

Authors' Note to Polish Readers

Marx, Engels and Poland: Then Between Then and Now

Marx, Engels and Poland: Now

Let's start with just one part of step #1

Turning now to step #2, . . . P . . . C'

Finally, let us examine step #3: C' – M'

This essay, revised since it was originally written in 1982, contains a systematic reinterpretation of Karl Marx and Frederick Engel's writings on various kinds of crises that were common in the capitalism of the 19th Century. In their writings, they set out both political commentary on contemporary upheavals and, over time, developed and offered various theories to explain both the possibilities of crisis and the forces generating them. In this prefatory note, we want to add to our essay, briefly, two sets of considerations that we think might be of interest to Polish readers. The first concerns what we have discovered about Marx and Engels' thinking about the partitioned Poland of their time. The second concerns the relevance of these ancient texts to contemporary struggles in Poland. The analysis that follows, in both sections, is based on our reading of materials available in English – and to a lesser degree in French – but has been formulated without our being able to read materials in German and in Polish. Because some of the materials upon which we have drawn have made use of sources in those languages, we are aware of the limitations of our reading, and therefore, that our analysis might change with access to those sources. However, one does what one can and we offer our thoughts for your consideration, dissection and critique.

Marx, Engels and Poland: Then

As part of their study of crises, and on the prospects for revolutionary change, Marx and Engels followed, sought to understand and respond to events and crises in Poland. They saw the unfolding of conflicts in Poland as important for Europe more generally, but they also saw Poland, and the other countries of central and eastern Europe, as harboring a barely developed capitalism, far behind that of England. In England, they observed the great textile mills of Manchester feeding on expropriated labor from the countryside and raw materials from the New World, and pumping out an endless stream of commodities that British ships and troops were carrying to the far reaches of an expanding colonial empire. But in Poland, they saw capitalist development restricted to a few cities and mostly limited to commerce and small scale industry, often monopolized by Germans who had colonized the Western edge of the country since the first partition in 1772. While conceding that those invaders had “brought to Poland culture, education and science . . . retail trade and guild crafts” Engels also argued that their efforts:

. . . remained at the lowest stage of industrial development; they did not accumulate large capitals; they were neither able to set up large-scale industry nor control any extensive commercial networks. . . . The entire activity of the German Poles was restricted to retail trade, the handicrafts and at most the corn trade and manufacture (weaving, etc.) on the smallest scale (Engels, 1848b, p. 339-340)

Years later, Rosa Luxemburg concluded from her study of the industrial development of Poland that the first typical capitalist crisis in Poland didn't occur until 1884. (Luxemburg, 1898, p. 32) Therefore, for their studies of the kinds of periodic booms, busts and associated upheavals characteristic of industrial capitalism, Britain, and to a lesser degree France and the United States, provided Marx and Engels-with their main fields of research upon which to base their theories of crisis. In other words, the limited capitalist development in Poland, they perceived to be enclaves surrounded by a countryside organized in a feudal manner with the vast majority of the population being peasant serfs subordinated to big landowners – the *szlachta*, or traditional Polish nobility. In the period 1850-1870, grain produced by those peasants was being exported, but the proceeds only financed industry on a very small-scale. (Batou, 1991, pp. 130)

Therefore, Marx and Engels assessed crises in Poland to be primarily political ones involving two kinds of conflicts. First were the struggles of Poles for national independence from the Holy Alliance of Germany, Russia and Austria that had repeatedly seized her lands, ultimately obliterating their country as an independent nation with the Third Partition of 1794. Second, were struggles within Poland for democracy via agrarian reform against the country's still dominant patriarchal feudalism. They saw these two kinds of struggles as closely connected. In 1848, Marx wrote:

“The men who led the Cracow revolutionary movement were deeply convinced that only a democratic Poland could be independent, and a democratic Polish was impossible without the abolition of feudal rights, without the agrarian movement which would transform the tied peasants into free proprietors, modern proprietors.” (Marx and Engels, 1848b, p. 549) In the *Communist Manifesto* (1848) they affirmed their support for “the party [in Poland] that insists on an agrarian revolution as the prime condition for national emancipation, that party which fomented the insurrection of Cracow in 1846.” (Marx and Engels, 1848a, p. 518)

But if the abolition of serfdom and the rights of the *szlachta* were prerequisites for a broad-based democratic struggle for Polish independence, that objective was controversial among European revolutionaries who shared an internationalist perspective and opposed the way ruling elites used nationalism to divide and conquer. For example, in his book *La Guerre et la Paix*, Pierre J. Proudhon (1809-1865) portrayed the demand for Polish independence as nothing more than the old nobility's desire to take back their estates and their power from Holy Alliance interlopers. The restoration of Poland, he argued, would do nothing for the mass of the population who would find themselves saddled with and exploited by local rather than foreign masters. (Proudhon, 1861) He argued that history had spoken, that the Holy Alliance's partition of Poland had given Europe peace, that “the Poles have no right” to independence and sovereignty (Proudhon, 1863, p. 68) and that partition amounted to “deliverance for the working classes”; it was literally their “emancipation”. (Proudhon, 1863, p. 86) He was referring to how serfdom had been formally abolished in Prussia in 1807, in Austria in 1848 and in Russia in 1861.

Let us be clear, Marx and Engels had long denounced the reactionary character of the Polish nobility, as exemplified by their condemnation of the *szlachta*'s refusal to accept the social reforms put forward by Joachim Lelewel (1786-1861) during the “Cadet Revolution” in 1830.

What did the Polish aristocracy want in 1830? To safeguard its own acquired rights with regard to the Emperor [Nicholas I]. It limited the insurrection to the little country which the Congress of Vienna was pleased to call the Kingdom of Poland¹; it restrained the uprising in the other Polish provinces; it left intact the degrading serfdom of the peasants and the infamous condition of the Jews. . . . But within the conservative revolution, within the national government itself, there was one man who vigorously attacked the narrow views of the ruling class. He proposed really revolutionary measures before whose boldness the aristocrats of the Diet recoiled. By calling the whole of ancient Poland to arms, by thus making the war for Polish independence a European war, by emancipating the Jews and the peasants, by making the latter share in landed property, by reconstructing Poland on the basis of democracy and equality, he wanted to make the national cause the cause of freedom; he wanted to identify the interest of all peoples with that of the Polish people. Need I name the genius who conceived this plan, at once so vast and so simple? It was Lelewel. (Engels, 1848b, pp. 550-551)

When, in 1866, Proudhon's followers within the First International attacked support for Polish independence as being of no interest to the working class, Engels wrote a series of articles on “What have the working classes to do with Poland?” (Engels, 1866) In those articles he made two arguments as to why workers elsewhere should support, not dismiss, Polish struggles for independence. His first was that workers in places such as Germany and Austria had an interest in limiting the expanding power of the Russian Czar – whose power he and Marx saw as the most powerful reactionary force on the continent. After sketching the history of Czarist annexations and efforts to subordinate various parts of central Europe, the “restoration of Poland”, he argued, would amount to the emancipation of not just Poles, but also Germans “from Russian vassalage”. (*Ibid.*, p.154)

His second argument was to remind the Proudhonists of the long history of workers' support for the right of self-determination of people living within historically identifiable *nations*, i.e., large “bodies of undoubted vitality”. (*Ibid.*, p. 156) This he juxtaposed to the Czar's “principle of nationalities” used to divide and conquer, used, for example, to justify the seizure of territory in Eastern Poland. (Both Putin's seizure of the Crimean Peninsula and his interventions in Eastern Ukraine are strikingly similar to the actions of the Czar in Marx and Engel's time, and have been justified using the same logic.)

¹ The Congress of Vienna in 1814-15 liquidated the so-called duchy of Warsaw which depended on Napoleonic France. It was formed by Napoleon in 1807, after the defeat of Prussia, on the Polish territory seized by Prussia as a result of the three partitions of Poland. The Congress repartitioned the duchy between Prussia, Austria and Russia with the exception of the free city of Cracow, which was under the joint protection of the three powers up to 1846. The part incorporated into Russia was called the Kingdom of Poland with Warsaw as its capital.

