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FACING LAYOFFS

WOMEN: PRODUCTION AND REPRODUCTION

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF WOMEN

REPORT ON CLUW

Cover: Zapotec Indian woman grinding corn in San Sebastian Teitipac, Oaxaca, Mexico. Photo by Phyllis Ewen.

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Zapotec Indian woman and child in San Sebastian Teitipac, Oaxaca, Mexico. Photo by Phyllis Ewen.

The Dialectics of Production And Reproduction in History

Renate Bridenthal

In recent years, feminist Marxists have been working to evolve a theory which will restore and reintegrate women's experience into written history, not only in the interests of fairness but, more importantly, for the sake of a better understanding of the forces of historical development as a whole. In this endeavor, we have encountered two major frames of historiographical reference that require serious attention. Of main interest to us is Marxism, but we cannot ignore the other, structural functionalism, which continues in the mainstream of liberal thought. Much historical scholarship in the latter framework is being conducted and supported by the established profession, and not a few radical historians are drawn to it in search of a synthesis with Marxism.

Marxism itself has suffered from a certain degree of traditionalism. A brief recapitulation reveals both the relevancies and drawbacks to the history of women. Marxists focus on capitalist industrialization, noting that it removes the product and the means of production from workers and deprives them of economic initiative and of relative independence. They hold that other cultural forms correspond to economic change, and that consequently psychological alienation accompanies material alienation. For women,

the process forces them out of the home into paid employment, thus both proletarianizing them and destabilizing the family, which is finally destroyed by individual competitiveness. Temporarily destructive though the process is, it liberates women from immediate dependency on their husbands and politicizes them by forcing them into the labor force. Thus, according to Marxist criteria, women lose autonomy along with men as capitalism develops. They regain it when they join the class struggle, and ultimately share it with men in socialist society. Autonomy is defined, in this view, primarily as control over the means of production, which is the key to control over other aspects of life.

Structural functionalists, on the other hand, following the sociology of Talcott Parsons and the historiography of Neil Smelser, come to the opposite conclusion. (1) Its adherents stress the apparently liberating aspects of industrialization, the adaptation of the family to a small, efficient nuclear form, and the evolution of both physical and emotional dimensions of love. Autonomy, in this version, is defined as heightened enjoyment of life through self-determination of pleasures, mainly those of social contact of a private or personal kind. Self-determination in work or participation in life-or-death decisions concerning production and politics appears secondary in this form of historiography. It stresses the increase in leisure as leading to personal development. By such criteria, women appear to gain increasing autonomy historically. Their work burden is reduced, their affective relationships are deepened, especially with their children, and their sexual lives are enriched.

Neither of these two mainstreams of historical thinking does full justice to historical evidence about women. Functionalists speak of autonomy too much in psychological terms, and overlook areas of decreasing independence for both sexes, but especially for women in such areas as production and politics. Marxists, on the other hand, have too heavily emphasized production and women's participation in it as the crucial variable in their history. Women's participation in reproduction, however, while sketched out in Engels' ORIGIN OF THE FAMILY, PRIVATE PROPERTY AND THE STATE, and in Marx's CAPITAL (2), has not received nearly the same amount of attention, with the result that the treatment of women, while basically correct, lacks full dimension. Specifically, the way in which the family is destroyed and new forms of social relations established are not sufficiently analyzed. Simple generalizations about "free love" or "egalitarian socialist marriage" have been applied to the end of historical development, with little analysis of process or of transitional forms.

In fact, the terms "progress" and "regress" become meaningless in comparisons of past and present autonomy, without further refinements in the categories. Juliet Mitchell, who might be termed a Marxist structuralist, has made important strides toward such a

refinement. (3) She singles out production, reproduction, sexuality, and the socialization of children as categories within which women have operated historically and by which their position at any given period in time may be ascertained. Women's liberation, or autonomy, depends on the structures of all these four functions being as non-restrictive as possible; if any one remains confining, women cannot be considered free, according to Mitchell. The problem with this schema, advance though it is, is that the categories appear separate and unrelated in their origin. If mechanically applied, they would seem like so many boxes, each of them reaching back into the past. Connections between them may be made, but are rendered difficult by the initial compartmentalization. The influence of one category on another — not to speak of a dialectical relationship — is easily lost. Mitchell's Marxism falls victim to her structuralism.

I propose a different framework for analysis, based on a combination of Marx's and Mitchell's frameworks. In such a framework, the categories of sexuality, reproduction, and socialization of children would be subsumed under the term "mode of reproduction." Then a relationship would be sought between it and the "mode of production," the social organization of the creation of new value in society. I fuse three of Mitchell's categories into one because biological reproduction and the socialization of children together constitute reproduction of the species and because sexuality and its control is an important aspect of control over reproduction.

My reading of history suggests that the relationship between production and reproduction is a dialectic within the larger historical dialectic. That is, changes in the mode of production give rise to changes in the mode of reproduction, such that a tension arises between them. For women, the experience has become one of pulls between opposing forces, work and family. This dialectic demands a new synthesis, in which each pole will be absorbed and transcended. Such a synthesis would be a society in which the modes of production and reproduction are controlled by members of both sexes equally. This analytic approach makes room for some of the more subtle and complex interrelationships between objective conditions and consciousness. A schematized version of this framework appears in Appendix A. Narratively it would work out as described below.

In Western Europe, the pre-industrial agrarian economy gave rise to modes of production and reproduction that were symbiotic, that is, in a close, mutually advantageous association with each other. For women, this meant that they could participate in both in such a way that each reinforced the other. Thus, housework, which produced items for consumption, helped to reproduce the family. Conversely, children (obviously in the category of reproduction) helped in production. The locus of both production and reproduction was in or near the home. With industrialization, wom-

en's functions divided: production moved out of the home, leaving reproduction behind. Many women were thus removed spatially from ongoing participation in productive work.

In the nineteenth century, production became markedly more public; that is, the community was organized to work in factories. Meanwhile, reproduction became markedly more privatized. Motherhood as a feminine ideal rose and served as a useful rationale for removing middle-class women from productive life. Further, by providing an alternative to exploited employment, it also served to mute the consciousness of working-class women, who provided a flexible labor force through their transient presence in the labor market.

During this period, the two categories of public production and private reproduction stood in dialectical relationship to one another for women involved in both modes. That is, the demands of each conflicted with the demands of the other, posing a double burden for working women and enforced idleness and isolation for bourgeois women. The resulting tension sought resolution in a new synthesis, and this period witnessed the first wave of organized feminism, an ideological response to structural change. It was a first effort toward the equalization of the sexes, and limited itself to demands for civil equality, which was seen as a first step toward greater social change — a liberal thesis characteristic of the middle class from which the first feminists came.

In the twentieth century, the mode of production developed further, becoming more capital-intensive and less labor-intensive. The distribution and service sectors employed increasingly greater numbers, while the industrial sector stabilized or, in the case of female employment, even shrank in some places. The latter development was due partly to the fact that branches of manufacturing traditionally occupied by women declined more rapidly than new areas which employed them expanded. For example, textiles and clothing manufacture dropped off faster than metallurgy, chemicals and electronics picked up. Overall change in the level of women's employment was minor, as shown by Appendix B. But changes in the labor market as such necessitated more education: more people went to school and stayed there longer. Schooling provided more intensive training in some cases and reduced unemployment statistics in general. Also, the needs of the modern state sponsored new jobs in education and public welfare. These represented women's traditional family functions, now in the public sphere. Activities which fall into the area of reproduction, such as teaching, nursing, social work and so on, became increasingly organized through the public sector. Like the mode of production, the mode of reproduction increasingly moved out of the home and concomitantly involved more men, especially in controlling positions.

For example, in France the number of women in public service and the liberal professions, including teaching, increased between

World War I and World War II by over 100,000, but only by a scant one percent of the total profession: from 30 percent to 31 percent. In Germany, in the same period, the number of female teachers actually fell by about 3,500, as did their proportionate number in the profession, from 32 percent to 30 percent. The number of nurses rose, and nursing remained a predominantly female profession. However in social welfare, while the number of women rose by about 15,000, their predominance became precarious as men's entry into the profession reduced women's share from 82 percent to 67 percent. In Italy, similar trends emerged somewhat later. Female teachers rose from 70 percent to 73 percent of the profession during the interwar period, but fell to 67 percent after World War II (4).

If we look at the reproductive sector in the family, we find a parallel shriveling of its functions as a unit. Within it, women's specific functions become both more specialized (they must learn consumer education, child psychology, and good housekeeping) and simultaneously diminished (that is, challenged by professionals in these fields). With the merger of industries, monopoly, and increasing capitalization of the mode of production, there is an increased need to control the labor force and its reproduction. Hence we find a growing interest of the state in demography, education, and social maintenance. Women are manipulated in their biological reproductive function by demographically conscious statesmen, on one hand, and by an increasingly professional corps of educators, psychologists, and sociologists on the other. (5) While women often move into that corps themselves, they tend to land at the bottom of the public social-work hierarchies. Here they are distant from policy-making and hence are alienated from their "product," the nurturance and maintenance of the working class.

Thus we see here a dialectic within the dialectic. The capitalist mode of production gives rise to a public mode of reproduction which comes into contradiction with the private ownership of the means of production as represented in and perpetuated by the independent self-reproducing family, the transmitter of property. Certainly the process reveals the hollowness of the ideology of the family. We also have a third level of contradictions within the mode of production itself. This is that women employed in public reproduction become the very instruments of the destruction of their role in the family. Women's alienation from reproduction, through layers of institutionalization, is both a cause and an effect of the destruction of the family, that is, the erosion of its functions and the increasing absence of its members. Still a fourth contradiction is that the rise of companionate marriage, which reduces patriarchal authority and allows greater equality between the sexes, occurs in an institution (the family) which is losing control over significant areas of life. (7) For women, the overall result is a decline in autonomy, masked by apparent equalization at home and in the labor force, through the sheer availability of new kinds of jobs.

In the 1970's, then, we find both production and reproduction becoming increasingly public, yet not mutually reinforcing, as they had been when both were in the private sphere. Besides standing in the dialectical relationship outlined above, the two modes may be in conflict with one another in the very person of a woman who must divide her time and location between her work and family functions. Or the conflict may come between two different representatives of these functions, say a mother and her child's teacher over some issue of socialization. At any rate, both modes now alienate the product from the producer and reproducer, who remains privatized because she lacks control over both modes and because the ideology about women and the family sustains a myth of privatization. Concretely, this means that female workers produce commodities outside the home, according to decisions made by others, receive wages, and then retranslate their labor into consumption of these predetermined items through their purchases. In their reproductive capacity, women bear children according to decisions made by professional psychologists, and then transfer them at an early age to educational institutions. Here they are taught mainly by other women performing the tasks of socialization of children for wages, which they in turn retranslate into consumption of goods and services, including education for their children. Women are thus alienated from their reproductive product (the child) in two ways: there is another socializer besides the mother at an increasingly earlier age for the child; and as teachers, women are estranged from their pupils by institutional control and by the transient nature of their contacts with children. The ultimate result is alienation affecting all members of society: today's children are tomorrow's adults. For women in particular, their authority in the socialization process, so dependent on emotional as well as intellectual bonds, is undermined. It is further reduced, if one includes the subversive power of emotional blackmail traditionally exercised by women to circumvent patriarchal authority in the family. That is, if the father previously supervised a child's education by its mother, she could exercise her own influence nonetheless through her close bond with the child. Contrary to the structuralist-functionalist view, affective mother-child relationships are diluted by the socialization of the mode of reproduction.

Thus, to speak of "progress" or "regress" in women's history is relatively meaningless. The key word is shift, in women's participation in production and reproduction, from the private to the social arena, and from relatively direct to relatively mediated participation. The resulting feelings of alienation have given rise to a second wave of organized feminism. Like the first, it is an ideological response to structural change. Elaborating on and evolving out of the first wave, it poses a new alternative, beyond civil equality, one characterized by sex-role free determination in production and reproduction. Given the new sophisticated technology which reduces the need for a division of labor by sex, such a

society becomes a real possibility. However, without corresponding control over what is produced and how, it would offer only a kind of freedom of choice among options one had not created in the first place. For example, one could choose between Westinghouse or General Electric refrigerators, but not between individual refrigerators or communal kitchens. By itself, the second wave of feminism is only a symptom of alienation rather than a solution for it.

Thus, for the history of women and for history in general, the concepts of "progress" and "regress" will have to be replaced by something that better reflects women's and men's complex experience. Women's history has differed from men's in ways important enough to affect some basic assumptions. To return to the two major frames of reference:

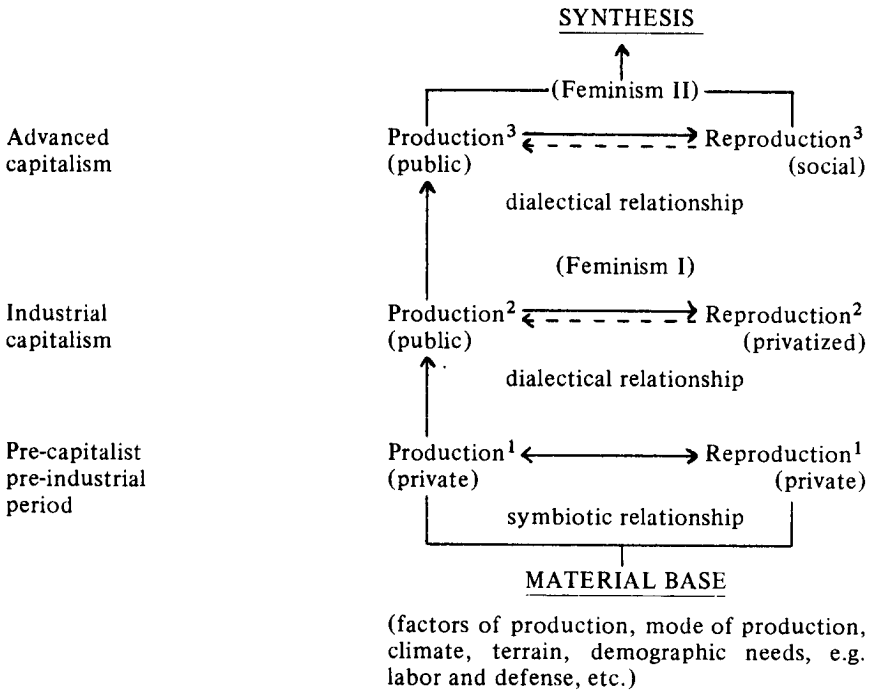
Functionalist thought needs to redefine some basic concepts such as individualism, responsibility, and autonomy, so that they could apply to women as well as to men. And it would have to re-examine and reinterpret the historical development of "affective" (female) and "instrumental" (male) roles in the family. Were it to do so, it would lose much of its optimistic cast.

Marxist thought must take better account of changes in reproduction as well as production, and it must integrate the fact that women's emergence into the public sector is increasingly in the area of reproduction, rather than production. It should be noted also that men are increasingly entering the area of public reproduction, in fact crowding women out in some cases. Recognizing these developments might help us to understand the composition and consciousness of the reconstituted labor force, and might lead to a redefinition of alienated labor as including laborers employed in the reproduction of labor power. Class analysis must include recognition of sex differences, since women have some important experiences which differ from those of men in their class. My own research into the history of women in Europe indicates that these differences do not unite women across class lines, but rather that men and women of the working class, for example, may have different experiences of their class position. Such a deepening of Marxist analysis could provide the best key to our understanding of historical process.

As an index of political maturity, feminism is important. It represents a vanguard akin to the alienated intellectuals who become detached from the status quo, and as such it may become a powerful political force for radical social change.

This paper was first read at the Berkshire Conference on the History of Women, October 27, 1974, and further developed for a Sarah Lawrence College Women's Studies Program Symposium, "Conceptual Frameworks for Studying Women's History," March 15, 1975. Presentations by the entire panel included perspectives on the Classical period by Marilyn Arthur, on the Renaissance by Joan Kelly-Gadol, and on American History by Gerda Lerner. The symposium is available from Sarah Lawrence College, Women's Studies Program, Bronxville, New York 10708.

Appendix A



Note: The main historical dialectic occurs in the left-hand column, as the development of the modes of production. The dialectic between the modes of production and reproduction are a dialectic within the larger dialectic.

Appendix B

| Country | Percentage of economically active women out of total female pop. | | | Percentage of economically active women out of total economically active pop. (same census years) | | |
|---------------|--|-------------|-------------|---|--------|--------|
| | Pre-war | 1920's | 1930's | Pre-war | 1920's | 1930's |
| Belgium | 28.6 (1910) | 21.3 (1920) | 24.1 (1930) | 30.9 | 25.0 | 26.3 |
| Denmark | 27.2 (1911) | 24.1 (1921) | 26.9 (1930) | 31.3 | 29.7 | 30.5 |
| France | 38.7 (1911) | 42.3 (1921) | 34.2 (1936) | 36.9 | 39.6 | 36.1 |
| Germany | 26.4 (1907) | 35.6 (1925) | 34.2 (1933) | 30.7 | 35.9 | 35.5 |
| Great Britain | 25.7 (1911) | 25.5 (1921) | 26.9 (1931) | 29.5 | 29.5 | 29.8 |
| Ireland | 19.5 (1911) | 23.5 (1926) | 24.3 (1936) | 23.7 | 26.3 | 26.2 |
| Italy | 29.1 (1911) | 27.2 (1921) | 24.8 (1936) | 31.3 | 28.7 | 28.7 |
| Norway | 23.0 (1910) | 21.9 (1920) | 22.0 (1930) | 30.1 | 27.8 | 27.1 |
| Netherlands | 18.3 (1909) | 18.3 (1920) | 19.2 (1930) | 23.9 | 23.2 | 24.1 |
| Sweden | 21.7 (1910) | 25.8 (1920) | 28.7 (1930) | 27.8 | 29.8 | 31.0 |
| Switzerland | 31.7 (1910) | 31.4 (1920) | 29.0 (1930) | 33.9 | 33.9 | 31.5 |

Source: P. Bairoch, *La population active et sa structure* (Inst. de Soc. de L'Univ. Libre de Brussels, 1968), pp. 27-34.

