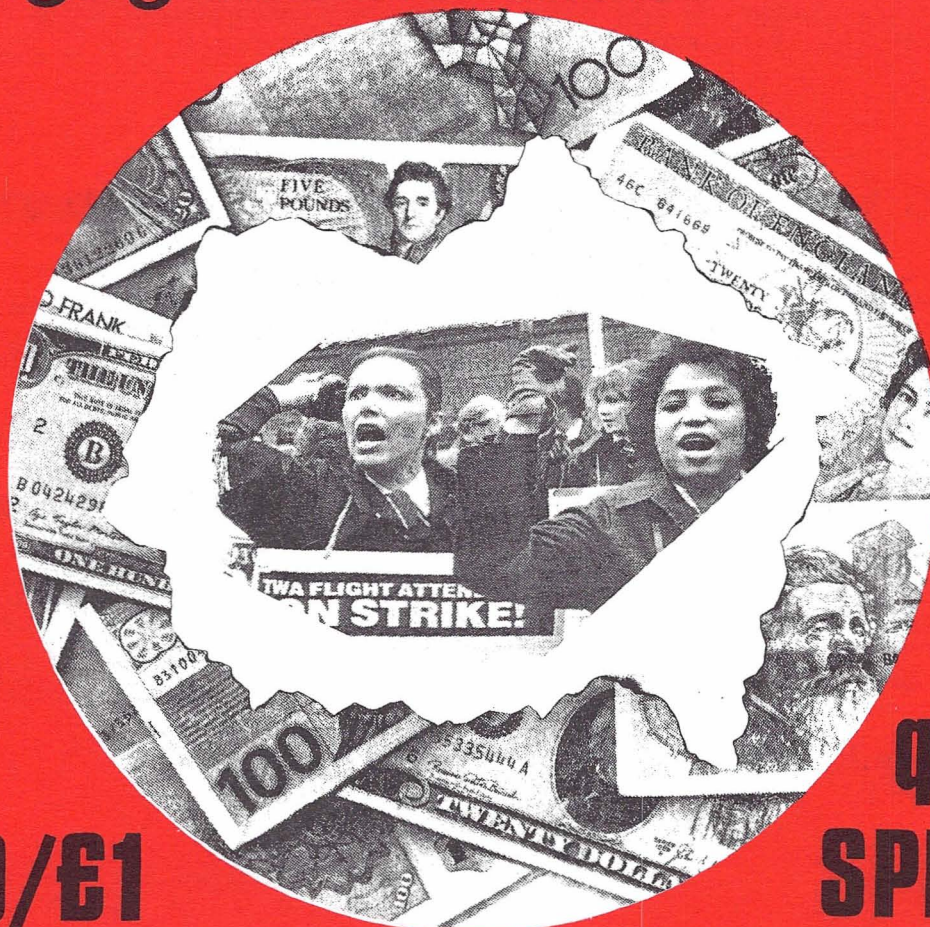


**EXTERNAL
FRACTION OF THE
INTERNATIONAL
COMMUNIST
CURRENT**

INTERNA TIONALIST PERSPECTIVE

**workers struggles worldwide
the development of class
consciousness
plunging into the crisis**



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WORKERS STRUGGLES INTERNATIONALLY

On an international scale, statistics show that 1986 has been a year of very low strike-activity, even if it is somewhat higher than in 1985, which in many countries was the lowest of the whole postwar period. We have therefore to be clear on the fact that the significance of the struggles today lies not so much in its numbers, in the willingness of workers "everywhere in the world" to go on strike, in the "international simultaneity" of strikemovements. The fact is that workers everywhere are very reluctant to use the strike-weapon, and with good reason. The depth of the crisis has made the limited strike a much less effective weapon, which often not only "does not pay" but even worse, leaves the workers in a more precarious situation than before. The dire situation many workers are in makes it at times easier for capitalism to pit workers against workers. A growing awareness in the class about the ineffectiveness of the limited strike- drawing the lesson, after countless defeats, that the slogan "the struggle pays" is deceiving, is a necessary step in the development of class consciousness. Yet it leads -initially- to a decline in strikes. However the low number of strikes is no sign that the 3th wave of struggles is over, or that it's even correct to speak about a "pause". The large strike-movements that have taken place in this period of low activity, the ones that further clarified the ineffectiveness of the limited strike, by breaking through these limitations, had an explosive character, bringing the tendencies towards selforganization and extension, present in previous struggles, closer together.

So it is the general context which give the struggles of today their significance. It is not a context of growing demoralisation, of bourgeois ideology reinforcing its grip on society and the proletariat. There are plenty of signs of the contrary, even outside the working class directly like the student-revolts (China, France, Spain, Mexico) against austerity, the difficulties in the American government to pull itself together, the immobilism of both blocs in their interimperialist confrontations, the anti-Russian riots in Khazakstan, the desperate attempts of the Russian regime to regain some mystificatory power.

In the working class itself, this context is marked by a subterranean maturation of consciousness, a breakdown of the powerfull illusions that enable the left and the unions to control and recuperate the struggles of the workers. This reduces the margin of manoeuvre of capitalism and

makes the outbreak of struggles much more dangerous, despite their diminished frequency. The destruction of illusions is a necessary condition for the proletariats own perspective to become visible. While this is one process, it clearly has 2 different aspects. At the moment, the maturation of consciousness still occurs mostly in a subterranean way, which means, as the 2nd part of the article on consciousness elsewhere in this issue explains, that the emphasis is on the first aspect, the 'negative' part of the process, the breakdown of illusions. A breakdown of illusions does not automatically lead to struggle but when a massive struggle breaks out on a ground made fertile by this breakdown of illusions, the proletariats own perspective becomes visible.

This has been confirmed by the recent strike wave in France, which followed a long period of "passivity" in the working class there. The fact that underneath this 'passivity' a profound disillusion in the left and the unions had taken place became visible in the rejection of union- and leftist control and perspectives by the strikes that led to an important step in making the working class'own perspective concretely visible, giving the class a taste of its own potential power through workers democracy, the workers own organization taking in hands the extension of the struggle. Naturally, even in that struggle the heterogeneity of that maturation is still sizeable, the rejection of union-control and recognition of its own class-force is still groping, still in search for clarity. Revolutionaries have to recognize that too, to avoid any immediatist illusions. But it's nevertheless an important indication of the present potential and the way in which the struggle will evolve.

IMPORTANT STRIKES SINCE LAST SUMMER

Despite the low number of strike days recorded in the major industrialized countries, a number of significant confrontations took place which testify to the exacerbation of class antagonisms. Conflicts have become harder with more bitterness and rage on the part of the workers and more openly brutal aggression on the part of the bosses and the State. These confrontations clearly show that this third wave of class struggle since 1968, this general movement of workers' unrest which began in 1983, has not become demoralized or ebbed into a reflux.

The most significant class confrontation

took place in France in Dec. 86-Jan. 87. The self-organization of the French railroad workers outside the unions, their determination to fight austerity, their distrust of union sabotage struck a chord among workers all over the country. This struggle will be discussed in more detail elsewhere in this issue but is obvious that the movement in France represents a high point in this wave. Its characteristics, and even its shortcomings, define the strivings of authentic class struggle today :

- it began as a spontaneous outburst against government-imposed austerity;
- workers' demands were relevant to workers in all the public services and nationalized industries;
- the workers refused union organization and organized themselves into general assemblies and centralized committees.

The essential weakness of this struggle was, in fact, that its strengths did not go far enough. The unions were thrown out the door but allowed to creep back through the window. First of all because the railroad workers saw "some" role for the unions as "experts in negotiations", a reflection of the fact that despite enormous strides, the workers seemed to take refuge against union steamrolling by limiting their organization to a corporatist terrain of rail workers alone. This effectively hindered their attempts at spreading the struggle, a vital aspect of any class confrontation today. This weakness was exploited by the unions to break the movement through a false, union-dominated and controlled, extension.

The "radicalization" of the unions, the CGT in particular, also created confusion amongst the workers and undercut the self-organization and thereby the dynamic of the movement. But it was not a negative development that the struggle stopped pretty quickly after the unions took over and did not become a long drawn-out battle leading to exhaustion. There can be no substantial material gains for workers in today's crisis but this struggle provided the workers with valuable lessons about the nature of their existence as a class in decadent capitalism.

It represents a breakthrough because the self-organization that took place was not "forced upon" the workers by an overtly hostile attitude from the part of the unions, as was the case for instance in Rotterdam 1979, but a conscious choice of the workers. It contained both characteristics along which self-organization must develop: -the general assemblies as the focal points of the struggle upon which the movement rests, to base the struggle on real workers' democracy, on the will of all, and thereby give it strength and perspective; -and the centralization through coordination committees, based on the assemblies, with revo-

cable delegates, as the tool to unify the struggle.

Before these events, there was a major strike wave in Belgium in the spring of 1986 (see IP 4 & 5). These strikes also ended with the workers unable to make substantial material gains. But to conclude that this failure has meant demoralization among the workers would be wrong. Social tension has remained high in Belgium. Strikes and demonstrations have been a constant since June 1986, fueled by austerity measures and the threat of lay-offs as in the case of the postal workers struggles in July/August 86 which began outside union control. But it will take some time before last year's experiences and failures are fully digested and today's dispersed strike activity can once again merge into a unified movement. Base unionists and leftists have not been inactive in feeding off temporary disorientations. Where they are active, as in the Boel shipyards in Flanders, a bastion of workers' combativity, scores of lay-offs have been carried out with no resistance from the workers.

Since February, social tension runs high again in the region of Limburg. Unlike last year, the strike now takes place in a context of harsh austerity-measures imposed by the government on all sectors and lingering social unrest manifested by sporadic conflicts. These have remained isolated, despite the wide discontent. Rank & file unionism has played its role in Limburg, creating structures to contain the workers, which pressure the unions to seek better conditions for the pit-closings. Everything is done to divide the miners, which is made easier by their current relative isolation.

In other European countries there were many outbursts of combativity reflecting the same characteristics as seen in France and Belgium. Several massive 24-hour strikes recently took place in Greece against the austerity measures of

the "Socialist" government. Although the action seems to have remained solidly under union control, the workers are involved in "learning" the same lessons as the workers in France "learned" from the Socialist government in power since 1981: that the left face of capital is as brutal, if more devious, as the right and that workers are going to have to have a good memory --as rail workers in France have shown by their distrust of the unions and the left parties who ran the government Transport Ministry for years with workers having nothing to show for it but deteriorating conditions. In Spain over the summer, miners, farmers, and print workers struck. The miners held general assemblies and were joined by steel workers. Throughout March, a wave of strikes, protestmarches and violent clashes with the police swept over the country, involving many sectors of the working class. The situation in Spain remains highly volatile in relation to working class activity while

general social unrest, as expressed recently by the students, forms a backdrop to the grim reality of a society in open crisis (see box: The ICC and the student movement). Social unrest today is not simply filling a vacuum left by a reflux in class struggle (as it did in the late 70's and part of the 80's) nor is it a preamble to the carnival of the "alternative" movement (as after 1968). It accompanies struggles in major bastions of the working class: in France, Belgium, Spain and in Holland too where the Dockers of Rotterdam have once again been out on strike this year. Britain is one of the major European countries hardest hit by social deterioration due to the crisis of capitalism. Attention is still focused on the newspaper workers' desperate struggle at Wapping against massive Murdoch lay-

offs. While the tenacity of the workers is certainly admirable, the way they are courted and at the same time straight-jacketed by the leftists is outrageous. They organize demos that are funeral marches designed to demoralize these workers and any others who struggle. The lesson of the tragic miners' strike and of this one too is that no sector can win alone against the united action of the bosses and the state, no matter how solidly they are out or how long they hold on.

The unions were still trying to sell this corporatist poison to the BT (British Telecommunications) workers during their strike in February which began with spontaneous job actions. It is interesting to note that this strike saw workers struggling against wage reductions and work conditions as well as the threat of lay-offs. Although the workers

The French Railworkers Strike

By creating structures that, from the beginning of their struggle, allowed for an autonomous life outside the control of the unions, the railroad workers in France have shown the road to follow. This allowed the workers to concretely deal with all the problems of the struggle and to collectively search for solutions. This gave the movement its initial strength and placed it on a political terrain by refusing the traditional negotiations between unions and management. It revealed the combative potential of the working class, showing that workers are far from willing to let themselves be locked up in a wait-and-see attitude or to surrender to the patriotic arguments of their "leaders", such as the necessity to serve the public, protect the machines, etc.

By creating their own autonomous organizations, the workers took their fate into their own hands and prevented, at least initially, the recuperation of the struggle by the union logic. Workers' general assemblies were key aspects of this, where problems could be discussed and dealt with together. Such assemblies are crucial for the development of class consciousness.

But autonomous organization is only one aspect of the struggle. Too often, revolutionary groups see only one aspect and forget all the inter-connections. The ICC, for instance, sees only the need for extension. The F.O.R. on the other hand, looks only at the content of the demands, emphasizing in this strike, the corporatist aspect.

We think it is the complexity of the process which must be understood. The struggle shows the fundamental hostility of the working class to the conditions of capitalist exploitation. The elimination of exploitation expresses a content common to all workers'

demands. But under current conditions, this general content is still expressed in terms of demands about particular aspects of working conditions. Nevertheless, this fundamental common content tends to push towards a greater understanding of how to fight effectively: self-organization, solidarity.

