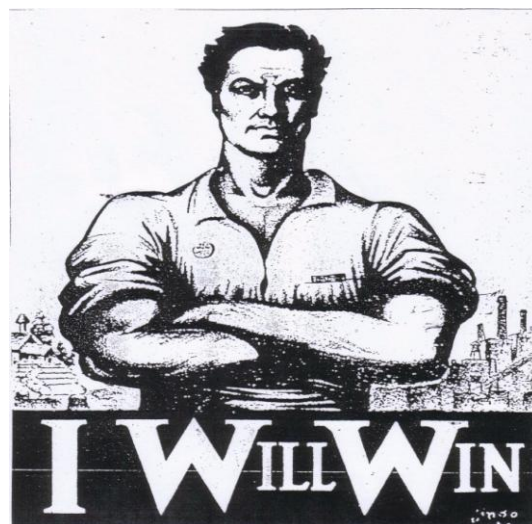


**Université Libre de Bruxelles**

**Faculty of Sciences Economic Policies and Social Studies-Section**

**Social Work (LITSO)**

**“The subjection of the labor process to the valorization  
process through the example of the American labor  
movement 1887 –1920”**



"THE FACTORIES ARE A POWDER KEG... SOMETHING ABSOLUTELY HAS TO BE DONE."  
(1912: Secretary of the Detroit Businessmen's Association) (1)

"UNDERSTAND, WE'RE ON LURCH FOR THOSE DAMN AGITATORS, THAT 1 GANG WON'T  
WORK." (2)

(John Dos Passos: The 42nd parallel. Ed. Gallimard, Coll. Folio -1988- Page 121)

## I. INTRODUCTION:

During our first year of undergraduate studies in social work, we were struck by the importance given to Scientific Management (SMM or the "Taylor System") and its numerous developments, not only in Professor Alaluf 's sociology of work course, but also in a whole series of courses more or less related to this topic. Furthermore, we had the opportunity to read Karl Marx's "An Unpublished Chapter from Capital" (Union Générale d'Editions 10/18), in which the author elaborates, in particular, on the problems of the transition to large-scale industry and mechanization through the concepts of "formal subjection of labor to capital" and "real subjection of labor to capital," which define "the two historical phases of the economic development of capitalist production" (p. 191).

Thus, we decided to attempt to explain the phenomenon of Taylorism (OST), or more precisely, the phenomenon of the transition to large-scale industry, whose archetype is the Taylor system, using Marxist concepts (3) of formal and real submission, restoring to them a validity and relevance that "the spirit of the times" and "current modernity" tend to deny, relegating Marx, in most cases, to what he himself called "the dustbins of history." To make our attempt at explanation more concrete, we then take the example of the American labor movement to support our argument and highlight the polarization between the "traditional" union movement (AFL) and the radical "industrial unionism" movement (IWW) as one of the consequences of the revolution that occurred in the production process.

The American example is not innocent; besides being the birthplace of Taylorism, its "purity" allows us to understand a global historical phenomenon that would later occur in all core countries (including Soviet Russia) and whose consequences continue to determine the fantastic technological transformations of the capitalist mode of production (CMP) and their social repercussions ("de-skilling/over-skilling," crises, unemployment, etc.). In any case, that would be our "conclusion" of our work, a "conclusion" that, in reality, is nothing more than a new hypothesis that other studies could validate or invalidate.

As Marx wrote in his Introduction known as "1857": "*The anatomy of man is the key to the anatomy of the ape*" (K. Marx. *Manuscript of 1857-58 "Grundrisse," first part, Sociales ed., 1980, p. 40*).

We have attempted to use the same methodology, positing that the anatomy of social capital in the United States is key to understanding the anatomy of capital in all countries where the capitalist system dominates, albeit in a less developed and less pure form than in the United States. We are clear that Marx's works are neither "neutral" nor "objective," but rather stem from a position of taking sides in the class struggle, from the perspective of the working class. All his "economic" works are not simply "anatomies" of capital but rather aim to lay out its obituary.

The subtitle of his most famous work, Capital, is "Critique of Political Economy," and he himself stated that it was "*without a doubt the most terrible missile ever launched against the bourgeoisie (including the landowners)*." (Letter to J. Ph. Becker, April 17, 1867, quoted by R. Dangeville in his introduction to the "Unpublished Chapter," already mentioned). Our own interest in these questions dates back some years and is based not on the viewpoint of the impartial observer (if such a viewpoint can exist), but on that of someone seeking a better understanding of social reality in order to transform it. This commitment, materialized in the choice of our subject, is not, we hope, the doctrinal application of a new "religion," even a secular one.

In this respect, we cannot but endorse the criticism that Engels made about Karl Heinzen: "*Herr Heinzen imagines communism is a certain doctrine which proceeds from a definite theoretical principle as its core and draws further conclusions from that. Herr Heinzen is very much mistaken. Communism is not a doctrine but a movement; it proceeds not from principles but from facts. The Communists do not base themselves on this or that philosophy as their point of departure but on the whole course of previous history and specifically its actual results in the civilized countries at the present time.*"

*Communism has followed from large-scale industry and its consequences, from the establishment of the world market, of the concomitant uninhibited competition, ever more violent and more universal trade crises, which have already become fully fledged crises of the world market, from the creation of the proletariat and the concentration of capital, from the ensuing class struggle between proletariat and bourgeoisie." (Engels : "The Communists and Karl Heinzen," October 1847).*

Similarly, it is in economic and social history that we will attempt to find the material elements, the facts that can support our theoretical hypothesis, knowing that we are neither economists nor historians by training. The value of using theoretical concepts lies in the possibility of formulating hypotheses (theses), of having a theoretical framework that allows us to begin the critical work of understanding reality, even if the latter subsequently invalidates the theoretical model. It is, therefore, as Marx explained, a matter of "rising from the abstract to the concrete" (see the introduction to "1857," already cited, p. 35) and not of adding up concrete facts to deduce, in a more or less "scientific" way, the conclusions we would like to reach ("the Rosenthal effect " in psychology).

Therefore, we will lay our "theoretical cards on the table," and it will be up to the reader to judge the coherence of the argument we base on the historical experience of the labor movement, in this case, the "American" movement (4). Once again, Engels had already made a similar point when he wrote: "*Knowledge of the conditions of life of the proletariat is an absolute necessity if one wants to secure a solid foundation for socialist theories, as well as for judgments about their legitimacy, and put an end to all the digressions for and against.*" (F. Engels : Preface to "The Condition of the Working Class in England," March 15, 1845, in Ed. Sociales, p. 30, 1973).

It is in the living conditions of the proletariat, and more precisely in the labor process that determines these conditions, that we will seek a material basis both for the existence of "traditional" " gomperist " trade unionism ( the AFL ), and at the same time for the emergence of spontaneous and radical movements that broke with this trade unionism, giving rise around 1905 to a "new" type of organization, "industrial" trade unionism, of which the IWW is one of the clearest expressions (5). Finally, we will highlight schematically that each type of trade unionism corresponds essentially to a certain predominant "technical class composition": Traditional and corporatist trade unions, a class composition in which the "craft worker" or "professional worker" predominates, a typical product of the phase of formal domination of labor by capital.

In the IWW, the class composition was dominated by the "unskilled" worker (what we would call the OS, line worker) or even the unemployed, a typical product of the phase of real subjugation of the labor process to the valorization process. We will, of course, emphasize the predominant aspect, knowing that these distinctions are not absolute, as well as the always complementary process of extracting absolute and relative surplus value, the driving force behind the permanent transformation of the labor process. The appearance "today" of these "new" Marxist concepts might seem surprising, as if it were a matter of periodically highlighting this or that element or this or that "new reading." For our part, we do not believe that this is the case with our discourse, firstly because Marx uses these concepts implicitly and explicitly throughout his entire work, conceived as a whole, and whose

periodization of the capitalist mode of production into two overlapping phases is the basis for explaining the emergence of the specifically capitalist mode of production, the stage of large-scale industry-mechanization.

*"Marx mentions the formal domination of capital or the formal submission of labor to capital, as well as real domination or submission, in Capital, in the first volume, specifically in section 3, chapter 8 (German edition): 'The Working Day.' However, it is not until section 4, chapter 14: 'Absolute and Relative Surplus Value,' that Marx defines both concepts. This passage has not been translated into French by Roy." (J. Camatte: "Capital et Gemeinwesen," ed. Spartacus, series B, no. 98, Paris, 1976, p. 108).*

And, on the other hand, because most of the developments relating to these issues come from texts recently "discovered" and/or "rediscovered" (and whose French translation is still recent). Consider the 1857-58 "Grundrisse" manuscripts (whose translation by Éditions Sociales dates from 1980), the unpublished Chapter VI (translated by Roger Dangeville in 1971), or the 1861-63 Manuscripts (of which only notebooks I to V were translated by Éditions Sociales in 1979). Therefore, it is no coincidence that G. Labica and G. Bensussan, in their Critical Dictionary of Marxism (second edition, Presse universitaire de France, 1982), address this issue extensively under the formulation "formal/real subsumption" (6), pp. 1102-1103.

*"In his works on the 'critique of political economy,' Marx uses the term subsumption, or also submission (Unterwerfung) and subordination (Unterordnung), to describe the way in which the labor process is subjected to capital. The concept has both an analytical and a historical character. It only makes sense when it is specified in the opposition between formal subsumption and real subsumption (of labor under capital), considered as 'the two historical phases of the economic development of capitalist production' (...). (G. Labica and G. Bensussan, p. 1102).*

Therefore, with this work we do not intend at all to provide a "proof of originality", but quite the opposite: to contribute, even if in a limited way, to the collective work of "rehabilitating" Marxist theory, whose death and/or overcoming is announced every five or ten years... We are forced to note that, for more than a century, the corpse has been in good health, somewhat like the dialectic of the CMP, which it criticizes in action.

As the "young" Lukacs already stated: *"The function of orthodox Marxism -to overcome revisionism and utopianism- is not, therefore, to liquidate false tendencies once and for all, but to wage a ceaselessly renewed struggle against the perverting influence of bourgeois forms of thought on the thinking of the proletariat. This orthodoxy is not the guardian of traditions, but the ever-vigilant herald of the relationship between the present moment and its tasks in relation to the totality of the historical process."* (G. Lukacs: *"What is Orthodox Marxism?"* March 1919, in *"History and Class Consciousness,"* ed. de Minuit, Paris, 1960, p. 45).

#### Introduction Notes

- (1) Cited by B. Coriat in « L'atelier et le chronomètre », ed. Christian Bourgois, Paris, 1979, p. 95.
- (2) « I Won't Work »; « I don't want to work », a play on words with the initials of IWW (Industrial Workers of the World).
- (3) We prefer to use the term "Marxian" rather than "Marxist," which is less ideologically charged, referring to Marx's famous phrase: "All I know is that I am not a Marxist." Quoted by M. Rubel in "Marx critique du marxisme", Payot 1974, p. 6.
- (4) We will often speak of the "American" labor movement, which for us means that it develops within the geographical space of the United States, knowing full well that, in most cases, the national origin of the protagonists is European... even to China (let us think of the numerous Chinese proletarians who built the railroads in the United States).
- (5) We could draw a parallel between the simultaneous emergence of the IWW in the United States and that of the "workers' councils" in Russia, or even the "unions" in Germany, which for us essentially embody the same type of problems. Often, some of the initiators of the "unions" in Germany, for example, had worked in the USA and had been members of the IWW. This is the case of Fritz Wolfheim, a theorist of industrial trade unions; cf. Broué P. "Révolution en Allemagne", ed. de Minuit, Paris 1971, p. 935.
- (6) The term "subsumption" means both "domination" and "impregnation." It is the translation of the German term "Unterwerfung," which, in addition to the concept of domination/submission, contains that of full integration, something the French word "domination" fails to express. "Domination" can, in fact, be an external factor. For our purposes, we will use the terms domination, submission, and subsumption interchangeably.

## II. ATTEMPT TO DEFINE SOME MARXIST CONCEPTS

### A. Absolute surplus value and formal domination

\*It is in the eighth chapter of the third section of his work "Capital" that Marx addresses the question of absolute surplus value (1), whose cornerstone is the lengthening of the working day: *"The capitalist maintains his rights as a purchaser when he tries to make the working day as long as possible, and to make, whenever possible, two working days out of one. On the other hand, the peculiar nature of the commodity sold implies a limit to its consumption by the purchaser, and the labourer maintains his right as seller when he wishes to reduce the working day to one of definite normal duration. There is here, therefore, an antinomy, right against right, both equally bearing the seal of the law of exchanges. Between equal rights force decides. Hence is it that in the history of capitalist production, the determination of what is a working day, presents itself as the result of a struggle, a struggle between collective capital, i.e., the class of capitalists, and collective labour, i.e., the working-class."* (K. Marx : "Capital", Volume I, ES, p. 261).

As can be seen directly here, the first mode (in time) of extorting added value was, historically, the lengthening of the working day; this corresponded to the lengthening of the proportion of "surplus labor" relative to that of "necessary labor," thus materializing an increase in the rate of surplus value, that is, the ratio between surplus value and necessary labor, or, in other words, the ratio between profit and the sum of distributed wages. This lengthening of the working day is not infinite, and, already in the previous quote, Marx highlights social limitations, resistance, and workers' struggle as antinomic factors to this lengthening of time, which implies an increase in exploitation (since the rate of surplus value = the rate of exploitation). Furthermore, there is also an "objective," physical limitation to this lengthening, namely, the fact that a day only has 24 hours and that, moreover, it is necessary to "conserve" a portion of that time for the reconstitution of labor power.

Thus, objective and subjective factors accumulate to force capitalists to develop another way of increasing extra labor and therefore surplus value: the extortion of relative surplus value. Before developing the specific modalities of the extortion of relative surplus value, it should be noted that, in the case of the extortion of absolute surplus value, capital acts essentially on time without affecting the labor process itself; thus, in general, during the phase in which the extortion of absolute surplus value predominates, the labor process remains intact, that is, it is taken as is from the pre-capitalist modes of production, to be dominated by the valorization process (production of surplus value) without undergoing any other transformation than concentration in one place (stage of cooperation and manufacturing).

*"That a substantial number of workers labor at the same time, in the same space (or, if you will, in the same field of labor) in the production of the same type of commodity, under the command of the same capitalist, is what constitutes the historical and conceptual starting point of capitalist production."* (K. Marx : "Capital," already cited, p. 362).

