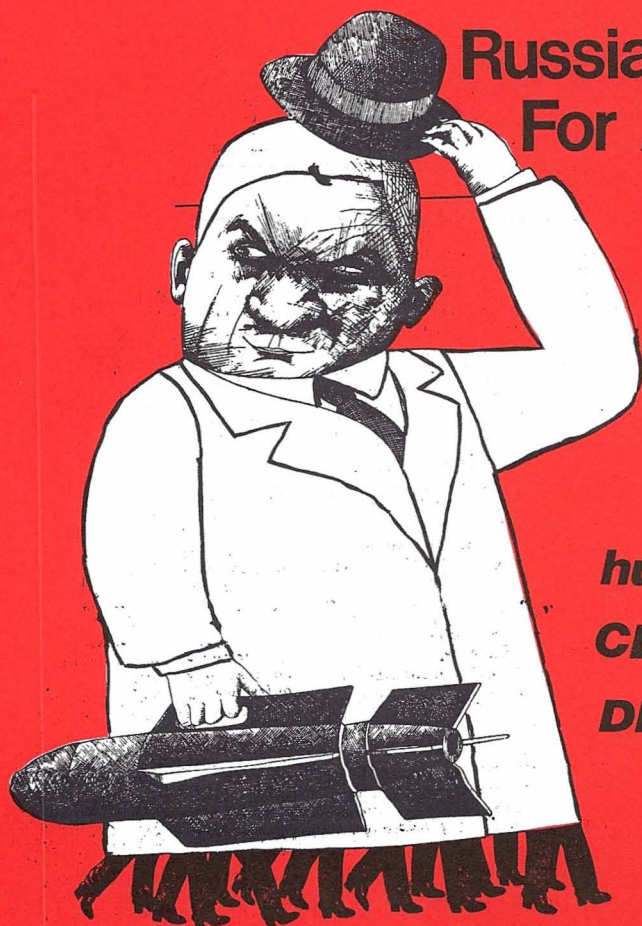


**EXTERNAL  
FRACTION OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL  
COMMUNIST  
CURRENT**

# **INTERNATIONALIST PERSPECTIVE**



**Russian Imperialism Searching  
For A New Lease On Life**

***hunger riots in 'socialist' algeria***  
**CLASS STRUGGLE IN POLAND**  
**DEBATE ON STATE CAPITALISM**

**problems of the period  
of transition (Bilan 1936-37)**

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# Russian Imperialism Searching For A New Lease On Life

The inherent contradictions of the capitalist system push it inexorably towards total war and barbarism. Despite the appearance of calm and detente between the rival imperialist blocs today, the system is driven by its destructive logic towards the only culmination of a system ruled by blind economic forces -- universal military confrontation. Although the years of reconstruction after the war and the intervals of detente have lent some credence to the mouthings of the ideologues who claim that peace is possible in the home of capitalism, a permanent state of military tension has existed since the end of the second world war and the redivision of the world by the two victorious superpowers.

At the beginning of the 80's, this rivalry between east and west greatly increased, motivated by a merciless struggle for the domination of the world market. The language of illusion gave way to the language of hard truths. In the military sphere, this was expressed in a headlong race for armaments and in confrontations in Africa, Asia and wherever the economic and strategic interests of the blocs were involved. It was the era of Reagan's crusade against the "evil empire" of the USSR. This virulence went along with a great increase in military spending under the Reagan administration. U.S. military spending increased by 30% from 1981 to 1986. (In 1983, the Pentagon controlled a capital investment of \$475 billion and in 1982 it represented 40% of all industrial investment.) At the same time, following the loss of Iran, the main ally of the U.S. in the region, Soviet troops invaded Afghanistan, a point of considerable strategic importance. A real escalation took place during the 80's which the two blocs claim to be ending now with honeyed phrases and spectacular declarations.

All these events (summit meetings, negotiations on regional conflicts, arms destruction and reductions) must be seen in their proper perspective. Some will see no further than surface appearances and think they discern a real desire of the blocs to conciliate differences because for one reason or another, world war has supposedly become impossible. Gorbachev's pacifist speeches, heavily covered by the media,

feed this illusion of capitalism grown wiser. Others will see recent events as just a bluff, a pure mystification. Such a reductionist attitude towards reality is powerless to explain the dynamic of the real contradictions facing the capitalist class and its need to adapt to them. In this article, we will try to use another method to deal with what is happening today in the balance of forces between the imperialist blocs. After assessing the various changes that have taken place in the inter-imperialist confrontations, we will try to find the underlying causes and put them into a meaningful perspective.

## DISARMAMENT AND THE "SOLUTION TO REGIONAL CONFLICTS"

For several months now there have been an increasing number of proposals for discussions, negotiations, agreements and visits involving the two great powers on the level of arms deals as well as regional conflicts. All the smiles and handshakes and jokes of Reagan and Gorbachev have been at the center of a media blitz. Gorbachev's visit to the U.S. was covered as well as the charm of Reagan in Moscow, a man who just recently was the anti-communist standard bearer. So much for the spectacle. But each of these meetings, each of the appearances of Gorbachev has gone along with solemn oaths about the two leaders' newfound commitment to slow down the arms race.

- In 1987, the signing of an agreement for the destruction of the European missiles, the SS 20 and the Pershings; the effect of this agreement was all the greater because these missiles were at the heart of the large-scale pacifist campaigns in Europe.
- On the occasion of these agreements, the delegations vowed to continue the talks in order to reduce armaments of other types such as inter-continental missiles.
- Gorbachev uses each of his appearances to make new proposals about disarmament; during his trip to Poland in July, after his four proposals on this subject since





1986, he invited the European countries to reduce their conventional forces in the same way as the Warsaw Pact.

- In September, Gorbachev made a new opening towards Asia. At Krasnoiarsk, he reaffirmed the fact that the USSR will not increase its nuclear weapons in the East; he asked for talks among the naval powers to stop the increase of maritime military forces in the region, offered to shut down the Russian base in North Vietnam in exchange for US bases in the Philippines and once again suggested an international conference to make the Indian Ocean a "zone of peace".

Behind this subtle mixture of real agreements and incessant propaganda, some think they see a real tendency of capitalism to move towards disarmament. We will see about this in the second part of our article. But other points seem to support this belief : the evolution of regional conflicts. In this sense, the USSR's decision to leave Afghanistan was taken as a true sign of the will to detente between the blocs. Just as the invasion of this country ten years ago was the symbol of the worsening rapport between the blocs, today the Soviet withdrawal is taken as a sign of a real change in the bourgeoisie of the USSR. This conception can garner a certain credibility because the Soviet leaders are pressing for negotiations in many parts of the globe.

In July-August, there was discussion after discussion on the situation in Cambodia. At the beginning of the 80's, pro-Russian Vietnamese troops took over the country, setting up a puppet state that was to be part of the Vietnamese plan for a vast Indo-Chinese Confederation under the control of Vietnam. In 1982, a coalition government was formed in exile to fight against the Vietnamese. It is supported by the west and includes the Khmers Rouges which are pro-Chinese, the partisans of Prince Sihanouk and a nationalist faction. These three elements are busy fighting a sort of mini-civil war whose outcome could be the partition of the country. But in July, in Bogor, Indonesia, the different sides met together for the first time : the coalition government and the pro-Vietnamese representatives. A real compromise has not been reached but there is a minimum agreement for a retreat of Vietnamese forces in the near future and also to stop any chance of the Khmers Rouges, the authors of recent genocide, from taking power again.

In addition to these negotiations on Indochina, agreements have been signed on the conflicts in West Africa that have gone on for ten years. For years guerillas have be

been operating in the region. In Angola, a pro-western UNITA, directly supported by South Africa, has been trying to destabilize the pro-Soviet, Cuban-aided regime. In the South, between Angola and South Africa, Namibia, a veritable South African colony has been the battleground of a guerilla movement actively encouraged by Angola, the SWAPO and fiercely combatted by South Africa. Negotiations are being held to try to "pacify" the region : a cease-fire has been declared between Angola and Namibia and Cuban troops maintain their readiness to go home. Namibia is heading for independence, at least in theory.

These different elements, their number and acceleration show a certain reorientation of the bourgeoisie's imperialist strategy. The Middle East, Indochina and South Africa remain vital areas in the imperialist power game either economically, strategically or both. Recent events demand an analysis capable of explaining as clearly as possible the evolution of the balance of forces between the two blocs.

Before getting to the underlying causes of these events which justify these adaptations of the capitalist class, a few general remarks. First of all, disarmament or de-escalation that the media are hyping now cannot cover certain facts : recent national defense budgets do not express a tendency towards the reduction of military spending. This would tend to support those who see a huge bluff behind all the hype. Also, the destruction of missiles was rapidly assimilated to a "nuclear-free Europe" in the future. But although these missiles were dismantled, the nuclear arsenal in Europe is barely affected. In fact, information has leaked out about the fact that military headquarters of the blocs have recuperated the vital parts of these missiles. Nothing is ever really lost! Finally, for the propagandists of the pacifist change of the bourgeoisie, recent events are unique because for the first time bilateral agreements call for a real reduction in arms and not just their limitation. Over and above the jesuitical reasoning of such a distinction, we will see that a reduction in a certain type of arms can serve the interests of the bourgeoisie to reorient priorities in arms production. These preliminary remarks bring us to the heart of the matter.

