

The New Enclosures

Midnight Notes Collective

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... the historical movement which changes the producers into waged workers, appears on the one hand as their emancipation from serfdom and from the fetters of the guilds, and this side alone exists for our bourgeois historians. But on the other hand these new freedmen became sellers of themselves only after they had been robbed of all their own means of production and all the guarantees of existence offered by the old feudal arrangements. And the history of this, their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire.

- Karl Marx, *Capital*, Vol. I

The docile Sambo could and did become the revolutionary Nat Turner overnight. The slaves, under the leadership of those from the more complex African societies, fought and ran away, stole and feigned innocence, malingered on the job while seeming to work as hard as possible. And they lived to fight another day.

- George Rawick, *From Sundown to Sunup*

Glasnost, end of the cold war, united Europe, we are the world, save the Amazon Rain Forest . . . these are typical phrases of the day. They suggest an age of historic openness, globalism, and breakdown of political and economic barriers. In the midst of this expansiveness, however, Midnight Notes poses the issue of "The New Enclosures." For a corrosive secret is hidden in the gleaming idols of globalism, the end of the blocs and Gaian ecological consciousness: the last decade has seen the largest Enclosure of the worldly Common in history. Our articles reveal this secret in detail, as well as the resistance to it. This introduction explains the meaning and importance of Enclosures, both Old and New, in the planetary struggle of classes.

The Old Enclosures were a counter-revolutionary process whereby, after a century of high wages and breakdown of feudal authority, beginning in the late 1400s, farmers in England were expropriated from their land and commons by state officials and landlords. They were turned into paupers, vagabonds and beggars, and later into waged workers, while the land was put to work to feed the incipient international market for agricultural commodities.

According to the Marxist tradition, the Enclosures were the starting point of capitalist society. They were the basic device of "original accumulation" which created a population of workers "free" from any means of reproduction and thus compelled (in time) to work for a wage.

The Enclosures, however, are not a one time process exhausted at the dawn of capitalism. They are a regular return on the path of accumulation and a structural component of class struggle. Any leap in proletarian power demands a dynamic capitalist response: both the expanded appropriation of new resources and new labor power and the extension of capitalist relations, or else

capitalism is threatened with extinction. Thus, Enclosure is one process that unifies proletarians throughout capital's history, for despite our differences we all have entered capitalism through the same door: the loss of our land and of the rights attached to it, whether this loss has taken place in Front Mill, England, in southern Italy, in the Andes, on the Niger Delta, or in the Lower East Side of New York City.

The Apocalypse of the Trinity of Deals

Today, once again, the Enclosures are the common denominator of proletarian experience across the globe. In the biggest diaspora of the century, on every continent millions are being uprooted from their land, their jobs, their homes through wars, famines, plagues, and the IMF ordered devaluations (the four knights of the modern apocalypse) and scattered to the corners of the globe.

In Nigeria, for example, people currently are being thrown off communally-owned land by troops to make way for plantations owned and managed by the World Bank. The reason? The government points to the "debt crisis" and the International Monetary Fund dictated "Structural Adjustment Program" (SAP) allegedly devised for its solution. The SAP for Nigeria is similar to SAPs being implemented throughout Asia, Africa and Latin America. They invariably include the commercialization of agriculture and the demonetization of the economy via massive devaluations which reduce money wages to a paper value. The result is destruction of village communities, emigration to nearby cities and then, for the desperate, clever or lucky, a chance to work in New York or Naples.

In the United States, millions are homeless and on the move. The immediate reasons are highly publicized: the farm crisis, the steep rise of rental and mortgage payments relative to wages, the warehousing of apartments and gentrification, the collapse of the social safety net, union busting. Behind these reasons, however, is a fact: the decline, since 1973, of real wages for the mass of workers. The post-WWII inter-class deal that guaranteed real wage increases is now definitively over and the homeless are the shock(ed) troops of this fact. But even those whose wages have escaped the deal's collapse complain of the concomitant loss of the natural Commons due to a series of Big Catastrophes from the vanishing ozone layer to the burnt-out rain forests.

