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RADICAL AMERICA

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ROOTS OF WOMEN'S LIBERATION
CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE SOUTH
WORKERS' MOVEMENT IN SPAIN

RADICAL AMERICA

March-April, 1975

Volume 9, Number 2

THE ORIGINS OF THE WOMEN'S LIBERATION MOVEMENT Sara M. Evans	1
THE ROOTS OF CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE SOUTH Ken Lawrence	15
TENANTS FIRST: FHA TENANTS ORGANIZE IN MASSACHUSETTS Barry Brodsky	37
SYNDICALISM AND REVOLUTION IN SPAIN: THE WORKERS' COMMISSIONS Jean Monds	49
LABOR AND MONOPOLY CAPITAL: A REVIEW Margery Davies and Frank Brodhead	79

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Editors: Frank Brodhead, Margery Davies, Linda Gordon, Jim Green,
Michael Hirsch, Allen Hunter, Jim Kaplan, Donna Karl, Jim O'Brien,
Becky Tippens

Associate Editors: Paul Buhle, Ellen DuBois, Marcello Galeotti, Martin
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erson, Wesley Profit, Sheila Rowbotham, Stan Weir

RADICAL AMERICA: Published bi-monthly at 60 Union Square, Som-
erville, Massachusetts 02143. (MAILING ADDRESS: P.O. Box B, N.
Cambridge, Massachusetts 02140) Subscription rates: \$5 per year, \$9
for two years, \$12 for three years; with pamphlets \$10 per year. Double
rates for institutions. Free to prisoners. Bulk rates: 40% reduction from
cover price for five or more copies. Bookstores may order on a consign-
ment basis.

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ing offices.



The Origins of the Women's Liberation Movement

Sara M. Evans

According to Sheila Rowbotham :

The emphasis on the importance of personal questions of liberation has not only recurred again and again whenever there is a high degree of participation of women, it has almost been a precondition for the mobilization of women in any significant numbers. (1)

While there is a crucial truth in her analysis, it is also a fact that previous feminist movements in the United States have generally failed to offer a thoroughgoing critique of personal life. Rather they have tended to use traditional definitions of woman as housewife to bolster their own arguments for political rights. Charlotte Perkins Gilman was quite alone in her critique of woman's role in the family and advocacy of socialised housework, and even she failed

to make a frontal assault on sex-roles as such. (2) It is a new and striking characteristic of the contemporary women's movement that at the center of its existence is the assertion that "the personal is political." Such an assumption came first from the young women in the new left and has since penetrated the more conservative "women's rights" portions of the movement. As a result, contemporary feminism has focused not simply on legal or public inequities but on the broader questions of sex roles, socialization, and the economic function of women's work in the home.

The structural basis for this development lay in a process I shall call the "socialization of social production" which has created a widening gap between the myths and the realities of women's lives. Much of the work traditionally associated with the home has been brought into the public world of paid labor by the expansion of social services and white collar bureaucratic occupations since the second world war. While the analogous process in the nineteenth century offered men a clear role, wage-earner, these more recent developments have been clouded by the extension of a role associated with the private sphere of home into the public sphere. Women from educated, middle-income families in particular who drew their identities from the domestic social role of housewife lived in an ambiguous limbo as their roles were pulled out from under them.

Modern sex roles have been shaped by the sexual division of production which occurred when nineteenth century industrialization and urbanization removed most production of goods from the home to the factory. (3) The logic of this development forced men to work outside the home in order to "support" the family. Production within the home, social production, was now defined as "women's work." While women continued to prepare food and other necessities consumed within the home, their work focused increasingly on the socialization of children as the family became more child-centered and on the creation of a private haven from the competitive "outside" world. This growing division between the family and the outside workplace was experienced as a separation of public and private, and it permitted a radical polarization of traditional male and female images.

On the one hand the public realm, the sphere of men, came to represent rationality, competition, and political life. On the other hand the private realm, maintained by women, embodied emotion, cooperation, and personal life. Barbara Welter has described the crystallization of this female side of the polarization into the "cult of true womanhood" in the nineteenth century. (4) The same themes remained components of the female stereotype into the twentieth century. They appeared in the "cult of the home" at the turn of the century and the "feminine mystique" in the 1950's.

Despite their pervasive tenacity, however, the economic basis for sharply contrasting sexual images had seriously eroded by the mid-twentieth century. The changing life cycle of most women and the maturation of the corporate economy combined to produce radically new employment patterns for women. Women married younger, had fewer children, and lived longer. By the age of thirty-five a middle-class housewife faced the second half of her life with little to do in a house full of conveniences and emptied of children from nine a.m. to three p.m. (5)

Moreover, as women became available to work outside the home the American economy underwent changes which both encouraged and facilitated their doing so. Beginning with World War II and continuing through the 1950's and 1960's white collar clerical and service jobs boomed. Whole new industries emerged around mass media, advertising, and computer technology. From 1940 to 1965 government spending multiplied more than ten times. Corporations also consolidated, expanded, and diversified, creating their own gigantic bureaucracies. Increasingly their growth was dependent on the production of new technology and on new techniques of advertising and marketing.

Employment in the services grew 194% from 1947 to 1968, while employment in manufacturing grew only 31%. In 1947, 49% of the workforce was in services and 51% in manufacturing. By 1968, the ratio had shifted to 64% in services and 36% in manufacturing. (6) In effect the expansion of the social services removed into the sphere of paid work many of the social functions previously performed in the family or by female volunteers.

These changes constituted the socialization of social

production, a process similar to the socialization of goods production in the nineteenth century. The earlier economic revolution had brought men into the labor force in order to produce goods. This time, however, many of the jobs created in fields such as health care, education, child care, clerical work, social work, and advertising constituted extensions of the traditional social role of housewife, thus easing the transition for women from housewifery to paid employment. Educated women in middle income families already had the skills for the kinds of jobs which were opening up: technical and clerical jobs and social service work such as teaching, nursing, and social work. In 1966, 70% of all families in the \$7,000 to \$15,000 annual income range had at least two workers in the family, and the second was most often a woman. (7) Throughout the 1950's and 1960's the group entering the labor force at the greatest rate was married women from middle income families.

These same women, however, were thoroughly caught up in the resurgence of domestic ideology, the "feminine mystique." They constituted the sector of the female population who married early, had more children, and moved to suburbia. Yet the home as workplace was becoming increasingly alienating. The fantasy of total emotional and intellectual fulfillment in marriage and family frequently led to "colossal disappointment, guilt, and self-castigation" when it failed to be realized. (8) Growing suburbs isolated women and children farther and farther from the centers of public and community life. (9) The intensification of the family's function as a private enclave to which members escape from the outside world for warmth, nurture and support resulted in an inexhaustible stream of emotional demands placed on women. And finally, as the household technology developed, new standards of housework maintained the amount of work required at a high level. Consumption oriented, psychologically manipulative advertising reinforced and multiplied these new demands. For example, it used to be that soap would clean everything. By the 1950's the housewife was expected to choose and use a different cleanser for every surface in her home and on her body. And "clean" meant sootless, odorless, and antiseptic.

The women who found themselves simultaneously pushed out of the home and pulled back into it suffered an alienation at least as deep as the women who chose to stay at home. They may well have wanted to work, to escape loneliness and boredom. Yet a woman's work was likely to be threatening to her husband. It implied that he was not being a "good provider." Her guilt required that she avoid training, long-range planning, or high aspirations. As a result she could not resist discrimination when the only jobs open to her were repetitious and boring. This structural inability to take oneself seriously induced deep insecurity and a negative self-image. (10) In addition these women were shouldering two jobs. They continued to be the ones responsible for household work and they defined themselves as wives and mothers. Their bodies were at work but their psyches remained at home.

The oppression of those women revolved around their primary self-definition as "housewives" whether they worked inside the home or outside. Any revolt which drew on their discontent could neither accept a traditional stereotypic view of "female nature" as particularly suited to home and motherhood nor could it restrict itself simply to a critique of inequities in the public realm.

For this reason the emergence of NOW in 1966 did not initiate a massive feminist movement. NOW was the product of contradictions experienced by professional women. Professional women throughout the 1950's were the most unmistakably "deviant," and often harbored among themselves the few remnants of feminism left. Precisely because they perceived their work as important, they felt even more acutely the discrimination against them. Having openly admitted a certain level of drive and ambition, they were far more likely to see discriminatory hiring, training, promotion, and payrates as unfair. Other women could justify their unwillingness to fight against such barriers by saying "I wouldn't be here if I didn't have to" or "I am only doing this for my family, not for myself." Professional women could not do this. In addition, Jo Freeman has demonstrated that throughout the 1950's and 1960's the relative deprivation of professional women increased at a greater rate than for any other group. (11)

These women, in general, accepted the division between the public and the private. Betty Friedan's devastating critique of housewifery ends up with a prescription that women, like men, should be allowed to participate in both realms. In effect she urges women to do it all — to be super women — by assuming the dual roles of housewife and professional. She makes no serious assault on the division of labor within the home. For Friedan it was easier to imagine a professional woman hiring a professional "housewife" to take her place in the home than to challenge the whole range of sex roles or the division of social life into home/work, private/public, female/male domains. (12)

The catalyst for a more thoroughgoing critique and a mass mobilization of American women developed among young female participants in the social movements of the 1960's. These daughters of the middle class had received mixed, paradoxical messages about what it meant to grow up female. On the one hand the cultural ideal — held up by media, parents, and schools — informed them that their only true happiness lay in the twin roles of wife and mother. At the same time they could observe the reality that housewifery was distinctly unsatisfactory for millions of suburban women, and furthermore that despite the best efforts of the Ladies Home Journal, most American women could expect to work outside the home a substantial portion of their lives. Such contradictions left young, educated women in the 1960's dry tinder for the spark of revolt. The preconditions for that spark developed within the southern civil rights movement and portions of the new left.

Many former activists in the civil rights movement and the new left have attributed the rise of women's liberation to the discrepancy within the movement between the goal of equality and the actual subordination of women within it. I have found, however, that the preconditions for female revolt developed in those parts of the movement which offered women the greatest space in which to develop their own potential and discover their own strength. In the process they also accumulated many of the tools for movement building: a language to describe oppression and justify revolt, experience in the strategy and tactics of organizing,

and a beginning sense of themselves collectively as objects of discrimination.

The two most important incubators of feminism within the new left were the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and the community organizing projects of Students for a Democratic Society (the Economic and Research Action Projects: ERAP) which were modeled on SNCC. By late 1965 an interconnected group of experienced female organizers had articulated an analysis of women's oppression which focused squarely on the issues of sex roles. (13)

The most important source for new self-images within the movement lay in the nature of women's work. In contrast to the later mass mobilizations which placed a premium on public speaking and self-assertion in large groups, the vision of SNCC and of ERAP translated into daily realities of hard work and responsibility which admitted few sexual limitations. Young women's sense of purpose was reinforced by the knowledge that the work they did and the responsibilities they assumed were central to the movement.

In direct action demonstrations many women discovered untapped reservoirs of courage. Rarely did women expect or receive any special protection in demonstrations or jails. Frequently direct action teams were equally divided between women and men on the theory that the presence of women might lessen the violent reaction.

Working in local communities, organizing around voter registration, teaching in freedom schools, running libraries, creating block organizations or groups of welfare mothers, many women reached well beyond their previously assumed limits. One participant in the Mississippi "freedom summer" of 1964 wrote:

I was overwhelmed at the idea of setting up a library all by myself.... Then can you imagine how I felt when at Oxford, while I was learning how to drop on the ground to protect my face, my ears, and my breasts, I was asked to coordinate the libraries in the entire project's community centers. I wanted to cry "HELP!" in a number of ways.... (14)

In SDS projects a few men were good organizers but most good organizers were women. The skills required by community organizing meshed with the social training of females: warmth, empathy, compassion, interpersonal radiation. Furthermore, community organizing tends to draw upon a largely female constituency. In northern communities, while male leaders futilely attempted to organize streetcorner youth, winos, and unemployed men, women successfully created welfare rights organizations, though their efforts received much less attention. (15)

Female community leadership in both the south and the north provided new role models as well. In 1962 SNCC staff member Charles Sherrod wrote the office that in every southwest Georgia county "there is always a 'mama.' She is usually a militant woman in the community, out-spoken, understanding, and willing to catch hell, having already caught her share." (16) The newsletters of ERAP were likewise filled with stories of courage in the face of hardship, of women who stood up for themselves against any and all authority. (17) For many middle-class white women in the new left these women were also "mamas" in the sense of being substitute mother-figures, new models of the meaning of womanhood. (18)

The opportunities to develop new strengths and a heightened sense of self were strengthened by the personal nature of new left politics. The new left consistently emphasized the importance of building new kinds of human relationships, and the political import of personal choice. Jane Stembridge, daughter of a Southern Baptist minister who left her studies at Union Seminary in New York to become the first paid staff member of SNCC, put it:

...finally it all boils down to human relationship. ...It is the question of...whether I shall go on living in isolation or whether there shall be a we. The student movement is not a cause...it is a collision between this one person and that one person. It is a I am going to sit beside you.... Love alone is radical. (19)

Three years later the SDS University Committee reported:

The free university is not defined by a particular structural arrangement, but by the questions the participants ask....The central question of the free university seems to be "what kind of interpersonal relations allow people to treat each other as human beings?" (20)

Within the student movement the intensely personal nature of social action and the commitment to equality resulted in a kind of anarchic democracy and a general questioning of all the socially accepted rules. "Let the people decide" and "participatory democracy" were the ideological passwords of SNCC and SDS. A spirit of moral idealism permeated the new left.

The ideas and ideals of students in the new left reflected the fact that they were in many ways engaged in a cultural revolt. The counter culture of the late 1960's grew from the perceptions of thousands of young people that suburban material "success" constituted a hollow promise and from their determination to build their lives around more meaningful goals. It was a natural extension for women to apply the same critique to sexual relationships: Casey Hayden and Mary King wrote in 1965:

Having learned from the movement to think radically about the personal worth and abilities of people whose role in society had gone unchallenged before, a lot of women in the movement have begun trying to apply those lessons to their own relations with men. Each of us probably has her own story of the various results....(21)

According to Casey and Mary, however, such ideas could be discussed seriously only among women. Despite their own cultural rebellions, men in the movement clung to traditional notions of sexual relationships. The effort to create a haven, a "beloved community" of equality either racially or sexually, foundered in a movement so deeply enmeshed in the very culture it set out to challenge. Feminism was born out of this contradiction: that the same movement

which permitted women to grow and to develop self-esteem, new strength and skills, generally kept them out of public leadership roles and reinforced expectations based on woman's role as housewife: houseworker, nurturer, sex object, unintellectual.

In the years after 1965 the movement became increasingly alienating for women. Women were increasingly relegated to running the mimeograph machines, preparing and serving coffee, washing dishes, and being available for sex. Draft card burning, mass demonstrations, strident oratory left women more and more alienated and secondary. (22)

But women had developed along the way too much self-respect and too much organizing skill to acquiesce quietly. They rounded out the new left focus on the personal nature of political work by asserting that personal life was in itself political. They drew on the analogy with black oppression in defining a complex of discriminatory attitudes (sexism) comparable to racism which were backed by an infrastructure of discriminatory institutions and laws. They also understood quickly by analogy that women had internalized many of the negative things attributed to them and that mutual solidarity and support were necessary to wage a struggle that was at once internal and external.

When young women from middle-income families revolted against the replication of the housewife role within the new life, they did so with a sense of strength that allowed them to name and to politicize a dilemma experienced by millions of women. Where the public ideology of NOW had focused on legal inequities, the newer radical women's liberation movement made a critique of family and personal life the cornerstone of its existence. It created a medium, the consciousness-raising group, through which individual women could develop a sense of the social nature and political import of deeply ingrained attitudes, habits, and assumptions.

Without their critique, there could have been no mass movement, only a strong feminist lobby. For millions of American women only a movement which addressed their oppression as housewives — both in the home and in the outside workplace — could have generated the massive shift in consciousness which we can observe in the past six to eight years.

FOOTNOTES

1. Sheila Rowbotham, *WOMEN, RESISTANCE AND REVOLUTION* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 125.

2. Charlotte Perkins Gilman, *WOMEN AND ECONOMICS* (New York: Harper & Row, 1956); *THE HOME: ITS WORK AND INFLUENCE* (New York, 1910).

3. To my knowledge the term "sexual division of production" was first used in Kathryn Johnson and Peggy Somers, "The Political Economy of Sexism" (unpublished manuscript, mimeograph, June, 1972). While the process to which it refers has been analysed many times, I find their term useful because it focuses on the productive nature of women's work in the home and on the interrelation between the home and the outside workplace.

4. Barbara Welter, "The Cult of True Womanhood," *AMERICAN QUARTERLY*, LVIII (summer, 1966), 151-74.

5. See Robert W. Smuts, *WOMEN AND WORK IN AMERICA* (New York: Schocken Books, 1971), 24-37.

6. Daniel Bell, "Labor in the Post-Industrial Society," *DISSENT*, XIX (winter, 1972), 168; figures from *THE U.S. ECONOMY IN 1970*, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics Bulletin 1673 (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1970); see also Victor Fuchs, *THE SERVICE ECONOMY* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1968).

7. Smuts, *WOMEN AND WORK*, 64; Ravenna Nelson, "The Changing Image of the Career Woman," *JOURNAL OF SOCIAL ISSUES*, 28 (1973), 34; William Henry Chafe, *THE AMERICAN WOMAN: HER CHANGING SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND POLITICAL ROLES, 1920-1970* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), 190-191.