#### THE USSR TRIES TO STRAIGHTEN ITSELF OUT

We must see how much this new language of the world bourgeoisie corresponds quite simply to Gorbachev's assertion of power. This can help us to understand how what seems to be an image of detente can, in fact, correspond to a vast effort of a



bloc leader to change the balance of forces against his country. It is not yet clear to what extent the changes can succeed but they clearly show the Russian state's refusal to accept its position as a relatively powerless, outmanoeuvred adversary of the west and its need to develop a new strategy.

The USSR's problem is the following : a weak economy, incredibly anachronistic productive forces on the one hand, and on the other, the need for the USSR to maintain its first-rate military power, capable of keeping its bloc together and challenging the west. In reality, military might cannot exist in isolation and remains dependent on the general state of the productive forces. The weaker the productive forces, the weaker, the more difficult the military effort. The strengthening of Gorbachev's power expresses the USSR's consciousness of its own weakness and the need to straighten things out in order to be able to mount a new military effort. Of course, these efforts are not exactly new. Just as the western bourgeoisie has tried all sorts of economic policies to solve the crisis, the Russian bourgeoisie has tried again and again to revitalize its ailing economy. In the last 30 years there have been six major reform movements in the USSR, some using centralization and others decentralization of economic decisions, to patch things up. All these reforms have failed, aggravating the economic situation of the country. The late development of capitalism in Russia, the orientation of the war economy in the 30's, the inefficiency of the State in directing economic development, the widening gap between the different plans and their real output, the near-total disinterest of the workers in the context of chronic shortages in consumer goods of the most basic kind, all these factors plunge the Russian bloc into a state of weakness that has to be straightened out if the bloc wants to measure up to the west. "This persistent effort towards reform expresses the constancy, even the aggravation, of fundamental problems. First of all, problems of growth. The pace of the evolution of national revenue and investment have declined over the last 30 years. Then, problems of efficiency. The productivity of labor has fallen since 1978....The productivity of capital is regressing with an alarming persistence. Finally, problems of supplies....All together, these difficulties add up to a regime where growth is exhausted (based more on the quantity of resources used than on productivity) and where innovation and quality work are reserved for certain priority sectors (defense, space) which have become an increasing burden as the economic context gets worse." (Le Monde Diplomatique).

But these difficulties are not specific to Russia. All the countries of its bloc are affected, in Europe and the rest of the world. These problems are a threat to the coherence of the bloc and must be dealt with by the Russian capitalist class. The 80's have accelerated the decline of the countries around the USSR. The fact that almost all of these countries have gone through often violent, massive and prolonged class struggles is a sign of the gravity of the situation. The 80's began with mass strikes in Poland and are ending with the social instability in the country. Rumania and Yugoslavia have been regularly shaken by social movements against intolerable conditions. More recently, the working class in Hungary has begun to rise up.

The present "regionalist" movements of frustrated nationalism that have nothing to do with class struggle still point up the decomposition of the Russian bloc situation.

Because of the internal difficulties of the USSR, it has been impossible for it to economically support the countries of the "Third World" under its domination or to assure the long-term and massive upkeep of armies incapable of victories these past few years. A few examples will demonstrate this and show the need for the USSR to revise its strategy. We will see below how this is translated into questions of armaments and the assertion of the Russian presence on the terrain.

The example of Afghanistan is as clear as possible. When the invasion was decided on, Soviet leaders hoped for a quick victory, a massive occupation of the terrain that would be borne by the strength of the bloc. In fact, the opposite has happened and Russia was forced to face the reality of its own weakness. Despite ten years of war, it was unable to turn the tide against the superior technological armaments of an adversary supplied by the west and this, despite massive commitments of Soviet troops.

Vietnam, Angola and Ethiopia, other Russian pawns that have to be held up from outside, are to varying degrees facing total ruin even though they must maintain massive armies. The example of Vietnam is the clearest. Since 1978, 120,000 Vietnamese soldiers have occupied Cambodia; Vietnam is massively supported by the USSR as a compensation for the loss of China from the Russian orbit. But today Vietnam is threatened by a famine as grave as the famines that tear through Africa. "The national budget has shown a deficit since 1976; it is financed 40% from outside, mainly Russian, credits. The expenses for defense and security represent between 38 and 45% of the total. Since



1982, the country has been unable to repay any debts. Inflation reached 700% in 1986 and the country is going headlong into collapse." (Le Monde Diplomatique). A similar situation exists in Ethiopia and Angola.

All this shows that the Russian bourgeoisie absolutely needed to react. Gorbachev's spectacular initiatives must be seen in this context. The enumeration of all these difficulties should not make us think that the bourgeoisie is facing a total impasse. On the contrary, it is only when all the problems are identified that we can see how much resilience the bourgeoisie is still capable of in its efforts to keep the system going at all costs. Up to the middle of the 80's, the USSR followed a policy of :

- rushing ahead in the extensive development of arms whatever their performance level, against a background of fundamental economic problems, making the military effort increasingly problematic;
- economic and massive military aid to the countries of the Third World that it attempted to keep under its domination, despite the fact that these countries are moving towards total collapse, which can only make them more open to penetration from the west.

In such a situation, the Russian bourgeoisie had to make a choice : either continue to forge ahead under existing conditions and risk compromising the whole bloc or try to assert its power in another way.

For the moment, it looks like the second solution is being used although there must be a considerable amount of dissension in the apparatus. This solution includes :

- trying to purge the economy of everything that is unprofitable, inefficient, wasteful and paralyzing;
- putting great pressure on the proletariat by demanding greater discipline and by trying to divide the workers with the threat of unemployment, a new weapon because of the new laws making it easier to declare unprofitable sectors closed;
- lightening the burden of massive economic and military aid to pro-Russian regimes on the imperialist terrain by working towards a stabilization through negotiations;
- taking advantage of the benefits of this program to reorient military efforts towards developing quality materials that can compete with western technology;
- developing a more open attitude towards the west to release its stranglehold on the east; Gorbachev's opening to the west must also be seen as an ideological offensive against the west, trying to divide the allies and disorient opinion.

It is in this context of urgent restructuration for the USSR that we should consider whether or not there is a real detente between the blocs. The USSR is expressing the need to reassert itself as a super-power after seeing its status decline in recent years. In its first stages, the new policy can be concretized in a desire to find a way out of the dead-ends it has gotten into, such as Afghanistan, and can thus lead to a phase of attenuation of conflicts. But this is not the same thing as a real detente because it is intended as a transition to the renewal of conflicts once the eastern bloc has been strengthened.

We have explained the circumstances of the Russian withdrawal from a certain number of regions due to increasing difficulties on the terrain. Despite this withdrawal, Russia maintains its foothold in these countries. This puts the so-called pacifism of the Russian leaders into proper perspective. Despite its defeats, Russia is pursuing new diplomatic relations and all sorts of contacts that show it intends to stay in the race for world domination :

- In the Middle East, flirtations with Israel;
- The retreat from Afghanistan does not mean that this country vital for the control of the Persian Gulf will now pass to the western side. Even though the present regime is compromised, it still enjoys the full support of the Russians and the resistance, in Pakistan and within Afghanistan, remains divided. The USSR hopes to infiltrate one faction or the other so as to control any future state.
- Although the end of the Iran-Iraq war will probably allow the west to redouble its efforts to regain Iran, Russia is not standing idly by. It maintained its contacts with these two key countries even though the CP in Iran suffered the repression of fundamentalist Islam.
- In the Far East, the Russian retreat expressed in the withdrawal of Vietnamese troops from Cambodia must be seen as a readjustment of its Asian strategy; the priority is once again a rapprochement with China, which would be impossible without a "solution" to the Cambodian question. Furthermore, whatever the new government of Cambodia will bring, the Russians are firmly determined to maintain a presence and an influence.

With these brief remarks, we can get a better idea what is really behind the "detente" and de-escalation trumpeted in the media. What



is true for the balance of forces between the blocs is also true for armaments. Far from planning any real disarmament, Gorbachev's intentions are to strengthen the military potential of his country. "The army has nothing to complain about in the new policy. Although there may be some doubt about the overall total of the Defense budget, the task of modernization of the army, far from being slowed down, has in fact, been given even higher priority. If the budget that Chervernadze promised to "gradually" make public will have to be cut, the main areas affected will probably be the Soviet army in Afghanistan, military aid to certain countries of the Third World and some tank divisions, areas where the military wishes to cut back for strategic reasons. The spearhead of tomorrow's army will profit from today's reorientation and the major options (Akula attack submarines, submarines equipped with cruise missiles, parachute and helicopter divisions and computerized artillery) will not be adversely affected. A sort of absolute priority seems to have been given to the space program by Gorbachev himself. In short, the army can consider itself lucky with glasnost as far as it is directly concerned....The realism often shown by Gorbachev means a strengthening and not a weakening of the links with the army. In this situation, military perestroika can only mean perestroika by the military." (Liberation, France)

#### THE REORIENTATION OF MILITARY SPENDING

We have tried to show the meaning behind the present strategy of the world bourgeoisie. The Russian bloc which initiated this new strategy is trying to react against the position of weakness it finds itself caught in. This reaction and the attitude of the western bloc do not correspond to a real process of detente between the rival powers. In reality, they are the preparation for new and more dangerous confrontations.