In his work entitled "An Unpublished Chapter of Capital" (Ed. 10/18) (2), which is actually nothing more than the French translation of the sixth chapter of the so-called "primitive" German version, which the first translator, Joseph Roy, did not include in the French version, Marx very clearly defines this phase of capitalism in which the extortion of absolute surplus value predominates:

*"I call the form based on absolute surplus value the formal subjection of labor to capital, because it is only formally distinguished from the previous modes of production on whose basis it arises spontaneously (or is introduced) by whether the immediate producer remains his own employer or whether he has to provide extra*

labor to others.” (K. Marx: “An Unpublished Chapter of Capital,” translated and introduced by Roger Dangeville - Union Générale d’Edition-10/18, 1971, p. 202)

*“If the production of absolute surplus value corresponds to the formal submission of labor to capital, that of relative surplus value corresponds to the real submission of labor to capital (...).”*

If each of the forms of surplus value, absolute and relative, is considered separately, the absolute surplus value always precedes the relative surplus value.

*“But to these two forms of surplus value correspond two distinct forms of the subjection of labor to capital, or two distinct forms of capitalist production, of which the first always paves the way for the second, although the latter, being the more developed of the two, may in turn constitute the basis for the introduction of the first into new branches of production” (Ibid., p. 201). “In fact, the specifically capitalist mode of production knows other modes of extracting surplus value, but, on the basis of a pre-existing mode of production, that is, a given mode of the productive power of labor, and of the mode of labor corresponding to the development of this productive power, surplus value can only be extracted by prolonging the duration of labor time, in the form of absolute surplus value. The formal subjection of labor to capital thus knows only this single form of production of surplus value” (Ibid., p. 195).*

Thus, we see how the formal domination phase is characterized by the production of surplus value absolute, as well as through the formal submission of the labor process that capital has not yet transformed, that it has not yet fully brought into conformity with its nature as "value that valorizes itself," thus allowing the worker to retain a mode of labor and a knowledge of it close to that of pre-capitalist modes of production, essentially feudal (3). This is what we will call the "artisan worker" or "professional worker" type, proud of their -real- qualifications and who organizes themselves essentially according to their trade. In this sense, it is significant to point out that the first trade unions originated, among others, among printers, "overqualified" book workers, since they had to be able to read and write.

*“While the maintenance of ‘secrets’ within the master craftsman’s line remains the exception, the ‘craft,’ systematically and generally throughout the 19th century, will constitute the cornerstone upon which the workers’ organization, their capacity for resistance, and their strength will be built. It is in the United States, more than anywhere else, that things take a clearer turn.” (B. Coriat : “L’atelier et le chronomètre”, Christian Bourgois éditeur, 1979, p. 29).*

To summarize this first notion, we would say with G. Labica and G. Bensussan:

*“The essential element in formal subsumption, in Marx’s view, is:*

*a) The fact that the subordination of labor to capital does not derive from a sociopolitical relationship, but solely from the control of working conditions by the capitalist and, consequently, from the economic dependence of the worker.*

*b) The fact that «the objective and subjective conditions of work are presented to the worker as capital», the source of the mystification inherent in the capitalist/wage worker relationship, the productive force of labor is presented as the productive force of capital.” (G. Labica and G. Bensussan : “Dictionnaire critique du marxisme”, PUF, Paris, 1982, p. 1102).*

The labor process, although subject to capital (one of whose definitions is precisely that of the dual process of labor and valorization), is not yet in itself a capitalist labor process, just as society as a whole is not yet fully subsumed by the logic of valorization. Thus, while in general terms the labor movement and its various organizations remain excluded from civil society during the phase of formal domination (prohibition of producers' associations, exclusion from the right to vote, etc.), progressively, with the development of the process of real subjugation, the labor movement is first

recognized and then legalized as a collective "partner" within the capitalist system. The visible turning point in this gradual process of integration occurred during the First World War, when the support of the vast majority of the social-democratic (and anarchist) labor movement for the outbreak of war, alongside the various national bourgeoisies, was "paid for" with open participation in the state.

This materialized in most capitalist countries with the postwar development of equal mechanisms for managing social relations, the corollaries of which are, and were, national consensus and social peace. In this sense, the "traditional" trade unions were fully integrated into the state apparatus (the phase of real submission) as collective representatives/managers of the price of labor power as a commodity (managers of the labor market). They are the social backbone of the process of realizing democracy; on the political level, this is expressed through the existence of large "workers'" parties—at least from a sociological perspective; on the social level, by supporting political representation, the major trade union federations embody the process of social democracy.

The proletariat is not conceived as a revolutionary force (class in the full Marxist sense), but as a "mass" of sellers of their only commodity: labor power, whose exchange value is the wage and whose use value is the specificity of creating a surplus value, a new value. Returning to the definition of the Marxist concept of the formal subsumption phase, in which the extortion of absolute surplus value predominates, we can never stress enough that it is a process in time and space that has its starting point in the use by capital (valorization process) of the essentially unaltered labor process, before progressively transforming and revolutionizing it through the introduction of new technical conditions that develop the productivity of labor and thus reduce its value itself (development of the extortion of relative surplus value).

*"When it comes to obtaining surplus value by transforming necessary labor into surplus labor, it is no longer enough for capital, leaving the traditional processes of labor intact, to be content with merely prolonging their duration. On the contrary, it must transform the technical and social conditions, that is, the mode of production. Only in this way can it increase the productivity of labor, thereby reducing the value of labor power and, consequently, shortening the time necessary to reproduce it" (K. Marx: "Capital", Volume II, p. 9).*

Thus, within the phase of formal subsumption that corresponds globally to the 19th century, the process of real subsumption is already developing in the poles of capitalist concentration (in England, for example, a process widely described by F. Engels in his work "The Condition of the Working Class in England"), although, in general, and especially from a global perspective (within the world market itself), the mode of extortion of absolute surplus value continues to predominate, which opens the way to the development of the extortion of relative surplus value and, therefore, to the full and total domination of the specifically capitalist mode of production, since, from its point of view, it has really and totally appropriated the labor process and the whole of society.

As E. Balibar summarizes: "In 'formal subsumption,' on the contrary, the belonging of labor to capital is determined only by its non-absolute ownership of the means of production, but in no way by the form of the productive forces, which remain organized according to the principles of the craft. The return to the craft, for each worker, does not seem to be excluded." That is why Marx says that the worker's belonging to capital remains accidental here:

*"In the beginning of capital, its dominion over labor is purely formal and almost accidental. The worker only labors under the orders of capital because he has sold his power; he only works for it because he*

*does not have the material means to work for himself*" ("Capital", Volume II, p. 23). (L. Althusser - E. Balibar. "Reading Capital", ed. Maspero, Volume II, PCM No. 31, Paris 1970, pp. 219-220).

Thus, we can increasingly observe, within the phase of formal subjugation, the development of real domination in certain companies, industrial sectors, entire countries... which defines a period that we will call a "hinge" between the phases of formal and real subjugation, corresponding to the late 19th and early 20th centuries. This "transition" period, in which the predominance of the extraction of absolute surplus value tends to transform into a predominance of the extraction of relative surplus value, is most clearly visible in the United States with the introduction and generalization of Taylor's OST system (4) and the multiple consequences this will have on both the structure of capital and that of the proletariat and its organizations.

But, at this point in our exposition, we want to emphasize above all the fact that if we speak of "predominance" it is because the two modes of extraction of surplus value (absolute and relative) are complementary and concomitant; What varies is the relationship between them, precisely in terms of "domination," and its consequences in the capitalist transformation of the labor process (division of labor, "disqualification," etc.). The two modes of extracting surplus value thus overlap and develop reciprocally, as Marx explains very clearly:

*"From a certain historical point of view, the difference between absolute and relative surplus value seems at first illusory. Relative surplus value is absolute because it implies the absolute prolongation of the working day beyond the labor time necessary for the worker's subsistence. Absolute surplus value is relative because it implies a development of labor productivity that makes it possible to limit the necessary labor time to a part of the working day. But if we consider the movement of surplus value, this appearance of identity of kind disappears. Once the capitalist mode of production has been established and has become the general mode of production, the difference between absolute and relative surplus value becomes perceptible as soon as it is a matter of increasing the rate of surplus value in general.*

*If we assume that labor power is paid at its value, we are faced with the following alternative: given the productive power of labor and its normal degree of intensity, the rate of surplus value can only be increased by an absolute lengthening of the working day; on the other hand, with a definite limit to the working day, the rate of surplus value can only be increased by a change in the relative magnitude of its parts, necessary labor and surplus labor, which in turn, since the wage must not fall below the value of labor power, presupposes a change in the productivity or intensity of labor."* (K. Marx: LI) Werke, volume 23, pp. 532-34, cited by J. Camatte in "Capital et gemeinwesen," p. 110).

Once these points have been clarified regarding the inseparable nature of the extortion of absolute and relative surplus value, as well as the overlap of the periods of formal and real submission (avoiding a simplistic view that denies the temporal and spatial differences between the various geopolitical areas), we can move on to delve deeper into the definitions of relative surplus value and the phase of real domination.

## **B. Relative surplus value and real domination**

\* The emergence of the specifically capitalist mode of production, as Marx calls it, that is, the MPC that has completely subjected itself to the labor process, is the condition for the extortion of relative surplus value.

*"As they develop, the productive forces of society, or the productive forces of labor, become socialized and directly social (collective), thanks to cooperation, the division of labor in the workshop, the use of*



*machinery, and, in general, the transformation that the production process undergoes thanks to the conscious application of the natural sciences, mechanics, chemistry, etc., for specific technological purposes, and thanks to everything related to large-scale work, etc. (only this socialized labor is capable of applying the general products of human development -for example, mathematics- to the immediate production process, since the development of these sciences is in turn determined by the level reached by the material production process.)"*

*"All this development of the productive power of socialized labor, as well as the application of science to the immediate production process, this general product of social development, stands in opposition to the more or less isolated and dispersed labor of the individual, and all the more so since it all presents itself directly as the productive power of capital, and not as the productive power of labor, whether that of the isolated worker, that of workers associated in the production process, or even a productive power of labor that would be identified with capital." (K. Marx: "An Unpublished Chapter of Capital," already cited, pp. 199-200).*

*"The real subjugation of labor to capital develops in all forms that produce relative surplus value, as opposed to absolute surplus value. The real subjugation of labor to capital is accompanied by a complete revolution (which continues and is constantly renewed) in the mode of production, in the productivity of labor, and in the relations between capitalists and workers. The real subjugation of labor to capital goes hand in hand with the transformation of the production process we have just mentioned: the development of the social productive forces of labor and, thanks to large-scale work, the application of science and machinery to immediate production.*

*On the one hand, the capitalist mode of production, which currently presents itself as a sui generis mode of production, gives material production a different form; on the other hand, this modification of the material form constitutes the basis for the development of capitalist relations, which therefore require a certain level of evolution of the productive forces to find their appropriate form. (K. Marx, *ibid.*, pp. 218-219). To summarize schematically, we would say: specifically capitalist mode of production (CMP in the phase of real domination) = large-scale cooperation (large-scale industry) + application of science and machinery to immediate production (formation of a labor process based on a specifically capitalist technology)."*

*"It is like an articulated system of working machines that only receive their motion from a central automaton through the transmission machinery that mechanized exploitation has its most developed configuration." (K. Marx : "Capital", Volume I, ES, p. 428).*

The phase of real domination, therefore, corresponds to the full realization of the capitalist mode of production as a specifically capitalist mode of production, as a sui generis mode of production. It is characterized by the predominance of the extraction of relative surplus value, that is, the development of surplus labor (unpaid labor) in relation to necessary labor (paid labor = the sum of distributed wages), which in turn decreases, not due to the lengthening of the working day (although, evidently, this can still occur), but essentially due to the decrease in the value of labor power. This decrease is, in turn, due to the increase in the productivity (and intensity) of labor that the capitalist transformation of the labor process allows. Thus, the introduction of new technologies, due in particular to competition and the pursuit of extraordinary profits, increases labor productivity (the ratio between time and the mass of commodities produced) and reduces the unit value of commodities, including those that are directly and indirectly involved in the reproduction of labor power, whose value also decreases, even if real wages remain constant.

*"In the case of absolute surplus value, there is a relative decrease in the value of wages compared with the absolute increase of surplus value; in the case of relative surplus value, there is an absolute decrease in the value of wages." (K. Marx: "Manuscripts of 1861-63", Social Studies Edition, p. 366).*

The absolute decrease in the value of the commodity labor power, the consequence of which is the increase in productivity/intensity of labor (increase in the rate of surplus value, rate of exploitation), is the fundamental engine of the extortion of relative surplus value.

*"The productivity of labor means the maximum output with the minimum labor, that is, the cheapest possible goods. In the capitalist mode of production, this becomes a law, independent of the capitalist's will." (K. Marx: "An Unpublished Chapter," already quoted, p. 222).*

Here we already have a clear definition of what will later be called mass production, developed and theorized in particular by Ford, and whose condition is the OST. As G. Bensussan points out: *"If in formal subsumption, the subordination of labor to capital is only determined by the lack of ownership of the means of production, in real subsumption it is over-determined by the form that the productive forces adopt, which breaks radically with that of the craft."*

Thus, *"capitalist production conquers all branches of industry in which it does not yet dominate and in which only formal subsumption reigns."* (G. Labica and G. Bensussan: *"Dictionnaire critique du marxisme"*, PUF, already cited, p. 1103).

From the standpoint of the internal law of capital (competition for maximum valorization among individual capitals, branches, and territorial sections of global social capital), the arrival of the large-scale industrial phase makes possible not the emergence, but rather the rise of the specifically capitalist form of extortion of surplus value: relative surplus value. As we have seen previously, the increase in relative value added does not thereby preclude absolute value added. On the contrary, the massive introduction of machinery and science into production also entails a tendency to lengthen the working day. This is done in order to appropriate the greatest possible extraordinary surplus value during the increasingly shorter interval in which the sector as a whole lacks access to such efficient machinery and technology. Hence the tendency of capital to simultaneously combine a maximum extension of the working day with a reduction to the minimum possible of the necessary labor time and the number of workers required.

This is, therefore, a dual movement of proletarianization and expulsion of workers (the creation of a reserve army of labor) from the immediate production process. During formal submission, the worker controls, to a certain extent, the pace of work and the manufacturing processes jealously guarded from generation to generation, from parents to children. In order to introduce machines, capital must seize these "secrets of manufacture," since if it is unable to know precisely the exact development of the labor process, it cannot introduce machines that are nothing more than the mechanical reproduction of that process. The OST (Substitution Industrial Organization) thus finds its objective basis (capitalist appropriation/transformation of the labor process) and, at the same time, becomes the essential vector of increased labor productivity (relative surplus value).