But in the current stage of the economic crisis, the workers' struggle and the development of their class consciousness, the emphasis is still on the specific aspects of exploitation. This makes it possible to imprison the struggle in a corporatist straight-jacket on the basis of sectorial demands. These demands are often the pretext for the explosion of the struggle and workers still hesitate to take the struggle into their own hands and raise all the questions of extension and the generalization of specific demands.

The emergence of autonomous organizational structures in the French railway strike was an undeniable step forward by the working class. They gave the specific demands of the strikers an important dynamic. In the present context, a generalization of the demands was possible. This is what was at stake in the discussions in the general assemblies. The dynamic of self-organization initially prevented the corporatist logic from emptying the dynamic of the movement. But rank-and-file unionists worked continually to make corporatism prevail. They succeeded in fixating the movement in sectorialism. The real dynamic of the struggle as sustained by the general assemblies was gradually exhausted and destroyed. But despite the corporatist weaknesses, the struggle was so strong that it required great efforts from the unions to regain control over the movement.

D.

seem to have been able to make some headway against new and punitive job conditions (Much as the French capitalist class saw itself obliged to impose on public service workers and against which the rail workers fought) but the unions buried the issue of job losses, expected to be as high as 25 % in the future.

Important class struggle is, of course, not confined to Europe even though its highest moments are there. In the US, although the number of recorded strike days has also been low, a number of significant movements have taken place since last summer, among municipal workers (Philadelphia, Detroit, Houston); steelworkers (LTV, Armco, USX,) --the first major strikes in this industry since 1959; dockworkers (all along the east coast); communications workers (AT&T, NY Telephone); hospital workers (Pittsburgh, Boston, California); meat packers (Hormel, Swift, Iowa Beef); print workers, lumber, paper (Washington, Maine) and car/tractor workers (GM, Deere) to mention the most important ones. Although these strikes were unsuccessful in stopping the fall in wages, they were more directly aimed than before against the concession/giveback logic, even when the concessions did not directly affect workers as individuals such as in the Kaiser Hospital strike against the introduction of a two-tier wage system (meaning lower wages for new workers and division among the staff). While some strikes started spontaneously (Houston) and there were spontaneous actions in several strikes showing tremendous combativity in defense of picket lines (Swift and the Atlantic City casino workers) and for the extension of picket lines (From paper workers to dockers in Seattle), there is, as yet, no discernible movement towards self-organization. (See article on Hormel strike in this issue).

Elsewhere in the western industrialized world, we are finally seeing some movement in Japan. In Sept. strikes and demonstrations took place involving violence and sabotage in the Japanese railroads against privatization, which meant lay-offs for workers. The union made it into a struggle against privatization as such and was willing to accept lay-offs and give a no-strike pledge if privatization could be stopped. The railroads were privatized anyway. Other sectors have been active too: in Nov. there was a sit-down strike in the Takashima coal mines against the threat of closures. Japan still has the lowest unemployment rate of any industrialized country but large-scale lay-offs are planned in the railroads, steel, shipbuilding & mining-- the same sectors that the world crisis has decimated in Europe and the US. Although it will take some time before a struggle can really gather strength in Japan, the economic squeeze cannot but affect the future course of class struggle in that country.

In the less developed countries, the general characteristics of the mass strike in capitalist decadence appear in an even starker light

because of the weakness of the capitalist class. Struggles in these areas are often characterized by sudden flare-ups, rapid extension and then a tendency to end abruptly. Violent confrontations are the rule but there is a difficulty for the workers to focus this combativity and rage. A clear example of this is Brazil. In Sept a strike wave broke out for wage increases and extended rapidly from banks and hospitals to public utilities and teachers. It ended quite suddenly only to break out again in Nov. along with huge workers' demos protesting price increases. There were violent clashes with the police and looting.

Bolivia continued to be the theatre of massive strikes where the miners are militant enough for anything but unable to go any further in the context of one country alone. They were crushed by the army in Sept.

In Argentina there was a massive strike this Jan. but apparently totally under union control. The Argentine capitalist class benefits from a union and leftist tradition that can be more easily exploited for the moment than in Brazil. Latin America has seen more defined working class activity against the crisis than in Asia and Africa where class activity is often but not always submerged in general social movements. India saw a massive 24-hour strike in Jan. apparently under union control. There has been an increase in strike activity in the Philippines showing that the change in regime and the "honeymoon" period for Aquino has not changed the exploitation of the working class. The situation is hammering away at the workers illusions in "democracy".

In China the attention to the student agitation obscured the reaction to price increases which were withdrawn in Jan. 87. Unlike the 50's, this student protest, despite its illusions in "democracy", is primarily a general phenomenon of social discontent and not a pawn in a ruling class faction fight-- which is clear from the way the issue was treated today as opposed to the bloodbath in the 50's.

In Africa, there have been hunger riots, not only in Tunisia and Morocco but now more recently in "liberated" Algeria. Strikes have broken out in the mining region of Zambia as well as in South Africa which remains a hotbed of tension and class conflict with recurrent strikes in the mines (Sept, Oct, Nov) and auto factories (GM).

In the Eastern bloc, too, and against all odds, there has been movement in the working class: in the summer there was a miners' strike against lay-offs in Hungary. More recently, a strike wave paralyzed industries in Rumania and there was a workers' demonstration in the big Kama River truck plant east of Moscow, the site of unrest in 1980 during the mass strike in Poland. In Yugoslavia, after a series of price hikes, (inflation there is now running at a rate of 130 %) workers reacted forcefully throughout march, with more than 80 wildcat strikes. It's the

most important wave of workersstruggle this "socialist paradise" has ever known. The government, while threatening to use the army, revoked some decisions. As in previous conflicts, most strikes lasted only a few hours. Some however continued for a week. The center of strike-activity was Croatia, one of Yugoslavia's most industrialized regions. The government conceded that more than 7000 workers struck there in about 40 plants. Others put the number higher. All of this testifies to the reality of working-class resistance in the so-called "communist" bloc--and to the international character of the wave of class struggle presently confronting the capitalist world.

REVOLUTIONARY INTERVENTION

Our Fraction intervened actively in the strikes in France and also distributed leaflets about this strike in other countries (See our leaflet in IP #5) which emphasized that the steps taken by French workers to take the organization and extension of the struggle into their own hands show the way forward for workers everywhere. We invite our readers to comment on our intervention. Every important strike is an occasion to deepen our understanding of our intervention-task. This is not so much a matter of forms (do we need bullhorns? was a major topic of discussion

THE ICC AND THE STUDENT MOVEMENTS

That BC & the CWO, like the PCI before them, should conclude that student agitation today means nothing at all is not surprising. In 1968 when the anarchists, libertarians and other situationists were proclaiming that students were everything, the bordigists just took the other side of the coin and proclaimed that the student discontent was nothing, the mere "sons of the bourgeoisie" (as though the 19th century "intelligensia", which state capitalism has effectively destroyed to create education for the masses destined to serve the bureaucracy, still lives on in their dogma). To them, the student discontent was worse than useless unless it would "put itself behind the banners of the party".

Apparently the ICC has now joined this chorus of denial. Because by now even the bourgeois press in France has learned how to accompany the government's murderous repression with flattery of the students "pure and peaceful motives", the ICC thinks it is really being radical by just taking the other side of the coin: "student discontent can only be sterile". (WR). There is no doubt that the only perspective in today's crisis is in the working class movement and not partial and ephemeral protests as much as they show the deepening decomposition of capitalist society. It is easier today to make this point than it ever was in 1968 because the workers are actively struggling in all countries, resisting the crisis and the reality of unemployment and impoverishment is facing the whole society. There are more realistic possibilities today than the illusions of the late 60's. But in the ICC's schema, once something happens, (student protest in 68), if it ever happens again it is by definition reactionary and back-

ward looking because the ICC is unable to evaluate a new context. Thus the ICC views the student discontent today as more meaningless than in 68. Why? Because the slogans of the student "leaders" are apolitical. Which they are. The ICC like all the battle-scarred veterans of '68 writing in Le Monde, obviously prefers the deep political content of "Girls in the dorms at Nanterre", "take your dreams for reality" and other grafitti of 68! That was politics! That was when the ICC members were young! Today is nothing. This idealization of the politicization of 68 before the workers'burst into struggle, is a legend (one the leftists love to cite). But the self-organization (the action committees of 68, the coordinations of today in France) that are a material expression of this heterogeneous social movement, a social tendency that only the working class can bring to fruition in workers' councils, is not even mentioned by the ICC --which is not surprising in the light of their holy war against councilism and centrism.

But the pinnacle of this political analysis is that instead of intervening to show that only a workers' movement can change society through a revolution that will secure a future for all of mankind (even if only a minority of students will see this now), the ICC addresses them by family- origin: "those with working class parents --to the workers' movement; those without --to the 'upper echelons' of capitalist society." The irony is that this same "hoary-handed sons of toil" routine was so effectively used against ICC members 20 years ago by the leftists, who are past masters of this blatant ouvrierist tap dancing the ICC now uses for its interventions. JA.



strikes in
spain

in the ICC before we left) but of content. Revolutionaries must constantly pose the question: which concerns are living in the class? Which mystifications hold back its struggle? On which illusions are these mystifications based? Where do they get their strength? How can we demystify them more concretely?

We touched upon some of these questions in our leaflets and in this article. We emphasized the importance of the fact that the class is facing the futility of the limited strike, that this realisation forces it to search for extension of the struggle in order to gather enough force to obtain its demands. While doing so it is acting more as a class and learns to see itself more as a class. As the strike becomes no longer limited, the class consciousness of the conflict as one between 2 classes develops.

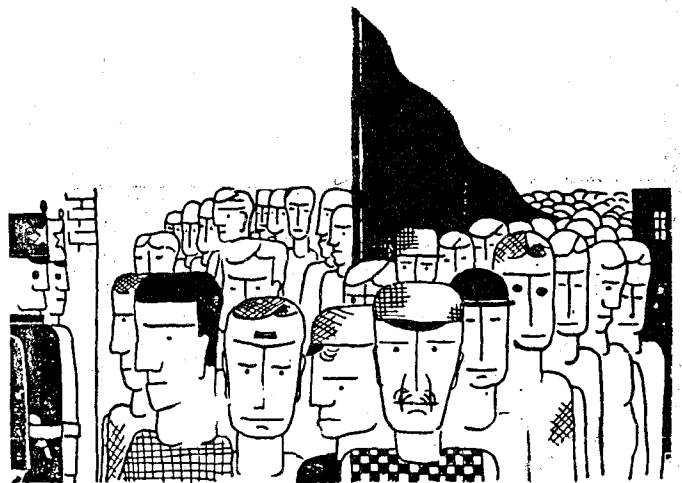
This we must accelerate, by making the link clear between the need for extension and our understanding of reality as an historic struggle between 2 classes with irreconcilable interests. This means also constantly pointing to the fact that the workers' aspirations cannot be met under capitalism. That as long as capitalism exists, the living- and working conditions will incessantly worsen. It is something that must be understood for class consciousness to develop, for revolution to be possible, for war to be avoided. So revolutionaries have to repeat it again and again: there is no 'victory' possible under capitalism, this system must be destroyed, there is no other way. The illusion that "the struggle pays" which implies that workers can protect their living and working conditions under capitalism, is a major brake on the development of class consciousness. But it is a cherished illusion, difficult to give up. Because giving it up means facing the enormity of the tasks ahead.

Workers can sometimes gain a temporary respite if the capitalist class is afraid of what would

happen if it didn't slow down its austerity; if it becomes afraid of the growth of class consciousness when a struggle becomes increasingly massive and self-organization develops. But even that respite will be paid for by the workers in another way later, through more unemployment or inflation. But more and more workers are becoming aware that the crisis is one of the entire world-economic system and that neither the left or the right has any solution for it.

To realize this does not lead to the demoralized conclusion that we might just as well not fight at all. It leads to the question: what are we fighting for? And that is clearly a question that is very much alive in the class. That's why we see hesitation to wage limited strikers, distrust in the unions and the left and the 'actions' they propose, struggles that extend quickly and in which spontaneous action becomes conscious self-organization, as in Belgium and more clearly so in France.

It is to this burning question that revolutionaries must formulate an answer that relates to what the workers themselves see already. Instead of shouting slogans about "The struggle pays" and pinning hopes on immediate victories like the ICC does (cfr. World Revolution 100, p 1: "Workers! Mobilize to defend jobs and living standards. It's possible."), we must spell it out as concretely as possible that we fight for communism, against the profit-system that cannot "give in to our demands" because it has nothing to give anymore but misery and destruction. We fight for communism, because in our own struggle we are discovering our capability to organize ourselves and thus to organize society. For we are an international class, with no conflicts of interest between us, when we learn to overcome the divisions that capitalism has imposed on us.



CLASS STRUGGLE IN THE U.S.

LESSONS OF HORMEL

As the article on class struggle elsewhere in this issue illustrates, the workers' struggle in the US is facing the same problems as it does in Europe and elsewhere: how to fight effectively given the mounting evidence of the futility of the limited strike?; how to increase the force of the struggle? And, what does it mean, to fight effectively? Given the bleak economic perspectives, what is possible? What are we fighting for?