The western bourgeoisie is no passive spectator in these events. The capitalist class in the west must also face growing contradictions that are dictating certain adaptations.

- Although the inherent dynamic of capitalism inevitably leads to more and more total war, demanding more and better weapons and personnel, the world bourgeoisie has been unable to mobilize a proletariat more concerned with its class interests than this purpose.
- In such a general context, the economic crisis can only deepen in the west, destroying the productive fabric and throwing countries into overwhelming debt and compromising the arms race. Constant increases in military spending are both

inevitable and a factor exacerbating overall economic difficulties.

That is why the western bourgeoisie is also trying to use the present situation to its advantage by stressing three objectives :

- rationalizing military spending because it is no longer possible to keep up the same rate of increase in defense budgets;
- making allies carry more of the military burden;
- reorienting efforts towards more sophisticated weapons.

Of course the bourgeoisie always tries to keep modernizing and reorganizing military affairs. But today these necessities have become urgent demands. Accusing the allies of not paying their way is hardly a new element of trans-Atlantic relations but in the past few months, U.S. politicians have stepped up the tone.

The aim can no longer be to increase the military spending of Europe. The idea is to use this spending more rationally, with greater efficiency. "According to a recent study of the National Academy of Sciences in the U.S., waste due to duplication because European governments have not succeeded in working together in weapons work has reached 35 billion dollars a year" (Le Monde Diplomatique). This represents 20% of the military spending in Europe in 1987. Eliminating duplication and establishing a tight coordination among European countries would increase their potential by 25% alone without spending a penny more, according to NATO sources. Although the idea of not increasing European arms spending must be taken with a grain of salt, it is certainly not a question of weakening European defenses but of finding more efficient ways to build them up.

By saying that the agreements threaten a European weakening (something the Russians would love to see), the U.S. hopes to put pressure on the European allies to assume more responsibility for their defense so that the U.S. can devote itself to developing more sophisticated weapons systems. The idea of the "allies" falling out among themselves is another media hype.

Reagan's tenure in office corresponded to the development of the SDI project, "star wars", that take the arms race to new heights and require immense financial and technological resources. Despite all the publicity given to the difficulties encountered by the Reagan administration in its pursuit of this project and the perhaps sincere opposition of some factions of the bourgeoisie, billions of dollars have already been spent on this project that will cost untold sums in the



future.

The USSR itself is orienting its military efforts towards taking up this "challenge". In an interview on ABC television in November 1987, Gorbachev admitted that the USSR was also working on anti-missile defenses and he seemed to find a limited SDI project quite acceptable.

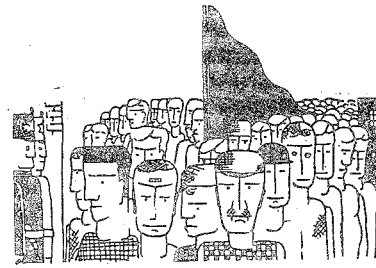
But beyond these grandiose projects that oblige the bourgeoisie to make choices, this technological orientation is taking place on many other levels. A commission of the U.S. Department of Defense reported that "...new technologies are going to transform the combat capacity of the major countries. These changes will exert a great pressure on the U.S. and NATO and will require new strategic and military initiatives. The strategy Washington has been following for the last 40 years will have to be adapted to fit the times....In relation to conflicts in Europe and on the periphery of the USSR, one of the main recommendations is the development of 'intelligent' non-nuclear arms which would have a destructive potential of weak nuclear weapons. Intelligent conventional weapons can play a great role in stopping Soviet arms anywhere on the periphery of the USSR. Such weapons would give us a good chance to destroy a great variety of targets without using nuclear warheads." (Quoted in Le Monde Diplomatique).

The bourgeoisie is making changes but not the ones it is pretending to make. It is not moving towards disarmament but towards a reorientation of military expenditures. Although it is forced to slow down the pace of the increases in these expenditures, the increases themselves are not in danger.

Peace is impossible in capitalism, a system based on exploitation, profit and competition. In this article we have tried to show that today's "detente", like all the other detentes that went before it, is a smokescreen hiding a reorganization of imperialist policy by the international bourgeoisie on armaments and on the control of the economically and strategically important zones of the world. We have limited ourselves to this issue without going into an essential question : why a world war has not broken out despite the whole situation of the crisis. The reason is that the bourgeoisie is not able to mobilize the proletariat for world war. Only the working class' active refusal of all national defense can end this reign of barbarism all over the world.



## CLASS STRUGGLE IN POLAND



# A Growing Distrust Of Solidarnosc

In IP # 11 we showed how the struggles which broke out in the spring in Poland revealed a catastrophic situation and the tendency of a great majority of the younger workers to break with the kind of opposition policy defended by Solidarnosc and the Catholic church. Only 3 months later the Polish workers confirmed this assessment, showing an unmistakable determination to confront a regime they no longer believe in. Once again, Solidarnosc played its role of brake on the development of the struggle. But this time, Walesa faced a great deal of resistance to his demobilizing speeches.

Against a constantly deteriorating economic situation, increasingly intolerable living conditions, galoping inflation, scarcity of basic necessities on the official market and steep prices on the black market and "Kombinacja", against steep increases of housing costs making the search for lodging a nightmare for the younger generation, the miners of the "Manifest Lipcowy"-pits in Jasztrebie stopped working on August 15. They demanded wage increases and better working conditions and to the initial surprise of the national leadership of Solidarnosc and the Church they spread their strike to the other mines of Silesia. The news of the miners strike spread like wildfire, engulfing the steelworks of Stalowe Wola near Warsaw, the port of Szczecin and finally also the port and shipyard of Gdansk.

Since being taken by surprise during the spontaneous movement in the spring, Solidarnosc has tried to strengthen its local implantation in the plants, seeking to control the new generation and preparing for the commemoration of the anniversary of the Gdansk agreement at the end of August, in the hope of controlling some of the rising anger in the working class.

Although "Solidarnosc's initial reaction was hesitant and simply appealing for moderation, it quickly spoke a more suitable language with its demand for the "legislation of pluralism for trade unions". This bourgeois slogan was widely echoed by the church and the government quickly took up its role in this scenario by announcing that talking to Solidarnosc was out of the question. The workers' original demands were, of course, conveniently forgotten.

This recuperation, or attempt at recuperation, happened despite the force and organization of the struggle, because of the still considerable weight of unionist ideology and the political influence of the Church, which is presented as the only credible opposition to Jaruzelski. The sclerosis of the state-apparatus, its incapacity to deal with change, the fact that the bureaucracy is identified with pillage and profiteering, makes it easy for the Church to present itself in its chaste and pure robes as the defender of the poor and the exploited. While the ruling party is torn apart by internal struggles and finds itself incapable of creating a consensus by any other means but repression, the Church appears as the alternative force, demanding, in Christ's name, an end to the most glaring abuses, without questioning the logic of the system of exploitation itself. This insight helps us to understand the Church's considerable influence today, also fostered by the Pope's efforts to refurbish the image of the Polish Church.

As for Solidarnosc, this union created in August 1980 to help muzzle the formidable movement of struggles in Poland through its counter-revolutionary action, has become the loudspeaker for the clerical message of social peace in the Polish factories, playing

upon the ambiguity of its semi-clandestinity to drown the workers demands with legalist demands for union-democracy. By presenting the legalisation of Solidarnosc as a real improvement for the workers, the clandestine union prevents, or is trying to prevent, the working class from raising the real problems of its survival within the capitalist exploitation system, trying to impede a real unification on the basis of class demands. The fact that quite a number of its militants have been persecuted by the regime gives them an image of martyrdom and makes it easier to use its rank & file unionist ploys. Some of Solidarnosc's positions on the organization of the struggles and the general assemblies are still seen as proletarian by the workers. This explains its influence and how difficult the working class finds superceding Solidarnosc. As the figurehead of Solidarnosc since August 1980, Lech Walesa has personified the image of the charismatic leader, the victim of repression and courageous father. The leader who has received financial aid and recognition from the West and focused media attention on his fight for human rights, exalting patriotic virtues. Unfortunately he is still for many workers a symbol of resistance, a necessary



reference for each struggle, even if his influence is somewhat blunted. The bourgeois idea that there is a need for a leader, a man who negotiates and speaks for all workers, still subsists in the class, and it is hammered home every day by the bourgeois media. Only by confronting the contradictions defended more and more openly by the great leader, will the Walesa-myth be exploded in the eyes of many workers. The events of the summer were an important step in this direction, even if the force of rank & file unionism is still considerable and has put its stamp on the movement. As in the spring, the strikes of August started spontaneously, primarily around workers demands such as wage increases, better working conditions, lower prices... The movement spread rapidly to companies with a key-role in the Polish economy and workers remained deaf to

