

STRANGE VICTORIES

*p.m.***Part I: Who is Involved in the Anti-Nuclear Movement**

STRANGELY, THE ANTI-NUCLEAR MOVEMENT DID NOT ORIGINATE IN HIGHLY populated, industrialized and polluted areas where, it could be assumed, a struggle against environmental dangers would seem to be urgent. The anti-nuclear movement is not an immediate response to the attack on the quality of life which takes place in the "industrial triangles" of the US and Europe. In West Germany, where the anti-nuclear movement first started, it emerged not in the traditionally polluted Ruhr area, but in Southwest Germany in a rural zone of vineyards and small farmers (Why!, 1974). The same was true for France (Malville, near Lyons, is situated in an essentially rural area), Switzerland (Kaiseraugst, Goesgen, etc.) and Italy (e.g., the nuclear plant of Montalto di Castro in the Maremma). A similar type of area is found near Seabrook nuclear plant in New England, which is one of the few regions of the US where an older type of small or middle-sized farming and fishing exists (in the rest of the US we should rather speak of agricultural industry).

But the strange location of the anti-nuclear movement is not so puzzling at a second look: It is due to the conscious choice of the nuclear industry. The "back-to-the-land" movement of capital is easily explained by the "bad experiences" it had in the metropolitan, industrialized centers. Urban riots, student agitations, workers' struggles were developed and favoured by the urban environment. The capitalists realized that the cities were dangerous for their health.

Nuclear development presented possibilities for a new organization of industrial geography, a new industrial frontier. Never before in the history

of capital have the sites of industrial installations been more carefully planned than nuclear power plants. *Some* decisive aspects of this planning have been:

- minimizing risk in case of accidents (rural areas are less populated and pose fewer problems in case of evacuation);
- safety-distance from dangerous, unreliable class-sector (problems of sabotage, "bad" influence on personnel);
- strategic locations around metropolitan agglomerations (very useful for evacuations for different purposes, e.g. in case of social troubles);
- political passivity or conservatism of the local populations; (in this respect capital made some of the most painful miscalculations).¹

Plant locations were chosen from the beginning to prevent protests and organized actions against or within nuclear plants. The problems of communication and organization in rural areas compounded by the complicated class situation mixing small owners, wage-depending people or rural intelligentsia, coupled with the relatively immense financial power of the companies, were supposed to guarantee a quiet development and disarm any opposition.

While this plan worked in some cases, it did not in others. Protests developed despite the difficult conditions. Pay-offs to local governments and some advantages to local businesses could not always effectively divide the local population. However, the anti-nuclear protest of local communities usually did not go beyond legal actions (voting in town meetings, law-suits, petitions, media action, etc.), although there are some significant exceptions, mostly due to the farmers' radicalism (tractor blockades in Germany, cutting of power lines in Minnesota, and other episodes). For them the construction was not mere "danger for mankind during the next 500,000 years," but a direct attack on their income.² Confronted with the allied power of the companies and the government, these legal actions led mostly to a dead-end. Only the emergence of an *additional factor* decided whether the struggle would move to a higher level or the nuclear industry had won that round. Only where this "factor" was present can we speak of an anti-nuclear movement.

An Additional Factor

This "additional factor" was introduced by an important change in the class structure of some rural areas which occurred in the early seventies, a period when the planning and location of the nuclear plants had already

been completed. (In the US, this process takes about 12 years; while in Europe it *used to be faster*, but most plants now completed had obviously been planned in the sixties.) The change we are speaking of is the resettlement of urban intellectual workers (wage-depending professional, teachers, artists, journalists, social workers, students government workers, etc.) in rural zones, a move largely stimulated by the various sixties movements. As a "back-to-the-land" movement, it chose rural areas which were not too isolated and too far from the cities, for it needed continuous contacts with the educational and cultural industries.

In the US this "additional factor" decisively emerged in two regions: in New England and in California.³ These are, not surprisingly, the areas where anti-nuclear movements have developed most continuity and mass character. The choice of these areas is directly linked to the specific interests of this intellectual proletariat. (We use the term proletariat in the original Marxist sense: all the people who live on a wage and cannot live on their capital without working — "independently of whether the wage is high or low.") On the level of production these areas are the major national or regional centers of the education industry in which workers receive "skills" and qualifications which result in a higher *valuation* of their labor power. They provide a variety of full-time, part-time, seasonal and temporary jobs themselves and in related businesses, such as bureaucracy, social assistance, book-stores, printing-shops, building-maintenance, drug-dealing, culture, art, sports, psychiatry, restaurants and small shops, etc. A look at the rate of private and public education expenditures per inhabitant in these areas can give some evidence.