Through spontaneous action, some struggles in the US tried to break through the paralysis imposed by the unions; by extending picket lines, they searched for means to increase their forces. But the problem of extension is still more difficult here than it is in Europe, already because of the much larger distances that separate factories and industrial concentrations. The fact that some regions in the US have benefitted from the recovery of recent years has made it easier for the powerful mass media to keep alive illusions in the economic future of capitalism, reinforcing the ideological barriers against the generalisation of workers' resistance.

The capitalist class is well aware of these weaknesses, and takes advantage of them. While being very cautious when confronting workers of very large companies (ATT, car industry, etc) elsewhere it's using more aggressive, intimidating tactics than it would dare to do in Europe:

- the frequent use of court injunctions (such as in municipal strikes, hospital strikes), the creation of special laws (for the Long Island railroad strike) to force strikers back to work;

- the increasing use of lockouts (USX, Deere, Brooklyn Union Gas);

- the increasing use of 'permanent replacement workers', the unemployed hired to fill the jobs of strikers, permanently (TWA, Swift, Paperworkers Maine);

- open repression, including mass dismissals (Hormel, Houston, TWA) and the use of National Guard troops against strikers.

But this brutality wouldn't work if it weren't complemented by an ideological attack, spearheaded by the unions. If the workers were not weakened, disoriented and iso-

lated by the union tactics, the same repression which now intimidates them might become a powerful stimulus to spread the struggle.

So the unions try their best to provide false answers to the questions the workers ask themselves:

- how to fight effectively? The unions answer with seemingly 'radical' action - like the week-long, 100-mile 'March on Olympia' (the state capital) in the Washington lumber strike, which exhausted the workers and got them out of the industrial centre of Seattle - and with 'new', 'creative' tactics like boycotts and court actions which create nothing but illusions (see below);

- how to reach out to other workers? The unions answer by equating solidarity with charity (money, food collections), by appealing for 'moral support' instead of the extension of the struggle and, above all, by organising this 'solidarity' through the channels of the union structure;

- what are we fighting for? Wherever possible the unions replace the workers' demands with "the defense of our unions against the 'union-busters' of the right" as the goal of the struggle, permitting them to cry victory if the supposed 'union-busting' doesn't succeed, even when the strike ends with massive concessions.

- who is our enemy? Foreign competition steals your lunch, say the unions, poisoning the workers with nationalism, teaching them solidarity with capital as in the demonstrations for protectionism organised jointly by unions and management in the steel and textile industries.

As in Europe, wherever the effectiveness of the unions' tactics is undermined by their loss of credibility, rank-and-file unionists and assorted leftists fill the breach, covering union ideology in a more 'radical' clothing to prevent the self-activity of the workers.

Nowhere in the US was this more visible recently as in the struggle of the Hormel meat-packers, which was controlled by union local P9 in defiance of the union apparatus. Over the course of the strike, rank-and-file unionists from all over the country descended upon Hormel, constituting a real network of rank-and-file unionism, with contacts in

hundreds of locals, which undoubtedly will play a role as a barrier against autonomous class action in future struggles.

The struggle at Hormel itself was not all that exceptional. As in scores of other local strikes, the workers displayed lots of courage and combativity but never broke through the straitjacket of union ideology. (For a detailed account of this struggle, read IP 2, pp 4 - 5). After squandering the potential for extension, the strike became a war of attrition lasting more than a year, slowly bleeding to death. The strike received unusually wide coverage in the mass media which highlighted the workers' combativity as well as their smashing defeat. And a defeat it was. Not only were none of the workers' demands obtained, not only are many strikers now unemployed, but the strike also ended in confusion, demoralisation and infighting between workers.

The large attention Hormel received has made of this strike a symbol, a focal point for discussions amongst combative workers in the US who want to learn from what has happened. The mass media, of course, have their reasons to highlight Hormel while ignoring so many other struggles. For them, the lesson to be learned is that workers are better off if they don't struggle at all. But for the many workers who don't buy that crap anymore, capitalism has other 'teachers' ready, eager to 'help' the workers draw the 'proper' lessons: the leftists.

Defeated by Isolation

Why were the Hormel workers beaten so badly? Certainly not for lack of combativity. The willingness to fight was there, but the understanding of the fight was lacking:

* The strikers thought this was a fight between them and the Hormel management. They were mistaken. A capitalist facing 'unruly' workers can count on the solidarity of his class, of its state. Hormel had made an agreement with other meatpackers (FDL Foods) which protected it against shortages in case its Austin plant were to be shut down. All state organs - the courts, the police, the national guard, the unions, the media - acted in perfect solidarity - against the workers. The enemy workers face in even the most local battle is not the boss - it's the entire capitalist class and its state. No isolated group of workers is a match for such an enemy. Only when the workers succeed in spreading their struggle they can force this enemy to relent, because the only thing capitalism fears is that workers unite and become conscious of their common class interests. Meanwhile, the strikers at Hormel naively thought they had management by the balls

because they manned the most modern and profitable plant of the company. It was only when 'their' plant was operating under the protection of hundreds of national guardsmen that they began to see the need for extension. But even when they did send roving pickets to other Hormel plants, they only asked workers there to stay out in support of the Austin strike, not to join the strike for common demands. Even when hundreds of workers at the Hormel plants in Ottumwa and Dubuque were fired for responding enthusiastically to the strikers' appeals, the strike front did not broaden. Instead, the Ottumwa workers were kept busy with their 'own' rank-and-file union support groups and rallies

Despite the fact that this strike took place in rural Minnesota, far from the larger concentrations of industry, the potential for extension existed. There was unrest in other Hormel plants and in other companies in the industry, as was testified by the bitter strikes that later broke out at Swift and Iowa Beef. There were strikes going on in other sectors to which the Hormel workers could have sent massive delegations. But the rank-and-file unionists made sure to keep them busy around their 'own' plant.

* The strikers thought they could win the fight if they followed the right leaders. When they lost confidence in the union chiefs who sold them a horrible contract they thought they'd solve the problem by electing new union leaders (December 1983). When the union apparatus turned against the strike, they put their trust in the 'experts' of Corporate Campaign who promised to organise the struggle for them with 'innovative methods', for a mere \$340,000. (1) The stupid recipes of Corporate Campaign chairman Rogers assured the defeat, keeping the workers busy with pointless action and blinding them to the real necessities of the struggle. But even the best of leaders, the most far-sighted team of 'experts' would not have solved the problem. It's only when the workers start to rid themselves of this substitutionist weight which makes them see themselves as followers in need of leadership, when they begin to decide and act in large masses, that their self-confidence can really grow. It's when they stop acting out a union-written script and start organising their own general assemblies outside union control, discussing their own actions amongst themselves, that they learn to see the needs of the struggle, the many means of action to respond to them.

How to Organise

So the Hormel strike suffered from serious weaknesses. Given the present context, these were neither unusual nor impossible to over-



come. To overcome them, the working class has to go through painful defeats like this one and learn from them. But the 'lessons' that are drawn in the many leftist analyses and debates will not help them. They can only exacerbate these weaknesses and prepare for future defeats.

One of the main debates amongst leftists on Hormel is around the question: how to organise. A vital question indeed, but for the leftists the question is not how the workers can organise themselves, but how the workers can be organised, how the union control can be tightened. Some, like the weekly 'Labor Notes', the trotskyist SWP and the anarcho-syndicalist WSA applaud the initiative of the remainder of P9's leadership to pull out of the existing UFCW union and form a new, 'more combative' union (NAMPU). "We are not saying that workers should automatically avoid the AFL-CIO-type unions", assures the WSA, but in situations like Hormel, when the union openly opposes the struggle, "the need and opportunity" for new unions "is clearly demonstrated". (Ideas and Action, no. 7) Others, like the CP and trotskyist LRP, object that this "means abandoning thousands of workers looking for a way to fight the sellout leadership" (of the UFCW). (Proletarian Revolution, no. 27) Whether they want new unions or 'reconquer' the existing ones, all leftists have one thing in common: a fear that workers would escape from the union stranglehold altogether, abandon their trust in permanent structures of 'leaders' and 'experts', certified by the state and organise the struggle themselves collectively, in the heat of the action.

What is Solidarity?

Much of the debate was also about the tactics of the rank-and-file unionists of 'Corporate Campaign', which were generally applauded by the left. As we explained before, striking workers do not face a single boss, but the capitalist class. Their struggle will gather strength to the degree that they understand that they must oppose class power with class power, their conscious unity as workers. The tactics of Corporate Campaign were all aimed at preventing the consciousness of workers as a class from growing. They made the strikers see their struggle as one of consumers, organising a boycott of Hormel products, and as voters, Americans, appealing to 'public opinion' (the state's mass media) and 'justice' (the state's courts and labour boards). To be sure, the experts of Corporate Campaign like to talk about 'workers' solidarity', but by that they mean 'moral support', financial help, food donations, etc. But if a struggle becomes an isolated war of attrition as at Hormel, no amount of food and money donations can rescue it. In a financial tug of war, capital will always be the stronger.

This form of 'solidarity' is used to lull the workers to sleep while their struggle is being buried. It is used to disperse them, sending them off on door-to-door rounds soliciting donations and 'moral support', on demonstrations at faraway bank headquarters to 'arouse public opinion' and publicise the boycott. It is used to make them dependent on the unions whose existing structure is indeed 'the best channel' to organise such phoney solidarity.

The use of boycotts to create an illusion of struggle is now so popular with American unions that a 'conscious trade unionist' would have to consult a list of more than a hundred 'forbidden products' when shopping at the local supermarket.

How long can workers be fooled with such stupidity? Not very long, think leftists like the LRP who denounce all this illusory solidarity as a product of 'bad leadership' and who call for extension of the struggle instead. 'The general strike against concessions' is their slogan. But organised and controlled by whom? Why, the unions, of course. So what their slogan really means is that workers must fight so that "Lane Kirkland and other bureaucrats are replaced by a new militant leadership." (Like themselves - you guessed it.)

Like the LRP, the unions know very well that today's strikes have an intrinsic dynamic towards extension. They don't like it and they will try to abort it, dividing and iso-

lating the workers whenever possible. But when they can't, they are quick to jump in and organise 'an extension' themselves, as has happened repeatedly in recent struggles in Europe. Unions don't need the LRP to organise tightly-controlled massive strikes and demonstrations. But what do these mean for the workers? They blow off steam, hear congratulatory speeches and are left to wonder what could be next ... The mass strike is indeed the future, but under union control it can only be a caricature, an exercise in demoralisation.

The real extension of the struggle can only come from the workers themselves. While they actively seek it, their consciousness of themselves as being part of a class develops. And this in its turn clarifies for them who the enemy is and what they are fighting for. While organising the extension themselves, centralising the struggle in coordinating committees (and, later, in workers' councils) and keeping it under the collective control of their general assemblies, they make their own class alternative to the existing social order increasingly visible. It is this context which gives the mass strike its real meaning.

Dealing with Scabs

One question which, for obvious reasons, received a lot of attention in discussions on Hormel was how to deal with scabs. Many leftists claim that the strike was lost because of them and vie with each other in heaping insults on those 'rats', as if this were the ultimate proof of their true-bred proletarian nature. According to the WSA the solution to this problem is to 'bring back the sit-down strike' (plant occupation): "When workers are in possession of the plant, the scabs can't be brought in to carry on production."

But the struggle at Hormel was not lost because of scabs. It was lost because the workers did not break through the isolation which the union, rank-and-filers included, imposed on them. A plant occupation would only have made sense if it would have been carried out by the workers themselves, not as a goal in itself but as a moment in their struggle for extension, for instance to have a place to meet and discuss, to have a gathering point for workers of different factories. A sit-down strike controlled by the union solely to keep the scabs out would not have done any serious harm to Hormel which has other plants and market agreements with other companies. It would only have reinforced the isolation that was the cause of defeat. The workers would have been effectively locked up in their own plant. (2) It was by allowing their struggle to become a drawn-out war of attrition, and not because

of the gradual return to work which resulted from this lack of extension and of perspectives, that the workers lost.

Scabs are not the 'scum of the earth' that must be approached with utter contempt and hostility. They are workers who don't understand that their own interests are identical to those of their class. Given the ideological power which capitalism still has over the workers, given the desperate position of many unemployed workers, it's really no wonder that scabs can be easily recruited.

In their search for extension of the struggle workers can and must use many means of action. The use of force to stop production, to close off a factory, to disrupt traffic, to stop trains, etc. are amongst them. But that does not negate the necessity for convinced workers to spread their conviction to the less or not convinced. The strikers must try to persuade the scabs, not beat their heads in. And the best way to convince hesitating or unconvinced workers is by showing the potential of the struggle, by creating a movement that has the strength, the hope and the joy of real solidarity. In other words, to seek real extension. The left and the unions are using the issue of scabbing precisely to prevent real extension. In the British miners' strike, the union persuaded the workers not to seek extension to dockworkers and carworkers - although the potential was very real - because there were still mines in operation. In the same vein the LRP is arguing on Hormel that the workers could hardly ask other plants to join the strike when their own plant was not closed down. In other words, don't spread the strike, beat the scabs. It's a good way to get rid of your aggression and it doesn't do much harm for capital. Quite the contrary: the mass media are delighted to show pictures of workers fighting workers. It's about the only reason that they still mention strikes at all.

