

the profits. Wasserman's cry for a "labor-intensive" development means nothing more than offering capital a new source of human work, a new source of exploitation. The problem is not lack of jobs. Nobody cares about jobs, because every job means self-repression, loss of life, repression of one's wishes. The real problem is lack of money, access to power and to the wealth which we have ourselves produced. If jobs are an efficient way to get money, we might accept them as a temporary solution, a tactical compromise with capital. But jobs can never be a solution to the problem of the working class.

Of course, unemployment is also a weapon used by capital against us, because it forces us to choose between misery or accepting the worst jobs at the lowest wages. On the other hand, many people have discovered temporary unemployment as a weapon against capital: you don't get much money, but if you organize with other people (as Harvey Wasserman and his crowd did in New England) you have more time for yourself, can regain some strength and develop your talents. Unemployment is not a question of technology, but a question of power. *As long as we don't have the power, the control over all resources and social wealth, "human work" will always be an attack on us, whether it is planned by Rockefeller or anti-planned by Wasserman.*

The same is true, of course, for socialist and communist models, like the one of the CPUSA, which includes even nuclear energy, but "under democratic control," i.e., managed by the State (whomever that may be). The "State" is only another name for "general capital," especially in the energy sector, and what ultimately we might expect from socialist States can be seen in Russia, China, Vietnam, etc.

Even more radical and "anarchist" anti-plans such as Bookchin's proposals or other similar models, which want to cut back society and economy to small, human, self-sufficient units, without State, capital and money, suffer from the same basic vice: anticipating and planning a future for "others," assuming the functions of intellectual workers, defending one's own value as qualified labor-power, putting the future as a barrier between the different class sectors in struggle. The ecological and anti-plan ideology is an expression of the fears of intellectual workers in confronting less valuable labor power. They are not ready to devalue themselves, to renounce their planning and managing function, to "get down" on the level of immediate, irreconcilable struggle against capitalist exploitation in all its forms. Hiding behind the concept of "responsibility for humankind," for the future, for "constructive alternatives," for all "ifs" and "buts" (will we have enough energy? who will clean the streets?) they

protect their own existence as a distinct sector of the proletariat. This is neither surprising nor vicious – we just have to be aware of it . . .

Attack Nuclear Capital

However, the anti-nuclear movement need not be a movement of anti-planning. Making the nuclear industry a target of struggle is essential at this point. The nuclear industry represents a synthesis of all major trends of capitalist development. All aspects of the general perspective of capital are concentrated in this industry: high capital intensity (70 plants in the US employ only about 79,000 workers and produce 13 percent of all electricity) extreme discipline and command over the labor force, combination of State and private capital (in research, financing, supervision), internationality, computerization and extension of the “planning horizon” far into the future (nuclear waste). The nuclear industry is able to occupy all free spaces geographically (reactors are independent of local resources), politically (all police-State measures can be justified by radioactive dangers), and in time (even if we “win,” we will have to deal with the nuclear waste; our “utopias” are infested for thousands of years).

Psychologically, nuclear reactors are symbols of permanent self-control and self-repression, representing the psychological character of the 1950s. The controlled explosion, the slow burn-out, corresponds to the process of exploitation of each single worker. Nuclear plants emit bad “vibes” because they are like capital wants us to be. We are not allowed to explode socially – the reactor is not allowed to explode technically. Our control-rods are family-education, responsibility-ideologies (including “alternative”), fear of death – for it we meltdown, we are punished with the “technical” death penalty. The nuclear plant is just another element of this blackmailing with death, together with traffic, machines, etc.

In the 1960s, some of this technical reliability melted down, millions of intellectuals and other workers refused the stress of self-repression. In this respect, nuclear development is felt like a counterattack of capital to create new centers of reliability against the marsh of obscure wishes and desires. It is an attack on the working class because it aims at imposing tighter command and higher productivity on it. The anti-progress, anti-command, anti-concrete-and-steel-ideology within the anti-nuclear movement represents a basis for unity with other class sectors as it is a genuine expression of the class situation of the intellectual proletariat as well as of factory and office workers, etc.

Slime against concrete/refusal of responsibility and command against capital/life against work/wishes against need – these are elements of an

ideology and practice which could destroy the planning/anti-planning dead end.

Part III: Strange Victories – The Anti-Nuclear Movement and the Nuclear Industry

The immediate enemy of the anti-nuclear movement is the nuclear industry. This industry is apparently a “single capital” which, however, has financial and technological roots in many other capitals and represents the most “general” single capital so far. In practically all countries, the nuclear industry is tightly linked to the State which has developed and financed its technology through the nuclear weapons industry. This fact alone makes it clear that the struggles around the nuclear cycle, from inside or outside, are immediately concerned with a State/capital and reach the highest levels of class contradiction.

