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De mi mayor estima:

Confirmando mi anterior del 26 de febrero y el envío de dos trabajos de Marija, que espero obren en su poder.

Aprovecho esta oportunidad para informarle de nuestra nueva dirección

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Ruego enviar toda correspondencia a esta nueva dirección.

A la espera de sus noticias, le saluda atte.,

*B. Balve*  
bepa balve



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Maria Rosa—

here are the pages that touch on the  
history of WFH. There are many references  
throughout the book.

I am enclosing the section on labor-time  
which I hope you will find of interest

Ciao

Harry

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battles which both engendered the theoretical developments and were clarified by them.

An extremely important political moment in the development of these struggles in the community, and in their theorization, was the coalescence of the autonomous struggles of women into self-conscious, organized political groups. In this development we can see the kind of autonomy which C. L. R. James saw two decades ago in his analysis of black struggles in the United States: the autonomy of a sector of the working class from other sectors.<sup>127</sup> This new autonomous movement arose through struggle against what many women saw as the domination of the New Left organizations by men, and their overemphasis on the factory. Those women grasped not only the theoretical concept of the social factory but also the key role of the struggle of nonfactory workers—most of whom are women. Mario Tronti and other men in PO could see that the reproduction schemes of Volume II of *Capital* included the reproduction of labor. The women in PO could see that it was their labor which accomplishes that reproduction, and that it had been the struggle of women against that labor in the community which was at the core of the self-reduction movement and other community struggles in Italy and elsewhere.

As a part of their struggles to bring this issue to the fore, women like Maria Rosa Dalla Costa developed both new theoretical emphases and new organizations. Organizationally, they broke with PO and organized *Lotta Femminista* in Italy and, subsequently, an international *Wages for Housework* campaign. On the theoretical level they vastly expanded Tronti's work on the nonfactory part of the working class. They focused on the key role of the wage in hiding not only the unpaid part of the working day in the factory, but also unpaid work outside it. They drew on Marx's work on the reserve army and the wage, yet they went beyond it in seeing the reproduction of labor-power as within capitalist planning. They brought out the way the wage divides the class hierarchically into wage (factory) and unwaged (~~reserve~~ <sup>army</sup>: housewives, students, peasants, etc.) sectors, such that the latter groups appear to be outside the working class simply because they are not paid a wage. They pushed forward the analysis of the work of reproducing labor-power and analyzed its structure both within the home and in the socialized forms of schools, hospitals, and so on.<sup>128</sup>

This understanding of the wage as the fundamental tool for the hierarchical division of the class brought a key insight to the old prob-

lem of the role of sexism and racism in capital. As Selma James has argued in her pathbreaking work on this issue, sexism and racism can be understood as particular cases of division which are almost always simultaneously wage division.<sup>129</sup> This is true even when the racial or sexual divisions are among the unwaged. Here the hierarchy is that of unwaged income. Her extension of this analysis to the case of the peasantry opened the door to a reconceptualization of the international character of capital and to a rigorous redefinition of the role of the peasantry within the international capitalist system as a whole. Here was the answer to Althusser's renovated but sterile historical materialism of modes of production as well as a more solid basis for the rejection of the politics of that theory. If the neo-Marxists like Frank had correctly grasped the global nature of capital but failed to develop a theory to explain the wide variety of production arrangements—especially among the peasantry—then James' work provided that theory, especially when combined with the concepts of working-class autonomy and political recomposition to explain the evolution of the structure of production over time.

The political implications of these new insights were far-reaching. As women, the members of Lotta Femminista and Wages for Housework could see that leftist strategies for women calling for their "joining" the working class by moving into the factories were counterproductive. Not only did going into the factories mean double work, women were already working for capital at home, but also, once in the factories, the wage hierarchies of capital, perpetuated by the unions and the Party, would either keep women down as a group or divide them up over that same hierarchy and thus destroy their collective power. Just as C. L. R. James had argued for the necessary autonomy of the black movement, so did they refuse to be subsumed in such organizations.<sup>130</sup> These women saw that the basic difference between the waged and the unwaged was one of power. The wage—money—gives power, the material resources as a basis for struggle. Hence they put forward the qualitative demand that wages be paid for housework by the collective capitalist: the state. As to the quantitative determination of wages, that would be based on women's power, not on any capitalist productivity measure. It was a demand aimed against the waged/unwaged division. It sought to increase both women's power and, in so doing, that of the working class as a whole by raising that of the lowest level.<sup>131</sup>

This work formed a decisive advance over the earlier work by

Tronti and others. It not only allowed a more adequate grasp of the political recomposition of the Italian working class, but also opened the path to the generalization of earlier work on the capitalist crisis to the global level. The identification of the leading role of the unwaged in the struggles of the 1960s in Italy, and the extension of the concept to the peasantry, provided a theoretical framework within which the struggles of American and European students and housewives, the unemployed, ethnic and racial minorities, and Third World peasants could all be grasped as moments of an international cycle of working-class struggle.