8. Ellen and Kenneth Kenniston, "An American Anachronism: The Image of Women and Work," *AMERICAN SCHOLAR*, 33 (summer, 1964), 355, 357.

9. *Ibid.*, 371; Alva Reimar Myrdal and Viola Klein, *WOMEN'S TWO ROLES: HOME AND WORK* (London: Routledge and Paul, 1956), 136-53; David Reisman, Nathan Glazer, and Reuel Denney, *THE LONELY CROWD: A STUDY OF THE CHANGING AMERICAN CHARACTER* (New York: Doubleday, 1953), 332-33; Margaret Meade, "What Women Want," *FORTUNE*, 34 (December, 1946), 174-75; Betty Friedan, *THE FEMININE MYSTIQUE* (New York: Dell, 1963).

10. See Helen Hacker, "Women as a Minority Group," *SOCIAL FORCES*, 30 (October, 1951), 60-69.

11. Jo Freeman, "The Politics of Women's Liberation" (unpublished dissertation, University of Chicago, 1973).

12. Friedan, *FEMININE MYSTIQUE*.

13. See Casey Hayden and Mary King, "Sex and Caste," *LIBERATION* (April, 1966), 35-36; interviews with Mary King, July 24, 1973, Washington, D.C.; Dorothy Burlage, August 5, 1973, Cambridge, Massachusetts; Vivian Rothstein, July 10, 1973, Chicago, Illinois; Cathy Cade,

July 21, 1973, Berkeley, California; Leni Wildflower, July 18, 1973, San Jose, California; Jimmy Garrett, July 16, 1973, Washington, D.C.; and others.

14. Elizabeth Sutherland, *LETTERS FROM MISSISSIPPI* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1965), 111-12.

15. This conclusion is a product of interviews with participants in most ERAP projects and of impressions gleaned from the papers of Students for a Democratic Society, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

16. Quoted in James Forman, *THE MAKING OF BLACK REVOLUTIONARIES: A PERSONAL ACCOUNT* (New York: Macmillan, 1972), 276.

17. SDS Papers, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

18. Interviews with Dorothy Burlage; Mimi Feingold, July 16, 1973, San Francisco, California; Mary King; Sue Thrasher, June 30, 1973, Atlanta, Georgia.

19. Quoted in Howard Zinn, *S N C C: THE NEW ABOLITIONISTS* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1965), 7.

20. "Report of the SDS University Committee," June 28-30, 1965, SDS Papers, Series 3, State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

21. Hayden and King, "Sex and Caste," 35.

22. This is a generalized impression drawn from primary and secondary sources and from interviews with participants. See James O'Brien, "The Development of the New Left in the United States, 1960-1965" (unpublished dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1971); and Kirkpatrick Sale, *SDS* (New York: Vintage Books, 1974).

SARA M. EVANS has been active in the civil rights movement, the women's liberation movement, and the New American Movement (NAM). She is writing her Ph.D. thesis on the origins of the recent women's liberation movement.

ERRATUM

In our introduction to Rosalyn Fraad Baxandall's sketch of Elizabeth Gurley Flynn in the last issue (volume 9, number 1) we inadvertently criticized the wrong group for postponement of the publication of the Flynn papers. The staff of the American Institute for Marxist Studies not only gave Baxandall access to the papers but encouraged their publication. It was the guardians of the papers, appointed by Flynn herself, and International Publishers, who have delayed the project. We want to extend our comradely apologies to AIMS for the undeserved criticism we mistakenly made of them.

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The Roots of Class Struggle in the South

Ken Lawrence

How many people know which is the most unionized state in the United States? ... the least unionized?

The answers are that the most unionized state is West Virginia and the least unionized state is North Carolina, with South Carolina less than two per cent away.

The reason I start with that is that I want to draw a picture of the working class of the South a little bit different from the familiar one, which is Southerners as victims, Southerners as helpless, and so on. I think that's a picture that's useful to liberal politicians and businessmen who have certain designs on the South — which entail the working class being subservient to their ends, etc. But I don't think it's a very helpful picture of what's decisive about the South for workers — in terms of their ability to fight and

OPPOSITE PAGE: Southern Tenant Farmers Union (STFU) Convention, Little Rock, Arkansas, 1944. Photo courtesy of H. L. Mitchell.

win what they're after. What I think is decisive about the South, in the sense that we're interested in, is the tremendous unevenness of development.

That's reflected by the fact that West Virginia is the most unionized state in the country, and North Carolina is the least unionized state, and they're not very far apart. And they both are part of the Southern region, the region in which we are active. And so you have — and over and over again we're going to see this kind of thing happening, where you have advanced layers of the working class (advanced in the sense that workers have gotten themselves together and fought together and won what they were fighting for) side by side with the most oppressed layers of the working class in the whole country, black and white. This is the situation of working people in the South. And what this offers, more than any other part of the country, is a real explosive combination — on the one hand, an example of development, side by side with perhaps the greatest need for struggle and victory. And this, in turn, allows the concept of combined development, that is, where the most oppressed layers are capable of leaping over whole stages of development and appearing on stage with all the equipment that the most advanced layers have already achieved, because the example is right there before them.

So anyway this is not going to be the traditional picture of the South enumerating how poor it is, or something like that, but rather the peaks of struggle which have thrust the whole working class, not just in the South but throughout the country, forward.

USING STATISTICS

I just want to add one more preliminary note, which is that ordinarily, statistical studies, which are largely sociological, are the place people begin in making these evaluations. And historically that's an excellent guide, and we will use it a great deal. But in periods like the one we're entering today, statistics become less a weapon, as they don't serve our immediate needs. In other words, in 1955, if you were trying to draw a statistical picture of the working

(EDITOR'S NOTE: This article is abridged from a talk by Ken Lawrence at a Labor Workshop sponsored by the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF) at Birmingham, Alabama, on May 5-6, 1973)

people in the South, the 1950 census would give you a pretty good approximation of where you were five years later and the situation you were dealing with. In 1965, the 1960 census wouldn't have been as adequate because things were changing more rapidly, especially urbanization and mechanization of agriculture, but it still would have been pretty close. But today, in 1973, things are changing so rapidly that the 1970 census is already largely outmoded in terms of providing the kind of information that we need. And for that reason among many others, the historic picture, the sweep, and the similarities to past periods are a more decisive weapon to be put at the service of working people to see where we are now in comparison to similar periods in the past, and where we're going, and how to get there. And that's really the purpose of this work.

I want to give you an example of this business of where we are today, because it was quite a shock to me to find out. Just to run down a comparison, I'll take Mississippi, where I live, and compare it with the United States. Only about seven per cent of Mississippi's workers are engaged in agriculture, and that percentage is falling rapidly. These are statistics for non-agricultural employment in 1966. In the United States, mining had 1% of non-agricultural employment; Mississippi had 1.1%. Contract construction: the United States had 5.1%, Mississippi had 6.0%. Manufacturing: the United States had 29.9%, Mississippi had 31.9%. Transportation and public utilities: the United States had 6.5%, Mississippi had 5.2%. Trade: the United States had 20.7%, Mississippi had 18.8%. Finance, insurance and real estate, the United States had 4.8%, Mississippi had 3.4%. Services: the United States had 15%, Mississippi had 11.6%. Government employees: in the United States there were 17.0%, in Mississippi there were 22%. So you can see the United States has caught up with Mississippi.

And that's pretty much the general picture. There's throughout the country no longer the image that many of us have carried around with us, of the South; and especially the places that have been traditionally the rural agricultural South are industrially and sociologically not very different any more from the rest of the country. So, again we can say that the picture we're drawing and the needs we

feel are very contemporary; they're not backward, they're not retarded, but the situation we're confronted with in the South, at least as far as the nation's economy and political structure are concerned, are as advanced as almost any place in the country, and certainly as advanced as the country as a whole.

Now, in this presentation it's not going to be possible for me to be comprehensive in terms of telling you even all the things that I think are important in the history of labor in the South. And I'm going to try to cover what I think are a few very significant happenings that will illustrate, I hope, situations that are valuable as precedents for the kinds of things that we're going to be spending the rest of the weekend on, especially the question of fighting racism and the question of organizing the unorganized. So I hope nobody will be disappointed if I leave out their favorite strike or anything like that. I'm not trying to be comprehensive. This is a kind of introduction to study for anyone who wishes to pursue it.

Now especially in the South, it's really important to distinguish between the history of workers and the history of unions, even though most historians write them up as one and the same. They're not the same. And above all, they're not the same in the South. And the fact that historians usually don't make the distinction means that most labor history, as written, is pretty distorted. And you'll see examples of this. Ray Marshall of the University of Texas is today the recognized authority on Southern labor, after publishing a book a few years ago called *LABOR IN THE SOUTH*, which is the most comprehensive book in recent times on the subject. And he's received platitudes from everybody, saying that it's the greatest thing. And because it's the only thing available, there's no question about it. It's got a lot of good information, and I recommend that people read it, but very cautiously.

BEFORE THE CIVIL WAR

Marshall tells us that the first union in the South was the Typographers Union in New Orleans, founded in 1810. By 1863, the labor movement in the South was running behind

that in the rest of the country. There were only 10 city labor assemblies in the United States in 1863, one of which was in Louisville, Kentucky, and the rest of the South didn't have any such institutions. But anyway, from 1810 up until the Civil War, unions were scattered, small and weak, but they were increasingly frequent and they were developing and growing. One of the earliest strikes was organized by workers at the Tredegar Steel Co., in Richmond, Virginia, where 200 white workers struck in 1847 when the company was preparing to increase its slave work force to more than 600 workers. Two hundred white workers struck to prevent that, but they lost.

And this brings us to the point that's the big problem in studying labor history as union history, which is that the bulk of the work force of the South was not free white workers but was African slaves who were working on plantations. And they weren't allowed to unionize legally. Nonetheless, the strike, which was not a very powerful tool in the hands of white workers — who could be threatened and replaced by black slaves — the strike was a very important weapon which was used very effectively by slaves. And throughout the period in the 20 or 30 years before the Civil War, there were slave strikes over and over again. The major demand of slaves when they struck was to replace the sunup to sundown gang labor system with the task system. The way they would do it usually was that all the slaves on a given plantation or several plantations would run off and hide in the woods or the swamps, and send one person in to negotiate with the overseer or the master, demanding that the slaves get the task system, which would allow them, after they had finished their assigned daily tasks, to tend to their own gardens, their families, or what have you. And they very commonly won this. The task system became the norm by the time of the Civil War. But of course none of that working class militancy shows up in histories of unions because none of that was conducted by unions. And yet, there's no question in my mind that it was the most significant, and certainly the most victorious, kind of struggle going on among the working people of the South at the time.

THE CIVIL WAR

And for the next period, the period of the Civil War and its aftermath, the most important book of history, from the standpoint of working people, is **BLACK RECONSTRUCTION IN AMERICA** by W. E. B. DuBois. In fact, it's remarkable that when you look around for a history of working people in the South of that period, there's almost nothing else, and certainly nothing as detailed and explicit as the book by DuBois. He begins: Chapter One is called "The Black Worker." Chapter Two is "The White Worker." Chapter Three is "The Planter." Chapter Four is "The General Strike." And we kind of get the image that he's speaking our language — telling us about how things happened then that are the things that we're interested in. And very few of us, that I know of, were taught in school to view the Civil War as a general strike of working people. And that was what won it. But that was what DuBois not only says but proves, and seals his case by offering Abraham Lincoln's testimony to the effect that what he's saying is true. DuBois says it was the black worker — as the founding stone of a new economic system in the nineteenth century, and for the modern world — who brought Civil War in America.

And the point of this is, of course, that up until the 1850's, the rulers of the North and the rulers of the South made every possible attempt to reach a compromise that would avoid open warfare between them. That the one group that was not willing to compromise, that constantly, regardless of any compromise that was made, was going to continue to fight for its freedom, was the black slaves. And they did. And as a result, none of the compromises worked, and the Civil War was brought on. And DuBois goes further than that. He says that the plight of white workers throughout the world is traceable to Negro slavery in America. And that's a remarkable statement. That says to me, and I take it seriously, that in order to understand the problems of white workers, not just back then, but in the world today, you have to have an understanding of Negro slavery in the United States.

I highly recommend BLACK RECONSTRUCTION as a place to start. It'll not only tell you a great deal, but it also provides a way of reading other material that doesn't give the information in the form that we need it, and allows you to see things that you might not see otherwise. DuBois says that the South lost the Civil War because of economic weakness, because its "whole labor class, black and white, went into economic revolt." And in his Chapter Four, "The General Strike," he's got an introductory note. This is his description of the general strike:

"How the Civil War meant emancipation and how the black worker won the war by a general strike which transferred his labor from the Confederate planter to the Northern invader, in whose army lines workers began to be organized as a new labor force."

That's a remarkable thing, and it's a remarkable chapter. And if ever there was a proof of the central role of black working people in the whole development of the working class in the United States, that furnishes the absolute proof. He says that half a million black slaves withdrew their labor from their Southern planter masters, and the South was doomed. Shortly after the black general strike, poor whites in the South went into open revolt against the Confederacy. In one year alone, 1864, DuBois notes that 100,000 poor whites deserted the Confederate armies.

I agree with DuBois that the Civil War was the greatest upheaval of working people in U.S. history, even though official labor history doesn't see it that way. The revolution was so successful in terms of building alliances, and then actually creating black-white unity after the Civil War, that the planter class was forced to enact what they called the Black Codes in order to try to re-establish their domination over working people. And it's interesting to see who they were scared of when they were enacting the Black Codes. DuBois quotes the Mississippi statute: "That all freedmen, free negroes and mulattoes in this state over the age of 18 years, found on the second Monday in January,

1866, or thereafter, with no lawful employment or business, or found unlawfully assembling themselves together, either in the day or night time, and all white persons so assembling, with freedmen, free negroes or mulattoes, on terms of equality, or living in adultery or fornication with a freed woman, free negro or mulatto, shall be deemed vagrants, and on conviction thereof shall be fined in the sum of not exceeding, in the case of a freedman, free negro or mulatto \$50.00 and a white man \$200.00 and imprisoned at the discretion of the court, the free negro not exceeding ten days and the white man, not exceeding six months." Now, I think that's pretty remarkable that the rulers of Mississippi, while they were passing their racist slave codes, decided that the people they had to punish the most severely were the whites who got together with the blacks, that this unity was clearly the biggest threat they could see, and they outlawed it accordingly.

HOW TO READ LABOR HISTORY

I want to show you here one of the problems with the people who think they're writing objective history and really aren't. Just what we've already examined up to the Civil War and a little bit after, I think, makes it pretty clear that the people who were in the forefront of struggle were always the black slaves and later black freedmen. For a long time the greatest hindrance to them was the fact that the poor whites were in one way or another manipulated into serving as agencies of oppression by the planter class, and so on. And yet in this labor history by Marshall, Marshall says on page four, "The presence of the Negro depresses wages, reduces skill, curtails purchasing power, diverts white workers' attention from the economics of the race issue, and furnishes an enormous potential supply of industrial workers." Now just from what I've gone through so far, I would expect any historian who was just dealing with these facts fairly, to have written instead, "The presence of the whites depresses wages, reduces skill, curtails purchasing power," and so on, because in fact that is what hap-

pened for the first hundred years or so of capitalist development in the South, more often than not.

THE RECONSTRUCTION ERA

Following the Civil War, there were several different kinds of labor organizing. The first attempt nationwide was the National Labor Union, organized primarily by a man named William Sylvis, who, despite his racism, considered it essential to build unity between black and white working people. He toured the South in 1868, attempting to establish this. However, the National Labor Union itself very quickly faltered on this issue, despite appeals by Sylvis, by Frederick Douglass, by every leading black leader in the country. The union would not take a forthright stand on a completely open policy for all workers, and it fairly quickly faded from the scene.

During the same period one very interesting thing happened in the South. In 1868, in Pensacola, Florida, stevedores, who were mostly black, formed the Pensacola Workingmen's Association and went on strike the same year. And very soon after they were organized, they began to run into a different kind of trouble. This was the center of a rich supply of Southern lumber at the time, and for many years Canadian lumberjacks came to Florida in the wintertime to cut wood. In the winter of 1873, job competition, because of a general depression, strained to the breaking point. And the Canadians, who had come down to work in lumber, attempted to steal jobs from the blacks — the jobs as stevedores on the docks. So the Pensacola Workingmen's Association members armed themselves and protected their jobs. The British government requested of the American government that British citizens of Pensacola be protected from "riotous mobs of colored men." The American government sympathized, but it was not capable of suppressing the union, and the Canadians were in fact not allowed by the workers to take the jobs. The governments of Pensacola and of Florida tended to side with the Canadians, since they were white, but did not actually intervene to try to destroy the union, and so it won. And the union was quite popular in

Pensacola, as a matter of fact, and had such great support that in the next session of the Florida legislature, the legislature essentially protected the union by licensing stevedores and requiring six months' residence in Florida before they could get a license. So this early, nearly all-black union fought from 1868 to 1873, didn't compromise, and won just about everything that it was actually fighting for.

Now the next remarkable thing, to me, that happened in the South was that, following the Hayes-Tilden compromise that removed the Reconstruction armies from the Southern states (the last vestiges of them; there weren't too many left) 1877 was also the year that mass proletarian violence swept the United States. As a matter of fact, there's a book by Robert V. Bruce called 1877: YEAR OF VIOLENCE, which describes the whole thing. And interestingly enough, it was black and white railroad workers together in Martinsburg, West Virginia, who began the strike. And because the armies, as part of the compromise, were not paid and therefore not available to break strikes, as they always had been up until that time, the strike swept along railroad lines that covered the whole country, and taught the ruling class quite a lesson, I think. It was probably the biggest nationwide upheaval there's ever been in the United States.