the appeals for calm which initially came from Solidarnosc and the Church. It was only on the 26 of August that the bishops, meeting in Czeszochowa, took a position. In the meantime, the strike movement organised itself to some extent. Drawing fully on their experience from previous struggle, the workers organized a general assembly in every plant and named strike committees under the control of the general assemblies. It was in front of these assemblies that Walesa had to explain himself in early september when he called for an end of the strike in exchange for "discussions" with the authorities. In Silesia, the miners also tried to create a coordination between the different sectors. But this dynamic was often canalised by structures that had already been put in place by Solidarnosc. By occupying the plants (with sitdown strikes) in the mistaken idea that they affirmed in this way the force of a workers bastion, the Polish workers let themselves be unfortunately imprisoned, cut off by the surrounding repressive forces from any possibility of contact with the outside world, except through Solidarnosc. Indeed, the bourgeoisie did not sit still and just wait. While avoiding a direct confrontation with the strikers despite the deployment of impressive police contingents around the striking plants, the ruling class engaged in a media-spectacle of a "crisis of power". Indeed, sharp criticisms were addressed to the government by...the ruling party: the "Głos Wybrzeża," organ of the CP of Gdansk, Jerzy Szmajdinski, leader of the "Communist Youth" organisation, leader of the OPZZ (the official union) all raised their voices to protest the worsening of the situation. On the 26 of August, the Minister of the Interior, General Kiszczak, even proposed a meeting between representatives of the different milieus. This proposal, however vague, was then used by the trade unionists of Solidarnosc as a pretext to call for the end of the strike, in order to discuss with the regime. But far from obeying, the Polish workers continued the strike, forcing Walesa to make an other tour of the striking plants to explain. In Gdansk, Walesa was booed by the workers. In Jasztrebie it was only after a bitter discussion lasting for hours and transmitted by loudspeaker throughout the factory, that Walesa finally obtained a return to work. Everywhere, the negotiations came up against the same questions that were the real reasons for the strike: wages, the payment of strike days, a guarantee that strikers would not be punished. Young workers continued to manifest their disapproval of the line followed by Solidarnosc. The wearing out of Solidarnosc's influence and the emergence of a new generation of combative workers, is certainly the most important development of the strike movement of August 1988. The workers have indeed rejected the Church's and Solidarnosc's appeals for calm and patience to launch themselves full blast into the struggle. And they continued the strike, despite defeatist sermons. Walesa had to descend into the social arena and only after long and turbulent discussions and after being jeered at, did he -momentarily- gain the upper hand. The Polish workers felt they were "betrayed" at a moment when their movement was not exhausted, as Wale-

sa's adviser Geremek recognized: "The strikes were not stopped at the moment of greatest weakness but at a moment when the curve didn't look that bad."

The power of the movement forced the state to seek evasive action, to play the game of negotiations with Walesa in the hope of a demobilisation in the name of the democratic myth. But it cannot hide the obstacles on the road of the development of class consciousness. The unionist ideology is still there, the democratic mystique and illusions about the West still weigh on people. The recent struggle has opened a breach but that is not enough. To jeer at Walesa doesn't help if

the workers do not also work towards setting up their own autonomous struggle organizations - which are political as well as economic- if they do not also strive to spread and generalize their struggle by unifying their demands, against the capitalist state.

FD

## ***hunger riots in 'socialist' algeria***

# THE END OF A MYTH

The Algerian powderkeg has exploded. Huge demonstrations, spontaneously formed in the streets, have protested against food rations, the lack of housing, the high cost of living and the absence of medical help. During a week of riots that rocked Algiers, Oran, Annaba and other cities all over Algeria, more than 600 demonstrators, many of them children, were killed by machine gun fire, not to mention the hundreds wounded by gunshots. Thousands of demonstrators, heads shaven and chained together, have been thrown into prison. Of the 3743 prisoners tried before special courts, few escaped heavy sentences (5 to 10 years behind bars).

This time it wasn't the soldiers of the French colonial army who carried out the repression but the troops of the socialist Republic of Algeria. This time it was not the "Red Berets" of the parachute troops of General Massu who tortured people with electric prods and drowning, who sodomized men and children with bottles, it was the police and military units of Algeria. This time it was not the horrendous French OAS that went after the civilian population but the national police who fired at point blank range. This time it wasn't the agents of the glorious French Republic who carried out arrests day and night but the special branch of the Algerian state.

With these horrors before their eyes, "how could this be possible" cry the former members of the "Jeanson network", the signers of the "Manifesto of 100", and all the die-hard apologists of the right to independence of the Algerian people, all those who made it their anti-imperialist glory to carry Ben Bella's national liberation propaganda. University professors, artists, men of letters, lawyers, judges, all the world of official "personalities" are busy signing declarations to separate themselves from what has happened

and demonstrate at Trocadero in Paris. But by their past commitment to the Army of National Liberation they helped put the foot of the new capitalist class in Algeria on the levers of power. They contributed ideologically to the creation of a new police state which, like the nazi or stalinist states, built forced labor camps at Saida, Tlemcen, and Langhuet for all those who resisted the system, the "lazy and undisciplined rabble". Their crime was being unemployed, workers who returned from France and couldn't be integrated into production, or peasants without land, all of them victims of the world capitalist crisis that has hit Algeria in a hundred different ways.

The solidarity of the "Committees on the Rights of Man and Freedom in Algeria", of Amnesty International, of SOS Racisme may be loud but rotten because it has nothing to do with class struggle. It is in the spirit of philistines who regret the destructive and chaotic nature of the explosion of October 10th and aspire only to a return to the normal order of capitalism. The only solidarity that this tragedy demands -- like the bloodbath in Morocco in 1984 -- is the solidarity of the real world, the solidarity that the internationalist proletariat brings by its struggles against world capitalism to its class brothers in Algeria.

This is not the first time that "socialist" and "self-managed" Algeria has revealed its true nature as a barbarous exploiting class. Year after year, time after time, since independence the proletariat of Algeria has fought against its new masters who are just as greedy and ferocious as the former French colonists who "made the natives sweat". Each time the regime called out its cops with dogs, its military police, their anti-riot cars

built at Renault or Mercedes-Benz. Each time workers were killed but not like the butchery of today's events.

The movement began spontaneously with wild-cat strikes which the watchdogs of the UGTA union couldn't avert. Workers of the industrial zone of Reghaia-Rouiba, 20 kilometers from Algiers, protested against austerity, wage freezes, wages due and not received, and the elimination of bonuses. From these factories, the movement spread like wildfire. At the head of the movement were groups of young workers and unemployed who got hold of arms by force and attacked the police, and burned several official cars of the leaders of the UGTA and the FLN (Front de Liberation National, official government party in Algeria). The strength and determination of the workers prevented the Algerian government from pursuing its "holy war" with Morocco.

This autumn 1988, the movement was so massive and so dangerous that the imams of Algiers, Blida and Kouba assigned themselves the religious duty of denouncing "too many social inequalities" and the "mistaken policies of the government". To take control of the movement and falsify its real content, these muslim priests start deserting the sinking ship of state. These preachers of abstinence and ramadan ask all the empty bellies to pray to Allah-the-Merciful so that he will bring them an "Islamic" Algeria. For them, people do not only need bread but the opium of religion because it is the fate of mankind to be condemned to live with classes, with the disinherited and the privileged, just as the Divine Creator willed it.

Chadli, the successor to Boumediene, wants to wash his hands of all responsibility for the catastrophic situation by turning against the "conservatives" of the FLN and UGTA apparatus, by putting the blame on "bad managers" trying to pass off the secondary aspects of the bureaucratisation of the country as accidents and anomalies in the functioning of Algerian society. Chadli is a manipulator like all politicians, using the stick and then holding out the carrot of empty promises. Now he calls on "all different viewpoints to express themselves democratically". His pacification program aims to anesthetize the population with words. His "urgent" measures, praised to the skies by "El Moudjahid", the rag of the ruling class, are nothing but demagoguery to calm the tempest.

Workers, unemployed, fellahs and landless peasants can expect nothing from the national bourgeoisie, whatever the faction or clique, all together in one anti-proletarian front. They mustn't fall into the trap of the absurd promises of President Chadli who pretends to be the guardian of the non-existent gains of a revolution nowhere to be found, or the trap of the Koran of the fundamentalist fakirs, bureaucratized by the state.

Today the policy of "mercy" and "flexibility" favored by Chadli cannot hide the dictatorship of the FLN, the one-party state. It was not the referendum of November 3 on constitutional reform allowing a semi-parlia-

mentary regime, nor the Presidential elections next year that will change the heart of the problem. The exploitation of state capitalism will not have let up one minute, overpopulation will not have abated one bit and among the basic demands of the population, not one will be satisfied in any long-lasting way.

The satisfaction of human needs, general well-being taking the place of the riches and misery of capitalist political economy, the "respect for human life", all this will never be achieved without the overthrow of the system in Algeria and everywhere else in the world. It is only with the revolutionary scalpel in hand, with a tremendous class struggle for the dictatorship of the proletariat through the system of workers councils and soviets that mankind can accomplish this.

R.C.

## FRANCE



# Why The Left Won The Elections

On May 8, 1988 Francois Mitterand obtained 54% of the vote in the French elections and began his second consecutive Presidential term. The comfortable margin of his victory represented the highest electoral score in the entire history of the Socialist Party. This victory was accompanied by a big shift on the right : the classic right-wing parties, the UDF and the RPR, obtained only mediocre results but the extreme right party, the National Front of Jean-Marie LePen, made a substantial breakthrough with 15% in the first round of the two-part French elections.

In the legislative elections which followed, the Socialists gained only a narrow victory over the right (276 seats to 271), the National Front was all but eliminated and the Communist Party regained some ground in relation to the Presidential elections. These events raise several questions : what are the similarities and differences between the elections today and those in 1981? What is the meaning of the increasing influence of the extreme right in the current period, a trend which is not confined to France but which is stronger there than elsewhere.