The Nuclear Plan

The nuclear industry was planned throughout the 1950s and 1960s as a response to the unreliability of domestic coal miners and oil workers in the Middle East (cf the Suez crisis in 1956). It was conceived as the source for a new capitalist accumulation, a new model of capitalist command, control and territorial organization. The “nuclear worker” was to be the standard for a new class composition: a model of discipline, responsibility and political reliability.

The higher level of discipline was to be achieved by *a militarization of the nuclear cycle*. “Atoms for Peace” was to be a mere extension and toned down version of the terroristic impact of the nuclear weapons industry. In the late 1960s the construction of 1,000 power plants by the year 2000 was planned. This plan meant the full “nuclearization” of US territory and would have been a marvelously powerful but subtle means of social control. The plan envisioned that the production of 30 percent of the energy supply would be nuclear. If this had succeeded, the industry would have been able to bust all the struggles of the coal miners and oil workers. The planned *location* of the plants was also dictated by the need for class control. The plants were sited around the major metropolitan areas, so that the State could impose evacuations or other emergency measures and blackmail the population with radioactive danger in times of “social unrest” (it would not make any difference if the danger were real, for with radioactivity “you don’t feel anything” until *after* the damage is done). The same command functions could have been exerted on an

international level through the control of the uranium cycle. For example, the European nuclear industry depends completely on US and Canadian uranium and to a large extent on US nuclear technology.

The plan suffered one major internal contradiction: *though planned as a profitable single capital, the nuclear industry turned out to be completely unable to function capitalistically*. One problem was the immaturity of nuclear technology itself. The political pressure of the working class did not give capital enough time to resolve all the technological problems ("safety," waste, environmental problems). Another problem was the overextended circulation period of nuclear capital. It takes ten years to plan a plant, four years to build it, another 15 years to completely pay off the investments, by which time it is technologically obsolete. This makes the costs of a nuclear plant virtually incalculable, for in this long period many external influences (inflation, changes in the supply costs, changes in the environment) can intervene. Thus the huge cost overruns.

The extended circulation-period of nuclear capital is not a mere financial or economic risk, it is also politically dangerous. It imposes a rigidity on capital which can be "exploited" by the working class's power of surprise. Between the planning was the students' movement, the anti-war movement, a new situation in the Middle East, a general loss of credibility in the ideology of "progress," a breakdown of the family, the crisis after 1973. The anti-nuclear movement itself is both a part of these general developments as well as their expression. Capital has invested deeply in a future it really does not control. In a sector with short profit-return periods, capital can adjust quickly to new situations without losing huge amounts of already invested money – not so in the nuclear industry.

All these working class surprises forced capital to give up the idea of a really profitable nuclear industry. One response was to make energy in general artificially more expensive. This began in earnest in the oil-crisis of 1973. Once oil was made two times more expensive than before, nuclear energy became more competitive. At the same time, the additional oil-profits could be used to finance the nuclear industry which is connected with the oil trusts through the banking system. Further, the oil companies are directly interested in the nuclear industry because they control a large share of uranium mining and can coordinate the price of uranium with that of oil (e.g., between 1973 and the present the delivery price of uranium oxide has gone up from \$7 to more than \$20).

This profit injection into the energy industry as a whole has been paid for by the working class in the form of higher gasoline prices and inflation. The State organizes the inflation of energy prices since it guarantees the

electric companies' profit with money taken from the working class either in the form of taxes or by granting higher utility rates. Further, the State lowers the real cost of nuclear plants because decommissioning costs are not charged, while the liability of the companies is reduced by a law which artificially lowers their insurance costs (the Price-Anderson Act limits liability to a ridiculously low \$560 million).

The nuclear industry is not operating on conventional capitalist cost-principles or, rather, far less so than other industries. It is more like a branch of "State socialism" where the State pays and the industry receives "fake" profits. Its economic function can best be compared to that of the war industries, for it is only under such "para-military" conditions that the nuclear engineering and utility companies survive financially. The flip side of this State/capital relation is that the nuclear industry has become a subtly powerful instrument of State planning in the crisis.

Higher energy prices and the ease of price manipulation afforded by the nuclear industry impose higher basic costs on all capitals. Nuclear prices force them *either* to raise their capital intensity (rationalization, automation) *or*, if they are not able to do this, to raise the rate of exploitation (lower wages, longer hours, faster work rhythms) *or both*. Not only are workers forced to work more, but single capitals are forced by general capital (the State) either to exploit them more effectively or face bankruptcy.