Yet, Engels' manner of framing this argument was also dismissive of the rights of then sub-national, but culturally and linguistically coherent bodies of people to independent nation-state status, i.e., Laplanders in Scandinavia, or "Serbians, Croats, Ruthenes [Ukrainians], Slovaks, Czechs, and other remnants of bygone Slavonian peoples in Turkey, Hungary, and Germany". (*Ibid.*, p. 157) This disdainful attitude toward those lacking "civilization" must appear retrograde today when many of those peoples have indeed achieved independent nationhood. Equally unappealing is his scornful mocking of Laplanders as "nomadic savages" and of their resistance to cultural assimilation and the loss of their "own barbaric, half Esquimaux idiom". (*Ibid.*, pp. 157-158) Today, not only have well-organized indigenous people all over the world been fighting for autonomous self-determination, but they have inspired peoples of many nations to join together in precisely the kind of anti-capitalist, alter-globalization movement dreamed of in the First International. (Cleaver, 2009)

Early the following year in a speech in London, Marx reiterated Engels' argument of the need for an independent Polish buffer to check the Czar's imperial ambitions. (Marx, 1867a) It was the Poles, he reminded his listeners, whose insurrection prevented Czarist troops from marching on France to put down the uprising in Paris of 1830 against Charles X. "The uprising of Warsaw saved Europe from a second Anti-Jacobin war." (*Ibid.*, p. 196) It was why the revolutionary Berliners of 1848 called for the restoration of Poland. (*Ibid.*, p. 197) After describing in some detail the expansion and growing strength of the Czarist Empire, he concluded,

There is only one alternative left for Europe, Asiatic barbarism under Muscovite leadership will burst over her head like an avalanche, or she must restore Poland, thus placing between herself and Asia 20 millions of heroes, and gaining breathing time for the accomplishment of her social regeneration." (*Ibid.*, p. 201)

At the same time, Marx and Engels insisted, the struggle by Poles against foreign domination was the only possible path to social development *within* Poland. Against those who deprecated Polish struggles for national independence, they affirmed:

As long as a viable people is fettered by a foreign conqueror, it must necessarily apply all its strength, all its efforts, all its energy against the enemy from without; for this length of time, then, its inner life remains paralyzed, it remains unable to work for social emancipation. Ireland, Russia under Mongolian rule, etc., provide striking proof of this thesis. (Marx & Engels, 1875, p. 57)

As for the Czarist emancipation of the serfs in Poland, celebrated by Proudhon and his followers, Marx and Engels argued that it had only been done with the objective of undermining the local nobility and making peasants available for Russian exploitation and for induction into the Czar's armies.

But beyond their sympathy for the struggles of a subjugated people, Marx and Engels had tremendous respect for those Polish revolutionaries in exile who fought alongside others throughout Europe and even in America. As early as 1858 Marx and Engels co-authored an article praising Józef Bem (1794-1850), a Polish military leader who had fought with Napoleon against the Prussians and Russians, during the 1830 uprising against the Russians, and in Austria and Hungary on the side of the revolutionaries of 1848. (Marx & Engels, 1858, p. 130-133) Looking back, almost 20 years later, Marx wrote that the Poles were:

the only European people that has fought and is fighting as the *cosmopolitan soldier of the revolution*. Poland shed its blood during the American War of Independence; its legions fought under the banner of the first French Republic; by its revolution of 1830 it prevented the invasion of France that had been decided by the partitioners of Poland; in 1846 in Cracow it was the first in Europe to plant the banner of social revolution; in 1848 it played an outstanding part in the revolutionary struggle in Hungary, Germany and Italy; finally, in 1871 it supplied the Paris Commune with its best generals and most heroic soldiers. (Marx & Engels, 1875, p. 57-58)

For those unfamiliar with the history, these examples are worth explaining. The participation of Polish exiles in the American Revolutionary War included Tadeusz Kościuszko (1746-1817) and Kazimierz Pułaski (1745-1779). Kosciuszko, a skilled engineer, served as a colonel in the Continental Army, designed and oversaw the construction of various fortifications, including those at West Point – services for which he was promoted to brigadier general. He returned to Poland to join the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth Army, fight against Russia and was commander-in-chief of the uprising of 1794 against Russian occupation. (Gardner, 1920) Pułaski, after fighting in

the failed Bar Confederation war against the Russians, also came to America and joined the Continental Army, reformed the Army's cavalry, and created the Pułaski Cavalry Legion. It was his blood that was shed while leading a cavalry charge against the British at the Battle of Savannah. (Shores, 2014)

What Engels calls here "the Polish revolution" of 1830, was the Cadet Revolution referred to above, that blocked Russian plans to use Polish draftees against uprisings in France and Belgium. Besides the role of Józef Bem, Marx and Engels were, as previously noted, particularly impressed by the agrarian reform plans of the historian and politician Joachim Lelewel put forward in the midst of the uprising. When the uprising was crushed, Lelewel fled into exile in France and then Belgium. He continued to write and agitate for reform in Poland and collaborated with Marx and Engels in 1847 to found the *Demokratische Gesellschaft zur Einigung und Verbrüderung aller Völker* (Democratic Society for Unity and Brotherhood of All Peoples) (Wikipedia; Barr, 2010) (Skurnowicz, 1991)

The Cracow Uprising of 1846 only lasted nine days but, as mentioned above, its leaders not only fought for national liberation but put forth the kinds of demands made by Lelewel sixteen years before.

In 1848, in the wake of the economic crisis of 1847 that caused unemployment to soar, there were revolutionary uprisings in many countries of Europe. Marx and Engels returned to the continent, first to Paris during the February Revolution and then to Cologne in Germany where revolution began in March. There, Marx published the *Neue Rheinische Zeitung* and Engels helped out on the barricades. Among the many uprisings was one in Poznań against the Prussian occupiers of that part of Poland. But everywhere, Marx and Engels saw Poles joining revolutionary risings. Engels later wrote, "In Paris, Vienna, Berlin, Italy, Hungary, the Poles shared the fighting in all the revolutions and revolutionary wars, regardless whether they were fighting against Germans, against Slavs, against Magyars, or even against *Poles*." (Engels, 1849, p. 375)

In 1871, when in response to Emperor Napoleon III surrendering to the Prussian Chancellor Bismark, all of Paris rose and created the Paris Commune, Jarosław Żądło-Dąbrowski (1836-1871), who had fought in the 1863 Polish uprising against the Russian Empire, was elected to the Commune's Council. As counter-attack by the exiled French government and by Prussian troops that had surrounded and laid siege to the city loomed, Dąbrowski was appointed Commander-in-Chief and organized the defense of Paris. He was killed in the fighting, five days before the Commune was crushed and the massacres of the Communards began. Another Pole, Walery Antoni Wróblewski (1836-1908), who had commanded rebel detachments during the Polish Uprising of 1863-64, also joined the Parisian Communards as a general who organized the southern defense of the city. Unlike Dąbrowski, Wróblewski survived the defeat of the Commune and emigrated to London. In 1872 he became a member of the General Council of the First International supporting Marx and Engels in their conflicts with Bakunin. (Lissagaray, 2000) These are but a few of the Polish émigrés whose participation in uprisings at home and organizational efforts abroad inspired Marx and Engels' solidarity with Polish revolutionaries. (Ciołkosz, 1965)

Between Then and Now

Between Marx and Engels' writings and the present lay long and tumultuous decades. They include the years of the Second International (1898-1914), of World War I (1914-1918), of the Second Polish Republic (1918-1939), World War II (1939-1945), of the Polish People's Republic (1945-1989) and of the Third Polish Republic (1989-present). During those years, capitalism continued to develop in Poland, and with it connections between crises within Poland and those unfolding in the wider capitalist world. The character and extent of those connections, of course, varied enormously, differing in periods of relative independence from those when Poland was subjected to foreign domination of one sort or another. From once-again-partitioned neo-colonial subordination during World War II, through domination by the Soviet Union in the post-WWII era, the development of capitalism within Poland took place within constraints imposed from without. Most obviously, perhaps, was the imposition of Soviet-style state capitalism in the period of the Polish People's Republic. Despite its self-representation as socialist, and its more common designation as communist, the Soviet regime's institutions merely reorganized capitalism rather than progressively substituting something new and different. Like capitalists elsewhere, the regime's planners focused on organizing life around work and extracting the greatest amount of surplus labor possible. These objectives were replicated by its client government in Poland. Since regaining nominal national independence in 1989, the organizers of capitalism in Poland have found Soviet influence replaced by that of contemporary supra-national capitalist institutions such as the European Union, the European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank.

Throughout those decades, a wide variety of Marxists, both Polish and foreign, have undertaken to analyze the development of capitalism in Poland, the struggles of Polish workers and episodes of crisis. However, the time period is far too long and the number of such analyses far too great for us to even sketch an outline. Some such analyses, such as those of Rosa Luxemburg, probably Poland's most famous Marxist, have been subjected to numerous close studies and critiques. Those studies have involved an assessment of both the similarities and differences between her analyses and Marx and Engels' own positions, e.g., her opposition to Polish independence or her use of Marx's reproduction schemes to ground her theories of crisis and imperialism. Obviously, the reinterpretation we offer here could provide one point of departure for studying her writings – and we have had occasion to make some brief comments on her theory of crisis. (Cleaver, 1982) Neither of us, however, have undertaken re-evaluations of Marxist writings on Poland in any great depth. Therefore, we leave to others an assessment of the relevance of what we have written here to such efforts. What we do offer are a very few reflections on that relevance in the present period – in the hope of provoking *militant* readings of our essay.

