

1. From C.L.R James, Grace Lee Boggs and Cornelius Castoriadis, *Facing Reality*, 1958.

What is coming to an end is the stage of mass production by assembly line workers.

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The essence of automation is that it replaces manual dexterity altogether by electronic controls.

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Automation is that stage of technology which under capitalism for the first time will not create a need for manpower regardless of the mass of products produced.

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Hence while the economists and politicians of government, industry and the union have been babbling about wages, pensions and profits, every new machine has been greeted by auto workers and their families with fundamental questions about who should control production. Today's crisis is driving them to expand the very meaning of that control.

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Now, with automation, capitalism is robbing the majority of the population of the only role they have been permitted [the role of worker, that is].

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Thus automation creates the conditions for abolishing all previous distinctions between political control and economic control.

2. From James Boggs, *The American Revolution*, 1963

Automation replaces men. This of course is nothing new. What *is* new is that now, unlike most earlier periods, the displaced men have nowhere to go. The farmers displaced by mechanization of the farms in the 20's could go to the cities and man the assembly lines. As for the work animals like the mule, they could just stop growing them. But automation displaces people, and you don't just stop growing people even when they have been made expendable by the system. Under Stalin the kulaks and all those who didn't go along with the collectivization of agriculture were just killed off. Even then, if they had been ready to go along, Stalin could have used them. But in the United States, with automation coming in when industry has already reached the point that it can supply consumer demand, the question of what to do with the surplus people who are the expendables of automation becomes more and more critical every day.

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This antagonism in the population between those who have to be supported and those who have to support them is one of the inevitable antagonisms of capitalism. And it is this antagonism, brought to a climax by automation, which will create one of the deepest crises for capitalism in our age. In this crisis one section of the population will be pitted against another, not only the employed against the unemployed but those who propose that the unemployed be allowed to starve to death rather than continue as such a drain on the public against those who cannot stand by and see society degenerate into such barbarism. On both sides there will be members of all strata of the population.

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The fact has to be faced. Automation is the greatest revolution that has taken place in human society since men stopped hunting and fishing and started to grow their own food. It is capable of displacing as many productive workers from the work force as have been brought into the work force since the invention of the automobile at the beginning of this century. (Today an estimated one out of every six American workers depends, directly or indirectly, on the auto industry for employment.) In fact, so devastating would be the immediate effects if automation were introduced at one fell swoop that those who would appear to benefit most from it (the capitalists) are as afraid of its introduction as the workers threatened with displacement.

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American Marxists have tended to fall into the trap of thinking of the Negroes as Negroes, i.e. in race terms, when in fact the Negroes have been and are today the most oppressed and submerged sections of the workers, on whom has fallen most sharply the burden of unemployment due to automation. The Negroes have more economic grievances than any other section of American society. But in a country with the material abundance of the United States, economic grievances alone could not impart to their struggles all their revolutionary impact. The strength of the Negro cause and its power to shake up the social structure of the nation comes from the fact that in the Negro struggle all the questions of human rights and human relationships are posed. At the same time the American Negroes are most conscious of, and best able to time their actions in relation to, the crises and weaknesses of American capitalism, both at home and abroad.

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The struggle for black political power is a revolutionary struggle because, unlike the struggle for white power, it is the climax of a ceaseless struggle on the part of Negroes for human rights. Moreover, it comes in a period in the United States when the struggle for human relations rather than for material goods has become the chief task of human beings. The tragedy is that all Americans cannot recognize this and join in this struggle. But the very fact that most white Americans do not recognize it and are in fact opposed to it is what makes it a revolutionary struggle. Because it takes two sides to struggle, the revolution and the counter-revolution.