The greater the number of machines introduced, the greater the worker's dependence on them. After taking over the methods of work, the machine imposes its own rhythm on the worker. The worker becomes a mere assistant to the machine, a part of it, and is completely subjugated to it. Simultaneously, the execution of the work process is simplified, placing the burden on the worker and allowing for the large-scale introduction of women and children into production. Hence the considerable devaluation of labor power. If initially only the man worked, his wages should have been sufficient to support his family. Now, the same family, in order to live, needs the wages of all working members, and lives no better than before, since, as a result, the man's wages have been considerably reduced. Therefore, it is through real subjugation that the inherent tendency of capitalist relations (to produce the greatest possible surplus value) is adequately realized thanks to the development of "technology" and the social form of labor.

The capitalist mode of production can only truly develop by passing through a "transition phase," which is the phase of formal subjugation of labor to capital. This latter phase prepares the conditions of production, the relations of production necessary for the production not only of surplus value but also of capital. Only under the domination of capital does the production process become a unity of the labor process and the valorization process. Moreover, the labor process is merely the means of the valorization process. As E. Balibar points out:

*"The transition from manufacturing to large-scale industry inaugurates what Marx calls 'the specific mode of production' of capitalism, or also the 'real subsumption' of labor under capital. In other words, large-scale industry constitutes the form of our relationship that belongs organically to the capitalist mode of production." (L. Althusser - E. Balibar: "Reading Capital II"; cited above, p. 127).*

*"In the 'real subsumption' of large-scale industry, the worker's belonging to capital is doubly determined: on the one hand, he does not possess the material means to work on his own account (ownership of the means of production); on the other hand, the form of the 'productive forces' deprives him of the capacity to set in motion by himself, apart from an organized and controlled cooperative work process, the social means of production." (Ibid., p. 218).*

Complementary to the transition to real domination, the process of transforming labor itself unfolds, the transition from what Marx calls "complex labor" to "simple labor."

*"Complex labor is nothing but a power of simple labor, or rather, it is simply simple labor multiplied, so that a given quantity of complex labor corresponds to a larger quantity of simple labor. Experience shows that this reduction occurs constantly." (K. Marx quoted in G. Beckerman: "Vocabulaire du marxisme", PUF-Paris 1981, p. 149).*

This process is evidently developed thanks to the introduction of the OST, which "disqualifies" the worker's work or, more precisely, which increasingly accentuates the separation between the worker and the product of his labor.

Here we touch upon a very current controversy in the sociology of work and, without going into it in depth, we will point out with M. Alaluf: *"The control-surveillance function, if it reflects a transformation of work, postulates neither a recomposition of work nor a decomposition of work, but an ever-increasing separation between the worker and the product of his labor."* (M. Alaluf: *"Does work qualify the worker?"*, in *Critique régionale "Work in sociology"*, no. 14, Institute of Sociology of the ULB, March 1986).

Thus, if the type of "craft worker" (or professional worker), in schematic opposition to the worker of the formal submission phase, did indeed possess a certain qualification in the sense of a certain knowledge of an essentially pre-capitalist (craft) work process, with the introduction of mechanization, science, and large-scale industry, the work process is transformed, disrupted, "revolutionized." But this transformation is more a growing alienation (estrangement) of man from his tools, his means of production (schematically, from a tool that extends man's labor to man who becomes a servant of the machine) than a loss of a mythical qualification that would be characteristic of past labor (in fact, of craft labor).

Therefore, special attention must be paid to the concept of "qualification," which, in a vulgar sense, would portray a worker as increasingly less qualified and knowledgeable. However, in fact, the line worker (the OS of the classic Taylorist assembly line) also possesses a certain level of qualification (which, therefore, lacks intrinsic value), knowledge, and specific training that allows them to integrate effectively into the machine system. Thus, while it is true that a fundamental transformation is taking

place in the work process and, consequently, in work itself, it must be considered primarily as the development of the proletarian's externalization ("Ausserliehkeit") and alienation ("Entfremdung") from their product.

*"Men's activity is becoming increasingly divided, which goes hand in hand with the division of labor and increases with it. Men become workers (and non-workers) separated by their jobs, etc." (J. Camatte: "Capital et Gemeinwesen", op. cit., p. 179).*

*"In the period of formal domination, capital is no longer able to subdue and thus incorporate labor power, which resists and rebels to the point of endangering the development of its own process, since it is totally dependent on it. But the introduction of machines changes everything. Capital then takes over all the activity that the proletarian carries out in the factory. With the development of cybernetics, it is observed that capital appropriates and incorporates the human brain; with computer science, it creates its own language, to which the language of men must adapt, etc." (J. Camatte, quoted, p. 113).*

Other elements (5) could be pointed out because of the transition to real domination of the work process, such as:

- \* The development of the role of the State as an impersonal and collective representative of capital as an economic agent (materialized, among other things, in Keynesian-type plans: the New Deal in the United States, the De Man plan in Belgium, etc.).

- \* The change in the composition of the working class with the emergence of the line worker (6), as well as the complementary development of a layer of "superior workers" (who identify themselves as producers isolated from the interests of the company itself) that the ambiguous concept of "labor aristocracy" has attempted to theorize.

- \* The integration of large trade union federations into the State apparatus through a multitude of negotiation and social concertation structures, the basis for the generalization of social democracy and the equal management of the price of labor power; the unions increasingly represent the "labor market" versus the availability of employment, thus becoming unions of wage earners and not, as in formal domination, strictly workers' unions (see the changes in the social composition of unions in the 20th century).

- \* Emergence of new intermediate and essentially unproductive social strata; the new middle classes linked to the development of unproductive labor (in the sense of the direct production of surplus value) and generally identified with the development of the "tertiary sector"...

Having attempted to "redefine" some concepts of the Marxist theory of the "two historical phases of capitalist production," we will now try to examine its explanatory power through the experience of the American labor movement. But before that, let us briefly outline the framework of economic and social development in the United States during the 19th century and, in doing so, situate the emergence of the OST as a fundamental vector in the transition to real domination.

#### Chapter II Notes

(1) We will prefer to use the term "surplus value" instead of the old expression "added value", in accordance with the introductory notes of the new translation of the first book made by Jean-Pierre Lefebvre for Social Editions/Messidor, 1983.

(2) We will not develop here all the contributions of the unpublished chapter of Capital, preferring instead the detailed study carried out by J. Camatte in Capital et Gemeinwesen, Ed. Spartacus, series B, no. 98, 1976, which in turn includes the works of the journal « Invariance » (and in particular the text «Le Vème Unpublished Chapitre du capital et l'oeuvre Marx's économique " in Invariance No. 2, 1964-66).

- (3) We voluntarily leave aside the problem of the domination of capital over other modes of production, such as the so-called Asian or tributary mode, which is the subject of multiple debates that do not fall directly within the framework of this thesis.
- (4) We will return later to an attempt to define the Taylor system as an essential vector of the step to real subsumption (see page 61).
- (5) We will limit ourselves here to pointing out these elements, knowing that each of them could be the subject of broader analysis and developments that do not directly fall within the scope of our work or that, more precisely, would be subsequent developments.
- (6) Also called, in the tradition of "Italian workerism", "mass worker" (see M. Tronti, *Ouvrier et capital*, Éd. Christian Bourgois, Paris, 1977).

### **III. A FEW WORDS ON THE ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE USA (LATE 19TH CENTURY) AND ON THE DEFINITION OF THE OST**

#### **A. The development of MPC in the USA.**

The specific nature of capitalist development in the British colonies lies, on the one hand, in the fact that they were colonies of the leading economic power of the 18th and 19th centuries (England) and, on the other hand, in the fact that they developed essentially through immigration (of people and capital) until achieving autonomy (the War of Independence). Therefore, it was not a development within and against a pre-existing mode of production (as in the case of Europe within and against feudalism), but rather the export of the most "modern" mode of production, which swept away the remnants of the "natural" modes of production existing among the native populations (in this sense, it was a "colonialist" development). The interpretation of the economic and social development of the United States thus becomes particularly clear through the successive waves of immigration, which almost photographically reflect the development and needs of capital. Thus, when Marx addresses the "modern theory of colonization" (chapter XXXIII of Book I of "Capital"), it is evident that he develops his theme through emigration to the United States.

*"On the one hand, the immense and continuous human current that rushes forward each year toward America leaves stagnant deposits in the eastern United States, since the wave of emigration from Europe throws more men onto the labor market than the second wave of emigration can bring to the 'Far West.' On the other hand, the American Civil War has brought with it an enormous national debt, taxation, the birth of the vilest financial aristocracy, the subordination of a large part of the public lands to speculative societies, the exploitation of railroads, mines, etc., in a word, the most rapid centralization of capital. The great Republic thus ceased to be the promised land of migrant workers. Capitalist production is advancing by leaps and bounds, especially in the Eastern States, although the reduction of wages and the servitude of the workers are still far from reaching the normal European level." (K. Marx: "Capital", dc, pp. 565-566).*

The two historical phases of MPC domination thus corresponded to waves of immigration of different kinds, which, for us, expressed the very characteristics that distinguished these phases. First, in the 18th and early 19th centuries, during the phase of formal submission, there was a "white" immigration of professional workers ("artisan") who were surplus in their countries of origin, particularly England.

*"The objective of this company will be to find various jobs for a large number of unemployed people." (R. Hakluyt: "Discourse on Western Colonization," quoted in H. Pelling: "The Labor Movement in the United States," ed. Seghers, Paris, 1965).*

A significant part of this wave consisted of poor peasants from Scotland, Ireland, Germany, Switzerland... but above all: *"Some were skilled artisans, like those who settled in Germantown, Pennsylvania; but their social advancement was hampered by linguistic and, at times, religious barriers."* (H. Pelling, *op. cit.*, p. 20) Y- H.

Nouailhat points out in the same way: *"European immigration is not only rural. Until about 1870, there was*

*a strong flow from British industrial centres, especially during periods of cyclical crises. They were generally artisans or skilled workers" (YH. Nouailhat: "Évolution économique des États-Unis du milieu du XIX è siècle à 1917", Société d'édition d'Enseignement Supérieur, Paris, 1982, p. 37).*

The defining characteristic of this type of working-class settlement was the enslavement of Black people "imported" directly or indirectly from Africa to work primarily on the tobacco plantations of Virginia and North Carolina, and on the rice and indigo plantations of South Carolina and Georgia. Toward the middle of the 18th century, for example: *"Some were skilled artisans, such as those who settled in Germantown, Pennsylvania; but their social advancement was hampered by linguistic and, at times, religious barriers."* (H. Pelling, *op. cit.*, p. 20)

Y- H. Nouailhat points out in the same way: *"European immigration is not only rural. Until about 1870, there was a strong flow from British industrial centres, especially during periods of cyclical crises. They were generally artisans or skilled workers" (YH. Nouailhat: "Évolution économique des États-Unis du milieu du XIX è siècle à 1917", Société d'édition d'Enseignement Supérieur, Paris, 1982, p. 37).*

Towards the middle of the 18th century, for example: *"Boston was a flourishing industrial center where artisans of all kinds, including goldsmiths and coachbuilders, found a market to sell their products and where the establishment of certain industries, such as shipbuilding and glassmaking, required perfect organization"* (H. Pelling, *dc*, p. 24).

As Tench points out Coxe in his book "View of the US" (1794) (also quoted by H. Pelling): *" Many of the most prosperous manufacturers in the United States were mere journeymen, sometimes foremen, in workshops and factories in Europe. Having proved themselves skillful, temperate, and frugal, they established themselves on their own account in the United States and obtained great profits."*

This is, therefore, a "white" immigration originating from Northern Europe (hence the famous term "WASP," White Anglo-Saxon Protestant), with a high level of "skilling," but essentially rooted in traditional trades and crafts, even though they generally embody capitalist social relations (wage labor). It represents the process of capital's incorporation of labor processes that predate even those suited to its own nature (which is specifically the industrial labor process). The CMP, in its phase of formal domination, is thus still based on a pre-capitalist labor process, although it dominates it from its point of view, since there is production of surplus value (and, therefore, the existence of wage labor).

This first wave of immigration, which took place in the 18th and early 19th centuries, will constitute the first fundamental nucleus of the American working class, whose first economic and resistance associations will logically express its characteristics, that is, a grouping based on the trade, closer to corporations than to unionism (we will develop this issue later). This first wave differs clearly from the second (second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries) both in its geographical origin and in its professional skills, or rather, its lack of qualifications- that is, its lack of a specific trade and, therefore, its availability, its "freedom," in a rapidly transforming labor market. The social origin of this second wave is essentially rural, as they come directly from the countryside and traditional villages of southern or eastern Europe. These migrants, with almost no transition (and after a particularly exhausting journey, blinded by all the illusions of the "promised land"), find themselves mostly in the labor market, crowded into national ghettos and subjected to all the brutal disillusionment of the capitalist reality of the "American Dream."

*"In the last two decades of the 19th century, the economic transformations that had driven*

*emigration from northern and western Europe reached southern and eastern Europe. In Austria-Hungary, Italy, Greece, and Russia, population growth and the disintegration of the old rural economy led to massive population displacements (...). By 1896, the "new" immigration was in the majority, and by 1914, it represented more than 80% of new arrivals. In general, these "new" immigrants were poorer than the older ones, with a similar level of education, more often transient, less politically educated, and with a higher proportion of single men (...). Overall, the "new" immigrants preferred cities, attracted by employment opportunities. This preference for urban life gave American cities a very particular character in the late 19th and early 20th centuries."*

By 1910, one-third of the population of the nation's twelve largest cities was foreign-born, and another third was made up of the children of immigrants. New York had more Italians than Naples, more Germans than Hamburg, and twice as many Irish as Dublin. Chicago boasted more Poles than Warsaw, more Czechs than Prague, and larger concentrations of Swedes, Norwegians, Serbs, Croats, and Lithuanians than any other American city.

*"Forced by their poverty to live in the cheapest places they can find, these newcomers often live in the worst slums. In every major American city, there are overcrowded immigrant ghettos." (YH. Nouailhat, dc pp. 37, 38-42).*

Coriat reinforces our point of view by differentiating the two waves of 19th-century immigration, *"highlighting notable social differences in the characteristics of the workforce, whose intelligence is decisive."* For the two "waves" of migrants differ both in terms of their country of origin, the roots from which they come, and the conditions of reception offered to them in the United States. (B. Coriat: *"L'atelier et le chronomètre,"* dc pp. 47-48).