By incorporating the work of Dalla Costa, James, and others in *Wages for Housework* into the analysis of the capitalist crisis, it was possible to extend that analysis to the United States and to the world as a whole. A growing number of articles in both the United States and Europe have underlined the position and importance of the unwaged in the current crisis. For example, *Operaio Multinationale* (1974) contains a number of articles which seek, through the analysis of the immigrant or "multinational" worker, to integrate our understanding of the connection between peasant struggles in the Third World, the student, women and "Third World" struggles in the developed countries, and those of the waged working class.<sup>132</sup> These articles help locate the origins of the current international crisis as being of the social factory as a whole and thus see it as immeasurably more profound than generally recognized.

In 1975 the first issue of the journal *Zerowork* argued, through detailed studies of struggles in the United States, that they were of the same sort as those Italian conflicts demonstrated by PO to have undermined the postwar Keynesian order and forced capital to adopt crisis as a strategy to regain control—to call a political strike on investments. But the collapse of the Keynesian attempt to mobilize working-class energy was not simply at the level of productivity deal in the factory. Analysis of the civil rights/black power movement, the student power, antiwar and women's movements showed that the collapse had been throughout the social factory. Not only had industrial investment in leading sectors like auto and mining faltered under the blows of a new working-class insurgency, but also the human capital investments of the Kennedy-Johnson era in ghetto and university had been undermined by the new movements of the unwaged. All these struggles had been seen before by the New Left theoreticians, but never before had it been possible to integrate their analysis within that of the working

class, or to see the autonomy of those struggles, or to analyze the pattern of their circulation among sectors of the class.<sup>133</sup>

Further work on the struggles of the waged and unwaged in the Third World and in the socialist block in the second issue of *Zerowork* has brought out the truly international character of the cycle of struggles. A re-evaluation of peasant and farm-worker struggles in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union, and Vietnam showed that the pattern of both worker offensive and capitalist strategy had much in common with peasant and agricultural-worker struggles in the "West." These studies contribute to the reinterpretation of a number of key phenomena, such as the role of access to land and the role of multinational workers. Against the traditional views of landownership as simply a petty bourgeois or feudal characteristic, these studies brought out the way land appears at once as a guarantor of income and as a tool for dividing the unwaged. Against the view of labor migration as simply a spectacle of victimized workers driven by capitalist manipulation, the role of autonomous labor mobility as a form of struggle against capital is emphasized.<sup>134</sup>

All this has led to a fundamental reinterpretation of Marx's crisis theory. With the working class understood as being within capital yet capable of autonomous power to disrupt the accumulation process and thus break out of capital, crisis can no longer be thought of as a blind "breakdown" generated by the mysteriously invisible laws of competition. Beginning with Antonio Negri's work on Marx's crisis theory, crisis has been reinterpreted in terms of the power relations between the classes and competition has been located as only one organization of this relation.<sup>135</sup> Marx's understanding of crisis as a means to restore the conditions of growth is seen in terms of restoring adequate control over the working class. Thus "the" modern crisis emerges as a phenomenon of two moments: a first, in which working-class struggle imposes crisis on capital, and a second, in which capital tries to turn the crisis against the working class to restore command. Thus in the present cycle of international crisis, the 1960s figure as the period in which capital lost control of the social factory as a whole due to an international cycle of working-class offensive. And the 1970s figure as the period in which capital has launched an international offensive in which the direct manipulation of the prices of food and energy and of exchange rates and international debt is being used to achieve through international channels what Keynesian policies failed to do nationally: regain control by containing wage struggles within the

limits of rising productivity. At the same time capital's organization of this second phase of the international crisis has included the attempt to decompose working-class unity by restructuring the class technologically and geographically. In terms of theory this has also involved a new assessment of Marx's analysis of the long-term trend in capital to substitute constant for variable capital—a trend which Marx saw as leading to a fundamental crisis for a system based on the employment of labor.<sup>136</sup>

These are some of the major insights which together constitute the beginning of a strategic analysis of the pattern of working-class power: (1) the working class as an autonomous power; (2) capital as including the working class within it, capital thus as the class struggle; (3) technology as a particular division of working-class power produced through the class struggle; (4) working-class organization as a function of the composition of the class and thus the historical specificity of trade unionism, social democracy, and Leninism, as valid working-class organizational solutions; (5) political recomposition as the working class overcoming capital's division; (6) the working class as including the waged and unwaged; and thus (7) capital as social capital or as social factory; (8) capitalist crisis as crisis of power between the classes; and (9) working-class political recomposition and capitalist decomposition as the substance of the two moments of crisis.