Marx, Engels and Poland: Now

We have insisted, repeatedly, that our interest in Marx and Engels' writings is not philological but political. We have not intended our reinterpretation to be just another contribution to the analysis of the history of thought, but rather one that uncovers how, and in what ways, these old ideas can help us cope with new problems, especially the constraints imposed on our lives by contemporary capitalism. Today, we are over a decade into the 21st Century. Obviously, a lot has changed since our two authors wrote. Yet, despite many changes, crises of all sorts are still very much with us. Are Marx and Engels' thoughts from so long ago still relevant? Are the sorts of crises they addressed similar to the crises that you face today and to what degree, if any, do their analyses illuminate your present problems and can usefully inform your strategies of struggle?

When it comes to judging the relevance of these old writings to struggles in contemporary Poland, we are acutely aware of the limitations of our distance and knowledge. If, as we maintain, the value of any socio-political theory depends upon its ability to provide weapons in the struggle against capitalism, then the evaluation of the practical usefulness of any theoretical understanding must be carried out in the light of, and with concrete knowledge of, particular real-world situations. Theory is always general; the world is always specific. So we repeatedly query whether our theory draws our attention to phenomena that we think are important and whether it illuminates specific circumstances, particular concrete sets of relationships. Yet, we also recognize that what we have been able to study has been limited and our knowledge bounded. So when an opportunity arises, such as this one, for our writing to be translated into another language and published in another country, we hope that you, our new readers, will do the same, i.e., carefully evaluate the contemporary relevance to your own circumstances of the interpretation we offer, as well as of the original writings that have been our object of study.

The obvious question is "What is involved in such an evaluation? How to proceed?" Useful answers to such questions do, we think, depend upon the theory in question. The abstract propositions theories set forth are usually framed, by their authors, with some real-world reference. Newton explained his theory of gravity with a story about a falling apple. In Marx and Engels' case, as you will see in the body of our essay, their proposals of abstract generalizations about the nature of crises were usually offered with illustrations drawn from observations made during their own time. So, for example, when highlighting the way in which limitations on the demand for consumption goods (or means of subsistence) could cause a crisis in the realization of capitalist plans, they could point to examples both of capitalists doing their best to hold down wages and of recurrent situations in which such limitations on buying power forced capitalists to lower prices, undermining their profits. An evaluation of the relevance of that aspect of their theory of crisis to any given historical period would thus involve an examination of the effects of capitalist policies on wages, salaries and other forms of income on consumer demand and any evidence of those policies limiting demand to such a degree as to cause problems in sales and the realization of profits.

Our reinterpretation of Marx and Engels' theory of crisis presented in this essay does not privilege, *a priori*, any particular moment of their theorization over others. Instead of joining one of the traditional Marxist schools of thought, such as that which has privileged underconsumption or that which has privileged the tendency of the rate of profit to fall, we have sought out, in their writings, all the possibilities of crisis and all the forces at play tending to turn those possibilities into realities that they identified and analyzed. Which forces have been at work and which possibilities have been realized, we argue, has varied in particular historical periods. And yet, we do argue that at the

heart of all of those possibilities and forces at play, there is a common element that unifies that diversity, or, rather, that they are all manifestations of a common conflict: the struggle between capitalist attempts to impose its way of organizing society around work and resistance by those of us who seek out and craft alternatives.

Importantly, the particular forms through which crises have played out have been shaped by local, national and international institutions, both those of capital and those created by we who resist. Those Marx called the functionaries of capital, with capital understood as a particular way of organizing social relationships, have always devised and sought to implement policies to promulgate their system and solve whatever problems that have arisen, including crises. Those of us who have resisted have also devised tactics and strategies, sometimes as individuals, more fruitfully in collaboration with one another, collectively. So, for example, the policies and associated institutions that capital developed and deployed for the use of commodity money (e.g., gold and silver) against us differed from those created and utilized for the management of paper and credit money. The former involved alchemy, coinage, recoinage, debasement, bank vaults and torture; the latter have involved a whole array of policies to control the quality and quantity of money that has mainly existed only as entries on balance sheets. Similarly, the tactics and strategies the rest of us have used in confronting money have varied according to the kind of money with which we have had to deal. Against commodity money, individuals used clipping, direct appropriation and counterfeiting, while collective working class efforts focused on the formation of unions and wage struggles, sometimes local, sometimes with international connections. But with the capitalist substitution of national fiat money and bank credit for commodity money, direct appropriation and counterfeiting have become more difficult and struggles have tended to focus more on efforts to increase income, to shape access to and terms of credit or to escape money altogether. (Winnerland, 2011) (Caffentzis, 1989) (Nelson and Timmerman, 2011) (Clever, 2017)

Today, as we see if from afar, those of you in Poland find yourselves in a country whose capitalism, although bearing scars from its earlier subordination to Soviet-style state capitalism, has been forcefully integrated into the global capitalist system. Since rejoining the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in 1986, since gaining national independence in 1989, since the imposition of “shock therapy” on Poland after 1989, since joining the OECD in 1996, NATO in 1999, the European Union in 2004, and Schengen in 2007, Polish capitalism and, perforce, all of you, have benefited or suffered the consequences of government policies aimed at integration with Western European capitalism and with multinational capitalism more generally.

All this is true, despite rhetorical challenges to that integration, especially to Poland's relationship to the European Union, by the current Rightwing Law & Justice Party government. From its attacks on Civic Platform for selling out Polish national interests, through its moves to neutralize the Constitutional Tribunal that has drawn the European Union's rebuke for undermining constitutional democracy, to the cancelation of participation in Europe's efforts to cope with the flood of refugees from the Middle East, the government has railed against the EU, in ways that seem to raise the possibility of following the UK out of the EU. Yet, for all its nativist rhetoric and moves toward forming an authoritarian state – moves shared not only by governments such as that of Hungary, but even by the new Trump administration in the US - it continues to solicit foreign multinational corporate investment. Most recently, ex-banker and Deputy Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki has been attempting to attract more investment by multinational banks reorienting away from London after Brexit. His lure? Cheap labor. (Colchester, 2017) Given that banks will only expand operations in Poland if they can depend on its EU membership, any Polxit seems unlikely.

The history of Poland's integration with the larger capitalist world suggests to us that today a much more straightforward evaluation of the relevance of Marx and Engels's theory of crisis to Poland is possible than they, or many of their followers, believed. As in the rest of our contemporary capitalist world, we need only examine the relevance of various aspects of their abstract analysis to the specifics of the situations in which Polish workers find themselves exploited, alienated and often in resistance. The systematic manner in which we have laid out our study of Marx and Engels' theory allows for an equally systematic examination of relevance. As you will find, we have organized our study around their representation of the “circuit” that capital must complete in order to realize its self-reproduction. In other words, the sequential steps that it must successfully organize in order to be able, once again, in the next period, to impose its peculiar organization of society on an expanded scale. The relevance and character of the various steps of the circuit – that begins with the mobilization of resources, both human and material, through various markets, continues through the combining of those resources in the production of some commodity and ending (this round) with the sale of the commodity and the realization of enough profit to permit starting all over

again on a larger scale – to particular, concrete moments of capitalism, e.g., in Poland and its connections with the rest of the world, can be examined one by one in sequential order and in relation to each other.

Before proceeding with some illustrations, we would like to point out that the above procedure reverses the more general method that we employ in examining the dynamics of social conflict within capitalism. We prefer to start with the struggles themselves, with our own self-activity, and then see how both our actions and capital's reactions are shaping the present, or have shaped the past (if we are looking backward). (Tronti, 1964) (*Zerowork*, 1975, Introduction) When studying Marx and Engels' writings, however, we recognize that *the* focal point of their *theoretical* efforts was capital, as is manifest in the title of Marx's most complete theoretical treatment: *Das Kapital* (1867b). Yet, precisely because their theory was a socio-political one that understood capital as an antagonistic social relationship, they formulated it in terms of the labor theory of value, i.e., a theory of value of labor to capital, every aspect of which, from the beginning, was challenged, contested and often ruptured by those upon whom the functionaries of capital have sought to impose labor as the core of their mode of organizing society. (Clever, 2011) Therefore, whether we start from our own struggles, or, as in the case of this essay we follow Marx and Engel's lead and start from the relationships capital seeks to impose and re-impose, we wind up at the same place, namely an analysis of the dynamics of struggle over the present and the future.

As we explain in the essay, Marx and Engels' circuit-of-capital has three steps; 1) the organization of what economists call input markets, symbolically $M - C(LP, MP)$, where M = money for investment, LP = labor-power, MP = means of production, 2) the sphere of production $\dots P \dots C'$, where LP and MP are combined to produce a new commodity C' , and 3) the organization of the sale of the new commodity for money, $C' - M'$. Already in Marx and Engels' time, each of these steps were complicated affairs with many different actors and each of these three steps involved quite distinct operations, both within capitalist firms and among them. Today, they are even more complex and spread out over an even more diverse, often multinational, geography of markets and of production. Given that complexity, we want to do no more here than offer some suggestive examples of where and how their analysis may be applicable to social conflict in Poland.

