

Exploitation and Exclusion--- the International Struggle

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16 September 2009

Everyone who knows Hari knows that his life has been one of struggle against imperialism and in support of the right of the oppressed to struggle for a decent life. His theme, indeed, might be that of the Communist Manifesto's assertion that 'the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.'

Underlying that theme is the premise that everyone has the right to the full development of her potential and that the society that we must struggle to build is one based upon the principle of 'to each according to her need for development.' As Marx understood, in such a society, 'the development of the human capacities on the one side [cannot be] based on the restriction of development on the other' (Marx and Engels, 1988: 190-2).

This is, of course, a concept of entitlement--- one based upon the centrality of human development, the premise from which Marx wrote his critique of capitalism (Lebowitz, 2003: 203, 209). I have tried to sketch out some of its dimensions in a new book (*The Socialist Alternative: Real Human Development*) by introducing the concept of a Charter for Human Development:

- A. Everyone has the right to share in the social heritage of human beings, has an equal right to the use and benefits of the products of the social brain and the social hand, in order to be able to develop her full potential.
- B. Everyone has the right to be able to develop her full potential and capacities through democracy, participation and protagonism in the workplace and society--- a process in which these subjects of activity have the precondition of the health and education which permits them to make full use of this opportunity.
- C. Everyone has the right to live in a society in which human beings and nature can be nurtured--- a society in which we can develop our full potential in communities based upon cooperation and solidarity.

In practice, what does this mean? And, in particular for our concern here, what does this mean on an international level?

Obviously, one premise is that we have to end capital's ownership of the means of production. The means of production, after all, are the products of past labour; they are the products of the social brain and the social hand, what Marx (1973: 694, 704-6) called the '*organs of the human brain, created by the human hand*: the power of knowledge objectified'. The means of production are our social heritage--- the heritage of all humanity. So, why should one subset of society own our social heritage?

As Marx demonstrated, our social heritage is owned by capital because generations of workers have sold their capacity to produce to capital and have been exploited by capital in its drive for growth. Because they lacked an alternative way of surviving, workers have surrendered their claim on their product to capital. All the power of social labour thus has become the power of capital. And, as long as capital continues to own the means of production, the capitalist process of production will continue to treat

human beings and nature as means (rather than an end) and will accordingly destroy both these 'original sources of wealth'.

But, it is not enough simply to end capitalist ownership of the means of production at this time. It is essential to end the exploitation and the deformation characteristic of the capitalist form of production. Continuing exploitation means that the products of current labour are separated from the producers themselves, and once again 'man's own deed becomes an alien power opposed to him, which enslaves him rather than being controlled by him' (Marx and Engels, *The German Ideology*, 1846:47-8). The continuation of capitalist forms of production means that workers cannot develop their capacities in the process of production (and that someone else does). In short, worker management is essential to prevent the re-emergence of exploitation even if capitalist ownership of the means of production has been ended.

Yet, that is also not enough. Even if the means of production are no longer the property of capital but are owned by society in the form of the state, even if workers in each productive unit can end the division between thinking and doing and can make the critical decisions in the workplace, this is not enough to ensure that the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.

Consider, for example, the case of Yugoslav self-management. In the former Yugoslavia, the means of production legally were the property of society (and could not be sold) and the legal decision-making body in individual enterprises was a workers councils. Nevertheless, there were vast differences in that society depending upon where people worked--- even if they performed their work identically. Before blaming this problem of inequality on the overwhelming effect of the market economy characteristic of the Yugoslav model, though, it is important to recall the differences, for example, between Chinese workers in state-owned enterprises and collective enterprises (not to mention the differences between town and country!) and between Cuban workers in tourist-oriented sectors vs. those in sugar mills. Very simply, even with social ownership of the means of production, there is a familiar phenomenon of differential access to particular means of production.

In itself, differential access to particular means of production is inevitable. And, this is not a problem when those who possess particular means of production are oriented toward ensuring that 'Everyone has the right to share in the social heritage of human beings, has an equal right to the use and benefits of the products of the social brain and the social hand, in order to be able to develop her full potential.' Differential access *is* a problem, however, when those differences are combined with self-interest (individual or group). All means of production, after all, are not equal; and, if some producers are able to secure particular benefits (e.g., higher incomes) as the result of their privileged access to particular means of production, their advantage is the product of monopoly--- the ability to exclude others from those benefits.

But why should that exclusion exist? If we recognise that the means of production, our social heritage, are largely the result of generations of exploited producers (rather than the product of current producers), what gives a particular group of current producers a greater entitlement than others? Remember, too, that social heritage which is the product of the social brain and the social hand is not simply tools, machines, *things*. It is also what Marx referred to as 'the accumulation of knowledge and of skill, of the general productive forces of the social brain'. Obviously, for ensuring human

development, we must reject capital's right to inherit these results of past social labour; however, similarly, no particular group of producers should have a greater claim than others upon the tools, the machines, the 'general social knowledge [which] has become a *direct force of production*' (Marx, 1973: 694, 704-6).

Within a particular country, this differential access may take the form of the distinction between those who are in the formal sector and those in the informal sector. Internationally, it takes the extreme form of differences between industrial producers of the North and rural producers of the South. Why should the latter groups in these dichotomies be excluded from the inherited knowledge and our social heritage in general? Aren't the peasant of the South and the autoworker of the North, for example, equal in their position as members of human society, equal in their right to human development, equal in their non-responsibility for the production of our social heritage?

True, industrial producers of the North and those within the formal capitalist sector are exploited. So, too, are peasants of the South and the vast majority of those in the informal sector. Exploitation means that they are excluded from products of their current labour. However, there is no logic which can make this current exploitation the basis for a privileged claim on the products of *past* social labour. To move from the first to the second implies a particular claim upon the means of production, an implicit relation of group property.

Exploitation is a process of exclusion. Production under capitalist relations not only excludes producers from products of their labour but, also, by crippling and deforming them in the process of production, excludes them from developing their potential. As we have argued, though, exploitation is only one aspect of exclusion. The latter is the broader category. It comes to the surface as the core issue as soon as we start from the centrality of human development--- Marx's focus upon a society where each individual is able to develop his full potential--- i.e., the 'absolute working-out of his creative potentialities,' the 'complete working out of the human content,' the 'development of all human powers as such the end in itself' (Marx, 1973: 488, 541, 708).

Understanding the centrality of exclusion means that we need to struggle against capitalist ownership of the means of production and against all exploitation. And that, of course, involves a struggle against imperialism. But it also means that international solidarity in struggles against capital needs to be more than a struggle against a common enemy (which has often been the form of trade union solidarity). As charitable groups and religious organizations have often recognised better than those of the Left, the starting point for international solidarity should be the recognition of common humanity.

In short, within individual countries, it is essential to build links between producers in the formal sector and the informal sector, between those who are excluded by virtue of exploitation and those who are excluded by lack of access to our social heritage, on the basis of the right of everyone to develop all her potential. Similarly, international solidarity should begin from the recognition of the right of all to struggle to remove the barriers to human development as they see fit. True solidarity starts from the understanding that 'the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.'

References

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