In China, the transition to a "free market economy" has led to the displacement of one hundred million from their communally operated lands. Their urban counterparts are facing the loss of guaranteed jobs in factories and offices and the prospect of emigrating from one city to another to look for a wage. The "iron rice bowl" is to be smashed while a similar scenario is developing in

the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. The post-WWII OECD (Western European-North American-Japanese), socialist, and third-worldist deals are all now null and void, as the examples of the US, China and Nigeria show. We refuse to mourn them. For who first voided them but brother and sister proletarians around the planet who desired and demanded more, much more than what was settled for? Not surprisingly, the old python of Capital has reacted instinctually and "originally" with a new lunge and the bite of Enclosures. This issue of Midnight Notes will show the unity of capital's reaction in the most diverse places and names, as well as the polymorphous struggle aiming to transcend it.

The "debt crisis," "homelessness," and "the collapse of socialism" are frequently treated as different phenomena by both the media and left journals. For us at Midnight they but deceptively name aspects of a single unified process: the New Enclosures, which must operate throughout the planet in differing, divisive guises while being totally interdependent.

Under the logic of capitalist accumulation in this period, for every factory in a free-trade zone in China privatized and sold to a New York commercial bank, or for every acre enclosed by a World Bank development project in Africa or Asia as part of a "debt for equity" swap, a corresponding enclosure must occur in the US and Western Europe. Thus when communal land in Nigeria is expropriated or when the policy of free housing for workers is abolished in China, there must be a matching expropriation in the US be it the end of a "good paying" factory job in Youngstown, the destruction of a working class community in Jay, Maine or the imposition of martial law in New York City's parks. With each contraction of "communal rights" in the Third World or of "socialist rights" in the Soviet Union and China, comes a subtraction of our seemingly sacred "social rights" in the US. Indeed, this subtraction has gone on so thoroughly in the 1980s that even the definition of what it means to be human is being revised by both capital and the proletariat.

This mutual contraction of the "right to subsist" in the Third World, the socialist countries and in the US is no accident. In no way could capital have won in any place if it had not operated in every place. Only if Filipinos thrown off the land could be used in "free enterprise zones" in Manila or as "shit" workers in Italy could capital reduce real wages in the US or sustain chronically high unemployment rates in Europe. Third world and socialist enclosures, apparently so distant and exotic from Boston or New York, inevitably become First World ones, equally distant and exotic from Lagos or Beijing.

The New Enclosures are so radical in their attack on what proletarian struggles in the course of history have imposed as human rights because capital confronted a life-and-death crisis that precluded any social-democratic deal. At the end of WWII, capital (in its Western and Eastern modes) offered a variety of slogans to the world proletariat: from "collective bargaining" and "racial

integration" in the US, to the family "social wage" in the USSR, to "colonial emancipation" in Asia and Africa. An enormous struggle ensued to determine the content of these slogans; but between 1965 and 1975, proletarian initiatives transcended the limits of capital's historic possibilities. From the Watts riot to the "Prague Spring" to Italy's "hot autumn" to the last US helicopter escaping from the fall of Saigon, the profit picture internationally turned sour and capital was facing euthanasia. Consequently, all deals were off and capital went on the attack everywhere.

At the end of the 1980s, capital seems to have gotten the better of the nullification of these various social contracts. For example, the US Left currently looks at "collective bargaining" and "racial integration" as utopias, while the Soviet workers anxiously watch as their "social wage" rapidly recedes into the past. Indeed, "colonial emancipation" is a phrase that, if any one has the bad taste to bring it up, can only cause derision. How have these "inalienable rights" been so rapidly alienated? Through the operation of the New Enclosures which attempt to eliminate any "traditional," "organic" or institutionalized relation between proletarians themselves and the powers of the earth or of their past.

These New Enclosures, therefore, name the large-scale reorganization of the accumulation process which has been underway since the mid-1970s. The main objective of this process has been to uproot workers from the terrain on which their organizational power has been built, so that, like the African slaves transplanted to the Americas, they are forced to work and fight in a strange environment where the forms of resistance possible at home are no longer available.

Thus, once again, as at the dawn of capitalism, the physiognomy of the world proletariat is that of the pauper, the vagabond, the criminal, the panhandler, the street peddler, the refugee sweatshop worker, the mercenary, the rioter.