NOTES

1. The most recent products of this school are Fred Weinstein's and Gerald Platt's *THE WISH TO BE FREE: SOCIETY, PSYCHE, AND VALUE CHANGE* (University of California Press, 1969) and Edward Shorter's *THE MAKING OF THE MODERN FAMILY* (Basic Books, 1973).

2. Karl Marx, *CAPITAL*, Volume I, Part I, Chapter I, on the fetishism of commodities.

3. Juliet Mitchell, *WOMAN'S ESTATE* (Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1971).

4. Francoise Guelaud-Leridon, *LE TRAVAIL DES FEMMES EN FRANCE*. Institut national d'etudes demographiques. Travaux et documents, cahier no. 42. (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1964), p. 25.

Renate Bridenthal, "Beyond KINDER, KUCHE, KIRCHE: Weimar Women at Work," *CENTRAL EUROPEAN HISTORY* (Atlanta: Emory University, June 1973), vol. 6, no. 2, pp. 163-164.

Rosa Anna Perricone, *L'INSERIMENTO DELLA DONNA NELLE ATTIVITA ECONOMICHE IN ITALIA* (Rome: Societa Italiana di Economia demografia e statistica, 1972), Nuova Serie, pp. 39 and 89.

Franco Archibugi, "Recent Trends in Women's Work in Italy," *INTERNATIONAL LABOR REVIEW* (Geneva: International Labor Office, 1960), vol. 81, p. 296.

5. For example, during the Great Depression, official encouragement of maternity intensified in Europe. Such a policy reduced two anxieties at once — that about population decline and that about women competing for work with men. Thus, in Germany, the Unemployment Act of June 1, 1933 offered marriage loans of up to one thousand Reichsmarks on condition that the bride leave her job and not return until she or the couple had repaid the loan. As a further incentive, the loan was reduced by 25 percent with the birth of each child. Interestingly, not only Fascist countries, but parliamentary democracies such as France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Great Britain had similar schemes to encourage births and discourage women's employment in this period. Various medical and social rationalizations were used to support these state policies, such as the physical health of women, the psychological health of children, and the sociological health of the family as an institution.

6. The concept of the dissolution of the family as a link between the dialectic developed in this paper and traditional Marxist analysis was first called to my attention by Atina Grossman, graduate student in history at Rutgers University.

7. Robert Blood and Donald Wolfe, *HUSBANDS AND WIVES* (Glencoe, Ill.: The Free Press, 1960).

William J. Goode, *WORLD REVOLUTION AND FAMILY PATTERNS* (New York: The Free Press, 1970).

Gunther Luschen and Eugen Lupri, *SOZIOLOGIE DER FAMILIE* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1970).

JOURNAL OF MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY (Menasha, Wisc: National Council on Family Relations, 1969), vol. 31, no. 2 is a special issue of cross-cultural family research.

RENATE BRIDENTHAL is the co-editor with Claudia Koonz of BECOMING VISIBLE: WOMEN IN EUROPEAN HISTORY (forthcoming from Houghton-Mifflin, 1977). She is also a coordinator of the Women's Studies Program at Brooklyn College.

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Facing Layoffs

David Montgomery and Ronald Schatz

Overwork and unemployment have been indispensable and inseparable characteristics of economic life under capitalism since its inception. No American worker who came of age before 1940 could have failed to be keenly aware of the relationship between the two. The first fifteen years of this century were marked by rapid economic growth and a relentless increase in productivity per worker, yet in only one of those years did the annual rate of unemployment fall below 6 per cent of the industrial labor force. In nine of those years it rose above 10 per cent. Long before and long after that period a "slack season" came every year in construction, clothing manufacture, lumbering, coal mining, and other industries, and in meat packing easily half again as many people could find employment during the first three days of any week as in the last three. From time to time the entire economy was plunged into crisis: during 1903-04, 1908-09, 1913-14, and 1920-22 one out of every five or six wage earners faced grim weeks or months without a job. And, of course, memories of the hungry thirties haunt older workers to this day.

The more recent, protracted experience of Americans with relatively high levels of employment, unemployment compensation, and welfare systems (which were forced by popular struggles of the

Opposite: WPA pickets in New York protesting job cuts in 1937.

1930's and 1960's to be noticeably more accessible to those in need than anything experienced by earlier generations) has served to dull our memories of the techniques formerly used by workers to cope with unemployment of both the routine and catastrophic varieties. Even the sharp economic slumps of 1949-50, 1953-54, and 1957-59 failed to generate a significant revival of the types of self-organized activity at the base which had been characteristic of earlier crises. On the other hand, the severity of the current levels of unemployment and the prospect that much higher levels of joblessness than have been customary in the last 35 years are likely to be with us for a long time to come have made it important to recall various ways in which workers used to cope with layoffs and with widespread unemployment in their ranks.

Styles of struggle have changed in response to changes in managerial practices, the government's role, and the strength and structure of unionism. The depression of the 1930's itself marked an important watershed in all these developments, and hence in the evolution of workers' practices. That decade saw the rise of seniority systems to govern layoffs in mass-production industries, unemployment compensation to ease the burden of short-term joblessness, and extensive relief programs, financed by the federal government to get the angry unemployed off the streets. All those developments modified the forms of workers' actions in the face of widespread joblessness.

Seniority itself emerged from the confluence of twentieth-century managerial practice with the demands of workers in depression-born industrial unionism. Few nineteenth-century workers harbored any sense of long-term attachment to a particular company. The tie to one's trade was far stronger than that to one's place of work. When, for example, the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor surveyed 230 shoe operatives, textile hands, machinists, carpenters, and others in 1878, it found that 65 per cent of them had been in the same occupation for more than 10 years, but only 15 per cent had been that long with the same firm. (1) The extraordinary rates of geographic movement, which Stephan Thernstrom and other historians have lately made so familiar to us, had their counterpart in rates of job turnover which dwarf anything to be found today. When major corporations first became seriously concerned about turnover, during the rather flush period between early 1910 and late 1913, they found that separations averaged slightly over 100 per cent of the number of people on company payrolls each year, and that more than two-thirds of the workers leaving quit on their own initiative. Ford Motor Company hired 54,000 men between October 1912 and October 1913 to maintain an average work force of 13,000 (a rate of 415 per cent, as compared to Ford's 1969 rate of 25 per cent). Major efforts were undertaken to secure the stability of trained workers after that period, and especially during the 1920's. Pensions, stock options, insurance, home financing, and other benefits were awarded in return for long serv-

ice with the company. Consequently the median quit rate in manufacturing fell to 30 per cent per year by 1929, and then in the face of the depression below 15 per cent in 1936 and 1937. By 1949-50 the average annual turnover for all occupations had reached the all-time low of less than 10 per cent. (2)

Of course, workers usually quit when plenty of other jobs were available. When economic downturns made it necessary to lay off large numbers of employees, however, many companies learned to sack relatively new and unskilled workers wholesale (their turnover rates being incurably high in any case), while transferring more skilled and experienced men and women into the unskilled jobs, or instituting a general reduction of their hours, so as to spread the available work within the favored group. Most glass works, located as they were in small towns which could have met huge welfare costs only by increasing taxes on the mills, cut hours rather than dismissing older men, even after mechanization had broken the unions. Westinghouse retained almost all the workers at its vast East Pittsburgh plant who had more than ten years' service during the worst of the early 1930's. Ford and General Motors in those same years devised preferential lists of skills, which the N.R.A.'s Automobile Labor Board easily converted into departmental seniority rules in 1934. (3)

These company practices had two important effects. First, they allowed the employers to assume the initiative in worksharing, for which workers had often fought before. Despite the fact that this initiative was applied selectively (favoring leaders of local ethnic lodges, activists in the Democratic and Republican machines, officers of veterans organizations, etc., and throwing workers older than fifty out wholesale), they often succeeded in earning the intense gratitude of people who had been saved from layoff by these means. Secondly, as workers' attachment to a particular place of work grew stronger, a new tendency developed (to a remarkable degree in the 1930's) for people who had lost their jobs to stay where they were and wait to be recalled. As late as the bitter depression of 1920-22, more than half of the Slavic and Black workers of Allegheny County left the region, just as their nineteenth-century counterparts would have done. What was new after 1929 was not the vagrancy but the relative lack of it, the large numbers of people who did not move to another town in search of work. Of course, the universality of the crisis reinforced the sedentary impulses which new management practices had nurtured. It was, however, this new tenacity which provided the basis for the rapid rise of unemployed organizations, irresistible pressure on legislatures for unemployment compensation, and struggles demanding that particular companies restore jobs, most notably the Ford Hunger March of 1932.

It was out of this setting that workers' demands for the regulation of layoff and recall by seniority became a central feature of the emerging industrial unionism. Before the 1930's the seniority

principle was seldom found in union rules or contracts, as they applied to layoffs. The peculiar characteristics of each occupation had shaped its workers' demands. Seniority clauses were unknown in coal miners' unions down to World War II. Such schemes as two weeks of work for half the miners, followed by two weeks for the other half, remained commonplace. Anthracite miners, whose industry was clearly expiring during the thirties, did raise a contract demand for seniority in layoffs in 1940, but failed to get it. Like garment and construction workers, miners had previously sought to safeguard themselves against arbitrary dismissals by a combination of the closed shop and a standard rate (minimum wage), which would deny the employer any economic advantage from dismissing union members or better paid men or women first. As seasons of steady work drew to a close, workers in all three of these groups customarily slowed down. For contract miners and clothing workers in piece work, this custom amounted to a self-instituted work-sharing scheme. Garment workers still practice it today. (4)

The closed shop, combined with a union hiring hall, provided workers with the best possible control over who got recalled to a job when work picked up again. Just such a hall was especially important to longshoremen, sailors, and construction workers, whose jobs changed constantly and for whom seniority never had much meaning. In the San Francisco strike of 1934 a rotary hiring hall was the central demand of the longshoremen. Of course, such hiring control could be used effectively to exclude Blacks, as was done by Brooklyn's Local 968 of the International Longshoremen's Association in 1949-50, but it could also be used to secure the position of at least a minimal quota of Blacks, as it was in New York's retail stores by Local (later District) 65 during the same period.

Layoffs themselves were dealt with by unionized workers as they arose. Tapestry weavers in Philadelphia's many shops fabricating upholstery textiles drew lots to determine who would leave and, where possible, exchanged surplus members among shops under union control. Seniority was used by them only to decide which weaver got which loom. The locals in the beef-killing and sheep-killing sections of Chicago's packing houses during the period of peak union strength (1903) actually waged a successful struggle to prevent any layoffs at all, then demanded a raise in piece rates to compensate for their scanty work late in each week. Machinists in Chicago's militant District 8 of the I.A.M. demanded "seniority and proficiency to govern" in recall from layoffs in 1900, though they made no mention of the layoffs themselves. Many railroads of that period followed the pattern of the Machinists' agreement covering repair shop workers of the Atcheson, Topeka, and Sante Fe, that "when reductions in force are necessary, seniority, proficiency and married men be given the preference of employment." Much more common in the machinists' trade, however, was the clause: "Should a reduction of expenses become necessary, it shall be

made in a reduction of hours, unless otherwise agreed upon by both parties." (5)

Closed shop, standard rate, spreading work, and, where possible, a union-controlled hiring hall, then, were the most common techniques by which organized workers regulated layoffs before 1930. Organized and unorganized workers alike slowed down, when the word from the shipping room and office clerks had it that a layoff was in the offing. Seniority clauses did appear occasionally. As early as 1886 the Knights of Labor put one in an agreement with the large E.S. Higgins Carpet Weaving Company after a strike against discriminatory dismissals. In fact, strike settlements served to popularize the idea of seniority. Early in the twentieth century the demand of unions that employers should fire all scabs and reinstate all strikers was often compromised after long struggles by reinstating all employees (old and new) in order of seniority. During World War I the National War Labor Board used that formula regularly in its mediation of strikes. The first widespread general application of the seniority principle, however, appeared on the railroads under government administration in 1918 and 1919. Unionized railroad shop crafts managed to keep seniority even after the disastrous strike of 1922. Locomotive engineers, however, were often successful in avoiding unemployment by urging the railroads to lay off firemen instead of themselves, and put the engineers temporarily to stoking the firebox. (6)

It was, therefore, with the industrial unions of the 1930's that the seniority rule became so basic a part of American life that many workers today find it difficult to imagine any other principle as just. Nothing was more obvious to the workers of the 1930's than the insecurity of their jobs. As soon as they organized in any form, they demanded an end to arbitrary employers' control over layoff and recall. The power of foremen to pick and choose which worker should stay and which should go was challenged by a determined struggle to impose a clear, objective standard on layoffs. Seniority clauses were demanded and won by the new unions in rubber, oil, steel, textiles, electrical machinery, auto, and urban transportation. (7) Often these clauses were not far removed from what the companies had already been doing in practice, but they eliminated the arbitrariness which had characterized that practice when it rested entirely on the companies' initiative. The gain was of enormous importance to older workers especially, and it provided a major component of the complex formula by which the second generation of Eastern and Southern Europeans secured a recognized position in American economic life.

Regulating layoffs, however, was only one facet of workers' efforts to cope with unemployment. The other was the struggle to put food on the tables of those who were already out of work. This effort assumed too many different forms under constantly varying circumstances to allow anything like a full account here. At times workers' parties and unions staged massive public rallies demand-

ing relief from municipal authorities, as they did in New York City in the winter of 1873-74, or marched in force into bourgeois neighborhoods to dramatize the workers' hunger, as they did in Chicago in 1884. In other instances unions whose members could afford high dues, like cigar makers and printers, paid benefits out of the unions' treasuries to unemployed members.

It was probably the first nine months of the Crisis of 1893 which witnessed the most impressive variety of efforts by unions to aid the jobless. In Danbury, Connecticut, locked-out hat workers went to the town meeting and voted themselves and other unemployed people \$50,000 in relief (which the selectmen subsequently refused to pay). In Chicago a series of militant demonstrations organized by the unions forced Mayor Carter Harrison and the city council to appropriate funds for relief and public work directly to a union-controlled Labor and Temporary Relief Committee. In Denver, which teemed with unemployed miners from mountain camps of the region, the city's Trades and Labor Assembly established Camp Relief, which provided shelter and clothing in a tent colony run completely by its own inhabitants, and the Maverick Restaurant, which fed 550 people a day. (8)

All these efforts ultimately collapsed from lack of funds, and relief work in each community was taken over by church and civic reform groups, which had the confidence of wealthy contributors. It was only appropriate, therefore, that the I.W.W. aimed its unemployed struggles of 1913 and 1914 directly at public charities and churches. Its most famous efforts involved direct action to clean up relief shelters and the invasion of Catholic churches during mass to demand some Christian charity on the spot. (9) The unemployed movements of the early 1930's resorted to both self-organized mutual assistance and pressure on charities and public agencies, but they enjoyed little of the assistance from city central labor bodies which had been evident in the 1890's.

The final phase of the depression of the thirties, which began with the severe downturn of the fall of 1937, forced the young unions of the C.I.O. to act quickly and imaginatively on both fronts: control of layoffs and relief to the unemployed. On the latter, the unions themselves assumed many of the functions which unemployed councils and leagues had exercised before 1935. Dealing with layoffs, they coupled the new seniority principle with older working-class practices, often in highly imaginative ways, which suggested that the two forms of regulation could be combined effectively by workers who had both ingenuity and audacity.

It is important to recall how perilous the plight of the new unions was. Hardly had the first contracts of C.I.O. unions been negotiated when the economic upswing, which had nurtured labor's militancy and effectiveness in 1935 and 1936, collapsed. In the last quarter of 1937 the steel industry suffered the largest production drop in its history (roughly 70 per cent), and its total payroll was cut in half. In St. Louis, a center of light electrical manufacturing,

the United Electrical Workers found half its members unemployed throughout 1938, and most of the others working only part time. That year was one of many lost strikes, and companies like General Motors, Philco, and Maytag sought to withdraw what recognition they had extended to the C.I.O. The traditional union device of controlling layoffs through the closed shop was denied to the new industrial unions by the adamant resistance of the corporations. Court rulings against sit-down strikes and an ominous rash of "labor peace bills" in state legislatures made veterans of the labor movement fear that a repetition of the disasters of 1920-22 was at hand.