In the foregoing sketch, I have tried to bring out how the rereading of Marx has been an important moment in the development of these elements. Panzieri's rereading of Marx on the organization of work, Tronti's rereading of *Capital* on accumulation, *Wages for Housework's* rereading of Marx's discussion of the reserve army and of the wage, *Zerowork's* rereading of the *Grundrisse* on the end of the work, among others, have been necessary and important moments in the development of an analysis which is of greater strategic use to the development of working-class power than either orthodox or Western Marxism. What kind of rereadings are these? How, if at all, do they differ from traditional approaches? They are not, it seems to me, exercises in ideology or in capitalist strategy building. They do not seek a critique of capitalism. They seek rather new tools for developing working-class power. Panzieri discovers working-class autonomy in forcing the transformation of capitalist technology and planning. Tronti discovers the theoretical grounds for exploring how to link factory and nonfactory struggles. *Wages for Housework* rediscovers the wage as a key to power in overcoming divisions of the class. *Zero-*

not only in the pathbreaking work done by people associated with the Johnson-Forest Tendency (works by C. L. R. James, James Boggs, George Rawick, and Martin Glaberman, among others, have been translated into Italian and probably received wider circulation and discussion in Italy than in the United States) but also in the perception that, just as American capitalism is the most advanced in the world and therefore particularly important to study, so too must the struggles of American workers, which have forced and continue to challenge that development, be of particular importance for workers everywhere. As many have said, probably correctly, the evolution of revolutionary struggles in the United States is determinant for struggles everywhere.

113. See Dario Lanzardo, "Intervento Socialista nella lotta operaia: l'Inchiesta Operaia di Marx," *Quaderni Rossi* 5, pp. 1-30. The translation of the inquiry by Maniuccia Salvati and Piero Scaramucci was attached as an appendix to Lanzardo's analysis.

114. See Romano Alquati, *Sulla Fiat e Altri Scritti*.

115. Bologna, "Class Composition and the Theory of the Party at the Origin of the Workers-Councils Movement."

116. Tronti, "Workers and Capital." It must be pointed out that this essay is a translation from the 1970 postscript to Tronti's book *Operai e Capitale*, which was written after Tronti's return to the Italian Communist party. Therefore, despite its useful historical analysis, his interpretation is geared to providing a justification for current social democratic programs of the Italian Communist party. His assessment of the degree to which American workers made gains in their struggles of the 1930s is taken as a model for workers in Italy today—a conservative argument for limiting struggles to trade union activities and confining the future to the Party.

117. Negri, "John M. Keynes e la teoria capitalistica dello stato nel '29."

118. Potere Operaio, "Italy 1969-70: A Wave of Struggles," supplement to *Potere Operaio*, June 27-July 3, 1970; idem, "The Communism of the Working Class;" idem, "Italy 1973: Workers' Struggles and the Capitalist Crisis," *Radical America* 7, no. 2 (March-April): 15-32.

119. Mario Tronti, "The Struggle against Labor," *Radical America* 6, no. 1 (May-June 1972): 22-25.

120. James Special Issue, *Radical America* 4, no. 4 (May 1974): 23.

121. John Zerzan, "Organized Labor versus 'The Revolt against Work': The Critical Contest," *Telos* 21 (Autumn 1974): 194-206.

122. Sergio Bologna, "Questions of Method for Analysis of the Chemical Plan," from *Quaderni Piacentini*, January 1973. Potere Operaio, "Porto Marghera: An Analysis of Workers' Struggles and the Capitalists' Attempts to Restructure the Chemical Industry, a Worker's Inquiry," from *Potere Operaio*, November 1971.

123. Ferruccio Gambino, "Workers' Struggles and the Development of Ford in Britain," *Bulletin of the Conference of Socialist Economists*, March 1976, pp. 1-18. Peter Linebaugh and Bruno Ramirez, "Crisis in the Auto Sector," *Zerowork* 1 (December 1975): 60-84.

124. William Cleaver, "Wildcats in the Appalachian Coal Fields," *Zerowork* 1 (December 1975): 113-126; and Harry Cleaver, "Food, Famine and the International Crisis," *Zerowork* 2 (Fall 1977): 7-70.

125. Tronti's article was published in English as "Social Capital."

126. Bruno Ramirez, "The Working Class Struggle against the Crisis: Self-Reduction of Prices in Italy," *Zerowork* 1 (December 1975): 142-150.

127. James, "The Revolutionary Solution to the Negro Problem in the United States."

128. Maria Rosa Dalla Costa, and Selma James, *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*.

129. Selma James, *Sex, Race and Class*, and "Wageless of the World," in *All Work and No Pay*, eds. Edmond and Fleming.

130. Selma James, "Women, the Unions and Work, or . . . What Is Not to Be Done," *Radical America* 7, nos. 4-5 (July-October 1973): 51-72. Originally a pamphlet by the Notting Hill Women's Liberation Workshop Group, 1972.

131. Silvia Federici, *Wages against Housework*.

132. Alessandro Serafini, et al., *L'Operaio Multinazionale in Europa*.

133. *Zerowork* 1 (December 1975).

134. *Zerowork* 2 (Fall 1977).

135. Antonio Negri, "Marx sul ciclo e la crisi," in *Operai e Stato*, by Bologna et al. See also Sergio Bologna, "Moneta e crisi: Marx Corrispondente della 'New York Daily Tribune,' 1856-57," in *Crisi e Organizzazione Operaia*, by S. Bologna, P. Carpignano and A. Negri.

136. See the final pages of Mario Montano, "Notes on the International Crisis," *Zerowork* 1 (December 1975): 32-59. For an overview of the differences between the kind of crisis theory implied by this work and the traditional approaches of political economy, see Peter F. Bell, "Marxist Theory, Class Struggle and the Crisis of Capitalism," in *The Subtle Anatomy of Capitalism*, ed. J. Schwartz.