B. Coriat thus distinguishes a wave between 1815 and 1860 in which "the overwhelming majority (they are) migrants from Western and Northern Europe" (p. 48) and a second wave: *"From 1880 to 1915: no less than fifteen million new immigrants are counted in the United States. The vast majority came from Eastern Europe (Poles, Hungarians, Moldovans, Czechs, Romanians, Lithuanians, Germans...) and Southern Europe (Italians, Greeks, Armenians) (ibid., p. 51)."*

These two waves of immigration brought about a radical change in the conditions of exploitation of the working class and in the very development of capital (introduction of new machinery, progressive transition towards real subjugation). According to Clarence D. Lang (*Wages and Earning in the United States, 1860-1890*), the average number of hours worked daily by an industrial worker was 10.9 hours in 1860; by 1890, this figure had fallen to 10.1 hours, a decrease of 7%, considering that most workers worked 6 days a week. This decrease was evidently due to the increase in labor productivity, made possible by the technical revolution in the objective factors of production, as well as a period in which radical and spontaneous workers' struggles against the new working conditions developed (see below).

*"On the contrary, in the textile factories of the south, in 1890, it was common to work between 12 and 14 hours a day; (...). In the steelworks, until the beginning of the 20th century, workers usually worked seven days a week to maintain the same purchasing power, since wages had decreased in this sector between 1880 and 1897. Between 1890 and 1920, the improvements were remarkable: in 1910, the working week was generally 55 hours, and in 1920, 50 hours. According to Albert Rees, the average working day in factories went from 10 hours in 1890 to 9.28 hours in 1914, five days a week, while on Saturday mornings, workers worked between 4 and 5 hours. Once again, skilled workers enjoyed better conditions, with a 44-hour workweek in 1920. However, in the metalworking industry, 12-hour workdays were maintained." (YH. Nouailhat, d. c, pp. 342-343).*

In general, it can be observed that during the period between 1870 and 1900, which we have described

as a "hinge", there was a clear increase in average wages.

*"Despite mass immigration, American workers managed to significantly improve their wages. According to Stanley Lebergott, workers' annual wages would have averaged (in constant dollars with 1914 purchasing power):*

*\$347 for the period 1865-1869*

*\$606 for the period 1875-1879*

*\$503 for the period 1885-1889*

*According to Albert Rees, workers' real wages increased by 37%, or at an annual rate of 1.3%, between 1890 and 1914. According to Lebergott, the average annual wage in dollars in 1914 was:*

*\$532 for the period 1895-1899*

*\$606 for the period 1901-1905*

*\$685 for the period 1911-1915*

*It should be added that many workers, particularly miners, did not receive their entire salary in cash: they received vouchers to use in the company stores or received part of their salary in kind" (YH. Nouailhat, dc, pp. 341-342).*

The rise in the price of labor and the reduction of the working day at this crucial historical moment (transition period) indicate the extraordinary surge in productivity (from the intensive exploitation of surplus-value producers). The total number of factory workers increased considerably, from 2.3 million in 1865 to 8.3 million in 1910; steel production per worker tripled between 1870 and 1900 (cited by Nouailhat, dc, p. 327). The formation of large-scale industry is synonymous with the concentration/centralization of capital, driven by competition and the pursuit of extraordinary profits, both the engine and expression of the periodic increases in the composition of capital; *"The merger of American Can in 1901, for example, affected 120 companies and resulted in a 90% market dominance. John Moody estimates that 78 of the 92 large companies he studied control 50% or more of the market, 57 control 60% or more, and 26 control 80% or more.*

*Most of these mergers were horizontal, that is, between competing companies" (YH. Nouailhat, dc, pp. 311-312).*

Other elements could similarly express the disruptions in the productive sphere, determining fundamental social transformations and, dialectically, how these social transformations further reinforce economic disruptions. Thus, the growth of the urban population is an indicator both growth/concentration of capital (which requires an increasing mass of workers concentrated in cities) and of the social transformations that a significant increase in the urban population necessarily implies. It is observed that between 1860 and 1920, "the increase in the urban population went from one-fifth to half of the total population in 60 years" (Y-H. Nouailhat, dc, p. 348).

Similarly, the following table impressively illustrates the increase in capital between 1880 and 1912 and explains the extraordinary growth of capital and its organic composition (C/V). Source: Simon Kuznets, *Capital in the American Economy: Its Formation and Financing*, pp. 610-611. (Cf. Nouailhat, dc, page 254). Finally, to provide an overview of industrial development in the United States during the second half of the 19th and early 20th centuries, we reproduce the graph of the growth of industrial production from 1860 to 1915, which, in addition to this spectacular growth, also shows, within the growth itself, the setbacks that express the crises within the cycles of "growth" (see, for example, the crisis of 1893 and that of 1907).

*"In the 1880s and 1890s, value added more than doubled, and labor productivity increased by*



almost 60 percent. Besides technological advances that led to capital investment and improvements in production organization methods, much of the growth in labor productivity can be explained by the increase in the amount of capital per worker. Capital per worker, in constant prices, increased from \$700 in 1869 to about \$2,000 in 1899.” (According to Paul J. Uselding, ‘Factor Substitution and Labor Productivity Growth in American Manufacturing 1839–1899,’ in the *Journal of Economic History*, September 1972, cited) by Nouailhat, *op. cit.*, p. 225).

The following chart illustrates the process of capital mergers between 1895 and 1914. Source: Ralph Nelson. *Mer Movements in American Industry, 1895- 19* p. 31. (Cf. Nouailhat. *dc*, p. 308).

| Year | Number of companies that disappear due to mergers | Capital corresponding to mergers (millions of dollars) |
|------|---|--|
| 1895 | 43  | 40.8   |
| 1896 | 26  | 24.7   |
| 1897 | 69 303  | 1 19.7650.6  |
| 1899 | 1 208   | 2 262.7  |
| 1900 | 340   | 442.4  |
| 1901 | 423   | 2052.9   |
| 1902 | 379   | 910.8  |
| 1903 | 142   | 297.6  |
| 1904 | 79  | 1 10.5   |
| 1905 | 226   | 243.0  |
| 1906 | 128   | 377.8  |
| 1907 | 87  | 184.8  |
| 1908 | 50  | 187.6  |
| 1909 | 49  | 89.1   |
| 1910 | 149   | 257.0  |
| 1911 | 103   | 210.5  |
| 1912 | 82  | 322.4  |
| 1913 | 85  | 175.6  |
| 1914 | 39  | 159.6  |

Distribution by sector of the increase in capital stock between 1892 and 1912 (in billions of dollars in 1929 purchasing power):

| Sector                   | 1880-1890 | 1890-1900 | 1900-1912 |
|--------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Agriculture           | 0.7       | 1.5       | 4.7       |
| 2. Mining                | 0.5       | 0.7       | 1.9       |
| 3. Industries            | 2.6       | 3.2       | 8.1       |
| 4. Transport             | 4.7       | 4.5       | 12.0      |
| Services public          | (4,1)     | (3,1)     | (6,9)     |
| including the roads iron | (0,1)     | (0,5)     | (23)      |
| Production               |           |           |           |
| Total goods              | 8.5       | 9.9       | 26.7      |
| production               | 14.0      | 15.5      | 22.2      |
| Private constructions    |           |           |           |
| governmental             | 22.5      | 25.3      | 48.9      |

This information perfectly illustrates what we mean. (Y - H. Nouailhat , dc . pg. 348). Urban population growth 1860-1920:

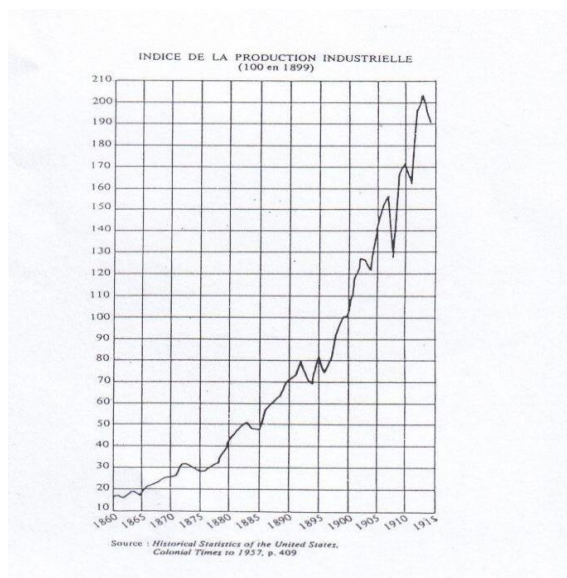
| Year | Population urban (millions) | Percentage urban/total | Decadal increase in urban population | % increase in urban area/total population |
|------|-----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|---|
| 1860 | 6.2                         | 20%                    |                                      |   |
| 1870 | 9.9                         | 25                     | 60%                                  | 25%                                       |
| 1880 | 14.1                        | 28                     | 42                                   | 12  |
| 1890 | 22.1                        | 35                     | 57                                   | 25  |
| 1900 | 30.2                        | 50                     | 37                                   | 14  |
| 1910 | 42.0                        | 46                     | 40                                   | 15  |
| 1920 | 54.2                        | 51                     | 30                                   | 11  |

It is worth noting that during this crucial period, several crises shook the industrial growth of the United States, primarily those of 1893 and 1907.

*"In 1893 alone, five hundred banks and sixteen thousand industrial companies went bankrupt and closed their doors. By the beginning of 1894, one in four American workers had lost their jobs: in total, nearly three million unemployed" (Francis Lacassin: Preface to Jack London: 'Les vagabonds du rail', UGE 10/18, no. 779, Paris, 1971, p. 11).*

*"However, the crisis eventually took hold in the United States with numerous bankruptcies of railroad companies and a stock market crash in New York in 1893. The metalworking industry was severely affected, and unemployment and working-class poverty continued to rise. The evolution of the American cycle, which peaked in 1892, is quite characteristic: the expansion was long -from 1885 to 1892- but the increase in production was relatively smaller than in the two previous expansion phases (...). Finally, it should be noted that the expansion was interrupted by two minor recessions in 1887 and 1890, while the depression was interrupted by a brief but very marked recovery in 1895. The cycle It lasted 11 years." (M. Niveau : "Histoire des faits économiques contemporains", PUF, Paris, 1966, pp. 181-182).*

Finally, it should be noted that the following cycles were those of 1897–1908 and 1908–1921, marked respectively by the crisis of 1907 and that of 1913, a prelude to the First World War. These two dates, 1907 and 1913, were also very important, as we will see in the development of the labor movement and the emergence of the IWW. (Y - H. Nouailhat, dc. pg.221) :



## B. A few words about the O.S.T

\* All these different elements force us to specify what kind of technical changes were involved in the work process and, therefore, to define in a few words the Taylor system or rather, "the scientific organization of work" (SOW), as the main cause and vector of this fantastic growth in labor productivity that confirms and reinforces Marx's assessment of the giant leaps in capitalist production in the United States.

Henri de Man, then general secretary of the Central Union of Workers' Education of Belgium (1918), Following a study trip to the United States, he defined Taylorism as "*a method of organizing labor: the so-called scientific assignment of tasks through the study of elementary times and the introduction of wage methods involving bonuses to reward the completion of a fixed task in a minimum time.*" (Henri de Man: "*Au pays du taylorisme*", edited by "*Le Peuple*", Brussels, 1919, p. 31).

Or, to use the same words of FW Taylor: "*The study of times and motions is the exact scientific method that determines the vast majority of the laws governing the most suitable, easiest, and most productive human movements*" (quoted by H. de Man, *ibid.*, p. 31).

But fundamentally, and in a much more "trivial" way, the primary objective, thanks to the Taylor System, is to combat the "idleness" and laziness of the workers, whose output is systematically lower than what is objectively possible. To this end, Taylor identifies the core of the problem: professional skill, the workers' knowledge of their trade, which allows them to hold a kind of monopoly on the "exact" knowledge of production time. R. Linhart defines this problem as follows: "*The essential function of the Taylor system is to provide the capitalist management of the labor process with the means to appropriate all the practical knowledge that until then had been de facto monopolized by the workers.*" (R. Linhart : "*Lénine, Les paysans, Taylor,*" éd. du Seuil, Paris 1976, p. 79).

It is, therefore, as we have seen in the chapter on "the rise" of the extortion of relative surplus value, the capitalist revolution of the labor process, thanks to science and technology, in order to destroy the old link between the artisan worker and his craft - phase of formal domination - in order to conquer the labor process and generalize the Taylorist division between execution tasks (the line worker) and conception tasks (engineers, managers, etc.).

"*This obligation to collect this vast amount of traditional knowledge, to record it, to classify them and, in many cases, to finally reduce them to laws and rules, even expressed through mathematical formulas, is voluntarily assumed by scientific managers*" (FW Taylor: "*The Scientific Management of Companies*", Verviers, 1967, p. 80).

One of the keys to the OST (presumably referring to a specific type of industrial production system) lies, thanks to the destruction of the old craft, in a division between the tasks of conception and execution. This separation leads to a growing disinterest, a lack of initiative, and physical and mental exhaustion in the worker who repeats the same operation thousands of times a day—an exhaustion akin to torture. This is, in fact, what Marx criticized when explaining the production of relative surplus value.

"*The very ease of labor becomes torture, in the sense that the machine does not liberate the worker from labor but rather deprives labor of its interest. Large-scale industry completes the separation between manual and intellectual production, transforming it into a power of capital over labor.*" (K. Marx: "*Capital*", Volume I, Section IV: "*The Production of Relative Surplus Value*", p. 300).

This separation between conception and execution that characterizes the OST does not only apply to the field of manual labor, but also affects intellectual work, where increasingly -especially with "Taylorization"- tasks are developed exclusively of execution, as opposed to those of conception.

Marx described this reality when he wrote: *"What the small-scale workers lose is concentrated before them in capital. The manufacturing division confronts them with the intellectual forces of production as alien property and as a power that dominates them. This division (...) culminates (...) in large-scale industry, which transforms science into a productive force independent of labor and places it at the service of capital"* (K. Marx, Book I, coll. de La Pléiade, p. 903).

To caricature, we could say that science "at the service of capital" has replaced in the phase of real domination what the craft was in the hands of the workers in the phase of formal domination.

Marx had considered this problem when he wrote: *"The accumulation of science, technical knowledge, and productive forces in general of the social brain, as opposed to labor, is absorbed by capital and thus appears as the property of capital, and more specifically of fixed capital, insofar as it intervenes in the productive process as a means of production... The full development of capital is realized (...) only when (...) the entire production process is no longer seen as linked to the immediate know-how of the worker, but as a technological application of science."* (K. Marx: "Grundrisse", Volume II, Anthropos ed., pp. 213-214).

B. Coriat also insists on this destructive function of the craft that characterizes the Taylor system:

*"What differentiates Taylor from his predecessors, what undoubtedly breaks with previous practices, is having turned the craft itself into the target of attack, into an obstacle that must be overcome. He does not seek to circumvent it, as the machine does, to "stimulate" it, as is attempted through increasingly sophisticated wage systems, or to turn it against itself, as piecework does, but rather to destroy it as such. In doing so, Taylor carries out a radical change of approach whose historical result will be the conception of a type of work process that will allow the beginning of mass production."* (B. Coriat: "L'atelier et le chronomètre", dc, p. 45).

