

Appendix

Capitalist Production/Alienated Labor: This Nuclear World and its Political Crises*

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The basis of the economy of the most powerful imperialist land, the U.S., is that it is now a debtor nation. The global ramifications of that fact, as well as its implications at home, have not been seriously dealt with. Paul Volcker, head of the Federal Reserve Board, and considered by economists to be the "second most powerful man" in the land, did not bother to attend the Economic Summit. He refused to be deluded by all the hoopla about the great state of the world economy, especially that of the U.S. Volcker claimed the U.S. "put all the necessary solutions off on other countries. ... The action taken so far is not enough to put the deficit on a declining trend." The strength of the economy, Volcker concluded, "is not an unalloyed joy."

The Grand Illusion, however, that all capitalist ideologues, including Volcker, have created about this nuclear world with its robotized production, was achieved by them through forgetting that Alienated Labor is *the* irreplaceable foundation, essence and universal form – *the* creator of all values and surplus-values. That is exactly what produces both capitalist profits and what Marx called the "general absolute law of capitalist accumulation" – its unemployed army.

What the industrial giants cannot hear is the death-knell that labor, employed and unemployed, as well as the homeless, are ringing out. The industrialists are under the illusion – never more so than in this robotized stage of production – that the unemployed army can be made to rampage against the employed.

* This text is Part II of the *Marxist-Humanist Draft Perspectives, 1986–87*, written by Dunayevskaya in June 1986. The title and footnotes are those of the original text. The full document begins on page 11026 of Volume XIII of the "Supplement" to the *Raya Dunayevskaya Collection*, which is housed at Wayne State University's Walter P. Reuther Library of Labor and Urban Affairs and is available to the public.

Marxism and Freedom, cited in footnote 2, is Dunayevskaya's first book, published in 1957. The quotation from Hegel on p. 90 comes from paragraph 1795 of the final chapter of his *Science of Logic*, "The Absolute Idea." The quotation from Marx on p. 90 is from part I, section 3 of his *Critique of the Gotha Program*.

Their ideologues are busy "proving" that Marx was wrong. They have never understood that other fundamental Marx prediction, that the failure to re-produce labor means the death of their whole system. Political crises reflect the general absolute law of capitalist production differently in different historic periods. Thus, the Great Depression produced a John Maynard Keynes, with his *General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money*, which proved to the capitalists that they cannot get out of economic crisis unless they couple production with employment. All kinds of "New Deals" were thereby contrived to save capitalism from revolution.

Today, modern profit-hungry capitalists, both state and private, think they can do the exact opposite – that is, "uncouple" employment from production. They think they can still go merrily on with their computerized stock market, false super-profiteering through mergers, playing the margins, and alternating ownerships from corporations to "private entrepreneurs." They now talk of factory "incubators," where former large plants are leased out to small producers who employ far fewer workers at far lower wages. They act as if higher labor productivity can come from somewhere other than sweated, living labor; as if it can come out of computers.

The favorite word of today's economists is "uncoupling." Peter F. Drucker has written for *Foreign Affairs* (Spring, 1986) on "The Changed World Economy."⁴⁸ There, he arrogantly, and yet in an off-hand manner (as if the changes he is talking about are the true status of the world economy), insists that it is necessary to recognize the three truths of the uncoupling that he elaborates:

- 1) "uncoupling" employment from production.
- 2) "uncoupling" capital from capital investment, reducing capital to money by calling it "capital movement": "Capital movements rather than trade (in both goods and services) have become the driving force of the world economy. The two have not quite come uncoupled, but the link has become loose and, worse, unpredictable."
- 3) "uncoupling" industrial production from the whole economy, by which he tries to explain that he means uncoupling it from the "weak" sectors like the farm economy and raw materials. It is as if digging out the raw materials is done without labor. Or, for that matter, as if our so-called post-industrial world is so "advanced" with its computers, its plastics, its synthetics, its "high technology," that labor which is not on a production line is not labor.

What they choose to disregard is that even those robotized, unimated production processes are built on sweated labor. A recent NBC television special on that most high-tech land, Japan, which has completely shaken up the global market, revealed how fully its production is rooted in the most wretched, low-paying, non-union, piecework labor, done by subcontractors for its high-tech corporations.⁴⁹

Indeed, all of the ideologues are rightly screaming against the astronomical indebtedness of the capitalist economy since Ronald Reagan has been in power. There is no way that even

⁴⁸ See also the *Special Report* on "The Hollow Corporation" in *Business Week*, March 3, 1986.

⁴⁹ Back in the early 1940s when Plan, with a capital "P," was the rage among the Left, the first study of the Five-Year Plans of Russia by those working out a State-Capitalist Theory, debunked the Plan as any kind of socialism, showing that "feudal" Japan, in the very same 1932-37 period, was out-producing "socialist" Russia. (See Raya Dunayevskaya's original 1942 study of the Russian economy, included in *Marxism and Freedom*, p. 233, and p. 358, footnote 220.)