We are also raising these questions because of the theoretical framework we have adopted to analyze today's social reality. For the past ten years, the strategy of the bourgeoisie has been to put its left factions into the opposition as much as possible. In this way, these parties and the trade unions linked to them can be made more credible in the eyes of the workers and hence maintain a certain control over their struggles. The counterpart of this strategy is that governmental responsibilities have been assumed by parties of the right. During the early 80's, this division of labor among the political forces of the bourgeoisie was put into place in several important countries : in Britain in 1979, in the U.S. in 1980 and in West Germany in 1982, among others.

At first glance, Mitterand's coming to power in 1981 went against this tendency. However, far from disproving the theory of the left in opposition, this event can be explained by the presence in France of several factors going against this tendency : "The political weakness of the French bourgeoisie, which can be seen in their rigid political structure, the sharp divisions within the right...the lack of experience of a left in government, which had as its complement, a still significant ideological weight of the left not only in the working class but among factions of the bourgeoisie and the petty bourgeoisie." (I.P. #9) Added to this was the strength of the Socialist Party which was rebuilt by Mitterand and succeeded in gaining the dominant position within the left at the expense of the Communist Party. "In that situation, where factors pushed both towards the left in opposition and the left in government at the same time, necessity was contradictory and the bourgeoisie itself could not achieve a homogeneous consciousness of that necessity, nor a political strategy....Therefore, the elections took place in a situation of relative equilibrium among the political forces of the bourgeoisie with the choice of Mitterand imposed by the balance of votes and that choice was accepted and confirmed by the legislative elections." (I.P. #9)

While Mitterand had only a few thousand votes more than his opponent in 1981, his victory in 1988 was resoundingly clear. It seems obvious that this outcome was the result of a deliberate choice of the majority of the bourgeoisie. We then have to explain why the bourgeoisie preferred the Socialists to the right in 1988 and why this choice was clearer than it was in the past. We don't think that the victory of Mitterand in 1988 invalidates the tendency towards the left in opposition any more than it did in 1981. But it confirms the existence and the strength of the counter-tendencies which prevailed



in 1981 and whose expression and weight have been modified since then.

The first priority of the bourgeoisie is to have a coherent and solid team in government, capable of pursuing a policy of restructuring certain aspects of the French state, including a formal disengagement of the state in the financial management of some companies and economic sectors, while, at the same time, strengthening its real control over them. The team must also be able to attack the working class at a time when it has become increasingly difficult to manage the economy in crisis. The historical weakness of the French right mentioned before was not corrected during the two years that it shared government responsibilities with the S.P. Quite the contrary; the way in which the (Gaullist) RPR led the government earned only skepticism about its ability to act in a coherent way. For example, Prime Minister Chirac of the RPR was sharply criticized for using "privatization" of the economy to get his and only his party cronies into top management positions in these companies. The leadership of Chirac was far from winning the unanimous support of the right. Some supporters of Raymond Barre, (the candidate of the other main party on the right, the UDF), openly proclaimed themselves in favor of a Mitterand victory even before the second round of the elections.

The Socialist Party, on the other hand, perhaps thanks to Mitterand, always appeared as a united party despite the existence of tendencies in its ranks. During the 5 years in which it managed the economy, it proved its capacity to respond to the needs of capitalism in crisis. It is not difficult to know what the S.P. bosses mean when they boast about their "governmental experience": the "experience" of imposing austerity on the working class, attacks on the unemployed and on immigrant workers, the commitment of France to direct involvement in inter-imperialist conflicts and so on. The S.P. also moved markedly towards a centrist ideology which was very clear in its platform for 1988, stripped of all the illusions carried since 1968: no nationalizations were foreseen, self-management was no longer mentioned and neither was the shortening of the work week. There wasn't even any talk about a lessening of austerity. It merely stated that wages must benefit from the positive results of the austerity policy, meaning that the fruits of regained competitiveness must be divided up. This "recentering" of the S.P. is not confined to declarations of intention. It represents the real backbone of all of its current political strategy. The fact that Mitterand advertised so loudly his wish that his party not win any overwhelming majority in the legislative elections (and indeed, it didn't) proves this and so do the first measures of Prime Minister Rocard both on the political level (an opening towards centrist politicians) and the economic and social plane (wage freezes, defense

of the "freedom" to lay off workers, etc.).

The other necessity which generally determines the division of labor among the different factions of the bourgeoisie is the need to derail the workers' struggles away from their own dynamic and into a dead end. This task of ideological control is, in the first instance, carried out by the tentacles which the state has developed from within the proletariat itself: the trade unions, the left parties and their arsenal of committees, contract agreements and so on. The bourgeoisie's increasing difficulty in managing the economy is echoed in an increasing erosion of the illusions the workers have about these unions and parties. The falling membership figures for unions, the workers' growing distrust of the unions and the union initiatives can be seen in the number of strikes that break out without waiting for union permission.

To have the left assuming the tasks of government, as has been the case for several years in Spain, in Greece, in France and recently in Belgium and now again in France, does not, at first sight, seem the best solution to the problem of controlling the working class. By trying to respond to the needs of capitalism in crisis, the Socialist Parties inevitably reveal their true nature as defenders of the existing social order. This can contribute to a further loss of illusions of the working class in any real future in this society.

But it would be a mistake to conclude that this situation will automatically lead to a greater development of class struggle than in countries where the left remains in opposition. This has not been the case in countries where the left is in government such as Greece, Spain or France between 1981 and 1986. This argument does not exclude the possibility of a longer term discrediting of the Socialist parties in these countries as a result of their participation in government. But we still have to explain why the class struggle has remained limited in those countries despite the fact that the Socialist parties were showing their true capitalist colors.

The presence of Socialists in the government does not mean that the bourgeoisie has left the workers "unguarded". In contrast to 1981, when both the Socialist Party and the Communist Party were in government and both unions, the Communist-affiliated CGT and the Socialist-affiliated CFDT defended the government as the natural ally of the workers, the CP today has affirmed its will to remain in the opposition before, during and after the elections. The CGT has already denounced the policy of Rocard as expressed in the budget proposal of 1989 and it can be safely predicted that the CFDT will soon jump on the bandwagon if only to prevent its rival from cashing in on all the anti-government feeling among French workers. The unions are on their guard since the railroad strike when they had to run very hard to

catch up with the workers and regain control over the situation. This means that the working class is and will be confronting new obstacles.

The unions won't hesitate to use once again the worn-out scenario of pitting members of one union against those of another (as they did this summer in the mines of Gardanne), to stir up corporatist resentments, etc.

Finally, the bourgeoisie will try to develop other types of mystifications based on the peculiarities of its political forces. The course of the election campaign testifies to this. The substantial surge of the extreme right allowed Mitterand to make a great play for power as the opponent of fascism and this undoubtedly contributed to the huge margin of the Socialist victory in the Presidential elections. It is not unthinkable that this factor was in part deliberately manipulated by the bourgeoisie. The current economic context, marked by growing unemployment, austerity and a decrease in the state budget for social services, is one of the factors causing the rise of racist reactions championed by the National Front. In such a situation, launching a proposal that seems favorable to immigrants (like Mitterand's comments on the possibility of giving the vote to some immigrants) can be enough to provoke xenophobic reactions and an increase in the electorate of the extreme right which then serves as a scare tactic to help the left. It is quite probable that a political strategist of Mitterand's caliber would not stop at that and the scare of the extreme right will be used again each time it is necessary to restore the credibility of the left, as it is used, regularly, in Spain and Greece. In short, the relative weakness of having the Socialists in government could be partially compensated for by the use of mystifications such as anti-fascism, which make it possible to resuscitate the myth of the left.

The loss of illusions in the left is a necessary but insufficient condition to determine a development of class struggle and class consciousness. Other ingredients are needed for workers such as the will to fight and confidence in their own strength. Despite the fact that the general period is characterized by a slow and steady rise in class struggle since 1968, the working class still has trouble identifying a general sense of its struggle and putting into practice the means to develop it. Because it is not yet clear to the workers that its future (and the future of mankind) lies in its own hands alone, in its capacity to develop a struggle until revolution and the taking of power, seeing through the lies of the left can indeed go together with an increased influence of reactionary ideologies. The electoral gains of LePen of the National Front are in part a result of this reality, which must neither be ignored nor treated as an irreversible situation.