R. Linhart summarizes the OST as follows:

*"This mode of work organization takes to its extreme -to the point where it almost becomes an 'ideal type'- the essence of the capitalist division of labor: the separation of manual and intellectual labor, of conception and realization, of command and execution. In an analysis of the 'pure' capitalist mode of production, Taylor's 'Scientific Management' best embodies the capitalist work process reduced to its essence."* (R. Linhart: "Lénine, Les Paysans, Taylor," op. cit., pp. 82-83).

For our part, we also consider that the OST better represents the transformation/integration of the work process by capital (which implies the destruction of the old trades) and, therefore, it makes the large industry correspond to the entire labor market.

It is this political character of the OST that Rolle highlights in his book Introduction to the Sociology of Work:

*"Taylor's technique thus presupposes the observation of men at work, but it takes for granted that the individual is not assigned once and for all to his position: that, therefore, he is not master of his employment or his way of working, but only of his capacity to work. To say that such a method is the best for a given task (allusion to the famous 'There is always one method and one implement which is quicker and better than any of the rest'), that is, that there is a particular strength, skill or knowledge that can be found in a population that goes beyond the company's personnel and encompasses all accessible job seekers."* (Rolle: 'Introduction to the sociology of work', Larousse, Paris 1971, p. 49).

This issue is important because it means that, in the crucial period of the late 19th century, there was a growing mass of workers (see the "second" wave of immigration) who were essentially characterized

by their willingness to do any job; by not having a specific profession (unlike the first wave of immigration, which was mostly of rural origin) and by their extraordinary mobility, essentially geographical. This explains the emergence of the legendary figure of the "hoboes" (roughly translated as "vagrants who live in gangs") or, as Jack London called them, "railroad hobos." It should be noted that, both in the United States and elsewhere, the railroad was a significant vector of labor mobility and a driver of the emergence and spread of new models of work organization.

The advance of the railroad embodies the specifically capitalist model of labor mobility, but it also entails, both upward and downward, technological and industrial development (steelmaking, etc.) and the relocation of major industrial centers (from east to west). Finally, it is clear that what we have briefly outlined regarding the Taylor system will be developed, expanded upon, and deepened by Taylor's successors, all of whom, to a greater or lesser extent, subscribe to the OST (Standard Operating System), even if they criticize one or another of Taylor's postulates. Thus, Ford will refine the Taylor system and give it practical application in mass production.

*"In Taylor, the worker subjected to 'Time and Motion Study' often remains a 'First class man' (first-class worker), duly selected and 'trained' the essential element being the separation of the work of conception from that of execution. It will be said of Ford that he develops Taylor and distinguishes himself from him by ensuring the 'subdivision' of the execution work itself, the 'fragmentation.' (B. Coriat: 'L'atelier et le chronomètre', dc, p. 76).*

H. Ford himself explains this mechanism: *"In the foundry, for example, all the work used to be done by hand and there were skilled workers, but after rationalization, only 5% of the shapers and foundry workers are truly specialized. The remaining 95% are 'specialized' in a single operation that even the most stupid individual can learn to perform in two days. Assembly is done entirely by machine..." (H. Ford: "Ma vie, mon oeuvre", ed. Payot 1927, p. 115, cited by Coriat).*

Thus, this fantastic revolution in the work process must correspond to a "new working class" without professional ties and totally "free" to adapt to the logic of mechanization and mass production, the corollary of which is the piece-rate wage system.

H. Ford himself explains this mechanism: *"At the beginning of the 20th century, the 'Scientific Organization of Work' (SOW), also known as Taylorism, was established. The invention and use of electricity further increased the number and complexity of machines, increasingly replacing individual tools and enabling the strengthening of this increasingly fragmented wage-labor system. The 'value' of a worker was no longer based on his skill and dexterity, but on the speed of execution of the movements imposed upon him, on his output. (...)"*

Around 1920, Ford added the principle of the "assembly line," the continuous movement of products to be worked on past the workstations, killing two birds with one stone: he gained downtime by reducing worker movement and better controlled the pace of work by imposing a movement rhythm. (*Michel Kamps: "Automatisation et lutte de classe" in "Ouvriers et Robots", ed. Spartacus no. 25 B, Paris, 1983, p. 39).*

From all these elements, which we could develop and exemplify at length, we essentially deduce, and in accordance with the Marxist concepts explained in Chapter II (see page 17), that it is an extraordinary development of the rate of exploitation (PL/CV) corresponding to the development of both absolute surplus value ("gain from dead time and struggle against "idleness") and relative surplus value (labor productivity), whose extortion becomes increasingly predominant due to the very

development of the productive force of capital (machinery, science, communication...), which, by subsuming (and transforming) the labor process (making it perfectly suited to its being of value in process -submission of the labor process to that of valorization-), reinforces the social relation of the wage earner and further develops the antagonism between workers and capital. B. Coriat presents in table form the different forms of surplus value extraction to highlight those involving the simultaneous increase in the intensity and productivity of labor, which leads to a sharp increase in the value produced (increase in the rate of exploitation) and in the quantity of goods produced (mass production). (See B. Coriat, cited work, p. 122).

*"All the advances of civilization, or, in other words, all the increases in the social productive forces, if you will, in the productive power of labor itself, do not enrich the worker, but capital, just as the results of science, discoveries, the division and combination of labor, the improvement of the means of communication, the creation of the world market, or the use of machines do. All these things only increase the productive power of capital, and since capital is the opposite of the worker, these advances only increase its material domination over labor."* (K. Marx: "Grundrisse", Volume I, Anthopos, Paris 1968, pp. 255-256).

Therefore, we can define Taylorism, following Michel Aglietta, as: *"The set of internal production relations within the work process that tend to accelerate the pace of movement cycles in the workplace and reduce the permeability of the working day. These relations are expressed through general principles of work organization that reduce the degree of autonomy of the workers and subject them to constant surveillance and control of compliance with the performance standard. Taylorism came into effect in the United States in the metal-processing industries at the end of the 19th century. It is a capitalist response to the class struggle in production when the work process is composed of several segments, each of which responds to the mechanical principle, but whose integration is always based on direct relations between different categories of workers."* (M. Aglietta: "Régulation et crises du capitalisme - L'expérience des États-Unis", Calmann-Lévy, Paris, 1976, p. 94).

And here, Mr. Aglietta addresses an issue that seems important to us, namely, the transformation. The capitalist nature of the labor process arises not only as a "logical" consequence of the development of the capitalist mode of production, but also as a reaction, a "capitalist response" to the class struggle within the labor process, which is still formally subject to capital. Thus, the class struggle, and therefore the working class regains its central role, not only as an "economic agent"-a reified object of the capitalist mode of production -but as an active subject, a "class in itself," a living expression of the internal contradictions of capitalist production, the gravedigger of the old world.

*"But the bourgeoisie has not only forged the weapons that will kill it, but it has also produced the men who will wield them: the modern workers, the proletarians"* (K. Marx, F. Engels: "The Communist Manifesto -1848-", ed. 10/18, Paris 1962, p. 27).

Mr. Aglietta addresses a question that seems important to us, namely, transformation. The factor of "class struggle" is, therefore, both an additional "cause" of the capitalist transformation of the labor process and, in a "dialectical return," a consequence of that transformation, which further reinforces the latter.

This observation on the factor of class struggle can also be linked to the observation on the "new" character of the "American" proletariat (second-wave immigrants), extremely precarious and highly mobile, which will allow us to better understand the spontaneous emergence of a radical workers' movement that corresponds in particular to these characteristics of precarity and mobility (see below). These few economic and social elements allow us to glimpse the framework within which the "American" labor movement and its various organized forms would evolve. These forms are nothing

more than the expression of the diverse (sometimes contradictory) interests that would both constitute and divide it. We thus possess some "objective" elements that allow us to better understand the exceptional nature, in more ways than one, of the labor experience in the United States during the crucial years of the late 19th century and early 20th centuries.

#### **IV. THE AMERICAN LABOR MOVEMENT AND THE EXAMPLE OF THE INDUSTRIAL WORKERS OF THE WORLD (IWW)**

##### **A. The labor movement in the phase of formal domination**

\* As we have seen in previous chapters, a series of objective factors (including the transformation of the labor process) would determine, at the end of the 19th century, the characteristics of the labor struggle in the United States, whose main protagonists would be the workers of the second wave of immigration. Previously, the labor movement (first wave of immigration) was characterized by an organization/association based on the defense of trade and of white, professional workers. The first workers' associations, therefore, corresponded to this type of class composition -"worker-artisan"-made up of professionals imbued with petty-bourgeois ideologies: defense of their craft and nationality. These attitudes were accompanied by a certain degree of racism and a refusal to organize with the "unskilled" masses, as well as with the Black proletariat.

Thus, a multitude of corporatist associations can be observed, from the "Knights of St. Crepin" (shoemakers) to the more famous "Knights of Labor." Regarding these "Knights of Labor," Engels would say in the preface to the American edition (1887) of "The Condition of the Working Class in England" that they exhibited, at the same time, "an insurrectionary spirit and the most medieval customs." It is clear that the almost feudal structure of the "Knights of Labor" was perfectly suited to the mode of labor from which they emerged and "would prove entirely unsuitable for the new conditions of struggle imposed on the American working class." (Quoted) by B. Coriat: «L'atelier et le chronomètre», op. cit., p. 54). Similarly, D. Guérin points out that

*"The Knights of Labor failed on one crucial point: they were unable to find a solution to the problem of relations between skilled and unskilled workers (...). Moreover, the Knights placed their organization, whose numerical strength came from the unskilled, at the service of the particular demands of the skilled." (Guérin D.: "The Labor Movement in the United States from 1866 to the Present Day," Maspero Small Collection, FM No. 23, Paris, 1976, p. 31).*

This archaic form of unionism, based on radical romanticism and the defense of a pre-capitalist mode of work, largely permeated the origins of the labor movement in the United States. The introduction of new machines that could be operated by unskilled labor led to the disappearance of many of these unions, as it reduced the demand for this type of labor.

*"In conclusion, we can say that mechanization leads, on the one hand, to associated and organized labor; on the other hand, to the dissolution of all social and family relations that have existed until now." (K. Marx: "Excerpt from the minutes of the session of the General Council, July 28, 1868").*

The professional workers, the ideal type of the "feudal artisan worker", would later be grouped (1886) in the "American Federation of Labor" (1) led by Gompers, which would openly express the tendency of the unions to become state bodies for safeguarding the commodity of "skilled and white" labor power, as demonstrated by the close links between the AFL and the American Protective Association,

association for the "protection of the rights of native-born Americans". Gomperism (as Americans call it) is based on the idea that the skilled worker, being scarce and in high demand, must, through a monopolistic organization that jealously closes its doors to newcomers, become even scarcer and more desirable and, thus armed, sell his services at the best price, without worrying about the other skilled workers, who also enjoy a monopoly guaranteed by a charter, or about the unskilled workers, abandoned to their sad fate.

*"Since each professional union is bound to the employers by contracts that expire on different dates, no guild wants to risk breaking a contract in force to come to the aid of another guild on strike. And so, while some fight, the others refrain from helping them; and each guild is defeated separately." (D. Guérin, dc., p. 33).*

On the other hand, the more recent immigrant workers of rural origin (Slavs, Russians, Austro-Hungarians, Italians, "Jews", Chinese, etc.) without qualifications, who were imported in large numbers to work in the large industrial concentrations, replacing the manufacturing work process with one based on mechanization and the deepening of the division of labor, will increasingly invade the labor market.

*"From 1886 to 1898, the number of AFL members increased slowly: 100,000 members in 1890, 278,000 in 1898" (YH. Nouailhat, already cited, p. 332).*

Faced with the fragmentation of this market, the AFL defended a "closed shop" policy, meaning the exclusive hiring of unionized workers. This was viewed favorably by employers, as it guaranteed social peace. Furthermore, the AFL declared its hostility toward the rise of socialist influence, represented by activists such as Eugène V. Debs and, above all, Daniel De Léon, as well as toward anarchist influence. Based on the reality of the AFL's corporatist and petty-bourgeois policies, anarchists sought to validate their positions of undifferentiated apoliticism.

*"I want to tell you socialists that I have studied your philosophy, read your treatises on political economy, and, not least, studied your fundamental works in both English and German (...). And what I want to tell you is that I not only disagree with your theories, but I also disagree with your philosophy. In the field of economics, you lack soundness; on social issues, you have been mistaken; on the industrial level, you are fanciful." (Gompers, 1903, quoted in Henri Pelling: 'Le mouvement ouvrier aux États-Unis', ed. Vent) d'Ouest, Paris, 1965, pp. 133-134).*

*"Gompers was also concerned with giving the labor movement greater prestige in the eyes of the employers. He wanted to accustom them to the idea that a union conscious of its responsibilities was more of an advantage than a disadvantage to a company. (...) Gompers endeavored to use the National Civic Federation as a means of influence. It was a society founded in 1900 to allow the leaders of different social groups to meet in order to eliminate the causes of riots and social unrest." (H. Pelling., Ibid., p. 118).*

The crucial period of the early 20th and late 19th centuries thus illustrates the double movement:

- 1) Within the CMP, the full realization of the substance of capital through the culmination / domination of a specifically capitalist mode of production (as Marx says).
- 2) Within the workers' movement, consequently and cause of the formation of a specifically capitalist mode of production, the division of classes between the "traditional" unions (constituted in the phase of formal domination of the labor process by capital) and the new associations of economic and political class struggle that emerged from the new technical composition of capital.

As the Statutes of the Industrial Workers of the World clearly state: *"Between these two classes there must be struggle, until the workers of the whole world organize themselves as a class, take possession of the*



*land and the instruments of production, and abolish the wage system (...). Instead of the conservative slogan: A fair wage for a fair day, we must inscribe on our banner the revolutionary slogan: Abolition of wages.” (See the 1908 preamble to the IWW Statutes in “Larry Portis: ‘IWW and Revolutionary Syndicalism in America’, ed. Spartacus, M 2587, no. 133 B; Paris, 1985, p. 139).*

But before delving into the exemplary movement of the IWW, let us briefly describe the social climate and the characteristics of the spontaneous struggles that took place as a prelude to the founding of the IWW.