THE KNIGHTS OF LABOR

Now, the next organized labor movement in the country was the Knights of Labor, which actually was organized in 1869 but did not get into the South that early. But the success of the Knights of Labor is very sobering for people who have been raised to believe that Southern workers are somehow congenitally anti-union, which is a theory that's frequently offered.

Here are the figures: The Knights of Labor came into the South for the first time in 1879. In the first year they had 475 members. The next year, they had 1,855 members. The first year they had 6 locals; the second year they had 28 locals. By 1886, which was the peak year of the Knights of Labor nationwide, in the Southern states there were 21,208 members in 487 locals. So we have this anti-union South

that we're told so much about, in seven years going from 475 members to over 20,000.

CLAUDE WILLIAMS: Was that white?

No, no. The Knights of Labor very officially and systematically organized without discrimination. Not only racially — they organized industrially, which after their fade, didn't happen again overall until the occurrence of the CIO. They did discriminate against a few people. Their constitution excluded lawyers, politicians, physicians, and rum-sellers from membership in the Knights, but otherwise they organized everybody, black and white. But I'll tell you, one of the interesting things is that a lot of writers have written that the Knights were segregated in some places; even though they organized everybody, they supposedly organized them into segregated locals. And Jan and I have been doing a great deal of research on the Knights in southern Mississippi, who were overwhelmingly black in the lumber industry and the sawmill workers and so on. And I believe that the reason why that impression is given is not because of the racism of the Knights of Labor, but because of the racism of the newspaper reporters and editors who were writing about it that historians read.

CLAUDE WILLIAMS: That's a very important point.

So, you see things like a reporter for a Mississippi paper, a Pascagoula paper, describing a meeting of the Knights of Labor and talking about the president of the local. And since the president of the local is black, the reporter writes in the report, "so-and-so, president of the Negro section," because to him it's inconceivable that there could have been a racially unified union in the South. Because of course there wasn't anything else interracial by that time. In fact, as late as 1946, FORTUNE magazine wrote a big article on labor in the South called "Labor Drives South," at the beginning of Operation Dixie. And one of the points that the author of the article makes is that in the South at that time, and since the end of World War I, the only institution found

throughout the South where blacks and whites came together on an equal basis, if they did at all, was in labor unions. And yet, of course, we're told frequently by our liberal friends that workers are the most racist people of all. But that's in itself something that ought to be examined.

The Knights of Labor led strikes all over the South during this period: in the coal mines of Alabama and Tennessee, the cotton mills in Georgia and Alabama, sugar workers in Louisiana, lumber in Louisiana and Mississippi. They were not just a union. They also organized co-ops, producers co-ops. They owned a tobacco co-op in Raleigh, North Carolina; a cooperative coal mine at Mercer, Kentucky; a black cooperative cotton gin at Stewart's Station, Alabama; a cooperative clothing factory at Morgan City, Louisiana; and consumer co-ops which they set up to fight company stores in Pittsburgh, Kentucky; New Iberia, Louisiana; Pulaski City, Virginia; and other places that I haven't found the details of yet. And they also entered politics, and they elected a great number of people. In 1877, the Knights elected a Congressman and 11 of 15 city councilmen in Lynchburg, Virginia. They elected a majority of the city and county government in Macon, Georgia. They elected an alderman in Statesville, North Carolina, and several city officials in Mobile. The following year, they elected the mayor of Jacksonville, Florida, and the mayor of Vicksburg, Mississippi. And in Anniston, Alabama, they elected a carpenter as mayor, and two molders, a brickmaker, a butcher, a watch maker, a rental agent, and a shoemaker as councilmen.

Throughout most of the country, the Knights of Labor declined after 1886 because it was discovered that the Knights' leadership, primarily its president, Terence Powderly, was secretly working to sabotage the eight-hour movement. That news doesn't seem to have reached the South as quickly as the rest of the country, so we find that the Knights are still leading militant activity even as late as a little after the turn of the century. But generally they began to decline in 1886 and didn't amount to too much after that.

Note: Earlier versions of this text have contained erroneous figures for Knights of Labor membership in the South.

THE AMERICAN FEDERATION OF LABOR

And in most areas, they were succeeded by the American Federation of Labor under Samuel Gompers, which was a distinct backward step in several ways. One was that while the Knights had gone out of their way to advance the cause of working people in the political sphere, the AFL specifically rejected politics as a method of workers' advance. And in addition, the AFL rejected organizing all workers on an equal basis, and instead only organized a craft at a time into separate unions, often at odds with one another, and so on. At first the AFL was officially and rigorously anti-racist. But that was the first thing to go, and by 1895 the AFL had admitted the International Association of Machinists, which had a racist bar in its constitution, and by 1900 the racism had gotten so bad that there were official resolutions of the AFL allowing the executive board to segregate and discriminate whenever they found that it would be to their advantage to do so. And by 1918 the AFL for the most part wasn't even willing to organize blacks under any circumstances. But even here, it's interesting that this tendency was the greatest in the North, and so much so that Frederick Douglass encouraged black workers to return South because skilled crafts were still open to them in the South and were not in the North. So it's interesting that even to the extent that racism was step-by-step imposed, that the people who run the country had their greatest difficulty in imposing it in the South, again not the traditional picture that we're offered.

In 1892, there was a racially unified general strike in New Orleans, which I believe was probably most significant in laying the groundwork for a lot of things that were to come. Jeremy Brecher, writing in his book, *STRIKE!*, said that the New Orleans general strike revealed an extraordinary solidarity among all races and classes of labor. And he says it helped to pave the way to the nationwide strike of 1894, two years later.

THE ALABAMA MINERS' STRIKE OF 1894

A book has recently appeared called *LABOR REVOLT IN ALABAMA*, by Robert D. Ward and William W. Rogers which is about the great strike of 1894, and I want to deal in some detail with this. This is an interesting book. Almost unwittingly, the authors have told the story of how, step by step, racism was imposed on black and white workers in Alabama. They haven't set out to do it, and I don't think they even realize that that's what they do. But they provide all the evidence, and reading it from that perspective is well worth doing. This is a tremendous book if you don't expect too much sophistication from the authors themselves, because it has a richness of detail that makes for good reading.

In 1889, 46.2% of Alabama coal miners were black. To me, that's a very striking statistic. And so I want to compare that fact in the book with the way the book's authors interpret its bearing on the strike. Here's what these authors of *LABOR REVOLT IN ALABAMA* said about black workers: "While they did not outnumber the whites, they served as a bar to an effective labor movement and as a strike-breaking force always available to the coal miners." What this book proves, by the way, is that that is untrue. While the whites did outnumber the blacks slightly, they served as an effective bar to the labor movement and ultimately divided it.

The first strikes in Alabama mines — and all of this is right in this area, by the way, in the five counties right around here; and it's a remarkable history — the first strikes were in 1879 and 1880, and they were broken by convict labor. And as a result, one of the earliest demands of miners in Alabama was the abolition of convict labor, and that was one of the things that they constantly struggled for, over and over again.

There were still strikes going on up until 1893, and the economic condition of mining as a whole was deteriorating at the time, because most of the coal was used to produce iron, and the iron industry was in a state of decline, as the

country was entering a depression. So the major companies, led by the Tennessee Company, slashed wages. And at about this time, the United Mine Workers of Alabama was formed, not to be confused with the United Mine Workers of America, because it's not the same. They had a statewide convention and they made the following demands. They said they would accept a 10% wage cut, provided that they would get the following: all coal weighed before dumping; a checkweighman chosen by the miners for every mine; and reductions in their rent, their store purchases, their mining supplies purchases, and their medical costs.

At first the company's tactic was to try to negotiate separately with black miners and with white miners. But the black miners, who were invited first, told the white miners about it, invited the white miners to the meeting. The company was furious, and nothing came of the negotiations. And when the pay cut went into effect, the UMW of Alabama voted to strike on April 14 of 1894. And the strike spread immediately throughout the five-county area. The first day there were approximately 6,000 on strike and it grew to almost 9,000. The vice president of the Tennessee Company called his system of strike-breaking (he came in to break the strike personally) "division" of the workers. He said if he could divide the workers, it would make them easier to handle. And his strategy was to import black workers. He wasn't able to get any of the Alabama black miners to scab, but he figured that he could divide the workers by importing black scabs, because he imported them all the way from Kansas to Birmingham to put them to work in the mines.

At this time, it's interesting to know what was on the picket signs of the strikers, because the newspapers kept reporting it as if it was white strikers and black strike-breakers. Here's what some of the picket signs said: They said, "Convicts Must Go." They said, "United We Stand." And some of the signs said, "We the Colored Miners of Alabama Stand With Our White Brothers." On April 23, after the first week of the strike, there was a demonstration of 4,000 miners in Birmingham that was 50% black. And one newspaper, writing about the strike, complained about the stubbornness and unity of black miners, "who seemed as determined in their purpose as the white."

On May 16 a black strikebreaker was killed while recruiting scabs. And interestingly enough, three people were charged with the murder: two were white and one was black. Ten days later the governor called out the troops and the war was really on.

The first day that the troops were called out, the commander discovered that one of the bands of Guardsmen called up from Birmingham was unionized, so they were quickly dismissed and replaced by troops from some other part of the state.

The workers held firm. There was a meeting on June 18 at Adamsville, where 800 white and 300 black miners met to reaffirm their support of the strike. And one of the motions of the meeting thanked "our colored brothers for standing firm against attempts to divide them." The miners also understood what was going on. And by this time, the political campaign was beginning to steam up, the campaign for governor and for legislature. And several miners were running for legislature, and a candidate jointly endorsed by the populists and the Jeffersonian Democrats was being supported by the strikers.

Finally, the strike was settled as a compromise, and in typical fashion, from every strike I've ever seen in my life, where workers (just like companies) demand more than they expect to get, so that they will get part of what they're demanding. But these authors (as almost all labor historians), when the workers don't get everything they ask for, write it down as a defeat. And actually, it was not at all, in my opinion. For instance, the wages they won were somewhere in between what they had demanded and what the company had offered. The price of blasting powder, which was a big issue, was reduced. They were not given any new checkweighmen, but the ones that the company had tried to take away were kept. Rents on company houses were cut 10%. And there was no discrimination in rehiring strikers and strike leaders. So that's how that strike ended.

If you read most standard labor history, what you read about going on at this time is not this strike, as interesting and as big a strike as this was, and racially unified in spite of all the handicaps. The strike you read about is the Pull-

man strike by the lily-white American Railway Union, led by Eugene Debs. But this Alabama one certainly gives a much deeper picture to me of the kinds of struggles the workers were confronted with than anything I've ever read about the Pullman strike. But that was the famous one.

As far as I know, the Alabama miners' strike was the last important struggle that grew out of the Knights of Labor's philosophy of industry-wide organizing of all people without discrimination. The result, in terms of the labor movement, was that the whole period went into eclipse with the rise of the AFL. Racism was built into unions.

A STUDY OF RACISM IN THE LABOR MOVEMENT

There is a recent article by Herbert Hill in *SOCIETY* magazine, called "Anti-Oriental Agitation and the Rise of Working Class Racism," which shows, among other things, how Gompers, using the issue of so-called "coolie labor," was able to confuse the whole AFL with racism. In fact, it's interesting that he came from the tobacco industry, from the cigar union. And one of the first things that happened in this anti-oriental campaign was that a new racist institution was introduced into the labor movement—the union label. The union label was first introduced by white cigarmakers in a "buy only white cigars" campaign—"These cigars are made by white union labor. Don't buy Chinese-made cigars." And that was the first union label on record, and was part of Gompers' campaign. And as a result of the anti-Oriental drive, according to Hill, the model was built by which the AFL craft unions then proceeded to expel blacks from all the skilled trades.

And that was accomplished by 1920. Up until 1920, from 1900 to 1920, you found blacks in virtually all the skilled trades. But step by step by step they were expelled by the white tradesmen, under the leadership of the AFL and Samuel Gompers. There were exceptions during this period, and they're important, and they're almost all in the South.

The biggest exception was the Brotherhood of Timber Workers, which was very strong in Louisiana and Texas, and also had members in Arkansas and Mississippi. It was

formed in 1910, black and white united; it grew to 30,000 members; two years later it affiliated with the IWW and conducted a very militant strike in 1912. Again, this is a situation that historians write up as a defeat, because all they can see is unions and not workers. The IWW did disappear from the scene, but much that was demanded in those organizing drives, and fought for, was won by the workers. And once again it becomes necessary to separate the two histories in order to see the reality.

There were a tremendous number of successful or unsuccessful strikes, a great deal of proletarian turbulence, up until World War I. After the war, the labor movement (the AFL and the railroad brotherhoods) grew somewhat in the early and mid-twenties. But following about 1925, as the country's economy became more turbulent, the ruling class made a tremendous attack on the working class, slashed wages across the board, smashed unions, etc. The AFL went into a state of decline, and it was just spiraling downward, not recruiting anywhere, above all collapsing in the South.

THE COMMUNIST UNIONS

At that time, in the late twenties, the Communist Party formed a new, nationwide industrial union called the Trade Union Unity League, under the leadership of William Z. Foster. Two of the most important strikes in the history of the South were led by the Communists. One was the Gastonia textile strike, led by the National Textile Workers Union. (It was that strike, among other things, that led to the formation of the Trade Union Unity League. The NTWU was actually formed before the whole nationwide union and it became one of the first member unions.) And of course following that, the Harlan, Kentucky, miners strike, led by the National Miners Union. The interesting thing about those to me is that even our own SCEF history book has, by only seeing the union, and not the workers, written up the NMU strike as a defeat for the union. And I would say once again, it takes nothing more than a comparison of how long the workers in Kentucky were able to hold out at pre-

vious conditions, compared to miners in any of the other coal fields, to realize that that fight protected those miners longer and better throughout the coming depression and what was to come than other miners who did not engage in a similar struggle. And those unions, as vehicles of that struggle, certainly were a great necessity, and were victorious.

And once again, every time there seems to be new real thrust in the direction of organizing the unorganized, the key, throughout the country, was placing the fight against racism at the front of the struggle. It's interesting, there's a book in which one of the Gastonia organizers wrote his own story of what happened, and he often felt that it was a shame that the Communists insisted on putting the struggle against racism at the center. It wasn't so easy to organize workers, he felt, if he did. But in the long run it was absolutely proven, that by making the fight against racism as a matter of principle, the only major strikes that successfully defended Southern workers in that period were the ones that the Communists fought very hard to keep racially unified.

TENANT FARMERS AND SHARECROPPERS

Also in the thirties, and another situation which deserves careful study but I'm just going to mention, were the organizations among black and white sharecroppers and tenant farmers. In Arkansas and surrounding states, it was the Southern Tenant Farmers Union that did the organizing, and it was mostly led by socialists. And in Alabama it was the Alabama Sharecroppers Union, which was a Communist union, which conducted some of the great struggles that protected and advanced the lives of the sharecroppers and tenant farmers. And all of these are above all important in understanding the groundwork of the CIO. Without this it's inconceivable that the CIO could have built itself a base. But the tradition of struggle, of militant unionism when the official labor movement was disintegrating in the South, certainly laid the groundwork.

THE FIRST SIT-DOWN IN AUTO

And when the sitdowns hit the auto industry, the first auto sitdown was in Atlanta in November of 1936. And that's really where the famous Flint sitdown began, because it was the auto workers of Atlanta who sat down and called up all the auto workers in the country to come to their defense. And the workers in Flint, Michigan, who have gotten all the attention, came out a full month ahead of their leadership's schedule of struggle, in order to demonstrate their solidarity with the workers at the Atlanta Lakewood plant.

THE CIO

The CIO didn't organize in the South with the same vigor that it organized in the North, but finally it was forced to, at the end of World War II, just in order to defend itself from runaway plants. And the remarkable thing is that in the period from 1939 to 1953, in spite of a great deal of reluctance on the part of the labor movement to continue its advance, union membership tripled in the Southern states in that period, and in fact continued to grow up until Walter Reuther took over as head of the CIO (which coincided with the onset of the full blast cold war red-baiting of the unions and the expulsion of the left unions). In the South, as in the rest of the country, the labor movement went into a state of decline, which it's still in today.

THE NEW MILITANCY

Today, although we don't have a clear pattern, we do see that the new upheavals are taking place in new ways, in many cases outside the official, established labor movement, as was the case in the CIO, or with the Communist unions, or the IWW, or the Knights of Labor. The Gulfcoast Pulpwood Association, the United Farm Workers (which is part of the AFL-CIO but has had to develop whole new strategies and methods of operating and reliance on its own methods), and the AFSCME unions (which have not had the rights to organize that the manufacturing unions have had,

and have been forced to fight much more militantly just for the most minimal kinds of organizations) are examples of this.

The Mississippi Poultry Workers Union is another example in an area where unions have been defeated over and over again. All of a sudden a new idea comes forward. Militant unionism, following the GPA example, goes out and fights and wins three out of three elections. Some of the more traditional unions are growing in militancy and their growing strength is a reflection of it. For example, the triumph of the Miners for Democracy. And UE has begun to come alive among electrical workers in the South in the last couple of years and recently won a tremendous victory in Tampa in a Westinghouse plant. And throughout, in these organizing drives, we see what we've seen ever since the times of slavery — that black workers are the most consistently militant leadership in every one of these new situations.



KEN LAWRENCE is a member of the editorial collective of the SOUTHERN PATRIOT, the newspaper of the Southern Conference Educational Fund (SCEF). For a copy of the entire text, write Ken Lawrence, SCEF, Box 5174, Jackson, Mississippi 39216. Donation, one dollar.