137. In a discussion of Marshall's principles, Mario Tronti points out Marshall's one-sidedness and the need to see the working-class viewpoint: "This is exactly opposite the truth from our viewpoint where every discovery of an objective social science can and must be translated in the language of the struggles. The most abstract theoretical problem will have the most concrete class meaning" ("Workers and Capital," p. 30).

138. Marx, "Introduction," to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, p. 213.

139. *Ibid.*, p. 211.

140. *Ibid.*, p. 209.

## II. The Commodity-Form

1. In the traditional Moore and Aveling English translation from the third German edition, the first sentence reads, "The wealth of those

quires a historical analysis of the male/female hierarchy already present in the societies in which the commodity-form was imposed, as well as an analysis of how that hierarchy was reinforced or changed by the new order. The continuing existence of this division, as well as its particular structural evolution, can only be grasped adequately by analyzing the pattern of working-class struggle and capitalist response discussed above. This kind of analysis does not reduce the phenomenon of sexism (or racism) to that of capitalism exactly because it requires recognition and explanation of both the respective relation of men and women to capital and the fact that this division is based on male dominance over women and not vice versa. Similarly, it reduces the analysis neither to one of capital's manipulations nor to that of the struggles of the working class as a whole. Quite the contrary, an examination of the processes of political recomposition and decomposition involves the analysis of the autonomous activities of the various sectors of the class and the way they interact in order to confront capital as a class.

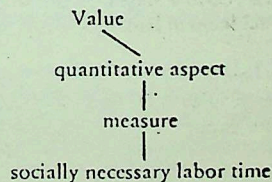
The political importance of grasping the class nature of abstract labor and the processes which engender it cannot be overemphasized. By focusing our attention on the homogeneity that the working class opposes to capital's abstract labor and on the processes of political recomposition through which that homogeneity is achieved, this approach brings out the class politics of abstract labor and the division of labor on which it is based. By studying these actual processes, we leave behind the ideological world of class consciousness and the leftist party to discover how the working class is working out its own unity as well as the strengths and weaknesses of its strategies and tactics.

Some basic aspects of working-class organization are suggested by this analysis. Because the divisions are hierarchical ones, there are always dominant and dominated sides. In these circumstances the divisions have worked where capital has been able to play on the dominant side's profiting from the division. The divisions are not imaginary or simply ideological ones that can be overcome with "class consciousness." Men do benefit from women's work; whites do benefit from blacks' lower status; local workers do benefit from immigrant workers' taking the worst jobs. Therefore, the struggle to destroy the divisions generally finds its initiative in the dominated group, since the other side cannot be expected to always work to destroy its privileges. The efforts to overcome racism, sexism, imperialism, or the exploita-

tion of students in the 1960s were led by the struggles of blacks not whites, women not men, peasants not Americans, students not professors or administrators. It was on the basis of these autonomous efforts that the struggles circulated to other sectors of the class, recomposing the structure of power. To subvert the autonomy of such sectors, as the Left and the unions generally try to do by dissolving them into their own hierarchical organizations, can only act to perpetuate the divisions useful to capital. The actuality of autonomy complicates the meaning of working-class homogeneity against capital. It suggests that working-class unity must be understood as being indirect like the homogeneity of capital (malleability through division). In other words, working-class unity is often achieved only indirectly through complementarity in the exercise of power against capital by different sectors of the class involved in the struggle, not in terms of the illusory kind of direct homogeneity of Leninist institutions.

#### *Measure of Value Is Socially Necessary Labor Time*

So far, Marx has shown us that value is the key to exchange-value and that the qualitative substance of value is abstract labor—which is to say work under capitalism. He then turns to the question of the measure of value in order to be able to carry out a quantitative as well as a qualitative analysis.



To measure value must mean to measure its substance: abstract labor. Marx argues that to measure the magnitude of abstract labor can only mean to measure the time during which it is performed. "The quantity of labor . . . is measured by its duration." Now the measure of time requires some unit, or quantum, of magnitude. Such a unit can apparently be selected according to convenience since we have many

standard units of time: week, day, hour, minute. But the measure of abstract labor, its time, must be understood to be as much a social concept and phenomenon as is abstract labor itself. It is thus not directly measurable by clock or calendar. As with abstract labor, labor time must be grasped within the totality of capital. The measurement of abstract labor time can only be done within the framework of the total social mass of homogeneous, abstract labor time coerced from workers' unit by "innumerable unit." But, even recognizing this we must be very careful how we approach this concept. Unfortunately, many tend to think that the magnitude of value of a commodity is determined by the amount of abstract labor time incorporated into it by the worker who produced it. But, to conceive of the value of a commodity as being the direct result of the work of producing that individual commodity is to lose the social character of value and to see it instead as some metaphysical substance that is magically injected into the product by the worker's touch. Such a theory of value is akin to the old chemical theory of phlogiston in which the principle of fire was conceived as a material substance incorporated into inflammable objects. A phlogiston theory of value leads to such bizarre and politically dangerous results as identifying "value-producing workers" only as those who do physical work directly on the product. From here it is only one step to the ritualistic categorization of "real" workers and "unproductive" workers and the political positions usually associated with such an approach.