## **B. Typical examples of the workers' struggle in the 19th century**

\* Apart from the class collaboration policy represented by the AFL, the labor movement unleashed fantastic movements of struggle, the most famous example of which is undoubtedly Haymarket Square on May 1, 1886 (the historical origin of May Day), which saw the hanging of the movement's five leaders: the Chicago Martyrs. Following the expulsion of 1,200 workers from the McCormick factory in Chicago in February 1886, amid preparations for the great strike to impose the reduction of the workday to eight hours, violent demonstrations erupted. As a result of police provocation (later proven in the trial that would exonerate the martyrs), the six leaders of the movement were sentenced to death (five hanged and one committed suicide).

The statements of these activists speak for themselves:

*“The class war has begun.*

*Yesterday, some workers were shot in front of the Mac Cormick factory.*

*Their blood cries out for vengeance! There is no more room for doubt.*

*The savage beasts that rule us are thirsty for the blood of the workers!*

*But the workers are not cattle to be slaughtered. To white terror, they respond with red terror.*

*Better to die than live in misery!*

*Since we are being machine-gunned, let us respond in such a way that our masters will remember it for a long time.*

*The situation forces us to take up arms!*

*Last night, while women and children mourned their husbands and fathers fallen to the bullets of assassins, the rich filled their glasses and drank, in their sumptuous mansions, to the health of the bandits of social order...*

*Dry your tears, women and children who weep! Slaves, take heart! Long live the insurrection!*

*(Parsons and Spies: "Chicago Martyrs" in "May 1st Around the World", ed. Librairie Sociale, Paris, 1914).*

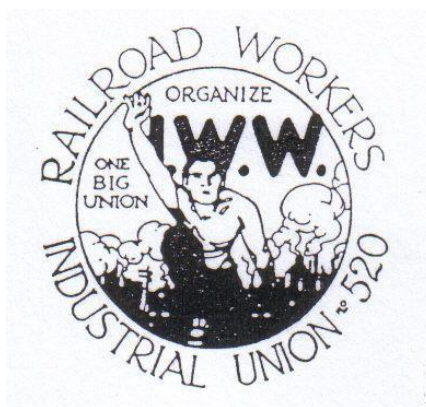
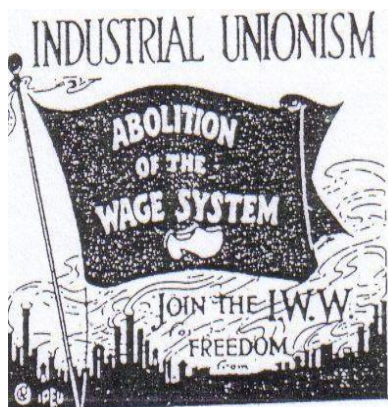
We could multiply the examples of radical struggles and fierce repressions. As an example, and to illustrate the severity of the conflicts, let us also cite the 1892 strike at the Carnegie factories in Homestead, Pennsylvania, led by a certain H.C. Frick:

*"Frick reacted by mobilizing a force of three hundred Pinkerton guards, whom he sent by boat up the river at night. But the strikers were alerted, and when the guards tried to disembark, a fight broke out: nine workers and three guards were killed.*

*After thirteen hours, the Pinkertons surrendered and the strike continued. The Pennsylvania National Guard then entered the factories and, under their protection, strikebreakers were brought in. (Quoted by H. Pelling, op. cit., p. 115).*

In this social climate and in the face of class collaborationist unionism on the path to nationalization, as will be clearly indicated later by the fact that Gompers accepted in 1916 to enter the National Defense Council to assume the presidency of the Labor Commission, thus openly supporting President Wilson and participation in the First World War, the Industrial Workers of the World, I.W.W. or

"Wobblies", was constituted at the other extreme in June 1905, which states, in the first sentence of its statutes: "The working class and the employer class have nothing in common" (in Larry Portis, d. c., p. 118).



### C. The IWW

\* Since its founding, the IWW gathered some 100,000 members, organized this new proletariat and fought, in most cases with weapons in hand, against the Pinkerton private militias and other national guards, but also against the AFL, which *"refused to join the strikes, which would have brought it new members among the recent and unskilled immigrants"* (H. Pelling , already cited, p. 140).

Portis indicates: *"This lack of coherence in union thinking and this refusal to unite against management left the door open to all kinds of abuses, compromises, and corruption. The creation of the IWW in 1905 responded to this deficiency and this refusal, while also indicating that the political evolution of the American working class had reached a new phase.*

*This evolution demonstrated that the revolutionary content of Marxist and anarchist thought had been assimilated by an active minority of workers and that the established forms of trade union organization were proving incapable of globally expressing the interests of the proletariat. Indeed, the new social composition of the working class, resulting from the transformation of American capitalism into a large-scale industrial economy, demanded an industrial or more adapted form of unionism (L. Portis: "I.W.W. et le syndicalisme révolutionnaire...", already cited, p. 12).*

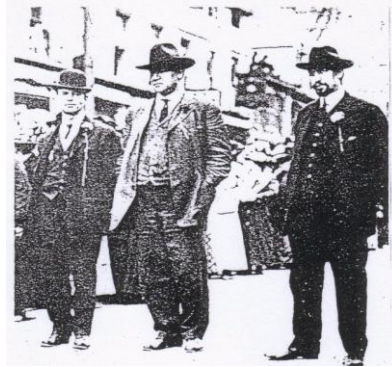
It should be noted, with Y.H. Nouailhat, that *"while the AFL was interested in skilled or semi-skilled workers, grouped in professional unions, in 1910 it still left out 90% of non-unionized American workers, particularly all unskilled workers. Black people were also excluded from AFL unions"* (O. already cited, p. 333).

Thus, from an ideological, class composition, and organizational structure standpoint, the IWW broke with "traditional" trade unionism. Its industrial structure, organized by industry branches, its explicitly internationalist perspective (such as the tendency to transform the IWW into an international organization), and its flexibility in adapting to the struggles and the mobile and precarious proletariat, were perfectly suited to the needs of the newly arrived proletariat.

*"Excluded by the unions, which did not consider defending this unskilled and exploited workforce, the new proletariat experienced this rejection under appalling conditions. Partly out of opposition to this situation in the organization of labor and to counteract the reactionary and corporatist tendencies of the union organizations, the AFL (American Federation of Labor) in particular, the IWW dedicated all its efforts to*

*uniting skilled and unskilled workers in a single organization destined to become the main vehicle of a revolutionary movement."* (L. Portis. *Ibid.*, p. 11).

The IWW quickly gathered thousands of activists under its slogan "One Big Union," but also all the different tendencies and personalities of the "radical left." From left to right: Adolph Lessig, Big Bill Haywood, and Carlo Tresca marching through the streets of New York with the Paterson strikers on the day of the show at Madison Square Garden, June 7, 1913.



*"It is worth noting that the opening day of the Congress brought together world-renowned heroes of the American revolutionary struggle, some of whom remain legends today, such as William 'Big Bill' Haywood of the Western Federation of Miners, famous for his role in the IWW; Daniel De León of the Socialist Labour Party; A. Simons, of the Socialist Party, Lucy Parsons, widow of Albert Parsons, martyr of Haymarket, and 'Mother Jones', a well-known figure of the United Mine Workers"* (L. Portis, *ibid.*, p. 44).

To this list we can add figures who would later become famous, such as James P. Cannon, John Reed, James Connolly, and the anarchist Emma Goldman. As a counterpoint to these revolutionary forces, the AF L. would increasingly align itself with the vanguard of American employers, becoming a fervent supporter of the OST, which would allow its corporate and skilled base to benefit from the supervisory positions opened up by the Taylorist division between workers and designers, as well as from the "advantages" of piece-rate pay.

*"Gompers, however, promoted a novelty that, nevertheless, remained in line with his general policy. He explicitly approved 'scientific management,' this new technique of improving worker performance by analyzing the duration of execution and a judicious distribution of performance bonuses"* (H. Pelling, *already cited*, p. 158).

As we have seen, the professional unions of the formal domination phase possessed both knowledge of the work process and the time required to produce goods. The introduction of mechanization and, above all, the OST (presumably referring to a specific type of trade union) would break these parameters, establishing a monopoly on the management of working time in capitalist hands. While at first the "old" trade unionism opposed the time/motion division that undermined the very foundations of its existence, it quickly adapted to the new upheavals in the mode of production, becoming the privileged representative of a fraction of the labor market (the old white, Christian, skilled workers, etc.).

Later, it accompanied the establishment of the specifically capitalist mode of production, becoming a state cog entrusted with the control of social conflicts through the management of individual wages and social surplus value. The social base of the unions, transformed into "state unions" (see AFL- CIO, merged in 1955), is no longer that of the old professional associations, but has expanded to encompass all civil society, although these groups maintain a deep distrust of unskilled workers, those without a

"homeland" and without "gods." The same is true of the process of separation between manual and intellectual labor that arose from the capitalist division of labor, and parallel to the process of "deskilling/devaluation" of labor power as a commodity. The loss of control over time corresponds to the growing separation between the overwhelming majority of workers, who tend to perform simple tasks, and the monopoly of complex labor held by the upper working class (drawn from the most skilled and oldest working-class strata).

At this stage, mechanization no longer allows the worker to control working time or understand the work process; the proletarian is progressively marginalized from the work process by the machines: from now on, the machines set the pace and dictate the worker's actions. Here we face a true "puzzle" for the labor movement: the formation of a specifically capitalist mode of production that simultaneously sustains the dizzying increase in the value placed on human labor, which is at once devalued and losing its centrality in the work process. The death of "workers' control" over the craft, the dispossession of man's productive power, and its transfer to the machine through the technological fixation of social knowledge dug the grave of the peaceful and regular development of the workers' movement, thus depriving the reformist project of seizing power through the expansion and strengthening of cooperative production of all rationality.

This project, which Marx had already denounced as an illusion in keeping with the formal stage of the labor process's subjugation to capital, became an organ of capital within the proletarian movement. The same would occur with the transformation of the corporate associations of the formal domination phase into bodies integrated into the machinery of the State in the real domination phase. More than ever, the basic workers' practice of defense, of "economic" struggle, was in fact opposed to the "traditional" unionism represented by the AFL. The labor movement was organized thanks to the fighting unionism within a proletarian association, the IWW, guided by its daily practice of "wildcat strikes", sabotage and violent confrontations with the "white guards", it earned on the ground the necessary stripes for the class war, especially in the territories of the "wild West".

Capital, aware of the danger posed by the IWW, quickly and openly asserted its terror through the lynching of strikers, the hunting down of "Reds," and open warfare against the "Wobblies" and "Hoboes," immortalized in the stories of Jack London (see, in particular, "The Iron Heel," UGE 10/18) and the songs of Joe Hill (an IWW member who was legally murdered). By opposing repression, passivity, and even the AFL's support for capital's violence, the IWW rapidly rallied tens of thousands of workers. The AFL sponsored a propaganda campaign denouncing the IWW as un-American, criminal, and immoral.

*"In parallel with this AFL offensive, the federal government granted the eight-hour workday and created company unions in the mines and sawmills, measures intended to pacify the majority of the workers and prevent any resurgence of Wobbly activity." (L. Portis, already cited, p. 113).*

But the IWW was not a "simple" "trade union" defense organization; it fought through economic struggle with the stated goal of abolishing wages and destroying the capitalist regime, thus applying the Marxist tactic of never limiting the conflict to its economic aspects of opposition to the devaluation of the commodity labor power, but turning it into a powerful lever of the revolutionary struggle against commodities and capital.

*"The ultimate goal of the political movement of the working class is, naturally, the conquest of*

*political power for its benefit, which necessarily implies that, beforehand, a sufficiently developed organization of the working class must arise and grow from its own economic struggles. (...) In this way, all the isolated economic movements of the workers everywhere develop into a political movement, that is, a class movement with the aim of realizing their interests in a general way, which has coercive force for the whole of society. These movements presuppose a certain prior organization and, at the same time, are in turn a means of developing this organization.” (Marx K. to F. Boîte, November 23, 1871, in “Correspondence”).*

Thus, the IWW applied on the ground a tactic that closely linked “economic” struggles and revolutionary propaganda, particularly through forms of “direct action” (2), thereby unifying in action the Marxist and anarcho-syndicalist tendencies of the workers' movement (which is practically a unique case since the IWA (First International)). Moreover, the IWW essentially “structures” itself for and through conflicts, swelling its ranks and mobilizing its militants during strikes, only to then “disappear” and reappear thousands of kilometers away during a new conflict.

This essentially mobile and flexible structure is particularly well-suited to the type of proletariat they organize, which is itself extremely precarious and mobile. This leads D. Guérin to say: *“It was no longer, as in the original scheme, a large central trade union destined to defeat the AFL, but an active minority, a kind of mobile team ready to move immediately to any point on the battlefield and take the lead in the struggles undertaken by the workers. Thus, the IWW, although it did not fulfill the great mission it had originally assumed, nevertheless rendered an important service to the American working class. In the absence of Gompersism, they were the only ones who intervened in the workers’ struggles of unskilled workers” (D. Guérin: “The Labor Movement in the United States,” already cited, p. 54).*

John Reed will describe some of these struggles in this way (particularly in his articles for the magazine “Les Masses”, “There is a war in Paterson (New Jersey).” But it is a strange war. The violence comes from only one side: the factory owners. Their servants, the police, beat men and women who have done no wrong and charge on horseback against crowds who remain within the strict bounds of the law. Their mercenaries, the armed detectives, use their rifles to massacre innocent people. Their newspapers, the Paterson Press and the Paterson Call, incite murder and violence against union leaders. Their instrument, Judge Carroll, harshly condemns peaceful picket lines that the police are quick to arrest. The employers have absolute control of the police, the press, and the courts (John Reed quoted by Robert Rosenstone in “John Reed”, ed. Maspero, Paris 1976, p. 193).

Rosenstone himself points out: *“In their speeches, the leaders declared themselves revolutionaries, affirmed the need to destroy the capitalist system and spoke of ‘general strike’, ‘sabotage’ and ‘propaganda by the deed’.”*

The ideology of the IWW was a curious mix of Marxism, syndicalism, and anarchism, but its leaders knew that workers more readily believed in immediate improvements than in distant and utopian hopes (...) With its vagrants, its poets, its energetic organizers, famous for the violent debates that took place in Spokane, Fresno, and San Diego, for its reputation for violence due to sabotage and clashes with the police and vigilantes, the IWW appeared as an active organization that transformed the radical movement into a heroic cry for freedom, where courageous slogans were shouted in the face of the rifles of private militias.