If we compare the nuclear plants with their actual achievements we find them in a very critical situation. Only 72 plants are operating in the US and most of them are operating far below their capacity. In 1978 no new nuclear plants were ordered while almost everyday we read that plants have been cancelled or will be shut down. In March 1979, five plants in the Northeast were shut down by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission because of "earthquake dangers." The Seabrook plant is struggling with serious financial problems. The Three Mile Island plant is lost. In Europe, dozens of plants have been cancelled or delayed. In Austria, a completed plant will not go into operation after a referendum on nuclear development. It will become a silent and ugly monument of the "nuclear age" in that country. If we compare this situation to the original plans, we can speak of a "victory" against the nuclear industry. But whose victory? And is it really a victory?

Bad Surprises

These victories cannot be due to the anti-nuclear movement alone because the movement had a direct impact only in a few situations (as in

Why!, West Germany). For example, the referendum in Austria was supported by the conservative *Volkspartei* against the Social Democrats and was not stated by the anti-nuclear movement. This "victory" occurred, moreover, in a period of open defeat of the movement in Europe.

The nuclear industry puts the blame on "rising costs" and not on the anti-nuclear movement. This is superficially true. But "costs" are only an expression of the social processes that cause them. One very important (if not the most important) element of these "costs" are the nuclear workers themselves, including all types of scientists and the social context in which they move. Nuclear plants were designed for the responsible progress-abiding, intellectual-technical workers of the 1950s. The high capital-intensity and the centralized existence of nuclear capital require stable, socially settled "family men," "militarily disciplined workers, truly "scientific" Stakhanovites of the second half of the 20th century.⁴ It is no accident that the race to develop the atomic bomb also produced the first "peaceful" atomic workers. War has always been capital's laboratory for developing new production processes and forming new types of workers.

The '60s and '70s put this "new" worker in crisis. Wives, mothers and lovers no longer produced stability and discipline, the universities didn't produce reliability, while academic unemployment ruined the "pride" of these workers. *As this disillusioned, cynical, unstable intellectual proletariat emerges, the future of such capital-intensive industries like the nuclear industry is endangered.*

Because of its long planning period, the long term future affects the immediate behavior of the nuclear industry more than any other branch of capital. The nuclear industry is in crisis because its future is in crisis: *not its technological future, but the relationship between its technology and labor force, between technology and "humanity."* The last few years have seen a whole wave of nuclear "desertions." Scientists and even members of the NRC went over to the "enemy." Some of these deserters helped make the film *China Syndrome*. In West Germany, the most spectacular case was that of Traube, the director of the national nuclear power plant programme, whose telephone was tapped by the police because he was suspected of having contacts with the Red Army Faction. This accusation could not be proven but Traube was fired and then joined the ecological movement. Recently, Kathy Boylan, whose husband is an employee of the nuclear department of the Long Island Lighting Company, pronounced herself against nuclear power. Asked whether her stand against nuclear power could jeopardize her husband's job, Mrs. Boylan replied, "It might."

The undermined discipline of the nuclear workers imposes high

"costs" on the nuclear industry, i.e., costs for "safety and protection" *against its own employees*. Sabotage or "human error" are in fact main concerns of the NRC. In 1978 the NRC demanded that all plants apply new, tougher safety procedures: more personnel, introduction of the "two man rule" (all employees dealing with vulnerable operations should always be accompanied by another employee to prevent sabotage), installation of TV-supervision and new safety clearances of two-thirds of all employees (which costs \$6,000 per person). A number of companies refused to apply these rules and risked losing their licenses (the deadline was first August 1978 and later extended until February 1979).⁵ But these new procedures did not do the job. In fact, the NRC blamed the Three Mile Island accident on "human errors," for the system itself worked fine! Nuclear workers have protested against the "two man rule" and other safety procedures because they consider them a declaration of mistrust. They are right: capital does not trust them. *For capital must not only deal with the question: Who educates the educators? But, most crucially in the nuclear industry, it must pose the question: Who controls the controllers?*⁶

Though no nuclear plant has been shut down due to a wage dispute, nuclear workers have been visibly struggling for more safety for themselves against radioactive dangers. Karen Silkwood has become something of a national martyr because she was murdered in 1974 when she tried to make public information about health dangers in the nuclear processing plant where she worked. In 1976 workers in a nuclear reprocessing plant in La Hague went on strike for six months protesting radioactive contamination at the plant. On February 18, 1979, nuclear workers at the nuclear power plant of Caorso, Italy, went on strike demanding safety guarantees from the company against radioactive dangers. The "leaks" of discipline within the nuclear cycle seem to be enlarging and capital must have strong doubts about the command-creating function of the nuclear industry.