Marx shows us at least two ways to avoid this trap. In Chapter One he invites us to consider the fact that the quality of labor always varies from person to person. There are always hierarchies of productivity among workers due to variations in skill and equipment in producing the same commodity. Thus, at any point in time the "homogeneity" of labor is actually reached only at the level of the social average in terms of both quality (abstract labor) and quantity (time) of labor. Marx writes: "The labour-time socially necessary is that required to produce an article under the normal conditions of production, and with the average degree of skill and intensity prevalent at the time."<sup>33</sup> In Chapters 14–16 on manufacture and modern industry, and in the "unpublished 6th Chapter," Marx later introduces an explicit discussion of the "collective" or "aggregate" worker that also leads us away from any phlogiston theory of value. In Chapter 16 Marx spoke of this with reference to the question of productive (value-producing) labor: "In order to work productively, it is no longer necessary for the

individual himself to put his hand to the object; it is sufficient for him to be an organ of the collective labourer, and to perform any one of its subordinate functions. The definition of productive labour given above, the original definition, is derived from the nature of material production itself, and it remains correct for the collective labourer considered as a whole. But it no longer holds good for each member taken individually."<sup>34</sup> In the "unpublished 6th chapter" Marx spoke of this even more vividly in a passage that is worth quoting at length:

... the *real lever* of the overall labour process is increasing-ly not the individual worker. Instead, *labour-power socially combined* and the various competing labour-powers which together form the entire production machine participate in very different ways in the immediate process of making commodities, or, more accurately in this context, creating the product. Some work better with their hands, others with their heads, one as a manager, engineer, technologist, etc., the other as overseer, the third as manual labourer or even drudge. . . . If we consider the aggregate *worker*, i.e., if we take all the members comprising the workshop together, then we see that their *combined activity* results materially in an *aggregate* product which is at the same time a *quantity of goods*. And here it is quite immaterial whether the job of a particular worker, who is merely a limb of this aggregate worker, is at a greater or smaller distance from the actual manual labour.<sup>35</sup>

These very important concepts should lead us once and for all away from any tendency to try to grasp value in terms of individual cases.

In understanding the measure of value the key distinction to see is that between the useful labor that produces commodities as use-values and the abstract labor that produces them as values. The direct measure of actual labor time can only be the measure of useful labor and never that of value. Between that useful labor time and value lies the social mediation which appears as an averaging. In other words, while the actual amount of useful labor time required to produce individual commodities of a given type may vary in different places, value expresses the social average which will give the "normal" conditions of production prevalent in any given period. As always with Marx, the social determination is central; the individual particularity, derivative

—the part is meaningful only within the framework of the whole. This means that the value of a commodity produced in one place, because it is determined by the socially necessary labor time, will be the same as those produced elsewhere even if it actually “contains” more/less useful labor time because the laborers producing it have a lower/higher productivity than the average.<sup>36</sup>

Although this social averaging appears at this point only as a conceptual necessity, it must also be understood as an actual social process of considerable importance in the development of several key capitalist strategies. It is an actual social process in the sense that capital has a tendency to redistribute itself from areas of low productivity to areas of high productivity (when this differential leads to a difference in profits). Such redistribution tends to produce a social average in fact as well as in principle. The mechanisms of such redistribution range from expanded corporate investment in plants of high productivity and the closing down of those of lower productivity to inter-corporate competition and the dissemination of similar productivity-raising innovations across an industry.

At the same time, we also discover in Marx’s analysis of relative surplus value and the introduction of machinery that labor time is actually increased in two different ways. First, the minimization of operating costs with machinery often calls for continuous twenty-four-hour operation so that a tendency is created both to lengthen the workday and to create night work. Second, the smooth regularity of machine operation tends to force the workers to work more continuously, thus “filling up the pores of the workday.” This is a process that may be understood both as working harder and as eliminating the moments or minutes of respite that workers could otherwise steal during their work time. Both of these phenomena, by changing the amount of useful (and indirectly value-“producing”) work done in a given period of time, change the nature of that time by making it “produce” more value. Such “heightened tension of labor power or condensation of labor” means more sweat, harder toil, and, often, increased accidents for the workers involved.<sup>37</sup>

This brings us to some further considerations on the nature of time itself under capitalism. So far we have seen the impossibility of conceiving of time simply in terms of the direct chronological time of production—because of the “social average” character of abstract labor. We have also just seen that an increase in the intensity of labor certainly changes the meaning of a given period of work. But Marx’s

analysis of labor time suggests more than this. It is an exposition of one of the basic political elements of the class relations of capitalism. The labor time we have been examining is above all completely within the context of the structure of capitalist production. It is the only time that counts from the viewpoint of capital. In capital’s perspective, “labor time” is the only living time because that time makes money. More labor time means less loss or more surplus value and so capital seeks by every means it can dream up to increase it. Any time spent by the working class that is not work—exactly the time workers fight to increase—is dead time for capital. (I shall return shortly to how capital tries to convert such dead time to work time.) For the working class, on the other hand, labor time is time lost. It is, after all, something it has been forced to sell to the capitalist; it belongs to the capitalist and is time lost to the worker. Thus, in contradiction to capital, labor time is dead time for the worker. It is only during nonwork time that the worker is free to live and develop his or her own life.