Let's start with just one part of step #1: $M - C(LP)$. The labor market has always been a terrain of conflict between those trying to hire labor and those who might be hired. As much as capitalists might desire it, individuals do not enter the labor market automatically. Throughout the history of capitalism many have resisted prostituting themselves in labor markets. As Marx showed in his analysis of "primitive" accumulation, capital had to use considerable force and violence merely to create labor markets. (Marx 1867b, Chapters 27-28) We also know that the obstacles that capitalists had to overcome in those days have continued ever since. Time and again, across the globe people have found ways to survive *without* entering the labor market. From hanging on to land affording subsistence, through direct appropriation and emigration, millions have done their best to avoid being pushed through this doorway to exploitation and alienation.

For many years in the 19th Century, Marx and Engels saw the attachment to land in places such as Poland as something forced, through laws and practices of serfdom. Later, study of the Russian *mir* and other agrarian peoples revealed to them how attachment could be a source not only of resistance to the depredations of capitalism but of alternatives to it. (Shanin, 1983) Such was the resistance faced by Soviet state-capitalist planners who, when they were able, imposed collectivization to maximize the imposition of work and the collection of a surplus to finance industrialization. Where they, and their client administrations, were less successful – because of fierce resistance, as in East Germany in 1953, Hungary and Poland in 1956 – large numbers of peasants succeeded in avoiding the labor market.

This continues to be the case in Poland, to some degree, as evidenced by two phenomena. The first is the difficulty some employers have in recruiting workers from the countryside. During a visit to Poznań in 2012, one of us heard stories about how employers had to provide daily bus service to distant villages to obtain workers. One example is an Amazon warehouse located in the countryside whose managers send buses to collect workers in villages and towns as much as 100 km away. The weekly costs of transporting those workers was reduced by having them work 10 hours a day, four days a week. The stories reminded us of the situation in Detroit after the uprisings in 1967 and 1968 where the auto companies of that Motor City sent out buses each morning to make sure rebellious young workers actually showed up for their jobs. (They did, but they carried their struggles with them from the streets to become the cutting edge of resistance inside the factories.) (Georgakas & Surkin, 1975) The second phenomenon is the effort to get farmers to leave the land, especially in Eastern Poland, through what capitalist policy makers like to

call “structural reform”. There, where the concentration of land holding and the conversion of family farming to capitalist agribusiness is less advanced than in the Western part of the country, policy makers both within Poland and those associated with organizations such as the European Union, the OECD and IMF lament Polish government policies that facilitate staying on the land and call for them to be changed. In a recent interview, for example, Daria Zakharova, IMF mission chief for Poland, argued that the Polish government should “phase out taxation incentives and retirement privileges that encourage people to continue small-scale farming”. Such policies, he argued in IMF-speak would “help workers’ transition out of agriculture and into higher productivity sectors, such as manufacturing and services.” (IMF Survey, 2016)

Resistance to labor markets, as the example of Detroit makes clear, has continued even among people successfully forced off their land. One form of resistance was emigration from available rural and urban jobs to new lands open to settlement. Such emigration from Europe, including Poland, constituted much of the history of the American frontiers, from Canada, through the United States to the Pampas of Argentina. But also, constituting less of an escape, has been emigration from one labor market to another. Just as capitalists have long sought to play emigrating workers against local workers, e.g., Germans against Poles in the 18th and 19th Centuries, Poles against German or English workers today, so have workers used mobility to resist bad labor market conditions, e.g., low wages, scanty benefits and dangerous working conditions, to take advantage of better ones, with higher compensation, better benefits and less danger. As we saw in the first part of this note, Marx and Engels were well aware of how Polish emigrants carried their militancy into other countries. More recently, between 2004 and 2007, 1.27 million workers left Poland, most moving West to better labor markets. (Gajewski, 2015, p. 6)

Within cities, amongst diverse markets for many different kinds of labor, resistance to labor markets has continued. This has been obvious in the so-called labor movement, where workers have organized unions to fight for recognition, collective bargaining and then better contracts. Resistance has been less obvious, but no less persistent in such phenomena as individual young people dropping out of schools – organized mainly to prepare them for the labor market – and into the streets and by squatters who have seized abandoned buildings and organized their living arrangements so only some have to hold waged jobs while others arrange their collective lives outside the labor market. Such struggles are widespread and have formed an important tactic among the young (and sometimes among the old) in resisting labor markets and other aspects of contemporary capitalism. In Italy they are known as “social centers”, and where the squatters have been numerous enough and well enough organized to hold on to properties they have seized, they have created pirate radio stations, e.g., Radio Alicia, and computer networks, e.g., the European Counter-Network, linking such efforts across the country and to the wider world. During the previously mentioned visit to Poland in 2012, one of us visited such “squats”, Syrena in Warsaw and Rozbrat in Poznań. In many cases, various forms of government-provided income have been used to support such resistance, e.g., student stipends, social security, unemployment compensation or welfare payments.

This kind of resistance has forced capital, again and again, to make such modes of living outside the labor market difficult. Misrepresented as delinquency or criminal trespass, such refusals have been outlawed by the state via laws against truancy, vagabondage and squatting. The state has also withheld or reduced sources of unwaged income such as unemployment compensation or welfare. Marx and Engels’ analysis suggests that such contemporary reductions, just like attacks on the Poor Laws in England in the 19th Century are aimed, like the anti-farmer policy changes called for by Zakharova, at increasing pressure on people to enter the labor market. In recent years, according to IndexMundi, such has been the case in Poland where “the total transfer amount received by the population participating in unemployment benefits and active labor market programs” as a share of their total income was lowered from 2005 to 2007 and has been kept low ever since. (IndexMundi, online) This has been particularly true for young workers, where the already low percentage of those eligible for unemployment benefits has dropped almost continuously after 2009. (Gajewski, 2015, p. 16) Those who have taken care of themselves by putting otherwise abandoned buildings to good use have been confronted by increased state efforts to evict them from their refuges. One example is Wałbrzych, a de-industrialized city where conditions have driven families to squatting in dozens of flats (Szum TV, 2011)

With the imposition of work being the most basic vehicle for organizing capitalist society, policy makers have a difficult task balancing their need to impose work versus the need for a sufficient number of unemployed workers to keep the employed in line with the threat of job loss and poverty. Thus, in Poland, we find the usual careful measuring of the “unemployment rate” and “labor force participation” by government agencies and the same, equally careful, assessment of the relationship between those numbers and changes in wages and degrees of unrest,

both on the job and off. Capitalist policy makers must constantly adjust policies in response to challenges from both employed and unemployed that disrupt their planned modes of expanded reproduction. At times, for example, they pursue policies that increase unemployment. Before learning from John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946) how to use state fiscal and monetary policies to manipulate the demand for labor, individual capitalists responded to worker threats to their profits and control by cutting back existing operations, by laying off workers, and by refusing to invest – all of which raised unemployment. They responded to more profitable conditions by expanding investment and expanding employment. Since grasping Keynesian methods, the state has acted at all levels, from the local to the supranational, to “fine tune” the demand for labor and to manipulate levels of employment and unemployment and with them the growth of wages. We can call the active pursuit of higher levels of employment a “development” strategy, one that fosters more unemployment an “underdevelopment” strategy. In the current neoliberal period, underdevelopment-as-strategy has been deployed not only in so-called “underdeveloped” capitalist countries, but also in so-called “developed” ones, such as the United States and Europe. In country after country in recent years, policy makers have seized upon crises in debt to impose austerity, high unemployment, and falling living standards as punitive measures against workers, seeking to force them to accept ever lower wages and ever more onerous working conditions.

However, keeping in mind that those policy makers usually restrict their definition of the “unemployed” to those actively looking for jobs, Marx and Engels provided us with a more accurate characterization of all of those not currently employed for wages (or salaries) in their definition of “the reserve army of labor”. That definition included those looking for jobs (the “floating” part of the reserve), but also those who might look (the “latent”, e.g., subsistence peasants, housewives, children) and those who would probably never look (the “stagnant” and “lumpen” parts, e.g., the crippled, the aged, criminals). (Marx, 1867b, Chapter 25) All of the people included in those three categories were, in 19th Century terms, *unwaged* (the wage being the dominant form of payment for labor power).

The unwaged, just like the waged, have always had to be *managed*. Why? Not only because they could be troublesome – protesting their poverty – but to make sure of their availability, either immediately or at some future date when they were needed. In other words, capital has tried to ensure that their various methods of unwaged survival produce and reproduce labor-power, i.e., their ability and willingness to work. In the 19th Century, besides the kind of anti-vagabondage laws mentioned above, such management was accomplished with a modicum of poor laws (parish relief) complemented, when necessary, by force. In boom times, Marx argued that for the most part capital left the reproduction of labor-power to the workers themselves. (Marx, 1867b, Chapter 24) In periods of crisis, however, in an era in which rising unemployment often meant starvation or death by untreated illness, guns and the gibbet were required to contain working class uprisings.

