

REVOLUTIONARY WRITING

COMMON
SENSE
WAYS IN
POLITICAL
POLITICS

AGNOLI
BONEFELD
CAFFENTZIS
CLEAVER
DALLA COSTA

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REVOLUTIONARY WRITING

COMMON SENSE ESSAYS
IN POST-POLITICAL POLITICS

EDITED BY
WERNER BONEFELD

AUTONOMEDIA

WERNER BONEFELD *editor*

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DEVELOPMENT AND REPRODUCTION

Mariarosa Dalla Costa¹

I. ZAPATA AND THE WORKERS

Zapata's determined gaze and slightly stooped shoulders in the well-loved photograph paraded by the "cobas" of Alfa Romeo auto workers at Arese in Milan was one of the striking journalistic images of 1994,² creating a bridge in real time between the Mexican revolt in January and the struggles of Europe's industrial workers and unemployed. A bridge was thrown through space and historical time to link struggles against continued 'primitive' expropriation of the land to those against the post-Fordist expropriation of labour that brings with it the progressive dismantlement of the public system of social rights and guarantees. The "primitive" expropriation of the land that began five centuries ago with the enclosures in England and which has been continued, and is still continuing,³ in the more recent forms of colonisation and exploitation in the Third World, is now linked even photographically to the contemporary forms of expropriation and poverty creation in the advanced capitalist countries.

How to build and impose on expropriated men and women the discipline of the wage labour system (with the unwaged labour it presupposes) was the problem posed five centuries ago in initiating the process of capitalist accumulation. It is still the problem today for the continuation of this mode of production and its combined strategies of development and underdevelopment. The creation of mass poverty and scarcity together with the imposition of terror and violence, as well as the large-scale relaunching of slavery, were the basic instruments used to resolve the problem in this system's first phase.

The expropriation of free producers of all the means of production as well as the individual and collective resources and rights that contributed to guaranteeing survival was subjected to a well-known analysis by Marx in his section on primitive accumulation (in *Capital*, Vol. I, Part 8, 1976) to which we

refer you for the enclosures and all the other measures that accompanied them, notably the bloody legislation against the expropriated, the forcing down of wages by act of parliament and the ban on workers' associations. Laws for the compulsory extension of the working day, another fundamental aspect of the period, from the middle of the Fourteenth to the end of the Seventeenth century are dealt with in *Capital*, Part Three, Chapter 10, where the subject is the working day.⁴

Concerning the expropriation of the land, Marx observed: "The advance made by the eighteenth century shows itself in this, that the *law itself* now becomes the *instrument by which the people's land is stolen*, although the big farmers made use of their little independent methods as well. The Parliamentary form of the robbery is that of 'Bills for Inclosure of the Commons,' in other words decrees by which the landowners grant themselves the people's land as private property, decrees of expropriation of the people" (Marx, 1976, p. 885). The "little independent methods" are explained in a footnote to the same passage, quoting from a report entitled *A Political Inquiry into the Consequences of Enclosing Waste Lands*: "The farmers forbid cottagers to keep any living creatures besides themselves and children, under the pretence that if they keep any beasts or poultry, they will steal from the farmers' barns for their support; they also say, keep the cottagers poor and you will keep them industrious, etc., but the real fact, I believe, is that the farmers may have the whole right of common to themselves" (Marx, 1976, p. 885, note 15).

This footnote gives a powerful picture of the step-by-step process of expropriation used to produce the misery and poverty essential in establishing the discipline of wage labour. But just as powerful an image is given to us by the isolation of people from all living beings that has characterised and still characterises the human condition in capitalist development. The human being, isolated not only with respect to his/her own species, but also with respect to nature — that "other" treated increasingly as a commodified thing.

Deprivation and isolation: they are in fact the two great accusations, the two great terrains of rebellion symbolised by the poster of Zapata whose watchword was *Tierra y Libertad*. The reappropriation of land was seen by the Zapatistas in 1911 as a fundamental question because it opened up the possibility of reappropriating a collective life free of misery. For even then the reappropriation of the land was pregnant with a multitude of meanings: as the reappropriation of a territory where one could express a different sense of life, of action, of social relations and of work; as a place where one could imagine and build a different future. From this viewpoint, Zapata's nine-year revolutionary epic is one of the great suppressed memories of official Mexican history.

Today's explosion of the *zapatista* rebellion shows how real the problem of the reappropriation of land remains, but also how much it has been magnified by the complex of issues raised by movements in the North and South over the question of land. "Land," here, does not only refer to a means of subsistence — though this would already be an excellent reason for a movement of reappropriation, since many economies based on a non-capitalist relationship with the land have guaranteed the possibility of life for millennia to a large proportion of people for whom capitalist development has offered only hunger and extinction. It refers also to land as the earth, a public space to be enjoyed without frontier; the earth as an ecosystem to be preserved because it is the source of life and, hence, of beauty and continual discovery; the earth as a material reality of which we are part, to be reaffirmed in contrast to the exaltation (especially by male intellectuals) of virtual reality.

But, returning to Marx (*Capital*, Vol. I, 1976, Part 8), the creation of misery starts and proceeds from the *fixing of a price for the land* as well as the land's expropriation. Pricing the land is in fact the solution used for colonies where the aspirant capitalist is unable to find a sufficient number of waged workers. When the settlers arrive at their destination, they find a "free" land where they can settle and work independently. "We have seen that the *expropriation of the mass of the people from the soil forms the basis of the capitalist mode of production*. The essence of a free *colony*, on the contrary, consists in this, that the bulk of the soil is still public property, every settler on it can therefore turn part of it into his private property and his individual means of production, without preventing later settlers from performing the same operation. This is the secret both of the prosperity of the colonies and of their cancerous affliction — their resistance to the *establishment of capital*" (1976, p. 934). In this context, we can leave to one side the obvious criticism that the "public" land freely settled by the settlers belonged, in fact, to the natives. Marx continues: "There (in the colonies) the capitalist regime constantly comes up against the obstacle presented by the producer who, as owner of his own conditions of labour, employs that labour to enrich himself instead of the capitalist. The *contradiction between these two diametrically opposed economic systems has its practical manifestation here in the struggle between them*. Where the capitalist has behind him the power of the mother country, he tries to use force to clear out of the way the *modes of production and appropriation which rest on the personal labour of the independent producer*" (1976, p. 931). Wakefield, the economist Marx quotes in this context, proclaims aloud the *antagonism between the two modes of production*: "To this end he demonstrates that the development of the social productivity of labour, cooperation, division of labour, application of machinery on a large scale, and so on, are impossible

without the expropriation of the workers and the corresponding *transformation of their means of production into capital*" (1976, p. 932).