The Intervention of the Milieu

The intervention of the proletarian milieu on the Hormel strike reflects the sorry state of that milieu in the US. There are those groups, descendants of organisations which, amidst the patriotic frenzy of inter-imperialist world war, defended, with more or less clarity, internationalist class positions but which since then have undergone a profound process of decay: like the IWW, 'News and Letters', or the DeLeonist SLP and NUP. It testifies to the depth of their decay that their comments on Hormel are virtually indistinguishable from those of the leftists. On the other hand, it's deplorable that younger, more living circles like the Discussion Bulletin Group didn't see it as their respon-

sibility to comment on Hormel at all.

In fact, the only organisations who defended class positions on Hormel in the US, as far as we know, were our Fraction and the ICC. Internationalism wrote generally good articles on Hormel. But like the rest of the ICC, it is fixated on the immediate situation. Where we pose the question: how to fight

effectively to develop the workers' unity and their consciousness of that unity, for Internationalism the question is: "How to use their" (supposedly already existing) "unity and their consciousness of that unity to fight effectively." (Internationalism 49) The unity of the class is not a tool in the struggle for immediate demands, it's the other way around. There's no question that these are class demands which have a class content and can therefore be a tool for the generalisation of the struggle. It's our task as revolutionaries to help make these demands the demands of all.

But we also know that the simple demand for job security, decent living and working conditions has become incompatible with capitalism: that its destruction, the goal of communism, is the real demand behind each struggle.

Few workers are glad to hear this message and the ICC would rather not tell them, for fear of demoralising them. But far more apt to create demoralisation is an absence of perspective for the struggle. And the only perspective that really makes any sense at all in the class struggle today is communism.

Sander

Notes

(1) 'Corporate Campaign Incorporated' is a business of rank-and-file unionists who sell their services to union locals in social conflicts and union-organising drives. It made its reputation in a successful campaign for union recognition at the J.P. Stevens textile company. In the case of Hormel, Corporate Campaign was paid by assessing each worker for an extra three dollars a week on top of union dues. Bloodsuckers!

(2) An excellent analysis of the question of plant occupations can be found in Internationalism 33 (and in Internationalisme, September 1979.) Reprints are available upon demand at our addresses. Send stamped addressed envelope.

ECONOMY

PLUNGING INTO THE CRISIS



I. TOWARDS AN ERUPTION OF THE DEBT CRISIS

A. The Mechanism of the Recovery and the Acceleration of the Debt Crisis

The economic recovery that followed the deepest recession since the 1930s (1981-82) has continued much longer than expected. True, the present growth is even in the strongest countries anaemic. In the US, it barely reached 2.5% in 1986. In Japan, which is experiencing its worst slump in more than a decade, industrial production fell by 2.4% in the last quarter of 1986. In France, industrial production grew by 1.5% in 1986 but fell by 5.7% in the last quarter. In Italy it fell by 7.1% in the last quarter. In West Germany, output dropped by 0.4% in the same period. In the weaker countries, the internal markets

are shrinking fast. Their growth is exclusively in export production, made possible by the US's policies and by their own price-cutting and devaluations (see below).

In countries where this wasn't the case, as in Brazil where the growth of last year also brought increased imports, foreign exchange reserves are rapidly depleting and inflation reaches surreal heights (in Brazil currently more than 600%). The situation recently forced Brazil to suspend interest payments on most of its huge \$108 billion foreign debt, foreshadowing the wave of defaults that could materialise when the return of recession brutally shrinks the export markets of the underdeveloped countries. (1) But even if in most of these countries the income generated by exports did not evaporate through a surge



of imports (prevented by severe austerity and generalised misery), it still was more than eaten away by their debt obligations and the incessant flight of capital. The net result is an increase of 'third world' foreign debt, now estimated at \$1080 billion, and a dangerous weakening of the economies that must carry its weight.

The duration of this recovery is not a sign of strength. Rather, it reflects an awareness of the capitalist class that a recession now would not be a passing moment in the 'normal' business cycle but would be very hard to contain and would risk taking on the characteristics of depression.

To see its limitations - and the ravages it has caused, let us recall the mechanism of this recovery. The motor of the recovery was the US 'Keynesian' expansionist policy, which created enough demand to fuel the world economy - or at least to keep it afloat. This policy operated through tax cuts and massive deficit spending. The tax cuts, accompanied by an ideological campaign about the marvellous 'new beginning' (in contrast to Europe, where the focus was still on the 'light at the end of the tunnel') where aimed at stimulating 'consumer' spending and corporate investment. 'Consumer' spending in the US certainly has played an important part in keeping the world 'recovery' going. But, accordingly, consumer (individual) savings declined and consumer debts increased. (Personal savings as a percentage of disposable income fell to 2.9% in 1986, the lowest since the outbreak of the Korean War, when there was frantic buying because people expected rationing.) Since the third quarter of 1986, consumer spending has been falling in the US (-2% in January). Personal bankruptcies rose in 1986 by 35% to the record number of 568942. As far as corporate investment is concerned, that hope did not materialise. Throughout the recovery, capital investment remained the weak spot and is currently falling, reflecting the capitalists justified scepticism about its own economic future. Instead, the billions gained by big corporations in the tax scheme were used to set in motion a takeover binge which is still continuing (3600 in 1986). This trend reflected the absence of a healthy growth perspective, the replacement of long-term investment by short-term speculation. It also reflected the tendency towards greater concentration, elimination of the weaker fish by the stronger,

as many US companies lost a competitive edge on the international market because of the strength of the dollar. Increasingly, these mergers and takeovers were paid with by junk bonds, committing the newly-merged companies to generating a very high future return and thus saddling them with a high debt volume. The annual default rate on junk bonds is already running at more than twice its historical average. So, the net result of this mergermania, combined with loss of export markets, is a steep increase of corporate debt in the US. The equity/debt ratio of many US corporations has declined in the '80s from 2:1 to 1:2. Equity on corporate balance sheets has shrunk by \$207.3 billion since the end of '83. Since then, corporate debt in the US has risen by \$51 billion to \$1.78 trillion.

The main stimulus of the recovery came from US government spending (with, in the first place, the doubling of military spending) with no regard to the deficits. So it's the increase of government debt which is the most spectacular. While throughout the '60s and '70s the ratio between Federal debt and GNP remained steady at 160%, it now exceeds 200%. In 1980 it was still less than \$1 trillion, now it exceeds \$2.2 trillion (under Reagan more debt has been created than under all previous presidents combined) and unless there is a turnabout it will have tripled before 1990. The annual debt service now takes \$187 billion out of the budget (17 cents out of every tax dollar). And its growth rate continues to rise. Despite the Gramm-Rudman Law which supposedly made higher deficits illegal, the deficit topped \$230 billion in 1986 and, if it continues to grow at the present rate, it will exceed \$300 billion in 1987.

B. The Debt Bomb and the Decline of Inflation

The debt of government, individuals and corporations in the US now hovers around \$9 trillion. Add to that the internal and external debt burden of the underdeveloped countries, the Eastern Bloc and Western Europe, and you get a feel for the truly mind-boggling size of the debt burden on the world economy.

Debt is really hidden or postponed inflation. (2) The economy must bear the cost of servicing it. Then how come that this period of steeply rising debt was at the same time one



of spectacularly declining inflation? Let's examine the causes of the decline of inflation and where they stand today:

(a) The depth of the recession of 1981-82:

Like war, recession destroys excess production capacity, delivers the rest of the economy of its weight. Given the severity of the recession, the tens of thousands of bankruptcies it created, this factor was substantial in reducing inflation. However, it wasn't a war, and its beneficial effects are dissipating, the longer the recovery last (see below on capacity utilisation).

(b) The brutal attacks on wages (and social wages):

This certainly has substantially reduced production costs. But it had its negative side too: as it happened internationally, it greatly contributed to the acceleration of the contraction of the world market for consumer goods. And this contraction meant steadily falling capacity utilisation (currently less than 79% in the US, despite the reduction of capacity in the recession) which in its turn increases production costs. (For the average-sized plant in the US, every 1% of unused capacity is estimated to add 1% to the production costs.)

(c) The US's monetary policy since October 1979:

The combination of tax cuts and deficit spending with a tight money policy marked the 'originality' of the present 'recovery' policy. The monetarist policy contributed to the depth of the recession, created more confidence in the US's seriousness in combatting hyperinflation and so was an important factor in the decline of inflation. But it ended in 1984. Since then, the US has followed a policy of aggressive monetary expansion. Other countries have followed reluctantly. The latest round of speculation against the dollar (mid-January) was provoked by the US to prod Japan and West Germany to do more in that regard (both have already lowered their discount rate to the lowest level since the '50s). They fear to do more because they would make themselves more vulnerable when inflation inevitably starts to rise again. In the Paris agreement of February, however, they committed themselves to make deficit spending, tax reductions and other inflation-prone measures in exchange for a vague US promise to support joint central bank intervention in the money market to hold the line on the dollar decline.

(d) The world-wide flight of capital towards

the US: This has made the US's deficit spending possible without rising inflation; foreign investment in the US more than doubled between 1980 and 1985, and is now topping \$900 billion. For the rest of the world, these capital movements have condemned to stagnating growth, accelerating the decline in domestic investment. For the US, they have transformed the strongest country in the world into a debtor nation (its foreign debt now exceeding \$200 billion) and have saddled it with an increasing burden of trade deficits (reaching a \$175 billion record in 1986, despite the dollar's decline). If the present trend were to continue, foreign dollar holdings (US foreign debt) would exceed \$1 trillion by the end of the decade and \$2 trillion in another eight years. That's a burden that even the US economy could not shoulder. The strong dollar (itself a product of the combination of deficit spending and relatively high interest rates in the US, and the bleak economic perspectives elsewhere) made the massive influx of capital possible but has undermined the US's competitive position too much, not only on the world market but also on the US's domestic market. On the other hand, the US economy's dependence on the foreign capital influx has not diminished. It's increasing as fast as debts are increasing and savings declining. Hence the US's dilemma and the tricky 'equilibrium' it is seeking by forcing down the dollar:

* If the dollar declined insufficiently it would not make a difference in the trade deficits. In any case, the best the US could hope for is to regain some lost terrain on its domestic market. Despite its prodding, little expansion is occurring in foreign markets, which will, on the contrary, decline as other countries suffer from a deterioration of their position on the US market. So, to the degree that the US would succeed in shutting other countries out of its domestic market, it would induce recession in these countries and ultimately in its own economy.

* If the dollar declined too much, capital movements would reverse as dollar holdings became unattractive. Faced with the necessity to finance its deficits, the US would be forced to raise steeply its interest rates, which would be the surest way to plunge its economy (and therefore the world's) immediately into recession. This danger is not so unreal. For 1985 already, capital outflow from the US rose by 9%. In the second quarter



of 1986, the latest for which we have figures, the private capital influx into the US diminished by \$37 billion. (At this point in the game, however, this decline is still offset by the euphoric binge on the stock exchange and by market intervention by Japanese and German central banks, who are buying billions of dollars to keep their own currencies competitive. It's clear that such defensive tactics can quickly run out.)

In both cases, a serious dollar devaluation, increasing the prices of all imported goods, and a decline in the foreign capital influx are potent forces in the rekindling of inflation in the US and therefore the world.

All the causes described above for the decline of inflation have either run out or are nearing that point. There is, however, another important cause that is still strong and even becoming stronger. But the 'stronger' it becomes, the worse off the world economy is:

(e) The deflationary tendency as a result of worldwide gluts: This is a 'good' side-effect of a terrible thing: the contraction of the world market, the exacerbation of overproduction. The prices of oil and other energy sources, of copper and other minerals, of grain and other foodstuffs are all going down. This has probably become today the most important factor in offsetting the inflationary tendencies.

The current slide of the dollar has to be seen in the light of the worldwide tendency towards competitive devaluation which started some five years ago in the periphery when, as in the '30s, underdeveloped countries let their exchange rates drop to deeply undervalued levels to generate trade surpluses for debt-servicing. Because the US, given its debt level, can no longer continue to act as the shock-absorber, competitive devaluation has now spread to the centre of the world economy.

C. What happened in value terms?

'Recovery' means a relative increase of production. But from a marxist point of view, the opposite occurred. The recovery was an important step in the deepening of the crisis. Production increased, fuelled by the demand generated by US deficit-spending. But

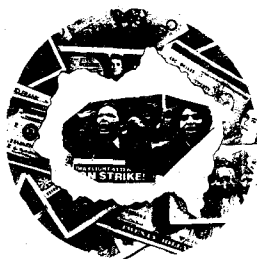
the added value produced is either fictitious (services, real estate boom, etc) or sterile (armaments) and does not return into the cycle of reproduction, while the productive sector of the economy has actually continued to shrink. Less value is returning into the economy while its burden has increased tremendously. The recovery was financed with debts under the assumption that the profits made through the increase of production will repay them. But as no value is added to the production process, these profits are really fictitious. So more and more, the entire world economy is functioning to pay off debts. In other words, interest is crushing profits, thereby progressively eroding the possibility of the continuation of accumulation itself. (Profits have declined in the US in 1985-86, despite the recovery, heralding a disastrous situation when the recovery ends.) What was already the situation of the periphery has spread to the centre.