On the other hand, hundreds of thousands of the workers who were being laid off from mass-production industries were already union members. In the U.E. "out-of-work stamps" were issued for five cents a month (regular dues were one dollar a month), and those who paid such dues were treated as full-fledged members, with voting rights at local meetings. Local secretaries were urged by the international officers to keep laid-off members informed of all meetings and developments in their locals. Many locals assisted unemployed members in obtaining relief and in fighting any bureaucratic obstacles they might encounter in welfare agencies. (10) At its 1939 convention the U.E. resolved to battle in each district for the right of workers to be placed on relief automatically, as soon as they were certified as unemployed by union officers, thus circumventing any investigation by welfare agencies. Indeed, in some industrial centers, like Pittsburgh and Tarentum, Pennsylvania, C.I.O. unions had won the power to place their unemployed members on relief rolls by early 1938. (11)

Moreover, U.E. locals waged a major and often highly effective effort to place their unemployed members quickly on the payrolls of the W.P.A. and to defend their rights and earnings there. In Dayton, Ohio, the U.E. established a W.P.A. Auxiliary to assist its needy members. The new auxiliary quickly expanded its endeavors to try to organize all workers on the area's W.P.A., to press workers' grievances with W.P.A. officials, and to campaign for higher wages on W.P.A. work. It had a steward system and an educational committee. According to K.M. Kirkendall, a well-known leader of the U.E. in Dayton, the auxiliary was "spreading the gospel of unionism to many people who never had the opportunity to organize before the axe fell and cut them away from private employment." (12)

Jobless union members were thus forged into a link between the industrial workers of the community as a whole and the new industrial unions. Similar activities were undertaken by U.E. locals in St. Louis, where Henry Fiering, financial secretary of Local 1108, who had himself been fired from Century Electric after a strike in April 1937, helped place 700 laid-off workers from that company on W.P.A. jobs or relief during the following year. Nor were they confined to the U.E. As early as 1935 the Trotskyist-led Local 574

of the Teamsters had created an effective Federal Workers' Section, which took over many of the functions formerly performed by the Trotskyists' unemployed organization in Minneapolis. Numerous locals of the Steel Workers Organizing Committee set up relief committees for their unemployed members, who were exonerated from all dues and assisted in getting relief by staff representatives. (13)

Clearly the activities of the Steel Workers were more in the form of a service to the members, as was typical of that organization, while those of the Teamsters and U.E. took the form of mobilization of the members. The difference between waiving all dues and requiring a nickel a month is symbolic of the contrast. But both forms of activity represented a new style of unemployed struggle, which was significantly different from that of the early 1930's. The struggles of the early thirties had been largely community-based, highly spontaneous in their actions, and organized by the various revolutionary parties. Those of the late thirties were shaped in the mold of industrial unionism and directly attached to the new unions.

These new characteristics became most evident in the W.P.A. strikes of the summer of 1939. Early that year the new conservative majority in Congress had ordered all W.P.A. offices to trim their rolls, to require a loyalty oath of W.P.A. employees, to close down all non-manual relief work such as theater projects and historical records surveys, which could not find state sponsorship, and, most drastic of all, to lay off for one month everyone who had been on the rolls for more than a year and a half. (14) The response in Minneapolis typified the new role of unions in the unemployed movement. The strike was called by a United Organizational Committee, which consisted of five representatives from each of the following groups: the A.F. of L. Central Labor Union, the city's Building Trades Council, the Federal Workers Section of the truck drivers' local (now numbered 544), the Workers' Alliance (a united front of the older unemployed organizations), and the county C.I.O. Council. All projects of the W.P.A. were picketed, and the Committee demanded that the W.P.A. administrator for the state close them down. The walkout was widespread, but fiercely resisted by the new Republican administrations of the city and state, which had ousted their Farmer-Labor predecessors through campaigns dominated by inflammatory red-baiting and anti-Semitism the previous fall. The projects were kept open; police fired into one crowd of pickets, killing a bystander; and 163 strikers were indicted by a grand jury. (15) A union-led strike of unemployed workers who had been taken on by government relief projects could have occurred only in the setting of the new managerial, governmental, and union practices.

Just as the heavy unemployment of 1938-39 drove many unions into unprecedented involvement in the struggles of the unemployed, so too did it stimulate flexible and innovative efforts to control layoffs. Several locals in the building trades used their control

over hiring to prevent employers from taking advantage of the heavy unemployment to rid themselves of workers who had slowed down with age. The painters' and electricians' unions in New York fixed quotas of the minimal numbers of workers over 55, whom contractors were obliged to hire for every job, as did the electricians in Cleveland and Cincinnati. The Fur and Leather Workers, through a protracted strike in the New York market in 1938, sharply limited employers' abilities to discharge "inefficient" workers at the end of each season and lengthened their formally-recognized work-sharing period. (16) All these accomplishments represented novel applications of traditional union controls over hiring.

Although the Steel Workers Organizing Committee had won a weak seniority clause from U.S. Steel, it authorized each local in that company and elsewhere to deal with the new layoffs as it wished. Some of them cut the work week drastically — to as little as 20 hours. Others permitted large layoffs, while battling for unqualified application of the seniority principle. Usually younger workers fought for the first approach and older workers for the second, and many locals were badly split over the question. These conflicts stimulated the desire of the union's leadership to return control to management's hands, provided it could be limited by clearly formulated seniority rights in the contracts. But U.S. Steel and other firms in the industry fought adamantly to make "merit ratings" prevail over seniority in selecting who was to be spared in layoffs, and thus kept local initiative very much alive until the war years, when the War Labor Board introduced the complex seniority systems, which lasted until the recent consent decree. (17)

When U.E. locals wrestled with the terrible choices involved in workers' efforts to control layoffs, they came up with a wide variety of answers. At the big Westinghouse Local 601, to take but one example, the union had contended vehemently for an unqualified seniority principle before 1937, but the stunning impact of the new dismissals led it to demand a general reduction of hours in order to share the remaining work. As short time in many departments dragged on month after month, however, everyone in the local became uneasy over what the union's paper called this "tremendous sharing of misery," and local activists came increasingly to share the fear of countless Americans at the time that unemployment at very high levels had become a permanent part of American life instead of the cyclical affliction it had formerly been.

Consequently, Charles Newell, whom the local had elected its business agent, argued that the union should abandon its work-sharing policy, insist on layoffs by strict seniority, and couple that policy with a militant battle for massive expansion of employment by the public sector. Yet Newell himself was openly anxious over the dangers inherent in that approach. He explained:

It is the tendency of the employed workers to disown the unemployed workers, to refuse giving them any help, and

even to try to exclude them from the union and deprive them of the right to vote. This represents the gravest danger to both.

There is nothing that makes me angry as does the sneer or taunt one of our more conservative members may make towards our unemployed workers, accusing them of being too radical, etc. One can expect it from (Westinghouse Board Chairman) A.W. Robertson, but not from other workers. (18)

Although Local 601 still did not have a contract with Westinghouse, it had already wrung control over layoffs away from the foremen. Now it had to devise a complex formula to solve its own dilemmas, and in August 1939 it wrested agreement to that plan from the company. The first response to lack of work was to be a reduction of hours in the division affected. If average hours fell below 36 a week in any division for more than four weeks, everyone in the division with less than a year's service was to be dropped. If they fell below 34 hours, as many people as necessary with less than five years were to be transferred to other jobs or laid off. No reductions below 32 hours would be allowed. Representatives of any division threatened by such a development would negotiate an alternative with the company. Rehiring options were to go first to any employee who had been transferred off his or her job, then to those who had been laid off, according to plant-wide seniority. (19)

These elaborate arrangements deserve close attention because they reveal not only the thoroughness with which workers could thrash out their own agonizing problems, but also that, even after seniority had become enshrined as the basic principle governing layoffs in mass-production industry, that principle could still be subjected to significant modification in order to avoid a paralyzing division between the older and newer workers. Seniority and contracts both had their place in workers' struggles, but it was equally dangerous to sanctify either device.

The dangers became especially evident during the next sharp downturn of the economy, that of 1949-50. By that time some kind of seniority formula (plant, divisional, departmental, "with ability to do the job," or whatever) had become standard practice in most basic industry. On the other hand, large numbers of Black workers had first obtained jobs in those industries during World War II. Strict application of seniority, therefore, threatened to wipe out the gains of Black workers and sharply pit unemployed Blacks against white workers who remained on the job with union protection. In this setting Black organizations launched a powerful campaign for state and federal fair-employment-practices commissions, and the Communist Party warned that "seniority today, in its effects upon the Negro people in a period of generally declining

employment, acts in the interests of the employers...." (20)

Alone among the predominantly white organizations which had any influence in the unions at the time, the C.P. called for a revitalization of older methods of combatting layoffs, as part of a many-faceted struggle to secure the unity of white and Black workers. Although the political conditions of the period guaranteed the defeat of its program, it did contain several ideas which are very much worthy of review, at a time like the present when layoffs threaten the position of women workers and Blacks alike.

First, where a union controlled hiring to any degree, the C.P. called upon it to make a deliberate effort to place Blacks on any jobs that came open, regardless of their seniority, much as the New York building trades had done on behalf of older workers during the thirties. In Local 65 and in the United Office and Professional Workers this was actually done, and both unions dealt with occupations with high turnover. Those unions established the rule that at least one out of every four workers placed on jobs had to be Black. Numerous shop meetings were held to thrash out, and where necessary defend, this policy. Because Black office workers were then very few, the U.O.P.W.A. encouraged Blacks who were not members to use its hiring halls.

Second, the program called for battles on the job to open more skilled jobs to Black workers and to secure their positions there by plant-wide rather than departmental seniority rules. Third, it called for work sharing through shorter weeks and other time-honored practices, in order to hold newer members on the job. Finally, it advocated the automatic awarding of two to five years' seniority to all Blacks, to compensate for the many decades in which they had been barred from employment in the industries altogether. All these efforts were to be placed in the context of a general campaign for government measures to restore full employment, just as George Meany would advocate today; but in sharp contrast to Meany, the Communists' leaders of that time warned:

The general struggle for jobs for workers as a whole should not be permitted to submerge the special struggle for jobs that must be conducted in relation to the Negro workers. The achievement of the 30-hour week will not end discrimination. Sharing work alone will not solve the special problem of the Negro workers. (21)

For the most part the Communists' program was howled down in the unions as "Jim Crow in reverse," "super-seniority," and a diabolical effort to pit race against race. The inviolability of seniority became the basic argument used against the program by union leaders, rank-and-file white workers, and employers alike. The greatest degree of success was scored in battles over upgrading and over the use of job-dispatching powers to combat the decline of Black membership through layoffs.

It would be foolish to apply any of yesterday's techniques for wrestling with unemployment mechanically to today's problems. But it would be even more foolish to treat the seniority principle and other established collective-bargaining arrangements as insuperable obstacles to the emergence of new, imaginative styles of struggle. As those new styles emerge, they are certain to contain recognizable features of the older methods.

The tradition of work sharing, for example, has largely receded from workers' consciousness today. Any reduction of hours below 40 now quickly reaches the point where the take-home pay of the workers is less than they would get on unemployment compensation. Moreover, the lure of consumerism drives workers to seek long hours of overtime and moonlighting in order to meet their bills. On the other hand, whenever signs of a layoff appear, a widespread aversion against overtime quickly materializes. Even workers who have been on an overtime binge for years then mobilize peer-group pressure against the acceptance of overtime, while shop mates are out of work. When they discuss the struggle at union meetings, some of the workers invariably castigate the effects installment-buying capitalism was having on their own lives. It is precisely in situations of this type that the workers' initiative can carry them beyond the sacred seniority formula, ideologically as well as organizationally, with tactics well attuned to their own peculiar circumstances.

Whatever changing forms social evolution may impart to struggles over unemployment, however, the most significant moments of working-class unity have occurred when workers have fought simultaneously for control of layoffs and for organization of the unemployed. Only this two-front battle can effectively combat the employers' ability to divide the workers into privileged and underprivileged segments. Even during such struggles potent forces of division remain present. Some workers wrote to the PEOPLE'S PRESS and the U.E. NEWS during 1938 and 1939 arguing that women should give up their jobs in favor of men with families, and Charles Newell testified to the contempt and fear in which some employed union members held the unemployed. But it is only in the context of the battle on both fronts, whether it be coordinated by unions, community-based groups, or some collective form not yet dreamed of, that workers can prevent their own cherished formula of seniority from being used against them with devastating effect. Conversely, only such a struggle can effectively demand a general reduction of working time and an end to the installment mania, which has made us willing slaves in the production of junk.

FOOTNOTES

1. Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics of Labor, REPORT (1879), 104-105.
2. Sumner H. Slichter, UNION POLICIES AND INDUSTRIAL MANAGEMENT (Washington, D.C., 1941), 100-101; Magnus Alexander, "Waste in Hiring and Discharging Men," IRON AGE, 94 (Oct. 29, 1914), 1032-1033; Special Task Force to the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, WORK IN AMERICA (Cambridge, Mass., 1973), 38-40.
3. Harry A. Millis, HOW COLLECTIVE BARGAINING WORKS (New York, 1942), 723-734, 765-766, 581, 617-620.
4. An excellent survey of union rules related to layoffs may be found in Slichter, 98-163.
5. Gladys Palmer, UNION TACTICS AND ECONOMIC CHANGE: A CASE STUDY OF THREE PHILADELPHIA TEXTILE UNIONS (Philadelphia, 1932), 34; John R. Commons, TRADE UNIONISM AND LABOR PROBLEMS, First Series (Boston, 1905), 229-230; MACHINISTS MONTHLY JOURNAL, 12 (March, 1900), 196; Mark Perlman, THE MACHINISTS: A NEW STUDY IN AMERICAN TRADE UNIONISM (Cambridge, Mass., 1961), 248, 258.
6. New York Bureau of Statistics of Labor, REPORT (1886), 254-258; Millis, 327, 351-357.
7. See the tables on contract layoff provisions in Slichter, 105-107.
8. Carlos C. Closson, Jr., "The Unemployed in American Cities," QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF ECONOMICS, 8 (Jan., 1894), 168-217, 257-258.
9. Philip S. Foner, HISTORY OF THE LABOR MOVEMENT IN THE UNITED STATES, vol. IV (New York, 1965), 435-461.
10. U.E. NEWS, Feb. 25, June 3, June 10, July 22, Aug. 5, 1939.
11. IBID., May 20, 1939, PEOPLE'S PRESS (National Edition), Jan. 29, 1938.
12. IBID., Feb. 25, June 6, 1939.
13. IBID., July 29, 1939; Farrell Dobbs, TEAMSTER POWER (New York, 1973), 78-96; Millis, 528. See also Philip S. Foner, THE FUR AND LEATHER WORKERS UNION (Newark, 1950), 512-513.
14. Joint Resolution of June 30, 1939, 76th Cong., 1st sess., U.S. STATUTES AT LARGE, vol. 53, part 2, 928-936.
15. U.E. NEWS, October 28, 1939.
16. Slichter, 55n; Millis, 212-213; Foner, FUR AND LEATHER, 522-523.
17. Millis, 554-562.
18. U.E. NEWS, April 29, 1939.
19. IBID., Aug. 26, 1939; Millis, 767.
20. Hal Simon, "The Struggle for Jobs and for Negro Rights in the Trade Unions," POLITICAL AFFAIRS, 29 (Feb., 1950), 33-48. The quotation is on p. 37. See also John Williamson, "Defend and Extend the Rights of Negro Workers," IBID., 28 (June 1949), 28-37.
21. Simon, 42.

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Loom, Broom and Womb: Producers, Maintainers and Reproducers

Women's Work Study Group

HISTORY: WOMEN'S WORK AND THE
DEVELOPMENT OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM

Women's work and the development of American capitalism can be examined in three historical phases: the pre-capitalist phase prior to 1820; the phase of competitive capitalism between 1820 and 1890; and the monopoly capitalist phase from 1890 to the present. In this section each period is briefly described in terms of the organization of production and the implications of the organization of production for the lives of women.

THE PRE-CAPITALIST PHASE

The pre-capitalist period in North America is dominated by agricultural production: in the northern colonies by small-scale family farming, and in the southern colonies by large-scale plan-

Note: This paper is excerpted from a longer work appearing in Vol. I, No. 1, of *Frontiers*, which aims to examine major aspects of women's lives under advanced capitalism. The longer work includes sections on methodology, history, ideology and consciousness, and strategy.

tation production. In small-scale agriculture, the family household was the unit of production. It was engaged in producing simple commodities for both home consumption and sale (the extent of which depended upon access to markets), but can be characterized as generally self-sufficient. While there was a sexual division of labor, with men predominating in agriculture and women in domestic manufacture, flexibility existed. Women took charge of vegetable gardens and dairies and assisted in the harvest, while men assumed responsibility for the manufacture of heavier farm tools. When a household began to produce a particular item for the purpose of exchange, the husband usually took over, becoming the master craftsperson, while the wife continued to produce articles immediately consumed by the family. The wife would often, however, expand her responsibilities to include selling the product the family produced. On her husband's death, the wife would often assume the position of master craftsperson. Thus, while there was a general division of labor, sexual hierarchy was not pronounced. Instead, society was stratified according to wealth. Women who owned land (usually widows of wealthy men) could and did participate in prestigious occupations, exercise power in the community, and vote.

In contrast to small-scale family farming was the plantation unit based on slave labor. Like women on the family farm, slave women both reproduced and maintained labor power for the plantation economy. Slave women, however, also had their labor expropriated for agricultural production on the plantation. Slave women were exploited as labor in the fields along with male slaves. Additionally, female slaves had their reproductive capacities expropriated to the extent that women were urged to reproduce a new generation of slave laborers which could be worked or sold at will by plantation owners. The exploitation of the productive and reproductive power of slave women is one distinguishing feature of the plantation system. It prefigures the double exploitation of all women (as wage laborers and household workers) with the development of capitalism in a later period.

THE COMPETITIVE CAPITALIST PHASE, 1820-1920

For women, the most important change which occurred with the transition to a capitalist organization of production was the separation of home and workplace. It is important to note that this separation had already occurred for slave women in the context of the plantation. In the pre-capitalist era, production was carried on either in the home or on land surrounding the home. With the advent of factory manufacture, the production of commodities began to shift outside the home. One of the most important aspects of the growth of manufacturing is the creation of a class of people who sold their labor power.

In North America, the first group of people to sell their labor power for industrial production was single women. Prior to textile manufacture, a significant way in which single women contributed to the welfare of their families was by spinning thread and weaving the thread into cloth. As manufactured cloth became cheaper and factory jobs became available, young single women took work outside the home. These women constituted a cheap, available supply of laborers working for a third to a quarter of the wages of men.

From the 1830's onward, large waves of European immigrants came to the U.S. to fill the need for more cheap labor. At first, immigrant women worked in their homes, taking in boarders and washing. Sometimes, they worked outside the home as domestics. Gradually, these women began to take up jobs in factories and formed the base of women working for wages. Although they were an important part of the development of militant labor struggles, women were only around 17% of the wage-labor force in 1890.