Tenants block moving van at attempted eviction in Brockton, Massachusetts in Winter 1975.

Tenants First: FHA Tenants Organize in Massachusetts

Barry Brodsky

During the mid-1960's and through to the early 1970's Massachusetts experienced a flourish of FHA-subsidized apartment developments built across the state. Some 30,000 families in Boston moved into these units which boasted below-market rents and promised to maintain low rents because the landlord was subsidized by the government and was re-paying the mortgage loan at a rate of from one to three per cent. But like most promises made by the government to the working class, FHA housing went sour. Rents began to soar, conditions at the projects rapidly deteriorated, and the tenants were caught in an inflationary squeeze as well as being forced to face poor living conditions.

The government's solution to the FHA-housing problem was twofold. First, stop subsidizing new construction for low-moderate income housing. The Nixon Administration put a hold on funding any new "236" projects in 1973. ("236" refers to section 236 of the National Housing Act of 1968

under which many of these projects were built.) Simultaneously, the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), the agency which regulates the programs, encouraged FHA landlords to come in regularly for rent increases which, in effect, would drive low-income people out of the housing which the government built for them. But the tide is being reversed.

ITEM: In March, 1973, HUD granted a \$27 rent increase at Battles Farm Village in Brockton — in March, 1975, more than 100 families have not yet paid that increase and have not been evicted.

ITEM: HUD has granted \$40 worth of rent increases at Mountain Village in Worcester during the last 18 months — 100 families have refused to pay the increases and are still living there.

ITEM: Fifty families at Tammybrook Apartments in Weymouth have been on total rent strike for one year and have refused to recognize two rent increases — again, no evictions.

In each of the above three projects tenants united and formed tenant unions when faced with rent hikes; rents which for many tenants would mean finding a new place to live. The three projects mentioned, along with seven others, now compose Tenants First Coalition — a state-wide organization of FHA tenant unions which claims more than 1000 dues-paying members.

Tenants First began in 1970 with organizing efforts against the biggest FHA landlord in New England — Max Kargman of First Realty, Inc. Some four years later the strongest FHA unions in Massachusetts are in Kargman-owned projects and Kargman himself hovers near financial ruin.

Max Kargman likes to call himself "father of the 221(d) (3) program" (predecessor of the "236" program). It was in the 1960's that Kargman frequented Washington, lobbying for the lucrative tax benefits found in the FHA program. Basically, the FHA finances a project to the tune of 90 per cent of the construction costs; the landlord-owner can sell shares of the project to outside investors to more than cover the other 10 per cent that the landlord is required to put up. The investors, or partners in the project, use these shares as "tax shelters" as the government allows the

project to "depreciate" in value on paper each year.

The FHA then subsidizes the landlord the difference between the market interest rate and the one per cent which the landlord pays. For the three projects already mentioned, Kargman cleared more than one million dollars before the first tenants moved in. The FHA also allows for a six per cent profit to be paid to the partners out of tenants' rents. But Kargman built his projects shoddily, requiring more federal funds to complete development — additional funds which would then show up in the mortgage and which Kargman and HUD would go to the tenants for in the form of rent hikes.

"The government and its agencies exist only to establish justice and promote the general welfare, something that HUD seems to have forgotten. And the general welfare does not consist of making a few millionaires like Max Kargman richer and pushing hundreds of families deeper into poverty."

— Al McCarthy, 68, Chairperson, High Point Tenants Union

Kargman tenants across the state found their landlord an easy target to organize against. The projects were falling apart. At High Point Village in the Roslindale section of Boston, there were no fire escapes — tenants went on a rent strike. At Battles Farm Village in Brockton the sewage system was so bad that waste frequently backed up in tenants' apartments. At Mountain Village in Worcester there were gas leaks which sent tenants to the hospital. At other projects there were sinking foundations, insect infestation, faulty heating systems, windows which would not open, drainage problems (Kargman built many of his developments on swampland), etc. etc. With conditions deteriorating at a rapid pace, tenants erupted when told that the rents were going up \$20, \$30, \$40, and more per month.

There are two levels of organizing for FHA tenants in Massachusetts — one level is for FHA tenants in Boston, the other for the rest of the state's FHA tenants. Boston is the only city in the State which extends Rent Control to its

FHA tenants. (Not all FHA tenants in Boston are covered by Rent Control — new construction and many rehabilitated buildings are exempt.) Boston has a Rent Control Board for FHA rent increases where FHA tenants can argue against rent increases and evictions.

Most Rent Control-covered FHA unions in Boston organized around preparing for these hearings. In other cities FHA tenants have withheld increases and have been consequently slapped with eviction notices and dragged into courts for what are usually protracted court battles. But even in Boston, where there is an FHA rent board, tenants are billed by Kargman for an increase even if the increase is cut back or denied by the board. Kargman and some other FHA landlords have brought a suit challenging the legality of a local board regulating federally subsidized housing; and recently HUD has written a new regulation which essentially supports the landlords in this case.

In order for working-class tenants to fight a corporate landlord, whether before a board, in a courtroom, or as in some instances in front of their doors blocking evictions, there has to be a viable organization with real staying-power. The unions in TFC have built structures which allow them to endure long court battles and the periods of relative calm which follow the original excitement of organizing the union.

The backbone of these FHA tenant unions is the "rep" system. Battles Farm organized a union in March, 1973, in response to a rent increase. Battles Farm is a 320-unit "garden apartment" project — what this means is that the project is laid out in courtyards, with about 20-25 apartments per courtyard. Each courtyard has one union rep (comparable to a shop steward) who attends union meetings every two weeks. The rep collects dues, hands out the union's monthly newsletter, and raps with the union members about what is going on in the project and the other TFC unions. Whether the projects are built like Battles Farm or like Camelot Court in Brighton where there are two high-rise buildings with 80 apartments in each, the union's strength lies in the rep system.

The unions, and thus TFC as a whole, are guided by the reps who make union and TFC policy decisions on a day-to-

day basis and report back to the general membership. (The "Coordinating Committee" of TFC, which meets every three weeks to discuss Coalition policy, is composed of reps from the individual unions.) A great majority of these reps within the unions are women.

"Our message to Max Kargman: we are no longer afraid of you, your scare tactics, or your unfair increases . . . we will pay no increase. The Tenants First Coalition, which has helped the tenants at Brandywyne to unite, is here to stay."

— Mina DiFilippo, Brandywyne Tenants Union.

"The majority of workers in the tenant movement are women. An explanation for this is that tenant unions is an area where women can be aggressive and take on an active leadership role because we are spending a great deal of time where we live and know the people we live with." Mary Ellen Tilden of the Battles Farm Tenants Union (BFTU) was speaking with tenants from Brandywyne Village in East Boston who were organizing against a \$48 rent increase. She continued, "There are, of course, many problems a woman encounters as a rep. Men who are heads of their families, union stewards or foremen at work are going to be reluctant to accept the word of a woman when it comes to making a decision such as withholding an increase or going on rent strike, or making an inspection of a heating system. They are going to question the knowledge you have of what is going to take place when this increase is withheld. They will doubt your ability to look at heating vent pipes and know which is single or double vent piping. You will have to prove yourself time and time again; there will always be someone questioning and testing your knowledge and ability. But, if women are going to actively take on this leadership role and participate in the actual formation and policy making decisions of this union you must continue to stand up to these people and not let them run roughshod over your efforts." Brandywyne organized and is now one of the strongest unions in TFC — nine of the 12 reps are women.

The BFTU has also branched out into doing more community work such as welfare advising; there is a day-care committee which has received funding, and the union is working with the city-wide Brockton Tenants Union in a rent control campaign.

Most of the confrontations between TFC unions, their landlords and the FHA have taken place in the courtroom except for occasional pickets and demonstrations by the tenants (and, of course, the daily struggles within the projects). There have been exceptions. Two TFC unions signed negotiated agreements with their landlords; one of those same unions plus another union have also physically blocked court-ordered evictions.

The Tammybrook Tenants Union (TTU) in Weymouth went on a total rent strike in November, 1972, over a rent increase and deteriorating conditions at the project. In February, 1973, the union signed an agreement with their landlord (Max Kargman) which ended the strike and "guaranteed" some \$30,000 in repairs. The agreement also restricted Kargman from enforcing any future increases unless the repairs were made — and the tenants were given full control as to the spending of the money for the repairs. Future rent increases were also to be first negotiated with the TTU. The TTU agreed to end their strike and Chairperson Linda Garcia called the agreement "similar to a labor union's no-strike collective bargaining agreement." "The tenants were intimidated by the courts," she said, "but so was Max. It seemed like the best way out at the time — our union members weren't strong enough to endure a long court struggle then." Kargman never abided by the agreement — only token repairs were made (without consulting the TTU) and within a year another increase, one which was never negotiated, was handed down to Tammybrook. The TTU went back on strike; a strike which led to the physical blocking of evictions by the union, with support from tenant groups across the state. But before looking at the eviction blockings, a look must be given at the other negotiated agreement signed by the Meadowbrook Village Tenants Union (MVTU) of Fitchburg — a union which is no longer active.

The MVTU signed the agreement with their landlord, Franklin Simon (a former Vice-President of First Realty),

in August, 1974, after an 18-month rent strike. The strike began with about 100 families, but had dwindled to a mere 18 at the time the agreement was signed. Internal union struggles proved to have a draining effect on the union. The MVTU then lost in District Court; while most unions expect this to happen, the MVTU (not yet a member union in TFC) had employed an opportunistic lawyer who not only had no organizational sense but led the MVTU to believe they could win in court. Members dropped off, but in the end 18 were willing to do self-defense in the appeals case. Rather than risking an uprising of sympathy for the remaining tenants and more publicity for the union, Simon signed the agreement which ended the strike — and gave Simon the rent increase. After the agreement was signed, what union was left completely collapsed.

Two negotiated agreements — one gave a union the time it needed to build, the other nailed the coffin closed on a weakened organization. In both cases the agreement was not a settlement of the struggle but rather a new or different set of ground rules under which either the struggle for power continued or one side capitulated.

On August 10, 1974, the TTU took to the streets and in two weeks blocked three court-ordered evictions of union families. Five months later tenants again banded together and blocked an eviction of a family at Battles Farm.

It was early Saturday morning when Janice McCormack answered her door to find a constable, two cops, and movers with a moving truck. Ms. McCormack, who lives with her two children, recalled those first frightening moments: "At first, I didn't know where to turn. The two leaders of the Union that I knew were both out of town. My next-door neighbor went to find some of the tenant union reps while I talked to the constable. In 30 minutes, four women that I had never seen before sat down on my front steps and refused to let the movers pass." More tenants came and talked the movers (Teamsters Local 82) into leaving. When the constable returned the next Monday for more evictions, TFC had mobilized support not only from its own FHA unions, but from tenant groups across the state who flocked to Tammybrook. The blockings received extensive news coverage and TFC lawyers were able to get restraining orders

in court. First Realty has yet to try again for these evictions.

As a result of the eviction blockings the TTU has adopted a position of "no evictions" at Tammybrook. "Any family evicted from Tammybrook (there are 90 families living there) would weaken our union," said building rep Paula Gorham. "So we're ready to block any eviction attempt." The BFTU has adopted a similar position for its union members. "I never thought I could do it," explained courtyard rep Sharon McDonald of the BFTU, "but when we got the call to go to Tammybrook, I dropped everything and went. And we did it, we blocked those evictions!"

"If it wasn't for the Union we'd be out on the street." — Louis Keller of Battles Farm after the Tenants Union blocked the attempted eviction of his family.

On January 18, 1975, the BFTU had an eviction of their own to block. The Keller family — Louis, Dottie, and their four young children — were called on a Monday by the Sheriff's Department and told to have their belongings packed and ready to be moved by 8 am on Saturday.

"You may be the first (eviction) up there," Deputy Werner told Lou Keller, "but you won't be the last. We're going to get you people out one by one." But when Saturday morning came the deputies were greeted by some 250 tenants from all across the state. After four gruelling hours of head-to-head confrontation between the tenants, the Brockton Police, and the Sheriff's Department (which brought attack dogs to the scene), the court convinced the landlord's attorney to put off the eviction for a few days.

Kargman responded to this latest eviction blocking by attempting to get injunctions against thirteen tenant groups and TFC. The injunctions were an attempt to stop tenants from blocking evictions by scaring them with further court action and the threat of being in contempt of court if they took part in any more blockings. As yet Kargman has been unsuccessful in getting the injunctions, but judges hearing the motions said that if another blocking took place the in-

junctions would be granted.

The eviction blockings at Tammybrook and Battles Farm were previews of things to come in the tenant struggle in Massachusetts. The negotiated settlement the TTU signed was supposed to lull the tenants into a coma; instead they strengthened themselves. Meanwhile, Max Kargman is working out an agreement with HUD to put a "binding arbitration" clause in all his new leases. The BFTU and TTU, however, are demanding that HUD foreclose on Kargman at the two projects and not resell them. The unions want HUD to retain permanent ownership of the projects, eliminate the mortgage payment (which consists of about 40% of the rents), stop the evictions and make needed repairs.

Kargman now finds himself in serious financial trouble in more than half of his 14 projects and is trying hard to find a way to take the starch out of TFC. The Coalition, incidentally, filed a suit in Federal District Court in 1973 charging Kargman with siphoning funds out of his projects and into his pockets, and charging HUD with closing its eyes and not enforcing its own regulations. HUD has since "ordered" Kargman to repay more than two million dollars to his project accounts. Kargman is hoping the offer of "binding arbitration" will make him look like he sincerely wants to work with tenant unions to enough rank and file tenants to cause a split within the militant unions in his projects. Because if Kargman fails to smash the unions, he will eventually go out of business; and HUD does not want to be forced to take over Kargman's projects — which partially explains its support of Kargman in the struggle.

The tactics of collective bargaining, however, will fail for Kargman and other FHA landlords over the long run because FHA tenants know what the landlords and the government are up to. Tenants got a view of HUD's plans last summer when HUD Undersecretary Fred Phaender testified in Boston in the case regarding the legality of FHA Rent Control. Phaender said that HUD will encourage landlords to "phase in" rent increases rather than get it all in one lump. Huge increases, Phaender said, "make tenants unhappy" and might even, for some, mean "dropping off one of their daily meals." So instead of big increases, Phaender said, "I would advise any owner to come in at least annually (for in-

creases). The HUD field officers have been told to try to get the owners more frequently." And Boston's Area Director for HUD recently told the Boston Globe that "FHA housing is not for low-income people. They can go to public housing."

HUD's plan is to rid FHA projects of low-income tenants in favor of people who can pay more. TFC tenants pledge to keep low-income housing for low-income people. And the eviction blockings at Tammybrook and Battles Farm coupled with TFC's close alliance with the rest of the state's tenants movement are the most dramatic examples of how that pledge will be kept.

BARRY BRODSKY, born in Dorchester, Massachusetts, became an activist through the Vietnam Veterans Against the War (VVAW). He now lives in Brockton and is active in the Battles Farm Tenants Union, the Tenants First Coalition of FHA tenants unions in Massachusetts, and the Brockton Tenants Union.

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Syndicalism and Revolution in Spain: The Workers' Commissions

Jean Monds

FROM FASCISM TO TECHNOCRACY:
THE REBIRTH OF THE WORKING-CLASS MOVEMENT

During the Civil War of 1936-39 the Spanish working-class movement was crushed by a fatal combination of tragic internal divisions and international fascist attack. (1) During the years of repression that followed Franco's victory, tens of thousands of political and trade-union militants were killed, imprisoned, or forced into exile for the remainder of their lives. Under these conditions active resistance to the Franco regime shrank to that carried on by tiny groups driven completely underground, by guerrilla groups in the mountains, and by those who were able to organize themselves inside the prisons. (2) A system of sindicatos verticales (that is, of corporative labor organizations on the German and Italian model) was imposed to keep order in the factories. Wages were fixed by government decree. The conditions of labor were what the owners

of factories decided them to be. The workers reacted with the only weapons of self-defense left to them: trabajo lento (go slow) and sabotage.

Thus, an era of production under fascist administrative mechanisms was initiated. Wages were very low, prices high, and the quality of goods produced distinctly inferior. Capitalists got less than ever before in the way of output, but thanks to a highly monopolized industrial situation and, of course, to drastically reduced labor costs, were still able to make respectable profits. The goal of the fascist economists of the period was "autarchy", or complete economic self-sufficiency. The effect of the system on the working class was complete and utter economic privation. Because wages were pushed down to bare subsistence levels during these years, an important amount of capital accumulation took place.

To some extent, however, the economics of autarquia only made a virtue of a necessity. After the Second World War the other Western nations put Spain in economic and diplomatic quarantine to show their "disapproval" of the only surviving Axis power. This situation of isolation and repression lasted until the late 'fifties and left its marks on an entire generation of Spanish workers.

During the period of isolation Franco made ample use of the Spanish fascist party, the Falange, to counter threats to his power issuing from the other segments of the very narrow spectrum of political activity permitted under his regime. Franco's basic political strategy was the simple and effective one of playing one group off against another. When the monarchist camarilla, for example, appeared to menace his position, he responded by giving a wink and a nod to the Falange. This gave rise to stage-managed rallies à la Nuremburg and renewed each time (falsely) the Falangist's hopes that their party would one day become a real power in Spain. By the end of the 'fifties the Falange's area of influence had, in fact, been reduced to that of controlling the sindicatos verticales where they continued to exercise their historic function of keeping the workers down. They were never again to sally forth from this last bastion. As soon as the other Western countries, led by the United States, decided to integrate Spain into the anti-Soviet

family of nations, the first to lose in the situation were the Falange, whose "totalitarian" characteristics were by that time considered embarrassing. By the beginning of the 'sixties, the sindicatos verticales represented the only card that the Falangistas had left to play.