The Pentagon of Enclosures

How have the New Enclosures been worked? First and foremost the New Enclosures operate exactly as the Old Enclosures did: by ending communal control of the means of subsistence. There are very few groups today who still can provide directly with their land and their work for their own needs. Even the last "aboriginals" from Indonesia to the Amazonas are being violently enclosed in governmental reservations. More commonly, the so-called "peasant" in the Third World today is a person who survives thanks to remittances from a brother or sister who has emigrated to New York; or by growing, in the most dangerous work conditions, poppies or coca leaves for export; or by prostituting him/herself to the carriers of hard-currencies (the great and perhaps only aphrodisiac of

the age); or by migrating to the nearby cities to join the swelling ranks of day laborers, street peddlers or "free enterprise zone" workers, where conditions are often more dangerous than in the poppy fields back home.

The second major method of the New Enclosures is again similar to the Old: seizing land for debt. Just as the Tudor court sold off huge tracts of monastery and communal land to their creditors, so too modern African and Asian governments agree to capitalize and "rationalize" agricultural land in order to satisfy IMF auditors who will only "forgive" foreign loans under those conditions. Just as heads of clans in the Scottish Highlands of the eighteenth century connived with local merchants and bankers to whom they were indebted in order to "clear the land" of their own clansmen and women, so too local chiefs in Africa and Asia exchange communal land rights for unredeemed loans. The result now as then is enclosure: the internal and external destruction of traditional rights to subsistence. This is the secret hidden in the noise of the "debt crisis."

Third, the New Enclosures make mobile and migrant labor the dominant form of labor. We are now the most geographically mobile labor force since the advent of capitalism. Capital keeps us constantly on the move, separating us from our countries, farms, gardens, homes, workplaces because this guarantees cheap wages, communal disorganization and maximum vulnerability in front of law courts and police.

Fourth, the New Enclosures require the collapse of socialism from the USSR, to Poland to China. The aim of Enclosure could not be realized unless there was a dramatic increase in the international competition of workers and thus an enormous expansion of the world labor market. One third of the world's proletariat could no longer be kept out of competition with the rest of the world proletariat while socialist capital could no longer repress the socialist working class' desire to be able to appropriate universal wealth . . . even though this wealth be embodied in the commodity form.

For a long time socialism has ceased to be a pole of proletarian attraction. The anti-colonial revolutions of the 1960s and the primary commodities boom of the 1970s gave it some breathing space, but by the 1980s the game was up. The reasons for socialism's collapse are, in retrospect at least, rather obvious. Socialism is another name for a class "deal" that normally exchanges a guaranteed job at a lower level of exploitation for lower wages. "Lower," of course, is a relative term and it presupposes a comparison with a capitalist standard. The deal works as long as the guarantees, the exploitation and the wages are in synch.

By the 1980s, especially with the collapse of energy prices, socialist wages became too low on an international standard for the socialist working class to tolerate. But the exploitation rate the state demanded was simultaneously too high, while its guarantees were looking less and less

promising to the proletariat. For with the computer-based technological leap, the expansion of production into the low waged Third World, and the end of the energy crisis in the OECD countries, the value of socialist work on the world market collapsed. It was not merely lower, it was almost nil. The "deal" fell apart at the seams and the piece-meal attempts to patch it worsened the tear. For example, the loans taken out by Eastern European countries in the 1970s (similar to the Third World loans of the time) to allow them to take part in the technological leap has required an enormous increase in exploitation and decrease in wages. The result: rebellion, disgruntlement and emigration.

Should we shed tears for this fallen deal? Hardly. For the collapse of socialism provides the definitive answer to the riddle of the Great Twentieth Century Sphinx: the socialist working class. How many tomes have been written to determine whether this rough beast really is a working class? We can now consign them to the archives, for the socialist working class has come out of the closet. The fairy tale of "opposing blocs" is finished and we can directly see the class struggle from Berlin to Ho Chi Minh City. We now have the same bosses and can compare, on the same jobs, the relative merits of the different systems. If anything, the working class "virtues of socialism" will especially be tested in the next decade. When the new class struggles of the 1990s erupt in Eastern Europe, the Soviet Union and China, we will then see if the values of "solidarity," "cooperation" and "internationalism" have really sedimented.