It is during this period that an ideology to disguise the reality of women's position in the productive system developed. It did this by defining the household and reproductive work performed by women in the family as economically unimportant. Although this reflected the fact that important productive functions no longer took place in the family, even necessary reproduction of the labor force which took place there was no longer valued. Additionally, the role of women was being defined as properly limited to the family, although women were serving as a source of cheap labor for the capitalists. This is the origin of a doubly oppressive ideology for proletarian women. Initially, it obscured the role women play in reproducing and maintaining the labor force. Over time it also came to obscure their role as wage laborers.

While wealth was becoming more concentrated in a growing capitalist class, ideology and practice developed which obscured class differences. Ideology stressed the equality of all white men. The vote was extended to men regardless of their wealth at the same time that state after state passed laws prohibiting women, regardless of their wealth, from voting. By 1837 women could no longer vote in any state. Working-class men were encouraged to feel that they had more in common with bourgeois men than they did with the women of their own class.

THE MONOPOLY CAPITALIST PHASE, 1890 TO THE PRESENT

Monopoly capitalism differs in the logic of its development from competitive capitalism. Many more decisions about the production and sale of commodities are under the monopolists' control, e.g. control of prices, type, and quality of products, etc. In addition, profit rates are higher with monopolies. These two facts create one of the contradictions of monopoly capitalism: the need to

maintain high profits by selling more products at a higher price, while simultaneously cutting production costs by keeping wages low and thereby curtailing the workers' capacity to consume what is produced.

Monopolists have attempted to suspend this contradiction in two ways which have had the effect of pushing more women into the work force. First, monopolists have reorganized their corporations, developing huge new departments to promote and facilitate the sale of their products. This has meant a rapid growth in clerical, sales, transportation, and communications jobs. These jobs required educated workers who would work for low wages. Women were an ideal source for this type of labor.

Second is the advertising thrust designed to build expectations and the desire for more material goods. At the same time, the socially necessary reproduction costs of workers rose faster than wages. This meant that families needed an additional wage earner. Many of the goods which corporations produced were home appliances, "labor-saving" devices for the home. Although the time required to care for a house was not decreased by these appliances, because standards for housework were rising, housewives were made to feel that their chores could now be done in their spare time, on weekends, and in the evenings. Consequently, women were "freed" to become the second family wage earner.

Labor-force participation-rate figures give an indication of the importance of these developments in transforming married women, in particular, into wage laborers. In 1890, only 4.5% of all married women worked for wages. By 1970, 40.8% of all married women were employed. In spite of these changes in women's participation in the labor force, women continued to be ideologically defined in terms of our roles as mothers and housewives. This ideology helps capital to control the rapidly growing female wage-labor force, by slowing the development of women's consciousness of ourselves as workers.

HOUSEHOLD LABOR

Describing the contradictory nature of the demands which the capitalist system places on the household requires an examination of three characteristics of domestic labor. First, the labor performed within the family is essential for maintaining the laborer's capacity to work. Secondly, the social relations in the household are different from those in a capitalist workplace. Thirdly, to understand the specific work done in the home, we must see that it is related to the capitalist sector.

HOUSEWORK IS VALUABLE AND IMPORTANT

In America today there is a tendency to demean the work women do in the home. Women feel this lack of status and respond in various ways. One woman wrote to Abigail Van Buren :

Dear Abby,

My career is my home and my family, and I'm proud of it. But for some strange reason, when a housewife is asked what she does, she very apologetically says, "I'm ONLY a housewife." This irritates me no end.

When I am asked what I do, I proudly say, "I'm an oikologist." The word comes from the Greek words "oikos," which means house, and "ologist," which means one who studies or is an expert in.

Please pass this on for other housewives. Perhaps they will feel more important as they use it too.

"Oikologist"

Abby responded in her characteristically sisterly fashion:

Dear Oik,

I wouldn't recommend springing that on the average Joe without defining it. The "oikologist" might be mistaken for an expert on pigs.

What strange reasons would cause a woman to say, "I'm ONLY a housewife"? Several characteristics of housework make it frustrating and unrewarding. (1) There is a large proportion of routine tasks. (2) The short period which elapses between much of the production and consumption which follows tends to detract from the worker's satisfaction. She feels her labor results in nothing permanent. For example, a meal is immediately eaten after it is cooked, although it may have taken all day to make it. (3) The products of the housewife's labor don't go on the market; they receive no monetary valuation. Since her contribution cannot be measured quantitatively, she and society as a whole fail to appreciate the contribution to people's well-being she actually makes. (4) Since the housewife earns no money for housework, she is dependent upon her husband—or the state, in the case of welfare mothers—for her food, clothing, shelter, and money. (5) While it is considered a "privilege" to live in a single-family household, full-time housewives who spend their time alone or in the company of small children often feel isolated and lonely.

Other characteristics of housework make it less alienating than many other jobs. (1) The worker is her own taskmistress and can rest at desired intervals. She has some control over her work. (2) The tasks are undertaken to meet the needs of the worker and her family. (3) The woman is free to exercise her initiative and judgment and to experiment and seek out the best conditions of work. (4) Housework is unspecialized and therefore new, and varied problems are continually being presented.

On balance, the tendency is for society to demean the housewife and to undervalue her contribution to people's welfare and to the reproduction of the capitalist system.

In the capitalist sector, workers are paid a wage sufficient to cover the costs of maintaining and reproducing their labor power. This wage must be converted into food, clothing, and shelter, the use values which allow the worker to go on living and working. Household work is the essential activity which translates the wage into these useful goods. We can imagine more direct ways of translating the wage into useful goods than via domestic labor. For example, a worker can go to a restaurant and buy a prepared meal instead of buying raw meats, vegetables, and grains, using a kitchen, and preparing the food. Housework is obviously not the only way to reproduce and maintain the labor force under capitalism, but today much of the reproduction and maintenance work is in fact done in the household by women.

Household labor differs from wage labor in the following ways :

(1) In housework, no one exercises authority and control over the woman during the work process. The woman herself decides which tasks must be done in any given day and sets her own standards of speed and thoroughness. She is, however, subject to demands from other people, such as her children and her husband.

But these limitations on the housewife's control over the work process are of a very different nature from those faced by a wage laborer. The wage laborer contracts with the capitalist to spend a certain number of hours per day at the work place in exchange for a wage. Historically, the capitalist has taken more and more control over the work process out of the hands of the workers. By contrast, housework has not been subjected to these forces.

(2) Housewives are not separated from their means of production to the extent to which wage laborers are. In a patriarchal family, legal ownership of the home, care, and other goods may belong to the husband. But we are interested in economic control, by which we mean access to the means of production. Housewives do have control since they can use the family stove to prepare meals for themselves and their families. The same is not true for wage laborers. In the capitalist sphere, production is undertaken only if the capitalist thinks he can make a profit. If he thinks he cannot make a profit, he will not use his machines, nor will he allow anyone else to use them, even though people are willing to work and even though people need the goods which those machines can help produce.

(3) The housewife works in order to meet her needs and those of her family. It may appear as if the wife exchanges her household labor for a share of her husband's wage, but this is false since the wife's standard of living does not depend on how hard she works. Working harder at housework does not result in a larger share of the wage for the housewife. Rather, her standard of living depends upon her husband's income and the status of his occupation.

In the capitalist sphere, although whatever is produced must fill some human need if the capitalist expects to be able to sell it, the purpose of producing is not to fill human needs but rather to make profit. For example, capitalist cattle ranchers periodically destroy thousands of calves. This happens despite record numbers of people starving, because those ranchers cannot make a profit in raising the animals. Capitalism is increasingly controlling household labor by influencing consumption patterns, setting standards for housework through high-pressure advertising, and psychologizing about child care.

HOUSEHOLD WORK CAN ONLY BE UNDERSTOOD BY ITS RELATION TO THE CAPITALIST SPHERE

In order to isolate contradictions (sources of change), we must now examine the interrelationship of the household and capitalist spheres. We have already described how the development of the capitalist sector results in a larger and larger proportion of women who do both housework and wage labor. In analyzing further interrelationships, we found it helpful to think about the ways in which the international capitalist system relates to pre-capitalist economies in colonized countries.

The pre-capitalist colonized economies are comparable to the household economy in some important respects. (1) In the traditional sectors of colonized economies, control over the work process is not in the hands of the capitalists. (2) People control their own means of production. (3) Production in the traditional sectors is oriented mainly toward the creation of use values, not exchange values.

The subordination and interdependence of pre-capitalist colonized economies on imperialism is parallel to the subordination and interdependence of the household on the capitalist system in this country. The household economy, however, also differs in many ways from both traditional pre-capitalist and colonized economies. In contrast to many colonized economies, the household is completely dependent for its reproduction upon the wage which comes from the capitalist sector. The comparison shows the nature of capitalism as a dominant force, creating dependent relationships between itself and other spheres of production.

Where traditional, pre-capitalist economies have some contact with the capitalist sphere, as in a colonial situation, much of the reproduction of labor power for the capitalist sector takes place. In addition, the traditional sector acts as a buffer, absorbing and caring for those whose labor is temporarily or permanently rejected by the capitalist sphere. These people are sick, laid off, or too old to work for wages. This also includes people who are working in traditional subsistence jobs. Meanwhile subsistence workers are forced into the wage-labor force, as they need cash to pay for

taxes and to consume goods.

Groups within the pre-capitalist economy may, for some time, maintain an independent course of subsistence. For example, traditional agriculture allows the people to continue living despite the lower-than-subsistence wages paid by capitalists. But this independent source of subsistence is gradually eroded as both land and necessary labor are appropriated by the capitalists.

Capitalism conveniently continues to highlight traditional ideologies and differences between groups of people (differences of culture or race) to divide the growing proletariat along false lines which obscure the class basis of imperialism. This leads various traditional groups to come into conflict in their competition for jobs and to ignore the commonality of their plight of subservience to capitalism. In sum, capitalism, in its relation with the colonized pre-capitalist world, gradually becomes the dominant mode of production and forces colonized peoples into economic, cultural, and ideological dependence on it.

Understanding the interrelationships between imperialism and colonized societies brings into focus the relationship between the household and capitalist spheres under advanced capitalism. It is a necessity for capitalism to create dependency and erode pre-capitalist sectors of production.

The household sphere reproduces daily and generationally the labor needed by the capitalist system. Household labor translates wages into needed goods and services for the workers' families. This unpaid household labor stretches the wage paid to workers, thus allowing capitalists to pay lower wages than would be required for the reproduction and maintenance of the worker and his/her family if housework were taken over by capitalism.

The household plays an important storage role for the capitalist sphere. It absorbs and maintains those unemployed members of society, the children, the aged, the sick, and the temporarily unemployed. This relieves the capitalists of the responsibility for their care. Reserve labor power, especially women's labor power, is stored in the household and may be drawn upon when needed by the capitalist system. This happens, for example, during war time, when many male workers are drafted, or during Christmas rush or seasonal food processing, when additional — but temporary — labor power is required. The household is expected to reabsorb these women's time and energy when they are not needed in the wage-labor force.

Most of the consumption of capitalist goods takes place in the household unit. Today the household produces fewer and fewer of its necessities, turning instead to the processed foods, clothes, and labor-saving devices produced by capitalism. Advertising is aimed at creating an ever-expanding variety of personal and household needs. All adult members of many families must secure wage-paying jobs to provide the household with the money to buy socially necessary goods.

CONTRADICTIONS

We can now isolate some of the contradictions inherent in the relationship between the two spheres of production. These contradictions help us identify stress points of the capitalist sphere and are the points around which we can organize and develop strategies for our struggle against capitalism and sexism.

In capitalist ideology, the household is portrayed as "woman's place," and as the location for domestic bliss, separate from the grind of the outside world, the capitalist sphere. In fact the household of today does not and cannot exist as a separate entity. Not only is the wage derived from the sale of labor power essential for the maintenance and reproduction of the family, but in turn household consumption and reproduction serve vital needs of capitalism. Capitalism manipulates the household by shunting individuals, particularly women, back and forth between the two spheres. Through advertising, patterns of consumption are determined by the profit needs of capitalist production. The notion of the separate household only disguises the extent of the household's dependence on and penetration by capitalism.

The more the household consumes of the processed food, goods, and labor-saving devices manufactured by the capitalist sphere, the higher are the costs of family maintenance and reproduction. Women are forced into the wage-labor sector in an attempt to maintain their family's standard of living. As a result, the household is becoming a less effective storage unit for temporarily unused labor, since women are becoming permanent members of the wage-labor force.

Although women look for jobs in order to help maintain the household, when they participate in wage labor they become more independent by having control of a wage. More and more women are challenging their husbands' traditional authority and control in the household. As increasing numbers of women are participating in wage labor today, the traditional power relations within the household unit show tendencies to break down.

On the job, male and female wage laborers experience the common oppression of being employees rather than employers, wage earners rather than owners of their means of production. The surplus value they create is appropriated by the capitalists; what they produce is determined by the profit needs of the capitalist mode of production rather than by real needs of people. Yet capitalism uses ideologies derived from traditional family relationships to divide workers along sex lines. Women receive lower wages than do men and are concentrated in service and clerical jobs.

While capitalism erodes the family with its demands for increasing consumption which force women to work for wages, it also manipulates the concept of family and familial ties to its own advantage. For example, advertising is used to reinforce the

domestic unit when capitalists need women to return to their homes to make room for men in the labor force. This manipulation occurred at the end of World War II, and today we find the media stressing the ideal of the traditional family in a period of high unemployment.

WOMEN AND WAGE LABOR

Women have served as a reserve army of labor in the past because they could be returned to the home when not needed by the capitalists. At the same time, the growth in the size of corporations with its attendant need for more clerical workers has brought many women into the wage-labor force on a permanent basis. This greater participation of women in the wage-labor force on a permanent basis undermines the willingness of women to serve as a reserve army of temporary labor.

This contradiction highlights two specific theoretical problems that need to be discussed due to their relevance to women's work for wages. First is an analysis of productive and unproductive labor and their relationship to women's wage work. Second is the relationship between the reserve army of labor and women in the capitalist system.

Marxists generally consider "productive" work to be wage work which involves the direct production of goods whose sale brings profits to the capitalist. "Unproductive" work is defined as a necessary part of the overall production process which assists in the circulation or sale of goods but does not add directly to the profit made on a product. According to this definition most of women's wage work in clerical, sales, and service jobs would be considered unproductive. The important political point which many people draw from this distinction is that only productive workers have revolutionary potential, since they are the ones directly involved in producing the goods which bring in profits.

We reject both the labeling of clerical, sales, and service jobs as "unproductive" and the conclusion that workers in those occupations are not worth organizing.

First, it is certainly possible to think of a task which is purely "unproductive" in Marx's sense of the word. Checking out groceries in a food store would be one such job. It merely accomplishes the transfer of ownership of goods from the capitalists to the consumers. However there are few workers whose only task is checking out groceries. Most cashiers also restock the shelves and transport groceries, and these tasks are "productive" because they are part of the realization process of capitalist production. We would argue that most clerical, sales, and service workers in fact do both "productive" and "unproductive" tasks. Even if revolutionary potential were a function of the productive/unproductive distinction, then we would argue that clerical, sales, and service

workers do some productive tasks and therefore have revolutionary potential.

However we would like to make a stronger argument and say that revolutionary potential is not related to the productive/unproductive distinction. Marx emphasized the integrated and increasingly social character of the labor process as one of the underlying, self-destructive features of capitalist production. It is the collective nature of capitalist production which creates the potential for revolutionary action and consciousness among workers. At the time Marx was writing, "productive" labor had the most highly developed social character. But monopoly capitalism has brought an increasingly social character to clerical, sales, and service jobs, too. Private secretaries are becoming increasingly rare. A larger and larger proportion of clerical work is done in typing pools. With the increasing social nature of this work comes the potential for class consciousness.

As women's employment becomes more and more permanent, it becomes more appropriate to consider their work in relation to what is known as the floating sector of the reserve army of labor. This sector is made up of workers attracted and repelled by capitalism, pushed out of jobs by technical advance or reorganization somewhere and made available for expansion and new jobs somewhere else. Because of the fluctuating and unstable nature of jobs in clerical and service work, this labor is frequently performed by the floating reserve army. Since the 1940's, however, clerical work has been stabilizing. Women's permanent employment has steadily risen; job turnover, although high, is usually within the same sector and at the same skill level.

It is often asserted that women are taking away men's jobs. It is true that since the 1950's the percentage growth rate of employed operatives (largely male) has fallen while the percentage growth rate of employed women — until the current economic crisis — rose markedly. There is not, however, an immediate link between these two trends. To begin with, the actual number of men employed did not drop. In addition, operatives not finding jobs or being forced out of old ones were males, while workers finding jobs in the clerical sector were females. Clearly there is not a one-to-one correspondence between those losing jobs in operative work and the growth of new jobs in the clerical sector. One possible hypothesis is that capitalism is counting on marriage or the household as a bonding mechanism within the floating sector of the reserve labor army. In this way, workers forced out of one sector can be supported through marriage by other workers drawn into another sector. It is indeed the case that the percentage of the female labor force which is married has risen markedly since World War II.

WOMEN AS CHEAP AND SEASONAL LABORERS

Women have served as a source of low-wage labor from the beginning of capitalist production in the United States. During the early industrialization period of the 1820's women accounted for from 75 to 90% of the factory labor force in New England. Their wages were one-fourth to one-half the level of men's. As more men were forced to work for wages — no longer able to support themselves as farmers and craftsmen or because they were newly arrived from Europe — women's proportionate contribution to the wage-labor force fell. But by 1900 women still accounted for about 17% of the wage-labor force. Most of the women who worked for wages in 1900 were black or immigrants or daughters of immigrants and single and young.