THE LEFT IN EXILE

Because the working-class organizations were either driven into exile or required to operate in total secrecy after the Civil War, changes in the party allegiances of Spanish workers began to take place. The dominant organizations in the working class up to and including the years of the Civil War had been the Spanish Socialist Party, its trade union the Union General de Trabajadores or UGT, and the anarcho-syndicalist Confederacion Nacional del Trabajo or CNT. The Spanish Communist Party (Partido Comunista de Espana or PCE), founded in 1920, had failed to attract many workers and was a relatively tiny organization when the Second Spanish Republic was founded a little over a decade later. (3)

During the Civil War the PCE vastly increased its membership, but the new additions to the party came not so much from the working class as from the ranks of the petit bourgeoisie, whose small businesses and small holdings were being threatened by the anarcho-syndicalist collectivizations (especially in Catalonia and Aragon), and by the new militancy of the Spanish Socialist Party. (4) The new recruits were in large part attracted by the Popular Front political line of the party, which represented its attempts to apply, in the Spanish context, the political program then being maintained by the Communist International. In general the PCE's strategy was to bloc with the various republican parties against the proletarian organizations, attempting to keep the political struggle of the times within the limits of a fight to defend the Second Republic. This sometimes included kidnapping and assassinating the leaders of the other working-class parties, and there were many who became convinced that the real aim of the PCE's political efforts was to destroy the Spanish Revolution itself. (5)

For these reasons the Socialists and anarchists kept the PCE out of the deliberations of the "government" in exile after the war. Perhaps because of this, and also perhaps because of the fact that the PCE was much better at underground work, the party managed to keep its organization alive inside Spain throughout the long years of isolation and repression. During this period the PCE began to earn the respect of large numbers of Spanish workers as the only organization which appeared to be continuing the resistance to Franco and the only organization which remained inside Spain and hence in any way close to their lives.

After "de-Stalinization" in 1956 the political line of the PCE stressed a policy of "national reconciliation". (6) By this was meant the need to unite all of the "patriotic" and "anti-fascist" forces of the nation to achieve the end of the dictatorship by "peaceful and democratic means". (7) In addition to extending an invitation to the anarchists and socialists to participate in this strategy, the party also made special appeals to the Spanish Army and to the Spanish Catholic Church. (8) In the Jornada de Reconciliacion Nacional (Day of National Reconciliation: 1958) and the Huelga Nacional Politica (National Political Strike: 1959), supporters of the party were to strike work and to "fraternize with the forces of the Army and the Police against the dictatorship". (9) Neither of these two political initiatives was at all successful, for the most part because the party still did not have a solid following in the working class. Figures published by the party itself giving the class composition of the membership circa 1937 give an indication as to why: (10)

Industrial Workers (and artisans and shopkeepers)	35%
Agricultural Smallholders.....	30%
Agricultural Day Laborers.....	25%
Middle Classes	7%
Liberal Professions and Intellectuals.....	3%

By the end of the 'fifties the PCE still had not overcome its petit-bourgeois origins and still had not distinguished itself by organizing in the factories. Its clandestine trade union, the Organizacion Sindical Obrera (Workers' Union), never achieved much and was disbanded as soon as the in-

introduction of the 1958 Collective Bargaining Law made a new kind of labor organization possible.

THE LAW OF COLLECTIVE CONTRACTS: 1958

The political cabal which replaced the Falange in Franco's affections at the end of the 'fifties was constituted out of the semi-secret lay religious order known as Opus Dei (literally, "Work of God"). Founded by an obscure Aragonese priest in 1928, the order is an association of Catholics ostensibly devoted to "the search for Christian perfection in all walks of life". (11) Despite this rhetoric the organization is extremely authoritarian and elitist in concept and snobbish in practice, especially in recruitment policy. The best way to rise to the top of the order — as did, for example, a number of members who became Spanish cabinet ministers between 1958 and 1973 — is to be male, youthful, talented, and rich. (12) Members of more modest social origins are in fact to be found more frequently in the (separate) women's organization wherein they carry out such tasks necessary to the "work of God" as typing, chauffeuring, bookkeeping, and so on. (13)

As contrasted with the Falange, the members of the order who were elevated to the government in 1958 presented an image of modernity and technical expertise in economic matters which led many people to think that Spain was at last to move ahead into contemporary Europe. (14) One of the Opus Dei's most useful characteristics was that some of their more prominent members could speak the same language as the officials of the important international investment organizations such as the World Bank, the Organization for European Economic Cooperation and Development, and the International Monetary Fund. One of the changes in the Spanish scene which was introduced by the Opus Dei at the behest of their international advisors was an imitation (adapted for local usage) of an important American invention known as "collective bargaining". (15)

The reasons for the introduction of this law are complex. On the one hand, the working class had never completely ceased to fight back despite the virtual eradication of their organizations. The Asturian miners had never given up the

strike weapon, even in the periods of severest repression. Furthermore, the general strikes in Catalonia in 1951 had indicated that mass political struggle, even to the point of open insurgency, had not been made impossible for all time by the defeat of the working class in the Civil War. (16) On the other hand, the fascist administrative mode of economic organization made an expansive industrial development impossible for a number of reasons. By international capitalist standards labor was highly immobile and unproductive, and the control exercised by the Falangist *sindicatos verticales* was highly restrictive of the individual employer's freedom of movement. The Law of Collective Contracts, decreed in 1958, allowed employers to negotiate labor agreements directly with their workers rather than through the official *sindicatos verticales*. By providing for the discussion of wages and working conditions outside of the confining and punitive ambience of the *sindicatos verticales*, the Opus Dei hoped to harness the wages struggles of the workers to the wagon of capital accumulation. In so doing the technocrats played the sorcerer's apprentice, for the effect of the new arrangements was to release incredible energies long bottled up in the Spanish working class and to give the subtle planners of Opus Dei a good deal more than they had wished for.

The Collective Bargaining Law was intended to be the "liberal" answer to the fascist administrative mechanisms of the regulation of the labor market by state decree. The word "liberal" is used here in its classic economic sense. The technocratic government (who were "liberal" in no other sense) hoped that by leaving workers and employers free to haggle over the terms of employment free from the intervention of the *sindicatos verticales*, they would thereby free the "invisible hand" to achieve a more perfect allocation of resources in production. This in turn would lead to higher profits and to economic development. Given a number of ancillary conditions, this is, in fact, what happened. It was not, however, all that happened. The struggle over the apportionment of the surplus, even when it is called "collective bargaining", cannot take place in a vacuum — even in a dictatorship. No sooner was the new law in the process of being slowly and timidly put into effect than organizations began to develop among the workers which at-

tempted to exploit this opportunity to the full. Thus, one of the unplanned consequences of the collective-bargaining law was the rebirth of the Spanish working-class movement in the form of the comisiones obreras or workers' commissions.

THE WORKERS' COMMISSIONS

The first workers' commissions grew up as ad hoc bodies dedicated to mobilising workers in particular factories for the struggle to win the best contracts possible under the new law. (17) One of the key aspects of organization in the factories was the existence of a semi-official body known as the jurado de empresa or "plant council". These councils formally made up the bottom line of the official sindicatos verticales and, in theory, existed to express the workers' point of view to management on matters of day-to-day importance as well as in collective-bargaining negotiations. In fact, because of the bribery and intimidation to which their members were subjected, the councils often represented no one other than management itself. One of the first tasks of the workers' commissions, therefore, was to destroy the authority of the plant council. Later, members of the workers' commissions would debate the question as to whether or not to put their own people on the factory councils.

The workers' commissions were organized on this relatively informal and seasonal basis during a period which lasted from approximately 1962 through 1966. The places of greatest development for the workers'-commissions movement at this time were the industrial zones of Barcelona, Madrid, and the Basque country. There was also an important center of organization in the building trades in Seville, a city which had been a stronghold of the Communist Party during the Second Republic.

Because, in the early period, the workers' commissions were organized largely with the aim of winning a good contract, the preponderance of the tactics developed in these years had as their goal the application of pressure on the plant management and (where necessary) on the sold-out members of the jurado de empresa. Such tactics included huelgas relampagos ("lightning strikes"), boycotts of the

plant cafeteria, and refusals to use the company transport at the end of the workday. Because these demonstrations of organization and unity were carried out in almost every case with perfect discipline and without warning, they were often very effective on employers long unused to this sort of thing. In the typical "lightning strike", for example, the usual clamor of a busy plant would be extinguished within minutes, and for a period of anywhere from fifteen minutes to an hour absolute silence would reign with a profound dramatic effect. The boycott of plant transport was also a dramatic form of demonstration of strength and unity which, in addition to making a point to the boss, also frequently led to confrontations with the police. On a given day all of the workers would refuse to ride home in the company buses and would walk away from the plant in a body. In the Spanish context this constitutes a political demonstration, and in many cases, therefore, the workers also had to face arrests and jailings.

In some cases the confrontation with the state was the central part of the struggle for the contract. In the Catalan textile industry, for example, the numerous small employers in the business preferred to avail themselves of the option to bargain collectively within the framework of the *sindicatos verticales*. In theory, therefore, one half of the corporate structure known as the *sindicato vertical* was discussing wages and working conditions with the other half. (In other words, the "economic" or employers' section was supposed to be "holding a dialogue" with the "social" or workers' section.) What this amounted to in fact was a public contest in which the textile workers confronted the state in the form of the "vertical syndicates". Such confrontations involved mass demonstrations when textile workers gathered outside the offices of the *sindicatos* allegedly to "hear the results of the negotiations", but actually to pressure the Falangist bureaucracy to write a contract generous to them and not to their employers. The Catalan textile towns of Sabadell, Ripoli, and Igualada, all of which have a tradition of labor struggle that goes back to the first half of the 19th century, then became the scenes of hard-fought battles between the "forces of public order" and the workers fighting for their conditions and wages. Similar struggles later took place in the construction in-

dustry in Seville and Granada, and for the same structural reasons (i.e., that numerous small employers in a relatively competitive industry preferred to bargain together for a contract applicable to all firms in the province).

Each of these actions, whether on the premises of a large company or in the street, carried its cost in terms of lost jobs, arrests, jail sentences, and some rough treatment at the police station. The victories won, however, far outweighed the costs. In addition to the fact that wages shot up phenomenally, the working-class movement in the factories had re-emerged after its long period of defeat. The next problem to be faced was how far the working-class movement should go in utilizing the opportunities offered by the new law.

SYNDICAL ELECTIONS: 1966

Thinking that they could exploit some of the new energy and enthusiasm generated by the growing practice of collective bargaining to vivify their own sclerotic organization, the Falangist bureaucrats of the *sindicatos verticales* attempted to draw some of the action into the official structure. In 1963, with great fanfare, "truly free and open" elections for the "representative" posts within the *sindicatos verticales* were announced. These "representative" posts began with the positions on the *jurado de empresa*, or plant council, and proceeded (by a system of indirect election) to higher levels within the *sindicatos verticales*. Filling such positions at any level higher than that of the factory meant very little in real terms, of course, since at every stage the appointed bureaucrats could over-rule the "freely elected" ones.

Alone among all of the groups on the left, the PCE decided that this represented a challenge on the part of the Falangist bureaucrats which had to be accepted. The party, therefore, came out strongly in favor of participating in the 1966 elections. It began an intense campaign in every area in which it had influence in the workers'-commissions movement. This influence was considerable in most areas of the country, since the party had been important in the organization of the movement from a very early stage. The

workers'-commissions movement, in fact, provided an ideal avenue for the party's politics of "national reconciliation". Among the groups "reconciled" to work more closely with the PCE were important sections of the Catholic workers' movement and dissident elements of the Falange. The founding document of the Madrid workers'-commissions organization carries the signature of one of the leaders of the "left wing" of the Falange, and the meeting at which it was drawn up took place on premises owned by the *sindicatos verticales*. (18)

It is not entirely surprising, therefore, that the PCE should welcome the chance to participate in the elections when all of the other working-class parties were strongly opposed. The party had certain well-defined political and trade-union ends in view, and felt strong enough to take on the bureaucrats of the Falange on their own ground. After a vigorous campaign the party was successful in convincing the Catholic worker groups and large numbers of non-affiliated workers to go along with the strategy, and workers'-commissions candidates were elected at all levels in all of the major industrial centers. (19)

The strategy of participation nevertheless had its shortcomings. In the first place, the most outspoken of the workers' leaders in elected positions were simply thrown out of their posts (and often at the same time out of their jobs) when the appointed bureaucracy wanted to get tough. Between the elections of 1963 and 1966, no less than 1800 "freely elected" representatives had been thrown out of their posts in this way, and the figure for the years following 1966 is not known but is certainly higher.

Worse than this were the consequences when the Opus Dei government decided it had to crack down on the workers'-commissions movement in the course of the economic crisis of the late 'sixties. This culminated in the full-scale repression which took place between November 1968 and February 1969 when the country was declared in a "state of siege". Thousands of working-class militants were arrested, jailed, and worked over in the police stations. Police work was made immeasurably easier on this occasion by the fact that the guardians of public order knew right where to go to get the leadership of the entire movement.

Almost all of the top leadership of the workers' commissions were thrown in jail at that time, and some of them are still there. By the end of 1969 it even appeared that the entire movement had been destroyed.

The workers'-commissions movement, then, arose out of the traditions of working-class struggle that had been carried forward from the past, and had burst into life when the Spanish ruling class was forced to substitute a more modernized regime of labor management for an outworn fascism. Throughout the 'sixties the workers' commissions had followed the political lead of the Spanish Communist Party, which was pursuing a policy of "national reconciliation" and the "replacement" of the dictatorship by "peaceful" means. In the development of the workers' movement in the factories these politics had worked themselves out in practice through a (necessarily) limited participation in the official structure of the sindicatos verticales. It was a policy which led to extremely heavy losses in a period of repression instituted at the end of the decade. The questions brought up by the events of that period were not really questions about whether or not the workers' commissions should have participated in the official trade-union structure at all (as some of the groups hostile to the PCE averred). The real questions, rather, concerned the nature of the political goals which were being served by this strategy. At issue was the validity of a policy of "national reconciliation" and all that it implied. Discussions about this issue are now going on in Spain. They are being held at a time when the political regime of Francoism is in an advanced state of degeneration. After a brief description of this state of affairs, we will return to questions of politics in the Spanish working-class movement.

II. FRANQUISMO IN DECLINE : FROM TECHNOCRACY TO UNCERTAINTY

As we have just seen, the 1960's saw the rebirth of the Spanish working-class movement on the basis of agitation in the factories. The events of these years, however, must also be understood in the context of the internal dynamics

of Francoist politics. The short space of years in which the workers' commissions rose to prominence coincided with a period in which a self-confident technocratic government used every means possible to make Spain acceptable to the rest of Europe. Thus, the government pretended to introduce measures of political liberalization to match the changes which they felt they had effected in the economic sphere.

This pseudo-liberalization took place in an era of unprecedented economic expansion on a world scale. Spain benefited from this international prosperity in the form of an increased flow of income from abroad: through tourism earnings, remittances of exiled Spanish workers, and an increase of foreign investment in Spanish industry.

This era began to come to an end with the first symptoms of world economic crisis manifested in the international monetary panic of November 1967. The British pound was devalued by 14% on this occasion, and the technocratic government in Spain was quick to protect its economic program through a speedy devaluation of the peseta by an exactly equivalent amount. This was not sufficient to solve all of the problems generated in a period of hasty and unplanned economic growth, however, and the devaluation was accompanied by a wage freeze. No collective labor contracts could be drawn up to include increases of more than 5.9% for the space of a year (inflation was running well in advance of this figure). As had occurred in Britain, and would take place later in the United States, the working class was required to shoulder the direct costs of an anarchic system of production by having salaries frozen while the government engaged in an ineffective charade of controlling prices.

The wages freeze gave the government a short space in which to breathe, but throughout the year the workers' commissions in every branch of production were preparing for a major push when the freeze was over. This the government could not tolerate, and toward the end of 1968 the newer methods of economic manipulation had necessarily to give way to the older but more reliable techniques of direct repression. The declaration of a "state of siege" in January 1969 was the form this repression took. Militant workers were arrested by the thousands, beaten up, thrown

in jail, and in many cases desterrado (i.e., exiled to remote parts of the country).

Also abandoned at this time were all of the cosmetics of "liberalization" which had been applied to the dictatorship's sagging cheeks. (20) The innovations had included a new "constitution", a new "press law", and a more relaxed attitude toward the publication of books and magazines. The quiet decrease in emphasis on these projects represented a setback in no real sense, since the "reforms" hadn't amounted to much in any case. The only real setback was suffered by the Opus Dei government itself in that the return to jackboot methods marked the end of its tenure. One by one at first, and later in wholesale lots, the Opus Dei ministers were shown to the door as the new conditions of the 'seventies called for sterner, if clumsier, hands at the wheel. The development of the workers' movement in the Spain of the mid-'seventies must now be evaluated, therefore, against a different political backdrop.

In brief, the politics of the regime in Spain have gone from the politics of technocracy to the politics of uncertainty. This basic change provides the key to an understanding of the growing militancy and determination of the Spanish working-class movement today. The politics of Francoism have necessarily become the politics of uncertainty, since none of the actors at work behind the facade of the regime is capable of bringing a coherent and consistent policy to bear on the growing political and economic demands of the workers. Nor is there an arbiter available to ride herd on the wildly contradictory elements of the Spanish ruling class when Franco can no longer exercise this function. This is especially true since the assassination of his hand-picked successor, Carrero Blanco, in 1973.