The crisis of command-creation within the plants (or the nuclear cycle in general) is intensified by the crisis of command over the socio-political environment around the plant. Site planning is obviously sensitive to this environment. Thus, in Italy the nuclear programme is relatively modest (11 million people per plant site). This is not surprising in a country with high levels of "mass terrorism" and a general credibility gap between the State and the working class. Capital-intensive industries like nuclear power are too risky there. At the other extreme is Switzerland which has the largest nuclear programme proportional to the population (900,000 people per plant) supplying 25 percent of its electricity.⁷ Again this is not

surprising for Switzerland is known for its political and social stability. Instead of increasing control over the site environments, however, the construction of nuclear plants has provided an ideal target for social movements of different origins. Many times, the plants "organized" social insubordination around themselves. The high concentration of capital and "visibility" of this capitalist "fortress of confidence and progress" attracted all types of protest, attacks and threats. For example, in the US, 175 threats or acts of violence against nuclear plants were reported. One of the most spectacular occurred on August 27, 1974, when an incendiary bomb exploded near Pilgrim 1 in Massachusetts while the plant was at one of its rare moments of full power. Nuclear capital could not anticipate this type of reaction which was based on social processes that emerged after the nuclear plants had been put on line. Attacks on the nuclear industry were not only used by the anti-nuclear movement. they were also enmeshed with other political purposes (e.g., struggles for national or regional liberation or for more traditional "party-games"). Thus the anti-nuclear movement is only one of the social movements which forced higher "costs" on the nuclear industry from the outside. These "costs" include: expenses for the military defence of the plants, propaganda and lobbying efforts, additional safety measures, legitimation (safety studies, legal actions). "lost time" and interest charges.

Even the accident at Three Mile Island, the first real-life rehearsal of nuclear command-creation, indicated more symptoms of the decay of command than of its strengthening. Thousands of workers took advantage of the situation and did not show up for work, while the credibility of State and nuclear officials reached only 16 percent in the polls. On the one side, workers who were told not to leave did leave; on the other side, those told to go often did not go. As Woodrow Miller, 63, former mayor of the town of Goldsboro (near the reactor) explained the attitude of the latter type of refusers: "What is the difference if you stay in New York and die from carbon monoxide or I stay in Goldsboro and die from radiation?" Given the fact that the crisis, the higher costs of living, the cut-backs of social services have generally created so many risks for health, many people are perhaps willing to take the additional radioactive risk, stay in an evacuation area and try to make use of the situation in the form of looting or riots. The renewed interest by the government in "civil defence" and mass, police-run evacuations indicates that nuclear plants are not terrorizing and commanding enough for the working class of the 1970s.

Even in this critical situation, with all these "strange victories," the nuclear industry (and even less capital in general) is not yet defeated and

has other choices. State/capital wants us to pay a high price for our unexpected victories and lack of devotion to its plans. For if splitting atoms cannot do the job of controlling our lives, maybe decaying dollars can.

At this moment, capital is obviously testing out two possible futures: a risky, capital intensive nuclear future and a labor-intensive, low-energy version. Neither is very tempting though there will always be, after the priority is set, a combination of both. The choice we are offered is one between cancer and misery. The "loyal opposition" to capital within the anti-nuclear movement seems to accept such a blackmail and is campaigning for the "misery" version: "solar jobs," conservation and "labor-intensive" production. In this sense, they are "educating" the masses, but they face the same problem the dominant capital faces with its cancer-option. *Imposing labor-intensive production on a working class that has been fighting around the refusal of work is as hopeless as the search for responsible high capital-intensity workers.* However, if we are not able to reject the choice between cancer and misery, we will surely get both.

Part IV: The Anti-Nuclear Movement in the Cities

One of the major achievements of the anti-nuclear movement and its militants (even its "solar capital" planners) is to have created a social movement practically from zero. In the midst of the general decay of old New Left organizations, anti-nuclear militants took a practical chance that lots of "pure revolutionaries" didn't even perceive. But this world is ungrateful and militant merits are not eternally respected because all movements, if they remain alive, change continuously. The anti-nuclear movement emerged with a class composition linked to a type of highly valued intellectual labor force in rural and suburban regions. Will this be the social and geographic limit of the movement? With the Three Mile Island accident and the energy price attack, capital is saying to this movement: "Okay, folks, you got a point. But what about food-riots in the cities, which side will you be on?"

