This essay appears on the website [www.zerowork.org](http://www.zerowork.org) as part of a larger project reconstructing the genesis, evolution and end of the political project that produced and published two issues of the journal *Zerowork* in 1975 and 1977. The entire text of the first two issues are on the website. Most of the texts for a third issue – produced but never published – are now also available for the first time on the website. As explained on that website, this is an ongoing project whose texts are subject to change as research proceeds and feedback comes in. Any constructive feedback will be welcome via email at hmcleave@austin.utexas.edu

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**Background: Genesis of Zerowork #1**

**The Analysis**

**Paths to Zerowork**

**Theoretico-political Roots**

**Workers’ Autonomy in the Sphere of Production**

**From the Johnson-Forest Tendency to Facing Reality and Beyond**

**Socialisme ou Barbarie**

**Italian Workerism (*Operaismo*)**

**From Struggles of the Waged to those of the Unwaged**

**Housework and the Struggle against It**

**Schoolwork and the Struggle against It**

**Peasants and their Struggles**

**Incipient Differences**

**Brief Biographies of the Editors of *Zerowork* #1 (1975)**

Those who formed the initial collective that published the first issue of *Zerowork* were a diverse bunch with various intellectual and political backgrounds and, collectively, considerable international experience. George Caffentzis, William (Bill) Cleaver, Leoncio Schaedel and Peter Linebaugh were Americans living in the United States, but George had family in Greece, Leoncio had recently escaped Chile after the overthrow of Allende and Peter had studied in England. While Bill and Peter had both majored in history, during the crafting of *Zerowork* #1 Bill was working in the library of the New School for Social Research in New York City and active in local union politics, while Peter was teaching history at Franconia College and at New Hampshire State Prison. George had studied philosophy of science and was teaching at Brooklyn College of City University of New York. Leoncio was in the graduate program in political economy at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Paolo Carpignano, Mario Montano and Bruno Ramirez were Italians who had all studied in Italy before crossing the Atlantic. But while Paolo and Mario came and stayed in the US, Bruno moved on to Toronto, Ontario after completing both a BA and an MA in the US. Peter Taylor was a Canadian living in Toronto working – and not working – in the Post Office. Paolo and Mario had both studied sociology, and Mario was teaching it at Clark University. Bruno was working on his dissertation in history. The two corresponding editors, John Merrington and Ferruccio Gambino lived in Britain and Italy respectively. But John had studied in Italy, translated and circulated political materials from Italy in England and participated in study groups with Peter Linebaugh. Ferruccio was at the Department of Political Science at the University of Padua where Toni Negri was chairman, but his frequent travels in Europe and the United States not only kept everyone up-to-date on what was happening and being discussed elsewhere but wove a web of interpersonal relations vital to all involved. (For more detail on the intersecting trajectories of their lives, see the section below with individual biographical sketches.)

These folks came together in the midst of crises both local and international.

Within major Canadian and U.S. cities, such as Toronto, Montreal and New York City, successful and untamed struggles by both waged and unwaged workers had been undermining capitalist control for some years. Ever since public employees in Canada – spearheaded by Post Office workers – had won collective bargaining rights in 1967 and formed the Common Front in Quebec in 1972 – the ability of city, provincial and national governments to provide popular services with cheap labor had been undermined. In New York City street-level and welfare rights struggles had interacted with those of public employees to so undermine the “business climate” of the city as to provoke business flight and job losses in the private sector and fiscal crisis in city finances. By 1974-75 the banks were beginning to refuse to roll over the city’s debt while city government, with the help of union bureaucrats, were beginning to raid union pension funds – not only to cover city debts but to undermine public employee struggles.[[1]](#footnote-1) These crises were forerunners of others to come – of which the automaker abandonment of Flint, portrayed in Michael Moore's 1989 film "Roger and Me", and the 2013 bankruptcy of Detroit are but two examples.[[2]](#footnote-2)

At the international level, widespread worker struggles in the United States had undermined the ability of the Keynesian state to manage the wage/productivity deals that had been the basis of post-WWII accumulation and had provoked business efforts to compensate by raising prices – causing such an acceleration in inflation as to contribute to the disappearance of the U.S. trade surplus and to provoke President Nixon in 1971 to unhook the dollar from gold and abandon the Bretton Woods system of fixed exchange rates. That ostensible “monetary crisis” was soon followed by a state-engineered food crisis in 1972 and the first “oil shock” of 1973-74 – initiated by the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) but sanctioned by United States policy makers.[[3]](#footnote-3)

**The Analysis**

In the midst of these crises, local, national and international, the members of the Zerowork collective put our heads together to construct an analysis of the situation – an analysis that would, hopefully, also reveal strategic implications for workers’ struggles. Two things had become obvious to all of us. *First*, these crises were not the usual “inevitable” crises envisioned by the Left as resulting from the internal laws of motion of capitalism, but were the products of, and responses to workers’ struggles.[[4]](#footnote-4) *Second*, those struggles had achieved the power to throw capital into crisis – and provoke it to counterattack – through a dynamic interaction between the struggles of the unwaged and those of the waged. Indeed, by the time we came together, all of us in the Zerowork collective had seen beyond the classical Marxist definition of the working class as made up of waged workers to a broader view in which the unwaged – including housewives, students and peasants – were integral both to the expanded reproduction of capital and to the make-up of the working class.

These two shared insights had grown out of both experience and study. On the one hand, several of us had been involved in unwaged student struggles and in the Civil Rights movement that brought us together with waged workers; others had been involved in waged worker struggles but linked, organizationally, to those of the unwaged. Examples of the latter were collaborations between Canadian student activists and blue collar militants in both the national Post Office system and local automobile factories. On the other hand, the emergence of the women’s movement had not only brought to the fore the centrality of women’s work in the home (and student work in schools) in the production and reproduction of labor power, but produced new theoretical formulations that deepened Marx’s limited discussion of that work and its role in capitalist reproduction as a whole. At the same time, study of the origins of capitalist policies in rural areas of the Third World – from the Vietnam War and land reform to innovations in agricultural technology – revealed not only how capitalists understood peasants to be part of the class they were doing their best to put to work but how the struggles of those more-often-than-not unwaged peasants undermined the best laid capitalist plans and forced repeated shifts in counter-revolutionary strategies.

But having become convinced that the crises surrounding us had been brought on by workers’ struggles – both waged and unwaged – we still had to figure out what characteristics of those struggles had given workers the power to rupture capitalist accumulation? On the surface, the characteristics were as varied as the struggles themselves and seemed to have little in common – a situation that led capitalist policy makers – always keen to divide to conquer – to disparage them as distinct “special interest” politics and others, more sympathetic, to honor them as diverse “social movements.” Waged workers had been fighting for more collective bargaining rights (where they didn’t have them, e.g., farmworkers), against corrupt union bureaucrats (e.g., in the United Mine Workers and International Brotherhood of Teamsters) and, pretty much everywhere, for more money (higher wages and pensions), better working conditions and fewer working hours. Women had been fighting for personal, legal and economic equality. Students had been fighting for free speech, for changes in curriculum better suited to their desires, for ruptures in the links between universities and the war machine and for racial, ethnic and gender equality in access to higher education. Welfare rights militants – mainly women – had been fighting for more resources and fewer humiliating intrusions by state welfare agencies. Black and brown militants among the unemployed and partially employed had been fighting for civil rights, racial equality and against police repression. Prisoners (disproportionately black or brown) had been fighting against abuse, for greater legal rights and more freedom within their confinement to study and communicate. Peasants had been fighting for land, for autonomy and for liberation from foreign domination, whether colonial or neocolonial. All of these efforts contested one mechanism or another of capitalist domination, locally, nationally or internationally. But did all these diverse groups constitute sectors of the working class only in so far as they were all subjected to, and resisting, capitalist domination? Or, was it possible to identify enough interconnections to see beyond their differences to an interactive and collective efficacy? We argued that there were.

To summarize our arguments for the existence of such efficacy – as spelled out in the first issue of the journal – the historical dynamics of struggle that led to a many-sided rupture of capitalist command had two fundamental characteristics. First, there were not only myriad interconnections among the various struggles but those interconnections were *pathways* *through which struggles circulated* from sector to sector amplifying their collective effects. Sometimes that circulation was through confrontation; sometimes it was through collaboration; sometimes it was merely the result of some struggles inspiring others. Second, the manifold demands articulated within those diverse sectors, more often than not, involved or supported a common refusal of the fundamental mechanism of capitalist domination: the imposition of work.

The identification of the interconnections and directions through which struggles had circulated were central to the analysis laid out in *Zerowork*. We saw the struggles of waged workers, for example, to have been spurred by the entry into factories and offices of previously unwaged militants, whether from the streets (young black militants moving into Detroit and Flint auto factories) or from schools (ex-student activists moving into many domains of wage labor). We saw the struggles of men – ourselves included – to have been spurred by those of women, both in their intimate personal relationships and in wider social ones as women fought for equalities that challenged the hierarchies of capitalist patriarchy. Indeed, we recognized that the refusal of authority by children in schools was partly the consequence of the refusal of authority by mothers. The resistance of peasants (and other workers in Southeast Asia, and elsewhere) to US government counterinsurgency efforts, we argued, inspired draft resistance and anti-war activity. Just as the struggles of Mexican and Mexican-American farmworkers helped (along with exploitation and repression in the cities) inspire the formation of militant Chicano groups, so, we concluded, did the efforts of later force changes in the strategies of the former. Other examples can be found in the pages of the first issue of *Zerowork*.

To argue that the *refusal of work* lay at the heart of so many different kinds of struggle turned out to be one of the most controversial aspects of the analysis. It challenged the traditional socialist perspective that workers struggled against *capitalist imposed* work only in order to embrace post-capitalist work freed from exploitation and alienation. The inclusive understanding of the working class that included the unwaged meant that some domains that had hitherto been seen as refuges from capitalist imposed work, e.g., families and schools, were argued to also be terrains of the imposition and refusal of work. To the traditional Marxist recognition of worker struggles for shorter working days (and later weeks, years, and lives) detailed in volume one of *Capital*, those of us in the Zerowork collective saw other struggles by the waged, such as those for better working conditions, higher wages and pension funds as ones that, when successful, were used to reduce work time. Better working conditions meant less work worrying about and avoiding injury; higher wages financed strike funds and vacations; pensions financed earlier retirement. At the same time, we interpreted practices that were often dismissed by labor union bureaucrats as bespeaking laziness and irresponsibility, e.g., shirking on the job, faked sick leave and other forms of absenteeism, as informal acts of resistance to work – sometimes individual, sometimes collective and coordinated.

In a parallel fashion, once we recognized the activities of housewives and students as involving the work of producing and reproducing labor power, then a whole array of struggles clearly involved various forms of refusing that work. Thus the variety of struggles that defined the women’s movement – ranging from the refusal of family altogether (manifested in falling marriage rates) through the resistance of women to endless procreation and child-rearing (perceptible through falling birth rates and struggles for access to contraception and abortion), the fight for personal and legal equality (and thus less work for, and under the supervision of men, both in the home and outside it) and the assertion of the rights of women to form intimate bonds with other women rather than with men, to the demand for wages for housework from the state – we identified as undermining the capitalist ability to impose enough work within the nuclear family to guarantee the reproduction of a malleable labor force.

Similarly, we interpreted the myriad struggles of students against the imposition of discipline within classrooms, against the power of the state boards of education, school administrators and teachers to unilaterally determine the content of curriculum, against the reduction of learning to training for jobs, against the imposition of the same kinds of gender hierarchies being resisted by women outside of school, against the teaching of history, government and the social sciences that ignored struggles important to them (e.g., those of blacks, browns, women and even students), in short, against the subordination of their learning to educational institutions and programs shaped to justify and reproduce capitalism, as the refusal of the work of transforming themselves into manipulable and compliant members of the working class.

Instead of the post-capitalist vision imagined by socialists as consisting of a parasite-free, one-class society of workers in command of their tools, "zerowork"*,* evoked for us a future in which the success of worker struggles was tending, among other things, to achieve such a dramatic reduction in work *per se* that it would become only one activity of self-realization among, and enriched by, other activities. The shared vision of those of us who crafted *Zerowork* was thus very much in the spirit of the famous passage in the *German Ideology* where Marx imagined a communist society “where nobody has one exclusive sphere of activity but each can become accomplished in any branch he wishes, [where] society regulates the general production and thus makes it possible for me to do one thing today and another tomorrow, to hunt in the morning, fish in the afternoon, rear cattle in the evening, criticize after dinner, just as I have a mind.” But unlike the usual socialist vision of a distant, future communist utopia, we also embraced another of Marx’s early insights, also enunciated in the *German Ideology*: “Communism is for us not a state of affairs which is to be established, an ideal to which reality [will] have to adjust itself. We call communism the real movement which abolishes the present state of things.”[[5]](#footnote-5)

**Paths to Zerowork**

For all those who consciously suffer, and resent, lives burdened with too many hours and too much energy sacrificed to work necessary for survival, and for those who haven't completely internalized the very capitalist subordination of life to work and become one-dimensional workaholics, the term "zerowork" must be one to conjure with. But could there really be such a thing as zero work, or something close to it? Beyond utopian imaginings, could the *real movement* actually *abolish* the subordination of life to work? Are there paths down which we could actually create new kinds of social life in which work could be one of many, freely-chosen forms of self-realization instead of a means of domination? One response to these questions that quickly becomes obvious to anyone who takes them seriously is that technically such paths are quite feasible. A second response is that politically those paths can only be opened through struggle and the revolutionary abolition of capitalism. Allow me to explain the reasoning behind both of these answers.

With regard to technical possibilities, modern industrialized society has repeatedly demonstrated, in thousands of domains of work, that machines can be substituted for and reduce human labor. This has happened in so many industries – from agriculture through manufacturing to services and communication – that no room can be left for doubt that technological development can be, and has been organized, to reduce the amount of work required to produce this or that commodity. But to what degree can such reductions in particular kinds of work result in an overall reduction in the average amount of work required per individual? There are two ways of answering this question: historically and theoretically.

Historically the rise and spread of measuring, of the gathering of statistics on more and more aspects of modern life have revealed that within capitalism the substitution of machines for human labor has become progressively general. For millions, though not for all, there has indeed been a reduction in the amount of work required per individual. In the United States, for instance, between the mid-1880s and 1940 – a period of rapid technological innovation in industry – the average working week was reduced from 75-80 to 40 hours and from 6-7 days to five. The weekend, that revered two-day period in which millions of waged or salaried workers are freed from any obligation to show up at their jobs, was the result. In the post WWII period – as technological development continued, often facilitated by war-time innovations, a similar reduction occurred in terms of working years as annual vacations emerged, providing many workers with enough days freed from jobs to permit substantial non-work activities, such as travel and tourism. Although some anthropologists have compared such marginal achievements negatively to the vast amounts of free time enjoyed by some pre-industrial peoples, certainly the course of modern capitalist development has thoroughly demonstrated the technical feasibility of the progressive reduction of work.[[6]](#footnote-6)

With regard to theory, the development of capitalism has included the recognition of the technical possibilities of steadily reducing work on the part of its critics but also of its apologists and strategists. Not surprisingly, writing in sympathy with workers whose lives had been rendered miserable through longer and longer hours of imposed work, the critics of capitalism, of its "satanic mills" and of its dank, polluted working class neighborhoods were the first to herald those possibilities.[[7]](#footnote-7) William Godwin, in his [An Inquiry Concerning Political Justice](http://socserv2.socsci.mcmaster.ca/~econ/ugcm/3ll3/godwin/pj.html) (1793) and Frederick Engels in his speeches in Elberfeld (1845) waxed eloquent about the possibilities of reducing the total amount of work by eliminating all of those jobs – both private and public – peculiar to the protection and promulgation of capitalism.[[8]](#footnote-8) By 1867 Karl Marx was able to analyze theoretically, in his *Capital*, two phenomena relevant to the possibilities of reducing work. On the one hand, he highlighted the power of living social labor that was repeatedly imagining and inventing new machines and new ways of organizing production to make work more efficient. On the other hand, he showed how capitalists turned that imagination and inventiveness against workers through its relative surplus value strategy of substituting those machines for living workers. By raising labor productivity (i.e., output per hour), such substitution made it *technically* feasible to enjoy the fruits of such substitution in the form of *less* work.[[9]](#footnote-9) But instead, capitalists were using those innovations to control workers and impose *more* work. Ironically, quite different theoretical innovations by supporters of capitalism could lead to the same conclusions about technical possibilities.

During the rise of capitalism, its theorists – mercantilists and classical political economists – were more preoccupied with justifying the imposition of work and figuring out how to impose more work on people who did not want their lives confined to endless toil, than with exploring the possibilities of reducing work. But, by the end of the 19th Century, the theoretical innovations of neoclassical, marginalist economists clearly revealed that technological development made possible more output with less work. At the time, economists such as Alfred Marshall, were mainly concerned with wielding their theory of marginal productivity to convince workers to restrict their demands for higher wages within the bounds of productivity increases.[[10]](#footnote-10) Marshall examined the conditions under which marginal increases in wages might reduce profits and those under which they would not. The key was the relationship between marginal increases in wages and marginal increases in labor productivity or "efficiency". In Chapter 11 on wages in his *The Economics of Industry* (1879) we find:

A rise in the Time-wages of any trade tends to diminish profits. But if the wages that are paid for work vary according to its efficiency – if Task-wages are unaltered – the share of the produce of industry that is left for others [the capitalists] will be the same whether Time-wages are high or low. It is only where the rise in time wages is not accompanied by a corresponding increase in efficiency, and therefore Task-wages rise, that the change is injurious to capital."

Yet this same theory is equally applicable to the issue of work time. Let us imagine productivity – measured in terms of output per hour of labor – doubling through the introduction of machinery. Then obviously one has choices as to how to realize the fruits of that increase in productivity: double output with the same amount of work, the same output with half the work, or some intermediary combination of more output and less work. Clearly, any choice other than the one that maintains the existing hours of labor involves reducing work. Moreover, if any of those choices that reduce work are made over and over, year after year, then the amount of work will be steadily reduced. Indeed, the ever-diminishing amount of work will asymptotically approach zero.

Therefore, as long as increasing productivity can be achieved, zero work is a goal that can be approached ever more closely. The many decades in which technological innovation has involved rising productivity has been one source of the optimism associated with the modern idea of progress. That idea, for some, has included the continuing technical possibilities of reducing work. [[11]](#footnote-11)

Turning from technical possibilities to political realities is necessarily sobering. Close examination of the historical path of rising productivity cited above reveals that only through sustained organizing and struggle have workers been able to realize the fruits of their innovations in the form of less work. At every step of the way, capitalists have opposed such reductions, often with violent repression. In Section 6 of Chapter 10 of Volume I of *Capital*, Marx described and analyzed the struggles of English workers to reduce working hours. Years later David Roediger and Philip Foner presented a parallel study of workers' struggles in the United States.[[12]](#footnote-12) Only those struggles were able to wrest time away from work as labor's share of the benefits of its own creativity – to win the forty hour, five day week and the weekend. The same history has played out throughout the capitalist world. The better organized and motivated the workers, the more they have won. Workers in Western Europe, for example, have won greater reductions in work time than those in the U.S. American workers have, in turn, won more than many in other parts of the world.

The reasons workers have fought to free their lives from capitalist imposed work – alienation and exploitation –

were also analyzed by Marx. At the same time, he also recognized how capitalists could concede some benefits to workers in exchange for their productivity raising innovations. But why have capitalist employers preferred, in general, to concede greater wages rather than less work? Why the bloody repression against battles for the 8-hour day in the late 19th and first half of the 20th Centuries? One answer emerges from the realization that the core of Marx's theory – *his labor theory of value – is really a theory of the value of labor to capital as its most fundamental and thoroughgoing mechanism of social control*. Capitalists don't just impose work to get rich by exploiting other people; capital as a whole can only survive by endlessly subordinating people's lives to work. Control-through-work includes not only that exercised directly over waged or salaried employees during formal "working hours" but also vast amounts of formally "free" or "leisure" time. For example, for years, during and after Marx's lifetime, workers fought to liberate their children from mines, mills and factories. As they achieved the ability to do just that, and demanded schools to prepare their children for better lives, capitalist social policy makers – backed by corporate or State funds – swooped in to structure public schooling to incarcerate, discipline and shape children into compliant future members of the labor force. Similarly, capital has intervened in every sphere of so-called leisure time – from the home to domain after domain of recreation – to convert people's activities into the unwaged work of producing and reproducing that ability and willingness to work for capital that Marx called "labor power." It has not always been successful, but its efforts have been quite thorough.

The implications of all this are at least three-fold. First, as a result of capital's attempts to turn all of life into work, the struggle for less work can be found throughout every dimension of capitalist society. Second, for those struggles to successfully open paths toward zero work requires not only the freeing of time from formal jobs, but also the defeat of attempts by capital to convert our gains (e.g., child labor laws) into subtle defeats (e.g., obligatory schooling as mere job training). Third, precisely because we must fight everywhere, what we really need is the revolutionary transcendence of capitalism.

**Theoretico-political Roots**

One of the complaints leveled against *Zerowork* #1 when it was first published and circulated was that its mode of presentation – the simple exposition of an alternative analysis of the current crisis in terms of class struggle – failed to clearly identify its theoretical and political roots.[[13]](#footnote-13) This was a complaint shared not only by those to whom the analysis laid out was entirely new, but also by those who were familiar with at least some elements of it and felt that origins deserved recognition.[[14]](#footnote-14) Where did the core ideas come from? The answer to that question is neither singular nor simple, and that is, perhaps, one reason for the absence of any attempt to sketch those origins – a desire to avoid an overly academic exercise in intellectual history. To all appearances the members of the Zerowork collective hoped that the analysis in the journal was different and powerful enough to catch the imagination of others and lead to discussions in which its roots would be explored to whatever extent folks felt the need to explore them. This was a choice accepted by some but lamented or resented by others.

To some extent, of course, such exploration has occurred. Gradually, hitherto obscure bits and pieces have been unearthed and shared.[[15]](#footnote-15) It is easier now to map the rhizosphere than it was when the first issue of *Zerowork* appeared. So, to give some idea of the roots that nourished the thinking and discussion within the collective, I will sketch some of those historical roots – they are multiple – focusing on those most related to the theoretical insights I have mentioned above and connections among them.

Personal note: because I was not involved in the Zerowork collective during the preparation of the first issue, my own understanding of this history began after it was published and required considerable research on both sides of the Atlantic to identify and sort out the various interwoven roots.[[16]](#footnote-16) One thing that became clear to me was that the degree of familiarity with those roots within the Zerowork collective was very uneven. Some were known to all, others to a few, some remained unknown, moments of unfamiliar history.

Let me begin with the understanding that “crisis” in capitalism is first and foremost a crisis in class relations brought on not just by some internal laws of the mode of production but by workers’ struggles. That understanding has at least two identifiable roots.