The most typical case for us is Massachusetts, with expenditures far above the 2nd ranking New York, and forming the center of the New England area, while New Hampshire and Connecticut follow close behind in the national ranks. Moreover, rural New England has a good network of highways leading to nearby major cities like New York and Boston, the educational and cultural center of the US. Thus, rural New England has attracted a lot of intellectual workers in search of a quiet country life. To a lesser degree, this is also true of California around San Fransisco, and other areas. Rural New England and California offered not only possibilities of external jobs, but also conditions for *cheap reproduction* of this type of worker. By the term *reproduction* we mean all the work that has to be done in order to keep us in shape so that we are able to work: eating, clothing, relaxation, medical care, emotional "services," discipline, education, entertainment, cleaning, procreation, etc. Sometimes what we call "life" is, in reality, only reproduction for capitalist exploitation. Cheap

reproduction is particularly urgent for the intellectual workers as they hold only temporary jobs or part-time jobs or live on welfare and food-stamps.

In New England, subsistence farming, collective reproduction (communal living) and mutual use of the skills of the highly qualified intellectual labor force via the substitution of capital-intensive reproduction (hospitals, microwave ovens) by labor-intensive reproduction techniques (macrobiotics, yoga, bioenergetics, meditations, massage, walks and fresh air) were favored by the agricultural structure, the climate (which imposes a certain discipline), the vicinity of metropolitan areas and low real estate prices.

This constellation allowed a certain refusal of full-time intellectual worker and the loosening of capitalist control over it. Under this aspect, the retreat to the countryside and the alternative lifestyle are forms of struggle by intellectual workers against capital. *Capital has always had problems in controlling its intellectual labor force mainly because the profit returns are indirect and slow, particularly for disciplines like philosophy, literature and art.* This loose tie between intellectual work and capital does not imply that it stands outside of capital, even if it is temporarily devoted to apple picking, woodworking or cow-milking, and if it is geographically separated from the centers of formal capitalist command (like universities, publishing houses, etc.). There is no such thing as "outside of capital" in a capitalist society: from a long-term perspective, the "back-to-the-land" intellectuals are just testing out new capitalist possibilities of dealing with certain problems of cheap production.

One of the requirements for the cheap reproduction of the "back-to-the-land" intellectual labor force is a relatively intact natural surrounding. Nature, if intact, is cheap or even free. Nature as a means of reproduction is important for these intellectual workers because the specialization and one-sidedness of their work generates psychological instability and requires periods of complete relaxation without jarring sensorial stimuli (noise, media, social contracts). Nature is the most efficient compensation for intellectual stress since it represents the unity of body and mind against the capitalist division of labor. Extensive consumption of nature has traditionally been an element of the reproduction of intellectual workers. (It started with Rousseau, then came the Romantics, Thoreau, the early tourists, Tolstoi, artists' colonies in the Alps, etc.). The ecological movement responds directly to the class interests of the intellectual sector of the proletariat and the struggle against nuclear power plants is a mere extension of this struggle.

Movement in New England

The history of the Green Mountain Post Films is a good illustration for this process in New England. Its story began in 1967 in Washington, D.C., when Marshall Bloom and Ray Mungo founded Liberation News Service as an essential means of exchanging news in the fast-growing anti-war movement. By 1968, LNS suffered an irreconcilable split between "orthodox Marxist-Leninists" and a "less doctrinaire" faction led by Bloom and Mungo. Mungo and friends decided to leave New York City, then home of LNS, and resettle at a farm in Packers Corner, Vermont; and, soon after, Bloom and his band found a farm in Montague, western Massachusetts, some 15 miles away.

A weekly news service dispatch came out of the Montague barn for a few months, but it trickled off under the pressure of a New England winter. The abrupt switch to farm life temporarily forced media and politics into the background. The two communities were busy struggling to survive. Then, in November 1969, Marshall Bloom killed himself, supposedly due to the isolation. His death served to strengthen the farm-people's resolve to keep working in the media. Over the years the two farms produced a considerable amount of books and articles. After the Vietnam war, political concerns were largely subsumed by the demands of rural self-sufficiency. It takes years to get an organic farm going; fortunately, haying, the maple trees' gift of sap, and authors' fees provided some cash.