One of the clearest indications of the use of women for seasonal or irregular labor needs was during World War II. In response to the needs of war production and the absence from the work force of millions of men in the military, "Rosie the Riveter" urged women to enter the work force as their patriotic duty. The percentage of women over 16 who were employed jumped from 28.9% in 1940 to 38.1% in 1945. By 1947, however, this figure had fallen back to 30.9%. Corporations gave strong ideological and material support to women joining the work force during the war, for example, through the establishment of corporation-sponsored day-care centers. Corporations were equally careful, however, to make none of these benefits permanent. After the war, government and industry cooperated in a campaign to put women back in the home, and to turn the home into a unit of consumption for the pent-up demand productive potential of the U.S. economy. With the subsequent layoffs of millions of women, the media played up family "togetherness." The resulting "feminine mystique" attempted to convince women that their place was in the home, and that household drudgery and raising children were the sole source of women's fulfillment in life.

In addition to the exceptional use of women as wage laborers that developed during the war, women continue on a yearly basis to participate in such seasonal work as pre-Christmas sales and food processing. Women constitute an ideal reserve army, since they continue to perform vital economic functions in their homes when they are not in the wage-labor force. This reserve-army aspect of women's participation is also evident in the fact that only 42% of women workers currently work full-time, year-round.

LONG-TERM INCREASE IN WOMEN'S LABOR-FORCE PARTICIPATION

The other side of the picture is the long-term trend of women's increasing labor-force participation. Particularly since the turn of

the century, a growing percentage of people work for wages. As a result, the working class has grown relative to the capitalist class. In 1940, for example, 75% of all people in the labor force worked for wages. By 1970 that figure had jumped to approximately 90%.

Secondly, with the exception of the rapid rise and decline of women's participation in the labor force during World War II, there has been a steady growth of women's employment through the Twentieth Century. While around 1890 18% of all women worked, by 1940 that figure had climbed to 27.9% (of women over the age of 16 working for wages). By 1970, 42% of women worked for wages. Almost 50% of women between the ages of 16 and 65 work for wages at the present time.

At the turn of the century most of the women who entered the labor force were young and unmarried. Most were black, immigrant, or daughters of immigrants. During the Second World War the bulk of women who entered the labor force were married and had school-age children. Most were in their 30's. Since World War II, there has been an increasing tendency for women with pre-school and school-age children to participate in the labor force. This growing tendency to participate during all stages of the life cycle highlights the growing permanency of women's role in the wage-labor force.

Finally, the rapid growth of the clerical, sales, and service sectors of the economy accounts for much of the increase of women's labor-force participation. Between 1940 and 1970 the single category of work with the highest growth rate was clerical work, which grew from 9.6% of all jobs in 1940 to 16.6% in 1970. The largest number of women workers is in the clerical sector, which by 1970 employed over one-third of all working women.

WAGE LABOR POST WORLD WAR II

After World War II it was easy for American corporations to earn high profits. American workers had built up large savings during the war years. Many workers had worked full shifts plus overtime, yet because factories were producing military supplies and food was rationed, their wages could not all be spent. When capitalists began converting their factories to the production of consumer goods after the war, they found a large and ready market for their products. In addition to this domestic demand, U.S. corporations found good markets in Europe. Since European factories had been destroyed in the war, American capitalists could sell their products and their technology there at prices well above production costs. Finally, American capitalists could further boost profits by investing directly in Europe, since European workers' wages were low.

What did this mean for women's lives? Opportunities for such high profits meant that capitalists found it worthwhile to hire many

workers. The unemployment rate fell from a post-war high of 5.5% in 1949 to 2.5% in 1953. This increasing demand for workers tended to push up wages. In an effort to keep down wages, capitalists encouraged the participation of women in the labor force. Additionally, the fact that capital was being concentrated in the post-war period meant that single firms were growing larger and more bureaucratic, implying a growth of jobs in the clerical sector, a sector which employed mainly women.

The cumulative effect of these forces pushing women out of the home and pulling them into the wage-labor force was a substantial rise in the labor-force participation rate of women. The female rate rose from its post-war slump of 30.8% in 1947 to 35.5% in 1957. The increased participation was even more dramatic for married women living with their husbands. In 1947 20.0% of married women, husband present, worked for wages. By 1957 the rate was 29.6%, an increase of almost 50% in just ten years!

These women, for the most part, were employed in the so-called white-collar occupations. White-collar jobs suggest, in the dominant ideology, jobs which are clean, require a fair amount of education and judgment, are interesting, and receive decent wages. This characterization of white-collar jobs was accurate around the beginning of the Twentieth Century, but over the course of the Twentieth Century white-collar jobs have become routinized, boring, and poorly paid. Clerical workers employed in 1900 by railroads and manufacturing establishments earned \$1,011 as an average yearly wage. Production workers in these industries earned an average of \$435 and \$548 in manufacturing and railroads respectively. Today, however, the median wage for clerical work is lower than that for every type of blue-collar work.

Clerical work was more like a craft around the turn of the century. The occupation required mastery of bookkeeping, timekeeping, payroll, quality control, commercial traveling, drafting, copying duplicates by hand, and preparing accounts. Rationalization of office routines has reduced the scope for worker control over the work process, reduced the number of activities in which an individual worker is engaged, and, in short, made it virtually identical with factory labor.

Thus, although the jobs in which women were employed after World War II were considered nice, pleasant, middle-class occupations, they are in fact proletarian, and are becoming more proletarianized every day.

LATE 1950'S TO 1970'S

By the late 1950's it was becoming more difficult for capitalists to earn high rates of profit. The post-war domestic demand had been spent, and Europe was catching up technologically and in management techniques, making European goods more competi-

tive with American goods. American capitalists could no longer charge such high prices (relative to production costs) as they had in the early 1950's. In addition, direct investment in Europe was no longer as profitable as it had once been because class struggle by European workers won them higher wages. What did this more difficult profit-making climate mean for our lives? Again, a major implication was more work for women.

In an effort to maintain their domestic sales in the face of decreasing demand for their products, corporations in the late 1950's and early 1960's began pushing "easy credit terms" for purchasing their products. Since many families had grown used to regular increases in income, and also because credit terms were made to appear much more favorable than they in fact were, many families got into debt. But reduced profit-making opportunities for corporations made conditions for the class struggle in America less favorable. In the early to mid-1960's the rate of increase of wages began to slow. Families did not receive the income increases which they had grown to expect, yet debts still had to be paid off. This situation forced many wives to seek employment outside the home. The labor-force participation rate of women increased. In 1970, 42.6% of all women and 40.8% of married women living with their husbands participated in the labor force.

During the mid to late 1960's women's consciousness of our oppression as women began to rise. This development was due in part to the fact that so many women were both regular participants in the wage-labor force and yet still responsible for all of the housework. Yet the ideology continued to define us solely in terms of our role in our families. The women's liberation movement which grew out of this increased consciousness of oppression had some revolutionary aspects. It challenged the ideology that wealth and status can be achieved by anyone who is willing to work for it by showing how women were systematically excluded from powerful and enjoyable jobs. The movement also gave women experience in organizing and demonstrated how collective action can improve people's lives.

However the movement with its present objectives does not serve the needs of all women. By concentrating its attention on gaining access for women into desirable professional occupations, it supports the myth that anyone who is willing to work hard can enjoy the benefits of capitalism. Bourgeois men, bourgeois women, and those few proletarian women and men who make extraordinary sacrifices and enjoy good luck can reap the rewards. But if all proletarian women and men worked harder, then they would merely receive the same low wages but be required to do more work. The capitalist organization of production does not permit all workers to have good jobs with good pay. A women's movement which does not challenge the capitalist organization of production, therefore, cannot bring liberation to all women.

Demands for equal participation of women and men in the wage-labor force will only mean that working-class women will be doubly oppressed. Jobs in the wage-labor force which are open to working-class women are routinized, boring, and poorly paid. In addition, working-class women are unable to afford the quality day-care services and household help which make it possible for bourgeois women to manage both household and labor-force responsibilities. Working-class women will be liberated only when the entire organization of production is reorganized. This will become clear as we examine the effects of the current economic crisis on women's lives.

THE 1970'S — THE CURRENT CRISIS

By the 1970's the ability of U.S. corporations to earn profits had declined even further. Europe had caught up technologically and organizationally, and in many industries was able to outsell U.S. corporations. Wages in the most "advanced" European countries rose when trade unions were able to exclude Southern European "guest workers" from employment in industry. Therefore, it became less attractive for American corporations to make direct investments in Europe.

Resources and labor were still cheap in the Third World, but growing nationalism — both in the form of national liberation struggles and in the form of stronger national bourgeoisies — limited the volume of direct U.S. investments. Third World countries couldn't be made to serve as good markets for U.S. products, either, because the people are so poor.

The position of U.S. capital was further weakened because the high profits which corporations had been earning in the '50's and '60's, plus the extension of credit which began in the late '50's, had produced general overinvestment in plant and equipment. Now corporations have the ability to produce more goods than they can possibly sell at high and profitable prices. To maintain profitable prices they must close some plants and lay off workers.

What does this crisis mean for women? A major effect is that we are being forced to make most of the sacrifices. With price increases which exceed wage increases and with so much unemployment among men, it has become even more imperative for women to find jobs outside the home. Yet just at the time when it has become even more necessary to work, the institutions and structures which had made it possible for women to combine domestic and household responsibilities are becoming less supportive. It is very difficult for women to find jobs. Although male unemployment rates are high, women's rates are 50 to 100% higher. Efforts to improve child-care facilities were weakened as soon as it became clear that the economy was headed for a crisis. Affirmative-action programs and programs to eliminate sex discrimina-

tion in employment are stopping. Finally, the ideology that married women who work do so only to buy luxuries or because they are bored seems to have taken on new vigor.

Meanwhile, women are being forced to work harder at home also. Last year Gerald Ford asked Americans to help fight inflation by adopting his money-saving tactics. His suggestions all meant extra work for women. For example, he urged housewives to shop around at many stores, searching for the lowest-cost item. He also suggested that women lower the hems on last year's dresses instead of buying new ones, spend more time preparing meals which are nutritious and tasty but which cost less, and go through the house turning off lights in empty rooms. Most women already do these things; they all require a lot of time and energy. More importantly, these suggestions are an attempt to make us feel personally responsible for the fact that our grocery bills are rising. These suggestions are an attempt to divert women's attention from the real source of the problem: that the economic system under which we live is a system for the purpose of making profits, and not a system for meeting human needs.

The WOMEN'S WORK STUDY GROUP represents a range of different perspectives within the socialist and feminist movements, but shares a common commitment to the methodology of dialectical and historical materialism. All members of the group have participated in collective discussion, research, analysis and writing. No one person is individually responsible for a specific idea or written portion. A list of the group's members follows:

AMY BURCE is a graduate student in anthropology at Stanford University and a participant in the West Coast Union of Marxist Social Scientists; she is currently doing research on wage labor in Papua New Guinea. SUSAN CARTER is a graduate student at Stanford University and is active in Union for Radical Political Economics. HELEN CHAUNCEY teaches part-time at San Jose City College and is active in the women's and Marxist-Leninist party building movement. She is also doing work on Communist Party organizing in pre-1949 China. LORI HELMBOLD teaches part-time at San Jose State University and is active in the women's and anti-imperialist movements in San Jose. SHERRY KEITH is an itinerant university teacher. She is active in the women's movement and in Third World liberation struggles. VERA SCHWARCZ teaches at Wesleyan University and is active in the women's movement. NANCY STONE is one of the founders of the Sojourner Truth Child Center in Palo Alto, California. She is active in the women's movement. BARBARA WATERMAN teaches at the University of Vermont. She is active in the women's and health care movements. In addition, the group wishes to express its thanks for the criticisms and feed-back from the many friends and comrades who have gone over the paper with them.

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The Death of CLUW

Ann Withorn

Since its inception the Coalition of Labor Union Women has been locked in conflict between women in the upper levels of the trade-union bureaucracy and women from various parts of the Left. The first Constitutional Convention of CLUW (held in Detroit in December) has, for all practical purposes, ended the struggle. The bureaucrats have gained solid control over the organization, although in order to gain their victory they were forced to destroy CLUW as a widely based mass organization within the trade unions. They have won, but everyone — especially the male trade-union bureaucracy they so hope to impress — knows that CLUW is now just a paper organization dominated by union bureaucrats who cannot mobilize large numbers of trade-union women for even the most narrow goals.

Looking back on CLUW's brief history, it is not difficult to understand the present situation. As Anne Marie Troger and Susan Reverby pointed out in this magazine (Nov.-Dec. 1975), CLUW was born out of contradictions between the limited goals of its founding leadership and the broad appeal inherent in forming any coalition of working-class women.

In 1973, a few women in the top levels of the union bureaucracy

began to see the usefulness of a trade-union based, NOW-type organization for helping them to gain more recognition, and therefore more "power", within their unions. Led by Olga Madar of the UAW and Addie Wyatt of the Amalgamated Meat Cutters, these women did not have an alternative vision of trade unionism, nor even broad "feminist" goals for changing the status of all women workers within the trade unions. They simply wanted more status for themselves and for other potential women bureaucrats. They saw a strategy of linking themselves to the increasingly accepted "women's movement" as a means to this end.

The early literature proclaiming the idea of CLUW spoke of "recognition", not power. It emphasized the disregarded accomplishments of existing women leaders, not the potential of rank-and-file or unorganized women. The bureaucrats tried to build an organization which would honor them, which would legitimate them as spokespeople for women trade-unionists and which would increase their stature in the eyes of George Meany, Frank Fitzsimmons, etc.

But, in order to build such an organization, the leadership had to open it to the rank and file, and therefore to the Left. From the earliest preliminary meetings, the Left — meaning a hodge-podge of Marxist-Leninist and independent Left women — created a presence. Left women often made a strong appeal to the "middle forces" of solid rank-and-file working-class women who, both spontaneously and through the "urging" of the leadership, came to the first meetings. Together the Left and the rank and file confused the leadership with a broadly based militancy — aimed as often against moribund union leadership as against the bosses. During early stages the bureaucrats attempted to harness this activist spirit, and only later did they try to completely suppress it.

Indeed, it looked in the beginning like coalition might truly be possible. By the founding convention in March 1974, the rhetoric of the more moderate bureaucrats had gotten braver. The unexpectedly large turnout of more than 3,000 women gave a spirit of "sisterhood" to the convention and allowed, in the confusion of so many unknown people, many Left women to gain membership on the National Coordinating Committee (NCC), the Steering Committee, and even one national office. Lines were clearly drawn, primarily around the relationship of CLUW to unorganized women and to local unions, and around the role of local chapters. However, there was also a widely shared sense that CLUW was an "idea whose time had come". Many people came away from the convention with an understanding that, although the Left and the bureaucrats would clearly remain in conflict, the organization was useful enough to both so that neither would precipitate suicidal struggle.

It was not to be so. Despite the logic supporting coexistence, lines quickly hardened. The leadership sluggishly initiated complicated certification procedures which forced new chapters into

performing time-consuming, non-outreach duties in order to obtain charters. Chapters received little communication or support from the national office except when they did not play by the rules — when they raised questions of membership requirements, when they criticized local unions, when they tried to address “loaded” issues like seniority or deportations. Then the reaction was harsh and dictatorial. Charters were denied; condemning letters were mailed to all members; overt and bitter Red-baiting took place. Olga Madar, the President, was particularly vocal. She even went to Atlanta and vowed to start her own chapter because the local one was strongly influenced by the October League.

The Left and the rank and file were unprepared for such an offensive. At the local level complicated bureaucratic procedures frustrated them and led to splits among Leftists over the proper way to fight. They argued over whether it was best to comply reluctantly and fight nationally or to stand on principle. In many chapters, such as Washington DC or Detroit, the anti-communist paranoia of the bureaucrats, and their efforts to pack committees, led many moderates to move further left. “I never thought I was a radical, but if they keep treating me like one I might as well be”, one woman said.

The more common response among the moderate rank and file, both in local chapters and on the NCC, was to drop away from the increasingly bitter and intense fighting. Despite massive efforts by the bureaucrats, including Shanker’s paying of his AFT members’ dues, the membership did not grow rapidly. Local chapters remained small and NCC attendance dwindled. The Left, under virulent attack, could not unite. The October League, although most severely harassed by Madar, would not work with the International Socialists or with other Marxist-Leninist groups. The Socialist Workers Party and the Communist Party supported the leadership and did not condemn the Red-baiting. Independents were unable to unite among themselves to influence other members to be less sectarian.

By the fall of 1975, CLUW was in tatters. Chapter membership was down. NCC meetings could no longer command quorums. Nearly every chapter experienced difficulty with NCC rules and restrictions. Many independent Leftists and progressive rank-and-file members had pulled out. While the officers spent time meeting with the Presidents of the AFL-CIO, the Teamsters, and other major unions, those active members who remained pressed for a last-ditch campaign around a more meaningful constitutional convention and a constitution which would provide a less bureaucratic, more open structure.

The December Constitutional Convention was, in spite of these efforts, a sorry affair. Only 1200 women, more than 60% of them staff or officers in their unions, gathered in Detroit to officially hand the corpse of CLUW over to the bureaucrats. The Convention

was structured so that there was much ceremony and little time for business. The internal structure was organized around union membership. Instead of coming together geographically, people were required to meet with their unions and were pushed to lodge together with their fellow union members from all over the country. There were no "middle forces"; votes almost always broke down the same way. Only about a quarter of the delegates voted with the minority; everyone else faithfully voted with the majority. The minority did not even go down to defeat gracefully. There was an unimpressive squabbling at the microphones over the "correct" minority position.