**Workers’ Autonomy in the Sphere of Production**

One root can be found running through the history of both anarchist and Marxist theoretical reflection on the class struggle that has seen workers – quite independently of any official leadership, i.e., union or political party – as capable of autonomous collective action in their own interests, both against capitalist exploitation and for alternatives. Segments of that thread can be found in the writings of some in the anarcho-communist tradition, e.g., Peter Kropotkin or Emma Goldman; some can be found in the works of the Council Communists, e.g., Anton Pannekoek, Otto Rühle and later Paul Mattick and, especially relevant to the genesis of Zerowork, some can be found in the writings of Trotskyists.[[17]](#footnote-17)

Neither of the first two traditions – anarchist and councilist – seems to have had much influence on the thinking of those in the Zerowork collective, either directly or indirectly. The limited influence of the anarcho-communist movement on those Marxists who did have more direct influence in the genesis of the analysis of crisis in *Zerowork* is the easiest to understand. The long-standing differences and antipathies between anarchists and Marxists – dating from the conflicts between Marx and Bakunin in the First International – has meant that few Marxists, including the original editors of *Zerowork* and those upon whose works they drew, made a close study of anarchist writings or were inspired by them.[[18]](#footnote-18)

Second, the limited influence of the council communists is a little more difficult to understand. On the one hand, those with roots in orthodox Marxism-Leninism, including Trotskyists, tended to accept Lenin's critique of Council Communists as suffering from an "Infantile Disorder" and failed to engage their writings. This included some who would eventually break with Trotskyism and develop ideas that would mirror, in some ways, the writings of the Councilists. As has often been the case, a lot more energy was expended in sectarian infighting among Trotskyists than in the critique of those outside their circles – other than Stalinists, of course. With respect to the specific issue of the relationship between class struggle and crisis in capitalism, the tendency of Councilists to see working class autonomy only coming into play as the *resul*t of crises in capitalism, and to locate the sources of crisis in its internal laws of motion rather than in the struggles of workers, contrasted with the reverse emphasis of those who would have more influence.[[19]](#footnote-19) The exception among the Councilists to this conception of the relation between crisis and class struggles seems to have been Anton Pannekoek – but even his work on this subject was largely ignored.[[20]](#footnote-20)

**From the Johnson-Forest Tendency to Facing Reality and Beyond**

Among those Trotskyists who largely ignored the Council Communists but who would become influential – directly and indirectly – in the genesis of *Zerowork* were those associated with the Johnson-Forest Tendency (JFT). Johnson and Forest were pseudonyms of C. L. R. James (1901-1989) and Raya Dunaveyskaya (1910-1987).[[21]](#footnote-21) These two, and those clustered around them, repeatedly differed with both Trotsky and the leadership of various Trotskyist factions on key issues, especially the nature of contemporary capitalism (which for them included the USSR), the role of Black struggles, the role of the vanguard party and the relationship between working class struggle and capitalist crisis. Those differences were laid out in a series of essays and led first to their leaving the Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) along with Max Shachtman to form a separate "Worker's Party", then to a return to the SWP and finally to a terminal split with Trotskyism in 1951 to form their own group, the Correspondence Publishing Committee. Like the Council Communists the members of the Tendency recognized and valorized the autonomous power of workers to not only to initiate revolutionary uprisings, e.g., 1905 and 1917 in Russia, 1918 in Germany, but also to create their own organizations, e.g., factory committees and soviets in Russia and workers councils in post-WWI Germany. Later events in the 1950s, such as the formation of autonomous councils by Hungarian and Polish workers during the uprisings of 1956 were taken as more concrete evidence of such capacities.[[22]](#footnote-22) However, the ideas of the JFT differed from that of the Council Communists in several ways.

Curious about the apparent failure of those in the JFT to engage with the Council Communists, I once asked Martin Glaberman about this. He recounted two reasons.

We never did deal with the Council Communists, but in informal discussions there were essentially two criticisms. Their view of state capitalism was basically an analysis of the Soviet Union, we saw ours as much broader, a view of a stage of capitalism. Secondly, we rejected their criticism of Leninism and their view of the period from 1917 to 1924.[[23]](#footnote-23)

Although the JFT eventually broke with the Leninist concept of the vanguard party, they continued, for the most part to honor other aspects of his thinking. Beyond those two reasons, we might add two more reasons for their neglect of the Council Communists.

First, partly because of James’ experience in the Caribbean, his participation in the development of Pan-Africanism and his writings about Black struggles, there was more awareness, discussion and acceptance in Correspondence of autonomy of sectors *within* the working class. This was especially true with respect to autonomous struggles by Blacks both in the work place and in the larger society that they argued ought to be recognized as legitimate, be accepted and be valorized.[[24]](#footnote-24) This emphasis on the autonomy of Black struggles within the working class – including how the development of the class as a whole could be driven by Black struggles against discrimination and racism – did not find a parallel in the work of the Council Communists.

Second, whereas when thinking and writing about crisis the Council Communists tended to remain stuck within the framework of debate over the “laws of motion”, those associated with the JFT and Correspondence, while taking a position in those debates, moved on to focus on how workers’ power could rupture capitalist development and precipitate crisis.

The JFT's position in the debates – enunciated as part of articulating their differences with Trotskyism – affirmed the centrality of Marx's analysis of "the tendency of the rate of profit to fall" in Volume III of *Capital*. This they counterposed to Stalinist, Trotskyist and mainstream economic efforts to shift attention away from production to problems of inadequate aggregate demand.[[25]](#footnote-25) At the heart of their understanding and embrace of the theory of "the tendency of the rate of profit to fall" was the conviction that the core of capitalism was production and the struggle between workers and capital at the point of production. Moreover, they saw the key process driving the tendency of the rate of profit to fall – namely the rise in the technical and organic compositions of capital – as resulting from workers' struggles – rather than the more common view that source was competition among capitalists. This was their understanding of Marx's analysis of relative surplus value in Volume I of *Capital* – which, for them, grounded and informed their interpretation of the discussion in Volume III. The corollary of this interpretation of Marx's theory of crisis was their insistence that the only struggles with revolutionary potential were those taking place within production in industry. Although they saw things like increased wages and higher standards of living as victories won by the working class, they also saw them as concessions capital could make that left the social relations of exploitation and alienation in production unchanged.

All this, they argued, was characteristic of contemporary capitalism both in the West and in the Soviet Union – a capitalism they called "state capitalism".[[26]](#footnote-26) State capitalism, they reasoned, was the appropriate label for the stage of capitalist development in which the state planning had become essential to capitalist strategies, regardless of whether the methods of planning were those of Soviet Five-year Plans or a combination of Keynesian and corporate planning. While such planning could help avoid problems of inadequate demand, they argued, it had two fundamental weaknesses. First, it was helpless against the consequences of the tendency to substitute machinery for labor – namely the undermining of the rate of profit. Second, while capital could plan, workers could undermine those plans. This emphasis on the ability of workers to undermine capitalist planning was based on studies of worker struggles against capitalist plans in American factories and worker and peasant struggles against Soviet state planning.[[27]](#footnote-27) These arguments, and others, they laid out in a series of publications, the most comprehensive of which was *State Capitalism and World Revolution* (1950) crafted to differentiate their position as carefully as possible from others within the Trotskyist movement. [[28]](#footnote-28) Once this differentiation was accomplished and they left the Trotskyist movement to form the Correspondence Publishing collective, they also largely disengaged from the debates among Marxist factions over crisis theory to focus on the phenomenon they had identified as the only source of real change: workers' struggles at the point of production.

Growing differences between James and Dunayevskaya led to a split in 1958, with Dunayevskaya and her followers leaving to found a separate group News & Letters. James and his supporters then changed the name of their group to Facing Reality. Given their common origins, there were many similarities in the theories and activities of these two groups as well as the differences that led to their split and those that developed afterwards. [[29]](#footnote-29)

Because of the participation by most members of Correspondence in workers’ struggles, e.g., those of autoworkers in Detroit, they were well aware of how rank & file workers often fought not only their corporate bosses but union bureaucrats and party hacks all too ready to cut deals with management at their expense. Such analyses and the conclusions they drew about the autonomous power of workers and their ability to craft “the future in the present” were laid out in a series of publications over two decades. Probably the most widely circulated of these was [*The American Worker*](http://www.zerowork.org/AmericanWorker.docx) (1947) by Paul Romano (Paul Singer) and Ria Stone (Grace Lee, later Boggs) in which Singer first provided a detailed description of life in an East Coast General Motors' plant and Lee then laid out a Marxist analysis of the implications of the life and struggles described by Singer for the "reconstruction of society". This early pamphlet was complemented by other essays by Marty Glaberman such as [*Punching Out*](http://www.zerowork.org/PunchingOut.pdf) (1952) and *Union Committemen and Wildcat Strikes* (1955) and by Matthew Ward's (Si Owens, later Charles Denby) *Indignant Heart: A Black Workers' Journal* (1952), based on their experiences in Detroit auto plants. Essentially part of this tradition, although published after leaving the Correspondence Publishing Committee in 1962, was another black autoworker's autobiographical work: James Boggs’ (Grace Lee’s husband and ex-editor of *Correspondence*) *The American Revolution: Pages from a Negro Worker's Notebook* (1963). With the focus of so many of these writings on workers’ struggles in large industrial factories, they constituted an American version of what would later, in Italy, be called a “workerist” perspective. In a period in which many Leftists had written off the American working class as hopelessly bought off – the most recent incarnation of Lenin’s “labor aristocracy” – the revelations about shop floor struggles in these writings refocused many radicals’ attention and hopes on their revolutionary potential – to create crises for capital and open new possibilities for workers.[[30]](#footnote-30)

The direct influence of this earlier work on *Zerowork* #1 can be found primarily in the article by Peter Linebaugh and Bruno Ramirez, “Crisis in the Auto Sector,” which immediately asserts that “the crisis reflects an impasse in the relations of power between capital and the working class, an impasse which in recent years has been made more visible by the ongoing upsurge of autoworkers’ struggles.” The article draws, in part, on research and analysis previously undertaken by members of the Canadian group the New Tendency (NT), several of whom were working and organizing in the auto plants of Windsor, Ontario. Bruno was a member of the NT and the article references material on auto workers’ struggles in the NT’s main publication *The Newsletter*, of April 1974. Glaberman’s writings, based as they were on his experience as an autoworker across the river in Detroit, were of particular interest to those Canadian militants and influenced Linebaugh and Ramirez’s analysis both directly and indirectly. The influence of this previous work can be seen primarily in the detailed examination of autonomous shop floor struggles often exploding in wildcat strikes against both management and union efforts to mediate/control/limit the conflicts.

Two further important influences on the thinking of those in Zerowork deserve mention – both the work of historians. The first was that of George P. Rawick whose work on slavery in the United States included something largely lacking from C. L. R. James' study of slavery and revolt in Haiti. Rawick was a comrade of those in the Johnson-Forest Tendency and many of those they influenced (see the brief biographical sketch of Ferruccio Gambino below). Rawick's work on slavery in the American South was based on the assembly of some twenty volumes of slave narratives. His overview volume to that series, *From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community*(1973) drew on that mass of first-person accounts by slaves of their lives and struggles, in large part – as the title of the book suggests – during those hours out from under the direct supervision of their owners.[[31]](#footnote-31) In a sense, Rawick's study, although an historical one, looking back to an earlier time, fulfilled Marx's objective with his workers' inquiry: to learn directly from workers about their struggles. Such a mass of documentation had not been available to James, but Rawick's work made it available and from it he drew his most important conclusion, namely, that there was far more day-to-day self-activity among slaves than had hitherto been recognized. In other words, he discovered a movement of self-determination among slaves – that built the underground railroad and sometimes exploded in violent revolts – that paralleled other examples of working class self-activity. In 1969 he had written a widely-read article about the self-activity of American waged workers in the 20the Century; in 1973 his book on slavery revealed some vital roots of that self-activity.[[32]](#footnote-32)

The second influence by historians, and one that is cited by Rawick, was that of the bottom-up British Marxist historians, especially Edward P. Thompson and his *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963). In reconstructing the history of workers' struggles in England he sought "to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the "obsolete" hand-loom weaver, the "utopian" artisan, and even the deluded follower of Joanna Southcott, from the enormous condescension of posterity." He did so by retrieving stories of those workers' past struggles from the infamous "dustbin of history" where most historians, including labor historians, had left them. His ability to see past historical accounts of official labor and party organizations to the self-activity of the workers themselves paralleled the perspective of the Johnson-Forest/Correspondence/Facing Reality folks who had gradually weaned themselves of the Leninist desire to organize workers and had begun to explore and reveal the struggles of workers directly.

Thompson's influence on Zerowork, however, came not only indirectly through George Rawick, and directly through several editors' familiarity with *The Making of the English Working Class*, but also through the work of one of those editors in particular: historian Peter Linebaugh who had been a student of Thompson in England. (See his biographical sketch below.) Not only had Linebaugh worked directly with Thompson, but he had also worked alongside other young historians who were building on previous bottom-up history in rewriting the story of the relationship between crime and the working class in the 18th Century. The first product of that collaboration was *Albion's Fatal Tree* (1975) – the "tree" being the hanging scaffold at Tyburn in London.[[33]](#footnote-33) Eventually, Linebaugh's magisterial *The London Hanged* (1991) would reflect both his historical research and his involvement in Zerowork.[[34]](#footnote-34)

Other roots of the understanding of how workers’ struggles were the source of crisis in capitalism, grew and proliferated partly as a result of the circulation of the above work to Western Europe where a parallel shift took place from the usual Left union and party politics to a focus on the situation, struggles and power of workers themselves.

**Socialisme ou Barbarie**

In 1948, shortly after the Johnson-Forest Tendency's reentry into the Socialist Workers Party, Grace Lee went to Paris to attend that organization's Second World Congress. While in Paris, she met Pierre Chaulieu, party name of Cornelius Castoriadis (1922-1997), a Greek revolutionary who had fled to France after the war and one leader of another small dissident group – this time within the French Trotskyist Party – the Chaulieu-Montal Tendency. [[35]](#footnote-35) Later she wrote of this encounter:

We soon discovered that we had the same interest in the daily lives of workers in the capitalist process of production and similar views about revolution as the liberation of human creativity. I spent a wonderful four months in Paris, mostly socializing with Chaulieu and members of his group.[[36]](#footnote-36)

Castoriadis' described this encounter as an "intellectual love affair between Grace and me." She was, he claimed, "delirious" about a text he had written called "The Phenomenology of Proletarian Consciousness". The main point of agreement, he wrote, was recognition of "the self-activity of the working class."[[37]](#footnote-37)

In a move that Johnson-Forest would adopt three years later, Castoriadis and Lefort broke away from the Fourth International and founded Socialisme ou Barbarie (SoB) as a completely independent organization.[[38]](#footnote-38) Like the JFT, SoB sought new solutions to the problem of working class organization in the autonomous power of rank & file workers.

The meeting of minds between lee and Castoriadis, and then the sharing and circulating of experience and ideas between the JFT and SoB more generally, led to the translation and serial publication of *The American Worker* in the first eight issues of *Socialisme ou Barbarie: Organe de Critique et d’Orientation Révolutionaire* (1949-1965). Introducing the text in the first issue Pierre Guillaume wrote:

Every worker, regard­less of “his nation­al­ity” of exploita­tion, will find in [*The American Worker*] the image of his own exis­tence as a pro­le­tar­ian. There are, in fact, deep and con­sis­tent char­ac­ter­is­tics of pro­le­tar­ian expe­ri­ence that know nei­ther fron­tiers nor regimes.[[39]](#footnote-39)

It also led to collaboration of Castoriadis with Grace Lee and C. L. R. James in the drafting of *Facing Reality: The New Society . . . Where to look for it, How to bring it closer, A Statement for our time,* (1958). [[40]](#footnote-40) One chapter, “New Society, New People,” constituted an almost lyrical ode to the reality of working class imagination and power to craft a new society out of the present. The essay sweeps across the world, from the developed First world to the underdeveloped Third, from the new attitudes and behaviors of shop stewards in England through the struggles of women in the United States to anticolonial struggles in Asia and Africa. Everywhere they claimed to see "new men, new types of human beings" throwing off the encumbering prejudices and destructive hierarchies of capitalism to develop new ways of being.

Alongside the serialized *American Worker* and articles critiquing various Trotskyist positions, *Socialisme ou Barbarie* published a whole series of reports on the situation and struggle of workers in French factories and drew conclusions about the dynamics of capitalist growth and crisis. With respect to the USSR, SoB shared the Johnson-Forest position that Stalinism had established a form of state capitalism, although they differed in particulars.[[41]](#footnote-41) Articles on the situation and day-to-day struggles of workers included G. Vivier’s series “La vie en usine” (Factory Life) and Daniel Mothé’s frequent reports on autoworkers at Renault.[[42]](#footnote-42)

But if SoB saw how workers’ struggles could rupture capital, they also recognized capital’s Post-WWII successes in co-opting such challenges to its authority.[[43]](#footnote-43) In a 1961 essay in issue #32 of the journal, Castoriadis argued that post-war capitalist growth was based on the *harnessing* of workers’ wage struggles. “Capitalism”, he wrote, has learned how to channel “working-class pressure against the consequences of the spontaneous functioning of the economy into ensuring, via the State, economic and social control.”[[44]](#footnote-44) Despite the links between Johnson-Forest and Socialisme ou Barbarie, the work of the later appears to have been largely unknown either to the Canadian militants who were drawing on the works of the former or to members of the Zerowork collective – at least in the period during the crafting of the first issue.

**Italian Workerism (*Operaismo*)**

More familiar to at least some members of the Zerowork collective was similar work being done in Italy – inspired, in part, by the translation into Italian of *The American Worker* and of the writings of Daniel Mothé by Danilo Montaldi.[[45]](#footnote-45) Within Italy, rank & file revolts multiplied in the period 1960-62 against not only the leadership of the relatively conservative Unione Italiana del Lavoro (UIL) but also against the politics and strategies of the Socialist Party of Italy (the PSI, Partito Socialista Italiano), the Communist Party of Italy (the PCI, Partito Comunista Italiano) and those of their affiliated unions – especially the Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL). The leadership of both parties and unions had essentially colluded with Italian capital’s post-WWII development plans. That collusion led growing numbers of working class militants and radical intellectuals to rethink their politics and their theory.[[46]](#footnote-46) Inspired by the revolts, by discovery of the writings of workers in the United States and France, and by the rediscovery of the detailed questions in Marx’s *A Workers’ Inquiry* (1880), radical Italian sociologists such as Raniero Panzieri (1921-1964) and Romano Alquati (1935-2010) – trained, in part, by Montaldi – went into factories such as Olivetti and Fiat to talk with workers about their concrete job situations and their struggles, both day-to-day and periodic wildcat strikes.[[47]](#footnote-47) Sociologists, yes, but sociologists of a new sort – conscious re-innovators of *conricerca,* or co-research, in which the “objectivity” of their investigations was co-produced by these outside researchers *and* the workers *with whom* they investigated the situation at hand.[[48]](#footnote-48)

These investigations were carried on, at least at first, by some, in the hope of bringing new understanding and new politics to the unions and to the left parties. Panzieri, for example, still hoped to influence the PSI despite past differences with it. Over time, however, such hopes faded and even when this or that new concept, in one form or another, was assimilated by those faithful to those institutions, or when one of these innovators returned to the fold, the new concepts were sometimes wielded in support of the same old social democratic politics.

In the short term, however, their studies and theoretical reformulations led to the creation of a series of new concepts and new journals to disseminate and discuss them. At the heart of the new reformulations was the replacement of the traditional Marxist focus on capital and its “laws of motion” with an understanding of capital as a set of antagonistic social relations of class in which struggles, especially those of workers, drove the development of the whole. Moreover, the concept of the working class – informed by the extensive empirical research mentioned above – recognized how divisions in the class were not merely vehicles of capitalist control (pitting one group of workers against others in hierarchies of power). Those divisions were also repeatedly recomposed through historical cycles of workers’ struggles that changed the balance of power between the classes. Their analysis provided new theoretical foundations for the phenomenon those in Johnson-Forest/Facing Reality had postulated years earlier: that workers’ struggles repeatedly generated new organizational forms. These Italians extended their studies backward in time and across space, examining not merely the history of Italian workers’ struggles, but also those of American workers. They discovered how those cycles of struggle not only generated new organizational forms and recomposed the balance of class power but also led, inevitably, to changes in the character of working class interests and demands – changes that had both required and produced new organizational forms.

Bringing these insights to bear on the contemporary situation in Italy, they argued that the post-WWII wave of capitalist rebuilding, especially in the industrial belt of the Po Valley, was not only based on the pitting of large numbers of young workers from southern Italy against northern workers but had gestated a new “mass worker” akin to those organized by the Wobblies in the United States in the early 20th Century and to that working class formed in the Fordist mass-production factories of the 1920s and 1930s. In other words, the pattern of capitalist development that Antonio Gramsci (1891-1937) – patron saint of orthodox Italian communism – had identified as being a uniquely American phenomenon was being imported into Italy and was being used against Italian workers just as it had been used against American ones.[[49]](#footnote-49) Only this time, a whole new set of Marxist concepts were emerging both from close study of worker struggles and from reinterpretations of Marx’s own works to understand the class dynamics of that development.

The first of the new journals to have a substantial impact was *Quaderni Rossi* (Red Notebooks) whose first issue in 1961 included a collection of documents on class struggles in FIAT by Alquati and a path-breaking theoretical piece by Panzieri. “The capitalist use of the machine” returned to Marx’s analysis of “machinery and modern industry” – Chapter 15 of Volume I of *Capital* – to refocus attention on how machinery was used by capitalists not just to raise productivity – part of the rationale of the left parties and their unions for collaborating with capitalist development – but also to undermine workers’ self-organization and power. That analysis explained both rank & file wildcats against the efforts of corporate bosses to introduce Fordist methods into the plants and their refusal to follow the dictates of union bureaucrats to cooperate with such changes.[[50]](#footnote-50) This amounted to a renovated Marxist theory of technological change in class terms that identified opposed class interests and drew organizational conclusions.[[51]](#footnote-51)

In issue after issue of *Quaderni Rossi* its pages were filled with both empirical work and theoretical innovations. Panzieri’s piece on the capitalist use of the machine was soon followed in 1962 by Mario Tronti’s “Factory and Society” that argued how “the pressure of labor-power is capable of forcing capital to modify its own internal composition, intervening within capital as essential component of capitalist development” – workers’ struggles drive capitalist development. Moreover, that pressure forces capital to colonize “the whole of society” such that it comes to exist “as a function of the factory and the factory extends its exclusive domination over the whole of society.”[[52]](#footnote-52) This analysis Tronti deepened in the third issue of *Quaderni Rossi* with an essay on “Capitalist Planning” that argued that business was driven to ever more comprehensive planning by the resistance and struggles of workers.[[53]](#footnote-53) The old orthodox dichotomy of capitalist “despotism” on the shop floor and capitalist “anarchy” in the social division of labor is dissolved as planning is extended ever more widely and capitalist society becomes a gigantic “social factory.”[[54]](#footnote-54) In the process, all traditional distinctions between economic and political power disappear. That article was complemented by Panzieri’s "Surplus Value and Planning: Notes on the Reading of *Capital*," in the fourth issue of *Quaderni Rossi*.[[55]](#footnote-55) In short, these Italian Marxists, drawing on their studies of actual workers’ struggles and detailed re-readings of Marx in the light of those studies, were elaborating what amounted to a revolutionary theoretical grounding of workers’ autonomy. Tronti would go on, in essays such as “The Strategy of Refusal” and “Struggle Against Labor”, to identify and articulate how the dynamics of workers’ struggles had led beyond the traditional skilled workers’ demand to take control of their tools to contemporary demands of unskilled “mass workers” on assembly lines for less work, period, i.e., not just the refusal of capitalist imposed work but of work as the only focus and preoccupation of life. This historical shift was also documented by Sergio Bologna in his “Class Composition and the Theory of the Workers’ Party in the German Workers’ Council Movement” (1967) and much later in "The Theory and History of the Mass Worker in Italy", (1987).[[56]](#footnote-56) *Quaderni Rossi* (1961-66) was soon accompanied or followed by other organizational efforts and other publications, e.g., *Quaderni Piacentini* (1962-1984), *Classe Operaia* (1963-67), *La Classe* (1967-68), *Potere Operaio* (1969-74), and *Lotta Continua* (1969-76).