In the years since their writings, when and where workers have succeeded in freeing children and many women from dangerous waged labor, capital has been forced to intervene more systematically. Capitalists have sought to retain control over unwaged workers through mass schooling, the family and the welfare state – all of which provide the means of “management” primarily through the structuring of schools, homes and access to unwaged income in ways designed to turn daily activities into the unwaged work of producing labor-power – thus paralleling the production of other commodities.

Although methods have changed and new institutions have been built, resistance has persisted. When students have been able to organize effectively, they have been able to change the school curriculum from job training to better meet their own needs instead of those of future employers. When women have been able to organize effectively, they have achieved greater independence, more control over their work and less of it. They have, for example, been able to reduce their work-load by gaining access to contraception and to compensation for child bearing and child rearing. For example, in Poland, despite bans on some kinds of abortion, women have been successful in reducing the fertility rate from roughly 2 in 1989 to 1.29 in 2014. Those gains have been won against capitalist-imposed restriction of access to contraception (often backed by the church – ever greedy to add to its tithable flocks) and in making use of pro-natalist laws designed to induce women to have more children, with all the work that entails. In the case of welfare recipients, localized high levels of chronic unemployment and poverty, have resulted in collective urban rebellions that capital has only been able to put down by armed force – as in the central city uprisings of the 1960s in the United States, the Brixton “riots” of the 1980s in London, the “révolte des banlieues” in France in 2005 or the more recent protests in the US, spear-headed by the Black Lives Matter movement. Where the revolts have been powerful enough, armed repression has sometimes been followed by concessions aimed at

preventing future uprisings, e.g., a dramatic expansion of food stamps in the US in the late 1960s, the reversal of food price increases in Poland after the uprisings of 1970, 1976, 1980.

But, over time, where gains have been won, capitalist counter-attacks to re-impose more work have not been long in coming. Where students won changes in curriculum, academic structures of rewards worked to turn once radical courses into tame, tolerable and optional elements of degree programs. In the US, although the central city risings of the 1960s won a vast expansion in food stamps that fed millions, the decades since have witnessed recurrent efforts, often barely fended off by renewed protest, to cut back those subsidies to the consumption and well-being of their recipients. Where women in the US won access to contraception, social conservative “pro-life” groups (often rooted in some church) immediately launched counter-attacks to reverse those gains. In the United States struggles around these issues continue to be waged in state after state. As we are writing these lines, we are reading reports of a church-backed Polish government plan to extend its bans on abortion to almost all cases of unwanted pregnancy, including incest and rape. Fortunately, we are also reading of the “Black Monday” protests by tens of thousands of Polish women dressed in black, boycotting work, shutting down offices, universities and schools in 90 cities and taking to the street in protest to block that plan. (At last report, the protests were successful in forcing the Polish government to set aside its plan. One can only hope that the momentum of protest will succeed in eliminating existing bans.) (Berendt, 2016) (Lyman and Berendt, 2016)

We have also noted contradictions in capitalist policies being put forward for Poland. From the point of view of capitalist policy makers there is a serious long run “demographic” problem haunting the Polish labor market: a below-replacement fertility rate combined with outmigration means a shrinking labor force and an aging population. Labor supply growing more slowly than the demand puts upward pressure on wages and downward pressure on profits, strengthens labor and undermines capital. Within this context, banning abortions, might be rationalized as an encouragement to increased fertility and increased labor supply. But while bans certainly result in more work for women outside the waged labor force – either it increases the costs, time and risks involved in getting an illegal abortion or travel for a foreign one, or, if it results in more children, it makes for more work in the home – it also makes women less able to participate in the labor market. Declining unemployment in recent years has already put upward pressure on wages, making capitalist policy makers anxious to increase the labor force participation rate of Polish women. As a result, they have been recommending reducing ineffective pro-natalist policies, such as family cash benefits under the new “Family 500+” program that began in April 2016, that encourage women to stay home and replacing them with increased child care (that, it is hoped, will also raise fertility), *not* reducing the statutory retirement and pension age for women and lowering marginal tax rates for second earners in families, usually women. (OECD, 2016, pp. 17-20) (IMF, 2016c, 2016d, 2017) Given that Polish women are as well educated as men, and “have a longer potential working lifespan”, policy makers see them as “an important underutilized source of qualified labor”. In other words, they are seen as a significant part of the “latent” reserve army that policy changes would shift into the “active” part of the reserve and hence into directly exploitable additions to the waged labor force. (IMF, 2016c, pp. 21-36)

A more general assessment of contestation of these kinds of relationships in Poland we leave to you, our readers. Just scanning the European Union’s 2013 document on *Your social security rights in Poland*, suggests that the terrains of likely conflict over the imposition and conditions of unwaged work are multiple. We do note that there is no mention, whatsoever, of access to contraception and abortion – an obvious, present terrain of struggle. At any rate, it seems clear to us that not only are the possibilities of crisis in **M – C(LP)** and the forces that tended to bring on such crises that Marx and Engels identified still with us, but with the growth in the strength and organizational abilities of workers, with the concessions won from capital – both in the private sector and from the state – those possibilities and forces have multiplied, making crisis even more likely than before.

Turning now to step #2, . . . P . . . C’, let us evaluate, once again, the possible usefulness of only one aspect of Marx and Engels’ theory of crises – this time in production – and of our reinterpretation of it: the struggle against work. We see the avoidance of the labor market discussed above as one form of the refusal of work, of waged work anyway. But the two great domains where refusal is a recurrent issue are: 1) Marx and Engels’ primary concern: points of production (**P**) of saleable, and potentially profitable, commodities (**C’**), which capital has multiplied far beyond the factories, mines, fields and sailing vessels of the 19th Century to include all of those places employing workers who provide services to both businesses and consumers, and 2) a set of work places they largely ignored, namely all of those where people’s activities were organized to produce the singular commodity labor-power.

Given the exploitation and alienation unavoidably produced by what Marx called capital's vampire-like thirst for ever more labor, the struggle against work plays out in multiple dimensions. Struggles to minimize the amount of one's time and energy given up to employers were of central concern to Marx in Chapter 10 of Volume I of *Capital* on the "working day". There, he analyzed how workers were ultimately able to block capital's efforts to make them work longer and begin to hammer down their hours of work. Those blows struck at the heart of absolute surplus value and profit. Failing to impose more work by lengthening hours, capital turned to the substitution of machines, whose rhythms they could control, to make workers toil more intensely. Workers, of course, resisted – from the out-and-out tool breaking of the Luddites to covert sabotage and collective slow-downs. All forms of sabotage, whether undertaken by individuals or by collaborating groups, reduce the amount of work imposed, increase the costs of production and harm profits. Whether the use of machines succeeds in making workers work faster, the reorganization that usually accompanies their introduction has also been used to undercut workers' self-organization by providing new opportunities to pit workers against each other – a long-standing ploy to divert frustration and antagonism into intra-class conflict, e.g., creating competition through which workers are induced to work harder. One means for heightening intra-class competition and conflict has been national identity. When Polish workers trade lousy labor market conditions at home for what appear to be better conditions abroad, they often suffer nationalist hostility and discrimination (both at work and in communities). In the UK, for example, attacking Polish and other foreign workers was used to gather support for Brexit. In the US, Trump's attacks on Mexican workers as criminals, rapists and job-stealers played a key role in winning him the Presidential election. Although national and ethnic solidarity provide essential support for such emigrant workers, the only effective means for subverting such tactics is by forming new alliances across whatever differences capital has tried to play upon and collaborate in collective resistance to more work. (Workers Initiative and AngryWorkersWorld, 2014) Some mix of the above forms of resistance are virtually universal. Few are those who are paid enough, or find work that they love enough – regardless of being overseen by an employer – to throw themselves whole-heartedly into their jobs.

In such circumstances, Marx and Engels supported workers' demands for access to the vote, through the People's Charter, which would help them get laws passed limiting work, such as the Factory Acts, and for the recognition of unions through which they could negotiate hours and conditions of work directly with their employers. The battle for the Charter (1838-1858) failed and for a long time unions were outlawed. Eventually, through the Reform Act of 1867, some British workers did obtain suffrage and in 1871 unions were decriminalized. Faced with unions – first mostly craft unions, later industrial unions acting as a collective force demanding, among other things, less work – the functionaries of capital developed several ways to neutralize them. First, despite legal recognition, they often deployed paramilitary, police and military forces to crush strikes and protests. Second, they used ethnic prejudice, e.g., by pitting Irish workers against English ones. Third, they used the government to directly take over and control a union's organizational apparatus, turning it into an arm of the state. This last was the dominant mode of control deployed by Soviet-style state capitalist regimes such as the Polish People's Republic, and has been widely used in other kinds of dictatorial regimes that have severely punished overt worker protests. This has long been the case in Mexico where state control of unions has undermined efforts by workers to raise their wages and improve their working conditions. Just as European companies pit lower waged Polish workers against higher waged ones in Western Europe, so American companies have pitted lower waged Mexican workers against higher waged American ones.