The meaning of this can hardly be overestimated. The entire post-Second World War reconstruction period was based upon a gigantic expansion of international credit, resulting in an accumulation of debt. The US played the pivotal role in this, its economic/political power supporting its position of the international lender of the last resort. Capitalism reacted to the end of the reconstruction period by accelerating its debt-accumulation, postponing the hour of reckoning. Basically the same was done in the '70s and the '80s; capitalism has not really found a new mechanism to deal with its problems. But the fact that the lender of the last resort is now itself a debtor casts grave doubts on capitalism's ability to play the same trick again or, in other words, on its ability to avoid a full scale depression.

II. TOTTERING ON THE BRINK OF DISASTER

A. Playing for Time

In order to prevent the next recession taking on the characteristics of a depression, it seems absolutely necessary for capitalism to reduce the debt burden substantially. Given the high level of corporate debt and 'third world' debt, a recession now would cause a very high number of bankruptcies and insolvency of foreign debtors. This would put a terrible strain on the international banking



system. Even before facing this test, the bank system is very vulnerable. As in the 1930s, banking earnings are in decline internationally. In the US 138 banks failed in 1986, the fifth consecutive record and the largest number since the '30s (compared to 79 in 1984 and 10 in 1981); 10% of all US banks are in serious trouble. A financial crisis would in its turn accelerate the recession. State capitalism 'normally' has the means to contain such a chain reaction. But the burden of debt governments are already shouldering would severely constrain their spending and thus their capacity for intervention. Disregarding this would unleash inflation in a spectacular way which in itself would be a powerful factor towards depression.

So capitalism has to try to diminish the debt problem before a recession sets in and in the meantime, play for time by further easing monetary policies and, from the US's point of view, force Germany and Japan to take more stimulative action. But these measures to postpone the recession tend to increase the debt problem. And on the other hand, measures taken to reduce the debt problem risk bringing a recession closer. That is in addition to the fear of provoking social conflict, the main reason why the capitalist class hesitates to reduce deficit spending drastically. The same problem exists in regard to the trade deficit: reducing it would certainly ease the US's debt problem somewhat, but the rest of the world, losing the 'locomotive' of its already stagnating 'recovery', would risk falling into recession and dragging the US's economy with it.

It could be argued that it would be to the advantage of US capital to unleash the recession this year, so that there would be time for a semblance of recovery in the second half of 1988, in time for the elections, to keep the right in power. But now it seems clear that the recession would be so deep that even a semblance of recovery could not be created in time. Given the advantages of keeping the Democrats in opposition, the capitalist class will make great efforts to postpone the return of the recession until after that election and try at the same time to ease the debt situation. At the moment, this goal seems to be pursued by a mix of measures for recession-postponement (easy monetary policy, a shifting of the burden by

forcing Japan and West Germany to more deficit spending tax cuts) and debt-alleviation (lowering dollar to cut trade deficit, cutting budget deficits). We've seen that this can in no way improve the situation (we discussed the dangers contained in these policies above) but that does not of course automatically mean that they are doomed to failure in the very short term. We have no way of knowing whether such policies might work for a couple of months or a couple of years.

But the fact that the US trade deficits continued to mount throughout 1985-86 - reaching a record high last November of \$19.2 billion - while in the same period the dollar continued falling - by more than 40% since February 1985 - seems to indicate that capitalism's options are severely limited. The fact that the dollar decline was less substantial than it appeared because the exchange rate barely changed towards major trade partners like Canada, Mexico or South Korea, and the willingness of exporters to take drastic profit cuts in order to hold on to their share of the American market, offer a partial explanation for this. But the main constraint to lowering the trade deficit is the inability of US capital to increase its exports substantially because of the stagnation of the rest of the world economy, which stagnation will increase to the degree that the US succeeds in lowering their share in the US domestic market. Thus, last January the US trade deficit rose again, despite a decline in imports, because its exports fell by 11.5% from December.

How is it possible that in such a depressing context the stock markets are booming? One reason is the decline of interest rates, taken to keep the 'recovery' alive, which depress the bond markets and create a shift of capital from bonds to stocks. Also, the devaluation of the dollar makes US stocks cheaper for foreign investors and creates the expectation of a higher share of the US domestic market for US corporations. But the main reason is that a lot of money is around as a result of the easing of monetary policy and which, in the absence of a perspective of healthy accumulation, is used in nervous, short-term speculation. Hence the extreme volatility. As one trader was saying: "It's berserk. It's total confusion. No-one knows



what the heck is going on." (NY Times, 24 January 1987) In the same way the stockmarket is feverishly rising, it can suddenly crash down when nervous investors, riding the increase, begin to get out before it's too late.

B. 1929 and Today

It was a similar situation preceeding the crash of 1929 and the depression of the 1930s.

The resemblances are striking:

- 1) the speculative euphoria on the stock-markets, the increasing gap between the booming 'symbolic' economy and the real, depressed economy;
- 2) the debt situation, the unmanageable budget deficits. In that regard the situation is much worse today;
- 3) the increasing burden of interest on the economy, the erosion of profits by interest - here also, the situation is worse today;
- 4) the appearance that the inflation problem is under control;
- 5) the declining income of banks and rising vulnerability of the financial system: objectively, the situation is worse today, but subjectively, the capitalist class might be better prepared as a result of its experience and the growth of state capitalism and international cooperation;
- 6) the generalised glut economy, with many similar characteristics: the depression in agriculture, steel, railroads, shipping, textiles, coal, the decline of energy prices;
- 7) the tendency to protectionism (much worse in the 1930s), the tendency to look for cartel solutions (dividing of the markets) in a vain attempt to deal with the glut problems.

We do not suggest that a depression could

unfold in the same manner as it did in the 1930s. Since then, the significance of what happens on the stockmarket for the overall economy has decreased substantially. The role of the state in the economy, the degree of international economic cooperation, have reached unprecedented levels. At the same time, it would be naive to assume that this cancels out the danger of depression. The creation of fictitious capital has reached such a point that the spectre of hyperinflation is becoming larger than ever over the world economy. The unprecedented debt levels assure that the next recession will be very deep, forcing the state to create more fictitious capital, running larger deficits, to contain it. But that will unleash inflation, forcing a steep rise of interest rates. In this way, capitalism is eating away its margin of manoeuvre, its ability to give its own decline a gradual, spread out character. And this is bringing it ever closer to an era of violent and decisive confrontations with its class enemy, the international proletariat.

Sander

7 March 1987

Notes

(1) The suspension of payments by Brazil does not yet herald such a global financial disaster. Brazil is trying to force its creditors to reschedule its payments (it now has to pay \$450 million in interest each month), but even more important, it is seeking a rationale to force down a new round of austerity upon 'its' combative working class. (We did everything we could, we even kicked the Yankees in the pants, now there's no alternative but to tighten your belts one notch further.)

(2) Unless, roughly speaking, the mass of realisable surplus value is growing faster than the debt rate, which today of course is past historic.

PUBLIC MEETING IN PARIS

A DEBATE ON REVOLUTIONARY INTERVENTION

On March 7th the external Fraction of the I.C.C. held its first public meeting in Paris and it became an important occasion for the political milieu there. About 30 people attended representing revolutionary groups such as the F.O.R. (Fomento Obrero Revolucionario), the I.B.R.P. (International Bureau for the Revolutionary Party), the I.C.C. (International Communist Current), Jalons, etc. * It was an important occasion not only because it was the result of a natural curiosity about our group but because it showed a willingness to confront ideas and engage in polemics among the groups and revolutionary elements who came, even if this willingness is still beset by weaknesses.

The topic of the meeting was the position of our organization on the class struggle today and the implications for the role of revolutionaries. Although the first point cannot be separated from the second, most of the discussion centered around the question of intervention.

In this article, we would like to expand on the four key points raised in the discussion: the question of demands; the direct influence of revolutionaries on class struggle today; the notion of "the struggle pays"; the question of calling on workers to join in union demonstrations.

A) DEMANDS

All the groups were concerned about this question -- what should revolutionaries put forward in class struggle. Although different groups gave different answers to this question, we think they are all part of a similar approach. Some think they can make a movement progress by proposing demands with a revolutionary content (such as the demand for communism). This is what the F.O.R. thinks. Others feel that an additional step towards a more massive movement would be the determining factor (such as the demand for spreading the strike put forward by the ICC in the struggles).

We think that there is no one key element to put forward as the factor for the development of the struggle but that we must try to push for a development of the overall dy-

namic of a movement. This dynamic is the result of a complex process which includes the self-organization and extension of the struggle and the demands put forward by the workers but is not limited to these points. This process has its strengths and weaknesses that we must support or denounce but there is no one "recipe" that would always, systematically, be the "key". Thus, systematically putting forward either the question of extension for the ICC or demands for the FOR is part of the same approach which loses sight of the process as a totality. It can lead to forgetting that it's the overall dynamic of a struggle that allows it to go beyond its weaknesses and poses the question of the greater autonomy of the struggle and its extension, or on the contrary, imprisons the struggle in corporatism and union recuperation. For us, therefore, there is no one "unifying demand" that revolutionaries can put forward that will magically overcome weaknesses or the weight of corporatism. From the Russian revolution, for example, emerged demands as elementary as "bread" or as ambiguous as "peace". But despite the limited character of these demands, the dynamic of the struggle and its context went beyond these demands and confronted the whole capitalist system. The question of demands in itself is a false one. Demands cannot be isolated from the movement as a whole and our role consists in pushing the development of this dynamic as a whole and not just one of its components.

B) DIRECT INFLUENCE ON CLASS STRUGGLE

This conception is closely linked to how the balance of forces between the classes is understood and what method revolutionaries want to use. On this question, the ICC's method was completely alien to marxism. The ICC told us at the meeting: "either we are in a period when revolutionaries get lynched if they show up at the factory gates or we are in a period when revolutionaries can have a direct influence on struggles. To this way of posing problems we answered that simple common sense, not to mention marxist method realizes that just because something isn't black, it does

not make it white. Between these two extremes there are a variety of colors. The ICC, by saying that a struggle or a period does not have a certain characteristic, concludes that the period must be characterized by its opposite. The same reasoning was offered at the public meeting about the slogan "into the streets". Because it would be wrong to call on workers to remain shut up in their "own" factory, the ICC concludes that it must call on workers to "hit the streets". The ICC dealt with this question the same way it dealt with the issue of direct influence on the course of events today -- with simplistic schematism.

Our organization tried to clarify its position. For us, even though it is obvious that we are living at a time when conditions are increasingly favorable for revolutionary positions finding an echo in the working class, we are still far from the time when revolutionaries can find themselves at the head of struggles or in the workers' councils. We are given an attentive hearing at certain moments in the heat of open struggle, in certain assemblies of workers, but we do not claim to be able to directly influence the course of events today. The present period is still affected by the heterogeneity of the process of class consciousness. For the ICC, the present wave of class struggle is already so formidable and the influence of revolutionaries so all-pervasive that just discovering the "correct" slogan would enable the ICC to make the workers forget all the questions, illusions and hesitations that are part of the process of maturation of consciousness going on today. In effect, the ICC is denying the existence of this process and replacing it with the power of slogans. The ICC ends up by overestimating the period and underestimating the long and difficult path to consciousness.

C) CALLING ON WORKERS TO JOIN UNION DEMONSTRATIONS

This position, defended by the ICC, was criticized by all the other groups attending the public meeting. For us, this position is a direct consequence, a concrete application, of the ICC position on "direct influence" on struggles today. Once again using the method of "either/or", the ICC told us: "either you think it's good that the working class remains atomized or you agree that we must call on workers to show up at all groupings, even union ones." To mention an example cited at the public meeting: at the union demonstration on May 31, 1986 in Belgium, the ICC exhorted the workers to "transform this demonstration into a workers' demonstration". They undoubtedly hoped that because revolutionaries told them to do it, the canalized workers, shut

into this union parade, having left their class terrain behind, would suddenly and miraculously change the content of this funeral march orchestrated by the bourgeoisie.

But in the ICC's explanation of this question a new element appeared which is in contradiction to its previous theories. On the one hand, the ICC tells us that the call to join union demonstrations only corresponds to "certain moments" when no other assembly of workers is taking place and when one has to take advantage of any occasion to "get together", even if it's organized by the unions specifically to break and/or bury a movement (this was the case in 1984-85 the ICC told us). But in that case, we don't understand why in Belgium, in the middle of a social movement that shook the nation in April/May 1986, the ICC put forward this perspective of joining the union demonstration on May 31 in Brussels. The only coherent explanation would appear to be this idea that the ICC is "directly influencing" events. This can probably also explain the situation of the ICC comrades who, leaning over the flower pots, megaphone in hand, harangued...the union banners at that demonstration!

We wish the ICC would explain once and for all what they think they are doing with these calls to join union demos. We refer our readers to criticism of this practice from several groups in the milieu including ours, in I.P.#2.

D) "THE STRUGGLE PAYS"

This was also a position defended only by the ICC and it shows the same "logic". The ICC began by saying that it would be wrong to say struggle brings nothing today. So ... the struggle pays.

Taking the simplistic position of parading the supposedly concrete, positive aspects of struggle so that workers can be lured into engaging in them, the ICC ends up by adopting this slogan of leftist flavoring: "the struggle pays". And even though the ICC tried to nuance its position at this meeting when faced with criticism, we wonder just what that nuancing can really mean when World Revolution #100 headlines: "Workers, Mobilizing to Defend Our Jobs and Living Conditions is Possible".