Capital tries to convince us that time is universal and just a physical entity. But we know it is not. One hour of work time is not equal to one hour of free time by any means. One particularly vivid example of workers’ consciousness of this fundamental fact is cited by Marx in the *Grundrisse*:

The *Times* of November 1857 contains an utterly delightful cry of outrage on the part of a West-Indian plantation owner. This advocate analyses with great moral indignation—as a plea for the re-introduction of Negro slavery—how the *Quashees* (the free blacks of Jamaica) content themselves with producing only what is strictly necessary for their own consumption, and, alongside this “use-value” regard loafing (indulgence and idleness) as the real luxury good; how they do not care a damn for the sugar and the fixed capital invested in the plantations but rather observe the planter’s impending bankruptcy with an ironic grin of malicious pleasure.<sup>38</sup>

This is one basic reason why time is a fundamental terrain of class struggle. Clocks have become tools of oppression within capital because minutes of labor time are gold for capital. While it is true that clocks cannot measure work directly because value is determined by the social average, they are nevertheless tools to extract as much labor



time as possible in each work place—which indirectly, as we have seen, determines the amount of value produced.

The struggle over time between capital and the working class, which Marx later analyzes in some depth in Chapter 10 on the working day, proceeds in the workshop in many ways. Some of those I discussed in the previous chapter—the open struggle over the “normal” workday, for instance. Others, which Marx discusses, include both the struggle over the intensity of work time, which we just examined, and the “nibbling” of the workday whereby capitalists (and workers—though Marx dealt less with this) seek to increase (or decrease) the amount of work at every opportunity: at the beginning and end of the day, at lunch breaks, restroom breaks, and so on. In Chapters 20 and 21 on time and piece wages, we also learn how capital tries to manipulate the form of payment of variable capital in order to increase the amount of work time, say, by keeping hourly or piece rates low. Today, when the question of the amount of work that capital can force workers to do is once again a major factor of conflict, we find much experimentation with new time-manipulation patterns, such as the four-day week or flextime, in which both classes seek to improve their position.

But while the struggles over time in factory or office, over the time of waged work, are many and varied, it is the question of the struggle over time outside the “official” working day which is the most problematic. In the nineteenth century, when Marx lived and wrote, the amount of time that workers had off the job was very short. Such time as they had was barely enough to achieve their reproduction as labor-power. In such circumstances activities like eating, sleeping, and sexual relations, which might normally be thought of as “free-time” activities for the workers’ enjoyment, were reduced to the work of patching up the damage (physical and psychological) incurred in the factory. In his discussion of simple reproduction in Chapter 23, Marx saw this as a situation in which “the working class, even when not directly engaged in the labor process, is just as much an appendage of capital as the ordinary instruments of labor.”<sup>39</sup> Already the “working” day included both factory work and “free” time. In these conditions Marx concluded that “the capitalist may safely leave its [the reproduction of the working class] fulfillment to the laborer’s instincts of self-preservation and of propagation.”<sup>40</sup>

Now, as we saw in the discussion of the commodity-form, Marx also perceived how the continual rise in productivity tended, by re-

ducing socially necessary labor time, “to reduce labor-time to a minimum,” and how this tendency gets stronger and stronger with the progress of science and technology. This tendency to reduce labor time is at the same time a tendency to “create disposable time”—free time for workers. Capital’s recurring problem is to find ways to convert this free time into work time. Because of the rapidity of this development, Marx could see the fundamental crisis that it would eventually pose for a system based on the imposition of work. He could see that, when workers would “themselves appropriate their own surplus labor,” then “disposable time would cease to have an antithetical existence” and would become the true measure of wealth. What he could not foresee, and this is apparent again and again in *Capital*, were the many ways capital would seek to restructure society as a whole, both in the factory and without, both during “work” time and during “free” time, in order to try to convert all time into work time. When Marx thought about capital’s attempts to recuperate disposable time and convert it into work time, he thought about industrial expansion and the creation of new factory and office jobs. The only exception to this was the case of the reserve army, in which he clearly saw that “free time” was integral and necessary to the functioning of capital’s “labor market.” But while this insight is fundamental, he never developed an analysis of the struggle over the content of free time between capital and the working class.