The technocratic solution, which worked so well in the past, is no longer viable. Externally, it has been rendered unfeasible by international economic crisis. A subtle manipulation of the economy is less and less possible as foreign investment begins to slow down, as the exiled workers come home from their jobs in the Common Market countries, and as the tourists decide to stay at home for a while. Internally, the Opus Dei has become merely the most recent casualty of the inner dynamic of Francoism. Now that the

order's services are no longer useful, Franco has once again extended his tenure of power by ending theirs: much to the satisfaction of their various rivals. Like Goya's Saturn, Franco has always survived by devouring his children, and the Opus Dei ministers were only the last in a long line of these. Unfortunately for the system, however, there is at present no group of aspirants to governmental power with the cohesiveness to take their place.

Certainly, it is not possible to revive a version of Falangismo at this point, even though an "extreme right" has been giving signs of a rebirth of activity in recent times. The old war horses of Spanish fascism are as testy and potentially as vicious as before, but they operate now as generals without any divisions. Their social base has shrunk to include little more than the time servers of the sindicatos verticales and some of the other government departments. This group can be served up to appear at the occasional rally (with the afternoon off), but can hardly be said to constitute a movement in any other sense.

The most important remaining contenders for power, then, are the Army and the Crown or some combination of the two. The conventional wisdom holds that the Spanish army under Franco has become the opposite of its former self. (21) It is now described as relatively small, reasonably professional, and having more soldiers than generals. Recently, however, there have been stirrings of indiscipline in some of the grades, and not long ago a high-ranking general felt called upon to issue a public warning against political activities. This should not be taken as an indication that the Spanish army is capable of following the path recently trod by the Armed Forces Movement in Portugal, however, since the destabilizing factor of an unsuccessful colonial war is notably absent in the Spanish case. (22) On the other hand, it is also unlikely that the powerful figures in the army would pledge their unreserved love and loyalty to the present monarch, Juan Carlos. For one thing the prince's father, Don Juan, still intervenes more forcefully in Spanish politics than does Juan Carlos, and for another the prince is universally thought of as highly incompetent, centuries of inbreeding and a career of no particular utility having produced a royal ruler whose pretensions are more fragile than they usually are in such cases.

At present, therefore, there is no coherent political formation within the regime capable of bringing a strong hand to bear when the occasion arises. Under these conditions the growing breadth and militancy of the workers' movement takes on a political significance that it has not had since the Civil War.

When Franco became seriously ill last summer, various elements of his personal following staged a series of farcical scenes at his bedside for the benefit of the viewers on national television. At the same time some 10,000 workers shut down thirty factories in the important industrial region of Bajo Llobregat (Barcelona), and successfully confronted the police in the streets for more than a week.

As the discordant elements of the regime jostled each other during the autumn, the crucial SEAT plant in Barcelona (automobiles) was the site of a conflict involving more than 10,000 workers. Locked out of the plant, they marched into the heart of Barcelona and, identified by their blue "monos" with SEAT printed on the shoulder, held the first mass meetings in the Plaza de Catalunya since the days of the Republic.

In the early winter, as the political gossip shops in Madrid were the scene of excited buzzing about the fall of the "liberal" Minister of Information Pio Cabanillas, 12,000 workers staged a three-day general strike in the Basque country against increases in the cost of living and for the release of the imprisoned Basque leaders.

Clearly, the coming period will be one of crucial importance as the politics of Franquismo become increasingly the politics of uncertainty, and the mass movement of the working class gains in maturity and determination. Under these circumstances the question of political leadership in that movement becomes paramount in importance. It is to an analysis of the problems brought up by that question that we now turn.

III. THE STRUGGLE FOR REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS IN THE WORKING-CLASS MOVEMENT IN SPAIN: 1975

Any discussion of the political perspectives now before the Spanish working-class movement must begin with an

analysis of the present program of the Spanish Communist Party. That party alone maintained its organization intact within Spain during the entire period of the repression, and, for reasons alluded to earlier, has achieved a position of importance in the working-class movement today which it did not have in the Spain of the Republic and the Civil War. The PCE has also played a key role in the organization and development of the workers' commissions since the beginning, and has been able to give an important amount of political direction to that movement through most of its history. The party is no longer, however, the only political force represented in the workers' commissions. The amplification of the struggle since 1970 has given rise to new forms (such as the asamblea de fabrica or factory assembly). In addition a much broader range of political opinion among the militant workers is now in evidence. The question which now arises is whether or not the PCE will be able to continue to inform the mass movement, i.e., the workers' commissions, with the political goals which the party is currently pursuing.

The PCE's latest political initiative is the creation of a political consortium called the Junta Democratica de Espana (Democratic Council of Spain, hereinafter JDE) which was launched in Paris in the summer of 1974 during a period of great political agitation in Spain. PCE Secretary Santiago Carrillo and self-exiled Opus Dei politician Calvo Serer appeared together at that time to announce the formation of this body. It includes not only the followers of Serer (whom-ever they may be) but also groups much farther to the right such as the Carlists. The only political bodies excluded by definition from the JDE are the Spanish government itself and the so-called "extreme right" of the Falange.

The political declaration of the JDE begins as follows:

The political regime of the Spanish state, founded on the basis of a now distant civil war and maintained until now as the personal dictatorship of General Franco...has at last reached its end.

The present Spanish government has reached the limit of its possibilities, the declaration goes on to explain, because it can provide neither genuine freedom, nor economic de-

velopment, nor even a coherent principle of rule after Franco disappears. According to the JDE there is only one solution for the future government of the country : the restoration of the republic. Evoking the twin images of repression and anarchy, the declaration states :

The Spanish people are not in the habit of fooling themselves. Between the extremist repression of the present regime, and potential anarchic violence, there is no objective more central, nor plan more reasonable, than that of the restoration of the democratic state. (my emphasis)

With these remarks the framers of the document show that they are as alarmed at the prospect of social revolution as they are by the spectre of reactionary violence held up by the present possessors of political power in Spain. This attitude is not surprising for most of the political elements represented on the JDE. They include, after all, dissident monarchists, "liberal" industrialists, the "left wing" of the Opus Dei, and a whole range of petit-bourgeois parties of a nationalist and social-democratic character. Many people, on the other hand, might have expected that the Spanish Communist Party would show a little less alarm at the prospect of social revolution given that it has undergone a complete break with Moscow and is today one of the truly independent communist parties of Western Europe. (23)

Independence from the foreign-policy imperatives of Moscow (or Peking), however, does not apparently mean that the PCE is now able to reverse its long history of working to achieve bourgeois democratic forms rather than revolution in Spain. Not only that, but there is also a whole range of political groups on the left in Spain today who, despite the fact that they have criticised the PCE for its pacifism and social-democratic tendencies in the past, are now completely unable to pose any political alternatives to the PCE and have fallen in line behind the program of the Junta. These are all groups of a pro-Chinese tendency who, apparently because of their interest in developing good relations with the "national bourgeoisie", see little difficulty in cooperating with the non-proletarian groups represented on the JDE. Like the Carlists and the Christian Democrats they are interested above all in a peaceful movement toward

a democratic republic.

These groups will be identified and discussed later on. They are not, however, the political parties referred to in the following passage of the declaration of the JDE :

The historic mission of the Spanish political opposition to the dictatorship has consisted precisely in the creation and preparation of organizations, leaders, and cadre, through work which has been going on for some time (from positions which were ideologically conservative as well as progressive, of the right as well as the left, modern in outlook as well as traditional and nationalist as well as regionalist in outlook) for the conquest of public liberties. (my emphasis)

The parties referred to here are the right-wing Christian democrats, the Carlists, and possible even some sections of the Falange (i.e., the "nationalists").

In announcing its unity with this assortment of political inclinations, the PCE is also announcing the renewal of its historic policy of popular-front alliances which reigned during the Civil War and which led to the systematic repression of the revolutionary actions of workers and agriculturalists in order to pacify the political parties of the petit bourgeoisie with whom the PCE had entered into alliance with the aim of "defending the democratic republic". In contrast to the policy of the earlier period, however, the PCE's "popular front" of today extends into political neighborhoods which are distinctly non-popular.

Bringing this kind of politics back into the arena in Spain today will be no less disastrous now than it was then; as the recent example provided by the slaughter of workers and peasants in Chile might remind us. As was to have been the case in Chile, the democratic republic foreseen in the program of the JDE is to be introduced and guaranteed by the "patriotic" army. After announcing its twelve basic points (24) the Junta :

Appeals, to the patriotism and professional honor of the armed forces, virtues ignored by those who today ask the army to be the guardian of corrup-

tion and the political police of a system which will cease to make any sense at all with the disappearance of Franco;

and,

Considers, as an influential factor in the growing professionalism of the army the recently formed juntas militares (military councils) to whom is directed the most sincere sentiments of sympathy; etc.

It would be natural for anyone who had closely followed events on the Iberian peninsula during the past year to point to the example of Portugal in support of the idea that the army can lead the way out of dictatorship and into a democratic republic. Certainly a number of people in and around the Spanish Communist Party have made this analogy and have suggested that a similar kind of praetorian socialism could come to pass in Spain. The March 1974 issue of the clandestine political journal of the Oposicion de Izquierda, for example, carries an article on the Portuguese situation entitled "Flores Rojas Para El General Spínola" (Red Flowers For General Spínola), and the comparison between Spain and Portugal is often made in conversation.

There are, however, two major points about the role of the Army in Portugal which are often brought up against the optimism of the PCE and which will bear much further discussion. First, there is the much-noted fact that the Armed Forces Movement in Portugal acted as it did under the pressures generated by a prolonged and unsuccessful colonial war. Secondly, it is pointed out that even if the Army does help to bring in a "provisional government" as the JDE desires, there is no guarantee that it will continue to support that government any more than the Chilean army continued to support the popularly-elected government of Allende. On the first point, it is obvious that no similarity exists between the Portuguese and Spanish cases, and on the second, the fact that the Armed Forces Movement in Portugal continues to debate the question of its relationship to the provisional government must give rise to some doubt. But whatever the attitude of the Spanish army may turn out to be, the implications of the Portuguese model for the

working-class movement in Spain remain the same. As has already occurred in Portugal, the Spanish Communist Party will be placed in the role of the caretaker of labor action committed to the restraint of strike action, the chaperoning of political demonstrations, and, in general, the limiting of the full development of working-class power. Such a state of affairs has already come to pass in Portugal, where the Portuguese Communist Party has been carrying out these functions from within the Ministry of Labor and from within the state trade unions (i.e., the former fascist syndicates of Salazar's creation now run by the PCP). Similar things also occurred in Chile where the Chilean Communist Party opposed the arming of the workers and a number of factory occupations which even enjoyed Allende's support. (25) These questions are being debated on the left in Spain today within a framework of activities and institutions which have vastly expanded since the renewal of the workers'-commissions movement in 1970.

REVOLUTIONARY POLITICS AND THE WORKERS' COMMISSIONS

Far from being destroyed by the end of 1969, the workers'-commissions movement was only driven back temporarily. In fact the removal by the government of some of the top leadership may even have had the paradoxical result of strengthening the movement, by reason of the simple fact that many of the best-known leaders were also members of the Spanish Communist Party and hence exercising a restraining influence on worker militancy. Certainly some of the groups who were opposed to PCE policies saw the communist leadership in the workers' commissions as a restraining factor.

Perhaps because a relatively conservative leadership was put out of the way, then, and certainly because the experiences of the previous 10 years had created a whole new generation of militant workers who were prepared for a fight, the workers'-commissions movement bounced back. In 1970 there were four times as many strikes as in the previous year, and in the month of December thousands of workers went into the streets in all of the major cities in

Spain in defense of the Basque militants who were on trial for their lives for the offense of "military rebellion". Thus, the general strike and the mass demonstration have become weapons in the workers' armory in a way which they were not in the earlier period. In El Ferrol (Franco's home town in Galicia) in 1972, in Bajo Llobregat (Barcelona) in the summer of 1974, and in the Basque country last December thousands of workers went on strike and confronted the regime in the streets. Sometimes this was for strictly political reasons, as in the case of the December 1970 demonstrations. At others the trade union and political demands were completely merged together, as in Bajo Llobregat.

A development which has been increasingly important in the day-to-day experience of the workers' commissions in the factories has been the *asambleas de fabrica* (factory assemblies). Like the workers in the Italian car plants, the Spanish workers now view the plant not just as a place to work but as a safe place in which to organize. When important questions arise relating to external political developments (such as the possibility of a general strike) or to problems affecting conditions in the workplace, an *impromptu* work stoppage is called and a factory-wide meeting takes place.

Thus, instead of accepting organizational directives from a central coordinating body as was very common in the early period, policy is now more often discussed in open meetings in each factory. A practical benefit of this practice is that it is now much more difficult for the brigada social (i.e., the political police) to learn who all of the various worker leaders are. The development of theory is also aided immensely by this in that the representatives of the various political tendencies within the movement must now put their views forward and (if they are accepted) see them tested in practice on the spot. As a result the awareness of the need to unite theory and practice has come to larger and larger numbers of people directly involved.

This situation both reflects and is the result of the existence of a much greater number of political organizations working within the labor movement than in the earlier period. In the decade of the 'sixties the PCE more or less shared its influence in the workers' commissions with a

number of labor groups of Catholic provenance. In that period political organizations of either the Maoist or Trotskyist orientation were still restricted in their activities to the precincts of the university. During the same period the anarcho-syndicalist and social democratic organizations tried to organize outside the workers' commissions (in one instance with the aid of the AFL-CIO), but with marked lack of success. (26)

At the present time almost all of these tendencies can be found somewhere within the workers' commissions, and have subjected the leadership of the PCE to a kind of critical scrutiny which it did not receive in earlier times. The major exception is the Catholic groups which have all but disappeared as their members, educated in the struggles of the past ten years, have moved in the direction of the Marxist parties; very often into the several pro-Chinese groups which now exist. The Spanish Socialist Party is still present, but is trying to re-establish its Union General de Trabajadores rather than to work within the workers' commissions. The CNT no longer exists as such, but its influence is still felt; especially, of course, in Barcelona. There are a number of syndicalist groups which are very active in the workers' commissions and which still embrace the anarcho-syndicalist line of hostility to the Leninist parties. All of these groups publish large amounts of material on a clandestine basis. Each of the political organizations manages to put out a more or less regular publication with the aid of their duplicating machines (as do the workers' commissions themselves), either on the plant, industry, or regional basis. There is even an International Workers' Commissions bulletin which circulates among Spanish workers abroad with news of industrial events in Spain and appeals for financial support for the struggles of the Spanish workers of the peninsula. Because of the difficulties and dangers associated with other forms of communication, the publishing life of the movement is a vigorous one. Both the quality and sheer numbers of clandestine publications available have increased immeasurably over about the past ten years.

It is not surprising, therefore, given the strong points of the workers'-commissions movement developed over the recent years, that the recent political initiatives of the PCE have met with a good deal of critical scrutiny. What is per-

haps surprising is the way in which all of the Maoist-oriented organizations — once so critical of the PCE — have accepted the politics of the Junta Democratica de Espana with hardly a murmur. The list of groups in this category includes, first and foremost, the former opposition group of the Catalan Communist Party, Bandera Roja. In a pamphlet published two or three years ago, the Bandera Roja organization criticized the PCE for:

- 1) losing influence in the workers' movement because of the increasing revisionism of their slogans, in particular the demand for amnesty, petitions to Bishops, etc.;
- 2) uselessly compromising itself by participation in the sindicatos verticales;
- 3) making a pact with the so-called evolutionist sectors of the oligarchy;
- 4) the recruitment of middle-class elements into the party for lack of ability to attract workers;
- 5) the view of the army as potentially a patriotic force which will defend the Spanish people instead of enslave them as it did in 1936. (27)

Bandera Roja has now come around to a position of total support. Meanwhile, it should be pointed out, a large part of the membership of Bandera Roja has re-entered the Catalan Communist Party, from whence they originally came. A similar sort of thing has taken place with the Oposicion de Izquierdas (Left Opposition) in Madrid. After a year outside the party in which a number of the PCE's more pacifist and social-democratic characteristics met with some sharp criticisms in the Left Opposition's monthly journal, this group too has re-entered the PCE.

In neither case did either of these groups achieve a genuine break with the traditions and the politics of the Spanish Communist Party. Hence, when faced with the political pressures generated by the existence of the Junta Democratica, neither group was capable of developing a political

alternative to PCE politics. Both found it easier to terminate their independent existence and fall into line behind the party. The same can be said of the more overtly Maoist organizations. (28) As the Secretary of one of these, the Partido Comunista Internacional, said recently in Madrid, "We have a number of reservations about the program of the Democratic Junta, but we are in agreement on the essential things. We do not renounce the revolution nor the principles of Marxism-Leninism, but we are now beginning a transitory period. The essential point today is to fight against the Franco dictatorship". (29)

This leaves only the Trotskyist organizations to oppose the Communist Party's politics of popular-front alliance with the petit-bourgeois parties, the Opus Dei, the Carlists, et al. The various syndicalist groups in Catalonia are also opposed, of course, but their ability to resist is nullified by their general anti-political line. There has been, nevertheless, a significant amount of opposition to the PCE politics within the workers' commissions, and the fact that this is now expressed in the open forum of the factory assembly and in the columns of an increasingly extensive clandestine press has made the struggle for genuine revolutionary politics much sharper. One response to this has been for the PCE and its allies to retreat somewhat from the workers' commissions and to propose a new strategy for labor organization, based again on the Portuguese example. It is a strategy which amounts to a renewal of anarcho-syndicalism on a large scale and one which must be discussed in detail.

SYNDICALISM OR REVOLUTION?