The fifth aspect of the New Enclosures' operation is in its attack on our reproduction: making us mutants as well as migrants! The highly advertised disappearance of the rain forest, the much commented upon hole in the ozone layer, the widely lamented pollution of air, sea and beach, along with the obvious shrinking of our living spaces, are all a part of the destruction of the earthly commons. Even the high seas have been enclosed in the 1980s with the dramatic extension of the traditional territorial limits. You need not be a science fiction freak to feel that we are guinea pigs in a capitalist experiment in non-evolutionary species change. Human proletarians are not alone in this speed-up and shrink-down. Animals, from protozoa to cows, are being engineered and patented to eat oil spills, produce more eggs per hour, secrete more hormones. Increasingly, land is no longer valued for how much food it can grow or what kind of buildings it can support but for how much radioactive waste it can "safely" store. Thus a tired earthly commons, the gift of billions of years of laborless transformation, meets tired human bodies.

Capital has long dreamed of sending us to work in space, where nothing would be left to us except our work-machine and rarefied and repressive work relations (see "Mormons in Space," *Computer State Notes*, Midnight Notes #5). But the fact is that the earth is becoming a space station and millions are already living in space-colony conditions: no oxygen to breathe, limited

social/physical contact, a desexualized life, difficulty of communication, lack of sun and green ... even the voices of the migrating birds are missing.

The sentimental horror of this aspect of the New Enclosures has turned a profit for many a publisher and film corporation but we would like to point out its purgative value. For the bodily and personal common, which for most of the proletariat had been free, is now increasingly being enclosed for all to see. Appearance and attitude are increasingly aspects of the work process in the so-called "service industries" from restaurants to hospitals. In the past how a worker looked or what s/he felt on the assembly line, farm or in the mine was immaterial to the wage relation. This has definitively changed. Those who "work with the public" are now continually monitored from their urine to their sweat glands to their back brains. Capital now treats us as did the inquisitors of old, looking for the devil's marks of class struggle on our bodies and demanding that we open it up for alienation. The most "extreme" case of this enclosure is in the personal-political debates around the increasing recourse to reconstructive surgery in the working class. The siliconed breasts of the recent Miss America are the concrete universals of this trend. Are we to lament or condemn them? No, for they simply point out that though the bourgeoisie had long lost its body, the working class is now being forced to follow suit. Not only "beauty queens" and "male leads" must buy and re-buy their bodies piece-by-piece, reconstructive surgery is now a must for many jobs in the "service economy" and exposes for all of us to see and evaluate the commodity nature of capitalist relations.

These five aspects of capital's response to class struggle have been at least partially successful due to their ability to recapitulate proletarian desires. After all, even during the period of the Old Enclosures many were attracted to the possibilities of universal consumption offered by urban life and did not wait for the state thugs' arrival on the village green to head for the city. A similar point can be made about present-day socialism. For the socialist workers' desire to participate in the exchange of universal labor has been a crucial factor in the "battering down" the walls of socialism. Indeed, the allure of the world market lies not in its evident exploitative consequences but rather in the energies it unleashes for travel, communication and wealth appropriation. Post-WWII socialism was certainly unable to generate alternative models of international exchange and reproduction either in the form of a Comintern bureaucracy or Che Guevara's ideals, hence socialist internationalism on the economic plane evaporated in the current crisis.

The Spiral of Struggle

Though the New Enclosures have been able to entice and divide, they have been fiercely fought and have brought about, unintentionally, an increased proletarian knowledge and autonomy. Most obviously, the planet has rung and reverberated with anti-IMF demonstrations, riots and rebellions. In 1989 alone, the streets and campuses of Venezuela, Burma, Zaire, Nigeria, and Argentina have seen confrontations between armed troops and students and workers who chant "Death to the IMF," loot foreign commodities markets, excarcerate prisoners, and burn banks. Though access to universal wealth is desired, the institutional forms of the world market that are using the "debt crisis" to create the New Enclosures are physically under a self-conscious attack throughout Africa, Latin America and Asia.