So CLUW continues to exist, but with a structure based almost solely within the unions and with no hope for the participation of unorganized women or of CLUW's support for union members' struggles within their own unions. The more credible women within the trade unions — such as Lillian Roberts of the AFSCME — have tacitly abandoned it. Most of the Left, except the October League, has given up, along with the moderate rank and file. CLUW is now the official Women's Auxiliary of the trade-union bureaucracy.

This close to the distressing spectacle of the Detroit convention, it is hard to understand how any of us ever had hope for CLUW. Were we wrong? Was the collapse of CLUW inevitable?

Surely the strength of the trade-union bureaucracy was always there. We could never expect the leadership to attempt to create anything but a passive organization which would try to smother any rank-and-file militancy. But perhaps we could have been more prepared for the sophistication of bureaucratic delaying tactics, for the outright lying which was the leadership's stock in trade. We struggled to keep to the issues, but under the frustrations of bureaucratic technicalities and the surprising viciousness of the Red-baiting ("there are alien forces represented here", proclaimed one NCC member) we often resorted to emotional attacks and appeals ourselves.

The divisions in the Left were critical to its defeat. The SWP and the CP were noticeable in their lack of opposition to the leadership and its Red-baiting. While they made "moderate" comments during debates, they always voted with the leadership. Although the October League was often forceful and skillful at opposing the bureaucrats at the national level, locally they often tried to force CLUW into being an OL support group rather than an independent organization with other goals than to endorse OL activities. Granted it would have been difficult no matter what, but October League members were not always able to see that demonstrations, educational, and leafletting around tangential issues were not the most effective outreach activities.

The Spartacists and other splinter Left groups were also instrumental in the loss. Their highly vocal and antagonistic presence at public activities must have discredited other Leftists and alienated many members of the rank and file. International Socialists, who behaved more responsibly, were active in local chapters, especially Detroit and New York, but by the time of the convention, at least, had become somewhat shrill and excessively sectarian, particularly in regard to OL. Independent Leftists were often passive critics, individually opposing both excessive bureaucracy and sectarian tactics, but seldom offering organized alternatives.

The economic crisis hurt CLUW. Given the rise in unemployment and inflation, many women workers were less likely to join an organization like CLUW. High unemployment forced complicated issues of seniority to the fore at a time when the Left was organizationally too weak to push them effectively.

But the greatest enemy of CLUW was the nature of American trade unionism itself. The unions have evolved to a point where there is a full-time bureaucracy whose material interests are in large part independent of the welfare of the rank and file. Women unionists have many legitimate complaints and much distrust of their unions, and are unlikely to be attracted to an organization so closely linked to the unions. Only if CLUW could have posed as a real advocate for women within their unions, as an organization willing to fight bosses and unions, would it have attracted alienated rank-and-file women. Yet CLUW could only be such an organization if it had a strong, active base of the very women who would not spontaneously come to it or stay if it were "just like the union".

Perhaps if CLUW had not been a national, hierarchical organization, there might have been hope. During the best times local chapters were able to spontaneously attract a cross-section of working-class women. With real "middle forces" present, the Left was able to be less sectarian and some of the more moderate bureaucrats could be less defensive. But those chances are gone with CLUW. Attempting to work within the Coalition of Labor Union Women now offers about as much potential for building working-class struggle as efforts waged within the Democratic Party. New efforts, locally based, perhaps similar to San Francisco's Union WAGE, will have to continue the fight for a strong organization of working-class women. For CLUW, although it still exists as a paper organization, is dead.

Ann WITHORN, an editor of RADICAL AMERICA, belonged to the Boston chapter of CLUW and was its delegate to the National Coordinating Committee.



Construction worker in the Plaza Commercio, Lisbon in December 1975. Photo by Jim Green.

Portugal: **The Meaning of November 25**

*Tod Ensign
Carl Feingold
Michael Uhl*

In the events of late November, the Portuguese left and the working class have suffered a defeat. Whether or not this reversal is fundamental and permanent remains to be seen, but two major areas of revolutionary influence — the military and the media — have been broken. Hierarchical authority has been restored to the military, and it will be difficult for left-influenced troops and officers to refuse to carry out acts of official repression. Hundreds of leftists have been fired in purges of newspapers and radio-TV stations; especially symbolic was the silencing of Radio Renascença and the daily paper REPUBLICA, since they had come to function as general organs of the revolutionary left following their seizure by workers last year.

The working class has thus lost some of its ability to communicate and some of the shelter which radicalized sectors of the military were often able to provide. However the widespread network of workers' commissions retain their autonomy, and so far only light repression has been directed against the revolutionary parties of the civilian left. With the military and media under its firm control, however, the government is now moving directly against these working-class organizations to reassert bourgeois domi-

nance over production. The outcome of this struggle is yet to be determined.

The November 25 debacle — in which the government provoked an incident (the seizure of Air Force bases by disaffected paratroopers), then used it as a pretext for a series of calculated measures against the left — came as the climax to three months of struggle that followed the ouster of Prime Minister Vasco Gonçalves in late August. This article will describe the background to that struggle and explain the events of late November.

SUMMER 1975

By the summer of 1975, the Armed Forces Movement (MFA) had accomplished certain goals: expropriation of the major monopolists who had profited so much from the Salazar-Caetano fascist regimes; freeing of the old regime's political prisoners and dismantling of its secret police; and above all, decolonization in Africa. With these projects largely completed, the MFA's socialist rhetoric masked increasingly sharp divisions as to the direction of the Portuguese revolution. Within the Revolutionary Council, the MFA's ruling body, there were basically three factions. One, led by the social democrat Melo Antunes, emphasized progress toward formal political democracy and opposed further nationalization of private industry. A second, generally associated with Otelo de Carvalho, espoused a kind of radical populism, and was responsive to the initiatives taken by workers acting through their own organizations. The third, headed by Gonçalves, generally followed the lead of the Communist Party (PCP), pursuing limited progressive policies such as land reform and nationalization of large enterprises while attempting to prevent the emergence of revolutionary organization and consciousness in the working class.

The MFA's internal splintering was in response to and in turn stimulated the rapid development of two opposing social forces during the summer. The first of these was an increasingly emboldened working class, particularly in Lisbon and the southern agricultural regions. The working class was so dynamic in its factory occupations, rent strikes, and land seizures, that the military and government leaders were often forced to ratify these advances even when they went beyond official policy. (See Radical America, November-December 1975 for a description of this process.) The second force consisted of the bourgeoisie (minus the former monopolists who had fled the country) and the northern small landholders and local merchants. Although the land-reform program was poorly organized in the North, there were real conflicts in the interests of the small peasantry and a radicalized working class. In Portugal large corporations exist, but most of the working class is employed in small enterprises of fewer than fifty employees. Nationalization could not go very far without affecting small busi-

nesses. This was especially true in Portugal where nationalization followed spontaneous seizures by the workers in the shops rather than a calculated plan developed at the top. In fact, many small shops had been taken over by their workers. Similarly, the fact that they owned real property and were deeply influenced by the Church drove many small farmers to the right. Thus the radical activities of the spring and summer helped to create the class base of reaction.

The withdrawal of the Socialist Party (SP) and the Popular Democrats (PPD) from the government in mid-July after the workers' reopening of REPUBLICA and the MFA supporting Poder Popular (Popular Power) coincided with the explosion of a virulent campaign of anti-communist activity in the North. The Fifth Provisional Government * had a narrow political and social base. It derived its political strength principally from the CP and its institutional presence within the working class. Socially, its centers of support were the working classes of Lisbon and the surrounding industrial areas and the agricultural workers in the Alentejo. It had little support in the North, where two-thirds of the country resides, and declining support within service and "white-collar" unions.

By August, Portugal's social divisions were openly expressed inside the MFA leadership. First, Melo Antunes and eight other members of the MFA's Council of Revolution issued the "Document of the Nine," urging a slowdown of nationalizations, greater labor discipline, and a curbing of the "anarchist" tendencies of the popular power movement within the working class. For quite different reasons — primarily a fear that Goncalves' policies were attempting too many restrictions on working-class power and were leading toward an Eastern European type of regime — Otelo and other MFA radicals also began to openly oppose the Fifth Government. Since revolutionary groups within the working class generally supported the Fifth Government even while criticizing it, it was the Antunes document which united tremendous opposition within both the military and the center-right parties against the government, bringing together a number of diverse and contradictory political tendencies within the MFA.

The populist COPCON faction, led by Carvalho, was willing to coalesce with the social-democratic Group of the Nine to oust Goncalves' government on August 29. For Antunes, the program of the

Note: The structure of the government of Portugal since April 1974 has been that the MFA-appointed president — Costa Gomes has held this position since the beginning — appoints a prime minister who in turn appoints ministers to a cabinet. The installation of a new cabinet constitutes the passage from one government to the next. Each is "provisional" because it is only meant to sit until general elections bring a constituent assembly to power. The Fourth and Fifth Provisional Governments with Goncalves as Prime Minister sat from late March 1975 until the end of August; the Sixth with Azevedo as Prime Minister has been in power since mid-September.

Fifth Government was too radical. For Otelo, on the other hand, Goncalves' drift toward controlled socialism on the state-capitalist model was contrary to COPCON's concept of grass-roots democracy.

THE SIXTH GOVERNMENT

The replacement of the Fifth Government with the Sixth represented a return to the pre-July status quo when the Socialists and Popular Democrats had left the government. President Costa Gomes appointed Jose Batista Pinheiro de Azevedo, Chief of the Navy, to be the new Prime Minister; that it took three weeks to form a cabinet is an indication of the problems he faced in sorting out the competing forces. The Socialists and the Popular Democrats insisted that the government reflect the results of the proportional voting in the April 1975 elections, in which they polled 67% of the vote between them. As a result the Communist Party had only one member in the Cabinet while the PPD had two and the SP had three.

By mid-September, a government intent on restoring orthodox discipline to the military and regaining full control over the mass media had emerged. These steps were seen as preconditions to halting the nationalizations of industry and achieving industrial "discipline."

These goals reflected the needs of the social and political bases of the Sixth Provisional Government. With the nationalizations of monopolies, the bourgeois base of the government was and is located in the political representatives of monopoly capital and in small enterprises such as construction, light manufacturing, food processing, fishing, canning, and the tourist trade. Small farmers in the North, motivated by their own short-run class interests as well as the influence of the Church, and rightist parties were important to the new government. Some professionals who had not already fled and technocrats who professed socialism but were intent on top-down control were supportive of the new government. Also, international capital breathed easier with the collapse of the Fifth Government, as was evidenced by the willingness of the international lending agencies to reconsider loans to Portugal, and the warmth expressed toward the new government by the social-democratic leaders in Europe.

Dominating the new government, the Portuguese Socialist Party, led by Mario Soares, is not even a social-democratic party in the classic European mold. The European parties enjoy a considerable membership and influence among the working class. While the Portuguese SP indisputably enjoys mass appeal, as demonstrated by the April elections, it can in no sense be considered a mass workers' party.

Created in West Germany nearly three years ago, the Portuguese SP does not enjoy the prestige or experience earned by the

left parties through long years of underground activity against the fascists. Such working-class influence as the SP has is limited to white-collar workers in banking, insurance, and the postal service. While in Portugal, we were told that the SP's recent success in the postal-union elections (in alliance with the Maoists) was attributable more to workers' disgust with the CP than to any pro-SP sentiment. The memory of the Communists' attempts to break a major postal strike was still painfully vivid when the workers voted. At Setenave, the modern shipyard in Setubal, the SP failed to obtain even the fifty signatures required for election participation from among the yard's four thousand workers.

We would define the Portuguese SP as being virtually a bourgeois party. While it does seek working-class support and has organized mass actions involving many workers, its politics are clearly bourgeois. Its role as the stalking horse for both Portuguese and international capital has been clearly perceived by the more dynamic sectors of the working class.

The power of the left was growing at the point of production. This power was built and defended by autonomous workers' organizations, by revolutionary parties, and at times by the CP-controlled Intersindical, COPCON, and soldiers. Hence the Sixth Government was forced to proceed cautiously. The very nature and extent of the workers' conquests had caused qualitative changes in a variety of social and economic relations. At the time of the Sixth Government's installation, the power of the working class was expressed in basically four types of organizations within the factories and offices, with one or more form present in virtually all industry.

First, there were the unions affiliated with the Intersindical. These were traditional trade unions, which in many cases Communist Party cadre had constructed from the shells previously used by the fascist corporatists.

Second, there were the workers' commissions or factory councils that in some shops had existed in embryonic form even before the April 1974 coup, but which had become generalized throughout industry since the coup. Their scope and level of political development varied from plant to plant. They were elected by plant-wide or office-wide assemblies, and generally co-existed with — and in some places virtually superseded — the trade unions.

Third, there were the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution launched in the summer of 1975 by the Communist Party to combat the influence of the far left in the workers' commissions.

Fourth, there were the Revolutionary Councils of Workers, Soldiers, and Sailors (CRTSM). Though the MFA had banned these committees as "paramilitary" they continued to function in a number of important industries. The CRTSM were organized in Spring 1975 at the initiative of the Revolutionary Party of the Proletariat (PRP). They enjoyed considerable initial success, culminating in

a June demonstration of 40,000. Nevertheless, the CRTSM's were viewed by the mass of workers as the instrument of just one revolutionary group, hence lacking sufficient authority to become authentic soviets.

FALL 1975

For the most part, the Sixth Government's efforts toward a rightward turn economically were propagandistic, limiting themselves to pronouncements such as Azevedo's warning that "there must be an economic role for private initiative and private property, including small and medium business like housing and transport." Socialist Minister of Agriculture and Fishing Antonio Lopes Cardoso warned that "political activity is necessary for economic development....it will soon be necessary to impose wage and price controls to get the economy moving....we need a new foreign investment policy — but a government of firm authority must come first." Whatever restrictions they felt in terms of actual ability to "discipline" the work force and increase its "productivity," the so-called socialist government made no attempt to conceal its pro-capitalist bias.

In late July 1975, the Goncalves government had promulgated a basic Agrarian Reform Law with the objective of transferring land and power from the large landholders to the small farmers and farm workers. The law held that maximum land ownership was to be 1,750 acres. There was widespread skepticism about the sincerity of the promise to compensate owners for their land and doubts about the ability of the government to meet such financial commitments, which strengthened opposition to Goncalves. In addition, farm workers were frustrated with the inaction of the Agrarian Reform Institute (ARI) and the Land Reform Agency — both parts of the state bureaucracy — and many simply occupied the estates they worked on without waiting for formal "recognition" of their cooperatives by the government. The number of land seizures steadily increased in August and throughout the fall. In fact, from the time of the formation of the Sixth Government until November 25, the amount of land that had been occupied more than tripled. Azevedo's Cabinet consciously did little to facilitate the work of ARI. In late September, Agricultural Minister Lopes Cardoso quietly began removing some left officials from their ARI posts. His hostility to the land seizures was explicit.

The Union of Farm Workers, dominated by the CP, organized many of these land seizures. The CP, through a youth wing, the Communist Student Union (UEC), also organized many volunteer work brigades, which sent hundreds of students into the southern countryside to assist in cultivation and harvesting.

As nearly all the land seizures were conducted by landless workers who had very limited experience with scientific farming



Portuguese corkworker from the south of Portugal in August 1975. He worked on a collective farm which had been taken over by the workers. Photo by Jerry Berndt.

and no access to the distributive mechanisms, and who further lacked capital for fertilizer or machinery, they were very dependent on governmental assistance. By simply withholding or impeding technical assistance (many foreign technicians had left) and financial help, the government could generate enormous pressure on the new cooperatives. It's not surprising that some agrarian economists predict as much as a 30% decline in agricultural production over the next year. While farm workers were well-organized and militant, the nature of their rural isolation limited their ability to resist the government by themselves.

Aware of the conservative mood of the small northern landowners, the MFA formed "cultural dynamization brigades" in May 1975. They attempted to take the message of the revolution into the rural North. Inexperienced, and sometimes arrogant, these units enjoyed slight success. As the brigades offered mostly rhetoric and propaganda, they couldn't satisfy the real needs of the peasants. In some respects, their collective anger and frustration was understandable. With inflation raging at 25-30%, the purchase of fertilizers and machinery became prohibitive, and the various governments seemed unable to stimulate or reorganize the economy.

In the early fall General Charais, a member of the "Antunes Nine," commanded the operation to break up a "collective" of farm workers who had recently occupied a large estate. At the same time, vigilante gangs of small farmers and fascist provocateurs began to launch raids against some of the new cooperatives in various parts of the North. These operations met with some success due to the hostile climate toward the left in the area. (Some radical military units did continue to work with new cooperatives, however, donating labor and machinery in the same areas.)

THE MILITARY

The major confrontations between the left and the center-right forces in the fall, however, occurred within the armed forces and the organs of mass communication. Indeed, the struggle for class interests was sharpest in the military. On one hand, the bourgeoisie needed to establish control over its military units, while on the other, the revolutionary soldiers and sailors were seeking to destroy the bourgeois army from within. When the Revolutionary Council reduced its size by purging some progressive officers in early September, the internal logic of the struggle led to revolutionaries' forming autonomous military committees outside the MFA and free of its hegemony.

To counter the developing power of the center-right forces within the military and to throw their weight behind the further creation of organs of popular power, enlisted soldiers, draftees, and some officers formed a clandestine organization, Soldiers United Will Win (SUV), in early September. While the SUV had been supported

by the left, it was started by themselves out of barracks grievance committees established earlier. The revolutionary groups maintained by and large a non-sectarian attitude toward the SUV, understanding that the rank and file would not tolerate party building within its organization. The SUV manifesto criticized the rightward trend in the military and their own previous willingness to follow the MFA. They proposed to struggle for greater democracy in the barracks, for the development of soldiers' commissions, and for building links with the base organizations of popular power. Their first demonstration, which took place in Oporto on September 10, had 20,000 participants, including 1,500 uniformed soldiers. They marched under the banner "Soldiers United Will Win" and shouted that "Portugal will not be the Chile of Europe." In a similar left demonstration of about 30,000 in Lisbon on September 25, between 3,500 and 5,000 soldiers and sailors marched in uniform. They represented nearly half the enlisted personnel stationed in the Lisbon area. In addition to deeply alarming the government, SUV succeeded in securing the release of two soldiers who had been imprisoned for distributing leaflets on base announcing the demo.