This kind of sloganeering perpetuates the illusion that it is possible to maintain the status quo in the capitalist system today. It hides the reality of the system and thus the absolute necessity to destroy it. It hides the fact that there is no other alternative. For more on this subject, readers can have a look at the Editorial in this issue.

In conclusion, this public meeting in Paris was a chance for political confrontation in

the revolutionary milieu. Even though we feel that this is a positive sign, it should not blind us to the weaknesses of the meeting. The discussion revealed the weaknesses and the significant divergences among the different groups attending, including our Fraction. Although the general question of the evaluation of class struggle today was only quickly touched on, there are profound differences separating the Fraction and the ICC from other groups.

Concerning intervention, even though only some aspects of this were brought up in the points raised here, they relate to divergent conceptions and approaches to the role of revolutionaries and the process of class consciousness. The criticisms we deservedly leveled against the ICC must not blind us to our own weaknesses. It was pointed out how difficult it is for all the groups, including our own, to put forward the perspective of communism while relating it to the immediate concerns and issues in the working class. Too often, the final goal still does not appear clearly in our leaflets or if it

does, it is as an abstract, far-away possibility.

If criticism of the ICC took up a large part of the discussion at this meeting, it is because of the ICC's increasingly alarming downward march into degeneration. One of the tasks of our Fraction was to keep up the work of critical understanding of the organization that we left a year and a half ago. In this, we can recognize our own weaknesses and accept certain criticisms directed at us as a reflection of the difficulty of elaborating our positions on the basis of the programmatic acquisitions of the ICC, the need to understand the origins of the ICC's errors and our own need for more experience in the class struggle.

It goes without saying that our efforts can only be enriched and helped by contributions and polemics from other groups just as we hope we are able to make a positive contribution to the rest of the revolutionary milieu.

Rose

CORRESPONDENCE

how to define the working class terrain

The following letter is sent by 2 revolutionaries on the American West Coast who have been long time contacts of the ICC. This letter, which relates about discussions with M., a visiting ICC-comrade, reflects an attitude towards the turmoil in the ICC of these past years, that is shared by other serious contacts of that organization and even by some of its members: on the one hand, deep concern about the ICC's rejection of its previous clarity on several crucial issues; on the other hand, doubts that the gravity of these errors was such that an organisational break became an absolute necessity. This letter focuses in particular on 2 issues: -the ICC's change in position on the counterrevolutionary nature of the 2nd International after 1914, resulting from its new "centrism"-theory; -the ICC's change in position on what constitutes "the working class terrain", replacing a political approach with a sociological one in order to accommodate its concessions to activism and immediatism in its intervention. On the first issue we already published extensive analyses in IP (See: "The ICC and centrism" in IP #4 and #5). The ICC now de-

fends the position that an organization remains proletarian as long as there is a minority of revolutionaries in its ranks. Therefore, parties of the second International remain class organs until the mid-twenties, those of the Third International until the mid-30's. This is in blatant contradiction to its own platform, which correctly states that the second International's participation in the war-effort in 1914, and the third International's adoption of the theory of socialism in one country in 1929, mark the irreversible endpoints of these organizations integration in the capitalist camp. The ICC is supposedly still discussing these issues; however, not a trace of these "discussions" can be found in its external press. The same rejection of political content as the criterion for class nature returns in the question of what is "the class terrain". Why is this issue so important? Because the capitalist state, being unable to prevent its own crisis from fueling the working class combativity, tries to keep this combativity from stimulating the development of class consciousness, precisely by organizing actions, campaigns etc. that are

seemingly "on a working class terrain" : 1 day-strikes (to prevent a real struggle) demonstrations "against unemployment" (but in fact to strengthen protectionist mystifications), etc, the examples of these derailments towards deadends abound. It is only by using a political criterion- are these actions, strikes, demonstrations, waged by workers collectively for their own class interests, or are they set up by the state and its unions to prevent real struggle, to confuse workers's interests with those of the class enemy- that revolutionaries can draw the distinction and therefore intervene appropriately. In the first case, it is their task to encourage the inherent dynamic of such actions towards increasing mass participation, self-organization and confrontation with the capitalist state. In the second case, it is crucial that they explain to workers why they must stay away from such traps and fight on their own class terrain. Rejecting such a political criterion for a sociological one- the mere presence of workers around concerns like unemployment- will lead to putting the actions of the working class and of the capitalist state in the same bag and thus will have disastrous effects on intervention- making revolutionaries like the leftists, objective supporters of the state. The third concern of this letter- the necessity for our split from the ICC- is responded to in the part of our answer to the letter that we print at the end. The broader issue that it raises- the weakening and degeneration of revolutionary organizations in a period of resurgence of the class struggle- is obviously so important that it demands an in-depth analysis not only from us, but from the entire revolutionary milieu. It was one of the topics for discussion at the latest conference of our Fraction. A text on the subject will be published in an upcoming issue of IP.

* * *

Comrades,

(...) We are concerned about the fact that the ICC now says that the 2nd International was viable until 1920. We argued this point along the same lines that the ICC has always argued, that the SPD after WWI and its support of and participation in it could no longer be a revolutionary organization. But M's reply was that it was only the parliamentary fraction that voted for war credits, therefore, how could the whole organization become bourgeois overnight. We argued that the process that led up to that point was what led them to become bourgeois "overnight". We also made the point: why does the ICC criticize Rosa Luxemburg for not leaving the SPD sooner if it was still a revolutionary organization until 1920? He didn't respond to this

question; or at least not clearly. Has the ICC changed its mind regarding their criticism of Luxemburg? Did she stay in the SPD too long or not long enough? One point that was discussed briefly was class terrain. What is class terrain and what isn't it? That is more clear to me now. M. made the statement that the union operates on a working class terrain, we disagreed with this. He seemed to be saying that if a union calls a march or a strike... they are on working class terrain. He may possibly have meant that any situation where workers are grouped together is potentially a working class terrain. But I don't agree with that either. My ideas about class terrain have come straight from the ICC-press but I would like to discuss the question of class terrain more thoroughly with both the ICC and the External Fraction. E.g.-The timber strike in the American North West: -workers were on their own terrain when they were defending their picket lines and extending their picket lines. This activity breaks down bourgeois ideological influence and helps develop class consciousness.

-They were derailed and on bourgeois terrain when they went on the interclassist union march demonstration. The potential here for revolutionaries to have an impact or for workers at this point to break out of the union stranglehold was minimal.

It was at the point of production when workers were feeling their own force turning away scabs and successfully getting workers under other union contracts to strike, that revolutionaries could have the most impact and that workers could begin the process of self organization. It is easier to understand class terrain through the strike activity of the workers. The Hormel strike presented clear examples of what is and isn't class terrain. The discussion around class terrain came up with M. because we reacted so strongly against his statement that the unions were operating on a working class terrain. I think he also used union-called strikes as an example, saying just because the union calls a strike doesn't mean the strike is on a bourgeois terrain- true enough. But if a union calls a one-day strike as they do frequently and the workers activity is contained by this action I wouldn't say that the workers were on their own terrain at that point either. But if the union is forced to call the workers out because the working class will strike anyway or if they break outside of the control of the union then they are involved in self-organization to some extent. The strike is the weapon workers use to defend themselves and protect what they have and also the process through which



they come to communist consciousness. Workers cannot come to a revolutionary consciousness outside of this process but that does not mean that ALL strikes, whether they're called by the union or by the workers are fought on a working class-terrain.

Another point of concern: one thing we are not sure of either is if the fraction was right in leaving the ICC. We get different stories from each group about whether they were de facto expelled or wanted to leave. But we do know that it has taken years and lots of hard work to build the organization. History is accelerating and the working class is gathering its strength but the revolutionary organizations are not regrouping but dispersing. There is no way for us to judge the necessity of the tendency's move to leave the organization. fraternally,
C.

* * *

dear C.,

It is normal that you have doubts on the necessity for us to leave the ICC, it reflects a seriousness from your part in realising that a split is a step of the last resort, that it would be irresponsible to leave an organization over secondary matters or in conditions in which the clarification of the issues at stake can still take place within the organization. Some contacts think that the issues at stake were indeed secondary but that's often because they share the ICC's confusions about class consciousness, centrism, etc. The truth is that the ICC's errors were accumulating on the question of intervention, wherein their search for immediate influence over the struggle, their leftist calls to draw workers to union-meetings and demo's, their artificial construction of "unitary committees" for the unemployed, led to

irreconcilable and thus paralyzing differences. We agree that all these differences and their implications were not yet fully clarified at the time of the split. But their clarification was no longer possible in the ICC. The majority was not interested, had closed the debate and took disciplinary measures against the minority that wanted to pursue the debate. The reality of this anti-discussion climate is hard to grasp, especially for people like you, who have been serious and close contacts of the ICC for years; who know the organization, but only from its dealings with the outside. We understand it is hard to judge what has happened on the base of such wildly diverging reports. In the end, what will be decisive will not be whether we "deserted" as the ICC states, or were de facto excluded, but the seriousness of our differences, the political direction both organizations take. We agree with you that the split means a loss for the working class. We know as well as anyone inside the ICC that "it has taken years and lots of hard work to build the organization", as you write. However, organization-building is not an end in itself. In the entire period of decadence, no organization has been built that has survived in a long-lasting way (except for degenerating ones like the ICP). Yet clarification of revolutionary thought has progressed a great deal over the same period. Groups that contributed to this clarification-process have died or degenerated. Yet their work was not lost but assimilated by new elements and organizations. this doesn't mean that it can continue that way, that revolutionary regroupment and later on the formation of a proletarian party are not our crucial tasks. Quite the contrary. But their emergence will not be the result of organization-building but of this process of clarification. One of the roots of the ICC's degeneration is precisely that it has progressively subordinated the task of clarification, real debate and theoretical elaboration to the goal of organization-building.

For us, the reverse is true. Therefore the necessity to continue that work, on the basis of the ICC's own acquisitions, as an autonomous fraction. An article in IP#3 also makes the point that the conditions for splitting from a group like the ICC are not the same as for leaving a proletarian party. The conditions are different and so are the priorities which are not yet those of a pre-revolutionary situation. All this does not yet fully explain the problem that you raise: "History is accelerating and the working class is gathering its strength but the revolutionary organizations are not regrouping but dispersing." That is indeed a key-question which revolutionaries must tackle to understand the problems of the hour and the ways to overcome them. On an upcoming conference, it will be discussed more deeply. We'll keep you informed...(...)

CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS IN THE PROLETARIAN REVOLUTION

2. THE PROCESS OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS



The first part of this text (see IP#4) was devoted to defining the nature of the class consciousness of the proletariat on the basis of a materialist analysis of history. It showed the essential difference between the ideology of class societies and proletarian class consciousness and criticized the ideological deformations contained in the conceptions of a large part of the revolutionary milieu. Understanding the theoretical nature of class consciousness is the cornerstone of revolutionaries' ability to contribute positively to the struggle of their class. But it is not enough. The way class consciousness concretely develops has to be grasped; the way the workers come to this consciousness in a society which constantly tends to destroy it, has to be understood if revolutionaries are to assume their role with a coherent revolutionary intervention.

CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS AS A PROCESS

The material conditions that determine the nature of class consciousness, the fact that it is the complete opposite of ideology, also determine the way it grows. Because it is not an ideology the class consciousness of the proletariat is not a predetermined thing, a mystical totality waiting to be revealed. It is a process created by the activity of men. As a class exploited by capital, the proletariat is constantly subjected to two contradictory tendencies. On the one hand, there are the internal contradictions of the capitalist system whose conditions of exploitation push the proletariat to assert itself as an autonomous, conscious class; on the other hand, these very conditions produce and reproduce bourgeois ideology whose effect is to destroy class consciousness. This contradiction does not give rise to any fixed, static situation where the two

tendencies neutralize each other. On the contrary, it produces sudden advances and retreats of class struggle where one or the other of these tendencies takes the lead. The factors deciding which of the two comes out on top are neither the simple objective conditions of the economic relations of production as councilism claims, nor the intervention of the party "from outside the class struggle" as Leninism maintains. It is determined by the dynamic of the balance of forces between the classes. This begins in economic determinations, but it also depends on the past, the experiences accumulated by the classes, the forces they possess and the consciousness they have developed which becomes a factor in its own future. Class consciousness is not predestined, not an automatic result of the existence of the working class. It is created and grows during the course of class struggle with the affirmation of the proletariat as an autonomous class against capital. Because of this, it is an uneven process both in time and in space. Historically, periods of rising class struggle and revolutionary explosions, when class consciousness tends to grow, alternate with periods of retreat and counter-revolution, when this consciousness tends to regress. Geographically, parts of the proletariat engaged in open battle with capital coexist with other parts that are still subservient to capital. The proletariat can overcome these differences only through the world historical unification of its struggle; it can eliminate them only by eliminating capitalism and all its divisions, only by putting an end to its own conditions of existence. It is this unevenness in the process of developing class consciousness that always



produces an avant-garde in the proletariat. In almost every workers' struggle, at least at the beginning, there are more determined sectors which pull others into the struggle. Geographically the phenomenon is rather fluid and can change or disappear rapidly with new sectors joining the struggle. But historically the problem is more complex because it is impossible for capitalism to be gradually changed into socialism and therefore it is impossible to have a continuous, gradual class struggle. This means that there can be no gradual, continuous development of class consciousness. Thus the avant-garde that before the rest of the working class reaches a theoretical consciousness of the historical perspectives of class struggle, over and above its temporary ups and downs, has a permanent function to fulfill in the development of class struggle. To understand the nature of this function, we must further explore the characteristics of the process of development of class consciousness, particularly the relation between theory and practice in proletarian struggle.