Reagan can deny that we have become a debtor nation. What the ideologues (who supposedly differ from the supply-siders and monetarists) have to recognize is this: once they have "uncoupled" industrial production from their whole economy, and capital from investment in production, reducing capital investment to money alone, they are left with what they supposedly rejected – monetarism.

These are not mere stock market fantasies; the monstrous reality they have created is a land in which at one pole we see a thousand new millionaires, while at the other we see the pauperization of millions of the unemployed, of the homeless, of the masses of Blacks and women living so far below the poverty line that Hunger stalks the richest land in the world.

Once capital is not tied to investments in production, once even trade has been "uncoupled" from trade of products and reduced to mere exchange of services, there is nothing left but an exchange of monies and investment for more monies. The reason that the U.S., though itself a debtor nation, is nevertheless still at the top of the heap is because the international capitalists feel safe in only one country – the counter-revolutionary Reagan's USA. It is not only "flight capital" leaving "unstable" lands that gets to the U.S.; Japan and West Germany have "invested" heavily here as well.

Let's take another look, then, at the "safe" U.S. and all of Reagan's victories in his ongoing counter-revolution at home against unions, against Blacks, against women, against the youth.

- It is true that the union bureaucracy has given too many concessions. But one look at Hormel's ongoing strike shows that militants know how to fight their own leaders, as well as the capitalists.
- It is true there is no ongoing General Strike. But if we count up all the "little" strikes from Minnesota to Chicago, from New York's sweatshops, to California farmworkers, and every place in between, we will see that U.S. labor is in daily, unrecorded revolt.
- It is true that the Women's Liberation Movement has seen a retrogression of all its hard-won gains of the 1960s and 1970s. But anyone who thinks that the sudden mass demonstration of 100,000 in Washington, D.C. on March 9 was "just" against Reagan's stand on abortion has not heard the voices of the Black and white women who have made their rejection of Reaganism known on every front from housing to childcare and from affirmative action to freedom of choice – and that is not the question of abortion alone, but the passion for human relations.
- It is true that the youth today are not the youth of the 1960s. But, as we have seen, the internationalism that was present in the anti-Vietnam War movement has reached a new dimension. Nor can one re-write the history which has proved that the two-way road of the Black dimension between Africa and America has never separated its struggles from its ideas of freedom, its search for a philosophy of revolution.

The Black masses see right through Reagan-Weinberger's "conceptual arsenal," as the ceaseless nuclear arming and genocidal imperialism that it is. The utter barbarism of the Holocaust is what shows us where this post-World War II world of capitalism-imperialism is heading.

The significance of the new, the concrete, is not only the general fact that these struggles and crises point to the need to uproot the system. The significance is that this new form of production, which Drucker and others tout, is hiding the essence, by creating the illusion that this Particular, this specific appearance, is the new Universal. It is necessary to work out the new and concrete forms as they appear. That does not mean merely saying that it is only form rather than essence. Rather, it is to see that only revolution can abolish these forms; that only revolution can abolish the illusion some Marxists have that these forms are the new Universal. This kind of transformation can be achieved only by the dialectic of Absolute Method.

As Hegel articulated it:

To hold fast the positive in *its* negative, and the content of the presupposition in the result, is the most important part of rational cognition; also only the simplest reflection is needed to furnish conviction of the absolute truth and necessity of this requirement, while with regard to the *examples* of proofs, the whole of the *Logic* consists of these. (*Science of Logic* Vol. II, p. 476)

Karl Marx projected his concept of the positive that would follow only after the old capitalist society was thoroughly uprooted:

In a higher phase of communist society, after the enslaving subordination of individuals under the division of labor, and therewith also the antithesis between mental and physical labor, has vanished; after labor, from a mere means of life, has itself become the prime necessity of life; after the productive forces have also increased with the all-round development of the individual, and all the springs of co-operative wealth flow more abundantly – only then can the narrow horizon of bourgeois right be fully left behind and society inscribe on its banners: from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs! (*Critique of the Gotha Program*)

The positive in the negative was not – *was not* – that Alienated Labor under capitalism is the human activity, much less that science is the human activity. Rather, it was the *struggles* of the Alienated Laborers against capitalism, and the laborers' passion for an actual unity of mental and manual labor, that spells out the urgency of revolution.

What the revolutionary theoreticians need to do is *listen* to the voices from below, and *concretize* that new unity by *practicing* it in their own publications, activities, relations, as they prepare for revolution, anticipate it, labor for it. The absolute opposite of that is what oozes out, from the ideologues under capitalism – which is why Marx called them the “prize-fighters” for capitalism.

Let us return now to the Economic Summit that was actually all political.