As we have already seen, the political goals now being placed before the Spanish workers by the Spanish Communist Party and the JDE are those of the restoration of the republic and trade-union freedoms (points 4 and 5 of the JDE program). These goals are to be achieved through a strategy of popular-front alliances and an appeal to the patriotism of the Spanish army. The PCE and its close allies, such as Bandera Roja in Catalonia, are also putting forward a program on the trade-union front. This program calls for the creation of a sindicato obrero unico which is perhaps

best described as the "one big union" envisioned by the American theorists of syndicalism.

The call for the *sindicato unico* will be familiar to those who know the history of the Spanish working class. The *sindicatos unicos* of the CNT were industrial unions organized by branch of production, and the fist of the Catalan working class from 1910 through the Civil War. They had their origins in the organizations set up within the Spanish branch of the First International, and ultimately became the largest organizations of the Spanish working-class movement. During the Spanish revolution and Civil War they were crushed by the combined attacks of international fascism and Stalinist treachery. Their greatest weakness was the unwillingness to face the problems that arise upon the seizure of political power. Like syndicalists elsewhere, the members of the CNT emphasized the form of working-class organization (the "one big union") rather than the content: the political development of the working class. Today the PCE is trying to revise these mistakes. The PCE's reasons for trying to create the *sindicato unico* all over again, however, are far different from anything that the anarcho-syndicalists of the CNT ever had in mind.

The Communist party organizations in the industrial neighborhoods of Barcelona and the editorialists of *Bandera Roja* are now calling for the organization of what they call the *sindicato obrero unico*. In so doing they lay greatest stress on the argument that the working class must achieve unity by bringing all industrial organizations into the same overall structure. Competing labor organizations are seen as destructive of the kind of concerted power needed by the workers in their struggle against the employers and the state. This is, of course, absolutely true. The strange thing, however, is that through the experience of the workers' commissions the Spanish working class has known, over the last ten years, the first episode of unity in its entire history. Why, therefore, should the question of unity arise at the present time?

There are two possible answers to this question. First, one suggested by reports hostile to the PCE, and second, one which is spelled out in a recent publication of *Bandera Roja*. Opponents of the PCE say that the party is in a proc-

ess of partial retreat from the workers' commissions. It is claimed by these informants that the political competition and criticism to which the PCE is subjected in the *asambleas de fabrica* and in the clandestine press is something to which the party is not accustomed and which it does not appreciate. What the PCE fears, then, is not so much the loss of unity in the workers' movement, but the loss of its hegemony over that movement. The Portuguese Communist Party has achieved hegemony in its sphere of operations in an interesting way. It encourages "unity" in labor organization through its dominance of the state trade unions. One is inclined to ask if the PCE may not have a similar strategy in mind?

The editorialists of the October 1974 issue of *Bandera Roja* (the organization's monthly journal) seem to be answering this question in the affirmative. The issue begins with a hearty welcome to the JDE so that it is clear that, however critical BR may have been of the Communist Party in the past, they are in broad agreement on political questions at the present time. In an article which follows entitled "Una Ocupacion y Transformacion Audaz del Sindicato Vertical" (An Audacious Occupation and Transformation of the Vertical Syndicates) the authors argue in strenuous terms for a vigorous campaign of participation in the *sindicatos verticales*. By following this plan, they claim, the working class will achieve unity of organization. The *sindicatos verticales*, of course, are still completely controlled by the Falange, but the editors of BR seem to have forgotten this.

To accept this argument is to succumb to the syndicalist illusion, namely that the formal unity of the "one big union" is in some way equivalent to the political unity of the working class. This is certainly an illusion. Political unity is something which the Spanish workers still have to fight for, even though, in the workers' commissions, they have already achieved an important experience of unified action on the industrial level. The real danger of the syndicalist illusion in this case is that it may result in the abandonment of the fight to achieve working-class political unity. The PCE, of course, would prefer to be the caretaker of all political questions. To allow it to have this role would be not so much a mistake as a disaster, as the previous failures of

popular-front politics in Chile, perhaps in Portugal, and in Spain itself prove in a most tragic way.

During the Spanish Civil War the syndicalism of the CNT and the popular-front politics of the Marxist parties were the mutually opposed strategies of a tragically divided working class. Both proved to be inadequate in the face of the demands of social revolution. Today these policies are being put forward in tandem by the same party, the Partido Comunista Espanol. As in France, Italy, Portugal, and elsewhere the aim of the implied division of labor is not social revolution but parliamentarianism and reform. There are two powerful forces in the Spanish working-class movement which oppose this: the beginnings of a genuine political opposition in the heart of the workers' organizations, and the living experience of those organizations in which the struggle against the dictatorship and against the capitalist system which it defends have been fused together and have taken the Spanish workers far beyond both the syndicalist illusion and the temptations of reformism on the road to the Spanish revolution.

FOOTNOTES

1. The best history is that of Pierre Broue and Emile Temime, *THE REVOLUTION AND THE CIVIL WAR IN SPAIN* (London, 1972). Noam Chomsky, in *AMERICAN POWER AND THE NEW MANDARINS* (New York, 1969), has exposed the shortcomings of the liberal-stalinist view. Gerald Brenan's *SPANISH LABYRINTH* (Cambridge, Eng., 1943) still gives the best background to the war; while George Orwell's *HOMAGE TO CATALONIA* (London, 1938) dramatizes the stalinist treachery in an incomparable way.

2. For the guerrilla see: Andres Sorel's *GUERRILLA ESPANOLA DEL SIGLO XX* (Paris, 1970); and for conditions in the prisons after the war see the testimony of Miguel Nunez, in Sergio Vilar's *PROTAGONISTAS DE LA ESPAGNA DEMOCRATICA* (Paris, 1968).

3. The best study of the PCE is Guy Hermet's *LES COMMUNISTES EN ESPAGNE* (Paris, 1971). For a discussion of the growth of the PCE and its class composition see pp. 46-47.

4. The best documented study of the PCE's wartime line in favor of small enterprise and of the PCE's military actions against the collectivized farms is Burnett Bolloten's *THE GRAND CAMOUFLAGE* (London, 1961).

5. Franz Borkenau, later to become a cold warrior, recorded all of this in his still valuable *SPANISH COCKPIT* (London, 1937). For the life and some of the writings of one of the more prominent kidnapes, see Juan Andrade's *ANDRES NIN: LOS PROBLEMAS DE LA REVOLUCION ESPANOLA, 1931-1937* (Paris, 1971).

6. Hermet, op. cit., p. 67.

7. Hermet, op. cit., p. 67, cites the relevant article in *MUNDO OBRERO*, the PCE paper, which was headlined "Towards National Reconciliation and a Democratic and Peaceful Solution of the Spanish Problem".

8. Ibid., pp. 68-71.
9. Ibid., p. 70. These instructions were issued in the PCE's "Declaration of the Communist Party on the National Strike", which came out in July, 1959.
10. Ibid., p. 47.
11. This remark is taken from the flyleaf of the Dublin edition of the order's sacred book, THE WAY, written by Padre Escriva, the founder of the order.
12. Daniel Artigues's study of the order, EL OPUS DEI EN ESPANA, gives an exhaustive list of important people connected to the order and for that reason sold on the black market in Madrid for prices ranging up to 1000% of its nominal purchase price.
13. Ibid., pp. 107-109.
14. Interviews with some of these people are to be found in Salvador Paniker's CONVERSACIONES EN MADRID (Barcelona, 1969).
15. See John Amsden, COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND CLASS CONFLICT IN SPAIN (London, 1972).
16. This strike is still known to Spaniards as "the tram car strike", because it began with a publicly enforced boycott of the trams in protest at high fares. Encounters in Barcelona were particularly violent and credit for organization is often given to the CNT. There is a short account in SPAIN (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.), p. 235.
17. See Jeronimo Hernandez, "Aproximacion a la Historia de las Comisiones Obreras y de las Tendencias Forjadas en su Seno," in CUADERNOS DE RUEDO IBERICO, No. 39-40 (Oct. 1972-Jan. 1973). A subjective history of the workers' commissions, written as a novel, is Julio Sanz Oller's ENTRE EL FRAUDE Y LA ESPERANZA; LAS COMISIONES OBRERAS DE BARCELONA (Paris, 1972). The novelistic narrator is a member of the indigenous Catalan working class, and from this point of view erects a structure of novelistic argument against the Leninist party. The pseudonymic author is a member of the Barcelona petit bourgeoisie who has the same views as his most important character. See Julio Sanz Oller, "La Larga Marcha del Movimiento Obrero Hacia su Autonomia", in Ruedo Iberico's HORIZONTE ESPANOL: 1972, Vol. 11.
18. To everyone's credit the neo-Falangist Union Sindical de Trabajadores, headed by Ceferino Maestu, soon left the workers' commissions organization in Madrid. The first meeting was held in the Control Sindical Mateo Morral. The copy of the document in the author's possession carries the signature not only of Maestu, but also of Marcelino Camacho, national leader of the workers' commissions, and currently in jail in Madrid.
19. Some 83.8% of the labor census voted in these elections, according to official figures.
20. Herr, in his HISTORICAL ESSAY, gives a short review of some of the reforms; see, esp., ch. 1. See also Amsden, op. cit., ch. 3.
21. See Stanley Payne, POLITICS AND THE MILITARY IN MODERN SPAIN (Stanford, 1967).
22. For an analysis of the Portuguese case see Robin Blackburn's "Lisbon: The Fall of Fascism", NEW LEFT REVIEW, No. 87-88, September-December, 1974.
23. An account of the falling out between the PCE and Moscow is given by Fernando Claudin in "The Split in the Spanish CP", NEW LEFT REVIEW, No. 70, December, 1971.

24. The "Twelve Points" of the Junta Democratica are:
1. The formation of a provisional government to replace the present one and return to the men and women of Spain over eighteen the full rights of citizenship through the legal recognition of all democratic liberties, rights, and duties.
 2. Absolute amnesty for all political prisoners and immediate release of all those who have been imprisoned for political or trade union reasons.
 3. Legalization of political parties without exception.
 4. Trade union liberty and the return to the workers of all goods and money presently in possession of the syndical organization.
 5. The rights of the strike, assembly, and political demonstration.
 6. Liberty of the press, radio, of opinion, and of objective information in the State media of social information, especially the television.
 7. The independence and functional unity of the judicial branch.
 8. The political neutrality of the Army and its exclusive professional dedication to external defense.
 9. The recognition, under the unity of the Spanish State, of the political personalities of the Catalan, Basque, and Gallician people and of the other regional communities who should democratically decide to ask for such recognition.
 10. The separation of church and state.
 11. Popular elections to decide the form of the state to be held between twelve and eighteen months from the restoration of democratic liberties with complete guarantees of liberty, equality, and impartiality for all.
 12. The integration of Spain into the other European communities with respect to international treaties and with the recognition of the principle of international peaceful coexistence.
25. See Ruy Mauro Marini, "Deux Strategies dans le processus chilien", LES TEMPS MODERNES, No. 342 (January, 1975), pp. 675-706.
26. Victor Reuther's Foreign Affairs Department sent organizing funds to the anarcho-syndicalists and social democrats in Spain through the International Union of Metal Workers (FIOM), with the aim of setting up "democratic" trade unions in opposition to Franco. See Amsden, op. cit., pp. 91-96.
27. EL VIAJE DE CARRILLO A CHINA Y LA BANCARROTA DEL REVISIONISMO ("Carrillo's Trip to China and the Bankruptcy of Revisionism").
28. Some of the more prominent are: the Organizacion Revolucionaria de Trabajadores; the Partido Comunista de Espana (M-L); and the Partido Comunista Internacional.
29. LE MONDE, December 4, 1974.



JEAN MONDS is a student of Spanish working-class history.



Labor and Monopoly Capital: A Review

Margery Davies and Frank Brodhead

LABOR AND MONOPOLY CAPITAL: THE DEGRADATION OF WORK IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY, by Harry Braverman. (Monthly Review Press, 62 West 14th Street, New York, NY 10011. Hardcover: \$12.50) 465 pages. 1974.

Rumor has it that if you buy a new American car you should buy one that was made on a Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday: worker absenteeism rates are so high on Mondays and Fridays, and the substitutes that fill the empty places on the assembly line so inexperienced, that cars made on those days are much more likely to be lemons. Books such as the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare's WORK IN AMERICA and Studs Terkel's WORKING attest to the fact that millions of workers in advanced capitalist countries are bored with the routine tedium of their work, whether it take place in factories or offices. But until now there has been no systematic explanation of this

turn of events from a Marxist perspective, no analysis that placed the problems in a concrete historical context.

But now there is a new and extremely important book which does just that — **LABOR AND MONOPOLY CAPITAL: THE DEGRADATION OF WORK IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY** by Harry Braverman. The central task which Braverman undertakes is to analyze the labor process as it has come to exist in advanced capitalism today. In doing so, he devotes special attention to the role of scientific management in the conflict between workers and management over control of the labor process; to the purposes to which scientific knowledge and technological invention have been put by the capitalist class; to the expansion of capitalist modes and relations of production into more and more areas of human life; and to the attendant changes in the structure of the working class which have taken place during the past century.

That Braverman accomplishes his task brilliantly is especially important because, as he puts it, "there is simply no continuing body of work in the Marxist tradition dealing with the capitalist mode of production in the manner in which Marx treated it in the first volume of *Capital*." Why should an examination and critique of the labor process, which occupies a central place in the writings of Marx, have been largely abandoned by twentieth-century Marxism? As Braverman points out, "The cataclysmic events of this century — two world wars, fascism, the successive disintegrations and restabilizations of capitalist economies in the aftermaths of wars and in the Great Depression, and revolutions both proletarian and nationalist — dominated the analytical work of Marxism. The front of this violent stage was taken and held by monopoly, militarism, imperialism, nationalism, the 'crisis' or 'breakdown' tendencies of the capitalist system, revolutionary strategy, and the problems of the transition from capitalism to socialism." (p. 10)

Furthermore, labor movements in advanced capitalist societies have by and large confined themselves to fighting with management over the size of their piece of the pie. Labor unions have very rarely questioned the way in which the labor process is organized: the assembly line is accepted as a given rather than something to fight about. But

over the past several years there have been more and more signs that workers are not only dissatisfied with the way work is organized, but are actively sabotaging it. Braverman's book both reflects that dissatisfaction and analyzes it, and therein lies its importance.

THE "DEGRADATION OF WORK"

A central theme throughout Braverman's book is that work in advancing capitalist society has become more and more degraded: that is, both reduced in complexity and debased in quality. As part of their drive for greater and greater profits, the owners of capital have continuously reorganized the labor process, breaking down complex jobs into simple ones and then breaking down simple jobs into their component parts of "conception" and "execution". The goal of the modern labor process is to have each job performed by the cheapest possible labor, stripping from as much work as possible its moment of "conception", concentrating this work of planning and design in the hands of management, and assigning the remaining mechanical functions of "execution" to unskilled labor or to machines tended by unskilled labor. As a result, workers are progressively denuded of skills and the opportunity to understand the overall process of which their jobs form a part. The fact that jobs are boring has been known by workers for many years, and has been recently discovered by academic sociologists. Braverman's contribution is to show that this degradation of work is not simply the function of poor job design, but must be seen in the context of the struggle for power between labor and the owners of capital.

The specific form which this degradation of work has taken begins with the shattering of various tasks into their component operations. In the manufacture of pins, to use Adam Smith's illustration from the Industrial Revolution, workers who had heretofore been responsible for the completion of an entire task were reduced to performing only one of the component operations, such as drawing out the wire, pointing the pins, making heads, or putting the pins into papers. Each of these operations was performed by a

different worker who, of course, was paid wages commensurate with the skill involved in only the small operation she or he executed. Thus the craftsman, who had previously performed the entire operation of making a pin, was replaced by lower-paid workers each performing a specific function, while the capitalist turned a tidy profit.

This form of the division of labor still left up to the worker the way in which she or he drew out the wire or papered the pins. Toward the end of the 19th century, however, capitalists attempted to gain control over the entire labor process. Their goal was primarily to increase profits by increasing the speed of work and the amount of production; but to do this they had to wrest control of the labor process from the craft workers. In many cases they simply introduced machinery to do specific tasks done by one or more workers. Frequently, however, capitalists recognized the necessity to totally transform the organization of work, leading eventually to completely integrated processes and the introduction of the assembly line. As recent articles by Katherine Stone and David Montgomery have shown, the relatively simple division of labor under the early manufacturing system was dominated by and contributed to the strength of craft unions.* Craft workers alone understood the secrets of the various parts of the process of production and were thus in a relatively strong position to regulate the labor process, the pace of work, the introduction of new machinery, and thus output and the profits of the employers. An integral part of the development of monopoly capital at the turn of the century, therefore, was the unleashing of a savage attack on craft workers and their unions, and a determined drive by the owners of capital to gain control of the shopfloor.

The general movement by capitalists to gain systematic control over the labor process at the turn of the century was called "scientific management", or "Taylorism", after Frederick Winslow Taylor, the chief theorist of this move-

* Katherine Stone, "The Origins of Job Structures in the Steel Industry", and David Montgomery, "Spontaneity and Organization", *RADICAL AMERICA* volume 7, number 6 (November-December 1973), pp. 19-80.

ment. Born in class struggle, this new pseudo-science of management was soon developed by the corporations and their adjuncts in the universities into personnel management, industrial psychology, human relations, and industrial sociology. Indeed, as Braverman must constantly remind us, the fundamental principles of Taylorism have become so integrated into the modern capitalist mode of production that we are in danger of forgetting that work does not necessarily have to be organized in this way.