What of all this was known to the editors of Zerowork? It varied. This whole new wave of innovative Italian Marxist thinking was well known to the Italian members of the Zerowork collective: Paolo Carpignano, Mario Montano and Bruno Ramirez and corresponding editor Ferruccio Gambino. The ideas were also well known to the other corresponding editor John Merrington who had studied in Italy and, along with Ed Emery, translated many texts. Emery (later Red Notes) and Jim Kaplan (later *Radical America*) went to Italy after the explosive Hot Autumn of 1969 to talk to people and gather documents; one result was the pamphlet *Italy: New Tactics and Organization* produced by Emery in 1971 – whose circulation nourished the development of Big Flame and the struggles by autoworkers in England.[[57]](#footnote-57) Those translations were discussed in multiple study groups, including one organized by Merrington and Emery that included, among others, future Zerowork editor Peter Linebaugh.

On the other side of the Atlantic, in the years before the Zerowork collective was formed, both Mario Montano and Bruno Ramirez contributed translations of key workerist texts to the American journals *Telos* and *Radical America*. Other translations were done by individuals interested or involved in this or that wing of the evolving struggles in Italy. Most translations were either from Lotta Continua (LC) or Potere Operaio (PO). Among them were “Italy 1969-1970 Wave of Struggles” by Ferruccio Gambino, “Organizing for Workers’ Power” by Andriano Sofri and “Class Struggle and European Unity” by Guido Viale.[[58]](#footnote-58) Several of these translations were compiled and published in *Radical America* in 1971 and 1973.[[59]](#footnote-59) Some were published as pamphlets and circulated by various groups in the U.S. and Canada. These translations – along with word-of-mouth accounts by their Italian comrades – provided the primary window into Italian developments for those in the Zerowork collective who did not read the language. All these materials can be considered more or less significant inputs into the thinking of everyone in the collective. (More detail is included in the biographical sketches of the various individuals.)

**From Struggles of the Waged to those of the Unwaged**

Alongside these primary roots of the thinking that went into the composition of *Zerowork* – some quite old – I want to pay special attention to the emergence from relative obscurity of what might be called an aerial root – because once above ground, it flourished in the light of day and then became a major component of the root architecture of the first issue of *Zerowork* – *the analysis of class struggle in the various domains of the production and reproduction of labor power*. Awareness of such struggles was never completely absent among the groups already mentioned but in terms of the amount of attention devoted to these domains, for a long time they were given relatively short shrift. This seems to have been the case across all those groups sketched above.

In the period from the 1940s through the 1960s, from the earliest work of the Johnson-Forest Tendency through Correspondence and Facing Reality to Dunayevskaya’s group News & Letters, I have only been able to find bits and pieces of writings dealing directly with domains such as the home and housework or school and schoolwork. In Europe the more or less parallel workerist focus on waged factory labor – running from *Socialism ou Barbarie* through *Quaderni Rossi* to *Potere Operaio* – also involved a relative neglect of the labor of reproduction – until a women’s backlash began to properly readdress the situation in the early 1970s.

**Housework and the Struggle against It**

With respect to housework – traditionally understood as a domain of women's work – relatively little was written or published about the struggles of women qua unwaged houseworkers. In *The Invading Socialist Society* (1947) that C. L. R. James called "the fundamental document of the Johnson-Forest Tendency" – where it set out its differences with both Trotsky and other Trotskyists – there is nothing at all on women or the work of reproducing labor power. In *The American Worker* (1947) Singer only devoted a couple of pages to the ways in which workers' harsh life in the factory haunted their life at home and only a couple of lines to how it added to the housework burdens of their spouses. In Lee's analysis, while she does not "deny the importance of women struggling as women for emancipation", she focused on "worker's activity in production", neglected labor in the home and argued that the emancipation of women could only come through a "revolution in the mode of production."[[60]](#footnote-60) In *State Capitalism and World Revolution* (1950), the chapter devoted to their analysis of the class struggle, including "the mode of labor in the United States" included, once again, nothing on women or the work of reproducing labor power, despite the authors' recognition of the welfare state as a new component of state capitalist social planning.

The same year, however, an unpublished, book-length manuscript by C. L. R. James, *Notes on American Civilization*, included one section on “Negroes, women and the Intellectuals” – apparently an after-thought, to “fill up certain gaps” and for the sake of rendering a “total impression of society.” In the dozen or so pages devoted to women, James sketched the growing frustration of middle-class women with the disparity between the idea of equality and the concrete inequalities of their daily lives. [[61]](#footnote-61) The result: the spreading refusal by women of all those constraints upon their self-development as human beings – including their traditional subordination to men and child rearing within families. He pointed to the refusal of increasing numbers of young women to marry and to rising divorce rates among those who do. Although such constraints and struggles were only “highly publicized” among middle-class women, he argued, they “apply with ten-fold force to the vast majority of working women or wives in the United States.”

Also that year, Raya Dunayevskaya contributed a short piece on "The Miners' Wives" to the SWP's newspaper *The Militant* highlighting the active roles of women during a coal miners' strike in West Virginia. However, the focus of that article was on the women's support for the men's strike. The only reference to housework was an account of a threat by the women to make their men "build fires, cook their own food, wash their own clothes, clean the house and hire baby sitters" if they returned to work without a contract.[[62]](#footnote-62)

Two years later, in 1952, James encouraged Selma Weinstein (né Deitch, later James) – a single mother – and Filomena Daddario to write about the situation and struggles of women. The result was an essay titled *A Woman’s Place* – published with the pseudonyms "Mrs. Marie Brant" (James) and "Mrs. Ellen Santori" (Daddario) – that described the work of both stay-at-home housewives and those who also worked for a wage, the problems faced by women in both situations and their struggles to deal with them. A “woman’s place,” they argued, was less and less in the home and increasingly wherever women had the power to go.[[63]](#footnote-63) The essay was published first in *Correspondence* and then as a pamphlet in 1953. The next year, in 1954, Weinstein wrote a regular column about issues specific to women for each issue of Correspondence’s biweekly.[[64]](#footnote-64)

Early in 1953 Raya Dunayevskaya drafted an essay – that remained unpublished – that included a few pages on women's struggles. In some ways, the analysis paralleled James' in his earlier unpublished manuscript, even using some of the same language. The major difference was the inclusion in her essay of a discussion of how the continuation of wartime roles of women in the Workers' Party was challenged by men after the war and how those in the Johnson-Forest Tendency defended those roles, but were still limited in their ability to move beyond old political categories and frames of references. Similar problems surfaced, she wrote, when the JFT rejoined the SWP and discovered that while many women "occupied the same subordinate position that women did in bourgeois society – they worked to support their men" – even the women in "leadership" positions shared the male leaders' sense of superiority over rank and file members. The very limited analysis in both unpublished manuscripts and published articles indicates how little attention, study and thought they were devoting to struggles against the work of reproducing labor power – especially if these few scattered pages are juxtaposed to, say, Simon de Beauvoir's 800 page, two volume *Le Deuxième Sexe* (*The Second Sex*) published in 1949.[[65]](#footnote-65) According to the transcript of a talk given by Dunayevskaya in 1974, she was not only familiar with the book in the 1950s but discussed her reading of it with Black factory women – especially her conclusion that de Beauvoir thought that men must free women.[[66]](#footnote-66) Yet despite her critique I have found no evidence of any effort in those years to produce a parallel study analyzing women's work in the sphere of reproduction or to demonstrate the autonomous struggles of women against it.[[67]](#footnote-67)

In 1958, *Facing Reality* did include a few paragraphs on women and their struggles for real equality – beyond whatever formal equalities, e.g., the vote, they had won up to that point. After noting "the handicaps of child-bearing and child-rearing in a competitive society", the existence of a "colossal struggle for the establishment of truly human relations between men and women", and rising divorce rates among "the professional classes", the authors argued that "the real battle for new relations between the sexes is being fought above all in the American working class". There, after the experience of waged labor during WWII, women "have no intention of once more becoming an adjunct to the male wage earner." They conclude:

In the age-long struggles of human beings to remold their world nearer to their heart's desire, rarely have such heroic efforts, such courage, such resource, such ingenuity been shown as in these efforts of American working women to live a complete life, a life corresponding to the technical achievements and social relations of their highly-developed society. As long as official society lasts, they cannot win a complete victory, but positions have been gained and if some have been lost, many have been held. This, one of the greatest social struggles of our time, goes unrecorded![[68]](#footnote-68)

Unfortunately, from all evidence, little more about those struggles was either studied or recorded by the members of Facing Reality over the next decade.[[69]](#footnote-69)

A special issue of *Radical America* on women, published in 1970, signaled the rising power of a new generation of feminists to change the agenda of “the movement” more generally. As the decade unfolded not only would some women draw on, and criticize, the traditions I have described but they would deepen their analysis and organize themselves in new autonomous ways. Of all the moments of the “Women’s Liberation Movement” of those years, the one that would have the most direct influence on *Zerowork* was, without a doubt, the Wages for Housework analysis and campaign. Whereas the writings in the 1950s about women’s struggles were primarily descriptive – with the underlying Marxism mostly implicit – in the 1970s the writings of women associated with Wages for Housework explicitly drew on Marxian categories while substantially elaborating their analysis of the work of reproducing labor power and valorizing contemporary struggles against it.

The seminal piece of writing that largely framed the thinking and strategies of the Wages for Housework Campaign was Mariarosa Dalla Costa’s essay “Women and the Subversion of the Community” originally written as a discussion piece for a gathering of Italian feminists in Padova in 1971. That essay, as Dalla Costa would explain later, was an attempt to synthesize the ideas and experience that had been developing among women – herself included – who had been engaged in the workerist movement in Italy, especially Potere Operaio – a network of groups that had already argued for wages for unwaged subjects like students.[[70]](#footnote-70) A year later the Wages for Housework Campaign was launched, again in Padova, along with the formation of the International Feminist Collective. Dalla Costa’s 1971 essay and the 1952 essay on “A Woman’s Place” were then combined – the former translated into English and the latter into Italian – and published, first in Italy (Padova: Marsilio Editori) in March 1972 as *Potere femminile e sovversione sociale* and then in England (Bristol: Falling Wall Press) in October 1972 as *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*.

The basic arguments – that the essential labor of producing and reproducing human life as labor power for capital is not only vast but largely hidden because it has been unwaged and unrecognized, that without the labor of *re*production there can be no labor of production and that the former labor should, instead, be revealed, recognized and waged – was soon elaborated by many authors in many languages as part of the International Wages for Housework Campaign. Among those elaborations, the ones familiar to most of the men in the Zerowork collective – besides *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community* – included the following: Selma James, “Women, the Unions and Work,” (1972), Selma James, “Sex, Race and Working Class Power,” (1974), Silvia Federici, *Wages Against Housework* (1975), Nicole Cox and Silvia Federici, *Counterplanning from the Kitchen: Wages for Housework, A Perspective on Capital and the Left*, (1975) and the collection Wendy Edmond & Suzie Fleming (eds) *All Work and No Pay: Women, Housework & the Wages Due*, (1975).[[71]](#footnote-71)

There were, however, certain theoretical formulations in these Wages for Housework publications – beginning with Mariarosa’s seminal essay – that did not sit well with some otherwise sympathetic comrades. I will illustrate with just one example, important given the political genealogy sketched above, that reveals how the thinking of those in this history was evolving. When Selma James sent a copy of Mariarosa’s essay to Marty Glaberman in 1972, he responded with a detailed critique of what he felt were the essay’s main shortcomings: the relationship between unpaid domestic labor and surplus value and, closely related, the definition of the working class or proletariat.[[72]](#footnote-72)

With respect to what he saw as the first shortcoming, Glaberman objected to the assertion that “domestic work not only produces use values but has an essential function in the production of surplus value”. “Unpaid labor,” he countered, “creates neither value nor surplus value.” Marx’s “definition of value, exchange-value, etc”, he went on, “leaves no room for unpaid labor.” His objection foreshadowed that of many others as the Wages for Housework movement set off a widespread debate among Marxists and feminists about how to analyze domestic labor. How James responded to his critique, I don’t know, but clearly Glaberman’s objection lay in his interpretation of Dalla Costa’s argument that domestic work “has an essential function in the production of surplus value.” He – and many who came after him – read those words as meaning the same thing as Marx’s frequent statement that commodity-producing labor “creates” value and surplus value.[[73]](#footnote-73) Neither his objection, nor the theoretical issue he raised was directly addressed in *Zerowork* – where Dalla Costa’s work was used as one fundamental building block of the overall analysis.

What he saw as the second shortcoming – a much too broad definition of working class – was closely related to the first. If, according to him, the working class, or proletariat, must be defined narrowly as including only those waged employees of capital producing commodities for sale (and surplus value or profit) then clearly all sorts of other people – including women in the home – should not be thought of as being part of the working class even if and when their struggles against capital “have independent validity” and even “contribute to the struggle for socialism, directly or indirectly.” Glaberman’s position here is rooted in both his theoretical understanding of Marx and in the long-fought politics of the Johnson-Forest/Facing Reality tradition of recognizing and valorizing the autonomous struggles of blacks, women, students, etc. To reinterpret these “other” struggles as being working class would, he feared, result in abandoning all of the important distinctions he and his comrades had fought to establish. Whether he ever confronted the new concepts of class composition and political recomposition that were designed specifically to capture and appreciate precisely those differences, and the interactions among them *within* the working class, I don’t know.[[74]](#footnote-74) At any rate, the broader definition of the working class was basic to the analysis in *Zerowork*.

**Schoolwork and the Struggle against It**

With respect to the analysis of students and schoolwork – designed to turn young humans into beings willing and able to work for capitalist employers – by people associated with Johnson-Forest, Correspondence and Facing Reality, I have found very little from the 1950s and not much more from the 1960s. On the one hand, there was not much of an organized student movement in the 1950s; tiny youth groups such as the Student League for Industrial Democracy were mainly preoccupied with events outside of schools.[[75]](#footnote-75) On the other hand, the little attention paid to student struggles was directed not at such formal organizations but at the self-activity of regular students. One early piece, *Artie Cuts Out* (1953), was a short pamphlet containing the reflections of one high school student on his experience, which included a student strike in 1950.[[76]](#footnote-76) As might be expected, the reflections are passionate but merely descriptive. The student, Arthur Bauman, sees quite clearly the repressive hierarchical structure of schools and the various ways teachers attempt to impose discipline and job training. He also describes how he, and other students, often responded: refusing the discipline or "cutting out" of a class, or of school entirely. But, there is no theoretical afterward such as the one written by Grace Lee for *The American Worker*.

In *Facing Reality* (1958) the struggles of students are only evoked in a reference to the 1955 film *Blackboard Jungle* which "put on screen for the first time the jungle which is American education and relations between teacher and pupil." Although the film (and the novel of the same name on which it was based) amounted to a fictional elaboration of the same themes as *Artie Cuts Out* and is situated in the same New York Public school system, there is no analysis in *Facing Reality* of the student struggles portrayed. The film is merely held up, alongside *Rebel Without a Cause* (1955) as a cultural mirror of the "crisis of American bourgeois society."[[77]](#footnote-77)

In the early 1960s in the United States, white students as well as black began to participate in the rapidly growing Civil Rights Movement either in their home communities or in areas of intense struggle, e.g., the Mississippi Freedom Summer Project in 1964. The Student Non-violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) formed in the wake of the 1960 Greensboro student sit-ins and Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) were emblematic of student activism in that period. Other than efforts at desegregation, however, these were mainly struggles *outside* the school system. That changed with the explosion of the Free Speech Movement at the University of California at Berkeley in December 1964 when 800 students occupied Sproul Hall and the governor called in over 600 police to eject and arrest the protestors. From that point on, student activists brought their struggles home to their schools and began to elaborate detailed critiques of the repressive structures of education and to demand changes in those structures to meet their needs.[[78]](#footnote-78)

For the most part, however, those "New Left" critiques owed more to C. W. Mills and his analysis of the power elite than to Marx. From [*Who Rules Columbia*](http://www.utwatch.org/archives/whorulescolumbia.html) (1968) to [*Maggie's Farm: A Radical Guide to Stanford*](http://a3m2009.org/archive/1969-1970/69-70/1969-1970.html) (1969), the emphasis of student activists was on dissecting business and state control of universities and critiquing the resulting subordination of teaching and research to corporate and government interests and programs. Central to those critiques were the absence of programs of study relevant to student concerns, linkages between university research and the War in Vietnam and ties to corporate strategies both local and international. The former would lead to the rise of the Black student movement and the latter would link on-campus struggles with off-campus ones against the War.[[79]](#footnote-79) In the 1960s the linkages between the student "New Left" and Marx were highly mediated – by Herbert Marcuse, by Eric Fromm, by Maoism and by various radical periodicals, such as *Monthly Review* (1949- ), *New Left Review* (1960- ), *Radical America* (1967-1999) and *Telos* (1968- ). As already mentioned, the latter two journals provided occasional glimpses into the traditions being sketched here but little was reported when it came to schoolwork and student struggles.[[80]](#footnote-80)

In France, Socialisme ou Barbarie paid little more attention to schooling and the struggles of students than Facing Reality. The only substantive treatment was one 1963 essay on "La jeunesse étudiante" that was published along with two documents by students on their situation.[[81]](#footnote-81) By this time, of course, Castoriadis had broken with Marxism so the group's earlier "workers' inquiry" approach to understanding struggles was not adapted to the growing revolt of students.

Unfortunately, this was also true with the Situationists who, in the run-up to the great explosion of French student struggles in 1968, did pay some attention to the particularities of schooling and student activism. Probably the most important Situationist document dealing with student struggles was [*De la misère en milieu étudiant considérée sous ses aspects économique, politique, psychologique, sexuel et notamment intellectuel et de quelques moyens pour y remédie*](http://library.nothingness.org/articles/SI/fr/display/12)*r* (1966) ([*On the Poverty of Student Life*](http://libcom.org/library/poverty-student-life)) largely written by a member of the Situationist International in collaboration with radical students at the Université de Strasbourg. Those students had gotten themselves elected to L'Association Federative Generale des Etudiants de Strasbourg, local section of the social-democratic Union Nationale des Étudiants de France (UNEF).[[82]](#footnote-82) In a move that anticipated the widespread distribution of critical assessments of American universities to new students a few years later, e.g., [*Maggie's Farm: A Radical Guide to Stanford*](http://a3m2009.org/archive/1969-1970/69-70/1969-1970.html), they printed and distributed 10,000 copies to incoming students. Despite its instant notoriety – and widespread popularity – the essay contains more critical condemnation of student passivity and self-centeredness than it does analysis of the dynamics of students' day-to-day struggles. Where it does deal with student activism, it mainly provides a critique of existing efforts, from the Provos through "little groups of 'militants' who claim to represent the authentic Bolshevik heritage" and reformist *groupuscules* such as the post-Marxist after-life of Socialisme ou Barbarie. The essay's primary thrust is to call for the extension of student struggle to all of society and a rethinking of the revolutionary project in the light of Situationist analysis of the spectacle. Yet, at the same time, its roots can be seen in its repeated evocation of workers' councils and self-management (*autogestion*):

It is by its present organization that a new revolutionary movement will stand or fall. The final criterion of its coherence will be the compatibility of its actual form with its essential project – the international and absolute power of Workers' Councils as foreshadowed by the proletarian revolutions of the last hundred years. . . . "All Power to the Soviets" is still the slogan, but this time without the Bolshevik afterthoughts. The proletariat can only play the game of revolution if the stakes are the whole world, for the only possible form of workers' power – generalized and complete self-management . . . "Workers' control must be the means and the end of the struggle: it is at once the goal of that struggle and its adequate form."

Their concept of self-management, however, was not a concept of merely taking control of the means of production to eliminate the alienation associated with capitalist control and replacing it with non-alienated work as true human being. On the contrary, their self-management would abolish the market, commodities and work as a separate domain of domination.

With self-management ends one of the fundamental splits in modern society – between a labor which becomes increasingly reified and a "leisure" consumed in passivity. The death of the commodity naturally means the suppression of work and its replacement by a new type of free activity. . . it is work itself which must be called in question . . . no strategy short of the abolition of work will do. It is only beyond the contradiction of use-value and exchange-value that history begins, that men make their activity an object of their will and their consciousness, and see themselves in the world they have created.

When student struggles – alongside those of 10 million French workers – did explode in May 1968, many themes of the Situationist analysis could be heard in the student assemblies and read in graffiti, spray-painted and stenciled on the walls of Paris and other hotspots of the uprising. The abolition of work would be the primary remnant of those ideas that would find its way into *Zerowork* #1.

At the time, these events – and the roll of students in the mass occupations – were being watched and analyzed by workerists in Italy. There too the 1960s saw an explosion of student struggles, but how those closely associated with workerism tended to view the struggles of students varied across space and time.[[83]](#footnote-83) Sergio Bologna and Giaro Daghini, for instance, compiled and published "Maggio '68 in Francia" in *Quaderni Piacentini* where they credited students with playing an important role in spurring many workers into action.[[84]](#footnote-84) On the other hand, workerism's focus on waged worker struggles led some to be initially dismissive of student activism as the "play" of the children of the middle class – who made up the bulk of students in the universities. The preoccupation of many of those students with such foreign struggles as those in Vietnam, the Cultural Revolution in China, guerrilla warfare in the "Third World" or uprisings in American black ghettos were largely secondary to the interests of most workerists. The Center-Left parties sought to subsume student activism within carefully circumscribed "youth" organizations of their own. But as student struggles spread beyond universities into secondary schools and the *Movimento Studentesco* began to elaborate its own autonomous analyses and strategies, it began to be taken more seriously. Both the workerists and many of the student leaders, some influenced by workerism, increasingly focused on the strategic political question of the best ways to bring student struggles and those of other social sectors – especially waged workers – together. One approach, not surprisingly, was to argue that student struggles must be subordinated to those of waged workers. The rationale lay in seeing students as future workers and finding ways to overcome the ideological role of the school – the ways in which it functions to condition its inmates into accepting the capitalist organization of society.[[85]](#footnote-85) Another approach built on efforts within the student movement to widen accessibility to education, especially higher education, beyond the middle class to the children of blue collar workers. The latter's financial needs fueled demands for more stipends/scholarships; the search for links with the workers' movement led to those demands being mutated into demands for wages for students, or even "a general salary to all young people under age 18".[[86]](#footnote-86) Such efforts to bring student and waged worker struggles together would contribute to the formation of *Lotta Continua* (1969-1976).