Then in December 1973, the Northeast Utilities Company announced plans to build a twin-tower nuclear plant three miles from the farm in Montague. One of the first reactions was Sam Lovejoy, a long-term farm resident, cutting down a 500-foot weather observation tower which was to precede the proposed plant. He then hitched a ride to the Montague police station and handed in a statement on the necessity of civil disobedience in times of environmental emergency. He went on trial and won.

The two farms have provided scores of informal ideologists and leaders of the anti-nuclear movement in the New England area: Harvey Wasserman, Anna Gyorgy and others. They produced several films and also distributed a film on the Why! anti-nuclear movement which had a strong influence on the movement against the nuclear plants in New England, particularly at Seabrook (cf. *New Age, Special Report*, 1978 and Ray Mungo, *Famous Long Ago*).

The crisis after 1973 has intensified also the attacks of capital against the intellectual proletariat which had conquered certain levels of power in the sixties (represented mainly by the high educational budgets and the

expansions of the universities and research institutions) and had been able to defend itself against tight command structures. The counter-attack of capital was mainly oriented toward regaining control over the productivity of the intellectual labor force. By cuts of educational and university budgets (engineered with the "fiscal crisis"), food-price inflation and destruction of the rural retreats (where reproduction is cheap), capital has tried in the last few years to regain control. This process of *devaluation* put the underemployed intellectual proletariat in a tight squeeze.

By 1976, when the first wave of attacks was over, it was clear that the job-perspectives for intellectual workers would be dim for decades and that they could not expect to get out individually or by intensified retraining (*revaluation*). In 1976 the Clamshell Alliance was founded, the first sentence of the founding statement being:

"Recognizing: 1) That the survival of human-kind depends upon preservation of our natural environment." It is obvious that the "survival of mankind" is intimately linked to the survival of this intellectual proletariat, and the preservation of "our" natural environment can be taken literally (Intellectuals have always had the precious talent of presenting their own class interests as those of "humankind" — as though their own class interests were something dirty).

The "choice" of the anti-nuclear issue as terrain of struggle is to be explained not only by the specific history of the farms in New England or other similar developments. For underemployed or temporarily employed workers it is very difficult to organize on the job. The jobs are unstable, the possibilities of mass struggle are minimal (the worker-boss ratio being low or, in the case of self-managed or "alternative" jobs, reaching 1/1), and sabotage is ineffective in the case of intellectual work and in the absence of expensive capital goods. All this pushed the struggle immediately on the level of the "general" circulation of capital, on the level of "society," of "humankind." As it is not possible for them to attack any specific capital from the inside, the struggle has to be launched from the outside.

The anti-nuclear protests of local residents presented such a possibility of intervention from the outside. A unifying factor from outside could intervene in a deadlock situation of conflicting interests of small store-keepers, farmers, workers connected with the nuclear plan, profession petty-bourgeois, etc. The anti-nuclear militants of the "second movement" could keep together this strange class mixture and at the same time use it as "hostage" against an isolation of their own struggle. So it was possible to forge that "mis-alliance" between former urban radicals and rural conservatives. This alliance was, however, never without problems,

and the division between "locals" and anti-nuclear militants remained clear on the level of real actions, with the locals, for example, supporting occupations or demonstrations mainly passively.

The development of this movement was facilitated by the fact that a large number of the New England "subsisters" had had experiences in the anti-war movement, i.e., in mobilization techniques, media work, information finding, legal work, etc. Further, once the movement was started it developed its own dynamic reproductive functions for the militants as it provided social contacts and interesting events for old politicians who began getting bored in the relative isolation of the country life. Additionally, the movement became a source of income and created jobs for intellectual workers (writing and selling articles, books, buttons, T-shirts, making conferences, figuring out "alternative energy sources," etc). In this regard, it was a direct answer to the problem of survival for at least a particular section of "humankind."