Not only is the money form of the New Enclosures being resisted, there has been a world-wide land war taking place in the 1980s. Up the Andes into Central America and Mexico there has been desperate and chronic armed struggle over the control of land (frequently referred to in the US as an aspect of the "drug problem"). In West Africa there is a micro-level of armed struggle against land seizures by the state and development banks (frequently discussed as anachronistic "tribal war"). In southern Africa, the battle over land and its control, both in town and country, is included as an aspect of "the struggle against apartheid," while in East Africa it is considered a "problem of nationalities." Land War is, of course, what the "Palestinian issue" is about, while from Afghanistan through India to Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Indonesia, proletarians have taken up arms against the New Enclosures in a wide variety of forms. But in the 1980s this Land War has not only been a rural, "third worldist" struggle. From West Berlin, to Zurich, to Amsterdam, to London, to New York, squatters, street people and the "homeless" have battled against police, arsonists in the pay of real estate developers, and other agents of "spatial deconcentration" not simply for "housing" but for land and all that it means.

These direct, violent and frequently armed confrontations have certainly limited the pace and scope of the New Enclosures but there have been other, often unintended, consequences of the New Enclosures that will perhaps be even more central to their universal leveling. First, the New Enclosures have led to an enormous increase and intensification of proletarian knowledge of the international class composition. For example, the average West African farmer in the 1980s knows about the deals that can go down in Brooklyn, London and Venice. Second, the New Enclosures have forced an internationalism of proletarian action, since the proletariat has never been so compelled to overcome its regionalism and nationalism, as people are losing not just their plot of land but their stake in their countries. Third, the very extremities of the debt crisis and the need to

organize reproduction outside of the money relation has often forced workers to develop their autonomy by imposing the task of creating a whole system of production and reproduction outside of the standard operating procedures of capitalist society.

The Marxist Ghost at Midnight

These unintended consequences of the New Enclosures and their possibilities are themes near and dear to the work of Marx and Engels, and it is time now to speak of them. For one of the central ironies of the present is that at the very time when socialism is collapsing, Marx's predictions concerning the development of capitalism are being verified. Though "postist" intellectuals are now dancing on Marx's grave while "Marxists" are desperately trying to revise their curriculum vitae, Marx's theory has never been so true. What are we seeing now but the famous "immiseration of the working class," "the expansion of the world market," "universal competition among workers," and "rising organic composition of capital"? How can we understand anything about this world without using the axioms of Marx's theory of work, money and profit? Capitalists certainly cannot!

Theoretically, then, Marx's ghost still speaks truly at midnight. Strategically, however, Marx and Engels fail at this moment of the New Enclosures. It is worthwhile to explain why. The Marx of *Capital*, while recognizing the complexity of the situation, would have most likely understood the New Enclosures as he did the Old: they were fundamentally a stage in the "progressive nature" of capitalist development as it prepares the material conditions for a communist society. The two decisive tendencies in this development are: (1) it breaks down local barriers and the separation of town and country, thus producing a truly universal human being capable of benefiting from the world-wide production of cultural and material wealth, and (2) it unifies the international working class which increasingly recognizes and acts on its common interest. Consequently, for all the pain and death, the "blood and fire" of the Old Enclosures, they were inevitable and ultimately historically positive, for they accomplished "the dissolution of private property based on the labor of its owner."

By destroying the mode of production "where the laborer is the private owner of his own means of labor set in action by himself: the peasant of the land which he cultivates, the artisan of the tool which he handles as a virtuoso," the Enclosures set the stage for the creation of "capitalist private property, already practically resting on socialized production." The Enclosures, therefore,

are the "protracted, violent, and difficult" transformation that makes possible the easier "expropriation of a few usurpers by the mass of people" in the communist revolution.

The problem with this analysis is simple: the New Enclosures (and probably many of the Old) are not aimed only at petty private producers and their property. They also aim to destroy communal land and space that forms an energy well of proletarian power. A Quiche Indian village in the Guatemalan hills, a tract of communally operated land in the Niger Delta, an urban neighborhood like Tepito in Mexico City, a town surrounding a paper mill controlled by striking paperworkers like Jay, Maine, do not fit into the classic Marxist model of the Enclosures. In each of these examples we are not confronted with a number of isolated, petty producers but a staging point for proletarian attack or a logistical locus. It is plain madness to accept the demise of such villages, tracts of land, neighborhoods and towns as necessary and ultimately progressive sacrifices to the destruction of capitalism and the development of truly "universal" proletarians. Universal or not, real, living proletarians (that do not live on air) must put their feet some place, must strike from some place, must rest some place, must retreat some place. For class war does not happen on an abstract board toting up profit and loss, it is a war that needs a terrain.