Wakefield's theory of colonisation tries to solve the problem of ensuring an adequate supply of labour for the capitalist's needs by what he calls "systematic colonisation," which as Marx notes England tried to enforce for a time by Act of Parliament. Of Wakefield's theory, Marx adds (1976, p. 938): "If men were willing to turn the whole of the land from public into private property at one blow, this would certainly destroy the root of the evil, but it would also destroy — the *colony*. The trick is to kill two birds with one stone. Let the government set *an artificial price on the virgin soil, a price independent of the law of supply and demand*, a price that compels the immigrant to work for a long time for wages before he can earn enough money to buy land and turn himself into an independent farmer. The *fund* resulting from the sale of land at a price relatively *prohibitory* for the wage-labourers, this *fund of money* extorted from the *wages of labour* by a violation of the sacred law of supply and demand, is to be applied by the government in proportion to its growth, to the importation of paupers from Europe into the colonies, so as to keep the *wage-labour market* full for the capitalists." Marx also pointed out that the *land price laid down by the state* must be "sufficient," which quoting from Wakefield (1833, vol. II, p. 192) he explains means that "it must be high enough 'to prevent the labourers from becoming independent landowners until others had followed to take their place'."

The reference to the setting of a price on the virgin soil is more than just a reminder of a past problem and its analysis in Marx's *Capital*. Today, putting a price to the land and expropriation by illegality, pseudo-legality and violence are issues on the agenda throughout those parts of the Third World where capitalist expansion is currently seeking to break economies and societies based on a different relationship with the land; types of economy which have guaranteed subsistence from time immemorial and which, by the same token, resist wage-labour's discipline and the isolation, hunger and death that usually accompany its imposition. Silvia Federici (1993) and George Caffentzis (1993) underline the cruciality of fixing a price on the land in the policies directed to "develop" the African continent. In their studies of Sub-Saharan Africa and Nigeria in particular, they insist on the importance of this measure from the point of view of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and other investors, but they also stress how this procedure became a terrain of struggle and resistance for the population.

Obviously, today, there are many other policies and measures creating hunger and poverty, from the lowering of the export price of agricultural products, which ruins Third World farmers, to those policies that, internationally, have characterised the period of the so-called debt crisis. But this has been dealt

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with in a recent collection of papers (Dalla Costa M. and Dalla Costa G.F., eds., 1993) and is dealt with extensively by the Midnight Notes Collective (1992).

In this article, the focus is on the two *major operations* of expropriating the land and putting a price on it, since, even though they are usually ignored, they remain as fundamental today for making a profit out of the Third World as they were at the dawn of capitalism in Europe. In fact, the current development strategy of the capitalist mode of production based on the "informatic revolution" continues to imply a strategy of underdevelopment that presupposes these operations which create hunger and poverty in order continually to refound and re-stratify the global working class.

Obviously, the continual imposition of wage-labour discipline at the world level does not imply that all those who are expropriated are destined to become wage-labourers. Today as five centuries ago, this will be the fate of only a small part of the population: those who can will find employment in the sweat shops of the Third World or the countries they emigrate to. The others will be faced solely by the prospect of death by hunger, which may explain the tenacity of resistance and the toughness of the struggles. And, returning to the poster in Milan, it explains the revolt in Chiapas. The *price* of capitalist development understood as a whole, in its facets as development and underdevelopment, is *unsustainable* because it consists of *death*. As I have argued elsewhere (Dalla Costa M., 1995), a central assumption must be that, *from the human viewpoint, capitalist development has always been unsustainable* since it has assumed from the start, and continues to assume, extermination and hunger for an increasingly large part of humanity. The fact that it is founded on a class relationship and must continually refound this relationship at a global level, in conflict with the power that the class of waged and non-waged men and women build through struggle and resistance, only makes its *original unsustainability* more ample and more lethal in time.

The operations that produce hunger, poverty and death, have accompanied the continuous and progressive expropriation of the land, and its rendering as commodity/capital have obviously been redefined in ideological and technological terms over time. "Food policies" brought into effect during the present century, officially in order to solve or mitigate the problem of insufficient nutrition have always been closely linked to "reforms" of the relationship with the land. The outcome has been better nutrition for the few, insufficient nutrition or hunger for the many, and above all a powerful tool for social control by breaking up those organisations that parts of the world's population, in very many areas of the globe, had created in order to achieve better nutrition and a better level of life as a whole.

The "social reforms" characteristic of these policies have always been linked to new divisions and a new hierarchy between the waged and the

unwaged as well as within these two groups. Harry Cleaver's essay (1977) remains fundamental for its analysis and the globality of its information as well as for its reports on numerous struggles and the sort of policies adopted to fight them. We agree in full with the assumption that food crises are fundamentally produced by capitalism's political economy. As this author informs us, it is interesting to note how experiments carried out by the Rockefeller Foundation in China in the 1920s and 1930s provided clear evidence of the stabilising effect of better food supplies coupled with some land reform measures on peasant unrest. In the 1950s, politicians were still talking about an Asian rice policy as a tool for halting peasant revolt in many parts of that continent. Later, the issue officially became a humanitarian one.

The Green Revolution, on the other hand, was put into effect in the 1960s in both East and West on the basis of a technological leap in the mechanical, chemical and biological inputs in agricultural policy. The aim was to apply Keynesian principles to agriculture, in other words, achieving wage increases linked to an increase in productivity. But, as Cleaver argues, the whole history of this technological breakthrough in agriculture was linked to the de-composition of the class power of the waged and the unwaged, the continual creation of new divisions and hierarchies, and the progressive expulsion of workers having different forms of relationship with agriculture.