Under such circumstances, Polish workers' struggles against work, like that of workers in similar circumstances elsewhere, were generally organized covertly. Although underground, such struggles were often surprisingly effective at subverting capitalist attempts to impose work. This was true throughout the Soviet Union and its East European satellites and was a major source of the low levels of productivity in both agriculture and manufacturing, long cited by Western critics. Reports of the negative impact on agricultural production were common. (Clever, 1977) Concrete examples of work refusal and sabotage circulated in *samizdat* literature, in a few exceptional reports such as Miklos Haraszti's account of the subversive struggles of piece workers in Hungary (Haraszti, 1975), and, after Glasnost, more openly in magazines such as *Ogonyok*. Such invisible resistance fermented the discontent that repeatedly blew up in the face of Soviet-style state capitalist planners, exploding in upheavals such as those in East Germany in 1953, Hungary and Poland in 1956, Czechoslovakia in 1968, Poland in 1970, 1976, 1980, gestated *Solidarność* in both the cities and countryside of Poland and ultimately brought down the whole state-capitalist system in 1989. The profound impact of such resistance on labor productivity became apparent once those countries were opened to competition from foreign corporations that had found more sophisticated ways of imposing work and extracting surplus labor from their workers. The upshot, especially after the imposition of shock therapy in Poland, are well known: myriad plant closings, deindustrialization, massive layoffs and high unemployment – all of

which constituted global capitalist revenge on the resistance of Polish workers. In the midst of these multi-pronged efforts to regain control over the Polish working class, the functionaries of capital – acting within Poland and from the offices of those supranational state institutions overseeing the “transition”, i.e., a change in the mix of planning and markets – sought to revamp the role of unions using the more sophisticated capitalist methods of instrumentalization through laws and collective bargaining contracts.

In the wake of 1989 despite such attacks, Polish workers retained enough power of resistance to force capitalists and the state to concede some protections and put some limits on exploitation. Three places where this would seem to have been the case are 1) the preservation of the 1974 Polish Labor Code, 2) union recognition for 17% of those employed in medium and large enterprises, and 3) the creation at the national level of the Tripartite Commission for Social and Economic Affairs in 1994, replaced in 2015 by Council of Social Dialogue (CSD) and the creation at the voivodship level of “social dialogue commissions” in 2002, replaced in 2015 by Voivodships Councils of Social Dialogue (VCSD) where employers are forced to sit down with union leaders and government officials to negotiate capital/labor relations. Let's look briefly at these three phenomena.

1) The Labor Code, despite repeated amendments, has been a continuing source of irritation for capitalists, both domestic and foreign, who find labor and employment laws far too rigid for their tastes. The Code contains clear cut limits to the hours of work that can be imposed and mandates equally clear periods without work. This is, of course, true throughout Europe because, despite their best efforts, capitalists operating in the area have never been able to achieve the freedom of corporations in the US to rig work schedules to fit corporate needs, or to fire workers at will, for whatever reason, including slacking on the job. Capitalist response to these limitations, however, has tended to eliminate jobs subject to such rigidities and increase the number of precarious jobs providing them with greater flexibility in imposing work. Moreover, in the wake of the economic crisis of 2006-2008, a so-called “Anti-crisis package” was enacted into law – including changes in the Labor Code – with considerable union connivance, that gave employers even greater power to alter and control both the contractual framework and the amount of work being imposed. (Gajewski, 2015) As a result, in Poland the proportion of unstable, precarious jobs, e.g., temporary, under “civil contract”, and with few or no benefits, have risen to over 25%. (Arak et al, 2014, p. 4) Such enhanced control undoubtedly helped capitalists limit the local impact on their profits of the global crisis of the time – while imposing costs on workers of greater subordination of their time and energy and of all the psychological uncertainty and stress that accompany such changes. Conflicts and struggles over work-time, and hence over capitalist efforts to extract ever more absolute surplus value have continued in Poland and can be expected to be an important factor in future crises.

2) The trade union “connivance” mentioned in the last paragraph refers to the flip side of recognition. On the one hand, the legal recognition of trade unions and trade union alliances, and their presence in negotiations over employment and social issues is a measure of workers' power. On the other hand, they function like formal political parties that limit their partisans' activities to periodic voting, sapping energy from more direct action. Both provide means for taming, even harnessing working class struggles. Such means have been widely deployed in the United States and Western Europe. For example, although particular arrangements vary from country to country, carefully structured labor contracts between employers and unions limit legal worker struggles to periods of contract negotiations. The rest of the time, under the terms of the contract, trade union bureaucrats are obligated to help managers impose the terms of the contract on their own members – even as employers are doing their best to renege on their own contractual obligations. (Glberman, 1952, 1955) (It was no surprise that the Nobel Prize in Economics in 2016 was awarded to economists working on “contract” theory – because, the awarding committee claims, “contracts help us to be cooperative and trusting.”) (Ellingsen, 2016) Despite being representative of only about 17 percent of all people with stable employment, the trade unions have gone along with amendments to the Labor Code and other changes in social policy that have made it easier to impose work and harder for workers to resist.

3) The thing that has struck us most in official representations of the purposes of the Tripartite Commission (now CSD) and the voivodship councils (VCSD) has been the way in which they have been explicitly given the mandate to limit social conflict. In the case of the TC, we find it stated that the forum was created “in order to conciliate the interests of employees, the interests of employers and public welfare. The aim of the Commission's activity is to achieve and maintain social peace.” In the case of the VCSD, we find that they are intended to help “to solve many problems on the territorial level in the situation of threats connected with existence of possible socio-economic conflicts in the region.” (Ministry of Labor and Social Policy, n.d.) Agreement with these motivations among trade union members has been manifested not only by continued participation but by judgements on the organizations

effectiveness. In one report, *NSZZ Solidarność* judged only the work teams of the TC to have been useful. Useful at doing what? In “defusing tensions within specific industries”. (Czarzasty, 2006, p. 16) In principle, the trade unions whose representatives sit on these forums, are not only “obliged to communicate agreed regulations to [their] members . . . but also to guarantee their support” (Sula, 2010, p. 211) Such a structure parallels the kind of cooptation of trade unions as contract enforcers cited above. At least one analysis of the actual functioning of the TC/CSD – its role in the creation of the “Anti-Crisis Package” – suggests that because there is nothing in the acts creating the TC that compels the government to follow its suggestions, the “social dialogue” organized by these institutions is an illusion hiding actual government monopoly over decision making. (*Ibid.*, p. 218) Significantly, the participating unions (*Solidarność*, *OPZZ* and *FZZ*) have never represented all workers but primarily those in the public sector. So represented in the TC/CSD and VCSD are mainly the interests of workers in health care, school and mines.

Finally, let us examine step #3: C' – M'. In the body of our text, we examine the array of possibilities, identified by Marx and Engels, that capitalist attempts to sell their commodities might fail, and then those forces tending to turn potential failure into reality. The possibilities and forces were many in the 19th Century, and continue to be numerous in our 21st Century. Which, we ask ourselves, and to what degree, have the many possible sources of failure-to-sell been a source of crisis for Polish capitalism in recent years? We want to differentiate here between chronic problems, such as limited consumption demand due to wages, salaries and other forms of working class income being held down by capitalist efforts to maximize profits, and those whose dimensions swelled during or in the wake of the global crisis of the late 2000s.

On the whole, by all reports, Polish capitalists were more successful than most other parts of Europe in fending off crisis, keeping output and employment growing. Despite a brief slowdown in 2012-2014, GDP growth has averaged about 3.25% since 2008 reaching 3.9 in 2015. (IMF, 2017) The obvious question about sales is “for what markets?” The main answers are 1) domestic investment and consumption markets whose growth offset declining foreign demand due to the wider economic crisis in Europe and 2) monetary policies that offset financial instability in the EU and allowed a continued expansion of credit that supported the expansion of both investment and consumption demand.

Investment demand continued to grow because of accommodating monetary policies, credit expansion and an inflow of funds from the European Union, the IMF and private investment. Domestic consumption demand grew because of expanded hiring (even if much of that hiring involved low-paid workers in temporary, low- or no-benefit jobs), increases in government transfer and subsidy programs (such as the “Family 500+” and “Home for the Young” programs), and minimum wage hikes. (IMF, 2016b) (Kuniewicz, 2015) (Average real wages and real consumption grew even faster because of deflation.) So although more full-time, higher wage employment would have benefited the working class more, there was enough improvement to overall income to keep up consumption demand, i.e., a market for C(MS)'.