In the first part of this text, we showed that the proletariat bears within itself the abolition of the division of labor and the separation of theory and practice; and that this abolition takes place in and through its passage to consciousness. That is why all conceptions which institutionalize a separation between theory and practice in the relation between party and class, like Leninism and before it all the conceptions that predominated in Social Democracy, are in fact obstacles to the development of the struggle and of class consciousness. Of course this does not mean that revolutionaries can now proclaim that theory and practice are now one -- any more than all the other separations produced by class society (between the economic and the political, between the unitary organs of the class and its avant-garde, etc.) can be immediately overcome. Such empty proclamations are the stock in trade of currents like anarchism, councilism or apparently the Groupe Communiste Internationaliste (GCI) who take the diametrical opposite of the S-D error, turning their backs on the real forces by which this abolition concretely must take place; and thereby also being unable to contribute to it. Although the proletariat in

its struggle sweeps aside all rigid separations, false oppositions, specializations and hierarchies produced by the division of labor in class society, it has to gather its forces in a society still deeply scarred by this very division of labor. Its effects cannot be completely eliminated from one day to the next. The separation between theory and practice in particular (two modes of the same activity separated by the division between mental and manual labor), continues to weigh heavily on the proletariat because of its very conditions of existence. The origin of class struggle lies in the economic contradictions between capital and the working class. In the first instance it is the objective constraints of the economic relations that forces the proletariat to assert its own class interests. It is only gradually that the practice of struggle develops its own theorization and that the working class develops its consciousness to the point where theory and practice become one. But this progression is constantly being interrupted by the inevitable retreats in class struggle, so that the need for theorization is also felt outside of any immediate practice of open struggle -- just as in the beginning, this struggle appeared without the prerequisite of theory. The abolition of the separation between theory and practice is not yet a reality in the proletariat but it is the historical tendency; and these two moments of its activity no longer appear as rigid oppositions.

THE PLACE OF THE PARTY IN THIS PROCESS

It is not our intention to go into detail here about the role of parties and revolutionary organizations in class struggle, about the historical transformations parties have undergone or the mistaken notions that the revolutionary milieu today continues to defend. This is a crucial subject, but one which requires a more detailed treatment. We will certainly be returning to this subject in the future. But because the party's reason for being lies in this process of developing consciousness and because it is such a vital factor in this process, we must at least define the party's place in this very process. To define the function of the party, it is totally inadequate to simply say that



"communists are the most determined faction of the proletariat", as the ICC does more and more today. This correct formulation of Marx only announces the avant-garde nature of communists, but it does not specify the aspect concerning us here: the function of this avant-garde and why it forms a permanent, distinct organization. There is no doubt that in all the struggles they participate in, communists distinguish themselves as the most determined elements, always trying to push the struggle ahead. But as we have seen, the emergence of an avant-garde is a spontaneous phenomenon in almost all workers struggles. It does not always take on an organized form and when it does it often takes an ephemeral form disappearing into the general organization of the class. It should also be pointed out that many of the most active and influential elements in struggles today are often those who get lost in immediate illusions and the trap of base unionism. The fact that the ICC today insists so unilaterally on this aspect is more an expression of its own activism than of any clear desire to give an effective revolutionary meaning to its role as "the most determined faction of the proletariat". To understand the function of the party, we have to go beyond the simple fact that communist militants participate fully in the struggles of the class. This assertion can seem laughable today when communists still suffer from such isolation from the concrete aspects of the life of their class, but it will take on all its meaning in a revolutionary period when the influence of communists will be immediate and their intervention decisive.

It is impossible for the proletariat to instantly unite theory and practice, to develop its consciousness in a gradual, continuous way. That is why avant-garde minorities which historically emerge from class struggle have to organize themselves in separate, permanent groups, factions or parties. The theorization of its own experience is a permanent effort of the working class as a whole in order to further its struggles. But this effort is being constantly opposed, pushed back, even destroyed by the material conditions of capitalist society and by the active forces of the managers and ideologues of capital, whose efforts take on gigantic proportions in our period of decadent state capitalism. Outside of a revolutionary period, for the

great majority of the working class, this effort leads only to a partial understanding of its experiences. Only in limited minorities does this effort reach and go beyond a global and historical understanding of society and class struggle to crystallize into a theoretical body of ideas and a coherent program: in and through the organization of these minorities. Such a "crystallization" can, in its turn, act as a powerful catalyst in the whole process. The appearance of a coherent revolutionary theory offers a theoretical frame of reference to which all the elements of partial understanding in the class can refer so that when the process of coming to consciousness is sufficiently advanced (particularly in a pre-revolutionary period), it can considerably accelerate this process. History gives us a clear example of this phenomenon with the emergence of Marxism as a theoretical expression of the proletarian struggle. When Marxism appeared in the 19th century, it became a powerful stimulant to class struggle. There is also the example of the role played by the Bolshevik party in the Russian revolution after April 1917. By defending a program of proletarian revolution (and despite its many errors), the Bolsheviks were a key factor in the seizure of power by the proletariat in Russia. The product of the uneven development of class consciousness, revolutionary parties and organizations are instruments created by the proletariat to overcome this heterogeneity and achieve the conscious overthrow of existing social relations. The function of parties and revolutionary organizations is to catalyze the process of development of class consciousness by working out and defending a coherent revolutionary theory and program in the class struggle.

There are many who think that such a conception of the function of revolutionary organizations reduces them to mere "theoretical discussion circles" and reintroduces the separation between theory and practice that it claims to oppose. The ICC itself, led by the logic of its theoretical and practical regressions, reproached us with this when we were still a tendency in that organization:

What is suggested here is that there is an opposition between the political positions of the proletariat on the one hand and the "activity of the mobilized masses"



on the other.... The former are supposedly not "practical" but something like "pure theory", something contemplative, an ideology. The latter is supposedly absolutely practical and above all does not have any influence on the former (political positions). Thus, the victims of the Paris Commune, the proletarians massacred in January 1919 in Berlin did something for the "practical aspect" of proletarian consciousness but their struggle supposedly served no purpose in enriching the program. Here we see again the idea of the party "responsible for theory" and the class that "takes care of the rest".... Not so far off are the classic councilist conceptions that see the grouping of the most conscious minorities of the proletariat as mere "work groups", "theoretical discussion circles" but absolutely not as militant political organizations. (Internationalisme #101, p.6)

The ICC, like many other organizations, shows here its inability to understand the real dialectic of class struggle and its role in that struggle. You would have to be deaf, dumb and blind to everything we have ever said to accuse us of saying that the theory of the proletariat is not "practical" or of claiming that the workers of the Paris Commune or those massacred in Berlin in January 1919 contributed nothing to the enrichment of the proletarian program. It is surely not by trying to blur the distinction between theory and practice -- while always acknowledging the relation between them -- that revolutionaries contribute to the elimination of their separation. This separation, as we've seen, is a reality imposed by class society, but one which historically tends to be eliminated in the proletariat. Revolutionary organizations contribute to this elimination by working out and defending a coherent theory of the practice of the class until it becomes revolutionary practice, practice fully conscious of itself -- a practice incorporating theory. That is why, in the proletariat, theory is no longer mechanistically separate, opposed to practice, but shows its true nature as a moment of practice. That is why revolutionary organizations, in fulfilling their function,

are not outside the struggle of their class, are not engaged in contemplative activity, do not consider themselves as "theoreticians", do not reproduce the mechanisms of ideology. The theory they defend is a theory resolutely turned toward practice. As members of their class, revolutionaries are naturally led to participate in the whole of the practical life of their class in the course of the development of its struggle. Similarly, the workers are led, by the very needs of their struggle, to see the propagation of their experiences and their positions in terms of the overall meaning of their struggle as an integral part of their practical tasks, as a component of the generalization of their struggle.

Revolutionaries risk being transformed into ideologues not by clearly laying claim to this function, but on the contrary, by losing sight of it. By their function and their mode of existence, revolutionaries are exposed to relative isolation in periods of reflux in class struggle and to the danger of demoralization because their theoretical positions encounter little immediate political impact. If they give into this danger by forgetting the long-term historical meaning of their work, they get sucked into either theoretical work that becomes increasingly abstracted from class struggle (towards a contemplative theory, towards academicism), or towards a frantic search for some gimmick to bridge the gap between themselves and the class (towards a theory that wants immediate practical results at any cost, towards activism). These two errors are really the two faces of the ideologue: the first being that of the "philosophe", the "man of science", passive, trying only to describe the existing world; the second being that of the "politician", active, always trying to see "which way the masses are going". In fact, these two aspects often exist simultaneously in degenerating proletarian organizations just as the philosophe and the politician have complementary roles in ideology. In Social Democracy as in Leninism, the idea of a theoretical "consciousness" developed outside of class struggle has always coexisted with the idea of "going to the masses". It is not surprising to see the ICC drifting towards an abstract, ideological conception of class consciousness (see the first part of this text in IP#4), and -- at the same time -- towards a confusion between theory and



practice that allows it to transpose its abstract "consciousness" into the domain of practice and to make it an "active" factor in class struggle.

From what we've seen so far, a number of questions posed by the ICC in its recent "debates" as well as questions posed by other organizations are, in fact, false questions that can only receive false answers. For example, the ICC, asked itself whether the party or the workers councils are "the highest expression of class consciousness". It concluded, along with Leninists of all shades, that the answer is ... the party. The question itself however, already presupposes that the revolutionary conception of class consciousness as totality, as the unity of theory and practice, has been abandoned in favor of an ideological vision of "consciousness" reduced to "theory", to the program. The answer is already contained in the question. It is obviously absurd to think that either one of these two complementary forms of class organization (unitary organs of the class and the organization of the avant-garde), expressing the same process of development of class consciousness, can, by itself, express the totality. If the party is the most advanced theoretical expression of class consciousness, it can never claim to represent the totality of that consciousness. It cannot englobe all the practical activity of the revolutionary transformation of the proletariat and, therefore, it necessarily has a partial vision of reality -- even if this part centers on something as crucial as the historic foundation and perspective of class struggle. Whatever the vital importance of theory and the revolutionary program of the proletariat synthesized in the party, it is never more than one moment of class consciousness which can only have its essential realization in the practical activity of the entire class. Any other vision is just a derivative of ideology, of philosophy, as we've seen in the first part of this article. It is the illusion typical of philosophy to imagine that it can represent the essence and totality of the world without any practical activity of transformation. It's for this reason that the party's function is not to take and assume power in the name of the proletariat, nor to bring about the revolutionary transformation of society in its place: that task belongs to

the unitary organs of the class, the workers councils, with the party acting within them.

SUBTERRANEAN MATURATION AND ADVANCES IN CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

Up to now we have tried to deal with the general characteristics of the development of class consciousness. But class consciousness doesn't follow a linear progression in history. Class struggle is made up of a succession of advances + retreats, often violent, and thus necessarily has an impact on class consciousness. How, then, despite its uneven development, does class consciousness grow until it produces a revolution?

For Leninism and councilism in their classic forms, this question -- theoretically -- poses no problem. For Leninism, class consciousness does not develop in the class as a whole but only by the class recognizing a consciousness outside of itself, in the party. The question is resolved almost "physically" by the party's ability to establish a "leadership" relation with the class. For councilism, class consciousness is virtually nothing more than a passive reflection of action. The question is resolved simply through the development of action under the effect of the economic conditions imposed by capitalism. With both Leninism and councilism, class consciousness has no meaning outside of open struggle because its bases lie in purely external conditions (the party or economic conditions). We have already seen the profoundly mistaken, ideological nature of both the Leninist and councilist conceptions, and it's fairly obvious that they provide only the most impoverished solution to the problem posed. The Leninist conception does not explain how the class manages to "recognize" its party or even how the party itself grows; if consciousness does not develop in the class, there is no reason why the class should "have confidence" in this party anymore than in a party of the bourgeoisie. The councilist conception has a great deal of difficulty convincing anyone of the possibility of revolution because there are no specific economic conditions in and of themselves that produce revolution. Revolution is first of all a political act -- the destruction of the bourgeois state. This supposes that the class has developed a consciousness strong enough to stand up



against all the political and ideological maneuvers of the bourgeoisie barricaded behind its state bastion.

In reality, the development of proletarian consciousness is not an eternal pendulum swinging back and forth from point zero under the effect of external conditions. To the extent that it represents the proletariat's ability to transform the world and itself, class consciousness is also a factor in its own future. It is a movement that cannot be completely grasped through any of its visible external manifestations (demands, program,

party, general assemblies, councils, etc.). Outside of periods of open struggle, during which consciousness can blossom in the collective thought and action of the workers and can make often spectacular advances, class consciousness does not completely cease to exist even if its overt expressions do. It can undergo a process of subterranean maturation whose overt effects will only be identifiable in the next wave of struggle. Under the surface of the atomization of the class into competing individuals, is --in Marx's words -- the slow work of the old mole. During this time, there is the accumulation of the elements needed for the re-emergence of consciousness in a more developed form in the open struggle.