Agricultural technology became more and more subject to criticism and analysis by feminist scholars, being so closely linked to large land holdings, which meant the expropriation and the expulsion from that land of unwaged workers, who were managing to make a living from it, and of waged agricultural workers, displaced by the continual technological change. Important in this connection is the work of Vandana Shiva (1989), whose approach is not Marxist, and who uses the category of the female principle against male reductionist science. An outstanding physicist, Vandana Shiva abandoned India's nuclear programme because she felt that the "reaction of nuclear systems with living systems" was being kept secret from the people. In her well-known work, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology and Development* (1989), she illustrates the systematic and grave loss of resources for health and subsistence through the reduction in biodiversity imposed in India by the agricultural policies of recent decades; the dependence and poverty created by the imposition of new laboratory hybrids; the drought and human and environmental disasters created by dams and their irrationality by comparison with earlier forms of water management. The history of the enclosure, expropriation and commercialisation not only of the land, but also of its plants, animals, and waters is revived in Shiva's analysis, which is centred on the events of these last decades. There are other important works belonging to the ecofeminist current, first of all the work of Maria Mies

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(1986 and, with Shiva, 1993), to mention only the most famous ones. In contrast Mary Mellor's book (1992), while it has many points of contact with the above cited studies, is rather concerned to define a "feminist green socialism."

I share much of the critique advanced in this blossoming of feminist studies on the relationship between human beings and nature and on the North-South relationship. Here, there is not enough space to compare our positions more extensively. But one point I can make is that some ecofeminist scholars look primarily at the forms of struggle and resistance in the Third World, while seeing the First World primarily as an area of excessive consumption whence the assertion of the need for a reduction of production and consumption. For myself and the circuit of scholars I have worked with since the early 1970s, we affirm that besides looking at the Third World struggles, just as much importance should be given to advanced capitalist areas, not only as a source of consumption, but also as a place of labour, hence our stress on the importance of the struggles of waged and unwaged that occur there and their relationship with struggles in other areas. We also see a need to analyse consumption in a more articulated way. By definition, consumption by workers, obviously including housewives, has in fact never been high and, today, is falling dramatically. But these are simply a few hints in a debate that will develop further.

Let us now return to our discourse. Vandana Shiva (1989) says of water and drought:

The drying up of India, like that of Africa, is a man-made rather than a natural disaster. The issue of water, and water scarcity has been the most dominant one in the 1980s as far as struggles for survival in the subcontinent are concerned. The manufacture of drought and desertification is an outcome of reductionist knowledge and models of development which violate cycles of life in rivers, in the soil, in mountains. Rivers are drying up because their catchments have been mined, de-forested or over-cultivated to generate revenue and profits. Groundwater is drying up because it has been over-exploited to feed cash crops. Village after village is being robbed of its lifeline, its sources of drinking water, and the number of villages facing water famine is in direct proportion to the number of 'schemes' implemented by government agencies to 'develop' water (p. 179).

"Commercial exploitation of forests, over-exploitation of ground water for commercial agriculture and inappropriate afforestation are the major reasons identified for the water crisis" (p. 181).

Time and again, Vandana Shiva points out, famous British engineers who learned water management from indigenous techniques in India, commented on the "sophisticated engineering sense, built on an ecological sense, that provided the foundation for irrigation in India." Major Arthur Cotton, credited as the "founder" of modern irrigation programmes, wrote in 1874:

There are multitudes of old native works in various parts of India...These are noble works, and show both boldness and engineering talent. They have stood for hundreds of years...When I first arrived in India, the contempt with which the natives justifiably spoke of us on account of this neglect of material improvements was very striking; they used to say we were a kind of civilised savages, wonderfully expert about fighting, but so inferior to their great men that we would not even keep in repair the works they had constructed, much less even imitate them in extending the system (p. 187).

The East India Company, as Vandana Shiva adds, took control of the Kaveri delta in 1799, but was unable to check the rising river bed. Company officials struggled for a quarter century; finally, using indigenous technology, Cotton was able to solve the problem by renovating the Grand Anicut. He wrote later: "It was from them (the native Indians) we learnt how to secure a foundation in loose sand of unmeasured depth...The Madras river irrigations executed by our engineers have been from the first the greatest financial success of any engineering works in the world, solely because we learnt from them...With this lesson about foundations, we built bridges, weirs, aqueducts and every kind of hydraulic work...We are thus deeply indebted to the native engineers."

But the lesson has obviously been overwhelmed by the full flood of the capitalist science of development/profit, what Vandana Shiva calls "maldevelopment."⁵ British engineers in the 1700s and 1800s recognised that indigenous technology and knowledge tended to preserve water resources and make them available for the local people. Today, capitalist water-management projects cause drought and deny survival to entire populations. One woman from Maharashtra State in India sings against the dam she has to help build so that crops such as sugar cane can be irrigated while women and children die of thirst (Shiva, 1989):

As I build this dam
I bury my life.
The dawn breaks
There is no flour in the grinding stone.

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I collect yesterday's husk for today's meal
The sun rises
And my spirit sinks.
Hiding my baby under a basket
And hiding my tears
I go to build the dam
The dam is ready
It feeds their sugar cane fields
Making the crop lush and juicy.
But I walk miles through forests
In search of a drop of drinking water
I water the vegetation with drops of my sweat
As dry leaves fall and fill my parched yard.

A response to this mad "enclosure" of water became more and more a problem on the agenda of political networks that monitor and struggle against projects of this kind. The immediate future will show the effects of this effort. An exemplary case is the Bangladesh flood control plan (Del Genio, 1994), presented by the World Bank in London in December 1989. Even though it was claimed to differ from previous projects because of its low environmental impact, other estimates of its effects were so dramatic that an international coalition of organisations, opposed to the World Bank's approach to the canalisation of rivers, was created in Strasbourg in May 1993.