As we saw in the Introduction, the historical development of capital that came after Marx, and which he could not foresee, was the expansion of capitalist control in order to structure all of society into one great social factory so that all activities would contribute to the expanded reproduction of the system. When Marx wrote, for example, in Chapter 15, Section 3, on the employment of women and children, he saw these persons being drawn ever deeper into the industrial machine to be chewed up daily and left to recuperate at night in the same fashion as male workers. There was no need for any special theory about the family, housework, or schoolwork, because these constituted negligible parts of the day. But later, with the expulsion of women and children from the mines and the mills and the factories, with the creation of the modern nuclear family and public school system by capital, such a theory is vital. Today, we must study how capital structures “free time” so as to expand value. We must see how housework has been structured by capital with home economics and television to ensure that women’s time contributes only to the repro-

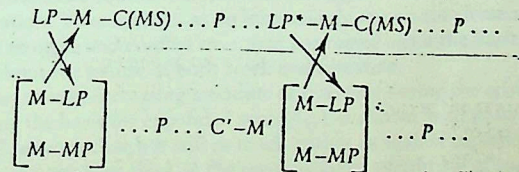
duction of their own, their husbands', and their children's labor-power. We must see the desire for the reproduction of life as labor-power behind capital's propaganda that it is in the interest of the individual or the family to have a "nice" home or a "good" education.

We must see how it developed home economics, not to teach future houseworkers how to use the wealth (both commodities and free time) of society for their enrichment, but how to make do with what little they have. It is true that workers demanded easier access to education. But we must also see how capital shaped "public" education, not for the "enlightenment" of workers' children, but to meet its own needs for particular skills, for new technology, for new social control strategies, and, above all, to inculcate discipline. Both housework and schoolwork are intended to contribute to keeping the value of labor-power low. The more work done by women in the home, the less value workers must receive from capital to reproduce themselves at a given level. The more work students do in the school, the less value must be invested in their training and disciplining for the factory (or home). Because of this, an increase of housework or schoolwork, by decreasing the amount of variable capital necessary for the reproduction of the working class, can contribute to the expansion of surplus value (or, inversely, a decrease can undermine that expansion—see below). In fact, we must see how the "social" factory has emerged from workers' efforts to escape the industrial factory and from capital's social engineering—how it encompasses today virtually all of what the Critical Theorists call the "cultural" sphere of life. Capital tries to shape all "leisure," or free-time, activities—language, literature, art, music, television, news media, movies, theaters, museums, sports—in its own interests. Thus, rather than viewing unwaged "non-labor time" automatically as free time or as time completely antithetical to capital, we are forced to recognize that capital has tried to integrate this time, too, within its process of accumulation so that recreation is only the re-creation of labor-power. Put another way, capital has tried to convert "individual consumption" into "productive consumption" by creating the social factory. When Marx formulated the circuit of labor power as  $LP-M-C$ , in which labor power ( $LP$ ) was exchanged for the money wage ( $M$ ), which was then exchanged for consumption commodities ( $C$ ), workers' consumption appeared as the end product of the circuit. The effort to make that consumption "productive" seeks to structure it as a production process

whose product is labor-power. This is a situation perhaps better symbolized as a circuit of the reproduction of labor-power:

$$LP-M-C(MS) \dots P \dots LP^*$$

where  $C(MS) \dots P$  represents consumption as involving the work of producing the labor-power ( $LP^*$ ). The asterisk on  $LP^*$  indicates change. Despite the fact that the work of child bearing and child rearing increases the population, work (e.g., housework) in  $P$  still implies a smaller value per capita and thus  $LP^* < LP$ . This has a positive impact on surplus due to the level of variable capital being lower than it would be otherwise. Capital's new organization of the social factory can thus be represented by the following diagram in which circuits of industrial capital and of the reproduction of labor power are interrelated:



If the circuit of individual capital is one producing "consumption" goods, then it will further interlock with the circuit of the reproduction of labor-power by selling its output  $C'$  to the workers as their means of subsistence  $C(MS)$  in exchange for their wages ( $M$ ), which become its revenues ( $M'$ ).<sup>41</sup>

In this pattern of development, which has spread so rapidly in the twentieth century, we recognize both capital's eternal tendency to generalize and universalize itself (see the discussion of the expanded form of value below) and its response to the growing difficulty of finding factory work to impose as the means of social control. Marx foresaw the contradiction. He could not foresee this form of socialization of work forming at least a temporary solution.

However, here, as in every other aspect of capital, we must see that there are still two sides, there is still a struggle that has never been completely integrated. As I argued in the Introduction, we must avoid the blindness of those contemporary Marxists who see and analyze the various forms of capitalist domination in the cultural sphere but who fail to see how working-class struggle has repeatedly thrown that domination into crisis. Yes, capital plans all of social life; but we are not in the Brave New World. The working class has forcibly and repeatedly asserted its autonomy. Just as the working class's struggle in the factory has forced capital to reorganize itself, so, too, has its struggle in the "cultural" sphere forced capital again and again to seek new ways to avoid complete loss of control. The history of "cultural" revolt is a long one involving all spheres of community life, the family, education, art, literature, and music. What is vital to see is that capital's response has more often resembled a desperate search for a new tactic than the smoothly orchestrated process of assimilation visualized by the prophets of "bourgeois cultural hegemony."