Intersecting with the analysis of the student movement was an emerging awareness that despite Marx's analysis in the "Fragment on Machines", not all labor was being deskilled and reduced to "machine tending." On the contrary, capitalist industrial development also required and produced skilled technical labor power at many levels of production – some of which was being trained in schools. What some saw as the increasing importance of such labor power – despite countertendencies toward ever finer divisions of technical labor – gave increased importance to the struggles of students – those very skilled technical laborers-in-training. Other than various invocations of the authoritarian methods through which such training was being organized, there was relatively little effort to extend the methods of the "workers' inquiry" into schools, at any level.[[87]](#footnote-87) Always students were analyzed as something separate and different from workers. In this the ideas of Italian workerists, in this period, paralleled those of Facing Reality – as enunciated, for example, by Martin Glaberman in his critique of how the Wages for Housework analysis led to an unacceptable broadening of definition of working class.[[88]](#footnote-88)

However, Mariarosa Dalla Costa's "Women and the Subversion of the Community" (1971) not only provided theoretical grounding for the Wages for Housework Campaign but her inclusion of analyses of schooling and the struggles of unwaged students against it also elaborated a Marxian logic to seeing those battles as integral elements of the overall class struggle. Not only did she identify ideological aspects of schooling, e.g. the "conditioning [of] students against 'crime'", but she also highlighted how the imposition of discipline and hierarchy (grades and selection) aims at preparing students for later employment. Moreover, she identifies struggles against these various mechanisms of domination undertaken by students at all levels. Condensed within a few pages is a more succinct Marxian analysis of schoolwork and the struggle against it than in previous writings that touched on this subject in the history being sketched here. From the problematic of the relationship of students *to* workers, she moved the discussion to that of students *as* workers. This change in theoretical perspective moved the issue of student income (stipends/scholarships/wages) from a means for blue-collar children to gain access to education to putting the struggles of students on the same footing as that of other workers – struggles over wage-work deals and over the conditions of work.

Not surprisingly, this kind of analysis was soon being applied by students themselves to their own struggles. In 1974 the London-based *Power of Women* newsletter published – very much in the old style of *Artie Cuts Out* – an interview with students who were circulating a petition for wages for students. A year later, students at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst – including one member of the Zerowork collective – published a pamphlet titled *Wages for Students* that laid out an analysis of how students' unwaged schoolwork served to produce their own labor power and demanded payment from capital for that work.[[89]](#footnote-89) Some of that analysis was incorporated into George Caffentzis' article "Throwing Away the Ladder" in the first issue of *Zerowork*.

**Peasants and their Struggles**

With respect to peasants, I feel it necessary to preface my account of how they have come to be counted among the "unwaged" by some people in the history presented here and how their work has come to be seen as contributing to the reproduction of labor power with a few remarks on the difficulties of the very category of "peasant". Today anthropologists and sociologists apply the label "peasants" to a wide variety of peoples living in rural areas with incredibly diverse patterns of work, life and struggle. The roles such people play in contemporary capitalism differ markedly all over the world. Generally speaking, the category "peasant" refers to agrarian folk who "work the land", that is to say, they engage in agricultural activities of various sorts. But not all who work the land are considered peasants. American family farmers, for example, almost never refer to themselves, nor are they referred to by others, as "peasants". The waged employees of agribusiness corporations engaged in factory farming are also never classified as peasants. In Europe, on the other hand, many family farmers do call themselves peasants, are so categorized by those who study them and organize themselves as such.

Some peasants, like family farmers, own their land (even if a bank holds a mortgage), work it, consume part of their produce and sell the rest in markets, local, regional, national or international. Others have access to land they can work only through some form of land tenure – the forms of which differ almost endlessly around the world. Some, so-called "landless peasants" have no access at all but work the land of others, often for a wage – whether in kind or in money. In each of these varied situations, the roles played by individuals often differ according to gender and age. Perhaps the most common condition of peasants, however, is a complexity of roles that defies easy classification. Those with direct access may devote themselves mainly to farming their own land during periods of planting and harvesting, but when time allows, they may engage in artisanal crafting for the market or find waged jobs on others' lands, or even off the land in villages, towns, cities or large-scale infrastructure projects, e.g., dam building and hydroelectric power plant construction. Thus, when we look at the situation of peasants around the world we find a varied mix of subsistence agriculture, production for the market and engagement in labor markets.

Whether the roles of individual peasants are few or many, in most cases they can only be properly understood within the context of the communities within which those individuals live. This is most obvious in the case of indigenous communities that have preserved substantial elements of their pre-colonial cultures and languages down through the years sufficiently to clearly differentiate them from other communities – including whatever dominant culture and language have been imposed on them by outside forces. All this often obtains even when rural enclosures have stripped peasants of their land and driven many into cities. There, they may seek waged jobs, or they may engage in those self-activities associated with the so-called "informal sector" – while still, for at least a generation and sometime longer, retaining ties – of family and friends, of culture, of language – to their communities of origin and longings for a return to the land.

Inevitably, the variety and complexity of peasant situations have gestated diverse degrees and forms of struggle. Given their attachment to the land, struggles for land reform have been common – from demands for formal legal redistribution to direct land seizures. But so have efforts to raise wages, among the rural landless where enclosure has displaced large numbers and limited mechanization has not undercut the demand for their labor and among those who have found waged jobs in urban areas and been able to organize with others. Peasants producing mainly for the market have also fought for higher prices for their output, or against government policies that have raised input prices – say for irrigation water and fertilizer – while holding down the prices of farm products.[[90]](#footnote-90) Even where peasants have been so repressed that their possibilities of overt action have been limited, they have had recourse to a wide variety of covert struggles.[[91]](#footnote-91) One thing is certain, the all too common, pejorative views of peasants as a quiescent mass of ignorant drudges who put up with their lot, generation after generation, is false. Such views were most spectacularly falsified during the most massive revolutionary upheavals in the 20th Century: the Mexican revolution of 1910-20, the Russian revolutions of 1905-1907 and 1917 and the Chinese revolution of roughly 1920 to 1949. Each of those great events depended far more upon the uprising of peasants — either recent rural-urban migrants to newly built factories or those still toiling in the countryside — than on the actions of any well-organized political party. Beyond these massive upheavals there have been any number of other violent, peasant-led revolts as well as widespread peasant support for non-violent change – as in the struggle for independence in colonial India.

Despite the diversity, persistence and frequently the intensity of peasant struggles, Marxists have long been either indifferent to, or critical of peasant struggles. The indifference has derived primarily from an analysis that took the fate of English peasants – subjected by enclosure to the labor market or to the acceptance of tenuous tenancy on great landed estates – analyzed by Marx as "primitive accumulation" as their primary point of reference. Such "proletarianization of the peasantry" has long been viewed by many Marxists as so inevitable as to render preoccupation with their struggles a waste of time.

This neglect is traceable not only to Marx's analysis of the impact of primitive accumulation on English peasants but also to his views of peasants elsewhere. Among the best known and most frequently referenced of those views was his brief analysis of the French peasantry included in his *18th Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (1852) dealing with the final defeat of the revolution of 1848. In that essay he characterized French peasants as constituting a class "in-itself" in so far as they had many commonalities of situation and shared experiences of exploitation. They were not, however, in his view, able to constitute themselves as a class "for-itself" by acting together in a concerted manner in their collective self-interests – and thus were easily recruited and utilized against the urban waged workers that he believed, however weak at that time, were progressing toward higher levels of self-organization and revolutionary action.[[92]](#footnote-92)

Less well known, but also contributing to the tendency of Marxists to neglect peasant struggles was Friedrich Engels' book *The Peasant War in Germany* (1850). While Engels celebrated the peasants, miners, soldiers and clerics who rose up in 1525 against enclosure, taxation and repressive authority and who conceived egalitarian "communist" alternatives, as an anticipation of the eventual transcendence of capitalism, he also argued that their failure was inevitable given their limited ability to act in concert. Following in Engels' footsteps was Karl Kautsky, who concluded in his *On the Agrarian Question* (1899) that German peasants at the end of the 19th Century were no more capable of self-organization as a class than those of 350 years earlier and were, moreover, doomed to disappear, disintegrating into a few big capitalist farmers and dispossessed waged workers.[[93]](#footnote-93)

These views of the limited ability of peasants for self-organization and struggle were taken up by Russian Marxists in their debates with Populists who were, on the contrary, much more optimistic about the potential of peasant revolt to transform the existing social order. Despite Marx having come down on the side of the Populists – something kept hidden by Soviet authorities for decades – the Bolsheviks embraced his earlier skepticism.[[94]](#footnote-94) Exemplary among pre-1917 Bolshevik attitudes toward the peasantry was Lenin's quite serious effort to understand the development of agriculture in Russia. In a manner similar to Kautsky's, he tracked down and examined as much statistical evidence as he could find. But his focus was on the degree of recognizably capitalist forms of agriculture and the proletarianization of the peasantry. Prior to 1917, he consistently supported peasant struggles demanding the redistribution of land because, he argued, it would hasten the development of capitalism – not any post-capitalist form of social organization.[[95]](#footnote-95) Once in power he and the Bolshevik Party leadership moved as quickly as possible to bring the rebellion of both urban and rural peasants under control and reestablish the Czarist practice of exploiting the peasantry to fund rapid industrialization.[[96]](#footnote-96) Much the same story unfolded in China where once Mao Tse-tung discovered that peasant revolution was underway in Hunan in 1927, he too moved as fast as possible to gain leadership and control. There too, once victories over the Japanese and the Kuomintang were achieved in 1945 and 1949, the Chinese Communist Party rejected peasant demands for the immediate implementation of the communist rule of "to each according to their needs" and, like the Soviets, institutionalized the extraction of peasant surpluses for purposes of industrialization.[[97]](#footnote-97)

Against this background, the attitudes towards and positions on peasants of those Marxists whose influence on Zerowork I have been tracing have been decidedly mixed.

In the case of the Johnson-Forest Tendency, C. L. R. James' early work of the 1930s, on the Haitian Revolution and in support of Pan Africanism demonstrated a clear awareness that struggles against colonialism involved unwaged slaves and peasants as well as waged workers.[[98]](#footnote-98) However, in his best-known work, *The Black Jacobins*, on the 1791-1803 slave revolt in Haiti, James saw those slaves not as peasants but rather, because of the way they were organized, as akin to the modern proletariat.

The slaves worked the land, and, like revolutionary peasants everywhere, they aimed at the extermination of their oppressors. But working and living together in gangs of hundreds on the huge factories [sic] which covered the North Plain, they were closer to a modern proletariat than any group of workers in existence. . .[[99]](#footnote-99)

 In his writings about anti-colonial struggles in Africa, he recognized how enclosures were used to drive peasants from their lands and the various methods used by colonial powers to force the resulting landless into wage labor. He also highlighted the many revolts against colonial rule, including revolts by peasants – sometimes in their own interests, e.g., protesting low prices for their products or high taxes, sometimes in support of striking waged workers. "What the authorities fear most," he wrote, "is a combination of the workers in the towns and the peasants in the interior." Yet, at the same time, he insisted that the failures of those revolts lay in the limitations of the rebels' ability to organize, and those limitations, in turn, derived primarily from their lack of education. James's fundamental point of reference in this regard, were not any close acquaintance or study of actual self-activity among peasants, but rather his embrace of Lenin's last statements in the year before his death in 1924 calling for educating the mass of Soviet peasants so they could be participants – under Bolshevik guidance – in the building of socialism.[[100]](#footnote-100) This judgment would continue to shape James' views on peasant struggle in the post-colonial world of the 1950s and 1960s even after he had broken with the Leninist concept of the vanguard party. [[101]](#footnote-101) Although James recognized the autonomous power of peasants to struggle in their own interests, he retained that skepticism of their ability to organize effectively that ran from Marx and Engels right through the whole history of Marxist orthodoxy.

Although such skepticism certainly haunted James and Dunayevskaya's analysis of the Soviet Union as state capitalism, it did not preclude their appreciation of the continuing resistance of Russian peasants to Stalinist exploitation. This was especially true with Dunayevskaya's writings. Being Russian and able to read Soviet documents, she not only provided most of the Tendency's evidence of the capitalist character of the Soviet Union but also most of their commentary on the struggles of Russian peasants. In a January 1943 article in *The New International*, she traced the processes of collectivization and peasant resistance to it – resistance that forced the state to allow free markets for [non-collectivized] peasant output.[[102]](#footnote-102) She also noted how variations in access to inputs and to official output markets led to enormous differences in collective farm income: millionaires vs paupers. Finally, she showed how mechanization, refusal to move to the factory and low levels of peasant work created large scale hidden unemployment in the countryside that the state began to tap, by force. Fifteen years later, after she and her group split to form News & Letters, her first major book, *Marxism and Freedom*, published in 1958, contained a chapter on "Russian State Capitalism vs Workers' Revolt" that reiterated her previous analyses, including a highlighting not only of worker resistance in factories but of peasant resistance in the countryside – including such extreme measures as the slaughter of animals to prevent their appropriation by the state. She argued that the extent of repression (death penalties, forced labor camps, etc.) measured the extent of resistance.

That same year James, Lee and Chaulieu's discussion of the Hungarian workers' councils in *Facing Reality* argued that the councils were able to overcome traditional divisions, such as those between technicians and the manual workers who invited them into the councils, and those between workers and peasants who supported them.[[103]](#footnote-103) They did not, however, lay out any analysis of existing autonomous struggles of peasants to explain that support.

The very limited knowledge of peasant reality of those in the Johnson-Forest Tendency, Correspondence, Facing Reality and News & Letters groups, it seems to me, contributed to their retention of Marxism's long-standing skepticism about the potentialities of peasant autonomy. At the same time, their ignorance was understandable. In the first place, the primary areas of their political activity, and therefore their attention to workers' struggles, were located in the industrial heartland of the United States, especially Detroit, (and, eventually, for James in England). Their very "workerist" orientation kept them, for the most part, far from much contact with, or analysis of, rural struggles in those countries or in the Third World. A brief sojourn among sharecroppers in Missouri (1941), James' short-lived contribution-at-a-distance to the Worker and Farmers' Party in Trinidad (1965-66) and short visits in West Africa (1967-68) – where he hobnobbed with elected officials or lectured university students – were no substitutes for close and sustained study of peasant lives and struggles.[[104]](#footnote-104) Overwhelmingly their attention and political work was always focused on the struggles of waged industrial workers. In the second place, despite their close study of Marx's original texts, they were, as far as I have been able to discover, unaware for many years of his letters to Zasulich with their embrace of Populist hopes for the peasant *mir* as a possible "fulcrum for the social regeneration of Russia."[[105]](#footnote-105)

This was also largely true for those related European organizations discussed above, e.g., Socialisme ou Barbarie and the Italian workerists. In the six issues of *Quaderni rossi*, examples illuminating theoretical pieces were almost always drawn from manufacturing and only two articles dealt with either agriculture or agrarian reform – neither of which reflected the kind of "workers' inquiry" research being carried out in factories.[[106]](#footnote-106) In both France and Italy, although there was clear awareness that to a considerable degree post-WWII economic recovery and industrial modernization was based on labor recently recruited from rural areas, either at home or abroad, relatively little attention was paid to the peasants involved with such rural-urban migration. An exception in Italy was the Danilo Montaldi's *Milano, Corea. Inchiesta sugli immigrati* (1960).

This changed, somewhat, as the 1960s progressed, as anti-colonial struggles became post-colonial, anti-neocolonial ones and were met with counterinsurgency violence. The spread of "Third worldism" – that tendency of young militants in North America and Europe to look for inspiration abroad, especially in the Cuban Revolution, the example of Che Guevara, the war for Vietnamese independence and the writings of Mao Tse-tung – made it politically impossible for those who had been preoccupied with the struggles of waged industrial workers to continue to neglect peasant struggles. Still, on the whole, relatively little attention was spared for those struggles and certainly there was little of the intense and detailed study characteristic of the "workers' inquiry" approach to analyzing class composition that had been applied to the class war in industrial settings. Even when the Materiali Marxisti group in Padua turned its attentions to those areas from which those industrial workers had come, their preoccupation was primarily with State policies, e.g., Ferrarri Bravo and Serafini's book on the Italian South, or *mezzogiorno*.[[107]](#footnote-107) It was also true when they composed and assembled a collection of essays on the "multinational worker' – directly addressing the role of immigrant labor, the focus was mainly on the roles and struggles of that labor in Italian industry. Only three essays in the collection *L'operaio multinazionale in Europa* (1974) – one on the struggles by workers in and from the Maghreb, one on those in Yugoslavia, and one that examined the struggles of women in the frequently peasant communities from which the immigrants had come, treated the struggles at home that contributed to workers' decisions to immigrate.[[108]](#footnote-108)

**Incipient Differences**

It should go without saying, but I’m going to say it anyway, that the members of the Zerowork collective brought to bear in their thinking and discussions all kinds of other intellectual and political influences beyond those sketched above. As the brief biographies of each will indicate, those individuals came from diverse intellectual and political backgrounds and thus brought with them to this collective project unique experiences and ideas appropriated from years of study in many fields and of all kinds of literature. To adapt something Marty Glaberman once wrote about George Rawick, these folks “knew a lot of stuff – a lot more than was involved in their academic specialties. They understood a lot of stuff. Knowledge is not simply the accumulation of facts; it is understanding relationships, causes, connections.”[[109]](#footnote-109) The diversity of backgrounds and knowledge made for an intriguing and enriching series of encounters from which, I believe, everyone involved felt himself to have benefited enormously. This despite, and perhaps partly because of, differences amidst many shared complementarities.

Among those differences I want to evoke just two – both of which eventually contributed to splits in the group and people taking different, though still related, political paths. The *first* concerned the interpretations of trends in the character of class relationships emerging from the cycle of struggle that had thrown the post-WWII capitalist system into crisis. The *second* concerned the organizational implications drawn from those interpretations.

With respect to the emerging trends in the character of class relationships there were two tendencies. One emphasized the how capitalist recourse to the relative surplus value strategy of substituting constant capital for labor, i.e., raising the organic composition of capital, in response to workers' demands for more benefits and less work had been undermining the capitalist ability to impose work itself. This line of thinking drew upon three sources – two empirical and one theoretical. The two empirical supports were the rapid development and generalization of automation during the Keynesian period and the rising levels of unemployment that came with the recessions of 1969-70 and 1973-75. While the generation of unemployment by the spread of automation in manufacturing had been, to a substantial degree, offset by the rapid expansion of the service sector of the economy, automation was also spreading there as well. What mainstream economists called structural unemployment and Marx called "the stagnant" part of the reserve army of labor seemed to be growing. The theoretical support was contained not only in Marx's analysis of relative surplus value in Vol. I of *Capital*, but also in the "fragment on machines" in the *Grundrisse* that had been receiving more and more attention, especially in Europe where the unemployment was worse than in the United States.

The "fragment on machines" was receiving a lot of attention because in it Marx pointed to a logical outcome of the capitalist strategy of repeatedly substituting machines for living labor in such a manner as to subordinate the latter to the former.[[110]](#footnote-110) The result, Marx wrote, is that the worker

. . . steps to the side of the production process instead of being its chief actor. In this transformation it is neither the direct human labor he himself performs, nor the time during which he works, but rather the appropriation of his own general productive power, his understanding of nature and his mastery over it by virtue of his presence as a social body – it is, in a word, the development of the social individual which appears as the great foundation-stone of production and of wealth. The theft of alien labor time, on which present wealth is based, appears as a miserable foundation in face of this new one, created by large-scale industry itself. As soon as labor in the direct form has ceased to be the great well-spring of wealth, labor time ceases and must cease to be its measure, and hence exchange value [must cease to be the measure] of use value.[[111]](#footnote-111)

In other words, the capitalist strategy of investing more and more in fixed capital, in machines, marginalizes labor in sector after sector, gradually reducing the overall ability of capital to maintain social order through the imposition of work. This becomes more and more obvious as Marx goes on, in this fragment, to discuss the replacement of labor time by ever greater amounts, of potential free or disposable time "for society generally and each of its members". This gave one sense to the concept of "zero work" – the approximate end-point toward which the class struggle is driving social development within capitalism. The analysis of this fragment – quoted at greater length than I have done here – is the focus of the last section of Mario Montano's contribution "Notes on the International Crisis" in the first issue of *Zerowork*.[[112]](#footnote-112)

At the same time, both within Montano's article and in other contributions to *Zerowork* #1, we can find an emphasis on a domain of work beyond that accounted for in unemployment statistics or in Marx's "fragment" – namely all those kinds of unwaged work that, because it is not paid for directly, is hidden from the usual measurements. For example, Caffentzis' piece on class struggles in education emphasizes that alongside the waged work of administrators and professors toil students. Some, like Artie Bauman, resist; others knuckle under and do as instructed. Either way, the vast majority are unwaged. As with housework, capital has done its best to organize schoolwork for the purpose of producing labor power – whether that labor power will eventually be employed and waged, or not. Of course, where work is imposed, resistance arises and Caffentzis emphasizes how student struggles have often undermined that imposition, forcing capital to abandon some strategies and adopt others. But the overall thrust of his arguments highlights a whole sphere of unwaged work that capital has sought to expand even as the substitution of machines for labor in industry has limited its ability to impose waged work.[[113]](#footnote-113) Parallel arguments are made in several other articles. Carpignano analyses struggles against capital's efforts to use welfare to "unionize" and manage the unwaged in poor neighborhoods. Ramirez examines urban refusal of price increases that impose more unwaged work. Cleaver studies the role of the unwaged in mining communities in the support of strikes and other miner actions. In all four cases, the authors draw attention to domains of work – and domains of struggle – that lie outside Marx's analysis of industrial development and the consequences for waged labor.

With respect to the organizational implications of the analysis in *Zerowork*, the key issue turned on the Wages for Housework collectives being autonomous women’s projects. All the men in the Zerowork collective embraced the analysis of the centrality of unwaged labor to the reproduction of capital and therefore the importance of the struggles of the unwaged. But, what were the organizational implications of autonomous women's groups for the political activities of men? Should men craft their own agendas? Did it make sense to think in terms of autonomous organizations of men? Or, should men dedicate themselves to the support of the women’s groups? Were there still forms of political organizing where men and women could work together? This issue had emerged as a general one with the new wave of feminism that grew out of the movements of the 1960s and early 1970s – and a wide variety of responses had been, and were being, given. For the men who came together to craft *Zerowork*, that collective crafting was itself *an initial answer* to the organizational question. It would not, however, be a final one. Almost as soon as the first issue of *Zerowork* was published, this organizational question began to be addressed directly. How the debates around this question unfolded and what they led to is taken up in the sketch of period between the publication of the first and second issues of *Zerowork*.