Outside the Movement

Perhaps the class structure of the anti-nuclear movement becomes even more clear when we look at those sectors of the working class who are *not* present in it: factory workers, blacks and urban minority people, atomic workers (with some important exceptions), construction workers and young urban clerical and service workers. All these urban or industrial class-sectors are usually exposed to substantially higher levels of pollution and environmental stress and are, even when living in large cities, not safer in the case of radioactive fallout when a nuclear accident occurs, as the accident at Three Mile Island has demonstrated. *But these sectors have a qualitatively different relationship to capital*, more stable in the case of the factory workers (unions, family, mass organization on the job) or without any assets in the case of the poor (their labor power is not very valuable or is even worthless for capital because little money has been invested in their reproduction). Even more different are the types of reproduction, including all "cultural" differences, straight lifestyle, etc. The indifference of these sectors toward the anti-nuclear movement (or better: issue) is not based on a "lack of education and information" as the anti-nuclear militants often bitterly complain. Even very uneducated class-sectors have always been able to grasp the essential knowledge about their problems, if the knowledge were in their interest and presented possibilities of struggle. There is of course no such thing as a "theoretical class interest:" the uneducated Iranian masses have been able to beat the CIA-trained Shah regime which was backed by the most educated capital

in the world, US capital; scores of poor people have the skills to cheat welfare; workers can deal with their union bureaucrats; etc. Moreover, recent polls show that practically everybody distrusts the energy-lies of the government and the companies. *The problem is not education, but organization, and finding ways of effective and direct struggle.*

So far, the anti-nuclear movement has presented no promising way of acting for the urban working or unemployed people. "Nuclear danger" alone can trigger activity only if there is an immediate material interest involved. It is pointless to be afraid of something if you can't do anything against it . . . (That's why nuclear disarmament movements provoke so little reaction, even with a global horrible catastrophe being possible at any second). *There is no "objective danger" and death is not immediately a political category. Power is.*

The European Movement

The formation and class composition of the European anti-nuclear movements follow in general the American patterns. The main difference consists in that in Europe the new intellectual, work-refusing working class has not been geographically concentrated in certain regions. European capital has not been able to organize the division of labor, especially between physical and intellectual work, along well-defined geographical lines. The movement started in Germany where the "subsistence intellectuals" had reached relatively high levels of autonomy (the installment of the Social Democratic government in the late 1960s marked the impact of the movement and presented large material concessions to students, intellectuals, etc.) which were then brutally attacked in the crisis (ideologically covered by Red Army Faction, "Baader-Meinhof"-hunting hysteria). The process of alliance of the "first anti-nuclear movement" with the "second movement" was very similar to the one in New England. It represented a "little political miracle," for the "alternative" people were officially stigmatized at "terrorists" and the populations of the nuclear sites were traditionally right-wing.

The lack of geographical division in Europe favored the class-specific expansion of the movement. *Unlike the US, whole sectors of the urban young or unemployed workers joined it, not particularly because of the anti-nuclear issue, but for its quality as a general social movement expressing insubordination, rebellion, the possibility of violent struggle, etc.* As the whole plethora of the "new" or "radical" left quickly filled its ranks, huge demonstrations of dozens of thousands of people like those in Brokdorf, Kaiseraugst, Malville, Kalkar, etc., were possible. In Europe,

everything is geographically and politically "near," communications are easy and fast, there is a continuity of "demonstration culture," while the existence of socially "homogenized" political parties (particularly socialist and communist) immediately link all types of issues to the general political power game. This can be seen by the fact that the nuclear issue has been used by different political parties to overthrow the governments. In Sweden, the conservatives used it against the ruling Social Democrats and won; in France, the socialists used it against a "liberal" government; in Switzerland, the anti-nuclear issue was first used by the extreme right, then the extreme left, at last also by the social democrats. *This further proves that the anti-nuclear issue by itself fails to provide a definition of the class-content of the movement.*

Part II: The Ideology (Self-Definition) of the Nuclear Movement in Relation to Capitalist Planning

We have seen that the anti-nuclear movements always express specific class interests, which are not everywhere the same. The nuclear industry creates contradictions not only between certain sectors of the intellectual proletariat and capital, but also between endangered small owners, petty bourgeois, small industrialists and more advanced capital. The nuclear industry represents for the former classes the destruction of older levels of capitalist development and psychological equilibrium. This explains why the anti-nuclear issue and ecological issue in general have been used in the context of reactionary ideologies. We mention "eco-fascism," a right-wing ideology which intends to impose austerity, lower wages and longer working hours, old-style family life, etc., while struggling against new technologies. This tendency had some impact in Europe, but obviously not in the US where the Ku Klux Klan supports the construction of nuclear plants.