Marx's righteous horror of "petty producers" and their disgusting behavior must not lead us to a loss of strategic reality under the rubric of honorific formulae. He did not see in 1867 the possibilities of proletarian power, however contradictory, in the intact communal life of millions in Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas. One certainly cannot find in *Capital* a call for the European proletariat to fight against the Enclosure of these communal peoples.

Similarly, Engels could not see a new communal power developing in the proletarian quarters of the new industrial cities of Europe that needed to be struggled for. To understand this strategic failure, let us look at a truly remarkable work of Engels, *The Housing Question* (1872), written a year after the Paris Commune. It is lucid, trenchant and more insightful than anything the housing and homelessness movement has recently produced. Engels seems to be describing, as if in a vision, New York of the 1980s by drawing on his observations of nineteenth-century London, Manchester, Paris and Berlin. He even describes a nineteenth century version of "spatial deconcentration" he attributes to Haussman, a Bonapartist urban developer. Haussman apparently planned "breaking long straight and broad streets through the closely-built workers' quarters and erecting big luxurious buildings on both sides of them, the intention thereby, apart from the strategic aim of making barricade fighting more difficult, being also to develop a specifically Bonapartist building trades proletariat dependent on the government and to turn the city into a pure luxury city."

But in the midst of these acute observations, Engels' actual discussion of the "housing question" is disappointing. Why? Because he puts aside his strategic standpoint, namely, how does the spatially defined class composition in a city determine working class power, to deal with two other classic Marxist points: (a) the average house rent paid by workers is simply a redistribution of surplus value between industrial capitalists and rentiers, (b) the "solution" to the housing question cannot be the promotion of home ownership since that would "bourgeoisify" workers and delay the coming of the real solution, revolution. The first point is abstract and, more or less, true, while the second reflects the horror-of-the-petty-proprietor-vacuum typical of Marx and Engels. Therefore, he nowhere takes up the defense of workers' quarters as an essential aspect of the "housing question" and an important strategic consideration of class thought.

It appears that in Engels' judgement, the housing market can totally transform the spatial composition of an urban working class and yet be irrelevant to "the housing question." Aside from being absurd, this is certainly not the view of capital's Hausmanns then and now. Certainly Engels should have realized that revolutions are not made in a heaven of ideas, they are usually made, at least in their final stages, in cities where the question of disposition of forces is crucial. Perhaps Engels' strategic neglect of working class topology was a product of the failure of the now classic revolutionary scenario of the Paris Commune played out a year before *The Housing Question* was published. More likely it was the result of a deeper categorical failure of Marxist understanding of the Enclosures that remains central to Marxism to this day. This is especially true of its "third worldist" variants that are frequently accepted by those in the frontline struggles against the New Enclosures, either as organizers of anti-IMF demos or guerrilla armies fighting for land. These forms of Marxism are now in deep crisis. At first sight the crisis of "third world" Marxism seems rooted in the collapse of its major socialist models, the Soviet Union and China, and has nothing to do with the understanding of the Enclosures both Old and New. First and foremost, therefore, the crisis appears as the end of military and economic aid that often had been provided by the socialist bloc as an aspect of "proletarian internationalism." Such a view is superficial.

"Third world" Marxists accept the notion of the progressivity of original accumulation. Consequently, even though they officially fight against the New Enclosures, they envision their party and state as carrying out their own Enclosures on their own people even more efficiently and "progressively" than the capitalists could do. They interpret communal ownership of land and the local market exchanges as being the marks of "petty bourgeois" characteristics they must extirpate. Their revolutionary action aims to nationalize land and wipe out local markets as well as kick out the IMF and the "comprador" ruling elite. Yet the first goal is an anathema to many of those people attracted by the struggle against the New Enclosures in the first place! The confusion thickens at

victory where there is a tendency to create or continue the two "advanced" forms of land tenure – state plantations (Mozambique) or capitalist farms (Zimbabwe) – at the expense of communal possibilities and actualities. Inevitably the conditions for counterrevolution ripen while the impossibility of carrying out autarchic economic measures becomes clear, since the very structures that might have sustained autarchy and denied land to the "contras" have been destroyed by the revolutionary forces themselves.

