they have shown that capital's attempt to mimic all social relations as relations between money can be defeated and continually exposed.

In this issue we continue the exploration of capital's use of science and technology in its plan to overcome the crisis by the redefinition of work and the consequent attempt to create a new kind of worker and state. In "Prolog to the Use of Machines" we precisely define the transition the crisis embodies, a transition from work defined by repetitive heat engines to work defined by logical machines. But to work capitalistically with such a new system of machines a completely new form of worker must be created. "Mormons in Space" seeks to show that such a worker must be patterned after the most archaic form of the capitalist individual: the puritan of the period of primitive accumulation. An interview with a government bureaucrat in "A Demon Speaks" reveals the form of the state necessitated by the transition to the new mode of work and the problems and contradictions it results in. "Strange Loops: Reagan in Zurich" sketches a scenario of struggle that is based on the recent Northern European confrontations which bring together a composition