One of the characteristics of the ecological and anti-nuclear movement is that the class interest of the people involved in it is never directly expressed in its ideologies. Anti-nuclear militants seem to be classless angels, coming directly from the heaven of a general "responsibility for humankind" and announcing the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah by a core meltdown. The main argument for this classless ideology is, of course, that radioactivity affects all classes, that the radioactive waste will be a problem for capitalists as well as workers. This is only partially true, for rich people have more possibilities to avoid radioactive areas and can protect themselves better. But even if radioactivity might kill everybody, it does not eliminate class difference until that moment (and this is

obviously the period we try to deal with).

In reality, the "classless" ideology of the anti-nuclear movement is an outflow of the class situation of its members: as they have no possibility of organization or self-definition on their jobs, they are forced to operate practically and ideologically on the level of the general development of capital. From their point of view, even if capital is seen as the basic relation of society, capital's enemy is taken as "humankind" or "all living creatures." As we read, "Nuclear power is dangerous to all living creatures and to their natural environment. The nuclear industry is designed to concentrate profits and the control of energy resources in the hands of a powerful few, undermining basic principles of human liberty." (*Declaration of Nuclear Resistance* of the Clamshell Alliance, 1 November 1977). This is a pure but useful fiction. The abstraction "humankind" is used to not endanger the alliance with local small owners, professionals, etc. At the same time it is the expression of the class ideology of intellectual workers whose function is to plan for the general development of capital – including the working class – and to sell these plans to us all.

The Anti-Planners

Confronted with "bad" nuclear capital, this general responsibility above all classes is transformed into the planning of an alternative development. They don't simply reject capitalist development, but rather present an anti-plan: "2) that our energy policy be focused on developing and implementing clean and renewable sources of energy in concert with an efficient system of recycling and conservation." Here again, it is not said *who* would develop and implement "our" energy policy. This statement about alternative planning is completely disconnected from problems of power and class and thus reveals its merely ideological function.

The anti-plan ideology is in fact one of the most visible class ideologies of devalued intellectual workers. Developing anti-plans means nothing less than finding a new function for such intellectuals in a modified capitalist development. The struggle among the anti-planners of "our" future is the struggle about the qualifications of future intellectual workers, for the ability to find alternative futures is exactly the function of intellectual workers (on a "lower" level called management, on a "higher" level, philosophy).

It is clear from the beginning that less valuable labor-power such as factory workers, clerks, housewives, etc., cannot participate in this type of management of the *future*. For them the *present* is more difficult because their relationship with capital is more immediate and irreconcilable. The

anti-plan ideology at the same time keeps away such less valuable workers from the movement, thus keeping the class composition of the movement "clean." A worker who is in permanent struggle with management will never try to participate in it, even if it is "alternative management." This becomes even more evident when we look at some of these anti-plans.

Ralph Nader proposes a model of "sane" capitalism based on competition of small capitals under the quality-control of the State. This would provide scores of easy jobs for quality-controllers like Nader and consorts, but no advantages for workers, only tighter control (as is typical in smaller businesses).

The most frequent anti-planning ideologies are based on the development of solar or other alternative energy sources. Solar energy has been promoted particularly around the job-issue. It is said that the nuclear industry destroys jobs and that solar developments would create lots of new jobs. This argument starts usually as Harvey Wasserman puts it in one of his articles (*New Age, Special Report* 1978): "The conflict lies in the basic difference between a capital-intensive economy and one based on human work." Such a statement is simply false: capitalist intensive economies *are* based on *human work* and require still *more and more intensive human work*. First, the machines, the equipment, etc., of capital intensive industries have to be built ultimately by *human work*. Then, as a glimpse at statistics shows us, non-industrial and service jobs have been expanding rapidly in the last few years "despite" nuclear development. While the rate of unemployment has been stable, overall employment has gone up rapidly. More *human work* than ever is being extracted from workers in the US. It is true: proportionately less people work in manufacture and automated industries in general, especially in the energy sector. But this doesn't mean that capital can or wants to do without human work. It is an optical illusion to see only the automated factory and not the sweatshop on the corner. *The fact is, human work, and therefore surplus value (surplus human labor extracted by capital), is extracted in less capital-intensive branches and appears as the profit of highly capital-intensive sectors.*

One of the instruments of this surplus-value transfer is the hike of energy and food prices. In order to pay *their* bills, the energy companies make *us* work more and more in small shops, as salesmen, typists, clerks, drivers, etc. The capitalist system forms a unity: exploitation in one place can result in profits in another place. This would also certainly be the case in the solar industry. The solar workers would do the shit work and the companies (e.g., steel companies which produce sheet steel) would make