In response to the huge SUV turnout on the 25th, Azevedo announced the formation of the Military Intervention Group (MIG) to ensure that he would have a reliable force to call on when the rank and file and the COPCON officers sided with the left. The MIG was an elite strike force commanded by "traditional" officers, with troops given special training and higher pay than other units. Regular marine and army units were assigned to operate under its control, but widespread resistance within the ranks prevented it from being effective.

By the end of September the left influence within the ranks of the military had reached the point where nearly all units would mobilize only in response to right-wing activity. Only the Amadora commandos — 100 men in an elite unit receiving special treatment much like the U.S. Army's Special Forces — and some marginal units would respond to "alerts" called because of "left-wing threats." President Costa Gomes, in a national address, warned that left agitation endangered military operational capacity and could, in his words, lead to "counter-revolution."

The intensifying struggle taking place between the rank and file, primarily organized under the SUV, and the authoritarian command is portrayed by a series of events that began in Oporto on October 4. General Veloso, a rightist who had replaced Corvacho (a Gonçalves supporter) as northern commander, ordered commandos to occupy and disband CICAP, a highly radicalized transport training unit. Since the revolutionary soldiers understood that demobilization and redeployment of troops was a tactic being adopted by the forces of "order," they refused to disband. For days there was a standing confrontation between Veloso's commandos, supported by right-wing civilians, and the CICAP troops, supported by their

civilian comrades. Both sides were prepared to fight. The Light Artillery Regiment of Lisbon (RALIS), known as the "red regiment," issued a statement in support of the CICAP and condemning the "government of right-wing dictatorship operating under the cloak of social democracy." Representatives of 18 different military units joined the troops in Oporto, and declared solidarity with their fight. The CICAP struggle was an impetus to revolutionary unity, as the soldiers began publishing their own weekly newspaper and forging links with other popular power groups throughout the country.

General Fabiao, head of the Army, was sent by the Revolutionary Council to negotiate with the mutinous troops. To the consternation of the Revolutionary Council, he gave in to all the strikers' demands except the removal of General Veloso. Fabiao — generally sympathetic to the left and with Otelo increasingly isolated within the Revolutionary Council — later expressed puzzlement that the SUV could be "horizontal" in an army organization that was "vertical," i.e. hierarchical. But the horizontal organization of the troops continued, and throughout the fall the popular power organs of the soldiers and civilian working class supported each other.

THE MEDIA

In early September protesting soldiers released a press statement that was carried by newspapers; hence one of the first acts of the new government was to try to censor news reports about military activity. This was unsuccessful, and then, in a move that somehow went almost unprotested, Azevedo took over distribution of all commercial newspapers. This meant that Socialist and independent daily papers from Oporto would be widely available in Lisbon, the hope being to counter the influence the left held over the media at the time.

On September 29, Azevedo launched a further offensive against the left-dominated media by ordering the infantry regiment at Queluz (RIOQ) to forcibly retake all worker-occupied radio and TV stations. His use of RIOQ (a COPCON unit), with Otelo's approval, was an important test of the government's ability to exercise control over its repressive apparatus. By choosing a target (the broadcast stations) where the revolutionary left was deeply entrenched, Azevedo was clearly trying to gauge the real strength and popular support of the forces arrayed against him. When the troops openly collaborated with the station's workers, refusing his orders to oust them, Azevedo grew alarmed. He then willingly complied with the left demands to withdraw all troops (except at Renascenca, where commandos disconnected the transmitter) to avoid their further "contamination" by the popular power forces. With the government's retreat, the stations continued their constant criticism of Azevedo and his Cabinet. On October 21, thou-

sands of workers and soldiers rallied at the Renascença transmitter, and forcibly put the station back on the air. This was particularly embarrassing to President Costa Gomes, who was on a state visit to the Vatican at the time.

On November 5 and 6, the CP and other leftists demonstrated outside the offices of the Ministry of Information demanding that Secretary Cunha (a PIDE agent under the old regime) be removed. Even though demonstrators clashed with the police, Otelo now refused to send in COPCON troops to subdue the crowd. The government eventually called in the Republican National Guard (GNR), a paramilitary security force created in the days of Salazar and never disbanded. Following this Otelo publicly broke with Azevedo and began to boycott meetings of the Revolutionary Council, voicing open support for the left opposition to the government.

In another test of his troops, on November 7, Azevedo ordered elements of MIG, including some Amadora commandos and sixty Tancos paratroopers, to dynamite the Renascença transmitter. This desperate act provoked another wave of militance that began with the paratroopers themselves. They met, and following an intense self-criticism session, voted to purge the commanders who had led them in the operation, elected new officers from within their ranks, and vowed not to work with the MIG again.

By early November, the pace of events was quickening; there were many large and highly-politicized demonstrations demanding the ouster of the Sixth Government and advocating direct links between workers' and soldiers' commissions. Many of the more politicized military units were able to defy demonstration orders, while SUV activists were distributing small arms to some left parties and workers' councils. On the other side, the government received economic aid and support from its European and American capitalist allies who encouraged its repressive policies. It was able to retard and bureaucratize agrarian reform, while mobilizing right-wing support in the North. Through its probes, it was developing a clear sense of which troops could be trusted to act unquestioningly to restore "order." The center-right forces could not allow ever-greater expressions of working-class power to go unchecked, but they lacked the ability to decisively defeat the working-class movement. Neither was the left strong enough to move toward the seizure of power; however, it was embarked upon a course which could only result in a confrontation of class forces. This was the setting in which the events of November 25 took place.

NOVEMBER 1975

The event that, above all others, exposed the Sixth Government's lack of effective control was the nationwide strike of 250,000 construction workers in November. The main demand was for a 40% wage hike. Evidently, the Azevedo Cabinet decided to fight it out over these negotiations. In Lisbon, the struggle escalated very

rapidly, with 80,000 construction workers and their supporters blockading the Constituent Assembly and the Premier's home on November 13. After a day and a half, Azevedo was forced into the humiliating position of acceding to all their demands. Emboldened by this stunning victory, the left sought to capitalize on this momentum by building additional demonstrations.

On November 16, over a hundred thousand marched through the streets of Lisbon, joined by bulldozers, trailers, and trucks. While one hundred and twenty workers' commissions in the Lisbon area called the rally, all left parties worked to make it a success. The rally demanded replacement of the Sixth Government with a government of "revolutionary unity." When Otelo's message that he would always be on the "side of the people" was read, there was heavy applause. The turnout was in striking contrast to the pro-government rally which the SP and PPD had organized the previous Sunday, and which had attracted at most 30,000 people.

Overwhelmed by these developments, the Cabinet went "on strike," refusing to meet until the MFA guaranteed that it would enforce its decrees. This ultimatum set off a chain of events which brought new authority to the moderate and rightist forces which dominated the Sixth Government, and a severe setback to the left.

The Cabinet's ultimatum had a galvanizing effect on a key segment — the majority, in fact — of the Council of Revolution. In the weeks previous, bypassing Otelo, Fabiao, and the CP-influenced members of the Council, the majority had been quietly organizing a unified staff and organizational command. This provided them with a striking force capable of coordinated action throughout the country. It was to prove decisive in the subsequent confrontation with left military units. Colonels Jaime Neves and Ramalho Eanes (who was to replace Fabiao as Army Chief of Staff after the 25th) played key roles in this shadow command, although they were not members of the Council.

With its operational command poised for action, the Council set its trap for a showdown with the left. Otelo was the bait. While criticizing the Cabinet for its "strike," the Council on November 21 removed Otelo from command of the Lisbon military district. At first the provocation was unsuccessful, because the leaders of the great majority of military units in the Lisbon area simply announced that they would refuse to accept the Council's choice, Captain Vasco Lourenco, as commander. Faced with this opposition, the Council suspended its action against Otelo. The Lisbon Workers Commission called a two-hour strike for November 24, demanding the Sixth Government's ouster and supporting the initiative of eighteen military (mainly COPCON) officers who had called for the establishment of workers' power based on independent workers' organizations and for the arming of the working class on November 21st.

In the rural areas north and east of Lisbon, rightist farmers be-

gan closing roads to the city. The following morning, November 25, after an all-night session, the Council again voted to oust Otelo. This time the trap was sprung. At daybreak responding to the ouster, paratroop units which had been radicalized by the events of the autumn occupied all the Air Force bases in the Lisbon region — the Tancos, Montereal, and Montejo. They were welcomed by the troops, and open fraternization took place. They also occupied the First Region air-command headquarters at Monsanto and detained the regional commander, Pinho Freiere. They demanded the resignation of Freiere, Air Force Commander Morais e Silva, and two other Air Force officers who were also members of the Council of Revolution. Several other left-wing units around Lisbon, including the Military Police and the RALIS, went on alert in solidarity with the "paras."



Revolutionary Portuguese soldiers on the base of the First Engineering Regiment, which was the operational headquarters for the April 25, 1974 revolt. Photo by Michael Uhl.

Up to this point, the paras' action was nothing out of the ordinary in the context of Portuguese politics during the autumn. On several previous occasions, troops had taken direct action to resist military reorganization or to force the removal of certain commanders. The aims of the November 25 "uprising" were far from insurrectionary. What set this rebellion apart from earlier episodes was the government's determination to seize upon it as the pretext for a general crackdown on the left.

Late that afternoon, the PRP and the Left Socialist Movement (MES) issued a joint call for workers to occupy their factories and offices and prepare for any eventuality. It said, "Now is the time to give a definitive lesson to the bourgeoisie — this is the will of

the workers." Their call for mobilization elicited little response because strong links with the work force had not been forged.

As both the paras and the far-left parties apparently understood, the conditions necessary for the seizure of power did not exist on November 25. While the mass organizations of the working class had made great progress, there was an absence of any unified military strategy or command on the left, not to mention the lack of a mass revolutionary party. The process of arming the workers and organizing them into defense units was only in a preliminary stage. But a strong mobilization of workers in support of the paras' initiative might have preserved the status quo of the autumn.

The equivocal role of the Communist Party in blocking full-scale mobilization in the factories and barracks, while at the same time calling for "vigilance," was to prove crucial to the Council's scheme for left "saneamento" in the days that followed. Party cadre within nearby marine units, in which the CP had a strong influence, argued against moving in support of the paras. Admiral Rosa Coutinho, the CP's main ally on the Council, was reported to have personally intervened with the marines to block any mobilization. Party discipline on this was observed throughout the military. Indeed, CP leader Alvaro Cunhal met secretly with both Costa Gomes and Melo Antunes on the 25th and 26th. Cunhal not only pledged the CP's opposition to any general mobilization by workers or troops under its influence, but actually supported restoring "order" within military units influenced by the far left. Melo Antunes, in return, agreed to support the CP demand for more positions within the government.

Late in the afternoon of the 25th, knowing that the paras' revolt had not spread far, Costa Gomes nonetheless declared a state of emergency in the Lisbon district and assumed direct command of all regional units. During the evening units of the Amadora comandos (headed by the right-wing Col. Jaime Neves) began to retake the occupied bases. Even though there was no serious resistance, Costa Gomes went on television in mid-evening (accompanied by the vacillating Otelo) to raise the "state of emergency" to a "partial state of siege." The following morning, with a declaration of martial law, he began the process of purging the left from positions of influence in the media and the military. None of these decrees were necessary to suppress the "insurrection," since it was not a real insurrection; the decrees were, however, a way of using the paras' revolt as a rationale for a long-term restructuring of power.

THE AFTERMATH

The government wasted no time in exploiting its victory. Under its "state of seige" order, all newspapers and broadcast stations

were temporarily closed and hundreds of left workers were dismissed. Virtually all left officers within the military were detained, with 140 persons, mostly military, being imprisoned. All left military units were demobilized for a two-week "probation."

On November 27, the Council of Revolution decided to suspend all current labor negotiations until January, and cancelled the recent wage increases won by the construction workers as well as bakery and sanitation workers.

Two weeks later, the Council announced a new plan for restructuring the armed forces which included dissolving the MFA as a political force. All soldiers' assemblies and commissions were banned, and almost the entire middle-level command structure of the military was wiped out in the purge of leftists. Several high-ranking officers formerly close to Spinola resumed commands, while nearly all former COPCON officers were removed. Otelo was arrested in mid-January and charged with participation in the "plot" on November 25.

With the military and media now firmly in hand, the Azevedo Cabinet turned its attention to the broader issues of social and economic policy. On December 19, the Cabinet announced its "austerity" plan. Its main features were an indefinite freeze on wages; state guarantees for all foreign-owned property; stringent energy-conservation plans (gasoline, for example, is now \$2.60 a gallon, the highest rate in the world); and an Investment Institute to seek and channel foreign investment.

In the atmosphere created by the government's manufacturing of the "insurrection" and its subsequent initiatives against the left, forces to the right of the Azevedo government began to assert a growing self-confidence. In mid-December a Rightist Confederation of Portuguese Farmers was announced in Rio Maior to fight the "socialist" agrarian policies. The Confederation's main grievance was "Communist domination" of the Agrarian Reform Institute, marketing boards, and farm leagues which control rural credit, pricing, and crop classification. The Confederation organized a vociferous rally in Braga a few weeks later at which 40,000 farmers heard sharp attacks on the agrarian reform in general and on Agricultural Minister Cordoso in particular.

Even as the right has advanced, the Socialist Party has clung to its alliance with the PPD, resisting all the Communist Party's entreaties that it forsake that alliance in favor of a united government of "the left." The PPD itself has moved much more unambiguously to the right. In a recent split, the party expelled its social-democratic elements, with twenty-one deputies and four PPD members of the Azevedo Cabinet among those expelled. It is ominous that the PPD finds it less necessary than before to present a progressive facade to the public. Even more ominous are the dozens of bombings and other terrorist attacks which have been directed at left-wing offices and at agricultural cooperatives in recent weeks. The SP, the PPD, and the further-right Democratic

Center (CDS) are now pushing for early elections and an end to the military's continuing power over national affairs. (The Council of Revolution's counter-proposal, drafted by the ubiquitous Melo Antunes, is that the military's rule continue for another five years.) The center-right parties also want the franchise in the elections granted to all two million "overseas Portuguese." Because most of those who would vote under this provision are from the conservative North, still bound by strong local-village ties, their votes would undoubtedly strengthen the right. The CP has wisely opposed this extension of the franchise.

Both the Communist and revolutionary left groups have attempted to regroup and regain some of the initiative lost since November 25. On New Year's Day, they organized protest rallies at the prisons in which the November 25 political prisoners were being held. At Custodias prison, in Oporto, National Republican Guards fired on the crowd, killing four and wounding many others. Two new organizations, the Association of Anti-Fascist Former Political Prisoners and the National Committee for Defense of Freedom of Expression, have been forced to coordinate this defense effort. The latter group is composed of many prominent intellectuals, scholars, and artists, some of whom are close to the CP.

For the present, the Communists have confined their attacks to vague charges of "fascism." At a mass rally on January 17, called by thirteen CP-led unions in the Lisbon area, the speakers attacked the Azevedo government in general terms, without offering any specific program for countering its offensive against the working class. The far left groups to date have been unable to formulate a program to effectively unite the working class. With inflation now galloping at 50% per month, these groups tried to organize a large farmers' market to make low-priced foods available to urban workers. This foundered, however, due to inadequate supplies and rural harassment.

The FUR, the united front of revolutionary left groups, exists in name, but at this point it consists only of the PRP, the Popular Socialist Front (FSP — a left split from the SP), and a badly-weakened MES. A minority of the MES split away after November 25 and formed the Revolutionary Socialist Movement. The International Communist League (LCI) has departed along with the Portuguese Democratic Movement (MDP — the CP's electoral front) and the League of Revolutionary Unity and Action (LUAR), which is quite small. Although there has not been a wholesale repression of the far left's leadership and publications, there is no denying that the right has regained the initiative. Nonetheless, the government still must reckon with the strength of the working class, as was recently demonstrated in its temporizing approach to the January seizure of a Timex watch factory by workers fearing plant closure. Nothing comparable to the pulverizing defeat of the Chilean working class has occurred in Portugal.

CONCLUSION

Did a revolutionary situation exist in Portugal in the months following the ascendance of the Sixth Government? Some of the leaders of the revolutionary groups thought one did: they believed that an adequate basis for seizing power would exist by mid-January 1976. At the least, they thought that a defensive response to a right-wing move might grow into a left insurgency. While a mass revolutionary organization could not be built in that short period, they thought that the existing rudiments of armed workers' and soldiers' councils could take and hold power in the greater Lisbon area. A revolutionary organization could then be forged out of the crucible of such action. In fact, the right had contingency plans for such a development as far back as September. They envisaged moving the national government to Oporto, then sealing off the "Lisbon Commune," cutting off its food supply, and attacking it at will.

In their calculations, segments of the left confused a revolutionary period with an insurrectionary one. With the benefit of hindsight we can see that the taking of state power was not on the agenda. Several factors support this view.

First, the organs of working-class power were insufficiently developed either to carry out insurrection and destroy the old state or to be in themselves the embryos of the new proletarian state. The widespread workers' commissions did not yet approach having such a potential; they lacked sufficient experience in the political arena to effectively administer the state apparatus. Nor did they possess the requisite coordination or linkages needed for such an undertaking.

Secondly, substantial sections of the left and the working-class organizations placed too much reliance upon the military, especially the COPCON units and Otelo de Carvalho. Most officers, Fabiao and Carvalho included, would not accept true workers' democracy, no matter how sympathetic they were to the working class. Therefore, overdependence on the COPCON units, while tactically understandable, was strategically unwise.