Considering solely the immediate human impact, the building of the Narmada dam in India was expected to require the evacuation of 500,000 inhabitants and aroused strong opposition from the "tribals" and the organisations supporting them. The Bangladesh Flood Action Plan (FAP), coordinated by the World Bank on behalf of the Group of Seven, would require the forced transfer of 5-8 million persons in a territory whose population density is ten times that of India.

Del Genio's article illustrates the reasons cited to justify the plan — on the one hand, mystified assumptions and, on the other, the lethal techniques of the Green Revolution. This plan insists on the need to "propagate modern mechanised agriculture capable of coping with the food crisis" so as to increase the cultivation of modern high-yield varieties of rice which, in its turn, requires a large and regular quantity of water and a system of flood control and irrigation to make it available.

The drawbacks of the high-yield varieties include a dependence on the market and the laboratories, since they are unable to reproduce, and imply the

reduction of the genetic diversity of local seeds. Awareness of the drawbacks is growing in the world, and rural workers' grass-roots organisations are putting up increasing resistance to these agricultural improvements that are supposed to be more appropriate for satisfying their nutritional needs. As regards flood control, some of the year's regular flooding bring nutrients which ensures the soil's fertility and top up the water-table as they expand across the plain. Other, purely destructive floods need to be controlled through works different from the planned ones if the aim is to be achieved without destroying the environment, including the humans in it. In this connection, it is worth remembering the level of sophistication achieved in biodiversity by long-term cooperation between humans and nature; among the hundreds of local rice varieties developed in response to the demands of territory and climate, a sub-variety called Aman is capable of growing over 15cm in only 24 hours if the level of the water rises.

As for transferring 5-8 million persons by coercion, this is in itself inconceivable from my point of view, since to uproot a population is like cutting a tree's roots, but in this case a forest's. The first and obvious question that comes to mind is: where and how does one suppose that the peasants are to find the money needed to pay the costs of agricultural modernisation (machinery, fertilisers, etc.)? The answer is identical and repeated thousands of times over in the history of the Green Revolution: only the big proprietors and the big enterprises can sustain the costs. And the others? Work has begun in the meantime...

The peasants and many working with them in international networks are organising resistance and opposition. The Asswan dam and what the consequent loss of the soil nutrients has meant for all the peasants who lived off the soil, plus all the other grave consequences it has precipitated, necessarily comes to mind. For example, the flooding of part of Nubia and, with it, the burial of major relics of that civilisation and the abandonment of the land by those who lived there. But this is only one case in the midst of the many one could cite. When I was in Egypt in 1989, there was talk of a project to turn the Red Sea into a lake. I hope that the growth of the ecological movement, the movements of the native populations and others will have relegated this project to the nightmares of a past era.

Returning to Vandana Shiva, the same observations, made by her and many other scholars today about the dams and other Western water management projects in the Third World, can equally be applied to the technologies that are imposed on Third World agriculture, in livestock raising, and in the destruction of forests to cultivate export crops: the destruction of biodiversity, ecological equilibriums, and the life-cycles that guaranteed subsistence. In short the production of profit for the big companies, the denial of survival for the population.

Even though her cultural and theoretical approach is far from Marxian, when Vandana Shiva interprets the logic of the continual enclosure of segments

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of nature and the effects it has, she finds no difficulty in concluding that the foundations of capitalist accumulation are the science and practice of the culture of death. Her merit is also to have contributed to bringing to international attention struggles and movements otherwise ignored or neglected. Our argument here is that the Chipko movement in which women organise to stay in the forest even at night, embracing the trees to prevent the logging companies from cutting them down, should be placed on the same level as all the other struggles against various forms of expropriation and attack against individual and collective rights in different parts of the world — not only the right to survival, or better to live, but the right to the self-determination of one's own future.

The economic and life system of the Indian "tribals"⁶ who created the Chipko movement which forms the focus of Vandana Shiva's studies and practical activity, is based on a combination of agriculture, livestock raising and the use/conservation of the forest. The forest has a central and many-sided role in the whole system. The forests bear "soil, water and pure air," sing the Chipko women (Shiva, 1989, p. 77), and they play an important nutritional role. Whatever crisis may hit crops or livestock, say the Chipko women, the children will never suffer hunger if there is a forest near. Thus embracing the trees to stop them from being felled is like occupying the land to prevent it being expropriated, or struggling in defence of jobs or a wage or a guaranteed income when survival depends solely on money. This is what we see if we want to spotlight how the different parts of the working social body struggle contemporaneously and in different forms against the same system that exploits and besieges them in different ways.

This is important for getting a real idea of how an opposition to this form of development is growing increasingly at the world level and is refusing to pay its price while seeking other paths for a different future. But I think that the struggles of the Chipko women and all the other movements for the maintenance and defence of an age-old experience and knowledge in humankind's relationship with nature are all the more vital for us. In fact, *the political debate in the "advanced" areas empowering the voice of those who refuse to pay the price of this development must necessarily be an ecological debate, too.*

The other great denunciations advanced by Vandana Shiva, whose work I have considered here, even if briefly, because it is representative of an entire school of feminist studies developed by women in the world's various Souths, concern the genetic manipulation of living species. To the tampering of the nutritional resources of entire communities is added the genetic manipulation of the species. This topic that has attracted extensive attention in recent years from the various circuits of women scholars and activists.

"With engineering entering the life sciences, the renewability of life as a self-reproducing system comes to an end. Life must be engineered now, not

reproduced. A new commodity set is created as inputs, and a new commodity is created as output. Life itself is the new commodity..." (Shiva, 1989, p. 91). "The market and the factory define the "improvement" sought through the new bio-technologies... Nature's integrity and diversity and people's needs are thus simultaneously violated" (Shiva, 1989, p. 92).