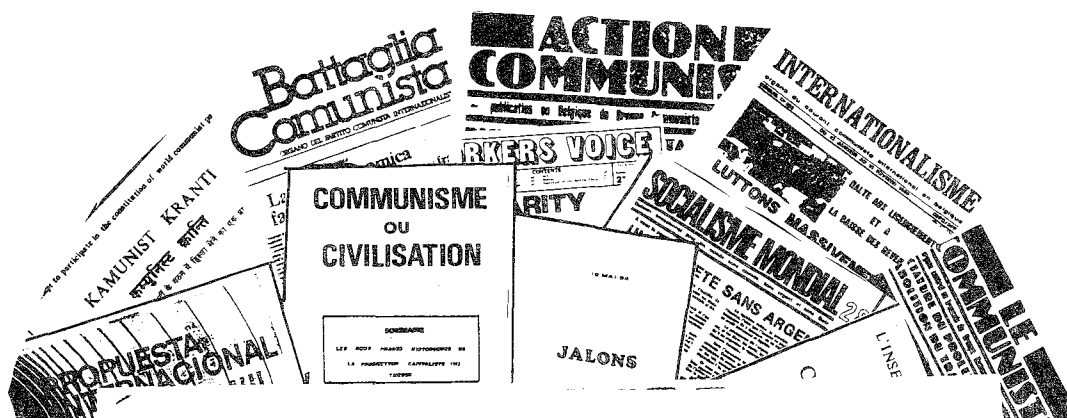
In conclusion, we can say that the election of Mitterand, as far as we can judge, represents an attempt of the French bourgeoisie to react to the weakness of its political apparatus with the means at its disposal. The aim is not only to take care of immediate needs but to prepare the way for an alternative in the not too distant future. The election of Mitterand and the current dominance of the left can serve as an incentive to reshape the French political landscape, something which the right was not able to do in all its years in government. This reshaping is necessary in terms of a restructuring of the right around someone like Barre and through a clearer delineation of a "center." These tendencies have been taking shape since the elections and can be seen in numerous small daily events. Such a restructuring would allow the Socialist Party (or part of it) to regain its place in the opposition and play its historic role in this period in relation to direct workers' struggle. It is too soon to tell if the current situation will really evolve in that direction but such an outcome cannot be excluded.

Adèle

#### Footnotes

1. See "Debate : An Experience in Government" in I.P. #4 and "Accident and Necessity in Marxist Analysis" in I.P. #9.

2. This evolution is not specific to the French Socialist Party. A similar phenomenon took place in the Belgian S.P. as well as in the Democratic Party in the U.S. and the Labour Party in the U.K. This change may correspond to two factors. On the one hand, the development of new mystifications for use against the working class. The workers no longer buy the idea that the Socialists can avoid the economic crisis or any of its repercussions thanks to a different management. But they still can be made to believe that the left wants to spread the weight of the crisis more equally on the whole of society in a different way than the right. On the other hand, this change could be the sign of the adaptations which the Socialist Parties have made during the 80's to the necessities of capitalism in crisis and which makes their participation in government more acceptable than when it became necessary at the beginning of the decade.



# WHERE WE HAVE FAILED

Many people in and out of the organized revolutionary milieu have recognized this failure, but they perceive it as a failure of communication ("the press is not accessible enough"), or of organization and cadre-building, or of agitation (the search for the ultimate galvinizing slogan), or of leadership ("who is the real party?"). In many cases, groups and individuals have sensed the inadequacy, if not the total futility, of such explanations; but some have taken refuge in blaming the working class ... for keeping us waiting, for not giving us the decisive confrontations that we felt were just around the corner in 1968.

In terms of perspectives for class struggle, there are those like Battaglia Comunista who did not see the point of 68 period, when it was happening, and therefore have a difficult time developing a clear perspective on it now. For many Bordigist currents, the counter-revolution has never really ended. The most one can hope for in the way of perspectives is that "a revolutionary rupture is always possible in the imperialist epoch." (Communist Review #5)

Communist Review, tries to warn against activism and over-estimation of class struggle today. Unfortunately, they put the emphasis on the wrong issue. They write: "The working class of Europe and America is more quiescent than in living memory." (Workers Voice, Feb./March 1988) It is true that the number of strike days lost in the US, for example, is at an all-time low, but this is not true of all countries unless "living memory" is very short and myopic. But even if it were generally true, this premature dictum of "social calm" where "the conditions for a generalized revival of class struggle DO NOT EXIST" (Ibid.) was written just before a noteworthy increase in class struggle in Britain. The problem is that specific outbursts of class struggle are today unpredictable. Without an understanding of the overall conditions of sate capitalism and how these conditions make our period different from the models of the past, it is impossible to chart a steady course in class struggle. Furthermore, passivity (lack of combativity) is not the problem; it is a question of consciousness.

This so-called passivity of the working class in the industrial heartlands is a false perspective. Unlike the period of counter-revolution when capitalism was able to mobilize the workers for its goals (war or reconstruction), today capitalism has got to be constantly on the lookout to demobilize the workers from the class struggle. Both Poland and Britain are, each in their own context, excellent examples of how the working class keeps coming back to fight against a class enemy that has reduced large parts of the working class to levels of pauperization undreamed of in 68. The decay of capitalism, massive plant closures in

sectors where the working class traditionally provided leadership (steel, mining, docks), deindustrialization and now homelessness and the growth of a huge underclass in the West, have, like crisis, poverty and scarcity in the East, increased the stakes of class struggle. Despite enormous blows (the 1972 dockers strike, the 1979-80 steel strike, the 1984-85 miners strike in Britain; 1970, 1976, 1980-81 in Poland), the class keeps coming back to fight. Passivity is not the problem. The real issue is the complex process by which class consciousness develops; combativity alone is not enough.

The working class has had to learn from a series of bitter defeats, not from a succession of ever-growing victories as the mistaken Social-Democratic model prescribed. Learning from defeat means passing through painfully numbing periods of quasi-paralysis.

Moreover, the context of class struggle is very different than it was in the nineteenth or even in the early part of this century. The "collective memory" of the class will not serve it unless there is an enormous process of re-evaluation and critical thought. In the nineteenth century, the activity of the working class often (unintentionally) aided the rationalization of capitalism as a system. In the epoch of state capitalism, however, the system cannot allow its economic laws to function unchecked. Working class activity, like the free flow of economic forces, must be contained by the massive development of the state to the detriment of all of civil society. The permanent crisis of capitalism in its decadent phase means that state capitalism must occupy the terrain of class struggle and contain the class if it intends to survive as a system. At the same time, in the industrial heartlands the capitalist class can no longer simply massacre tens of thousands of workers at twenty year intervals to keep order, as it did in Paris in the nineteenth century or in the mining towns of Europe and America, for example. The state cannot risk this and must develop an entire apparatus of control ranging from mystification, propaganda, brainwashing to physically occupying the workers' terrain via the unions or Socialist and Communist parties, once emanations of the class itself and now integrated into the tentacular capitalist state apparatus.

Before the workers find their true target and figure out how far they must go, the state must sterilize their efforts ideologically; only then can physical repression be used, subtly or overtly as the need arises. In the nineteenth century, the working class was bloodied but its goals were clear ("vivre en travaillant ou mourir en combattant" of the Lyon silk workers in 1832; "an injury to one is an injury to all", etc.). Today, the working class is constantly made to doubt itself and the simple ideas of the past are clearly insufficient to build a viable perspective.

When other workers saw the Polish workers

kneel down for the wafer at Catholic mass, when they saw British miners on strike for months become economically marginalized and useless, when they see workers in the Eastern bloc waving "their" national flags or see workers in the West cling pathetically to a shred of hope in the unions, workers are supposed to conclude that everything is hopeless. That is the way capitalism disarms and demoralizes its class enemy, because paradoxically the potential power of working class revolt is greater now than it has ever been in history.

The working class is having great difficulty developing its class consciousness in state capitalist society. The "dead weight of past generations" as Marx wrote continues to slow this process: the weight of loyalty to trade unionism, of faith in traditional working class solutions, of looking to "Socialist", "Communist", leftist parties or other substitutionists as leadership. It is proving incredibly difficult to break out of corporatism, unionism and traditional solutions, and to use the creativity of mass action to find new solutions to the now vital problems of solidarity and class unity. The issue of class consciousness, how it develops and why, as well as how revolutionaries help to accelerate this process, is at the heart of the dilemma facing the working class. And it is this subject that is largely ignored in the milieu today or is answered with ludicrous clichés.

Although we do not agree with the evaluation of "passivity" and "quiescence", there is no point in looking at the harsh reality of class struggle today through rose-colored glasses. In fact, one of the major obstacles to a more balanced view of the class struggle is the triumphalism and immediatism of groups like the ICC, once a standard bearer in the milieu.

For the ICC, every day in every way things are getting better and better; history is constantly accelerating. Today, when it is clear, even to those of us who developed this perspective in the early 80's, that this decade has not been the "years of truth" we expected, the ICC clings to its slogans, reinventing "what was really meant by this" as they go along. It is typical of fossilized thought that it can never admit change, error or the wider need for critical re-evaluation. Overestimating the level of class confrontation today, attempts to solve difficulties in the path of the development of class consciousness by resorting to "tactics" or activism is so pervasive that the hope for a convergence on perspectives in the milieu is indeed dim. Only a clear assessment of the phase of decadence, not as a catchword but in depth, can allow us to break out of the dilemma as a milieu.

Class struggle is indeed in a long-term secular upswing, but the organized revolutionary milieu is mired in crisis.

## RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE MILIEU

If the working class is feeling the "weight of the dead generations" in the development of class consciousness, it is not surprising that this same difficulty is felt with devastating effect in the revolutionary milieu. If the class as a whole is obliged to defend itself and to strike out against the class enemy, thereby clarifying at least some issues through direct experience, the political contribution of the revolutionary organization is not a function of the ups and downs of class struggle. Unlike the nineteenth century when the role of revolutionaries included organizing the class, in today's context of state capitalism revolutionaries must stand or fall on the clarity of their political contribution alone. Yet the vast bulk of the milieu does not recognize that the task begun by left communists sixty years ago -- to draw the lessons of the first great wave of revolutionary class struggle and its failure, of the defeat of the Russian and German revolutions, to reorient Marxism away from the mistaken Social-Democratic model, to use the Marxist method to grasp the new conditions of class struggle in the twentieth century -- was not completed. Today's milieu, far from renewing this vital task, has largely preferred to see Marxism as a mere reapplication of the same inadequate "solutions" of the past. Many if not all of the groups in the milieu write about what is happening within it: who has had a split, who's up and who's down. But most see what is happening as primarily an organizational question in the strictest sense of the word. We see it as symptomatic of a broader political crisis. Sectarianism is often identified as the basic failing of the milieu; we see the pervasive sectarianism as part of a wider political vacuum.