**Brief Biographies of the Editors of *Zerowork* #1 (1975)**

The length of the sketches that follow, and the amount of detail about each individual’s trajectory, varies considerably. This is due less to the length or degree of their involvement in politics than to available information. What I have been able to recount here has depended largely on the degree to which each individual has left a written record of his activities and the degree to which each has contributed his memories to this project. In two cases – those of Leoncio Schaedel and Peter Taylor – I have, so far, been unable to contact them.

**George Caffentzis (1945 - ):** Son of Greek immigrants who lived and worked in Brooklyn, New York – but with an extended, and oft visited family in Greece – George studied philosophy and physics at Antioch College (1962-65) in Yellow Springs, Ohio, where he was involved in efforts to defend Cuba and in the Civil Rights Movement.[[114]](#footnote-114) He then studied at City College of New York (CUNY) where he completed his undergraduate degree in philosophy in 1968. While pursuing graduate study at Princeton University, he was involved in the anti-Vietnam War movement and in challenging mainstream economic doctrine.

At Princeton, with two other students, Marc Linder and Julius Sensat, George prepared chapter-by-chapter critiques of Paul Samuelson’s iconic textbook *Economics*, to provide materials for a “counter-course”. In the process, they also undertook a thorough study of Marx’s *Capital* and *Theories of Surplus Value*. Those critiques were eventually revised and published by Linder as *Anti-Samuelson*, first in Germany (1974)[[115]](#footnote-115) in four volumes and then in the United States, in an abridged, two-volume edition, by Urizen Books (1977), albeit without George being listed as an author. He withdrew from the publishing project due to theoretical and political differences.[[116]](#footnote-116)

George went on to obtain his Ph.D. in the Philosophy of Science from Princeton and to teach philosophy first at Haverford College (1971-72) and then at Brooklyn College of CUNY (1973-78) during the period of his participation in the Zerowork collective.[[117]](#footnote-117)

One of the founders of Zerowork, George took part in the meeting – at Silvia Federici’s home – that launched the project in the Spring of 1974. Among those present who would take an active part in the project were George, Bruno Ramirez, Mario Montano, Paolo Carpignano and Leoncio Schaedel. Also present were Judy Ramirez, Selma James, her son Sam Weinstein and George Rawick. The Zerowork collective was made up of men because the women present – including Silvia, Selma and Judy – were involved in founding autonomous Wages for Housework (WfH) groups for women in various cities, including New York City and Toronto.

Complementing the Zerowork project – which was focused on the creation and circulation of the journal – some of the men were also involved with separate political groups to organize other kinds of political actions. In New York, an Income Without Work Committee mutated into New York Struggle Against Work and in Toronto a Struggle Against Work Collective was founded when the women in the New Tendency left to form a Wages for Housework Committee. George took part in the former; Bruno Ramirez took part in the latter.[[118]](#footnote-118) In both cases, the men in these groups faced the political issue of the relation of their struggles to those of women in the WfH movement. Because all of these men basically agreed with the WfH analysis of the central importance of unwaged labor in producing and reproducing labor power (and thus capital), and agreed that only through autonomous organization could women be certain that the importance of that unwaged labor, and the struggles associated with it, would not be marginalized, then the obvious question was “What kinds of struggle are appropriate for men?”

The thinking and debates this question provoked can be found in several documents produced by the two groups in Toronto and New York City.[[119]](#footnote-119) Two different views emerged. One view argued that because within the waged/unwaged hierarchy imposed by capital, the struggles of the unwaged, e.g., housewives, are necessarily beneficial to the waged, e.g., men, because any increase in the power of the former would make them less liable to being used against the latter, thus strengthening the working class as a whole. The waged should, therefore, subordinate their struggles to those of the unwaged. The other view argued that while increasing the power of the unwaged was essential to increasing the power of the working class as a whole, there was still space for men to act on their own. For a while, within both groups, these differing perspectives were discussed, evaluated and debated – at the same time that participants engaged in various kinds of political action.

In the midst of the above struggles in New York City, and during the preparation of the first issue of *Zerowork*, George also collaborated with some students studying "radical" economics in the Graduate Program of Economics at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. They wrote and published a critique of education as work-for-capital: a pamphlet titled *Wages for Students*. Among those students were two Americans, Leoncio Schaedel (see below) and John Willshire (who would later join Midnight Notes). Drawing on the theoretical framework of WfH, the pamphlet analyzed schoolwork as work-for-capital because it is primarily structured to impose work discipline for the benefit of future employers. The essay critiqued the usual arguments by economists that education is both a consumption good and a good investment. The former was labeled patently false because schoolwork is work and gets in the way of consumption. The second was no longer true on a personal level because high unemployment in the 1970s made future payoffs less likely. Another critique – prompted by and aimed at their own professors – targeted the Left's support for more education (more work) – in the name of raising social and political consciousness – as merely forwarding capital's agenda. Pointing to how student wagelessness put a burden on parents and/or forced them to add waged jobs to their unwaged schoolwork, the essay argued that regular students should be paid by capital much as some corporations pay for employee training, or ROTC pays for schooling. Many of the ideas elaborated in their pamphlet were incorporated into George’s contribution to *Zerowork* #1: “Throwing Away the Ladder: The Universities in the Crisis”.

**Paolo Carpignano**: An Italian, Paolo spent a year in the U.S. in 1965, studying at Wesleyan University and then returned to Italy in 1966 to continue his studies at the University of Rome. At the university he studied Marxism with Lucio Colletti (1924-2001) and sociology with Franco Ferrarotti (1926 - ).[[120]](#footnote-120) At the same time and on his own, Paolo was reading Mario Tronti’s *Operai e Capitale* – that generated, he says, “a fundamental theoretical turning point” – and was deeply involved in the Italian New Left beginning with the group that had published *Classe Operaia*.[[121]](#footnote-121) Although they had stopped publishing the paper, Paolo worked with Alberto Asor Rosa (1933 - ) and Franco Piperno (1943 - ) and contributed to journals like *Classe e Stato* and *La Classe*.[[122]](#footnote-122) In those circles he met Ferruccio Gambino, Sergio Bologna, Toni Negri, Mariarosa Dalla Costa “and many others.” “And then came 1968,” Paolo has written, “no need to dwell on it, it was the experience of a lifetime. I was active in the student-workers committee, participated in the creation of Potere Operaio, and in all the struggles up to the Hot Autumn of ’69.”[[123]](#footnote-123)

Shortly thereafter Paolo finished his dissertation, graduated, married an American woman and immigrated to the United States to teach Italian Culture, Sociology and Mass Media at Hunter College and the Graduate Center of CUNY. In the United States he reconnected with Mario Montano (see below) who introduced him to Silvia Federici. Through Ferruccio Gambino’s contacts he also met George Rawick and visited Martin Glaberman and John Watson of DRUM in Detroit.[[124]](#footnote-124) According to Paolo, given the central role of the struggles of autoworkers at Fiat in the development of workerism,

“Detroit was a natural destination for anybody with a workerist perspective and anybody who talked about workers’ self-activity had to be our comrade. We had heard of DRUM, FRUM, etc, and when John Watson visited Torino to observe the struggles at FIAT, he claimed to find himself at home. The axis Torino-Detroit was essential to the mythology of the time.”[[125]](#footnote-125)

According to Paolo, despite being familiar with Montaldi’s *Autobiografie della leggera* as part of his sociology studies, neither he nor other young militants in his circle were aware of the lineage I’ve traced above from Johnson-Forest Tendency through Socialisme ou Barbarie to Montaldi, *conricerca*, and Panzieri-Alquati. He did not, for example, discover C. L. R. James until “much later.” In Italy, as in the U.S., it seems that knowledge of these linkages – and the evolution of ideas associated with them – were poorly passed down through the changing generations of activists. One more reason for this website.

A draft of what would be his 1975 contribution to *Zerowork* #1 – “U.S. Class Composition in the 1960s” – was picked up, translated and published as "Note su classe operaia e capitale in America negli anni sessanta," in S. Bologna, P. Carpignano and A. Negri, Crisi e Organizzazione Operaia (Sept. 1974).[[126]](#footnote-126) Shortly before *Zerowork* #1 came out, at the invitation of Franco Ferrarotti, Paolo also wrote some articles for *La Critica Sociologica*, one of which was “Unemployment: Made in the USA,” for the Autumn 1975 issue.[[127]](#footnote-127) Shortly after *Zerowork* #1 appeared, Paolo also contributed “Immigrazione e degradqazione: mercato del lavoro e ideologie della class operaia americana durante la ‘Progressive Era’,” to the collaboration G. Bock, P. Carpignano e B. Ramirez, La formazione dell'operaio massa negli USA 1898/1922 (1976).[[128]](#footnote-128)

**William (Bill) Cleaver (1952 - ):** An American, Bill was the son of middle class, but liberal democrat parents, both of whom were born and raised in the South but had graduated from Rice Institute in Houston, Texas. With his ex-fighter pilot father – who had served in the Army Air Corps during WWII – stationed at Wright Patterson Air Force Base outside Dayton, Ohio he grew up in a conservative rural area. He was involved in student activism early, starting in high school in 1968 with a successful upstate effort to get 2,300 children school lunches and participation in the Presidential campaign of Eugene McCarthy. He published an independent student newspaper in high school in 1969-70 that was quickly banned but circulated underground. He later studied Politics and History at the Bowling Green State University and then finished his undergraduate degree at Ohio University in Athens, not far from the West Virginia border. During his time as a student in Southeastern Ohio he developed connections with social movements in Appalachia. He worked on several electoral campaigns by political progressives, including those of James Abourezk in South Dakota, George McGovern in 1972 and Toby Moffitt in Connecticut in 1974. That same year, he abandoned electoral politics for union organizing in New York City where he also he joined the Zerowork collective and contributed an article on “Wildcats in the Appalachian Coal Fields” to the first issue. In 1976 he returned to Appalachia where he worked and taught for several years.

**Peter Linebaugh:** An American who studied at Swathmore and Columbia, Peter was a student of E. P. Thompson, receiving his Ph.D. in British history from the University of Warwick in 1975. Peter has written that he met Thompson in 1968 in New York City – a meeting that led him to move to London in 1969 where he joined a group of scholars, brought together by Thompson, to study the relationship between crime and the working class.[[129]](#footnote-129) While living in London he joined John Merrington (see below) – who had studied in Italy and introduced Gramsci to English readers – in forming a *Capital* study group (1969-70) that met every Sunday for a year and a half. This group, which became known as the Offord Road Group because of the locale of its meetings, also included Clement Maharaj, a close associate of C. L. R. James, Geoff Kaye, an economist, Stefan Feuchtwanger, an anthropologist, Fei-ling Blackburn, associate of *New Left Review*, Bethia Waterman, an American feminist, and occasionally Selma James (wife of C. L. R. James) who, according to Peter’s account, “was testing the ideas of Mariarosa Dalla Costa by treating Geoff Kaye . . . as a whetstone to sharpen her own forensic wit.”[[130]](#footnote-130) Clement and Selma, of course, also brought to those discussions familiarity C. L. R. James’ work and that of the Johnson-Forest Tendency and Facing Reality more generally. The participants in those meetings discussed a wide variety of material, including not only *Capital* and writings by Dalla Costa but also other Italian writings that were summarized, or translated in their entirety, by John Merrington and Ed Emery. Those writings included essays by Romano Alquati, Mario Tronti, Raniero Panzieri and other influential figures in Italian *operaismo*, or workerism, from *Quaderni Rossi* to Potere Operaio and Lotta Continua.

When Peter returned to the United States he taught at Franconia College where in 1972 he published a pamphlet that combined a chapter of James Bogg’s *The American Revolution* (1963) with Guido Baldi, “Theses on the Mass Worker and Capital” – an essay published that same year in *Radical America* that synthesized much of the Italian theory that he had been analyzing and discussing in London.[[131]](#footnote-131) The author of the “Theses”, Guido Baldi, was actually a pseudonym for two Italians living in New York City: Silvia Federici, an important figure in the Wages for Housework Campaign and Mario Montano (see below) – both of whom had previously worked on the journal *Telos*. Within a year, Peter organized a meeting with Silvia and Mario to discuss the possibilities of publishing a collection of English translations of important Italian texts.

By that time Peter had begun teaching in the New Hampshire State Prison and had written and published an account of struggles and repression in that institution. That same year he joined with “prisoners, ex-cons and their supporters” to form the New England Prisoner’s Association (NEPA) and, along with Gene Mason and Monty Neill (later a member of Midnight Notes) edited *NEPA News: The Voice of the New England Prisoners’ Association* for the next two years. In all of this Peter was bringing his work on crime and the working class in the 18th Century and his study of Marx and Italian autonomist theory and practice to bear on the on-going, contemporary struggles within and around prisons in the United States. All of this Peter also brought to his collaboration in the formation and development of the Zerowork collective that began in 1974.

Besides participating in the inevitable discussions involved in all such collaborations, Peter’s contribution to *Zerowork* #1 was three-fold: first, he co-authored, along with Bruno Ramirez, “Crisis in the Auto Sector”, second, he drew his good friend John Merrington along as a corresponding editor (see below) and third, he took on primary responsibility for editing, designing, laying-out and printing of the journal.

**Mario Montano (1943 - ):** An Italian like Paolo, Mario studied in Rome with Franco Ferrarotti and Lucio Colletti. Mario wrote his dissertation on Galvano Della Volpe (1895-1968) with whom Colletti had studied at the University of Messina.[[132]](#footnote-132) Mario was also involved with the Italian workerist movement but became disillusioned after one of its major theoreticians – Mario Tronti – abandoned extraparliamentary politics and returned to the PCI. Mario traveled to the U.S., arriving in October 1967, "just days," he remembers, "before Che Guevara was killed." He came to the U.S. in search, Silvia Federici recalls, of a “new political experience.” He found it first by obtaining a fellowship to do graduate work in Sociology at Brandeis University where he studied with Kurt H. Wolff (1912-2003). Along with Stuart Kaplan and Paul Buhle, he served for a couple of years on the editorial board of *Radical America*. He found a job teaching sociology at Clark University (1969-1972), but was, he says, "fired for being a Marxist". No matter, he was soon hired "for that very same reason" to teach Political Studies at Adelphi University in Garden City, Long Island, from 1972 to 1976. Mario also linked up with the folks at *Telos* – which included Silvia with whom he became close friends. The editors of *Telos* were dedicated to bringing hitherto untranslated European critical writing to an Anglophone audience, so they published Mario’s "On the Methodology of Determinate Abstractions: Essay on Galvano della Volpe" in 1971 and later a spin-off of Silvia’s dissertation: “Notes on Lukác’s Aesthetics” in 1972. [[133]](#footnote-133) As mentioned above, Mario collaborated with Silvia to compose an essay – which they published in *Radical America* under the pseudonym of “Guido Baldi” in 1972. Mario had already, Silvia recalls, introduced her to the “refusal of work” perspective of Italian workerism and it was during their collaboration on that essay that he also shared with her Mariarosa Dalla Costa’s recently composed, seminal essay “Women and the Subversion of the Community” – a sharing that would lead Silvia to Padova in July 1972 and to collaboration with Mariarosa in the formation of the International Feminist Collective and launching the Wages for Housework movement. [[134]](#footnote-134) As also mentioned above, Mario traveled North with Silvia, Paolo and Bruno Ramirez to meet with Peter Linebaugh and Monty Neil to discuss the possibilities of an “Italian collection.”

When the Zerowork collective was formed in the spring of 1974 Mario joined in that collaboration, ultimately contributing “Notes on the International Crisis” to the first issue.

**Bruno Ramirez:** An Italian, after two years of study at the University of Rome (1963-65), Bruno crossed the Atlantic on a scholarship to study first in the United States at Shelton College (1965-67) and then in Canada, first at the University of Guelph (1968-69) and then at the University of Toronto where he completed his Ph. D in 1975.[[135]](#footnote-135) Bruno came to North America from Catania, Sicily, he recounts, out of a curiosity fed both by American movies and by interactions with U.S. sailors who he met through his church – a Waldensian Protestant church whose progressive socio-political practices were important in his own politicization and interest in workerist politics in Italy.[[136]](#footnote-136) That background, together with his experiences in the U.S. where he studied for three years in the midst of “the movement”, explains, he suggests, why he wrote his dissertation on working class struggles in the US.[[137]](#footnote-137)

Arriving in Toronto from Guelph, Bruno and his wife were soon involved in two political projects. First, with some of his new colleagues he formed a Marxist study group – focusing mainly on *Capital*, the *Grundrisse* and some writings by Gramsci. Second, they met Peter Taylor (see below) and others in the New Tendency (NT), a group that was formed by politically active Leftists who had become dissatisfied with party politics (both social democratic and Leninist) and the behavior of labor unions.[[138]](#footnote-138) The most active members of the NT seem to have been in Toronto and Windsor, Ontario.[[139]](#footnote-139) In Toronto, the group included students and workers in the Canadian Post Office, while in Windsor, participants in the NT group – the Labour Centre – were active in auto plants but also with students (including high school students), women and gays.[[140]](#footnote-140) In both cases they were actively involved in on-going struggles and were influenced, in part, by autonomous struggles in the United States, Britain and Italy. Both the character of those struggles and the writings that emerged from them were discussed within the group – which undertook, as part of its political work, to circulate some of the ideas and writings from those areas. In the case of the United States their primary interest was with the work of C. L. R. James and Marty Glaberman – major figures in the Johnson-Forest Tendency (1945-1955) and its offshoot Facing Reality (1955-1970) – and also with that of Selma James, wife of C. L. R. and one of the founders of the Wages for Housework movement. Many of the ideas were already familiar to Bruno, but materials from Italy also came to the NT through Britain.[[141]](#footnote-141) NT members read and circulated Italian material already translated and circulated by the British Group Big Flame (1974-1984)[[142]](#footnote-142) and the Rising Free bookshop[[143]](#footnote-143), e.g., A. Sofri’s “Organizing for Workers’ Power” (1969), “Italy: New Tactics and Organization” (1971) and “Autonomous Struggles and the Capitalist Crisis (1972). All of these were written by major figures in Lotta Continua in Italy. They were circulated as pamphlets and included introductions discussing the relevance of the analysis to the situation in Canada. Such discussions also provided Bruno with opportunities to discuss his own research on U.S. workers’ struggles and to get feedback from activist comrades.

At an international conference organized by *Telos* at SUNY-Buffalo in November 1971, Bruno met Silvia Federici and the first of those who would become his comrades in the Zerowork project – Mario Montano.[[144]](#footnote-144) He was quickly recruited to write a review of the latest addition to the Materiali Marxisti collection – *Operai e Stato* (1972) – and to translate Sergio Bologna’s contribution to that volume, “Class Composition and the Theory of the Party”.[[145]](#footnote-145) At the *Telos* conference Bruno also met militants from Lotta Continua – a meeting that led to further contact with members of that group, including Guido Viale – and folks from *Radical America* – for which he (and his wife Judy) did translations of LC and other Italian workerist materials.[[146]](#footnote-146) Subsequently, Bruno often stayed at Silvia’s place in Brooklyn during his trips to New York City to do archival research for his dissertation. Thus began what he calls an “informal network” through which he also met George and Paolo. These connections, in turn, led to his meeting militants in Potere Operaio, including Ferruccio Gambino and others in the Collectivo di Scienze politiche at the University of Padova.[[147]](#footnote-147)

The period 1973-1974 proved to be a turning point for Bruno in at least two senses. On the one hand, a 1973 visit to Toronto and presentations there by Selma James and Mariarosa Dalla Costa had a profound impact on those involved in the New Tendency.[[148]](#footnote-148) Not only did many embrace the Wages for Housework perspective but that embrace resulted in the effective dissolution of the group. Most of the women (including Judy) left the organization to form branches of Wages for Housework. This, in turn, led Bruno and other men in Toronto (including Peter Taylor and Tim Grant) to form a new, all-male political group: the Struggle Against Work Collective (SAWC).[[149]](#footnote-149) On the other hand, Bruno and Judy were among those gathered at Silvia’s home in Brooklyn who decided to launch Zerowork as a collective project to produce a journal by that name aimed at introducing to a broader audience many of the ideas and politics they had all been working with. This sequence of events in Toronto paralleled similar ones in New York City (see Caffentzis above).

The dissolution of the New Tendency was analyzed in a statement issued by the SAWC in March of 1975 – signed by Bruno and five others.[[150]](#footnote-150) The “basic error” according to that analysis was that despite having rejected Leninist vanguardism, the members of the group still saw themselves and their past struggles as “outside” the working class, and therefore needing to “join” the working class, but still as “organizers”. At the same time, the SAWC statement juxtaposed their analysis and politics to those of Out of the Driver’s Seat and spelled out how their political perspective and approaches to political work had changed.

Bruno’s participation in the Zerowork collective, besides taking part in discussions, produced two written contributions to the first issue. First, drawing on his experience in the NT and the experience of his NT comrades in Windsor, he joined with Peter Linebaugh in writing a piece on ["Crisis in the Auto Sector"](http://www.zerowork.org/LinebaughRamirezCrisisAuto.html). Second, as mentioned above, he also composed “[The Working Class Struggle against the Crisis: Self-Reduction of prices in Italy](http://www.zerowork.org/RamirezSelfReduction.html).”

**Leoncio Schaedel:** An American, recently returned from Chile, Leoncio was studying in the Graduate program in political economy at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. He is the son of anthropologist Richard Paul Schaedel (1920-2005) and had been in Chile at the time of the coup against Salvador Allende in 1973. He escaped back to the United States where he met George Caffentzis and Silvia Federici in New York City. At UMass, he, John Willshire and several other students discovered that the “radical” faculty of the department of economics not only imposed even more work than their mainstream counterparts but were intolerant of views that contradicted their own. This led to the collective composition – in collaboration with George Caffentzis – and publishing of the pamphlet *Wages for Students* that applied a Wages for Housework analysis to education, critiquing the imposition of school work in capitalism and demanding to be paid for that work. The pamphlet – which they produced and began to distribute in the fall of 1975 – was cleverly designed, in size, shape and cover to look like student “blue books” used for examinations. The pamphlet and their efforts to circulate it to high school and college students was reported in the March 2, 1976 issue of the student newspaper of the University of Massachusetts at Boston, *Mass Media*. Leo – who had by that time become fed up enough with the economics department to drop out – was quoted as saying, “The university (UMass) serves as a pool of cheap labor. That’s why the university is stuck here in Amherst. . . .It’s very important for the economy of Western Massachusetts, a ‘pool of cheap labor.’” [[151]](#footnote-151)

**Peter Taylor:** A Canadian who, before participating in the Zerowork collective, was previously involved in the New Tendency (see above). At the 1973 NT conference in Windsor, Ontario, undoubtedly influenced by the emergence of "all women" Wages for Housework groups, he was one of the coordinators of a workshop for "all men" for which a series of questions were prepared to get men to think about the particularity of their position within the working class. Peter was one of those working in the Canadian Post Office.[[152]](#footnote-152) He wrote “Working – and Not Working – at the Post Office”, a detailed autobiographical essay that recounted his struggles on the job and their impact on his life outside his official working days (and nights). That essay was turned into an illustrated pamphlet in 1974. A version was also published in Walter Johnson (ed), *Working in Canada*, Montreal: Black Rose Press, 1975, pp. 15-31. When the women in the NT left to form the Toronto Wages for Housework, Peter joined Bruno and others in forming the Struggle Against Work Collective.