This biotechnological trend is matched by the determination to patent and "bank" the genetic heritage of the living species. This was denounced by women meeting in Miami in preparation for the Rio conference (*Women's Action Agenda 21*, 1991), but their opposition is widely shared. After patenting cotton, the agro-industrial corporations now want to do the same for rice and soy, two of the fundamental foodstuffs for many parts of the world's population. Increasingly food, already difficult to obtain because of the combination of expropriation of land, technological innovations in farming methods, and the ratio between prices and wages (when there are any), is manipulated, placed beyond access, privatised, monopolised, patented, "banked." A new enclosure. *No Entry: Food!*

In this parabola of technological conquest over nature, expropriation reaches its acme: human beings are expropriated, the living species are expropriated, the earth's own reproductive powers are expropriated to transform them into capital. This mode of production pretends to capitalise the generation and reproduction of life. What a long way capitalism has come since it, indifferent to life, was satisfied with nothing more than appropriating an excessive number of working hours⁷ or when it simply pretended to transform all life into work and, to that end, whilst ignoring the contradiction of exploiting free and slave labour at the same time, on the one hand, drained dry the life of the free workers, and on the other, enchained masses of slaves!

But, the amplitude of the various rebellions and struggles in the world in rejection of this type of development is matched by the increasingly massive, lethal and monstrous structures and forms of domination. Considering only the most recent past, from the Gulf War on, the increasingly warlike character of this development has undeniably produced an escalation of war that removes any residual doubts over whether or not it is founded on the science and practice of death. Referring to the wars in the Gulf, ex-Yugoslavia, Somalia, and Rwanda-Burundi finds its limit in the fact that these are simply the wars that have received the most coverage in the media in the last three or four years. We certainly have no intention of underestimating the number of wars that have been pursued in the world without them ever entering the limelight.

If anything, the escalation of war in recent years has confirmed the emptiness of what the major powers said on disarmament. *Rather, war has become increasingly the instrument par excellence for disciplining the working social body at the*

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global level, through annihilation, terror, division, deportation, and the lowering of living conditions and life expectations. In the end, humans, when they are not *massacred directly*, are increasingly "enclosed" in refugee camps and the more or less concealed concentration camps of war situations.

But, at the same time, the *other face of war as a form of development* has been revealed ever more clearly, through the growing monstrosity of the enterprises its macabre laboratory generates. War is recognised as having always been a great laboratory, but since the voracity of capitalist technology has begun to pursue life in the attempt to steal and capitalise its secrets, death has been discovered increasingly as a terrain for profit. In this case, too, the shift is from the "primitive" indifference to the death of masses of individuals expropriated of their means of production and sustenance, to the identification of death, dead bodies or bodies destined in a nonchalant way to die in order to experiment with new technologies or commercialise body parts in trafficking in organs. Besides the traditional markets of arms, post-war reconstructions and techno-industrial experimentation on which our "peace economy" rests, war today offers above all the biggest mass of living/dying guinea-pigs on whom to test, on a mass scale, the new technologies applied to acquire more knowledge of the body and how to operate on it. Here too, it is clear how the part of guinea-pigs has been played above all by the people of the "non-advanced" nations, even if a similar role has recently been emerging for citizens for the most part from the weaker social sectors of the great powers, dispatched to war or used without knowing it in "peace-time."

But war continues to offer new and horrifying terrains on which to reap profits. Trafficking in children,⁸ for example. How many for pornography?⁹ How many for trafficking in organs?¹⁰ How many for slavery¹¹ and the traffic in war cripples?¹² How many for prostitution? How many to be sold for adoption by childless couples? Trafficking in adult males and females also goes on, for all the reasons mentioned above, apart from the last.

It is rather strange that, in discussing sustainable development, there is usually no mention of the *unsustainability* for humankind and the environment of the *form* that development has increasingly taken, namely *war*.

The poster with the image of Zapata from which we set out was sent to us from the Chiapas revolt and the war and truce that resulted from it. Carried as a banner by the workers in Milan, it gave voice to the two great expropriations, from the land and from work. At the same time, it poses with all the force expressed in the struggles throughout the world carried on by those who have been expropriated, the question of what is the contemporary relationship between waged and unwaged labour in this development? In the Third World as in the First, what future is there for unwaged labour?

II. ZAPATA AND THE WOMEN

It may be a provocation, then, but not excessive to think that, in relaunching the increasingly dramatic question of the relationship between these two great sectors of labour, the poster of Zapata also relaunches the feminist question that emerged and stimulated the women's movement in the early 1970s, i.e., the problem of the unwaged labour of reproducing labour-power. The woman is in fact the unwaged labourer par excellence and experiences in this development a *doubly unsustainable contradiction* (Dalla Costa, M., 1995; Dalla Costa, G.F., 1989). On the one hand, her condition, which has been created by capitalist development, is unsustainable in its typical form in the "advanced areas" as an *unwaged worker*; in that she is responsible for reproducing the labour-power in a *wage economy* (Dalla Costa, M., James S. 1972). On the other, her situation has become increasingly unsustainable as an unwaged worker in an unwaged *subsistence economy* where the expansion of capitalist relations progressively deprives her of the means to fulfil her tasks of reproduction for herself and the community. The contradiction and, with it, the unsustainability of the woman's condition, cannot be solved within capitalism, which forms its basis. To be solved, it requires a totally different conception and organisation of development, but by the same token, women's struggles around their condition amplify the demands of other unwaged social subjects from whose labour this capitalist development continually accumulates value.

Numerous studies of which I mention only some (Michel, Agbessi Dos Santos, Fatoumata Diarra, 1981, Michel 1988; Boserup, 1982; Shiva, 1989) have illustrated how the continual realisation of capitalist projects in the Third World's rural areas, apart from expropriating the land, makes it increasingly difficult for women to gain access to the fundamental means for the production of subsistence: from wood for fuel to water for the home and forage for the animals. Now, hours or days have to be spent in fetching things that were previously fairly close. These resources too have been swallowed up by enclosure/appropriation/commodification/capitalisation.

Feminist authors (Mies, 1992) have noted the paradox that precisely for their activities related to acquiring these resources, as well as for having too many children, rural women are blamed for doing harm to the environment. Supposedly, they destroy the forests if they go there in search of wood; they pollute and use up the water sources if they go to fetch water; they use up the earth's resources if they have too many children. It is a typical case of blaming the victims. At the same time, their working and living conditions and, with them, the entire community's life are continually undermined by the debt poli-

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cies imposed on the Third World countries by the major financial agencies, policies of which the expropriation/privatisation of the land is only one, but fundamental aspect (Dalla Costa M. and Dalla Costa G.F., eds., 1993).