With respect to monetary policy, the Polish government, with support from the EU and the IMF, took steps to insulate financial markets in Poland from instability in the rest of Europe. Domestically, the Polish government held down inflation then moved against deflation, imposed increased supervision on banks, floated the zloty, implemented counter-cyclical, stimulating monetary policy in response to slowdowns in exports due to the crises of its trading partners, and started cutting back expenditures to limit public debt while taking steps to increase tax receipts. (IMF, 2009) It also acted as lender-of-last-resort to banks, e.g., rescuing the SK Bank in 2015. (NBP, 2016, pp. 51-52)

Membership in the EU has resulted in substantial net capital flows into the country. In 2014, for example, EU spending in Poland amounted to €17.436 billion whereas Poland's contribution to the EU budget was only € 3,526 billion. The net inflow of €13.9 billion made Poland the biggest recipient of the EU budget. As percentages of Polish gross national income, these amounts are small, but their net effect has been to dampen the circulation of negative shocks from crisis elsewhere in the Union and beyond. Contributions from five different EU funds, e.g., European Regional Development fund and the Cohesion Fund, have financed some 125 projects. The bulk of those projects, ranging from infrastructure development to tourist attractions, are aimed at so-called less developed areas, e.g., the Eastern voivodes. The second largest number of projects are aimed at “rural development”, i.e., supporting farmer income and modernization, that is to say encouraging exodus from the land and the growth of capitalist agribusiness.

Moreover, as Polish policy makers have progressively approached meeting the criteria for admission to the Eurozone, private investment income has flowed in from multinational corporations.

The IMF's support has primarily taken the form of a series of loans (2009, 2010, 2011, 2013, 2015, 2017) under its new Flexible Credit Line (FCL) created in response to the international financial crisis and intended primarily to provide an emergency source of financing if needed. Although the IMF touts FCL loans as being free of the usual conditionality clauses with which it has battered governments to make policy changes that impose the costs of crisis on workers, FCL loans must be applied for and are only granted if the applying governments "qualify", i.e., already manage class relations using methods of which the IMF approves. That the Polish government has qualified five times shows that the IMF finds its managerial methods quite acceptable.

Among policy makers, their greatest worries about potential crisis in Poland appear to be focused on continued economic and political instability in the EU, on their Eastern borders, e.g., conflict in the Ukraine and recession in Russia, and now uncertainties associated with Brexit and with the Trump administration in the US. Because Polish policy has been ever more closely tied to the EU, with the objective of fulfilling sufficient preparatory criteria to permit abandoning the zloty and joining the Eurozone, past success in avoiding the circulation of crisis is not assumed for the future. The perceived risks of crisis are thus the same as those of their European partners: financial instability and stagnation in the growth of industry and trade. (IMF, 2016a) (IMF, 2016d) (IMF, 2017) (OECD, 2016) In class terms, that policy makers rarely use, the potential for crisis in Poland is closely tied to prospects for those class struggles elsewhere in Europe to circulate to Poland, as they have from Greece to Spain and Portugal. As we discuss in Part V.d of our essay, Marx and Engels highlighted how crisis and class struggle could circulate through and across the circuits of capital. This was something they not only analyzed but participated in. The greatest potential threat to Polish capitalism, and to the circuits of capital in Europe more generally, would be a perfect storm of resistance and demands for alternatives akin to those that swept Europe in 1848 and 1968. As always, we would expect the forms of struggle and ideas for alternatives to change with the evolution of the class composition, but given the experiences of the last twenty years, such a storm is imaginable.

The storm has been gathering for a long time. From the point of view of Polish capital, they were, at first, dark clouds over the horizon. Anti-IMF/World-Bank demonstrations in Berlin in 1988 and the first counter-summit against the G7 in Paris in 1989 took place just as Poland was gaining independence from Soviet domination. In 1990, one of us participated in a massive gathering in Venice of young activists from all over Europe titled Europe Against the Bosses, another counter-summit to a meeting of the G7 in that city. In the wake of the Zapatista organized Continental and then Intercontinental Encounters in 1996, People's Global Action was formed and moved against the WTO in Geneva. Following that effort, a whole series of massive collective actions were undertaken beginning in 1999 with the June 18th Carnival against Capital (J18) organized in dozens of cities around Europe, as far East as Minsk and Prague, and the Battle of Seattle (N30) on November 30th in the US. The J18 slogan "Our Resistance is as Transnational as Capital" expressed not anti-globalization – as the movement was sometimes called – but *alter*-globalization, dedication to building a non-capitalist global community. For several years, the alter-globalization movement organized protest demonstrations against the meetings of capital's supranational coordinating bodies, especially the IMF, the World Bank and the G7/8. These included the September 2000 anti-capitalist actions in Prague which drew some 15,000 protestors from all over both Western and Eastern Europe. The apex of those efforts were the demonstrations of over 100,000 against the G8 in Genoa, Italy in 2001. But two factors meant that apex also turned out to be the beginning of the end of that kind of transnational protest. The first factor was the violent police repression of the demonstration that led to two days of bloody confrontation and the killing of one protestor. The second was the realization that while the years of protest had built international networks of solidarity and cooperation, they had failed to change the neoliberal policies being foisted on the world's working class.

Although there have been scattered protests, gathering activists from many nations, in the years since 2001, both capital's tactics and workers' reactions have shifted. The widespread financial crisis of 2007-2009, subsequent general crisis throughout the circuit of capital, especially in many OECD countries, and the resultant crisis of debt repayment in Greece, Spain and Portugal, provided capital with an opportunity to impose the same neoliberal austerity methods it had deployed against workers in the Global South during the international debt crisis of the 1980s and 1990s on those in the Global North. Differential degrees of imposition have allowed capitalist policy makers to divide and, so far, to undermine the development of transnational resistance. While Occupy Wall Street burned brightly for a while – igniting other fires in other places – its fires have dimmed and the embers smolder.

Workers hardest hit in places such as Greece have fought back fiercely, from the streets to the ballot box (SYRIZA), elsewhere less austere methods and anti-Greek propaganda have been mostly successful at dissuading workers from rising up in support of those on the cutting edge of resistance. Added to that divide and conquer tactic has been the strategy of pitting the tides of refugees from wars in the Mid-East, against local workers – a strategy that resembles the efforts to pit East European workers against West European workers in the wake of 1989. While, therefore, multiple storms of struggle are disrupting capital accumulation, there will be no “perfect storm” until the transnational anti-capitalist movement discovers new and more effective methods to respond to and overcome current capitalist attacks.

Harry Cleaver & Peter Bell,
Austin, Texas & New York, New York
October 2016

REFERENCES

(NB: this set of references includes both those for the “Note” above and those for the essay for which it is a preface.

Arak, Piotr, Lewandowski, Piotr, Zakowiecki, Piotr, (2014) “Dual Labor Market in Poland – Proposals for Overcoming the Deadlock”, Instytut Badań Strukturalnych Policy Paper 01.

Barr, Monika (2010) *Historians and Nationalism: East-Central Europe in the Nineteenth Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Batou, Jean (1991) *Between Development and Underdevelopment : the precocious attempts at industrialization of the periphery, 1800-1870*, Genève: Libr. Droz.

Bell, Peter F. (1977) “Marxist Theory, Class Struggle and the Crisis of Capitalism” in Jesse Schwartz (ed.), *The Subtle Anatomy of Capitalism*. Santa Monica: Goodyear.

Berendt, Joanna (2016) “Protestors in Poland Rally against Proposal for Total Abortion Ban”, *New York Times*, October 3.

Caffentzis, George (1989) *Clipped Coins, Abused Words and Civil Government: John Locke's Philosophy of Money*, New York: Autonomedia.

Ciołkosz, Adam (1965) “Karl Marx and the Polish Insurrection of 1863”, *The Polish Review*, Vol. 10, No. 4 (Autumn).

Cleaver, Harry (1977) "Food, Famine and the International Crisis," *Zerowork*, No. 2, pp. 7-69.

Cleaver, Harry (2011) *Polityczne czytanie Kapitału*, Poznań: Oficyna Bractwa Trojka. Originally, *Reading Capital Politically*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1979 and London: AK Press/Anti-theses, 2000.

Cleaver, Harry (1982) “Karl Marx: Economist or Revolutionary?” in Suzanne W. Helburn and David F. Bramhall (eds) *Marx, Schumpeter & Keynes*, M.E. Sharpe, Armonk, 1986.

Cleaver (2009) “Trayectorias de autonomía”, in Claudio Albertani, et. al (eds) *La autonomía posible: Reinención de la política y emancipación*, México: Universidad Autónoma de la Ciudad de México.

Cleaver, Harry (2017) *Rupturing the Dialectic: The Struggle against Work, Money and Financialization*, New York: AK Press.

Colchester, Max (2017) “Poland’s Pitch to Brexit Bankers: You Might as Well Move Somewhere Cheap”, *The Wall Street Journal*, Jan 24.

Author's Note to Polish Readers

Czarzasty, Jan (2006) *Capacity building for social dialogue in Poland*, European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions.

Ellingsen, Tore, et. al. (2016) "Contract Theory: The Prize in Economic Theory 2016", Popular Science Background, The Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences.

Engels, Frederick (1843) "Outline of a Critique of Political Economy" in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works (MECW)*, Vol. 3, 1843-44, New York: International Publishers.

Engels, Frederick (1845a) "The Condition of the Working Class in England", *MECW*, Vol. 4, Marx and Engels: 1844-45, New York: International Publishers, 1975.

Engels, Frederick (1845b) "Speeches in Elberfeld," (Feb. 8, 1845), *MECW*, Vol. 4, Marx and Engels: 1844-45, New York: International Publishers, 1975.