*“To fight with the IWW was to fight for justice and to feel the euphoria of revolutionary times” (R. Rosenstone, already cited, p. 195).* Carlo Tresca’s (one of the IWW leaders along with “Big Bill”) favorite slogan was *“¡Occhio per occhio, dente per dente, sangue per sangue!”* Therefore, what clearly prevailed within the IWW was that it was an organization at the service of the radical struggles of the workers, and not

the other way around, the workers at the service of an organization; this reality clearly broke with the "old trade unionism" of the formal domination phase. In this period straddling two centuries, the process of integration into the state apparatus of the old organizations based on the "capital/labor" alliance was clearly defined - an ideological motive that turned them into bodies primarily concerned with the sale of the commodity labor power, in accordance with the conditions of valorization (see the support they gave to the new Taylorist methods of exploitation) - and the workers' reactions against the despotism of the factories and the organs of capital, which at first took the form of spontaneous and violent revolts (see, in this respect, the example of Haymarket Square in Chicago), and then tended to organize themselves as a revolutionary class.

This second stage in the formation of the revolutionary class 100 materialized with the emergence of a network of revolutionary workers' associations (some of them stemming from splits with the old AFL, as was the case with the Western Federation of Miners). However, the youth and heterogeneity of the movement itself (as well as of the proletariat that comprised it) meant that, within these class-based expressions, the anarcho-syndicalist current managed to stifle the political dynamism of the workers' struggle, contributing to freezing it in its primary dimension of economic defense. Thus, within the IWW, revolutionary tendencies were attacked—the De Léon tendency was excluded in 1908—and the article of the Statutes that advocated political action was abolished.

As R. Rosenstone points out: *"At first, the union enjoyed the support of some socialists such as Eugene V. Debs and Daniel De Leon, but when it declared itself opposed to political action, however revolutionary, they broke away from it. The IWW regarded politics as a kind of game invented to distract workers from their real concerns. According to the IWW, it was far more important to organize workers than voters, to win strikes than elections."* (R. Rosenstone, already cited, p. 194).

As in other parts of the world, the polarization between reformist politics and anarchist apoliticism (between Gompersism and anarcho-syndicalism within the IWW) hindered the growth of the unified revolutionary movement, which needed both powerful fighting organizations and a political successor for its revolutionary struggle. Within the IWW, political confrontation was constant, and despite strong anarchist influence, events increasingly compelled the organization to adopt political positions in order to "eliminate from the councils of organized labor those rats who fatten themselves on the cheese of dues" (IWW Declaration, quoted by L. Portis, already mentioned).

Marx's criticisms of "political indifference" thus regain their relevance: *'If the political struggle of the working class takes a revolutionary form, if the workers, instead of the dictatorship of the bourgeoisie, establish their own revolutionary dictatorship, they commit a heinous crime against principles; for in order to satisfy their daily needs, their pitiful and profane needs, in order to break the resistance of the bourgeoisie, they give the state a revolutionary and temporary form instead of laying down their arms and abolishing the state.'* (...) *In short, the workers should fold their arms and not waste their time on political and economic movements. All these movements can only bring them immediate results.*

*As truly religious people, they must despise the necessities of daily life and cry out with profound faith: Let our class be crucified, let our race perish, but let the eternal principles remain pure from all stains! As devout Christians, they must believe the word of the priest, despise the goods of this world, and seek only to gain paradise. Read instead of paradise the social liquidation that, one fine day, must take place in some corner of this world -no one knows who will carry it out or how- and that's all.* (K. Marx: "On Indifferentism in Political Matters," 1873, in Marx-Engels, "Texts on Organization," ed. Spartacus, Paris 1970, pp. 110-111).

It is in relation to the question of the First World War, described by the IWW, as well as by Lenin,



Trotsky and other anarcho-syndicalists like Rosmer and Monatte (3), with their views on the "imperialist war," as well as the fantastic hope born from the October Revolution of 1917, led the IWW to radicalize and develop movements against the United States' participation in this war. As an example, we can cite an article from the IWW newspaper "Solidarity" on its stance toward the war:

*"The principle of international workers' solidarity, to which we have always adhered, prevents us from participating in any dispute over the spoils to be divided, in which the parasitic class is involved."*

"Comrades: Remember! We are in here for you; you are out there for us."



Our songs, our publications, the feelings of all our members, the very spirit of our union, bear witness to our opposition to both capitalism and its war. All members called up for the draft were required to sign their exemption applications thus: "IWW, Anti-War." (Quoted in William D. Haywood: "The Story of Big Bill," Iskra Editions, Milan 1977, p. 311). This policy unleashed relentless repression, the murder of many of its members, thousands of imprisonments (including that of "Big Bill"), deportations, torture, and other "lynchings." July 2, 1917: Deportation of the IWW miners from Bisbee, Arizona, and their supporters.

#### FELLOW WORKERS



***WE ARE IN HERE FOR YOU; YOU ARE OUT THERE FOR US***

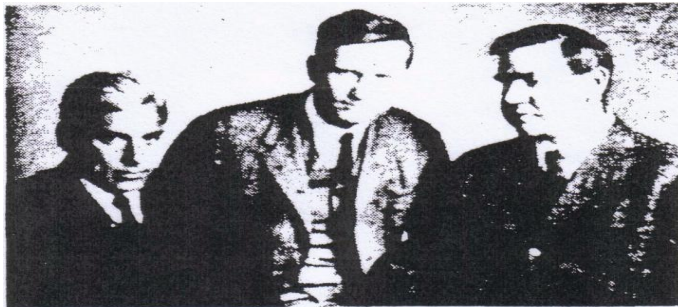
It should be noted that this wave of "anti-communist" and "anti-Wobble" terrorist repression was so violent that official history, even today, tends to assimilate it to the "folklore" of the "Wild West," and it has no parallel in the entire history of the labor movement in the United States. It is evident that the fierce repression against the only organized revolutionary force that existed in any significant way in the US determined the subsequent characteristics of the class struggle in that country (on the one hand, unions beholden to the various state apparatuses, and on the other, the regular eruption of spontaneous and highly violent movements). By militarily breaking up the IWW and annexing the AFL, the most powerful bourgeois state in the world secured decades of social peace, leaving the labor movements

only with periodic explosions of class violence, always crushed in blood, all mixed with an excessive "Americanist" nationalism. It was "tradition" to brand the initials IWW on the buttocks of militant workers with a hot iron (as well as crucifying them in train cars), while forcing them to sing the American anthem and kiss the star-spangled flag.

*"A 'charming businessman' tried to insert a cane into his rectum, another twisted his testicles, and others amused themselves by carving the letters IWW into his buttocks, inflicting horrific burns with a lit cigar. This painful ceremony ended on a patriotic note. Reitman was forced to kiss the American flag and sing a patriotic anthem, The Star-Spangled Donner." (Quoted by L. Portis, already mentioned, p. 105, according to Richard Drinnon, Rebel in Paradise: "A biography of Emma Goldman", Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1961, p. 136).*

The IWW's actions depended largely on circumstances (due to its lack of a clear strategic and political vision) and on ad hoc reactions to repression by employers and the state. The IWW's historical importance lies more in the significant spontaneous resistance of the workers against enemy initiatives, in the organization of class hatred against the barbarity of the system, than in possessing a clear vision of the revolutionary policy to be followed; especially since, as we have already pointed out, the IWW was heavily imbued with anarchist ideology, which sought to limit its actions to the sphere of economic struggle and to prefigure the future society: *"By organizing ourselves by industry, we form the structure of the new society within the old."* (Preamble of 1908, quoted by L. Portis, dc, p. 139).

However, given the severity of the repression to which its members were subjected, the IWW had to radicalize, rejecting, for example, the dogma of "peaceful" action, as well as the belief in the democratic nature of the American state, in order to frame its actions from a perspective of political struggle, particularly against the war and in defense of the October Revolution. As D. Guérin states, on the one hand there was repression: "Thousands of 'Wobblies' were arrested and sentenced to long prison terms."



From left to right: Max Eastman, James P. Cannon, and "Big Bill" Haywood in Moscow, 1922: "The movement was simply decapitated. It would never recover." And, on the other hand, the type of action of the IWW: *"The inability of the 'Wobblies' to build a permanent organization. They excelled at forming mobile teams, at improvisation; they were more agitators and propagandists than organizers."* (D. Guérin, work already cited, p. 58). This meant that the IWW could not withstand this terrible wave of what Marx already called *'the cannibalism of the counter-revolution'*

## **D. The IWW and the International Revolutionary Movement**

\* The most compromised elements, such as "Big Bill Haywood" (see his brief biography taken from the novel by John Dos Passos in "42ème Parallèle," in the appendix, p. 129), John Reed, James P. Cannon, Max Eastman, Louis Fraina, etc. joined the ranks of the internationalist Marxists and the



Third International. This radicalization of the IWW (as well as that of many other militants such as Victor) Serge, Rosmer, Souvarine, etc.) materialized in the fact that the IWW was, to a large extent, responsible for the creation of the two communist parties in the United States (the "worker" party, created by John Reed, and the one led by Fraina (4). These two parties attempted to express and explain the revolutionary character of the IWW's industrial unionism, as well as the impossibility of being active in the old AFL, not from an a priori "dogma," but based on a simple observation of the reality of the class struggle, which had practically settled this issue: for many years, no element, not even vaguely "socialist," could in fact be active within the AFL, which led them to oppose the leadership of the Comintern on this matter (see the interventions of Louis C. Fraina in the Amsterdam office meetings in "Du premier au deuxième congrès de l'Internationale Communiste", under the direction of P. Broué, ed. EDI, Paris 1979).

This question resurfaced during the creation, at the Third Congress of the Comintern (June 1921), of the RSI (Red International of Labor Unions), where the Comintern leadership stated:

*"In America we observe the same developments, but somewhat more slowly (than in England). In no case should communists limit themselves to abandoning the American Federation of Labor (AFL), a reactionary organization: on the contrary, they must do everything possible to penetrate the old trade unions and revolutionize them. It is necessary to collaborate with the best elements of the IWW, but this collaboration does not exclude the struggle against its prejudices." (From 'Four First World Congresses of the Communist International 1919-1923,' Librairie du Travail, Paris, 1934, reprinted facsimile F. Maspero, 1975, 'L'Internationale Communiste et l'Internationale Syndicale Rouge', p. 131).*

This stance represents a clear step backward both with respect to the reality of the struggle in the United States and with respect to the first positions of the IC, which at that time clearly advocated a break with the old trade unionism (in line with the positions of the IWW).

*"The Party, in promoting by all means the process of splitting within the AFL and the other confederations and corporatist unions affiliated with it, must strive to maintain the closest possible relations with the economic organizations in which industrial unionism is expressed (IWW, One Big Union, the unions that are leaving the AFL). The Party must work closely with them and, at the same time, strive for their unification and for the creation of strong, class-conscious, proletarian economic organizations.*

*The Party, by supporting the industrial trade unions in every possible way in their daily struggle for immediate economic demands, must strive to broaden and sharpen this struggle; to transform it into a struggle oriented towards the revolutionary objectives of the proletariat to overthrow the bourgeoisie and destroy the capitalist order." ('The Communist International to the American Comrades; to the Central Committees of the Communist Party of America and the Communist Workers of America' - December 1919 - quoted in 'The German Left and the Trade Union Question in the Third International,' Kommunistick Program, ed. PCI, 1971).*

Thus, the IWW's attempts to integrate into the international communist movement were doomed to failure (a situation like that of the Spanish CNT), while repression crushed its militants and decapitated its leaders, some of whom, individually, would take refuge in Soviet Russia (see Big Bill Haywood, Emma Goldman).

## **E. Decline of the IWW and characteristics of the labor movement in the U.S.**

\* The convergence of this relentless repression with the upheavals in the productive sphere (the development of "Fordism"- mass production) that became even more pronounced after World War I brought a near-definitive end to the existence of the IWW as a significant movement in the United

States. In this respect, they remain the only clear expression of a revolutionary movement that has existed in the United States to this day.

*"However, the IWW continued to play an appreciable role in some sectors of industry, particularly in the mines and sawmills, but it no longer exerted a notable influence on the American proletariat" (L. Portis, already cited, p. 21).*

However, the IWW's typical form of organization (industrial unionism) resurfaced in the interwar period with the creation of the CIO (Committee of Industrial Organization) in 1935. But this organization, regardless of its form, would become antagonistic to the IWW's revolutionary project and participate directly in state management structures, which "naturally" led it to merge with the former AFL to form the AFL-CIO in 1955, an electoral pillar of the Democratic Party, and so it remains to this day.

*"However, under the leadership of John L. Lewis, president of the United Mine Workers, the CIO barely developed the revolutionary character inherent in the IWW. Thanks to a tacit agreement between Lewis and President Roosevelt, the CIO benefited from government support for organizing workers in various industrial sectors: automobiles, steel, electricity, and rubber. In return, the CIO supported Democratic Party candidates in election campaigns." (L. Portis, DC, p. 127).*

This reality of the integration of the 'AFL-CIO' into American civil society was further reinforced during World War II, notably through Roosevelt's creation of the National War Labor Council, which included representatives from the AFL, the CIO, independent unions, and major employers. In all large industrial centers, the fundamental role of unions was not only recognized but actively encouraged by employers. Thus, Henry Ford not only accepted the implementation of unionism in his companies but even went so far as to organize a system of withholding union dues from workers' wages.

Our hypothesis, therefore, is that this is no longer a matter of "corrupt union leadership" (although it is common knowledge that close links exist between certain "union leadership" and the mafia, as demonstrated by the example of the Teamsters union) nor of "collaborationist unionism," but rather a fundamental modification in the social relations of labor, a product of the phase of real domination based on the existence, in all the core countries of the capitalist system, of state-run union federations that respond entirely to the needs of capitalist valorization.

Faced with this reality, the labor movement, especially in the USA, will respond with the periodic rebirth of true fighting associations, as well as with the reuse of the "old" methods of struggle called "direct actions", as different recent conflicts show us (see, on the miners' strike, the film "Harlan County, USA", 1976 or the 1978 film: "Blue Collar"). The tradition of the "Wobblies" is thus regularly rescued from folklore to become once again an active force in the labor movement, although this "rebirth" most often occurs without explicit reference to the experience of the IWW. Another important example is the Chrysler factory strike of June 1974 (truck production), in which, in a pamphlet recounting the events, the strikers themselves stated:

*"Today, the true role of the union has become so clear that it is reflected everywhere. Unions are not institutions created to provide advantages to their members through instruments such as contracts, but rather institutions that serve the interests of a class of bureaucrats and 'bosses,' assuming an indispensable function for contemporary industrial capitalism. Just as Chrysler is part of the automobile monopoly, the UAW (Automobile Workers Union) has a monopoly on the sale of labor in this market—who is hired, under what conditions this labor works, and under what conditions it can be fired." (In 'Wildcat, Dodge Truck', June 1974,*

translation and publication 'Echanges et Mouvement', February 1977, cf. BP 241, 75866 Paris Cedex 18, France).