When it is not directly the expropriation and expulsion of the rural communities without anything in exchange, the capitalist proposal which presents itself as an "alternative in the direction of development," not only removes an assured subsistence and replaces it with an uncertain wage, but deepens the gap between the male and the female conditions. Significant once more in this respect is the example (Shiva, 1989) also quoted by Mies (1992) of the Chipko women, who oppose the felling of trees in the Himalayan forests for commercial purposes. As in many cases, the men were less determined in their opposition because they were tempted by the prospect of the jobs they would be given in the saw-mills.

But one of the women's biggest doubts was of how much of that money/wage they would have received — and therefore they opposed the creation of a hierarchy based on having or not having a wage. Above all, they posed the problem of what would happen to all of them when the forest, the basis of their subsistence, had been swallowed up by the saw-mills which, since there would be no more wood to cut, would be closed. The women said clearly that they needed no jobs from the government or private businessmen as long as they kept their land and their forests.

In Shiva (1989), there are many other episodes of this kind. After five centuries in which the scene has been repeated, the lesson has been learned in the most remote corners of the earth. There is a great determination not to put one's life in the hands of the planners of development and underdevelopment,¹³ to stop others from plunging whole populations into total uncertainty, which if it does not lead to hunger today will do so tomorrow; a determination to avoid being turned into beggars or refugee camp inmates.

Ecofeminist practices and positions linking nature, women, production and consumption in a single approach are often criticised for "romanticism" by male scholars. One might wonder, if only to raise the most simple question, what value do these scholars attribute to the right to survival of those communities — and there are many of them — whose subsistence and life system are guaranteed precisely by these practices with nature, while the "development proposal" almost always presupposes the sacrifice of the vast majority of the individuals that constitute these communities. Significantly, Mary Mellor (1993) observes in this connection: "I see all this as something that men should prove to be unfounded, rather than as something that the feminists must justify."

As emerges with increasing clarity from the "charters" that the various native peoples have elaborated with the growth in their movement in the last

two decades, together with the right to land, i.e., the right to survival/life, there is an increasingly strong demand for the right to identity, dignity, one's own history, the maintenance of the complex of collective and individual rights belonging to one's own culture, and the right to work out one's own future starting from one's own premises. Obviously, there is no intention here of skating over the contradictions within the existing customs and systems of rules, above all those between men and women. If anything, what needs immediate clarification is that capitalist development, far from offering solutions to these problems, most often aggravates them. Politicians promoting development often try to suppress the women's movements which deal with these questions. Nevertheless these movements have grown and are creating an increasing number of new networks, that struggle, denounce and demonstrate great determination in changing a state of affairs clearly causing women harm.

In this connection, the Chiapas revolt is exemplary since it brought to international attention how the Maya women defined their rights with respect to men and society at large. Work and grass-roots debate in the communities produced a code of rights.¹⁴ Some rights concern the economic/social/civil plane such as the right to work, a fair wage, education, basic health care, the necessary food for oneself and one's children, the right to decide autonomously the number of children one wants to have and to rear, to choose one's companion without being required to marry him, to suffer no violence inside or outside the family. Others rights concern the political plane, such as the right to take part in managing the community, to hold office if democratically elected, to hold positions of responsibility in the Zapatista National Liberation Army (ZNLA). The code repeats that women must have all the rights and obligations deriving from revolutionary laws and regulations. As far as one knows, women participate fully in the highest offices in the ZNLA.

I was in Chiapas in the winter of 1992-93, and in San Cristobal I was struck by the numerous posters put up by women's right activists alongside the posters in praise of the guerrilla heroes. A year later, the great work achieved by these women took on new substance and became known throughout the world, disclosing how much progress had also been made within the community as regards the relationship between the sexes. It is significant that an important point in the code of women's rights, corresponding to the centrality this issue has won in the Western world, concerns violence. I would only like to add that, during my visit the year before the revolt, I was told in San Cristobal that the Maya women were no longer willing to go to the hospital to have their children for fear of being raped — evidently not by the natives.

It seems clear that these women's elaboration of their rights was not in a mythical and improbable phase, "after" the movement that was tending towards

a radical change in the state of things, but formed an integral part of it. The same thing happened in the elaboration of their rights by the Eritrean women during the Eritrean liberation war, and it is repeated in an increasing number of situations. These facts show how it is invalid to presume a lack of movement in "non-advanced" societies because of a supposed observance of tradition.

I would also like to underscore that the relationship with nature¹⁵ is for all of us a fundamental contribution made by the movements of the native women, yet there is great resistance to it being recognised as such by the more or less historical elaborations of urban male intellectuals that try to find a way to change the world.

As the Chipko movement shows — and numerous other examples are available from various parts of the planet — the leaders are increasingly *women in movements that link* the maintenance, recovery and reinterpretation of a relationship with nature with a defence of economic subsistence and the conservation of the identity and historical-cultural dignity of the communities/civilisations to which they belong.

In that their primary task is the reproduction of individuals in wage and non-wage economies, that they are *unwaged subjects par excellence* in both types of economy, and that their possibilities of autonomous subsistence are progressively undermined in the proceeding of capitalist development, women emerge as the *privileged interpreters* for the unwaged of the earth's future. Today, their critique and their theoretical contribution form a necessary moment in the formulation of a different development, or in any case in reasserting the right not to be developed against one's own will and interest.

On the other hand, international networking between women scholars and feminists and women active in various ways and various organisations concerned with the women's condition, development and the native peoples have brought an awareness of these experiences of resistance and struggle, stimulating a closer attention from Italian women researchers as well. Several of them, internationally well known, are cited by Cicolella (1993). One is the *Green Belt Movement* founded in 1977 by the Kenyan woman, Wangari Maathai, who starting from the idea of "afforestation for life," has created green belts around cities in twelve African countries where forests had been replaced by open spaces. Then, the *Gabriela* group in the Philippines began its activities by safeguarding a mountain precious for its natural equilibrium and fragile ecosystem. The *Third World Network* founded by a Chinese jurist Yoke Ling Chee aims at forms of development that truly respond to people's real needs and, above all, are independent of aid from the industrial nations. The *Mapuche movement* in Chile led by Alicia Nahelcheo, who was already active against the Pinochet dictatorship, is today struggling against development projects, the expropriation of land to

build power stations, and the cropping for commercial purposes of the *araucaria* tree whose fruit is a basic foodstuff.