**Ferruccio Gambino:** An Italian, son of wine growers in the northwestern foothills of the Apennines, Ferruccio was introduced to Marx and Lukàcs in junior high school (*ginnasio*) and the socialist tradition in high school (*liceo classico*). Like so many, he was critical of, and never joined, the PCI or the Socialist Party as a result of their responses to the Hungarian insurrection in 1956.[[153]](#footnote-153) After graduating from high school with few resources, he moved to Milan joining other low-income students in a dormitory – that proved to be a hotbed of political discussion and radicalization.[[154]](#footnote-154) In 1963, a friend in Turin sent him a copy of the first issue of *Quaderni Rossi*. The next year he collaborated with a group that split from QR and launched a separate journal *Classe Operaia*. Later a meeting with Sergio Bologna – a member of Classe Operaia – led to introductions to other comrades in Milan, e.g., Mauro Gobbini. From this period on, Ferruccio was active in workerist circles in Italy.

His desire to visit the United States and to have access to the English language literature on the history of class struggle, coupled with a travel grant, brought Ferruccio to New York City in the Fall of 1966. There he made the acquaintance of Murray Bookchin (1921-2006) – an anarchist who had come out of the United Auto Workers, factory struggles, Trotskyism and the anti-nuclear weapons movement to confront the ecological crises being caused by capitalism.[[155]](#footnote-155) Long conversations with Bookchin about Marxism and his “ecologismo”, Ferruccio would write, “showed me new horizons”.

It was during this trip to the US that Ferruccio accepted an invitation to visit Detroit by the Facing Reality folks – including George Rawick, Marty and Jessie Glaberman – finding them all intensely occupied: George was researching and writing on slavery, Marty on autoworker struggles and Jessie was very active as a Marxist feminist. Subsequently, in the Spring of 1967, George traveled to New York City, a visit from which Ferruccio says he extracted what amounted to a two-week, intensive seminar on American labor history and politics. That summer Ferruccio spent 40 days on the road touring by bus as much of the US as he could manage, before returning to Italy in September.

In the fall, at the suggestion of Sergio Bologna, Ferruccio applied for and obtained a scholarship to study at the Istituto di Scienze politiche at the University of Padua where he met Antonio Negri and Massimo Cacciari for the first time, joining their circle of political research. For the next three years he divided his time and energy between Milan and Padua in a period of intense study, building on what he learned in both Italy and the United States. In 1967 he organized a December seminar in Padua that brought George Rawick from the United States to sit down with Ferruccio, Sergio Bologna, Mauro Gobbini, Toni Negri and Luciano Ferrari Bravo to discuss workers’ struggles in the first decades of the 20th Century and their impact on changes in the form of the State. The essays prepared for this encounter would individually and collectively elaborate a whole series of ideas fundamental to the development of the extraparliamentarian Left. Ferruccio’s contribution to this discussion was a class analysis of the confrontation between the Ford Motor company’s “Fordist” organization of production and the British working class.[[156]](#footnote-156) All of the essays were subsequently compiled by Sergio and Toni and eventually published by Feltrinelli in 1972 as *Operai e stato* – the book reviewed by Bruno Ramirez in *Telos* and whose ideas were synthesized by Silvia Federici and Mario Montano (as “Guido Baldi”) in *Radical America*. (see above)

In the years that followed, Ferruccio took part in the development of the extra-parliamentary left in Italy while teaching at the Institute of Political and Social Science at the University of Padua. He not only served as “corresponding editor” of *Zerowork* #1, but through frequent travels in Europe and to the United States circulated news and ideas throughout much of the network of comrades within which the Zerowork collective was active.

**John Merrington (1940-1996):** An Englishman, born in Pakistan, son of a colonial engineer, John was dutifully tracked into Britain’s elite educational institutions, first Bradfield College in Berkshire County – a public school whose alumni have included plenty of high-ranking government bureaucrats and conservative politicians – and then Balliol College at the University of Oxford – England’s oldest and one of its most prestigious universities.[[157]](#footnote-157) At Bradfield, John began his rejection of the well-trodden road to power and at Balliol he turned his attention to those of below by studying with the Marxist, bottom-up English historian Christopher Hill (1912-2003), perhaps best known for his book *The World Turned Upside Down: Radical Ideas during the English Revolution* (1972).

In 1964 John studied Gramsci in Rome, critiqued him, came home and wrote "Theory and Practice in Gramsci’s Marxism," for the *Socialist Register* (1968). He then moved on to explore Italian workerism and, along with Ed Emery, to translate key texts from the Italian and get them into the hands of various groups of militants, e.g., Big Flame activists in the Ford auto plants. Dealing with the theoretical works of Italian workerists required close study of Marx, so John and Ed formed a *Capital* study group (1969-70) that included, among others, Peter Linebaugh and Selma James. (see Linebaugh bio above and his obituary for John) James' presence, as might well be imagined, guaranteed that those brief passages in *Capital* that dealt with the reproduction of labor power came under close scrutiny and arguments began over what he might have said, had he probed the issue more deeply – and what one might say, given that he didn't. With Peter and John both researching crime and policing in the 18th Century, they were open to expanding the concept of the working class to include the unwaged. *How* was a matter of fierce debate.

By 1973 John was actively engaged with Big Flame in the Ford plants and he and Ed were churning out translations from Lotta Continua, some from Potere Operaio and as many as possible of the key theoretical texts within Italian workerism. When the Zerowork collective was formed in 1974, Peter Linebaugh drew John into discussions about the essays being prepared for the first issue. Both enthusiastic and critical, John also sought, once that issue appeared, to distribute it in England and to provoke discussion among activists – just as he and Ed had been doing with their translations. Having gotten a job teaching at Middlesex Polytechnic he also sought to call attention to the journal and the ideas in it among the Marxist academics affiliated with the Conference of Socialist Economists.