The contemporary proof of the true autonomy of working-class struggles in these spheres has been their key contribution to the current crisis of capital. The family, one of the fundamental organizational units of capital's social factory, has been increasingly ripped apart because the struggles of women, children, and even men escaped all efforts to "integrate" them. Capital is now seeking desperately for ways to either bind the family back up or find alternative institutions. The public school system, another of those fundamental institutions of "cultural" hegemony, is also in almost complete disarray. The crisis of the schools, part of whose roots lie in the crisis of the family, which was so obviously a basic component of the cycle of struggles of the 1960s, continues. Capital is funding experiment after experiment to find methods of reshaping "education" in ways adequate to control students. These are only two of the most obvious examples of the breakdown in the social factory, "cultural" institutions of capital; there are many, many others. And as these institutions of control, these institutions which convert free time into work time, collapse, the working class gains more and more unstructured time in which to develop its struggle independent of capital. The collapse of such institutions thus not only is the sign of success in this conflict but also opens new space for expanded struggle.

There is no longer any need to preach against the "work ethic," that "strange affliction" which Paul Lafargue thought he saw infect-

ing the working class years ago.<sup>12</sup> Workers have already rejected capital's definition of living time as work time and have not only demanded the "Right to Be Lazy" but have also been increasingly achieving it. The twenty-four-hour workday (remember sleep "learning") has become only a nostalgic dream for capital and a fantastic illusion for those Critical Theorists blind to the comprehensive character of the crisis. Capital has sought to become identical with society, but that identity has been rejected by the working class and that rejection now threatens the very existence of capital itself. In a period such as this, when high productivity makes possible the satisfaction of all the needs of the working class, and the crisis makes clear that capital will not do so, the refusal of all work, both in the factory and without, continues to be a major factor in the class conflict. Factory workers' demands for less work and higher pay are not integrable if their struggle against work keeps wages rising faster than productivity. School dropouts and the disruption of education cannot be seen as an element of capitalist development when lack of discipline permeates the schools, the unemployment lines, and the factory. In ways like this we can see that time always has content and there is a struggle over that content and its duration. Time appears as an increasingly important element in the class struggle and conflict over time has raised again the basic questions about the nature of both work and free time.

The emergence of increasing amounts of free time during the crisis, by providing the basis for expanded struggle, has shown itself to be antithetical to work time but still as much within as against capital. Ultimately, the working class, in the revolutionary overthrow of capital, will move beyond both work time and free time. For free time, as we have seen, is time that is free from work as much as it is free for the working class. Here Marx's term of disposable time perhaps carries fewer confusing connotations of some abstract "freedom."

These considerations of capital's socially necessary labor time and of the working class's struggle against it and its demands for free time can teach us much about the nature and limits of various political strategies. For example, there is not even any real disposability of time when the struggle is converted into political work. It is here that the Party emerged as a basic institution within capital because, like the unions and so many other institutions, it structures "free time" in ways which ultimately contribute to the reproduction of the system, albeit in a reorganized form. At the same time the integrative aspects of "re-creation," of leisure time, show the limits of the simple "free

enjoyment” of free time, of “play.” It is true that workers fight for time to live, time to love, time to play. But we have seen how that time can be structured by capital and turned against them. As with factory work, it is never a question of whether one enjoys it or not, but rather one of whether the activity is imposed and structured to ensure the reproduction of the system. It is through linking confrontation with capital during all periods of time that can be most effectively turned against capital. Partial demands can be met if capital can find ways to compensate. A shorter workday (and hence more free time) can be provided if productivity rises and if that free time is structured. What is so exciting about the current crisis is just such convergence and complementarity of working-class attacks against the totality of capital’s social factory. Not only are all kinds of workers demanding less work time, but also they are refusing to compensate for it. They not only are working less in the factory but they are also using free time to de-create their own labor-power. Those with full or part-time jobs use their “free time” to gain strength, not to work, but to further refuse work. Those who are “unemployed” and who are supposed to be doing the work of looking for work, of using their free time to make the labor market function, are instead using their time to avoid work and increase their demands for unemployment benefits, welfare payments, and so on. Here is the real danger to capital: the working class is saying, “We want everything, including all our time—no more work time and thus no more free time, just life to be lived as we see fit.” Such a demand is totally unassimilable within capital, whose crisis continues because it has not yet found a strategy to defeat it.

*Use-Values and Commodities as Social Processes*

The final point, which is emphasized by Marx in the last paragraph of Section 1, is that “commodity” is a social category. Marx’s comments are not simply formalistic or definitional: that commodities are only commodities in so far as they are the unity of use-value and exchange-value implies that a product must be both exchanged and consumed in order to be a commodity. This is certainly true, but the main point is that the commodity-form must never be reified; it is never a thing. We do speak of commodities as things or things as commodities, but only because they pass through a specific series of social interactions. In this passage they are not things but social processes. As the analysis should have made clear by this point, things are things (use-values)

only in their particular properties. Marx now points out that in order to be commodities these properties must be such as to make them social use-values. Even so, they are only latently use-values and they do not become actual use-values unless they are indeed consumed. “Nothing,” Marx says in the last two sentences, “can have value, without being an object of utility. If the thing is useless, so is the labor contained in it; the labor does not count as [abstract] labor, and therefore creates no value.” So all the categories are those of process. We have now seen that use-value, exchange-value, abstract labor, value, and socially necessary labor time are all social categories designating particular determinations of the commodity-form, which is fundamental to the most basic social process of all: the class struggle.