But these are only some examples. The forms in which many men and women increasingly try to guarantee their survival and at the same time fight against this type of development can be expected to multiply and emerge further. At the same time, there is a growth of increasingly ample initiatives at the international level¹⁶ designed to contest the legitimacy of, and to halt the directives handed down by, the World Bank and the IMF. At the economic and social level, these are the key points in the management of contemporary development, as well as being the major factors in the poverty and degradation of the "developing" countries.

At the same time, the strong critique and forms of struggle and resistance against this form of development have produced an increasingly vast and articulated debate in which various interpretations of what a different development should be have emerged. Recent summaries (Gisfredi, 1993) of the major positions stress that the centre of it all is the importance of the environment and the cultural context for elaborating an autochthonous project.¹⁷ They also stress the significance of typologies which, in order to identify the fundamental goals of development, list as categories of basic needs, rather than those concerning pure physical survival, those concerning security, welfare, identity and liberty as against violence, material poverty, alienation and repression which typify the way in which governments rule "developing" countries.

Central to approaches such as these remains self-reliance, by mobilising all the human and material resources available locally and by using technologies compatible with the cultural and natural environment. But many other positions could be listed. To the range of approaches of basic needs, self-reliance, and eco-development summarised by the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation (1975), others have been added because, since then, the debate has developed significantly. The most questioned idea is "sustainable development" as it emerged from the famous world commission for the environment and development chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland. The main criticism is that it confuses development with economic growth and confuses "everyone's future" with the future of the First World.

In any case, it is clear that any definition of a new approach concerning development makes sense only in so far as it grasps the demands of those men and women who have so far paid the heavier price for development while gaining the least from it. And in so far as it recognises the *right to reject development* in all situations where people refuse it, as it often happens in many different parts of the world. In this sense, Gustavo Esteva said as long ago as 1985, in his comments on a conference of the Society for International Development: "My people are tired of development, they just want to live" (quoted in Shiva, 1989, p. 13).

Granted the perspective described above, a look at the contribution made by movements wanting to approach the question of development from a feminist viewpoint shows, in my view, that the most interesting approaches include eco-feminism, because its starting-point is respect for human life and the life of living beings in general. Since it appreciates rather than devalues the knowledge and experience of the women in the native communities, eco-feminism also relaunches an approach including the relationship with nature as the source of life and subsistence, the right to self-determination, and the rejection of the capitalist model of development.

I think that a cross between this feminism with the more radically anti-capitalist feminism which has analysed the condition and struggles of women and the unwaged in this model of development, posing the question of what perspectives, may make a very interesting contribution. In this context, I would like to recall, if only briefly, Vandana Shiva's conception of nature which forms the foundation of her discourse.

She uses a reading of Indian cosmology in which Nature (*Prakrti*) is an expression of Sakti, the female principle, dynamic primordial energy, the source of abundance. Joining up with the male principle (*Purusa*), Prakrti creates the world. Women, like any other natural being, have in themselves the female principle and, therefore, this capacity for creation and the maintenance of life. According to Vandana Shiva, the reductionist vision typical of Western science continually expels the female principle from the management of life, by the same token interrupting the life cycles and therefore the regeneration of life itself, creating destruction in its place. The reductionist vision with respect to nature and women ensures that they are reduced to means for the production of commodities and labour-power.

Patriarchal categories which understand destruction as 'production' and regeneration of life as 'passivity' have generated a crisis for survival. Passivity, an assumed category of the 'nature' of nature and women, denies the activity of nature and life. Fragmentation and uniformity as assumed categories of progress and development destroy the living forces which arise from relationships within the 'web of life' and the diversity in the elements and patterns of these relationships (Shiva, 1989, p. 3).

Feminism as ecology, and ecology as the revival of Prakrti, the source of all life, become the decentred powers of political and economic transformation and restructuring (Shiva, 1989, p. 7).

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Contemporary women's ecological struggles are new attempts to establish that steadiness and stability are not stagnation, and balance with nature's essential ecological processes is not technological backwardness but technological sophistication (Shiva, 1989, p. 36).

Discourse on land, on water, on nature return to us, brought by the native movements and the knowledge of the native women, almost the most precious of the riches that ancient civilisations hid and the secrets that they never revealed.

But with the land, there also returns to us the immense potential of a human diversity that has been able to resist and preserve its heritage of civilisation. And now it gives forceful expression to the will to work its own future autonomously. The need for a relationship with the earth, for liberty, time, and an escape from the modalities of labour and the relations that the capitalist model of development wants to continue imposing also represents a long thirst for expropriated Western humanity. Perhaps, precisely the fact of having been heard so widely in the world, as happened with the Chiapas revolt, gave many their first perception of the real feasibility of a different life project which they had resignedly relegated to a dream of impossible flight — a world in which life would not be all work, nor nature an enclosed park in which relationships are prepackaged, pre-codified and fragmented into atoms. It is evidently because these deep and dolorous chords in expropriated Western humanity were touched that the whole body of working society vibrated together with the Chiapas rebels, beating a thousand keys, transmitting, declaring, sustaining. A thousand arms and a thousand legs were moved, and a thousand voices heard.

A hinterland of communication and liaison has been constructed with the growth of the native movements across the Americas and in the world in the last twenty years. Relations, analyses and information have been more closely and more strongly interwoven, especially recently in opposition to the North America Free Trade Agreement. And all this has become the primary issue for communication between and action by different sectors in the working social body. Workers and non-natives, ecological movement militants, women's groups, and human rights activists have been attracted into a complex support action, helping and monitoring from various parts of the world. But it is clear that, in the last analysis, what has moved all these individuals, groups and associations is the fact of having recognised their own demands in the demands of the native movement; of having seen their own liberation in the native movement's chances of liberation.