When one reads the descriptions of these strikes, such as the equally exemplary Lordstown strike of 1972 at General Motors (see Pomerol and Medoc: 'Lordstown 72 ou les déboires de la General Motors', ed. De l'Oubli, Paris 1977), it becomes clear that they contain virtually all the classic demands of the IWW, from criticism of "traditional" trade unionism to the "rediscovery" of the methods of struggle that made the IWW famous sixty years earlier. Similarly, these theoretical and practical critiques also coincide with what Marx had already outlined as a critique of what trade unionism could become:

*"(The workers) must not forget that they are fighting against the effects and not the causes of those effects, that they can only slow the downward movement but not change its direction, that they can only apply palliatives but not cure the disease. Therefore, they must not allow themselves to be absorbed exclusively by these inevitable skirmishes that constantly arise from the continuous invasions of capital or the variations of the market. They must understand that the present regime, with all the miseries it imposes on them, simultaneously generates the material conditions and the social forms necessary for the economic transformation of society. Instead of the conservative slogan: 'A fair wage for a fair day's work,' they must inscribe on their banner the revolutionary slogan: 'Abolition of wages'." (K. Marx: "Wages, Price and Profit," foreign language ed., Beijing 1975, p. 73).*

It seems to us that this has been the effective practice of the IWW during the fifteen years that this organization has fought in the very bastion of the specifically capitalist mode of production. Straddling "the two historical phases of the economic development of capitalist production," it seems to us that the IWW simultaneously reflected the fundamental changes in the composition of the working class, resulting from the phase change, and largely foreshadowed, in a specific context, the main trends of the workers' struggle in the twentieth century: the independent organization of workers in struggle, beyond their "professional characteristics" or others; the direct struggle for economic demands and, simultaneously, from a revolutionary perspective, the will to radically transform their condition as "wage slaves."

But this goes far beyond the scope of this work, in which we want to highlight above all the fundamental relationship between the transformation of the work process and the transformation of the very composition of the working class, which materialized in the United States with the emergence of a new type of workers' association: the IWW. In this sense, we want to maintain the "old" hypothesis of Marx and Engels that the key to understanding social movements lies in the transformations of the sphere of production itself, regardless of the "consciousness" that social actors may have of it.

*"If we have been defeated, all we have to do is start again from the beginning. And, fortunately, the respite -no doubt very brief- granted to us between the end of the first act and the beginning of the second of the movement gives us time to perform a task of great utility: to analyze the causes that made both the recent uprising and its defeat inevitable, causes which are not to be sought in the efforts, talents, errors, or accidental betrayals of some of the leaders, but in the general social conditions of life in each of the nations shaken by the crisis." (Engels in "Revolution and Counter-Revolution in Germany", 1851, NY Tribune, in "The Bourgeois Democratic Revolution in Germany", ed. Sociales, Paris 1951, p. 204).*

#### Notes from Chapter IV

(1) A more detailed study would show that this process is general throughout the world, although less clearly defined structurally (see the birth of the different trade union centers in Western Europe).

(2) Here we refer to what in the workers' movement is called "direct action," that is, sabotage, picketing, autonomous organization, indefinite strikes, etc. See Emile Pouget in "Le sabotage", Librairie des sciences politiques et sociales, ed. M. Rivière, Paris (undated).

(3) It should be noted that Big Bill Haywood had met Monatte and Rosmer during a trip to France and maintained a privileged political relationship with them.

(4) The difference between these two communist parties was essentially due, as in other countries, to the question of the more or less urgent need to separate from the Socialist Party; Fraina's party, composed mainly of the "Slavic" sections of the Socialist Party, opted more quickly for splitting, while Reed's group still wanted to participate in the Socialist Party Congress. The two communist parties managed to merge in 1920. This unified communist party numbered between 8,000 and 15,000 members, mostly "foreigners."

## V. In conclusion

In this work, we have sought to apply certain Marxist concepts to a specific situation -the example of the American labor movement between 1887 and 1920- in order to demonstrate their explanatory power or, at least, to show that they constitute an analytical framework that still allows us to understand history and reality today, essential conditions for their transformation. Contrary to the trend of recent months that once again proclaims the death of communism (identified with the regimes of "real socialism"), it seems more pertinent than ever to attempt to demonstrate the extent to which Marxist critique can remain effective and, thereby, to distinguish Marx's essentially critical work from what has been "constructed" in his name. Lenin, in *The State and Revolution*, already denounced the attempt to deify, to "mummify," the revolutionaries.

*"After their death, attempts are made to turn them into harmless icons, to canonize them, so to speak, to surround their name with a certain halo in order to 'console' the oppressed classes and mystify them; in doing so, their revolutionary doctrine is emptied of content, degraded, and stripped of its revolutionary character."* (Lenin: *"The State and Revolution,"* ed. Sociales, Paris 1972, p. 9).

Today statues are being torn down, and the names of cities, squares, and streets are being changed, just as yesterday attempts were made to deify these thinkers, in order to obscure the very application of their critical method to the situation constructed in their name. For us, this is a change of God, of ideology, and not a scientific demonstration of the failure of Marxism as a critical theory of contemporary society. However shocking and significant the image of Karl Marx on some East German banknotes may be to us, we hope that the current disappearance of these religious manifestations will facilitate a return to a genuine understanding of "Marxist" theory.

Taking up an "old" idea of Karl Korsch, the aim is to apply Marx's critical method to the history of Marxism and the labor movement itself. This has been, very modestly, our attempt to use the concepts of formal and real domination -the latter being an expression of the opposition of a specifically capitalist mode of production through the effective subsumption of the labor process- to try to explain the polarization within the American labor movement between, on the one hand, the traditional corporatist unionism of the AFL, and, on the other hand, a revolutionary movement that was initially spontaneous and later crystallized within and around the IWW.

The first, suited to the reality of the needs of the MPC in its phase of formal domination, and the second, more in line with and a product of the transition to the specifically capitalist mode of production -primarily thanks to the OST- the phase of real domination (the consequence of which was the effective integration of the "old" trade unionism into the state apparatus). It is true that we have often been tempted to generalize this explanation -this framework- to other situations, if not to the main industrial centers of the early 20th century (from 1905 to 1920), but that would be a work of a different magnitude and scope, although we believe we can detect important similarities (for example, between the "unionist" movement of the IWW -see One Big Union- and that of the "trade unions" in

Germany during the years 1910 to 1925), both in the profound transformation of the productive sphere and in its consequences within the constantly transforming working class itself, in order to respond ever more effectively to the needs of valorization. But, once again, these are not "conclusions," but rather new hypotheses that we would like to explore further in subsequent work. Therefore, our main concern in this thesis has been to use Marxist analysis of the economic base and its modifications to better understand the history of the working class and its struggles.

*"My investigations (on Hegel's philosophy of law) led to this result: legal relations, like the forms of the State, cannot be explained either by themselves or by the supposed general evolution of the human mind; rather, they have their roots in the material conditions of life, which Hegel, following the example of the English and French of the 18th century, encompasses as a whole under the name of 'civil society,' and it is in political economy that the anatomy of civil society must be sought." (K. Marx: Preface to "Critique of Political Economy" -1859-, Editions Sociales, Paris 1972, p.4).*

In this sense, we hope to have achieved our objective, namely, to attempt to develop Marx's explanatory power through a historical example subsequent to his work and, with it, the power of his theory as a vector for understanding society and its contradictions. Therefore, our perspective is one of a return to Marxist theory as an alternative to the various current philosophical and sociological explanations; a return that does not signify repetition, but rather a "rediscovery" of a method of investigation and critique that, paradoxically, the "spirit of the times" does not seem to have refuted. The numerous "defeats" that punctuate the history of the workers' movement, of which the heroic experience of the IWW is one of the many concrete manifestations, can each time be interpreted as the defeat of Marxist theory or, as today -a return to Hegel- as "the end of history"; the "definitive triumph of capitalism." But that same Marxist theory had already responded to these periodic claims by explaining that it is the defeats themselves and their scientific understanding that feed the theory.

*"We are firmly convinced that it is not the attempt to experiment with communist ideas in practice, but their theoretical elaboration that constitutes the real danger (for the class enemy), because practical experiments, even massive ones, can always be answered with cannons as soon as they become dangerous, whereas the ideas that our intelligence has victoriously conceived, that our spirit has conquered, by which our intellect has forged our conscience, are bonds from which we cannot untie ourselves without tearing our hearts out; they are demons that man can conquer only by submitting to them." (K. Marx: "Communism and the Allgemeine Zeitung" -1842-Rheinische Zeitung no. 289, cited in Mouvement Communiste, number O, p. 80).*

We hope to have shared with readers our enthusiasm, both for the use of theoretical concepts that seem to us too underutilized (that is, rarely applied in the analysis of a concrete situation), and also our enthusiasm for the discovery of an episode in the history of the working class that we knew -but not to what extent- was rich in anonymous heroism and in the will to break the chains of exploitation of man by man. Finally, we hope to have contributed, to the best of our ability, to the updating of Marx's thought, without falling into mere apologetics.

Maximilien says Rubel:

*"Marx, as a critic, expected everything from criticism to advance and complete his work. This thirst for intellectual confrontation remained almost entirely unsatisfied during his lifetime, to the point that he was condemned to monologue or phantom hunting. Let us not, therefore, abandon Marx to disciples who, under the guise of absolute fidelity, substitute desirable and desired criticism with pure and simple betrayal. Obscurantist of our time, the Marxist who serves the police state and its capital falls under Marx's criticism just as much as the bourgeois capitalist and his liberal state. Enemy brothers, or even simply brothers, true capitalism and false socialism are united in this universal conspiracy that keeps humanity in a state of permanent barbarism and threatens it with extermination by famine and fire." (M. Rubel: "Marx Critique du Marxisme," ed. Payot, Paris 1974, p. 9).*

## LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

A.F.L.: American Fédération of Labor (Fédération Américaine du Travail) dirigée par Gompers (d'où l'appellation de "gompériste").

A.F.L.-C.I.O.: American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organisation (à partir de 1938)

C.N.T.: Confédération Nationale du Travail (syndicat anarcho-syndicaliste d'Espagne)

I.C.: Internationale Communiste (IIIème Internationale).

I.S.R.: Internationale Syndicale Rouge.

I.W.W.: Industrial Workers of the World (Ouvriers Industriels du Monde) ou encore "Wobblies").

M.P.C.: Mode de production capitaliste

O.S.T.: Organisation Scientifique du Travail (autrement dit, "système Taylor").

## Annex

### **\*Big Bill Haywood:**

He was born in 1869 in a furnished apartment in Salt Lake City. He grew up in Ophir, Utah, in a mining camp, amidst fights, gambling, Saturday nights, and whiskey spilled on poker tables piled high with new dollars. At eleven, his mother left him to work as a farmhand, but he ran away because the farmer whipped him. That was his first strike. He poked out his eye carving a slingshot from a dwarf oak branch. He worked in stores, ran a fruit stand, was a doorman at the Salt Lake City theater, and a messenger and bellboy at the Continental. At fifteen, he left for the Humboldt County mines in Nevada, with luggage consisting of overalls, a sweater, a blue shirt, miner's boots, two blankets, a chess set, boxing gloves, and a large plum pudding his mother had made for lunch. When he married, he went to live at Fort McDermitt, once built for defense against the Indians and now abandoned, since there was no longer a frontier. There, his wife gave birth to their first child without a doctor or midwife. Bill cut the umbilical cord and buried the placenta; the child survived. Bill earned money by any means: he made topographical measurements, cut hay in Paradise Valley, broke in colts, and rode horseback across a vast territory. One night, at Thompson's Mill, something strange happened: he was one of five men whom chance brought together to spend the night at the abandoned ranch. Each of them had lost an eye and they were the only one-eyed men in the country. He lost his home, everything fell apart, his wife became ill, and he had children to care for. He went to work as a miner in Silver City. In Silver City, Idaho, he became a member of the Federation of Miners of the West.

### **\*John Dos Passes :**

*42' Parallel*. Paris, you Club français du book. 1949, traduit of l'américain par N. Guterman . He was a delegate of the Silver City miners at the Federation congress held in Salt Lake City in 1898. From that day forward, he was an organizer, speaker, and propagandist; the needs of all workers were his needs; he fought in Cœur In d'Alène, Telluride, and Cripple Creek, he became a member of the Socialist Party, wrote articles, and throughout Idaho, Utah, Nevada, Montana, and Colorado, spoke to striking miners demanding an eight-hour workday, better living conditions, and their share of the wealth they extracted from the earth. In January 1905, a conference was organized in Chicago, in the same Lake Street room where anarchists had held their meetings twenty years earlier. William D. Haywood was president for life. It was during this conference that the manifesto from which the IWW emerged was drafted. On his way back to Denver, he was arrested and taken to Idaho, where he was tried along with Moyer and Pettibone, accused of the murder of rancher Steuenberg, a former governor of Idaho, who had died in a bomb explosion at his home. After his acquittal in Boise (Darrow was his lawyer), Big Bill Haywood was known from the Atlantic to the Pacific as one of the leaders of the working class. Now, the needs of all workers were his needs.

He was the spokesman for the West, for cowboys, lumberjacks, farmworkers, and miners. [The steam drill had laid off thousands of miners; the steam drill had sown panic among all the miners of the West.] The Western Miners' Federation was becoming reactionary. Haywood worked with the IWW to create a new society within the old one, campaigning for Debs 's election as president in 1908 on the Red Train. He was present at all the great strikes in the East where the revolutionary spirit was advancing, in Lawrence, in Paterson, at the Minnesota steelworkers' strike. They crossed the ocean with the AEF to save Morgan's loans, to save Wilson's democracy, they visited Napoleon's tomb and dreamed of an empire, they drank champagne cocktails at the Ritz, they slept with Russian countesses in Montmartre and dreamed of an empire; all over the country, in the offices of the American Legion and at businessmen's luncheons, being a patriot paid off; they lynched pacifists and pro-Germans, IWW members , Reds and Bolsheviks. Bill Haywood was tried along with 101 in Chicago, where Judge Landis, the baseball czar, applying the summary procedure of the commercial courts, handed down

sentences of twenty years in prison and fines of thirty thousand dollars. After spending two years in Leavemvori Prison, Big Bill was released on bail (he was fifty years old, a broken man). The war was over, but they had learned about the Empire in the Hall of Mirrors at Versailles; the courts refused to review the sentence. Haywood had to choose between accepting his release on bail or returning to prison for twenty years. He suffered from diabetes; his life had been hard, and prison had ruined his health. Russia was a workers' republic; he went to Russia, lived in Moscow for a few years, and died there. His large body was cremated, and the ashes were buried beneath the Kremlin wall.

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