1. The stories of these struggles were partially told in essays written by members of the Zerowork collective. Peter Taylor wrote the pamphlet *Working – and not working – at the Post Office* in 1974 and later contributed the article “‘The Sons of Bitches Just Won’t Work’ Postal Workers Against the State” to *Zerowork* #1. Philip Mattera (with Donna Demac) would prepare the pamphlet *Developing and Underdeveloping New York: the “Fiscal Crisis” and a Strategy for Fighting Austerity* in 1976 that would later appear in a revised form in *Zerowork* #2, 1977. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. The relevance of our study of the New York City fiscal crisis – especially of the attack on workers' pensions – would seem particularly relevant today in the case of Detroit where battles have been shaping up over just this issue. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. This is a synopsis of the analysis of the character of the international crisis of Keynesian or Fordist capitalist crisis laid out in both the first and second issue of Zerowork. Although only some of the articles deal directly with the crises mentioned the analysis is fundamental to all of them. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. The history of Marxist “crisis theory” has not been unitary but, since the time of the 2nd International (1898-1914) has been fraught with controversies over the interpretation both of the supposed “laws of motion” and how they generate crises, e.g., theorists of “underconsumptionism” have clashed with those of “the tendency of the rate of profit to fall”. The early 1970s saw what we felt was a very unsatisfying rerun of all the old debates. [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. While we recognized that *real movement* involves both the abolition of “the present state of things” *and* the crafting of alternative social relationships, it must be said that little of the time and energy we put into the creation of *Zerowork* dealt with the *positive content* of the struggles we identified as being at the heart of the crises that generated the whole project. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. See, for example, his chapter on "The Original Affluent Society," in Marshall Shalins' *Stone Age Economics*, New York: Aldine, 1974. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. The classic work is Frederich Engels, [*The Condition of the English Working Class*](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/condition-working-class/index.htm) published in German in 1845, translated and published in English in 1887. Engels pointed to such work as police protection of capitalist property and military jobs necessary to colonial expansion and imperialist wars. This kind of thinking has been recurrent [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. "[Speeches at Elberfeld](http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1845/02/15.htm)" (February 8 and 15, 1945) in *Marx Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 4, New York: International Publishers, 1975, pp. 243-251 and 256-264. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. It was in Chapter 15 of Volume I of *Capital,* dealing with "machinery and modern industry" that Marx evoked those dreams of Aristotle referenced in the General Introduction to this website. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. In their theory, limiting worker wages increases to the marginal product of labor guaranteed the distribution of the marginal product of capital to capitalist employers. In this way neoclassical theory reproduced the assumption of classical political economy that both labor and capital were productive and deserved the fruits of their respective productivity. For Marx, this was, at best, an engineering point of view – certainly both workers and machines played a role in production – but ignored the essential passivity of inanimate machinery (and raw materials) whose "productivity" was entirely dependent on labor. He, on the other hand, crafted a theory that analyzed every aspect of capitalist society in terms of its central social characteristic: imposed labor. [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. Less optimistic critics of both the modernist ideology of progress and of actual technological change within capitalism have pointed to the misery hidden by the ideology and to the negative effects of many technological changes on both humans and nature more generally. Two frequently cited, possible limits to productivity growth are 1) the exhaustion of those energy sources on which the proliferation of machine production has been based, and 2) the associated poisoning of the earth's ecology by capitalist industry to the point of dramatically reducing the very sustainability of human life. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. David R. Roediger and Philip S. Foner, Our Own Time: A History of American Labor and the Working Day, New York: Verso, 1989. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. In only two of the seven articles in the first issue are theoretical roots significantly acknowledged, and then, only in footnotes. Mario Montano and George Caffentzis cite work by Selma James and Mariarosa Dalla Costa of the Wages for Housework Campaign. Mario also sites one article by Antonio Negri. Peter Taylor, in one footnote, credits Negri with the first use of an expression “the technological path to repression.” As will become apparent this was scant reference to the literatures and ideas that informed the thinking in *Zerowork*. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. One such complaint was leveled by Marty Glaberman whose work, and those of his comrades, had – as will be made explicit below – been among the sources of the analysis laid out in *Zerowork*. At the same time, whatever the shortcomings of the exposition of *Zerowork*, its authors were hardly the first of their lineage to be rebuked for being less than forthcoming about their roots. Looking back at C. L. R. James (see below) and the influence of his circle on workers in the 1950s, Dan Georgakas wrote “There was little attempt to present his ideas in a systematic manner. Nor was there any effort to explain how News and Letters, Correspondence, Facing Reality, et. al., had evolved out of Trotskyist politics. Such information surfaced in personal conversations with individuals or as background on specific issues.” ”Young Detroit Radicals: 1955-65” *Urgent Tasks* 12, Summer 1981, pp. 89-94. Reprinted in *C.L.R. James: His Life and Work* (Paul Buhle ed) New York: Allison & Busby, 1986, pp. 185-194. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Special mention and recognition should be given to [libcom.org](http://www.libcom.org/) which has done great work – within the context of a much broader project – in gathering and making available in digital form what is probably the most extensive collection of material relevant to Zerowork to date. Indeed there is substantial overlap between what can be found there and what I provide here – in a somewhat more interwoven manner geared to this particular project. Overlap in cyberspace, however, is not wasted effort, but rather the creation of more gateways to our digital commons. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. More on this research will be detailed in the historical sketch section on “Background: from *Zerowork* #1 to *Zerowork* #2.” [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. On some similarities between the work of Kropotkin and various Marxists mentioned below see: H. Cleaver, “[Kropotkin, Self-Valorization and the Crisis of Marxism](https://webspace.utexas.edu/hcleaver/www/kropotkin.html)” in Anarchist Studies (UK), 1993. Originally written in 1992 for a Kropotkin conference in Russia, this essay compares Kropotkin's work on the future in the present and that of autonomist Marxists on self-valorization. For overviews of the Council Communists see: Peter Rachleff, Marxism and Council Communism, Brooklyn: The Revisionist Press, 1976. Chapter VIII: "Council Communist Theory," and Mark Shipway, "Council Communism," in M. Rubel and J. Crump (eds), Non-market Socialism in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries, New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987, pp. 104-126. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. The conflicts between those who call themselves anarchists and those who call themselves Marxists have ranged from theoretical differences to armed conflict. While the theoretical differences date from Marx’s arguments with Bakunin, the armed conflicts date from the Russian Revolution and the Bolshevik crushing of the Ukrainian and Kronstadt anarchists. Others, such as Kropotkin, were silenced, often exiled. There is a huge literature of Marxists attacking anarchists and visa versa. There is a much smaller literature of those who have recognized and emphasized similarities. Perhaps best known among those contributing to the latter is the Councilist and Marx scholar Maximilien Rubel. See his “Marx, Théoretician de anarchisme,” *L'Europe en formation,* no 163-164, octobre-novembre 1973, reproduced in *Marx, critique du Marxisme*, Paris: Petite Biblioteque Payot, 1974; also in English at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/rubel/1973/marx-anarchism.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. Among the Council Communists, Paul Mattick has published the most work on crisis – drawing heavily on the work of Henryk Grossman (1881-1950). See Mattick, “The Permanent Crisis: Henryk Grossman’s Interpretation of Marx’s Theory of Capital Accumulation,” *International Council Correspondence*, No. 2, October 1934, *Marx and Keynes: The limits of the Mixed Economy*, Boston: Porter Sargent, 1969 and *Economic Crisis and Crisis Theory*, White Plains: M.E. Sharpe, 1981. In turn, see Grossman’s ‘The Theory of Economic Crisis’ *Bulletin International de l’Académie Polonaise des Sciences et des Lettres. Classe de Philologie. Classe d’Histoire et de Philosophie. I Partie.* Les Années 1919, 1920, 1922, Kraków, pp. 285-290, in English at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/grossman/1922/crises/index.htm> and his *The Law of Accumulation and Breakdown of the Capitalist System: Being also a theory of Crisis*, London: Pluto Press, 1992, originally *Das Akkumulations- und Zusammenbruchsgesetz des kapitalistischen Systems (Zugleich eine Krisentheorie)*, (Hirschfeld, Leipzig, 1929) translated into English and abridged at <http://www.marxists.org/archive/grossman/1929/breakdown/index.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. See his "[The Theory of the Collapse of Capitalism](http://www.marxists.org/archive/pannekoe/1934/collapse.htm)" (1934) in which he critiques Grossman. Socialisme et Barbarie (see below) did have some limited dialogue with Pannekoek. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. C. L. R. James – Cyril Lionel Robert James – came to the United States from Trinidad but was eventually deported and lived the rest of his life in London. Raya Dunayevskaya was a name adopted, and retained for the rest of her life, by Rae Spiegel, a Russian who immigrated to the United States, worked for a while (1937-38) as Trotsky’ secretary in Mexico, then returned to the US. There is a considerable literature by and about these two people – their collaboration in the Johnson-Forest Tendency and Correspondence, differences, subsequent splits and separate organizations. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. See, especially Chapter I of *Facing Reality* (1958), op. cit., on “The Workers Councils” in Hungary and Poland. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. Letter from Martin Glaberman to Harry Cleaver, April 14, 1989. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. James recognition of and struggle for the acceptance of Black autonomy is often traced to in his early experience as player and commentator on cricket, first in Trinidad and later in England where he saw racial and colonial conflicts playing out on the field. Among his important writings that document his thinking on Black struggles are: *The Life of Captain Cipriani: An Account of British Government in the West Indies*, Nelson: Lancs, 1932, *Documents on the Negro Struggle* (including discussions with Trotsky), 1933 and 1939, *The Black Jacobins: Toussaint L’Ouverture and the San Domingo Revolution*, London: Secker & Warburg, 1938, *A History of Negro Revolt*, London, 1938, “Why Negros should oppose the war” in *Socialist Appeal*, Sept 6 – Oct 3, 1939, *Negro Americans and American Politics*, Detroit, 1956, “Black Power: Its Past, Today and the Way Ahead,” 1969. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. Among the Stalinists critiqued by the JFT were not only Russians such as [Eugen Varga](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eugen_Varga) and L.A. Leontiev (head of the Marx-Lenin Institute) but also Maurice Dobb and Paul Sweezy – especially his *Theory of Capitalist Development* (1942) where he attacked Marx's theory of the tendency of the rate of profit to fall. Among the Trotskyists, their primary targets were "Pablo" (Michel Raptis) and "Germain" (Ernest Mandel). Although within the framework of these sectarian debates, they took on no mainstream economists per se, the figure of John Maynard Keynes loomed in the background as the foremost mainstream theorist of aggregate demand and crises associated with its inadequacy. Sweezy, it is worth noting, had been a student of Alvin Hansen one of the foremost popularizers of Keynesian analysis in the United States. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. They quite explicitly linked their concept of state capitalism to Lenin's – which he had applied to both German capitalism and the early organization of accumulation by the Bolsheviks in the USSR. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. . See: C.L.R. James, "Resolution on the Russian Question," submitted to the Second Workers' Party National Convention in September 1941, F. Forest (R. Dunayevskaya), "An Analysis of Russian Economy," Part I: 3 articles in the *New International* (Dec 1942, Jan. 1943 and Feb.43), and F. Forest (R. Dunayevskaya), "The Nature of the Russian Economy: A Contribution on the Discussion on Russia," Part II: 2 articles in the *New International* (Dec.1946 and Jan.1947) – all of which lay the foundation for the analysis in *State Capitalism and World Revolution* (1950). The emphasis on workers' struggles and their characterization of the Soviet System as “state capitalist” was shared by the Council Communists who had, much earlier, pointed to Bolshevik efforts to corral autonomous worker initiatives [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. This analysis of state capitalism and workers' struggles in the USSR and Eastern Europe although not addressed directly in *Zerowork* #1 was more or less taken for granted by the members of the collective. It would become explicit in two articles in *Zerowork* #2 – Donna Demac and Phil Mattera’s piece on Vietnam and Harry Cleaver’s on food crises. [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Despite the similarities, in tracing the genesis of *Zerowork*, I have found far more direct connections with Facing Reality than with News & Letters. As a result there are many fewer reference in this historical sketch to the writings and activities of the latter group. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. Within the United States, perhaps the most influential writing-off of the American working class in the 1950s and 1960s was by Monthly Review - the magazine and the press – that focused its attentions, and thus that of many others, on imperialism and struggles in the Third World without connecting them to those in American work places. [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. George P. Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup: The Making of the Black Community*, New York: Praeger, 1973. [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. The article is George Rawick, "Working Class Self-Activity", *Radical America*, Vol. 3, No. 2, March-April 1969, pp. 23-31. Rumor has it that more copies of Italian translations of Rawick's book on slavery were bought by housewives in Italy – who could directly relate to the struggles of slaves – than were purchased in all of the United States. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John G. Rule, E. P. Thompson and Cal Winslow, *Albion's Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in Eighteenth-Century England*, New York: Pantheon Books, 1975. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Pter Linebaugh, *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteenth Century*, London: Allen Lane, 1991. [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. Claude *Montal* was the pseudonym of Claude Lefort (1924-2010), a student of Maurice Merleau-Ponty (1908-1961), the famous phenomenological philosopher. Among other contributors to *Socialisme ou Barbarie* were Henri Simon, Jean-François Lyotard and, briefly, Guy Debord, founder of the Situationist International. For a sketch of the history of the group, the journal, and the changing views of its contributors, see Marcel van der Linden, “Socialisme ou Barbarie: A French Revolutionary Group (1949-1965)”, *Left History*, 5.1, 1997. (Online at <http://www.left-dis.nl/uk/lindsob.htm>) and Andre Liebich, "Socialism ou Barbarie, a Radical Critique of Bureaucracy," Our Generation, Vol. 12, No. 2,Fall 1977, pp. 55-62. [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. Grace Lee Boggs, *Living for Change: An Autobiography*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998, p. 65. [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. He made this claim in a 1992 lecture, which along with follow-up questions and answers, was published first as "C.L.R. James and the Fate of Marxism" in Selwyn R. Cudjoe and William E. Cain (eds) *C.L.R. James: His Intellectual Legacies*, Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1995, and later in Cornelius Castoriadis, *Postscript on Insignificancy*, available online at <http://www.notbored.org/PSRTI.pdf> . [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. Among other contributors to *Socialisme ou Barbarie* were Henri Simon, Jean-François Lyotard and, briefly, Guy Debord, founder of the Situationist International. For a sketch of the history of the group, the journal, and the changing views of its contributors, see Marcel van der Linden, “Socialisme ou Barbarie: A French Revolutionary Group (1949-1965)”, *Left History*, 5.1, 1997. (Online at <http://www.left-dis.nl/uk/lindsob.htm>) and Andre Liebich, "Socialism ou Barbarie, a Radical Critique of Bureaucracy," Our Generation, Vol. 12, No. 2,Fall 1977, pp. 55-62. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)
39. A translation of this introduction, along with much more extremely useful historical material about the use of Marx's "Workers' Inquiry" was recently published (9/2013) in [the third issue](http://viewpointmag.com/) of the on-line *Viewpoint Magazine*. [↑](#footnote-ref-39)
40. Although he would later protest the inclusion of his name – because he apparently felt the publication was premature, not all problems having been worked out – Castoriadis was listed as joint author under his pseudonym Pierre Chaulieu. [↑](#footnote-ref-40)
41. The SoB analysis of the USSR focused on the management of a state capitalism by a bureaucratic elite. [↑](#footnote-ref-41)
42. Vivier’s reports appeared in several issues of *SoB*, beginning with #11 November-December 1952. Mothé’s reports first appeared in issue #13, January-March 1954, with a report on a strike at Renault but continued, periodically, throughout the whole history of the journal. Along the way Mothé dealt with strikes, day-to-day struggles, worker-union conflicts, worker reactions to the Hungarian Revolution, a new generation of young workers and local-immigrant worker relations. Mothé was a pseudonym for Jacques Gautrat and was, like Marty Glaberman on the other side of the Atlantic, an autoworker. He published *Journal d'un ouvrier, 1956-1958*, Paris: Éditions de Minuit, 1959 and later *Militant Chez Renault,* Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1965. [↑](#footnote-ref-42)
43. In the U.S. shop floor struggles challenged what the bosses called "managerial prerogatives" – namely the right to complete control over the organization of work. This authoritarian attitude led to managers refusing to even consider improvements in production practices proposed by workers – proposed to make their work more efficient and safer (and thus raising productivity while protecting themselves). The results were two-fold: first, the harnessing of workers' struggles was limited primarily to tying wage and benefit increases to productivity and second, American corporate managers lagged far, far behind their Japanese counterparts who would develop incentive programs to harness worker productivity-enhancing creativity. That more sophisticated harnessing at the point of production would eventually give them a considerable competitive advantage over U.S. manufacturers – an advantage that would dramatically facilitate the Toyoto invasion of the American market in 1965. [↑](#footnote-ref-43)
44. This insight into the capitalist harnessing of working class power to raise wages foreshadowed Antonio Negri’s later argument along the same lines, seeing it as fundamental to capital’s post-war Keynesian strategies. While Negri’s "John M. Keynes and the Capitalist Theory of the State in 1929," published in the first issue of the Italian workerist journal *Contropiano* in 1968 was known to some in the Zerowork collective, Castoriadis’ earlier article was not – at least as far as I have been able to determine. [↑](#footnote-ref-44)
45. Montaldi was a life-long political activist from Cremona whose dissatisfaction with the CPI led to multiple connections with other groups, including the French, and the creation of the independent organization *Gruppo di Unità Proletaria* in 1957. His translation of *The American Worker* was published serially in *Battaglia Comunista* in 1954-55. His translation of Mothe’s *Journal d’un ouvrier* appeared in 1960 as *Diario di un operaio*, 1956-59, Torino: Einaudi and included Mothe’s text, an introduction by Montaldi and various reactions to the text by, among others, Romano Alquati and Francesco Coppellotti. That year also saw the publication of Montaldi’s first book *Milano, Corea. Inchiesta sugli immigrati*, written in collaboration with Franco Alasia and based on carrying out a workers’ inquiry with immigrant workers – a part of the working class little studied in Italy at that time. A much more detailed and comprehensive introduction to the development of the Italian work that I barely sketch here can be found in Steve Wright’s book [*Storming Heaven: Class Composition and struggle in Italian Autonomist Marxism*](http://libcom.org/library/storming-heaven-class-composition-struggle-italian-autonomist-marxism-steve-wright), London: Pluto Press, 2002. [↑](#footnote-ref-45)
46. The well-known turning point at which rank & file anger exploded was the July 1962 Piazza Statuto attack on the offices of the UIL in Turin. The FIAT workers were furious that the union bureaucrats had signed an agreement with management without consulting them, thus undermining their strike. [↑](#footnote-ref-46)
47. Marx’s *A Workers’ Inquiry* first appeared in France in 1880 and consisted of 100 questions that he thought should be asked of workers to reveal their concrete situation. His purpose was to pressure the French state to follow the example set by the English government whose factory inspectors had done so much to reveal the shocking conditions in which workers lived in that country – and whose reports contributed so much to legislation that improved workers’ lives. Only the workers, Marx wrote, “can describe with full knowledge the misfortunes from which they suffer, and that only they, and not saviors sent by Providence, can energetically apply the healing remedies for the social ills to which they are a prey.” The Inquiry was first published in the United States in the December 1938 issue of the *New International*, pp. 379-381. The bulk of [*Quaderni rossi* 5](http://www.zerowork.org/QR5.html) was devoted to contributions to a 1964 seminar on the "Socialist use of the Workers' Inquiry". [↑](#footnote-ref-47)
48. Alquati has been quoted as denying being the inventor of *conricerca*, “Political militants have always done *conricerca*. We would go in front of the factory and speak with workers; there cannot be organization otherwise.” But for Alquati and Panzieri, and others who took up this task, how one spoke, what one said and what came out of the discussion were fundamental issues to be refined, not formulas given. See, for example, Panzieri’s essay “Socialist Uses of Workers’ Inquiry” that not only defends the usefulness of sociological methods for workers’ struggles, but discusses how such use differs from sociological methodologies developed to enhance capital’s control. Originally published in Spontaneita' e organizzazione. Gli anni dei "Quaderni rossi" 1959-1964, a collection of Panzieri's writings edited by S. Merli for [BFS Edizioni](http://www.bfs-edizioni.it/), Pisa 1994. The quote from Alquati is from Gigi Roggero’s obituary at <http://libcom.org/library/operaist-freedom-romano-alquati> [↑](#footnote-ref-48)
49. For Gramsci’s analysis see “Americanism and Fordism” (1934) in Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, New York: International Publishers, 1971. [↑](#footnote-ref-49)
50. See Raniero Panzieri "Sull'uso capitalistico delle macchine nel neocapitalismo," *Quaderni rossi*, no. 1, 1961, reprinted in R. Panzieri, *La Ripresa del Marxismo Leninismo in Italia*, Sapere Ed. 1975, and published in English as "The Capitalist Use of Machinery: Marx Versus the 'Objectivists,'" in Phil Slater (ed) *Outlines of a Critique of Technology*, Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1980. <http://libcom.org/library/capalist-use-machinery-raniero-panzieri> [↑](#footnote-ref-50)
51. All too often Marxist theories of technological change have seen it as driven by "competition" between capitalists – without seeing how competition between capitalists has been based on that between bosses and workers. The capitalists with the best control over their workers are the ones most likely to win out over their corporate competitors. See: <https://webspace.utexas.edu/hcleaver/www/CompetitionOrCooperation.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-51)
52. ####  Mario Tronti, “La fabbrica e la società”, Quaderni rossi 2, giugno 1962, pp. 1-31.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-52)
53. Mario Tronti, “Il piano del capitale”, *Quaderni rossi*, 3, , pp. 44-73, reprinted in Mario Tronti, Operai e Capitale, Turin: Einaudi, 1966, 1971, pp. 267-311, and published in English as “Social Capital” Telos, #17, Fall 1973, pp. 98-121. <http://www.zerowork.org/TrontiSocialCapital.htm> [↑](#footnote-ref-53)
54. That dichotomy was rooted in Marx’s own historically limited analysis of capitalism in mid-19th Century. See Chapter 14 on the division of labor in Volume I of *Capital*. [↑](#footnote-ref-54)
55. Raniero Panzieri, "Plusvalore e pianificazione: Appunti di lettura del Capitale," *Quaderni rossi* 4, pp. 257-288. In English: "Surplus value and planning: notes on the reading of Capital," *The Labour Process & Class Strategies*, CSE Pamphlet no. 1, London: Stage 1, 1976, pp. 4-25. [↑](#footnote-ref-55)
56. “Composizione di classe e teoria del partito alle origini del movimento consiliare,” *op. cit*. “The Theory and History of the Mass Worker in Italy” was translated from the German and published in an abridged form in [*Common Sense*](http://commonsensejournal.org.uk/) Nos. [11](http://commonsensejournal.org.uk/issue-11/) & [12](http://commonsensejournal.org.uk/issue-12/), The original German was published over three issues of *1999-Zeitschrift fur Sozialgeschichte des 20 and 21 Jahrhunderts*, . [↑](#footnote-ref-56)
57. Big Flame ex-members describe the group as “a Revolutionary Socialist Feminist organization with a working class orientation.” They have created [an extensive web space](http://bigflameuk.wordpress.com/about/) containing a great deal of information about the group, including publications, its activities and debates (both internal and with others). [↑](#footnote-ref-57)
58. Ferruccio Gambino, "“Italy 1969-1970 Wave of Struggles”, *Potere Operaio*, No. 27, June 27-July 3, 1970. Andriano Sofri, “Organizing for Workers’ Power” and Guido Viale, "Class Struggle and European Unity," *Lotta Continua*, November 7 & 8, 1972. [↑](#footnote-ref-58)
59. *Radical America*, Vol. 5 No. 5, September-October 1971 and Vol. 7, No. 2, March-April 1973 [↑](#footnote-ref-59)
60. See the section on "The Emancipation of Women", p. 60-61. [↑](#footnote-ref-60)
61. First, it is unclear exactly when these pages were written. It may have been in 1950 when the manuscript as a whole was first composed, or it may have been in 1956 when, apparently, members of Correspondence returned to the manuscript with the aim (unrealized) of completing it for publication. Second, the authorship of these pages of *American Civilization* seems to be in dispute. On the one hand, when the entire manuscript was finally published in 1993, both the editors of the book and James’ literary executor wrote commentaries attributing the entire manuscript to C. L. R. James – with some unidentified input from other members of Correspondence. On the other hand, in 1970 when *Radical America* published a special issue on women’s struggles, excerpts from the section on women were included as the lead article with Selma James listed as author. See: Selma James, “The American Family: Decay and Rebirth” *Radical America*, Vol. IV, no. 2, February, 1970. Given her subsequent writings on women it seems quite possible that she either wrote the passage or had input into James’ writing of it. Interestingly, in her recent collection of her writings she choose not to include this text. Selma James, *Sex, Race and Class, The Perspective of Winning, A Selection of Writings, 1952-2011*, New York: PM Press, 2012. [↑](#footnote-ref-61)
62. F. Forest, "The Miner's Wives," *The Militant*, 1950, reprinted in Raya Dunayevskaya, *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1985, pp. 29-30. [↑](#footnote-ref-62)
63. Ever since, as far as I have been able to determine, Selma James has claimed sole credit for *A Woman's Place*. Grace Lee Boggs has written that "CLR encouraged [Selma] to write the pamphlet *A Woman's Place* with Filomena [Daddario]." Grace Lee Boggs, *Living for Change: An Autobiography*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998, p. 62. [↑](#footnote-ref-63)
64. Three of her columns from *Correspondence* are included in Selma James, *Sex, Race and Class, The Perspective of Winning, op. cit,* pp. 32-38. [↑](#footnote-ref-64)
65. *Le Deuxième Sexe* was first translated into English and published in 1953. [↑](#footnote-ref-65)
66. See Raya Dunayevskaya, "The *Grundrisse* and Women's Liberation" (1974) included in Raya Dunayevskaya, *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution: Reaching for the Future*, Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1985, pp. 186-187. [↑](#footnote-ref-66)
67. Years later, in the 1970s, Dunayevskaya would repeatedly critique de Beauvoir for her Existentialism and for her failure to recognize and discuss various women's struggles, from the Paris Commune to those of the 1940s and 1950s, and for her *misreading* of the *1844 Manuscripts*. See the collection *Women's Liberation and the Dialectics of Revolution,* ibid. [↑](#footnote-ref-67)
68. *Facing Reality*, op. cit., pp. 73-75. [↑](#footnote-ref-68)
69. A caveat: so far this history has not benefited from detailed examination of the Martin and Jessie Glaberman archives at Wayne State University. Once I am able to get to and explore those archives some revisions are likely. [↑](#footnote-ref-69)
70. Mariarosa’s account of the genesis the essay “Women and the Subversion of the Community” and her attempt to set the record straight can be found in two places. First, her intervention “The Door to the Garden” at the 2002 launch of *Futuro anteriore* and second, her statement on Selma James’ attempted usurpation of credit for the essay in her introduction to the collection of her own writings *Sex, Race and Class, The Perspective of Winning*, *op. cit*.). “The political categories I was using in my analysis were those developed by Workerism: the strategic character of the wage struggle, the refusal of work, and the social factory. Consequently, it is not surprising that these categories are found in the article in question.” [↑](#footnote-ref-70)
71. “Women, the Unions and Work” was published by the Notting Hill (London) Women’s Liberation Workshop as a pamphlet. “Sex, Race and Working Class Power” was first published in the January 1974 issue of *Race Today* and later as the core essay – accompanied by many commentaries – in the pamphlet *Sex, Race and Class* by Falling Wall Press in 1975. *Wages Against Housework* was published by the Power of Women Collective and Falling Wall Press, while *Counterplanning from the Kitchen* was published by New York Wages for Housework and Falling Wall Press. [↑](#footnote-ref-71)
72. Marty Glaberman to Selma James, March 25, 1972. [↑](#footnote-ref-72)
73. Yet, as I have argued [elsewhere](https://webspace.utexas.edu/hcleaver/www/357k/HMCDallaCostaDomesticLaborAndValue.htm), Mariarosa’s words need not be understood in this manner. They can be understood as meaning that any unpaid domestic work that contributes to the production and reproduction of labor power has the effect of reducing the cost of that labor power to capital and thereby increasing whatever surplus value is realized through its employment. This is perfectly compatible with Marx’s theory and does not require any vast reinterpretation as Glaberman feared. [↑](#footnote-ref-73)
74. Those concepts were explicitly mentioned and employed in the first issue of *Zerowork*, but not, as far as I know, examined or critiqued by Glaberman – who *did* critique other aspects of the journal. Glaberman’s final critique, in his letter to Selma, was peculiar. Basically, he asserted that Mariarosa’s analysis was one she (and presumably the rest of Wages for Housework) was bringing to women from *outside* their own experience. Yet, as I have mentioned, Selma’s own work – with which Glaberman was presumably familiar – dating back at least to 1952 had demonstrated how women had been struggling around precisely the issues being raised in Mariarosa’s essay, long before she analyzed those struggles through the use of Marxian concepts. [↑](#footnote-ref-74)
75. See Andre Schiffrin, "The Student Movement in the 1950's: A reminiscence," *Radical America*, Vol. II, No. 3, May-June 1968. [↑](#footnote-ref-75)
76. *Artie Cuts Out*, by Arthur Bauman as told to Paul Wallis, New York: Jaguar Press, 1953. This character of this pamphlet – the words of a student recorded by a member of Correspondence – paralleled in format, the group's efforts to make heard the voices of workers who were unlikely to write up their own stories of struggle. A brief sketch of the evolution of such efforts is given by Marty Glaberman in his introduction to C. L. R. James, *Marxism for Our Times: C. L. R. James on Revolutionary Organization*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999, pp. xviii-xix. [↑](#footnote-ref-76)
77. C. L. R. James, Grace C. Lee and Pierre Chaulieu, *Facing Reality: The New Society…Where to look for it, How to bring it closer, A statement for our time*, Detroit: Correspondence Publishing Company, 1958, p. 60. Also in the reprint of Bewick Editions, 1974, p. 60. The same neglect of schoolwork and student struggles in the 1950s appears to have also been the case with News & Letters, the organization formed by Raya Dunayevskaya and her followers when they left Correspondence in 1955. [↑](#footnote-ref-77)
78. See: <http://www.fsm-a.org/stacks/GradStudentReport.html#IIA> [↑](#footnote-ref-78)
79. In 1969 C. L. R. James gave a talk on "Black Studies and the Contemporary Student" in which he critiqued both the position of some Black scholars, e.g., the economist W.A. Lewis, and the notion of Black Studies as a separate field. James mocked Lewis' attack on Black Studies and his argument that Black students should follow standard courses of study and seek positions as high up the power hierarchy as they could reach – which would mean accepting both the structure of an educational system designed to meet the needs of capitalism and the existing system of decision-making and power. (This was, of course, what Lewis had done, becoming an important contributor to capitalist development strategies for the Third World.) On the other hand, James argued that while it was important for Black students to study the history of Black struggles, those could only be understood within the dynamics of class struggles within the capitalist system as a whole – something he had demonstrated in *The Black Jacobins* and many other writings. Absent from his comments was any critique of the educational structures within which the advocates of Black Studies sought to carve out space for themselves or the implications of the acceptance of those inevitably hierarchical structures for the relations between teachers and students or the pressures the former would be forced to impose on the latter. Comparing this talk with the pamphlet *Wages for Students* (see below) makes clear what was missing, and had been missing, pretty much since *Artie Cuts Out*. His talk is reprinted in Anna Grimshaw (ed), *The C. L. R. James Reader*, Cambridge: Blackwell, 1992, pp. 390-404. [↑](#footnote-ref-79)
80. The May-June 1968 Issue of *Radical America* (Vol. II, No. 3) on "The New Left" contained two articles with information on student political groups: James P. O'Brien's piece on "The Early Days of the New Left," and Andre Schiffrin's "The Student Movement of the 1950's: A Reminiscence", but neither contained an analysis of either schoolwork or student resistance to it. When *Radical America* reprinted essays by C. L. R. James and his comrades, or *Telos* reprinted translations of Italian New Leftists, the texts chosen never included analyses of schoolwork or student struggles. [↑](#footnote-ref-80)
81. Claude Martin, "La jeunesse étudiante", Richard Dechamp, "La vie de l'étudiant" and Dionys Gautier "La situation de l'édudiant" *Socialisme ou Barbarie*, No. 34, Vol. IV (14e annee) Mars-Mai 1963, pp. 44-62. [↑](#footnote-ref-81)
82. The genesis of this document and the role of Mustapha Khayati in its writing was spelled out by the SI in response to misrepresentations of their role in the wake of the juridical repression that followed the distribution of the pamphlet. See: "Nos buts et nos methods dans le scandale de Strasbourg," [*internationale situationaliste*, Numéro 11](http://www.larevuedesressources.org/internationale-situationniste-integrale-des-12-numeros-de-la-revue-parus-entre-1958-et%2C2548.html), Octobre 1967, pp. 23-31. In English: ("[Our Goals and Methods in the Strasbourg Scandal](http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/strasbourg.html),")
 [↑](#footnote-ref-82)
83. This extremely brief summary of the evolution of workerist evaluations of the student struggles in Italy can be greatly enriched by reading [Chapter 4 "New Social Subjects"](http://libcom.org/library/4-new-subjects) of Steve Wright's *Storming Heaven*, op. cit. and the materials he references. [↑](#footnote-ref-83)
84. Sergio Bologna e Giairo Daghini, "Maggio '68 in Francia," *Quaderni Piacentini*, anno VII, n. 35, luglio 1968, pp. 2-41. [↑](#footnote-ref-84)
85. See for example, Luigi Bobbio and Guido Viale, "Student Political Organization," *International Socialist Journal*, Year 5, no. 26-27, July 1968, pp. 220-231. [↑](#footnote-ref-85)
86. These demands for wider access to education and for increased funding for those with difficulty affording it was common on both sides of the Atlantic. The mutation of demands for scholarships into demands for wages, however, happened much faster and spread much wider in Europe than in the United States. The demand for Wages for Students articulated by some students in Massachusetts (see below) never spread very far from its limited beginnings. This remained true despite the inevitable upsurge in "economic" student struggles in the 1970s as capital counterattacked "the movement", slashing financial aid and shifting from grants to loans. [↑](#footnote-ref-86)
87. Eventually such efforts would be made. See: Alquati, Romano "Universita, Formazione della Forza Lavoro Intellecttuale, Terziarizzazione," in Roberta Tomassini, Studenti e Composizione di classe, Milano: edizioni aut-aut, 1977, pp. 12-76. (Originally written in maggio 1976) [↑](#footnote-ref-87)
88. This difficulty is apparent in Alberto Asor Rosa's 1968 article about the Italian student movement titled "A Separate Branch of the Working Class", *International Socialist Journal*, Year 5, no. 26-27, July 1968, pp. 191-200. The text of the article belies its title; students are not treated as a "branch" of the working class, but as a wholly separate sector whose relationship to "the working class movement" is a central problem. It is also apparent in Vittorio Rieser's article "On Goals and Strategy" in the same issue.
 [↑](#footnote-ref-88)
89. See the biographical sketches of Leoncio Schaedel and George Caffentzis below. [↑](#footnote-ref-89)
90. The policy of holding down agricultural prices while allowing input prices to rise has been termed a "scissors strategy" for exploiting farmers and peasants and became infamous in the Soviet Union as a complement to collectivization. Both the "scissors" and collectivization continued the Czarist practice of extracting the maximal feasible surplus from the countryside to finance industrialization. The same policy has been used elsewhere, from the United States in the 19th Century where it gave rise to the populist movement, to India under Indira Gandhi in the 1970s where it provoked poor harijan peasants to harvest – illegally and often at night – the crops of wealthier local strongmen – who retaliated with their own goons or by calling in the police. [↑](#footnote-ref-90)
91. Anthropologists, e.g., James C. Scott, bottom-up historians, e.g., Edward Thompson and Rodney Hilton, and subaltern historians, e.g., Ranajit Guha, have all documented, in various countries and in various periods of history, the utilization by peasants of what Scott has called "the weapons of the weak" – covert forms of struggle elaborated where overt resistance has been viciously repressed. See Scott's *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Subsistence and Rebellion in Southeast Asia* (1976), *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance* (1985) and *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (1990), Edward Thompson's The Making of the English Working Class (1963), Hilton's *The English Peasantry in the Later Middle Ages* (1975) and Guha's *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (1983). [↑](#footnote-ref-91)
92. It is of some interest, as Peter Linebaugh has pointed out, that Marx's very first writing on economic conflicts dealt with state criminalization of the peasant tradition of gathering wood from forests. This attack on a non-wage source of income, Linebaugh argues, was not an act of "primitive accumulation" but one designed to impose the wage form on a recalcitrant peasantry already being exploited by capital. Peter Linebaugh, "Karl Marx, the Theft of Wood and Working Class Composition," *Crime and Social Justice*, Fall-Winter 1976. [↑](#footnote-ref-92)
93. Kautsky's *Die Agrarfrage: Eine Uebersicht über die Tendenzen der modernen Landwirtschaft und die Agrarpolitik u. s. w.*, Stuttgart: Dietz, 1899, that [Lenin called " the most important event in present day economic literature since the third volume of *Capital"*](http://www.marx2mao.com/Lenin/AQ99.html), has never been translated into English but is available in French as *La Question Agraire: Etude sur les Tendences de l'Agriculture Moderne*, Paris: V. Giard & E. Briere, 1900, reprinted by Francois Maspero in 1970 and Nabu Press in 2010. [↑](#footnote-ref-93)
94. Marx's responses to the debates in Russia were contained, primarily, in letters written to Vera Zasulich who had asked for his views. Those letters and critical essays on their implications have been collected in Teodor Shanin, *Late Marx and Russian Road: Marx and the Peripheries of Capitalism*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1983. [↑](#footnote-ref-94)
95. Given the size and importance of agriculture and of the peasantry that worked the land in Russia, Lenin devoted a great deal of effort not only into understanding the degree to which capitalist relationships were emerging in the countryside, but in critiquing the political proposals of other parties for various policies affecting the peasantry. Beyond the study of Marx and Kautsky's work on the development of capitalist agriculture in England and Germany, he also undertook his own serious studies of the development of capitalism in both American and Russian agriculture – primarily as revealed by available statistics. What was missing in his studies was any substantial effort to grasp peasant struggles from either the peasant point of view, or from intimate familiarity with the social and political dynamics of their self-organization. Lenin neither had, nor conceived the need for, a "workers' inquiry" appropriate to the revealing of the situation and internal dynamics of peasant struggles. Kautsky'sFor a useful annotated bibliography of Lenin's writings, see Amalendu Guha, "Lenin on the Agrarian Question", [*Social Scientist*](http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/3516720?uid=3739920&uid=2&uid=4&uid=3739256&sid=21103188120081), Vol. 5, No. 9, April 1977, pp. 61-80. [↑](#footnote-ref-95)
96. This was the outcome of the famous debate over paths to "socialist" industrialization in the Soviet Union. As it evolved, the Soviet State basically adopted the position of Evgenii Alexeyevich Preobrazhensky who argued that the fastest path to the development of industry was "primitive socialist accumulation" – namely the maximal extraction of surplus from the peasantry and its induction into waged factory labor. See his *New Economics* (1926). [↑](#footnote-ref-96)
97. The reference here is to the Wuchang Resolution imposing the alternative, very capitalist, rule: "to each according to his work." [↑](#footnote-ref-97)
98. , deals with primarily with slaves. His *History of Negro Revolt*, op. cit., focuses on the struggles of waged workers and peasants in colonies of the 20th Century. [↑](#footnote-ref-98)
99. These are the opening lines of Chapter IV, "The San Domingo Masses Begin" of C. L. R. James, *The Black Jacobins*, op. cit. [↑](#footnote-ref-99)
100. This skepticism must also be juxtaposed to James and his comrades' enthusiasm for the demonstrated ability of Russian urban workers to form factory committees and soviets during periods of revolutionary upheaval. These very different assessments completely ignored how the labor force in Russian factories and cities was almost entirely made up of first, or at most, second generation peasants, and how these autonomous urban feats of self-organization resembled the village *mir* or peasant commune. [↑](#footnote-ref-100)
101. His continuing reverence for Lenin's views on this subject were spelled out in greatest detail in the essay "Lenin and the Problem" written for a political journal in Ghana in 1964. (Included in C. L. R. James, *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution*, Westport: Lawrence Hill, 1977, pp. 189-213.) In that article, he focused on Lenin's critique of Soviet government practices and his call for educating the peasantry to facilitate the development of cooperatives as the path to socialism. This embrace apparently continued on into the 1970s – as indicated by an essay on Nigeria summarized in Anna Grimshaw, *The C.L.R. James Archive: A Reader's Guide*, New York: The C.L.R. James Institute, 1991, p. 42. His admiration of Lenin's call for cooperatives as the most effective means for peasants to organize, undoubtedly influenced his enthusiasm for Nyerere's embrace of *Ujamaa* (Swahili for "familyhood") – a rural path to socialism based on bringing the rural population together in small villages to undertake collective agriculture. [↑](#footnote-ref-101)
102. F. Forest (R. Dunayevskaya), "An Analysis of Russian Economy," Part I: 3 articles in *The New International* (December 1942, January 1943 and February 1943) These articles, along with two others were reprinted by News and Letters in 1973 as a pamphlet: The Original Historical Analysis: Russia as State-capitalist Society. [↑](#footnote-ref-102)
103. C. L. R. James, Grace C. Lee, and Pierre Chaulieu, "The Workers' Councils: Hungary," in *Facing Reality*, *op*. *cit*. [↑](#footnote-ref-103)
104. On James' experience in Missouri in 1941 – when he was a member of the Workers' Party – as a phamphleteer recording and recounting a sharecroppers' strike, see [his articles in *Labor Action*](http://www.marxists.org/archive/james-clr/works/1941/09/sharecroppers.html) published in September and October 1941, republished in Scott McLemee (ed) *C.L.R. Jamnes on the "Negro Question"*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1999, pp. 22-34. However limited, James' investigation of the sharecroppers' background – reported in three short articles - seems to have been the single, direct, on-the-ground study of the struggles of rural workers carried out by anyone in the Johnson-Forest – Correspondence – Facing Reality – News & Letters groups during the 1940s and 1950s.. Also: Paul Buhle, C. L. R. James, *The Artist as Revolutionary*, New York: Verso, 1988, pp. 82-83 and documents VII.43-VII.45 in Anna Grimshaw, *The C.L.R. James Archive: A Reader's Guide*, op.cit., pp. 56-57. James had known Nkrumah since the latter was a student in Pennsylvania and had been something of a mentor to him before he became a leader of the struggle for independence in the Gold Coast and elected president of independent Ghana. See: Chaper 5 of Paul Buhle's *C.L.R. James, the Artist as Revolutionary*, op. cit., and C.L.R. James, *Nkrumah and the Ghana Revolution*, op .cit. An exception to their focus on urban factory struggles was the JFT's interest in the miners' strike of 1949-1950. Although the vast majority of mines and miner communities are located in rural areas, the strike was very much an industrial one in which a central issue was automation – just as in the auto factories of Detroit. Many years later, New & Letters would publish a pamphlet on that strike that gives an account of their interest and analysis. See: *The Coal Miners' General Strike of 1949-50 and the Birth of Marxist-Humanism in the U.S*., Chicago: News & Letters, 1984. [↑](#footnote-ref-104)
105. Once drawn into the debate between the Populists and the "Marxists" who were using his writings on England to dismiss the importance of peasant struggles, Marx had to learn Russian to study the conflicting positions. Dunayevskaya already knew Russian but she neither knew Marx's writings on the debate nor carried out a parallel investigation of her own. Only much later, when Marx's letters – and his other "ethnographic studies" finally became widely known did she begin to take them into account. See: Chapter XII in Raya Dunayevskaya, *Rosa Luxemburg, Women's Liberation and Marx's Philosophy of Revolution*, Atlantic Highlands: Humanities Press, 1982. Had she discovered them earlier, it is easy to imagine that she would have provided a first translation – as she did with the passages on "estranged labor" in the *1844 Manuscripts*. One can only imagine the effect such discovery and translation might have had on her and James' analysis of peasant struggle in the 1940s and 1950s. [↑](#footnote-ref-105)
106. ####  G. Fofi's "Agricoltura" in issue #3 and Mario Miegge's Riforma agraria e lotta contadina nella Marsica, issue #6.