According to Braverman, the three principles of this new "science" of management are, in Taylor's own words: (1) the dissociation of the labor process from the skills of the workers: that "the managers assume... the burden of gathering together all of the traditional knowledge which in the past has been possessed by the workmen and then of classifying, tabulating, and reducing this knowledge to rules, law and formulae." (p. 112) (2) The separation of conception from execution: that "all possible brain work should be removed from the shop and centered in the planning or layout department." (p. 113) (3) The use of this monopoly over knowledge to control each step of the labor process and its mode of execution: that "the work of every workman is fully planned out by the management at least one day in advance, and each man receives in most cases complete written instructions, describing in detail the task which he is to accomplish, as well as the means to be used in doing the work.... This task specifies not only what is to be done, but how it is to be done and the exact time allowed for doing it." (p. 118)

Braverman devotes a considerable amount of space to Taylor's own description of how he personally reorganized the work in the lathe department of the Midvale Steel Works. From a wealthy Philadelphia family, Taylor had dropped out of school and taken a series of jobs in factories owned by friends of his parents. One of these factories was the Midvale Steel Works, one of the most modern in the industry. Starting as a common laborer, Taylor the willing worker soon advanced to gang boss in the lathe department. His description of the struggle that followed clearly illustrates that neither Taylor nor the workers regarded his attempt to reorganize work in the lathe department as an inevitable

step in some classless march toward Efficiency, but rather as a struggle for power between the working class and the capitalist class :

We who were the workmen of that shop had the quantity output carefully agreed upon for everything that was turned out in the shop. We limited the output to about, I should think, one-third of what we could very well have done. We felt justified in doing this, owing to the piecework system — that is, owing to the necessity for soldiering under the piecework system

As soon as I became gang boss the men who were working under me and who, of course, knew that I was onto the whole game of soldiering or deliberately restricting output, came to me at once and said; "Now, Fred, you are not going to be a damn piecework hog, are you ? "

I said, "If you fellows mean you are afraid I am going to try to get a larger output from these lathes," I said, "Yes; I do propose to get more work out." I said, "You must remember I have been square with you fellows up to now and worked with you. I have not broken a single rate. I have been on your side of the fence. But now I have accepted a job under the management of this company and I am on the other side of the fence, and I will tell you perfectly frankly that I am going to try to get a bigger output from those lathes." They answered, "Then you are going to be a damned hog."

Scientific management, cloaked though it may have been in rhetoric about efficiency, was not based on efficiency in the usual sense of greater output from the same input. It was primarily a means of forcing workers to increase their input.

TECHNOLOGY AND THE ORGANIZATION OF WORK

In three chapters on scientific technology and the organization of work, Braverman argues that both science and technological inventions have been important weapons for

capitalists in their struggle with labor. Once scientists and inventors have been thoroughly incorporated into the capitalist network, they are set to work devising processes and machinery which will employ labor increasingly as operatives — people who operate machinery or processes with little opportunity of subjective intervention on their own parts. "The unity of thought and action, conception and execution, hand and mind, which capitalism threatened from its beginnings, is now attacked by a systematic dissolution employing all the resources of science and the various engineering disciplines based upon it." (p. 171)

There is nothing about machinery that leads naturally and inevitably from the development of scientific knowledge to the division of labor as it exists in capitalist societies. "In reality," argues Braverman, "machinery embraces a host of possibilities, many of which are systematically thwarted, rather than developed, by capital. An automatic system of machinery opens up the possibility of the true control over a highly productive factory by a relatively small corps of workers, providing these workers attain the level of mastery over the machinery offered by engineering knowledge, and providing they then share out among themselves the routines of the operation, from the most technically advanced to the most routine. This tendency to socialize labor, and to make of it an engineering enterprise on a high level of technical accomplishment, is, considered abstractly, a far more striking characteristic of machinery in its fully developed state than any other. Yet this promise, which has been repeatedly held out with every technical advance since the Industrial Revolution, is frustrated by the capitalist effort to reconstitute and even deepen the division of labor in all of its worst aspects, despite the fact that this division of labor becomes more archaic with every passing day." (p. 230)

To an ever-increasing extent, machinery is designed not to make performing a difficult operation simpler or easier for the laborer, but to control the pace of work of the laborers. Craftspeople become "hands", tending and regulating and feeding a machine whose pace is set by its owner, not

by the direct producer. As Gorz and others have shown,* the function of scientists and engineers is increasingly linked to the design of the labor process, making ever finer distinctions between "conception" and "execution" in each stage of the productive process, and assigning each of these two phases of the labor process to different grades of workers, with different levels of "skill" and of course different levels of pay. Thus what once appeared at first sight to be an important part of a "new working class" — the growing sector of skilled and highly educated technical and scientific workers — is revealed to be in fact the growth of a sector closely linked with management and the maintenance of labor discipline, supervising and developing the division of labor, and creating in turn a vast mass of new unskilled jobs.

MONOPOLY CAPITAL AND "NON-PRODUCTIVE" LABOR

Changes in the mode of production over the past century have produced major occupational shifts within the working class. The major shift in the American population, of course, saw an enormous growth of the working-class as a whole at the expense of farm labor, which fell from 40% of the "economically active" population at the turn of the century to less than 4% in 1970. At the same time, the working class as a proportion of the total "labor force" grew from just over 50% in 1900 to just under 70% in 1970. (p. 379) Within the working class itself, however, important changes were also taking place. While "operatives, laborers, and craftsmen" accounted for more than 80% of the working class in 1900, by 1970 their numbers were surpassed by clerical, service and sales workers.

Braverman attributes this transformation of the working class to the growth of monopoly capitalism and to the con-

* See especially Andre Gorz, "Technical Intelligence and the Capitalist Division of Labor", TELOS number 12 (Summer, 1972), pp. 27-41. Also Gorz, "The Tyranny of the Factory", TELOS number 16 (Summer, 1973), pp. 61-67; and "Their Factories and Our People", TELOS number 18 (Winter, 1973-74), pp. 150-156.

sequent growth of "non-productive" labor. The emergence of the modern corporation, Braverman argues, produced changes in marketing, the structure of management, and the "function of social coordination now exercised by the corporation." (p. 265) The expansion of each of these areas, in turn, greatly expanded the number of workers performing jobs which, though producing surplus value, were only indirectly related to the production of goods.

A major problem facing the modern corporation is how to reduce the independent demand for its product, how to reduce risk and uncertainty by creating a constant flow of customers through advertising, planned obsolescence, and product styling, design and packaging. "For this purpose," Braverman points out, "the marketing organization becomes second in size only to the production organization in manufacturing operations, and other types of corporations come into existence whose entire purpose and activity is marketing." (p. 265) Similarly, the growth in the number of "non-productive" workers can be traced in part to changes in the structure of management. The transformation of management from a simple chain of command under a single capitalist to a complex of departments, each with its own staff organization and its own hierarchies, has greatly expanded the need for clerical and similar workers. Finally, Braverman argues that "the complexity of the social division of labor which capitalism has developed over the past century, and the concentrated urban society which attempts to hold huge masses in delicate balance, call for an immense amount of social coordination that was not previously required." (p. 268) In the absence of much overall social planning by the government, a crude form of social planning takes place in the form of the internal planning of corporations. In addition to industrial corporations, insurance companies, hospitals, schools, and of course many branches of government on all levels are examples of institutions where such social coordination takes place.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF CLERICAL LABOR

The growth of monopoly capitalism, and particularly the development of the modern corporation, has thus generated

an enormous expansion of clerical jobs. The 900,000 clerical workers at the turn of the century had grown to more than 14 million clerical workers by 1970. In the course of this expansion, the nature of clerical work has been radically transformed. Just as scientific management strove to separate the tasks of conception and execution in manufacturing jobs, so too did the modern corporation extend the division of labor into the clerical sector.

Prior to the advent of monopoly capitalism, clerical workers were in many ways craftsmen. Usually a man, a secretary or bookkeeper, performed a large variety of tasks, and understood his function in the overall operation of the firm. For instance, a bookkeeper understood and performed all of the steps involved in keeping a company's financial records and produced accurate accounts, in much the same way that a silversmith performed, or knew how to perform, all of the operations involved in manufacturing a silver bowl. But as corporations expanded both their absolute size and the number of functions they were involved in (accumulation of raw materials, manufacture, distribution and marketing), the number of clerical workers they employed increased rapidly. The job of keeping a company's books, which had heretofore been assigned to one bookkeeper, aided perhaps by a few assistants, was now assigned to an entire department. The various tasks involved in bookkeeping were now performed by different people. Thus an individual employed in the bookkeeping department was no longer a craftsman, capable of understanding the entire process of keeping the corporate books, but instead was in essence an operative whose job it was to perform over and over again the same small number of routine tasks.*

This degradation of clerical work went hand in hand with other changes. Clerical workers became predominantly women, and their pay relative to other occupations declined significantly. By 1971, according to a report made by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, "the median usual weekly wage

* The transformation of clerical work is described in greater detail in Margery Davies, "Woman's Place Is at the Typewriter: The Feminization of the Clerical Labor Force", *RADICAL AMERICA*, volume 8, number 4 (July-August 1974), pp. 1-28.

for full-time clerical work was lower than that in every type of so-called blue-collar work. In fact, it was lower than the median in all urban occupational classifications except service employment." (p. 297) Office machines have also been brought in to further the division of labor in the office and to reduce the level of skill necessary to perform many office tasks. Braverman includes some particularly appalling examples of the extent to which capitalists are attempting to "automate" the office and either replace clerical workers with machines or at the very least subordinate workers to the pace of those machines. Here is a description from a magazine called ADMINISTRATIVE MANAGEMENT of the uses of canned texts and automatic typewriters:

(Word processing is) a process of having word originators (executives, sales correspondents, lawyers, and the like) select formula clauses from pre-coded, pre-organized clause books. For example, an administrator who would normally dictate the same kind of reply to a letter several times a day, instead selects the appropriate clauses (by code number) from the clause book — or from memory if he's used them often enough. Once selected, clause codes plus individual names, addresses and other variable inserts (such as dates or prices) are either dictated into recorders or jotted down on "to-be-typed" forms. This source dictation or form is then used by the typist to prepare the final letter. Automatic typewriters repetitively type the "canned" clauses, and the typist manually keyboards in the new or variable data. ...Benefits are word originator and typist efficiency, and more work produced from the same number of hours on the job. In addition, less training is required of all the people involved. (p. 345)

This and other examples that Braverman provides point to an erosion of the differences between the office and the factory. In their desperate search for more and more sources of surplus value, capitalists attempt to extend the division of labor to its limits, whether the job is in the

"productive" or "unproductive" sector of capitalism. As with the growth of the scientific and technical sector, so with the clerical sector: what appears at first sight to be an expansion of a non-proletarian "white collar" middle stratum turns out on closer examination to be the growth of a relatively small number of supervisory jobs at one pole, and an "immense mass of wage-workers" at the other pole. (p. 355)

THE SERVICE SECTOR AND THE "UNIVERSAL MARKET"

Service and retail sales workers, who Braverman argues should be considered together, have also multiplied with the growth of monopoly capitalism. More than 12 million people do these kinds of jobs today, ranging from dishwashers, waitresses, pressers in drycleaning companies, to people who clean public buildings and private household domestics, as well as the better-paid and less-numerous firefighters, police and nurses.* These jobs, service and retail sales, are generally the lowest paid of all.

Underlying the growth of these sectors has been the extension of the capitalist market into more and more spheres of life, particularly those spheres which once existed outside the market and in the home. In one of the most interesting chapters in his book, on the "Universal Market", Braverman makes a very useful and clear exposition of this process:

* Braverman points out that it is misleading to call many of these workers "service" workers, since in many cases the thing that they produce is as much a "good" as the car produced by an auto worker. For instance, it is not clear that a meal in a restaurant or a clean pair of pants, complete with pressed crease, should not be considered "goods". "The distinction between commodities in the form of goods and commodities in the form of services," he writes, "is important only to the economist or statistician, not to the capitalist. What counts for him is not the determinate form of labor, but whether it has been drawn into the network of capitalist social relations, whether the worker who carries it on has been transformed into a wage-worker, and whether the labor of the worker has been transformed into productive labor — that is, labor which produces a profit for capital." (p. 362)

The manner in which this transition (the extension of capitalist market relations into all spheres of life) was accomplished includes a host of inter-related factors, not one of which can be separated from the others. In the first place, the tighter packing of urbanization destroys the conditions under which it is possible to carry on the old life. The urban rings close around the worker, and around the farmer driven from the land, and confine them within circumstances that preclude the former self-provisioning practices of the home. At the same time, the income offered by the job makes available the wherewithal to purchase the means of subsistence from industry, and thus, except in times of unemployment, the constraint of necessity which compelled home crafts is much weakened. Often, home labor is rendered uneconomic as compared with wage labor by the cheapening of manufactured goods, and this, together with all the other pressures bearing on the working-class family, helps to drive the woman out of the home and into industry. But many other factors contribute: the pressure of social custom as exercised, especially upon each younger generation in turn, by style, fashion, advertising, and the educational process (all of which turn "homemade" into a derogation and "factory made" or "store bought" into a boast); the deterioration of skills (along with the availability of materials); and the powerful urge in each family member toward an independent income, which is one of the strongest feelings instilled by the transformation of society into a giant market for labor and goods, since the source of status is no longer the ability to make many things but simply the ability to purchase them.

Though he does not make the point explicit, what Braverman is describing here is a breakdown of the "craftsmanship of daily life", by which the family met many of its needs in reproducing itself. As he continues,

...the industrialization of food and other elementary home provisions is only the first step in a process which eventually leads to the dependence of all social life, and indeed of all the interrelatedness of humankind, upon the marketplace. The population of cities, more or less completely cut off from a natural environment by the division between town and country, becomes totally dependent upon social artifice for its every need. But social artifice has been destroyed in all but its marketable forms. Thus the population no longer relies upon social organization in the form of family, friends, neighbors, community, elders, children, but with few exceptions must go to market and only to market, not only for food, clothing, and shelter, but also for recreation, amusement, security, for the care of the young, the old, the sick and the handicapped. In time not only the material and service needs but even the emotional patterns of life are channeled through the market. (pp. 275-276)

Finally, having absorbed all of these formerly domestic activities into the market, capitalism has created a vast new area for the extension and further extension of the division of labor, the separation of conception from execution, and the generation of surplus value.

WOMEN AND THE WORKING CLASS

The rapid growth of new occupations over the past 100 years has thus produced fundamental changes in the occupational structure of the working class. Whereas the industrial proletariat, made up of factory workers, was once considered the dominant group of the working class, that working class must now be seen as including clerical workers and "service" workers whose numbers equal those of the factory workers. Braverman shows that the nature of the work that these various groups of workers do is becoming increasingly similar, largely thanks to the efforts of the capitalists to degrade the work. The difference be-

tween an assembly-line worker in an electronics factory and a keypunch operator in an insurance company is not all that great when the tasks they perform are carefully analyzed, despite the fact that the first is termed a "blue-collar" worker or "factory operative" by the U.S. Census and the second is called a "white-collar" worker or "clerical employee". Thus, according to Braverman, "the problem of the so-called employee or white-collar worker which so bothered early generations of Marxists, and which was hailed by anti-Marxists as a proof of the falsity of the "proletarianization" thesis, has thus been unambiguously clarified by the polarization of office employment and the growth at one pole of an immense mass of wage-workers. The apparent trend to a large non-proletarian "middle class" has resolved itself into the creation of a large proletariat in a new form. In its conditions of employment, this working population has lost all former superiorities over workers in industry, and in its scales of pay it has sunk almost to the very bottom." (pp. 355-56)

This occupational shift in the United States — the growth of the clerical and "service" sectors — has corresponded with a steady increase in the number of women in the paid labor force. Women have gone into these sectors in such large numbers that these jobs are seen, in the United States and to a lesser degree in other advanced capitalist countries, as "women's work". Although Braverman mentions this correlation between expanding sectors of the labor force and the change in the sex of the workers, he does not draw out what seem to be very direct connections between those two phenomena.

In brief, as clerical work expands it is subjected to a division of labor and Taylorist "rationalization" that strips both skills and control from these jobs. A similar process occurs in retail, or other service jobs usually held by women. The expansion of these sectors draws on the largest labor reserve, women. Women are driven from the home by the spread of the universal market, which now provides as commodities the different products of the homemaker's "craft" cheaply and more efficiently. The social wage differential between men and women helps to guarantee that

women will be locked into the proletarian grades of these new job sectors. An ideology soon surrounds these feminized occupations: different jobs require nurturing qualities, and are more suitable for women; and conversely, women have lower expectations than men, do not need as much pay as men, and are less concerned about having an interesting job. Clerical work, for example, exists alongside the "romantic office" of popular culture, and promises of contact with exciting men of desirable class positions are substituted for interesting and fulfilling work.

Socialists have understood that the shape of the working class has been dramatically changed, but have tended to accept without question categories like "unskilled" and "semi-skilled", or "mental" and "manual", so that the essential unity of the changes in the labor process in the different sectors was obscured. The women's liberation movement has created an enormous literature which has only begun to address the meaning of the transformation of the working class from a feminist perspective. What Braverman has done is to link the transformation of the working class to the growth of monopoly capitalism; and to the almost-uncontested imposition in the growing sectors of clerical and service work of a "scientific" labor process that was violently resisted by workers in the older, industrial sectors. That "proletarianization" and "feminization" went together is apparent, though the link between the two still needs to be studied. By showing in concrete ways the transformation of the labor process in the century since Marx, *LABOR AND MONOPOLY CAPITAL* will help socialists to become clearer about the composition of the working class, and the nature of the work most women do.



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