As a consequence, low intensity counterrevolutionary warfare and high interest rates unravel the revolution. For it is relatively easy in the late twentieth century to practice the science of revolution and succeed. It is this ease that has made it imperative for capital, on the other side, to make sure that the consequences of winning will be catastrophe and despair. Hence the crisis of the third worldist left, which has its roots not only in the insidious demonic plans of the CIA, but also in the failure of Marx's own analysis of the Old Enclosures themselves.

In contrast, capital's most advanced public self-understanding of the New Enclosures, with the visible collapse of the socialist models and a crisis of revolutionary "third world" Marxism, is embodied in the slogan "the End of History." This phrase interprets the end of socialist states and parties as the annihilation of the driving contradiction of world history, and the triumph of the world market as the mark of a uniform planetary commodification called "Westernization" and "democracy." With no such "contradiction" there is no History of the grand narrative, of course. How seriously we should take this piece of State Department post-modernism is moot, but the scenario it suggests is simple. It returns the class struggle back to its pre-WWI situation and poses two choices to OECD workers: "liberalism" or "imperialism." The liberal moment accepts the "market mechanism" where we meet as different functions of the work process in a triage-like environment, so that upgrading our "survival skills" becomes the only goal in "life." The imperialist moment urges the internationalization of conquest and plunder whereby we reject competition by becoming accomplices of our immediate bosses in the direct exploitation of other proletarians, so that victory means a South African deal: better wages and a home of one's own ... protected by martial law, torture cells and a gun in the handbag. More probably a disgusting mix of the two would be more palatable!

The Greening of the Deal

In the looming shadow of these bleak capitalist prospects and with the collapse of socialism, the "greens" have come forward with a global perspective calling on human aspirations transcending the market. From Earth First!'s "Think like a mountain" to Greenpeace's "Nuclear-free

seas," the ecological movement seems to have been a major force in confronting the New Enclosures in the 1980s. "Green" militants have sabotaged deforestation, blown up power lines, aborted nuclear tests, and in general have played the "Luddites" of the New Enclosures, while "Green" parties in Europe attracted the support of many (who in a previous period would have joined the socialists or communists) by voicing political and ideological resistance to the grossest consequences of capitalist development. The "Greens" (along with their animal liberation allies) have brought some outlaw guts and angelic passion to the struggles of the last decade. But their class composition has limited their efforts up to now.

As we pointed out in "Strange Victories" (1979), the US anti-nuke movement in the 1970s — which is the political root of the contemporary ecological movement — had a limited class composition. It was based on the rural population living around the nuclear plants and "an additional factor": an intellectual labor force that had relocated in the rural areas around the plants after the 1960s. We also argued then that unless the anti-nuclear movement went beyond this rather limited class composition and brought the urban and industrial proletariat into the movement, the nuclear industry would not be defeated. Energy prices were the key to expanding the class composition of the movement and so it proved. The explosion of struggles against energy price hikes in the streets and highways of the US (as well as revolutions and insurrections in oil producing countries) in 1979-80 forced capital to stabilize energy prices. This sealed the doom of the US nuclear industry in this century at least.

The contemporary ecology movement, however, has not learned the secret of its predecessor's "strange victories." The peculiar dialectic between rioting petroleum junkies and anti-nuke angels in 1979-80 never developed into a truly proletarian movement that could have gone beyond merely managing the environmental consequences of capitalist accumulation. Ecologists in the Reagan period returned to the self-righteous ideology of "natural consciousness", morality of "good will" and a practice of "recycling" and "stewardship" of the 1970s. This movement has all the markings of Marx and Engels' petty producers' thought and manners writ large. Even the etymology of its name has echoes of the ancient Greek aristocrat's "aikos" or "hearth and home." But just as the word "economy" surreptitiously introduces into the capitalist factory the rural patriarchal relations of father-wife-child-slave, so too "ecology" presumes that the earth is an "aikos" to be well managed instead of the terrain of global class struggle. For proletarians might be natives of the earth but we have no home here.