The understanding of this subterranean maturation is all the more important in our epoch of capitalist decadence because the totalitarian stranglehold of the state on society produces extremely profound phases of retreat in class struggle followed by sudden explosions of struggle. (This can make people think there is just an incoherent and unceasing succession of meaningless struggles.) Revolutionaries like Rosa Luxemburg and Trotsky had already identified this process in the revolutionary movements at the beginning of the century. In the present phase of a long and difficult process of rising class struggle, there are many examples of this. The maturation shown by the workers in Poland between their experiences of successive struggles in 1970, 1976 and 1980 is just one expression of what is happening on a world scale. Recently, the ICC explicitly reaffirmed the existence of this phenomenon while the rest of the revolutionary milieu continues to deny its existence -- under the influence of either Leninist or councilist ideas. Unfortunately, this correct reaffirmation did not lead to a

positive development of the ICC's understanding of class consciousness and of intervention in the class struggle. On the contrary, it was a decisive moment in the regressive evolution of that organization. It is, therefore, particularly important to be clear on this point today. A merely formal recognition of a "subterranean maturation of consciousness outside of open struggle", like any purely formal recognition of an aspect of reality, can go hand in hand with a completely mistaken idea of its content.

Formalism devoid of content is of no use in revolutionary intervention!

To explain the contradictory phenomenon of class consciousness which --though it regresses in periods of downturn in struggle -- nevertheless develops in a subterranean process, the ICC, instead of working out a dialectical approach, took refuge in a mechanistic analysis superimposing two separate movements in supposedly different dimensions: a continually progressing movement in the "dimension" of "deepening" of consciousness and a movement of constant changes according to circumstances in the "dimension" of "breadth" or "spreading". Although these two "dimensions" were proclaimed a part of a "unity", this purely formal reminiscence of the dialectic could not erase the ICC's mechanistic dissection of consciousness. Consciousness was separated into an inconsistent "dimension" at the mercy of circumstances and, therefore, purely formal on the one hand, and on the other a constantly growing "dimension" which was, by contrast, the essential one. This separation between form and content was virtually explicitly formulated in the internal text which introduced this whole conception into the ICC. The two dimensions were defined as "class consciousness and the consciousness of the class, in other words, the thing (the content) and the spread of the thing." Aside from the grotesque incoherence of these innovations (the two dimensions of consciousness being ...consciousness and ...consciousness!), they marked a return to the Leninist duality of consciousness. The only aspect of class consciousness that --to some extent -- constantly progresses is the theory worked out by revolutionary organizations. In the ICC, this theory was de facto identified with the content, with the essence, with class consciousness itself,



while the practice of the class was reduced to the external form of this content, to a question of "how far theory has been assimilated by the workers". The logic presiding over this return to ideology is crystal clear, even if the ICC cannot bring itself to accept all the consequences of it.* With the ideological swamp into which the ICC has fallen, there is more clarity to be found among the revolutionaries of the past on the dynamic of class consciousness amidst the advances and retreats of class struggle. Paraphrasing Rosa Luxemburg, Georg Lukacs wrote:

But the class consciousness of the proletariat, the truth of the process "as subject" is still far from stable and constant; it does not advance according to mechanical laws. It is the consciousness of the dialectical process itself: it is likewise a dialectical concept. For the active and practical side of class consciousness, its true essence, can only become visible in its authentic form when the historical process imperiously requires it to come into force, i.e. when an acute crisis in the economy drives it to action. At other times, it remains theoretical and latent, corresponding to the latent and permanent crisis of capitalism: it confronts the individual questions and conflicts of the day and its demands, but as an "ideal sum", in Rosa Luxemburg's phrase. (History And Class Consciousness, p. 40)

That Lukacs, by one of those "dialectical" sleight of hand operations so many revolutionaries (then and now) seem to fall into, then saw the party as "the bearer of proletarian class consciousness", does not diminish the truth of the above quote. It shows that the fogs of the "depth" and "spread" dissipate in the dialectic of theory and practice in class consciousness. The moments of open and massive struggle are moments when class consciousness is fully expressed and developed, practically as well as theoretically, while moments of downturn in struggle are moments when consciousness regresses and is reduced to a more or less limited theoretical aspect, of which the only outward expression is generally the organized

activity of revolutionary minorities. Because this activity is devoted to the gradual elaboration of a coherent body of theoretical work, it can give the illusion of being independent of the ups and downs of the general consciousness of the class. From this comes the illusion of the separate movements of two "dimensions of consciousness" in the ICC or consciousness that is outside the struggles of the class in Leninism. In reality, because theory and practice are two moments of the same consciousness, theory can only be nourished from the new questions raised in class struggle. In addition, the theoretical effort that goes on after these practical experiences die down does not have an unlimited life span. It will necessarily gradually fade out if there is no new proletarian elan in practice. This process of progressive tapering off is seen even on an organizational level. After great historic moments of class struggle, proletarian political parties disappear or --as in the present epoch -- betray the working class and are integrated into the bourgeois state. Even the authentic proletarian fractions that survive the reflux end up by falling apart if the counter-revolution persists. This is what happened to all the fractions of the communist left after the second world war.

After the almost total disappearance of the Italian fraction during the war and the fact that its members joined a mythical party (the Internationalist Communist Party), at the end of the war, the Gauche Communiste de France was voluntarily dissolved by its members in 1952. The German and Dutch lefts were reduced to a few sclerotic groups. As a result, practically no continuous theoretical work was done in the proletariat during the 1950's and 1960's. The result was that when class consciousness resurfaced in the reawakening of class struggle at the end of the 1960's, the emerging revolutionary minorities faced all the work of reappropriating the lessons of the past as well as the need to deal with a reality which had evolved and was raising new questions. Faced with these many tasks, the new revolutionary minorities fell into so many mistakes of the past that today they find themselves in crisis, facing all the difficult problems of class struggle. It's easy to see how wrong this idea of a mechanical, uninterrupted, linear progression of revolutionary theory really is. It's true

that there are the historic acquisitions of the proletariat, lessons forever inscribed in its historic experience; but the way these acquisitions live in the proletariat is entirely dependent on the dynamic of its consciousness.

What is valid for revolutionary minorities is even more valid for the proletariat as a whole. There is no guarantee that a reflux in class struggle will spark the progress of consciousness on a theoretical level. On the contrary, the conditions of capitalist society tend to block this. Only the general dynamic of class struggle (not on a purely immediate scale but on a historic scale) can bring a kind of maturing of consciousness between moments of open struggle. Because the class doesn't have at all times an active and collective life, this subterranean maturation of consciousness in the class as a whole cannot be a continuous and positive progression of coherent theory. It is basically negative in that it is the destruction of certain illusions that workers have kept and which they have to confront in their practice. It is this wearing away of mystifications more than a constructive building up of a positive vision, that characterizes the subterranean maturation of consciousness. It is only in a new phase of struggle when the class itself rediscovers a kind of positive existence in collective action that the elements of negative understanding accumulated during the phase of retreat can be translated into a positive consciousness, practical as well as theoretical. There is no mysterious mechanism at work behind the subterranean maturation of consciousness as some appear to want to think. It simply expresses the fact that in human activity up till now, consciousness generally lags behind unconscious practice, and so when workers confront a new obstacle in their struggle, they don't do it in a fully conscious way; that the defeat of the struggle precedes the elements for understanding this defeat, which only become clear later on. Thus, the series of defeats the proletariat undergoes in its immediate struggles can, in the long run, lead to a victory of the revolution the moment when consciousness develops to the point where it begins to coincide with a practice of

revolutionary transformation.

In this subterranean maturation even more than in any other form of developing class consciousness, there is nothing automatic. Consciousness takes on the form of a subterranean maturation because it is actively suppressed in its outward expression by the strength of bourgeois ideology that weighs with all its might on isolated workers. Even when workers manage to resist an ideological barrage in any deep-seated sense (as they are doing today), bourgeois ideology constantly undermines a part of their efforts towards consciousness. That's why workers have to go back over experiences of struggle again and again before a lesson is really learned and understood. In the long run, if class struggle isn't renewed, the destructive effect of bourgeois ideology will be so strong that any form of subterranean maturation will be eliminated. For this maturation to follow through, the proletariat must begin to fight again so that its consciousness can breathe the free air of struggle. That's why even though revolutionaries should recognize the existence of subterranean maturation, they cannot idealize it, any more than they would boast about the therapeutic virtues of defeats because defeats are necessary! The aim of revolutionaries is to do everything they can to make the class struggle progress towards a revolutionary outcome. Revolutionaries have the task of helping to transform the elements that mature negatively in the class into clear lessons opening the perspective for the further development of struggle.

M.LAZARE

*The most extraordinary result of all this theoretical mishmash is that, having identified the maturation of consciousness that develops deep within the class, in a subterranean way, with some sort of "depth dimension" of consciousness covering basically its theoretical aspect, the ICC decided to proclaim that any rejection of the notion of subterranean maturation of consciousness is councilist (even though, as we've seen, it is as much Leninist). They then accused organizations that are self-proclaimedly Leninist, like the CWO and the IBPR, with being "councilists"!



OUR POSITIONS

The external Fraction of the International Communist Current claims a continuity with the programmatic framework developed by the ICC before its degeneration. This programmatic framework is itself based on the successive historical contribution of the Communist League, of the I, II and III Internationals and of the Left Fractions which detached themselves from the latter, in particular the German, Dutch and Italian Left Communists. After being de facto excluded from the ICC following the struggle that it waged against the political and organizational degeneration of that Current, the Fraction now continues its work of developing revolutionary consciousness outside the organizational framework of the ICC.

The Fraction defends the following basic principles, fundamental lessons of the class struggle :

Since World War I, capitalism has been a decadent social system which has nothing to offer the working class and humanity as a whole except cycles of crises, war and reconstruction. Its irreversible historical decay poses a single choice for humanity : either socialism or barbarism.

The working class is the only class able to carry out the communist revolution against capitalism.

The revolutionary struggle of the proletariat must lead to a general confrontation with the capitalist state. Its class violence is carried out in the mass action of revolutionary transformation. The practice of terror and terrorism, which expresses the blind violence of the state and of the desperate petty-bourgeoisie respectively, is alien to the proletariat.

In destroying the capitalist state, the working class must establish the dictatorship of the proletariat on a world scale, as a transition to communist society. The form that this dictatorship will take is the international power of the Workers' Councils.

Communism or socialism means neither "self-management" nor "nationalization". It requires the conscious abolition by the proletariat of capitalist social relations and institutions such as wage-labor, commodity production, national frontiers, class divisions and the state apparatus, and is based on a unified world human community.

The so-called "socialist countries" (Russia, the Eastern bloc, China, Cuba, etc.) are a particular expression of the universal tendency to state capitalism, itself an expression of the decay of capitalism. There are no "socialist countries" these are just so many capitalist bastions that the proletariat must destroy like any other capitalist state.

In this epoch, the trade unions everywhere are organs of capitalist discipline within the proletariat. Any policy based on working in the unions, whether to preserve or "transform" them, only serves to

subject the working class to the capitalist state and to divert it from its own necessary self-organization.

In decadent capitalism, parliaments and elections are nothing but sources of bourgeois mystification. Any participation in the electoral circus can only strengthen this mystification in the eyes of the workers.

The so-called "workers" parties, "Socialist" and "Communist", as well as their extreme left appendages, are the left face of the political apparatus of capital.

Today all factions of the bourgeoisie are equally reactionary. Any tactics calling for "Popular Fronts", "Anti-Fascist Fronts" or "United Fronts" between the proletariat and any faction of the bourgeoisie can only serve to derail the struggle of the proletariat and disarm it in the face of the class enemy.

So-called "national liberation struggles" are moments in the deadly struggle between imperialist powers large and small to gain control over the world market. The slogan of "support for people in struggle" amounts, in fact, to defending one imperialist power against another under nationalist or "socialist" verbiage.

The victory of the revolution requires the organization of revolutionaries into a party. The role of a party is neither to "organize the working class" nor to "take power in the name of the workers", but through its active intervention to develop the class consciousness of the proletariat.

ACTIVITY OF THE FRACTION

In the present period characterized by a general rise in the class struggle and at the same time by a weakness on the part of revolutionary organizations and the degeneration of the pole of regroupment represented by the ICC, the Fraction has as its task to conscientiously take on the two functions which are basic to revolutionary organizations:

- 1) The development of revolutionary theory on the basis of the historic acquisitions and experiences of the proletariat, so as to transcend the contradictions of the Communist Lefts and of the present revolutionary milieu, in particular on the questions of class consciousness, the role of the party and the conditions imposed by state capitalism.

- 2) Intervention in the class struggle on an international scale, so as to be a catalyst in the process which develops in workers' struggles towards consciousness, organization and the generalized revolutionary action of the proletariat.

The capacity to form a real class party in the future depends on the accomplishment of these tasks by the present revolutionary forces. This requires, on their part, the will to undertake a real clarification and open confrontation of communist positions by rejecting all monolithism and sectarianism.