This may appear exaggerated, but this question expresses the main problem the anti-nuclear movement will necessarily face in urban areas. The urban working class forces a choice on the movement: will it stick to its old class-structure or will it try to extend beyond these limits? Will it be a movement of concerned intellectual workers, dealing with problems of anti-planning, restricting its form of struggle and organization to this class sector or will it deal with more immediate issues such as rate hikes and food prices. The anti-nuclear movement is still pondering over the

risks of enlarging its class composition (which could mean self-devaluation) versus the advantages of conserving its own value as a labor force (for example, at one of the first major occupations of a nuclear plant site after Three Mile Island – the one at Shoreham, New York, on June 3, 1979 – nonviolence training has still been declared compulsory by the organizers).

The anti-nuclear movement has developed a certain rigidity and a fear of uninvited guests. While being harmless in rural areas, this rigidity can become a danger in cities where different class sectors live closely together. "Doing your own thing" in a city can immediately mean doing it against others, for everything is so directly interrelated. The apparently innocent act of installing a windmill on the roof and saving energy is an attack on a neighbor who probably doesn't have the necessary money for such an installation and is left alone in the struggle against rising electricity bills. One arm of the anti-nuclear movement, "alternative energy," can become just another hobby for higher income people or people with special educations. Thus, Carter's energy bill subsidizes the installation of solar heating devices through tax write-offs, but only those who have houses to install them and taxes to write off can take advantage of the deal. In general, such individual or class restricted energy solutions put poorer sectors in an even tighter squeeze and deepen the divisions within the class. If a nuclear shut-down only means solar privileges for some people, capital can divide the possible movement of all energy consumers and we will lose the nuclear battle.

Not to deal with the problem of energy prices at the urban community level means to automatically play the game of capitalist class division, consciously or not. All types of symbolic or legal activities, like "making the link with the atomic bomb" (can you practically attack an atomic bomb by "attacking" the Pentagon?) divert from possible activities in the community. If we are not able to deal with the local electric company, how can we deal with the Pentagon? Why should we go to Washington if we have never been to the corner utility office?

These questions concerning the movement's direction must be asked now, for the anti-nuclear movement has a real chance to play a role as a catalyst for struggles in a very critical situation in the cities. The Harrisburg accident has legitimated this movement on a mass level and has "educated" people about the lies of government and the nuclear industry. Being anti-nuclear means to be against capital, against the energy squeeze, against the "Choice" of cancer or misery. The anti-nuclear issue is a possibility of autonomous organization outside of all types of

compromised party, union and ethnic organizations, and open field of creativity for all types of people. The characteristics of the "rural" anti-nuclear movement are partly an obstacle for such a function. The urban anti-nuclear movement has to develop its own ways of organizing, making decisions and acting. It must insist on its own rhythms and cannot just be an appendix of the established organizations.

April, 1979

Notes

This is an edited version of the original text. For the complete version, contact Midnight Notes.

¹ Whyl in Germany was a Christian Democrat (conservative) stronghold, the political attitudes could be described as "law and order," "defense of private property," "anti-communist." Nevertheless, it became the center of a very militant activism of local people against the planned nuclear reactor and against the Christian Democrat government.

² In Whyl, the quality of the wine would have declined due to climatic changes; the value of the real estate would have gone down; milk production would become problematic, etc.

³ Similar "factors" emerged on a lesser scale in other places, including the Denver-Aspen area of Colorado; around Chapel Hill, North Carolina; Madison, Wisconsin; etc; in sum, in centers of "alternativism" which co-exist with centers of the education industry.

⁴ According to G. Daneker and R. Grossman, *Jobs and Energy* (Washington, D.C., 1977) p.15, the ratio of professional and technical workers in atomic plants is 33 percent of the total plant employment; in manufacturing this ratio is 10.2 percent while in mining it is 12.6 percent, *Handbook of Labor Statistics 1976* (Washington, D.C., 1976).

⁵ Interview with R. Jungk, *Tages Anzeiger*, March 6, 1979.

⁶ The typical nuclear plant employs about 733 persons a year according to Ron Langue, *Nuclear Power Plants: The More They Build, The More You Pay* (New York, 1976). The average cost per plant completed in 1976 is about \$2 billion. Thus the average investment a worker handles in a year is \$2.7 million. The investment per worker per year in petroleum is \$150,000 while in textiles it is \$18,600. *Statistical Abstract of the US 1978* (Washington, D.C., 1979), p. 567. Thus the nuclear worker has to be 16 times more reliable than the petroleum worker and 145 times more disciplined than a textile worker.

⁷ Calculated from the *Statistical Abstract*