As a consequence of this political conservatism, the ecology movement has missed an enormous historical opportunity to once again transcend its rather limited class composition. For with the collapse of the post-WWII deal in the US, there is finally a chance to break the tie that

bound working class wage increases in the past with the destruction of the commons. These wage increases have been definitively denied, the deal is off, but capital is still operating as if it can use our "lebensraum" for its defecations. But workers are increasingly denying capital its "right to shit." For example, an important aspect of the strike against International Paper in Jay, Maine, lies in the strikers' support for an environmental ordinance that literally said to IP: if you demand total control of the production process inside the plant, we demand total control of the reproduction process outside the plant. This type of action is at the heart of a new possibility for a new ecology movement that would reject its angelic status and come to a proletarian earth. For if one generalized the Jay workers' tactic into a struggle that denied capital the possibility of enclosing and selectively destroying the natural commons gratis, a truly revolutionary crisis would emerge.

Such a shift in the direction of the ecology movement would be one part of a larger process which would transform the New Enclosures into a definitive occasion of proletarian unification and capitalist catastrophe. In practice this means the creation of individuals and organizations that can both think and act globally and locally which is exactly what the struggles around the New Enclosures do. The root of this result is actualized in the struggles against the New Enclosures that simultaneously re-appropriate and hold places from capital while opening spaces for proletarian movement. This is why defensive localism, provincialism, nationalism and racism appear so attractive to many in the working class at the moment, for they seem to offer some protection against the most obvious sign of the New Enclosures for many in North America and Europe: the arrival of the "other" worker. But such a reaction is doomed, the more such places are sealed off by "Whites Only" signs, the more constricted the spaces of proletarian action. There are those, on the contrary, especially in the Third World and the socialist countries, who now revel in the opening of proletarian space for movement seeking to escape the most immediate consequences of the New Enclosures there, wagelessness. But if they do not create places against capital at the termini of their trajectory, they will find themselves, like the pirates of the Caribbean, continually displaced and eventually exhausted and exterminated.

The concrete task of reconstructing a new proletarian geometry is going on in such places like New York, Boston, Zurich, Jay, Maine, Beijing and Lagos. They find a place and space in this issue.

The Last Jubilee?

But can we end here with this dry hope for an abstract, almost paradoxical proletarian geometry? Have we too been infected by the post-modern anti-revolutionary malaise? This malaise

is strange indeed, for with the definitive collapse of the era's three basic deals, a moment of classic revolutionary crisis opens. Yet, though at the instant of this initiation capital is most unstable, capital's fetishistic charm still seems potent. While all around us unprecedented revolutionary events unfold, postists hail the end of revolution, the end of class struggle, the end of the Grand Proletarian Narrative or, implicitly and conversely, the total triumph of capital.

It is now time at midnight for other words and spells in the magic struggle of classes. In this introduction we have reintroduced some old terms, "enclosure" and "commons." As we end let us recall another: "Jubilee." We might at first be thought slightly mad. After all, as our comrades are being hunted down, blown up, imprisoned and tortured around the globe, the very utterance of "jubilee" seems incongruous or even obscene. Is this the time for jubilation? But every struggle against enclosure and for the commons inevitably becomes a call of jubilee.

The term itself comes from the Old Testament but was revived in two central spots in the capitalist period. "Jubilee," in general, meant the abolition of slavery, the cancellation of all debt and a return of all lands to the common. It did occur periodically among ancient Mesopotamian peoples, including the Hebrews. But in the late eighteenth century the term was used in the English countryside to demand an end to enclosures while across the Atlantic African slaves used "jubilee" to demand liberation from slavery. This word thus linked the poles of trans-Atlantic struggle against capital in the pre-Marxian era. Can it do so again? Perhaps not, but the secret energies within the demand for Jubilee are far from spent. On the contrary, at this moment when the roof has been blown off all the covenants between classes, the demand to re-begin the story of humankind in common is the force that capital itself must depend upon to create a true world market. It is that force of jubilee that has led to this issue.

Down with the New Enclosures, Time for the Last Jubilee...!