In March 1988, a letter was sent to the groups in the revolutionary milieu announcing the demise of Wildcat in Great Britain. The letter frankly outlined the political fragmentation and personal frictions in the group. It attempted to record the "important political differences which have arisen in the group in the last couple of years". The letter's openness is to be commended. The need to explain, to be accountable to a milieu, is in itself a positive contribution to the future.

But what were these major political differences? They concerned whether or not teachers are cops, the importance of rioting, reactionary workers and minoritarian actions. Why otherwise normal militants would become fixated on teachers is beyond the scope of the present article. But reading the entire letter is like taking a trip back to the concerns of the student movement of the 60's. Wildcat apparently "fudged", as the letter put it, its agreement with the idea that some workers -- like the white workers in South Africa -- are "permanently reactionary" when it published the headline "All Power To The Black Working Class In South Africa". This part of their letter could be a word-for-word

repeat of the "white skin privilege" debates about rejecting the white American working class in 1968. But do not despair: Wildcat didn't apply this to US workers or even to Irish Protestant workers. It exported it to the periphery and stuck it in South Africa.

The discussion on how important riots are (are they as important as strikes or more important; as one member put it, riots are more important than the mass strike in Poland) could have been recorded at any meeting of the student movement when so many cities were burning in the 60's. And the conclusion shows the same cheap thrills from the violence of desperation and the same inability to distinguish between a class movement and general social decomposition. The only difference with the 60's is that the desperation of the workers doomed in the miners strike and at Wapping seems to have convinced these comrades that riots are the wave of the future and the antidote to a "passive" working class.

In the debates on workers' democracy, some members of Wildcat concluded that workers were often so contemptibly reactionary that "enlightened minorities" should undertake actions despite the will of general assemblies or other "forms" of working class decision making. Someone must have recognized this as fundamentally substitutionist and an inevitable slide into the justification for terrorism exactly as the Weathermen of SDS so long ago. But no one says so in the letter.

We have written about Wildcat in a previous issue of IP. The saddest part of the present letter is not the sense of futility because these issues apparently had never been clarified in the past, but that EVEN NOW the letter does not contain a clear political statement on the issues.

The CWO emphasizes the activism of Wildcat culminating in demoralization after the defeat of the miners strike. The ICC, ever true to form, is concerned to denounce some "rump" taking the name of Wildcat in vain. The CBG correctly points out that although the Wildcat letter refers to heated debates in the group, these were never made public and so could never mature or help others. The disease of organization -building and the charade of monolithism hid amongst the libertarians -- as amongst everyone else -- the reality of a political vacuum.

Compared to the honest -- though modest -- efforts to sum up the end of Wildcat, the documents of the split in the Groupe Communiste Internationaliste in Belgium are a nightmare version of the small-group dynamics that the bourgeoisie always tries to make believe is the reality of revolutionary politics. The GCI texts are patently incomprehensible on any deeper level because it is mostly a chess game of finessing one another: you say Russian revolution, I say German revolution; you say Ruhle to me, I say Gramsci to you. It appears that the majority of the GCI is still settled on a modernist course with "critical support" for the likes



of the Sendero Luminoso guerrillas in Peru. The new split, A Contre Courant, on the other hand, harkens back to the founding position of the GCI, when it left the ICC, that is to say, presumably to Bordigist positions. In fact, the majority of the GCI and those in Wildcat who found the working class "too backward" for workers democracy have a lot in common.

The political evolution of the GCI shows only regression and once again the only hope is that a) someone will clearly draw the lessons of this debacle and b) that our milieu can one day escape from the "solution" of a retreat back into the arms of Bordiga. Both these eventualities are unfortunately quite unlikely in the near future. All the more so because both groups have only contempt for the rest of us in the "little milieu". For much of the milieu, influenced by their own versions of Bordigist ideas or unable to follow the arcane debates in French, the present split in the GCI was not big news.

Only the ICC was openly pleased with the demise or splits in the aforementioned groups. This is because these groups are not "real" groups but only "obstacles" for other groups. How is this determined? There are groups in Italy, for example, with positions not unlike those of A Contre Courant. But in Italy apparently they are "legitimate". Why not in Belgium? Because groups that have once seen the light of the ICC and rejected it by splitting or getting thrown out (which is the case for members of these groups) can never be anything but obstacles. As with the Mormons, it is not the ignorant who are damned but the apostates.

Of course the ICC had a split last year too. Comrades of the section in Spain left the organization criticizing the ICC's intervention and perspectives, calling it "centrist". Unfortunately these comrades claim to have no desire to continue political work. Perhaps they have come to believe the ICC when it maintains that no one "represents anything meaningful" unless the ICC says so. As with bourgeois ideology, belittling the opposition is an excellent organizational tactic: when militants leave, they lack the confidence to continue political life and therefore they "prove" the organization's judgment that they were unserious and unmilitant. If they do continue a political life, they are "obstacles".

Unfortunately, the ICC has adopted other organizational devices once the exclusive domain of crypto-Trotskyists. At first it is hard to see this, but a certain systematic repetition begins to ring a familiar bell. The Spanish splitters were undoubtedly irresponsible for circulating some of the internal ICC documents they did. But was it necessary to denounce them as enemy agents to the milieu? Trotskyist groups routinely denounce members who split or are thrown out, not for their ideas, but for "not paying their dues" or "hanging around nefarious individuals".

The comrades in Spain document and denounce

the ICC's growing concessions to leftism on the union question. When they attempt to realistically evaluate the class struggle today, they see that despite the ICC's claims that the 80's are the decisive "years of truth" when "the intervention of revolutionaries can change the course of class struggle", there is no party, that the milieu is fragmented and that its immediate impact on the working class (including that of the ICC) is minor and politically inadequate. These comrades do not seem to question the ICC's analysis of the "years of truth" but rather conclude that behind the bluff revolutionaries are unprepared, and so war is probable. These comrades have no plans to continue militant activity. The sterilization of militant energies is the price paid for the ICC's activism. The ICC, for its part, in reacting to this latest split, seems to want to prove the bourgeois precept that "politics is not concerned with solving problems but with silencing those who raise them".

#### REGRESSION IN THE MILIEU

The Communist Workers Organisation has written: "The class responded to the crisis in capitalism without a leadership and without a program. Therefore, it was doomed to be defeated." (Workers Voice) Does this mean that the present revolutionary milieu could have provided such leadership or program, or that it could do so today? In our opinion, no.

First, this view misrepresents the real nature of the process of class consciousness, the way the class becomes conscious of itself as a revolutionary subject. It is not a process like bourgeois schooling where a teacher is supposed to "know" what the students are trying to "find out". There is no program that can hand workers all the answers in advance and which workers need only "believe in" or "assimilate". Second, it is not true that we already possess an adequate theoretical framework for this process of becoming, and that the workers just won't listen. A communist program adequate to our period of class struggle has yet to be fully elaborated. In fact, in the past ten years the political clarity of the milieu has regressed not advanced.

After 1968, there was a general undermining of the classic positions of leftism: work in unions, support for nationalism, small partyism. But the new breath of fresh air after the long years of counter-revolution could not be a panacea; in itself, as a reaction without theoretical backing, it could and did lead to some of the most grotesque aberrations. Today, however, with the theoretical work still largely undone, the milieu has come full circle. The CWO is glad to greet the ICC's new tactic about being "pragmatic" about unions. The CWO now quite openly defends the need for communist militants to work in the unions. The Spanish splitters from the ICC quote from a leaflet where the ICC called for extension of the struggle appealing "for support for the union

organization" (Texte de Rupture avec le CCI, p.5; write to Apartado 1598, 20080 San Sebastian, Spain) and discusses the latest in the decreasing political content of that organization's agitation. The idea that "the most militant workers are in the unions" and that "that is where communists can go to reach them" (CWO) as well as the more general idea that communists need not always "reveal" that they belong to a political organization but can, like leftists with their front groups, circulate leaflets signed by "Workers from X city" or perhaps "Committee to Extend the Struggle", etc., seems to be taking hold.

On the issue of nationalism or national liberation struggles, the destruction of the ICP (International Communist Party / Programa Comunista) has not led to any notable clarification of this question. Although Communist Review mentions its support for R. Luxemburg's position on the national question, this did not prevent the IBRP's flirtation with nationalist elements from Kurdistan. Nor had it prevented Battaglia in its interventions at the international conferences in the late 70's (despite their desire to see the rejection of "national liberation struggles" become a criterion for participation in the conferences) from maintaining that IF there were a real international PARTY, then, perhaps, national struggles would be possible because the strength of the class would be there to make it all "proletarian". Clarity on the national question is no more than skin deep in the milieu.