 [↑](#footnote-ref-106)
107. Luciano Ferrari Bravo (1940-2000) e Alessandro Serafini (1942-1991), [*Stato e sottosviluppo: Il caso del Mezzogiorno italiano*](http://www.ombrecorte.it/more.asp?id=134&tipo=novita), Milano: Feltrinelli, 1972. [↑](#footnote-ref-107)
108. Franca Cipriani, "Proletariato del Maghreb e capitale europeo," Marco Dogo, "Jugoslavia, un paese d'emigrazione" and Mariarosa Dalla Costa, "Riproduzione e emigrazione" in A. Serafini, et al, *L'operaio multinazionale in Europa*, Materiali Marxisti 4, Milano: Feltrinelli, 1974, pp. 77-108, 181-196 and 207-242 respectively. Dalla Costa's essay was translated into English, was intended to be included in *Zerowork* #3 and is now [available](http://www.zerowork.org/DallaCostaReproductionEmigrationA.html) on this website. [↑](#footnote-ref-108)
109. Martin Glaberman, “George P. Rawick: Socialist Historian,” *Against the Current*, May-June 1991, p. 9. [↑](#footnote-ref-109)
110. The "fragment" was published in *Quaderni rossi* 4, pp. 289-300. [↑](#footnote-ref-110)
111. Karl Marx, *Grundrisse*, The Marx Pelican Library, p. 705. The "Fragment on Machine is usually defined as pp. 699-712. [↑](#footnote-ref-111)
112. Latent in debates within the Zerowork collective over the relative importance of capital's growing difficulties in imposing waged work was a theoretical issue that would eventually surface and on which participants would take quite different positions: whether the ever greater substitution of machinery for labor renders Marx's labor theory of value irrelevant. [↑](#footnote-ref-112)
113. In Cafffentz's article "Throwing Away the Ladder," the ladder to be "thrown away" by workers' struggles was the "training ladder", i.e., schooling geared to the production of labor power. Another ladder that was being thrown away, this time by capital, was the "career ladder": long term jobs with rising wages and benefits as one "climbed up" step by step. In its place were proliferating short term, lower waged, precarious jobs and the increased unwaged work associated with repeated job search, returning to school for a new "training footstool", and all the affective labor associated with increased anxiety occasioned by the uncertainty associated with these conditions. [↑](#footnote-ref-113)
114. Arriving at Antioch College in the Fall of 1962, both George and Harry Cleaver – who joined Zerowork after the first issue (see Background: "From Zerowork #1 to Zerowork #2") – were witnesses to the Cuban Missile Crisis that unfolded over nearly two weeks that October. George joined a few dozen other Antiochians to protest – at Wright Patterson Air Force Base - the threatened nuclear war. Subsequently, in March 1964, both were also involved in the protests against Yellow Springs, Ohio, barber Lewis Gegner’s refusal to serve Blacks. Along with over a hundred other students from Antioch and nearby traditional Black colleges, they were arrested and jailed during the protests. Some of what follows is drawn from an extended interview with George undertaken by the Greek anti-authoritarian/communist group [*Ta Paidia Tis Galarias*](http://www.tapaidiatisgalarias.org/) (TPTG) or *The Children of the Galley,* published in the November 2001 issue of their journal of the same name. An English translation is available at: <http://libcom.org/library/interview-george-caffentzis> [↑](#footnote-ref-114)
115. Marc Linder, Unter Mitarbeit von Julius Sensat und George Caffentzis, *Der Anti-Samuelson: Kritik eines repräsentativen Leehrbuchs der bärgerlichen Ökonomie*, Band 1-4, Mit einem Vorwort von Elmar Altavater, Gaiganz: Politladen Erlangen, 1974. [↑](#footnote-ref-115)
116. Marc Linder and Julius Sensat, *The anti-Samuelson. Volume One. Macroeconomics: basic problems of the capitalist economy*, New York: Urizen Books, 1977 and Marc Linder and Julius Sensat. The anti-Samuelson. Volume Two. Microeconomics: basic problems of the capitalist economy. New York: Urizen Books, 1977. The full texts of volumes I and II are now available on-line at <http://works.bepress.com/marc_linder/doctype.html#book> Even a skim of the introduction to the first volume will make clear the political and theoretical differences with the orientation of *Zerowork*. George did publish, with Julius Sensat, a small part of their work: "A Critique of Utility Theory," in *Science & Society*, Summer 1975. [↑](#footnote-ref-116)
117. George's dissertation was "Does Quantum Mechanics Necessitate a Revolution in Logical Theory?" [↑](#footnote-ref-117)
118. The New York Struggle Against Work group (preceded by the short-lived Income Without Work Committee) included some men in personal relationships with women in the WfH movement, some who were not. Among the former were George and Larry Cox. Among the latter were Harry Cleaver and Philip Mattera. For more detailed history of the Toronto group see the section on Bruno Ramirez below. [↑](#footnote-ref-118)
119. From the Toronto group, in the period leading up to the publication of *Zerowork*, I have been able to locate only one document: SAWC, “A Statement on the Dissolution of the New Tendency," March 1975. Discussions of these questions in these two groups would lead to further publications in 1976. (See "Background: From *Zerowork* #1 to *Zerowork* #2.) [↑](#footnote-ref-119)
120. At that time, Colletti was a fierce critic of the Gramscian Marxism that was used by the Italian Communist Party (or *Partito Comunista Italiano,* PCI) in the post-WWII period to justify its collaboration with Italian capitalism. Ferraroti was, and may still be, Paolo has affirmed, “the most prominent Italian sociologist.” Of some interest is that Ferraroti wrote his own dissertation on Veblen and among the books he had written by the time Paolo was studying with him were ones on industrial sociology in America and in Europe and others on autonomous syndicalism, worker protests and sociology as participation. [↑](#footnote-ref-120)
121. *Classe Operaio* had published parts of *Operai e Capitale* and Paolo says that even though by that time Tronti had returned to the PCI – much to the disappointment of many – he was still “very forthcoming and accessible to us young militants.” [↑](#footnote-ref-121)
122. Literary critic, professor and novelist, Asor Rosa collaborated with the workerist journals *Quaderni rossi*, *Classe Operaia*, and *Contropiano*. Franco Piperno, political activist and physicist, was a well-known leader of the student movement in Rome and one of the founders of Potere Operaio. [↑](#footnote-ref-122)
123. Personal correspondence. [↑](#footnote-ref-123)
124. DRUM = Dodge Revolutionary Union Movement. Initially aimed at reforming the United Automobile Workers (UAW) union, DRUM was created by black workers who had come to form a majority of the workers in their plants but had little representation at the level of the union bureaucracy. John Watson was a member of DRUM and editor of an associated newspaper *The Inner City Voice*. See Marty Glaberman’s 1969 [article](http://www.marxists.org/archive/glaberman/1969/04/drum.htm) on DRUM and the current wiki. The rise of DRUM led to similar organizations elsewhere in the industry, e.g., FRUM = Ford Revolutionary Union Movement. [↑](#footnote-ref-124)
125. Personal correspondence. [↑](#footnote-ref-125)
126. The Collectivo that oversaw that collection, and several other collaborations in the Materiali Marxisti series published by Feltrinelli, was one organizational effort by those at the Università di Padova gathered, more or less tightly, around Antonio Negri – a major figure in Italian workerism and the one who has been most successful in getting his many writings translated and published in English. [↑](#footnote-ref-126)
127. That article was translated and published as “Chomage: Made in USA,” in the French autonomist journal *Camarades*, No. 2, Summer 1976, pp. 20-24. [↑](#footnote-ref-127)
128. G. Bock, P. Carpignano e B. Ramirez, La formazione dell'operaio massa negli USA 1898/1922, Materiali Marxisti 10, a cura del Collectivo di Scienze politiche di Padova, Milano: Feltrinelli, 1976, pp. 189-238. [↑](#footnote-ref-128)
129. That collaboration led to the publication of E. P. Thompson, Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John G. Rule and Cal Winslow, Albion’s Fatal Tree: Crime and Society in 18th Century England, London: Pantheon, 1976. [↑](#footnote-ref-129)
130. This account of the Offord Road Group comes primarily from “Sketching the Genesis of Zerowork”, a talk given at the May Day Rooms of the Marx Memorial Library in January 2013 where Peter was depositing a first collection of materials with that archive. In a 1995 letter critiquing the inaccuracies in *Rendezvous of Victory* – a collection of C. L. R. James’ writings, Marty Glaberman describes Selma in the following manner: “She was his secretary, collaborator and financial support in most of the years after the forties. . . . She was the primary influence on him and the organization in relation to the ‘woman question’.” In a 1996 review of Ken Worcester’s biography of James, Marty pointed out that Selma’s maiden name was Deitch, not Weinstein – the name of her first husband. [↑](#footnote-ref-130)
131. James Boggs, a black worker originally from Alabama, had been, along with his wife Grace Lee Boggs, a member of Facing Reality. After he and his wife left Facing Reality in 1963, he published *The American Worker: Pages from a Negro Worker’s Notebook*, that detailed, analyzed and drew lessons from his own experience of work and struggle in Detroit auto factories. “Theses on the Mass Worker and Capital” *Radical America*, Vol. 6, No. 3, May-June 1972. [↑](#footnote-ref-131)
132. Colletti was heavily influenced by Della Volpe and was often considered his intellectual successor. [↑](#footnote-ref-132)
133. Mario Montano, "On the Methodology of Determinate Abstractions: Essay on Galvano della Volpe" in *Telos* *7* (1971), pp. 30-49. Silvia Federici, "Notes on Lukác’s Aesthetics” in *Telos 11* (1972), pp. 141-151. Silvia had previously written several reviews of French and Vietnamese writings for *Telos* and translated a piece by Salvatore Veca, “Value, Labor and the Critique of Political Economy,” *Telos* *9* (1971), pp. 48-64. [↑](#footnote-ref-133)
134. Mario Tronti’s 1966 essay “Lotta contro il lavoro,” was translated and published as “Struggle against Labor” in the same issue of *Radical America* (Vol. 6, No. 1, May-June 1972, pp. 22-25) as their Guido Baldi synthesis. Because the origins and authorship of “Women and the Subversion of the Community” has been falsified by Selma James in her introduction to the recently published collection of her essays, *Sex, Race and Class--the Perspective of Winning: A Selection of Writings 1952–2011* (PM Press, 2012), Mariarosa’s reluctant response – aimed at setting the record straight – is made available here. [↑](#footnote-ref-134)
135. At Shelton College Bruno completed a BA in History and at the University of Guelph, an MA in History. His dissertation is available on-line: Bruno Ramirez, *Collective Bargaining and the Politics of Industrial Relations in the Progressive Era, 1898-1916*, Dissertation, University of Toronto, Toronto (Canada) 1975. Retrieved from ProQuest Dissertations and Theses. (Accession Order No. NK32876) Much, although not all, of what follows comes from a very detailed and thoughtful autobiographical piece that Bruno wrote for the December 1999 issue of the *Journal of American History*. [↑](#footnote-ref-135)
136. His church, Bruno says, had a very active youth movement and many of its leaders went on to join the extraparliamentary Left, especially Lotta Continua. [↑](#footnote-ref-136)
137. His dissertation was later revised and published as Bruno Ramirez, *When Workers Fight: The Politics of Industrial Relations in the Progressive Era*, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1978. [↑](#footnote-ref-137)
138. These included, among others, members of New Democratic Youth (the youth wing of the New Democratic Party). [↑](#footnote-ref-138)
139. Much of what is said here about the NT is based on research carried out by Gary Kinsman who has been researching the history of the NT and associated groups. [↑](#footnote-ref-139)
140. Windsor is located immediately across the Detroit River from that city and was long its Canadian counterpart – in the sense of being the location of major automobile plants. In Windsor the primary focal point of those organizing outside of political parties and existing labor unions in the early and mid-1970s was the Windsor Labour Centre. Among the activists there were apparently many factions but two are notable: the Out of the Driver’s Seat group and the Auto Workers’ Group (both had autoworker members). The Out of Driver’s Seat (ODS) group drew part of their ideas from C. L. R. James, Marty Glaberman and Facing Reality more generally. (Although Facing Reality – for many years basically a Detroit-based organization – was dissolved in 1970, Marty Glaberman (1918-2001) continued to publish and circulate pieces the group had produced through Bewick Publications.) Some insights into the group can be gleaned from their discussion paper “Out of the Driver’s Seat: Marxism in North America Today, The Windsor Labour Centre”, which was written in 1974 as other factions withdrew from the Centre leaving ODS in charge. It outlines the group’s experience intervening in student, gay, women, blue-collar and white-collar worker struggles, perceived mistakes and lessons drawn. Those lessons included the rejection of any kind of vanguardism and the very Correspondence-like search for ways to give workers the opportunity to articulate and discuss their own ideas. [↑](#footnote-ref-140)
141. This is true in a double sense. On the one hand there was the circulation of Italian material described below. On the other hand, Italian feminist thought, especially that of Mariarosa Dalla Costa, came to Canada through what was undoubtedly the most widely read and influential publication of the Wages for Housework movement *The Power of Women and the Subversion of the Community*, Bristol: Falling Wall Press, October 1972. [↑](#footnote-ref-141)
142. Big Flame ex-members describe the group as “a Revolutionary Socialist Feminist organization with a working class orientation.” They have created [an extensive web space](http://bigflameuk.wordpress.com/about/) containing a great deal of information about the group, including publications, its activities and debates (both internal and with others). [↑](#footnote-ref-142)
143. Rising Free was an anarchist bookshop in London. According to the [Radical bookshop History Project](http://www.leftontheshelfbooks.co.uk/images/doc/Radical-Bookshops-Listing.pdf), Rising free was located first at 197 Kings Cross Road, WC1 and later at 182 Upper Street, Islington, N1 and operated from 1974 to 1981. [↑](#footnote-ref-143)
144. Bruno wrote an account of this conference that was published in *La Critica Sociologica*, No. 20, inverno 1971-72, pp. 190-197. His account was mainly aimed at giving Italian readers a sense of the theoretical and organizational state of the "radical American Left" at that point in history. [↑](#footnote-ref-144)
145. S. Bologna, et al., *Operai e stato: Lotte operaie e riforma dello stato capitalistico tra revoluzione d’Ottobre e New Deal*, Milano: Feltrinelli, 1972. Bologna’s contribution was “Composizione di classe e teoria del partito alle origini del movimento consiliare,” which, along with Bruno’s review of the book, appeared in *Telos* as “Class Composition and the Theory of the Party at the Origin of the Workers’ Council Movement,” #13, Fall 1972. [↑](#footnote-ref-145)
146. For the special *Radical America* issue on Italian struggles (March-April 1973), Bruno and Judy translated “Against the State as Boss” by the Autonomous Assembly of Alfa Romeo workers and Bruno interviewed and wrote up an interview with Lotta Continua leader Guido Viale, some of whose writings had been studied by the members of NT. A year later Bruno and Judy translated Guido Viale’s “Class Struggle and European Unity” for the November-December 1974 issue of *Radical America*. [↑](#footnote-ref-146)
147. These connections would lead to collaboration with Paolo and Gisela Bock in preparing La formazione dell'operaio massa negli USA 1898/1922, Materiali Marxisti 10, Milano: Feltrinelli, 1976. Bruno’s contribution to that volume was the lead article “Lotte operaie e strategia del capitale: 1898-1905”, pp. 7-54, that drew on his dissertation research. He was able to spend time in Padua with Ferruccio while working with the translator of his article. [move all this information to section **Background: From Zerowork #1 to Zerowork #2**] [↑](#footnote-ref-147)
148. Bruno's wife, Judy, was active in organizing this visit – part of a larger Canadian tour that "culminated in a keynote address by James at the Montreal Feminist Symposium 'where 800 women passed a resolution demanding wages for housework for all women from the state.'" Majorie Griffin Cohen and Ruth Roach Pierson, *Canadian Women's Issues: Vol. II: Bold Visions*, Toronto: Lorimer, 1995, p. 10. [↑](#footnote-ref-148)
149. On the other hand, although a few women from the NT organized a short-lived Wages for Housework group in Windsor, the women in Out of the Driver’s Seat rejected the Wages for Housework analysis – and its separatist approach to organization – and remained in the former group until it began to wither away in the late 1970s. [↑](#footnote-ref-149)
150. SAWC, “Statement on the Dissolution of the New Tendency”, March 1975. The signers of the statement were: Bruno, Peter Taylor, John Huot, Tim Grant, John Ford and David Kidd. [↑](#footnote-ref-150)
151. This article can be found in the online archives of *Mass Media*. A year earlier on March 11, 1975, *Mass Media* had carried a story analyzing the analysis presented by “seven women from Italy, England, Germany and the US . . . to explain wages for housework to Boston women.” [↑](#footnote-ref-151)
152. Another member who worked at the post office, according to Gary Kinsman, was John Huot. [↑](#footnote-ref-152)
153. I have drawn much of what follows from “Intervista a Ferruccio Gambino, 10 Giugno 2001”, in which Ferruccio sketches his political development, and from personal correspondence that refined some of the information contained in that interview. [↑](#footnote-ref-153)
154. La Casa dello studente di viale Romagna [↑](#footnote-ref-154)
155. Bookchin’s work in this area was path-breaking. Both his book *Our Synthetic Environment* (1962) – which came out about the same time as Rachel Carson’s better known, and less radical, *Silent Spring* (1962) – and his “Ecology and Revolutionary Thought" (1964) was an early statement on a subject that would eventually become an essential discussion among Marxists and Anarchists struggling to get beyond capitalism. [↑](#footnote-ref-155)
156. “Ford Britannica. Formazione di una classe operaia”. This essay was summarized in English, illustrated with relevant materials, and published in London as the first issue of Red Notes: [*Workers’ Struggles and the Development of Ford in Britain*](http://libcom.org/library/workers-struggles-development-ford-britain), Pamphlet No. 1, Red Notes, London, 1976. Appendices to this English translation outline many of the key concepts in a manner reminiscent of the “Guido Baldi” essay in *Radical America*. [↑](#footnote-ref-156)
157. This sketch is a poor substitute for Peter Linebaugh’s beautiful tribute to John – “Gone to Glory”. Read it for a much better sense of the man. The Wikipedia entry for Bradfield College includes a very long and very revealing list of its illustrious ruling class alumni. For those unfamiliar with the term, in England “public schools” are actually elite private secondary schools – often boarding schools. Such schools were the progenitors of what in the United States are known as “Prep schools”, i.e., elite schools that prepare kids for entrance to elite universities. For example, John F. Kennedy and Sargent Shriver both studied at Canterbury School in Connecticut before moving on to Harvard and Yale. In Peter Linebaugh’s tribute to John he quotes him as saying that the portrayal in the 1968 film *If* of a public school and of the revolt against it reflected well his own experience. The film ends with a handful of rebellious students firing retrieved WWII weapons from the rooftops at the attendees of a Founders’ Day ceremony. [↑](#footnote-ref-157)