Third, there was no large revolutionary organization implanted in the working class which could provide leadership and revolutionary experience in the struggle for power; in fact by late November no organization was approaching this capacity, and the FUR was far from having achieved unity among the left parties and groups. Without such a deeply rooted organization, the advanced strata could not make sufficient links with the masses.

Fourth, there were significant regional splits. Most people outside of Lisbon, Oporto, and the Alentejo were deeply influenced by the campaign of the right. As the revolutionary left had not offered a concrete program which might have won the small farmers to the side of the working class, they were faced with an implac-

able foe. If the rural majority, including the small farmers, could not at least be neutralized as a hostile force against the revolution, then a premature insurrection would have left Lisbon as isolated as the Paris Communards had been.

Prospects for socialist revolution in Portugal now appear dim. Yet who would have predicted before April 25, 1974 that the Portuguese working class and its allies were capable of such impressive accomplishments, given a half-century of fascism, in such a short time? They have demonstrated remarkable resourcefulness and creativity in building autonomous organizations to advance and defend their interests — giving the lie to the skeptics' assertions that the European working class has been "corrupted" and no longer constitutes a revolutionary force.

TOD ENSIGN, CARL FEINGOLD and MICHAEL UHL, activists based in New York City, formed the Portugal Information Center in July 1975 to disseminate accurate information about revolutionary developments in Portugal. P.I.C. regularly publishes the BULLETIN which RADICAL AMERICA readers may receive by writing P.I.C. at 175 Fifth Avenue, #1010; New York, NY 10010 (Telephone: (212) 777-3470).



Wheatcutter from southeastern Portugal. Photo by Jerry Berndt.

On the Death of Augustin Tosco

Christopher Knowles

It was shortly after the surprising appearance of his collected prison writings in Buenos Aires bookstores that Argentines were informed of Augustin Tosco's death early last November. After a year of directing his militant Light and Power Union (*Luz y Fuerza*) in Cordoba from the underground, Tosco died of a malignant brain tumor.

Forty-four-year-old Tosco, mourned as the militant trade-union movement's most lucid and popular leader, had been unable to receive proper treatment for his illness due to strict police control of hospitals and clinics. He had been living and working in the underground since Cordoba police began gunning for him in October of 1974.

Isabel Peron's regime and the labor bureaucracy of the General Workers' Confederation (CGT), to whom Tosco represented an unyielding and dangerous enemy, found cause for a double celebration: the man high on their "most wanted" lists could be crossed off and had died without their direct involvement, as rarely is the case.

For militant trade-unionists and progressive forces nation-wide who followed Tosco's unswerving revolutionary leadership over

the past two decades, his death has raised great concern for the unity and clarity of the ongoing struggle. Tosco will be remembered for his particular ability to rally diverse sectors of the working class and the petit bourgeoisie around specific causes and clearly define the specific strategy needed to win their demands.

Cordoba, Argentina's automotive center which Tosco helped to organize into the most defiant and potent focus of leftist militancy, marked his death with illegal work stoppages. In defiance of the bloodiest state of siege in Argentine history, more than six thousand persons attended his funeral, which was disrupted by several thousand rounds of police gunfire in the cemetery. The entire nation, silent in the oppressive atmosphere generated by ubiquitous death squads and police convoys, paid unspoken homage.

Tosco had possessed something rare in Argentine political and trade-union circles: he was consistent. A self-proclaimed Marxist in a country which has been dominated by the ideological confusion of Peronism for the last thirty years, his battle was uphill all the way.

He consistently pointed out and described the nature of the enemies of the Argentine working class. For the last ten years these were what he described as the "neo-corporatist" military dictatorships (headed by Generals Onganía, Levingston, and Lanusse) which had surrendered the country to foreign capital and crushed all democratic expression; and the "collaborationist" trade-unionism which has come to characterize the CGT leadership. Tosco described in speech after speech and letter after letter (especially while he was in prison) how the dictatorships and the corrupt CGT leadership worked together to deny Argentine workers even their basic human rights, not to mention their workers' rights to organize and to strike.

In combating the dictatorships and the corrupt leadership, Tosco's strategy and objectives were always the same: the use of the general strike and mass mobilizations in defense of the rights to better working conditions, higher wages, freedom to organize and, gradually, to make more sophisticated demands which earned Cordoba the title of "Argentina's Socialist Province".

In 1968 Tosco and the leaders of other militant unions formed a national network of trade unions designed to challenge the CGT collaborationist hegemony called the "CGT de los Argentinos". This parallel CGT, later outlawed, reflected Tosco's concepts of legitimate trade-unionism: that only from the rank and file did authentic trade-unionism spring, as opposed to the "rule from above" which is the basis of Peronism. Tosco wrote at the time: "Only through the people are we going to reach popular solutions. All conception of elites, of whatever kind, ends up serving to consolidate the system which oppresses us."

Though convinced that Cordoba had become the vanguard for eventual revolutionary change in Argentina, Tosco worked with

combative unions throughout the nation in order to generalize the struggle. The militant unions in Cordoba constantly send financial and logistical support to strikes in other cities and the countryside (sugar workers in Tucuman, migrant laborers in Mendoza and Neuquen, miners in Rio Negro), combating the isolation which often contributed to the failure of many strikes and conflicts.

Tosco spent a lot of time in prison. The principal leader of the May 1969 massive insurrection which took control of Cordoba (the so-called "Cordobazo") and brought the Ongania regime to its knees, he was sentenced to eight years in prison by a military tribunal. Popular pressure got him released in time to lead another uprising, the so-called "Viborazo" which helped to bring General Levingston's regime to collapse and Tosco's return to jail. By then the resistance movement which had developed nationally had rallied around the demand for Juan Peron's return from exile. It was debated whether to run Tosco for president as an independent Marxist candidate as an alternative to Peronism. Though he did not run in the 1973 elections, Tosco never accepted the illusion that Peron had returned to bring socialism to Argentina. It was not long before the fraud became obvious to even the most fanatical Peronists. For many, it was too late.

Because of its militant and often non-Peronist character, Cordoba logically became the focus of the violent repression unleashed by the Peronist government, particularly under Isabel. The militant unions there have been taken over by the national CGT and the entire apparatus forced to go underground.

With the repression of militant trade-unionism in Cordoba the combative spirit sprang up in other industrial areas, such as the heavily industrialized zones between Buenos Aires, Villa Constitucion, Rosario, and Santa Fe. Wildcat strikes and rank-and-file unrest over unchecked inflation and an ever increasing repression by Isabel's government exploded into a General Strike last July. As a result of the national shutdown, ultra-rightist Jose Lopez Rega, Isabel's "eminence gris", was forced to flee the country.

But it would be inaccurate to claim that the militant unions have not been seriously curtailed in their activities as a result of the all-out war against them: repression works. That the revolutionary trade-unionist movement is strong enough and deeply rooted enough in the Argentine working class to survive the repression, however, is certain. The question which faces the militant trade unions, and the left generally, at this point is how best to carry the struggle on.

On one hand, Argentina's ruling elites — the Peronist muddle of labor bureaucrats and politicians, the bankrupt Radical Party opposition, and the restless military — have demonstrated in the long series of unresolved crises that they are unable to run the country or the economy. On the other hand, the guerrilla forces, especially the People's Revolutionary Army (ERP) and the leftist Peronist

Letters

(Editors' Note: We would like to encourage our readers to send us brief responses to our articles and comments on important political issues for publication in this section. We will print as many as we can of those which seem of general interest to our readers.)

Editors,
Radical America

Dear Friends and Comrades,

I don't find Noel Ignatin's letter in *Radical America*, vol. 9, #6 helpful in untangling the problems raised by the Boston busing situation or the general problem of working class education in America. Having taught in the Chicago public schools a total of four years since the late sixties, I have had a chance to view first-hand the problem *as it exists here*, both in the most oppressed section of the Black community (at Dusable Upper Grade Center on the Southside, which "serves" the Robert Taylor homes) and in white working class communities on the Northeast side. I have taught both vocational and general education from grades seven through twelve, as well as elementary grades K through 6 (as a long-term substitute).

The value of the *Radical America* analysis of Boston lies in its concreteness. The weaknesses of both Noel's and Staughton's offerings lie in their abstractness — in their lack of analysis of the schools in the city where the three of us all live.

Noel is simply *wrong* when he states "... the demand for quality education is rarely heard in white communities except in response to Black demands for *equality* in education." Leaving aside Chicago's suburbs where quality education is perhaps the *main demand* of parents of school-age children (white, for the most part, because of housing segregation), I do not know of one predominantly white school in this city where community, parents, and teachers' activity is not focused in one way or another on improving the schools or preventing their decline. The same is true in the Black community schools where I have taught. Parents, white or Black, still view education as one of the major ways to free their own children from their class. With the decline in the city schools (or — at least as accurately — with the greater improvement in suburban schools), this is one of the major reasons why white parents move out of the city and take on the added costs and inconveniences of suburban life. The difference here is: white families have the option to move to the suburbs. Because of segregation, most Black and Latino families don't.

More specifically, why do I say that Noel's assertion is wrong? Because I have seen the facts in the activity of white families that prove to me he is wrong. Let me give two examples.

First, I am teaching this year at Steinmetz High School, on the Northeast side of Chicago. Until 1970, Steinmetz was all-white. The nearest Black families live in the Austin area, three miles from the school. Housing in the area is maintained in typical Chicago segregated fashion: Black and Latino families can't get into the neighborhood. Beginning in 1970, Black students were bussed to the school on a voluntary basis from West Austin, and the faculty was integrated.

Just before Thanksgiving, the school held its annual parents' night, when parents come to hear about activities in the school and talk with their children's teachers. The parents' night crowd filled the school auditorium with over 1,000 people, Black and white. After some introductions, they came around to classrooms.

Those thousand parents — mostly white — came to the school that night because they were interested in their children's education — in its quality. Most of the parents who visited me were not expecting their children to go to college (Chicago's high schools have a four-track tracking system: 'Basic,' 'Essential,' 'Regular' and 'Honors'. I teach essentials and regulars, the majority of whom will never go beyond high school, with some continuing in the junior colleges for awhile.)

Why were those parents there? Because they were concerned about their children's education — *the quality of it*; not because the Black community was demanding equality.

My second example is less direct. In the North Austin district, where the neighborhood is 'changing' from white to Black, the white and Black parents from the Byford Elementary School have been protesting overcrowding. Since Byford became integrated, the Board of Education has stalled on building a new building, allowing the school to become 100% overcrowded. The school lot is filled with temporary classrooms (which look like large house trailers).

This summer, Byford's *Black and white* parents packed a Board of Education meeting to shout about the situation. Both wanted an immediate end to the chaos at the school. Additionally, the white parents stated that they wanted to stay in North Austin and wanted their children to go to school and live with Black children equally. But between panic-selling, other pressures, and the Board of Education, they were being told — directly and indirectly — to take their white 'option' and move north. They were refusing and standing together with the Black families for 'quality education' (first step, end overcrowding) for all their children.

Why do I make so much of this? The process of winning whites — part of which involves helping them to first understand the poisonous nature of their relative privileges over Black and Latino people and later to reject both the racism and the material privileges which underpin it — is just that, a *process*. If we begin by floating outlandish generalizations about white working people — for example, that they *only* fight for quality education to maintain their white skin privileges — we as white revolutionaries will have little chance of changing white workers' "reactionary" consciousness. Because that consciousness has many elements, some of which lead to Nazi rallies in Chicago's Marquette Park and others of which led my white working class students to decide to chase the Nazis who were leafletting our school.

Staughton is wrong if he believes that white revolutionaries can come up with a program that enables them to avoid confronting white privilege. The history of the American left right down to this moment is filled with that kind of white opportunism. But Noel is equally wrong — more so, because he has analyzed the white problem more thoroughly — if he insists on negating the positive aspects of white people's dual consciousness.

Yours for revolution and liberation,
George N. Schmidt
Chicago, Illinois
November 30, 1975

Folks,

Two former editors of RADICAL AMERICA, Roger Keeran and myself, are now directors of the Oral History of the American Left program, sponsored by Tamiment Library in New York City. The last half-dozen years have seen the deaths of many of the remaining well-known political figures from the 1920's and 1930's: Paul Robeson, James P. Cannon, Solon DeLeon and Earl Browder, to name only a few. We are sharply aware of how priceless a legacy of information, interpretation, plain reminiscence and anecdotes we are losing. With that in mind, we hope to create a central repository for oral history materials that now exist in the form of tapes made by teachers and stu-

Those thousand parents — mostly white — came to the school that night because they were interested in their children's education — in its quality. Most of the parents who visited me were not expecting their children to go to college (Chicago's high schools have a four-track tracking system: 'Basic,' 'Essential,' 'Regular' and 'Honors'. I teach essentials and regulars, the majority of whom will never go beyond high school, with some continuing in the junior colleges for awhile.)

Why were those parents there? Because they were concerned about their children's education — *the quality of it*; not because the Black community was demanding equality.

My second example is less direct. In the North Austin district, where the neighborhood is 'changing' from white to Black, the white and Black parents from the Byford Elementary School have been protesting overcrowding. Since Byford became integrated, the Board of Education has stalled on building a new building, allowing the school to become 100% overcrowded. The school lot is filled with temporary classrooms (which look like large house trailers).

This summer, Byford's *Black and white* parents packed a Board of Education meeting to shout about the situation. Both wanted an immediate end to the chaos at the school. Additionally, the white parents stated that they wanted to stay in North Austin and wanted their children to go to school and live with Black children equally. But between panic-selling, other pressures, and the Board of Education, they were being told — directly and indirectly — to take their white 'option' and move north. They were refusing and standing together with the Black families for 'quality education' (first step, end overcrowding) for all their children.

Why do I make so much of this? The process of winning whites — part of which involves helping them to first understand the poisonous nature of their relative privileges over Black and Latino people and later to reject both the racism and the material privileges which underpin it — is just that, a *process*. If we begin by floating outlandish generalizations about white working people — for example, that they *only* fight for quality education to maintain their white skin privileges — we as white revolutionaries will have little chance of changing white workers' "reactionary" consciousness. Because that consciousness has many elements, some of which lead to Nazi rallies in Chicago's Marquette Park and others of which led my white working class students to decide to chase the Nazis who were leafletting our school.

Staughton is wrong if he believes that white revolutionaries can come up with a program that enables them to avoid confronting white privilege. The history of the American left right down to this moment is filled with that kind of white opportunism. But Noel is equally wrong — more so, because he has analyzed the white problem more thoroughly — if he insists on negating the positive aspects of white people's dual consciousness.

Yours for revolution and liberation,
George N. Schmidt
Chicago, Illinois
November 30, 1975

Folks,

Two former editors of RADICAL AMERICA, Roger Keeran and myself, are now directors of the Oral History of the American Left program, sponsored by Tamiment Library in New York City. The last half-dozen years have seen the deaths of many of the remaining well-known political figures from the 1920's and 1930's: Paul Robeson, James P. Cannon, Solon DeLeon and Earl Browder, to name only a few. We are sharply aware of how priceless a legacy of information, interpretation, plain reminiscence and anecdotes we are losing. With that in mind, we hope to create a central repository for oral history materials that now exist in the form of tapes made by teachers and stu-

dents, by political groups, relatives and others. We also hope the project will encourage the taping of rank-and-filers from the 1920's (or earlier) to the 1940's and 1950's, not only in labor but also in cultural work, health foods, science fiction — whatever comes to mind as a point where the Left has made its influence and there are old-timers around to talk about their situations.

There is no money to pay people for taping, although copies will be made of all tapes when requested, so that there is no outlay for the interviewers. We do not mean to create a monopoly on the interviews — Tamiment would like to exchange tapes with other libraries involved in similar projects. We hope that articles for RA and other journals may come out of this work, but all tapes will be restricted for use according to the wishes of the interviewee.

We'll have a column in the *Radical Historical Review* on our work and from time to time Tamiment will issue a bulletin to those who request further information. We ask you to send for a formal announcement to pin up on bulletin boards and get into local papers and magazines, and to give us a boost at getting some of the work done that is so badly needed now. Write to "Oral History of the American Left," Tamiment Library, New York University, 70 Washington Square South, New York, NY 10012.

Paul Buhle

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In the past year our pamphlet mailings have included the following titles:

Winter, 1974

Mark Naison, *Rent Strikes in New York*, from New England Free Press; H. Hanegbi, et. al., *The Class Nature of Israel*, from the Middle East Research and Information Project; Fredy Perlman, *Essay on Commodity Fetishism*, from NEFP; and *A Guide to Working Class History*, a selected, annotated list of readings, recordings and films on workers' history in the US and Canada, also from NEFP.

Spring, 1975

Critique (#4): *A Journal of Soviet Studies and Socialist Theory*, from Glasgow; the first issue of *Network: Voice of the UAW Militants*, from Detroit; a special labor issue of *Philippines Information Bulletin*; and the suppressed monograph by Noam Chomsky and Edward S. Herman, *Counter-Revolutionary Violence: Bloodbaths in Fact and Propaganda*, from Warner Modular Publications.

Summer, 1975

Portugal: A Blaze of Freedom, from Big Flame (Britain); *Unions and Hospitals: A Working Paper*, by Transfusion (Boston); *Taxi at the Crossroads: Which Way to Turn?*, from the Taxi Rank and File Coalition (New York); and the first issue of *Cultural Correspondence*, edited by Paul Buhle and Dave Wagner.

Autumn, 1975

Southern Populism and Black Labor, by Vince Copeland; *Lip and the Self-Managed Counter-Revolution*, by Black and Red; *The IWW in Canada*, by George Jewell; and an issue of *Theaters*, with *Marxism and Popular Culture*, by Paul Buhle.

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