Engels, Frederick (1848a) "On the Polish Question, Speech by Mr. Frederick Engels", *MECW*, Vol. 6, Marx and Engels: 1845-48, New York: International Publishers, 1976.

Engels, Frederick (1848b) "The Frankfort Assembly Debates the Polish Question", *MECW*, Vol. 7, Marx-Engels:1848.

Engels, Frederick (1849) "Democratic Pan-Slavism", *MECW*, Vol. 8, Marx and Engels: 1848-1849.

Engels, Frederick (1866) "What have the working classes to do with Poland?" *The Commonwealth*, Nos. 159, 160 and 165, March 24, 31 and May 5 in *MECW*, Vol. 20, Marx and Engels: 1864-1868.

Engels, Frederick (1892) "Preface" to the 1892 English edition of *Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844*, *MECW*, Vol. 27. Engels: 1890-1895. New York: International Publishers, 1990.

Gajewski, Pawel (2015) *Labour Market Measures in Poland 2008-13: The Crisis and Beyond*, Geneva: International Labor Office.

Gardiner, Monica M. (1920) *Kościuszko: A Biography*, London: George Allen & Unwin LTD. (Online by Project Gutenberg)

Georgakas, Dan and Surkin, Marvin (1975) *Detroit, I do Mind Dying: A Study in Urban Revolution*, New York: St. Martin's Press.

Glaberman, Martin (1952) *Punching Out*, Detroit: Correspondence Publishing Committee.

Glaberman, Martin (1955) *Union Committeemen and Wildcat Strikes*, Detroit: Correspondence Publishing Committee.

Haraszti, Miklos (1977) *A Worker in a Worker's State*, London, Penguin.

IMF (2009) Press release: IMF Executive Board Approves US\$20.58 Billion Arrangement for Poland Under the Flexible Credit Line, May 6.

IMF (2013) Press Release: IMF Executive Board Approves New Two-Year US\$33.8 Billion Flexible Credit Line Arrangement for Poland, January 18.

IMF (2016a) "Poland: Staff Concluding Statement of 2016 Article IV Mission, May 16.

IMF (2016b) *Cross-Country Report on Minimum Wages: Selected Issues*, IMF Country Report No. 16/151, June.

IMF (2016c) *Republic of Poland, Selected Issues*, IMF Country Report No. 16/211, July 10.

IMF (2016d) "IMF Executive Board Concludes Article IV Consultation with the Republic of Poland", July 5.

IMF (2017) *Republic of Poland: Arrangement under the Flexible Credit Line and Cancellation of the Current Arrangement – Press Release; Staff Report; and Statement by the Executive Director for the Republic of Poland*, January.

IMF Survey (2016) "Poland Strong Institutions a Must for Steady Growth", July 5.

Kuniewicz, Katarzyna (2015) "Home for the Young scheme affects prices of dwellings and sales volumes", REAS, February 5. (online)

Linebaugh, Peter (1976) "Karl Marx, the Theft of Wood, and Working-Class Composition: A Contribution to the Current Debate," *Crime and Social Justice.*, No. 6, fall-winter.

Linebaugh, Peter (1991) *The London Hanged: Crime and Civil Society in the Eighteen Century*, New York: Penguin, 1991.

Lissagaray, Propser-Olivier, *Histoire de la Commune de 1871*, Paris: La Découverte.

Luxemburg, Rosa (1898) "The Industrial Development of Poland" in Peter Hudis (ed) *The Complete Works of Rosa Luxemburg, Vol. 1: Economic Writings*, New York: Verso.

Lyman, Rick and Berendt, Joanna (2016) "Poland Steps Back from Stricter Anti-Abortion Law", *New York Times*, October 6.

Marx, Karl (1842) "Debates on Law on Thefts of Wood," in *MECW*, Vol. 1, Karl Marx: 1835-43, New York: International Publishers, 1975.

Karl Marx (1847) "The Poverty of Philosophy," in *MECW*, Vol. 6, 1845-1848. New York: International Publishers, 1976.

Marx, Karl (1848) *Political Writings, Volume One, The Revolutions of 1848*. New York: Vintage, 1974.

Marx, Karl. (1850b) "Class Struggles in France," in *MECW*, Vol. 10. New York: International Publishers.

Marx, Karl, (1852). *Political Writings, Volume Two, Surveys From Exile*. New York: Vintage, 1973.

Marx, Karl (1857) *Grundrisse*. New York: Vintage, 1973.

Marx, Karl (1859) *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*. New York: International Publishers 1970.

Marx, Karl (1861-1863) "Economic Manuscript of 1861-63" (*Theories of Surplus-Value*) *MECW*, Vol. 32, Marx: 1861-1863, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1989.

Marx, Karl (1865) "Value. Price and Profit", *MECW*, Vol. 20, Marx and Engels 1864-1868, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1985.

Marx, Karl (1867a) "Speech at the Polish Meeting in London", *MECW*, Vol. 20, Marx and Engels 1864-1868, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1985

Marx. Karl (1867b) *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume One. London: Penguin Classics, 1990.

Marx, Karl (1885). *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume Two, London: Penguin Books, 1978.

Marx, Karl (1893). *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*, Volume Three, London: Penguin Books, 1981.

Marx, Karl & Engels, Frederick. (1846) "The German Ideology" in *MECW*, Vol. 5. 1845-1848. New York: International Publishers, 1976.

Marx, Karl and Engels, Frederick (1848a) "The Communist Manifesto" in *MECW*, Vol. 6, 1845-1848. New York: International Publishers, 1976.

Marx, Karl and Engels, Frederick (1848b) "On the Polish Question", Speeches in Brussels on February 22, 1848, on the occasion of the Cracow Insurrection, in *MECW*, Vol. 6, 1845-1848. New York: International Publishers, 1976.

Marx, Karl and Engels, Frederick (1850) "Review, May to October [1850]" in *MECW*, Vol. 10. 1849-1851. New York: International Publishers, 1978.

Marx, Karl and Engels, Frederick (1858) *MECW*, Vol. 18, Marx & Engels: 1857-1862.

Marx, Karl and Engels, Frederick (1875) "For Poland", *MECW*, Vol. 24, Marx and Engels: 1874-83.

Marx, Karl and Engels, Frederick (1975) Frederick *Selected Correspondence*. Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1975.

Mehring, Franz (1962) *Karl Marx, The Story of His Life*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.

NBP or Narodowy Bank Polski (2016) *Financial Stability Report*, February.

Negri, Antonio (1982) *Marx Beyond Marx: Notebooks on the Grundrisse*, Forthcoming. New York: I. F. Bergin Press.

Nelson, Anita and Timmerman, Frans (eds) (2011) *Life without Money: Building Fair and Sustainable Economies*, London: Pluto Press

OECD (2016) *OECD Economic Surveys: Poland*, March.

Panzieri, Raniero (1961) "Sull'uso capitalistico delle macchine nel neocapitalismo," *Quaderni Rossi*, No. 1, pp. 53-72. 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.

Proudhon, Pierre J. (1861) *La Guerre et la Paix, Recherches sur le principe et la constitution du droit des gens*, Brussels.

Proudhon, Pierre J. (1863) *Si les traités de 1815 ont cessé d'exister? Actes du future congrès*, Paris: E. Dentu.

Schor, Juliet (1992) *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure*, New York: Basic Books.

Shanin, Teodor (ed) (1983) *Late Marx and the Russian Road: Marx and the Peripheries of Capitalism*, New York: Monthly Review Press.

Shores, Douglas B. (2014) *Kazimierz Pulaski: General of Two Nations*, San Diego: Create Space.

Skurnowicz, Joan S. (1991) "Lelewel in Polish Historiography in People's Poland", *The Polish Review*, Vol. XXXVI, No. 3, pp. 269-282.

Sula, Piotr (2010) "Role of social dialogue institution in the time of crisis. The case of Poland", Research Papers of Wrocław University of Economics, No. 136.

Szum TV, (2011), *Strajk matek*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2ygNHXqf9zo&t=3s>; Magda M., "Strajk matek. Walka przeciwko przymusowi pracy", w: *Przegląd Anarchistyczny*, nr 12, 2011, s. 193-202.

Author's Note to Polish Readers

Tronti, Mario (1964) "Lenin in England" in *Working Class Autonomy and the Crisis*, London: Red Notes and CSE, 1979, pp. 1-6. Originally in *Classe Operaio*, No. 1, Jan. 1964, pp. 1, 18-20. Republished in Mario Tronti, *Operai e Capitale*, Torino: Einaudi Editore, 1966, pp. 89-95.

Wennerlind, Carl (2011) *Casualties of Credit: The English Financial Revolution, 1620-1720*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Workers Initiative and AngryWorkersWorld, "Migrant Workers: Between Polish and English Nationalism – thoughts after the Mansfield Park attack", June 2014. (Online at libcom.org)

Zerowork: Political Materials 1, (1975). <http://www.zerowork.org/>