The natives have brought the keys, and they are on the table. They can open other doors to enter the Third Millennium. Outside, the full flood has arrived, breaking the concrete banks and drowning the latest high-yield variety of rice...The peasants take out their hundreds of seed varieties, while Aman pushes its stems out above the water.

TRANSLATED BY JULIAN BEES

ENDNOTES

- 1 This paper was first presented at XIII Conference of Sociology, Bielefeld, Germany, July 18–23, 1994, Section 8: Women, Development and Housework [RC 02: Economy and Society].
- 2 See *Il Manifesto*, February 8, 1994, but many other newspapers have used the same image. The demonstrating workers were led by the Cobas, the rank-and-file committees created to negotiate on working conditions without passing through the traditional trade-union organisations. The movement now has a national liaison committee.
- 3 This is the subject of the third part of Midnight Notes Collective (1992).
- 4 In lectures on *Capital* that I used to give each year, I devoted some comments in 1970 to the fundamental question of the two opposite tendencies characterising the history of the working day. They were published later (Dalla Costa M., 1978). In my university courses, I continue illustrating fundamental parts of *Capital*, especially those concerning primitive accumulation. Social processes in this period which were neglected by Marx in *Capital*, e.g., the great witch-hunt, have been analysed by the feminist scholars I worked with (Fortunati, 1981; Federici and Fortunati, 1984), with the aim of clarifying the capitalist sexual division of labour and the construction of proletarian women's individuality in capitalism. It is no coincidence that this period is considered as crucial by various currents of feminist thought.
- 5 The term *maledevelopment* and its French equivalent *maledéveloppement* were originally coined with a biological meaning in mind, rather than a political one. The reference to the idea that the wrong type of development is male-related is clear.
- 6 India has about 50 million members of scheduled tribes, recognised as such by the Indian constitution because of their particularly disadvantaged situation. They are found most extensively in the states of Orissa, Andhra Pradesh and Maryana and are at most marginally integrated into the market economy. Their specific social organisation tends to be non-masculinist and generally speaking egalitarian, with a particularly "sustainable" approach to natural

resources. But they are considered as without caste, being despised and exploited as cheap or unpaid labour when they are forced to join agricultural or industrial units. Consequently, "tribals" referring to India, has not only a social-anthropological meaning but a juridical one as well.

- 7 "Capital asks no questions about the length of life of labour-power"... "What experience generally shows to the capitalist is a constant excess of population"... "*Après moi le déluge!* is the watchword of every capitalist and every capitalist nation" (Marx, 1976, Vol. 1, p. 376, 380, 381).
- 8 In *La Repubblica*, May 17 1994, an article entitled, "Where have the Sarajevo children disappeared to?" Wondering where the children evacuated from the Bosnian war have finished up, the article quoted spine-chilling figures from the humanitarian organisations on trafficking in children and reported the case of one 14-year-old girl who finished with Italian go-betweens and managed to escape. Also mentioned is an article in the weekly, *Focus*.
- 9 The number of children used in the pornography market was referred to with increasing frequency in the media in 1993-94.
- 10 International criminal networks and international crime organisations with legal terminals are growing around the clandestine traffic in organs. In this connection, Italian public television has broadcast a series of programs on this issue. One of the most interesting, on March 5, 1994 on the second state channel, provided evidence of a relationship between these organisations and legal terminals in France.
- 11 It seems worthwhile putting this question given the incredible figures on slavery published recently: 200 million in the world, according to *The Economist* of January 6, 1990. 100 million are reportedly children, according to *Il Manifesto*, 8.06.1994, which quotes a UNICEF report published on the previous day.
- 12 *Il Mattino di Padova*, 4.06.1994, publishes an article on the discovery and denunciation of an organisation that was exploiting women and war cripples from ex-Yugoslavia. In Mestre, Venice, the former were sent to work as prostitutes, the latter as beggars.
- 13 An effective description of the creation of underdevelopment through development is provided for the Port Harcourt area in Nigeria by Silvia Federici (1992).
- 14 Since January 1, 1994, the day on which the revolt broke out, there has been a continual flow of information in the press. In Italy, *Il Manifesto* and other newspapers have reported the major demands of the rebels and with them the women of Chiapas as they were advanced. Two articles with very precise information on the demands as a whole and the details of the mobilisation are Gomez (1994) and Cleaver (1994). A brief synthesis of the

- women's rights in the Women's Revolutionary Law is to be found in Coppo and Pisani (eds. 1994). I must add that a book not to be missed for knowing the condition of the Maya women, this time in Guatemala, is Burgos (1991), *My Name is Rigoberta Menchù*.
- 15 In any case, it needs recognising that, in recent years, even if with different approaches, there has been a growth — internationally — in attempts to link different theoretical elaborations with approaches whose focus is the relationship with nature, particularly Marxism and ecology. The magazine best-known for publishing this type of debate is *Capitalismo. Natura. Socialismo*, which is explicitly located in an eco-Marxist perspective. In this same magazine, a particularly ample discussion has developed around the O'Connor (1992) theses on the "second contradiction of capitalism." On the relationship between the left and ecological issues, see, among others, Ricoveri (1994).
- 16 Just to mention two initiatives: the Circle of the Peoples coordinated a wide range of associations in a counter-summit against the Naples summit of the Group of Seven on July 8–10, 1994, and, in the first ten days of October of the same year, a large number of associations is taking part in a counter-summit in Madrid for the annual assemblies of the World Bank and the IMF, this year marking the fiftieth anniversary of Bretton Woods and the international financial organisations created there. For the same event, the League for the Rights of the Peoples is working at the Lelio Basso Foundation in Rome to produce a statement on the Bretton Woods institutions to be published when the summit is on in Madrid, just as was done for the IMF general assembly in Berlin in 1988.
- 17 *Autochthon*, from the Greek [ott pl.] are of the earliest known inhabitants of any country and/or an animal or plant that is native to a region, Greek meaning "from the earth itself" [Editor's Note].

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