Nor has the issue of the role of the revolutionary organization and the nature of class consciousness been clarified. We have had slogans on organization building from all sides and extensive quotes from Lenin on consciousness or varying sorts of apologetics for the policies of the Bolsheviks, but, in reality, leftists are far more effective popularizers of these notions. Even the ICC has begun the retreat back to the false security of Leninism on class consciousness. The irony is that so many of those who think that the working class is passive or mired in bourgeois ideology are themselves prisoners of the past; that so many who claim to be ecstatic with the "acceleration" of history are, in fact, resorting to increasingly compromised expedients.

The revolutionary milieu as a whole, with the exception of the ICC, has never dealt with the difference between the conditions in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the meaning of capitalist decadence. For groups of the more orthodox Bordigist persuasion, as was true for Bordiga himself, the issue of state capitalism never really arises; which explains Bordigism's vacillation on the nature of the "Soviet Union" as well as that tendency's fossilized thought on how class struggle can succeed. But little by little, even those groups which had accepted the general validity of the theory of decadence have come to reject it, such as the GCI and the CWO. The fact that the majority of the CWO now feels that state capitalism is

rendered non-existent by "privatization" policies is a regression of major proportions for the milieu (see IP #10). The fact that the CWO has openly explained and presented their evolution on this point is to their credit. There is no doubt that the questioning that is taking place in many groups, including ours, is a healthy sign of the need to confront reality. But without a strong theoretical framework it can lead to the hasty overgeneralizations of the CWO majority's text, which not only jettisoned the theory of state capitalism, but sounded some ominous notes of wounded British nationalism.

It is almost as though the decline of the ICC has been a signal for further regression in the milieu. "At last we can rid ourselves of the last vestiges of the influence of the ICC", people seem to be saying -- not only generally, but sometimes in our group as well. But the only way forward is not through this kind of subjectivism. In fact, that is the other side of the coin to the slavish repetitions of Lenin or Bordiga or whomever; throwing the baby out with the bath water when it comes to a "rival" or disappointed hope.

There is positive work being done in the milieu today, and no one is denying this. But what is the general context? What can we do so that this work is not lost or sterilized? Is there any interest in this question? The CWO has recently written: "Many new issues have arisen in communist politics in the last decade and many things have not happened in the way that we expected them to. There are whole new areas of theoretical work needed where solutions cannot be provided by the political nostrums of the past, but require a fresh approach .... At the moment, when such issues occur, they are dealt with often in an unsatisfactory 'one-off' and journalistic way and the thinking is not homogeneous throughout the group. But we must face these issues -- the restructuring of the productive relations in the crisis and the composition of the class, the question of privatisations and the revival of 'classical' bourgeois economics, the agrarian question, a theoretical treatment of the housing question, the issues of peripheral economic development, of the trend towards tariffs and autarky, of the role of trade unions in the actual stage of capitalist restructuring -- the issues are legion". This sounds like an excellent initiative. It will be difficult, however, to find a Marxist coherence on these questions without the framework of the theory of decadence and state capitalism. The above quote ends by saying: "The organisation which best deals with such issues theoretically will be best placed to deal with the revival of class struggle which lies on the historical agenda for the 1990's." (WV Feb./March 1988)

It is unfortunate that the article doesn't realize that the development of theory today is not the domain of one group in rivalry with others, but of a milieu, an expression of the working class, and of the

confrontation of positions.

#### CRISIS IN THE MILIEU

The CWO and the ICC both state that what is going on in the milieu today is a simple "decantation" process, a "selection" process. Not to worry, they tell us. But a selection process implies that political questions are being clarified; that even when groups almost disappear, like the ICP, the major international group in the communist milieu for decades, others learn from the lesson of their defeat; that militant energies are increasing and strengthening and that the contribution to class consciousness has been such that whatever happens in terms of repression, etc., there has been a clear contribution to those who will follow.

Is that the case today? What we see, in fact, is 1) political regression, lack of clarity on positions, no convergence through the lessons of class struggle; 2) dispersion of forces, sectarianism exacerbated over the past decade since the breakdown of the international conferences, the absence of real debate; 3) fragmentation of the milieu, militant energies simply lost when groups break up. What is typical of a period of crisis is that questioning may only accelerate the process of regression and the old stagnation (as with the ICP).

Will the vaunted periphery save us? This "weak link" theory of a deus ex machina is mistaken. There are surely encouraging signs in Argentina, Mexico and India; but what our own milieu has contributed to it is its own sectarianism and sterility transplanted: opening subsidiaries of the mother enterprises in the periphery with all the same bitterness, personalism and political confusion overlaid onto the confusions and resentments already existing in the political milieu in Mexico and especially India.

Some militants are blinded by the smug little schema that if the class struggle is on the upswing then we have nothing to worry about; the milieu too must be automatically on the upswing. For these elements, you can only use the word "crisis" in the milieu if the class struggle is defeated. Until then, you're safe. In The May 1988 number of WR, for example, the ICC proclaims that a crisis in the milieu did take place in 1980-81 because class struggle temporarily declined in the "second phase of the third wave". Whatever the convoluted jargon, the idea emerges that the milieu became "okay again" as soon as class struggle picked up in 1983. This idea that class struggle automatically solves the problems of the organization or the milieu is the result of the blindness of bureaucratic philistines. What we need is open political confrontation on fundamental issues, in the pages of our publications, in discussion meetings, not in isolation, not by identifying the fate of the milieu with one organization's work alone.

Some who look more honestly at reality recognize that all is not a simple "selection process", but they are tempted to generalize the crisis of the milieu and conclude that the working class must already be defeated. Both views are ways of avoiding our responsibilities as a milieu.

If any of the hopeful signs in the milieu are going to come to fruition, the crisis in the milieu must be recognized as more than just a question of sectarianism or of the specific history of each individual group. It must be grasped as an historic crisis of Marxist theory, left unfinished by the last great movement of the working class.

J. A.

## DEBATE ON STATE CAPITALISM

### The ICC Buries Its Head In The Sand

In Internationalist Perspective #7, our Fraction published a discussion text on the question of state capitalism. The argument of that text was that the universal tendency towards state capitalism in the present epoch was the product of a confluence of several causal chains, one of which was the change from the formal to the real domination of capital. The formal domination of capital is based on the extraction of absolute surplus value, while the real domination of capital is based on the extraction of relative surplus value. In the epoch of formal domination, the capitalist law of value is confined to the realm of production (though even here its sway is not yet complete) and excluded from the realm of distribution and consumption. In the epoch of real domination,

the capitalist law of value extends its sway to the whole of production, distribution and consumption; in short, to all of social being. This latter is an epochal transformation internal to the capitalist mode of production, the analysis of which is contained in Marx's economic manuscripts of 1857 - 1861 (the Grundrisse), the economic manuscripts of 1861 - 1863 (out of which Marx crafted volume one of Capital, Engels selected the material which would constitute volumes two and three, and from which The Theories Of Surplus Value would be taken -- in short, the veritable source of Marx's analysis of capital and the fundamental categories that constitute the forms of being of capital, which have only recently been published in their integral form), and

several other economic manuscripts of Marx (e.g. The Results Of The Immediate Process Of Production). Previously, the revolutionary milieu had seen no direct link between the change from the formal to the real domination of capital and the development of state capitalism, and one of the purposes of our discussion text was to argue for just such a link. The aim of our text was to initiate a discussion -- both within our own Fraction and in the milieu as a whole -- not to lay down a line. However, it would seem that we underestimated the extent of the crisis in the revolutionary milieu, which far from engaging in a discussion or debate on the arguments put forward in our text, has basically reacted by heaping scorn on the effort itself. This is particularly true of the ICC, which in the course of a more general article on the milieu -- in International Review #54 -- denounced our text for its "modernism", while totally ignoring the substantive points that were made in it.

The ICC's reaction, while characterized by an unwillingness to engage in a real discussion or debate, in short, by the dogmatism and sectarianism against which all revolutionaries from Marx to the present have had to do battle, tells volumes about the theoretical stultification which now afflicts an organization which still has the gall to print in all its publications that the ICC is devoted to "The vital theoretical elaboration demanded by the re-awakening of the proletarian struggle after fifty years of counter-revolution." Clearly, the permanent crisis of capitalism, which has brought an incredible cheapening of currency in its wake, has no less relentlessly cheapened the very principles on which the ICC was once based.

To begin with, the ICC gloats that our Fraction has discovered Marx's Grundrisse and Results... twenty years too late. Lest the reader draw the conclusion that we are only now seriously turning to the political study of texts that the ICC long ago assimilated, it must be said that the ICC as an organization NEVER theoretically or politically appropriated these seminal texts of Karl Marx -- neither when they were first published nor at any time since. Indeed, comrades who raised the question of the possible importance of these texts were told that their study was not the task of a political organization, and moreover that concepts such as the formal and real domination of capital -- which were laid out in these manuscripts -- added nothing to the existing theoretical arsenal (a patent untruth as even a cursory study will demonstrate!) or were irretrievably tainted with "modernism", i.e. the liquidation of the revolutionary core of Marxism (another untruth). In sum, within the ICC, no effort to grapple with or appropriate the categories developed by Marx in these manuscripts was made or could be made. If our Fraction is "late" in coming to these texts, we have at least undertaken the task however belatedly, while the ICC remains in sublime

ignorance of the categories that are central to a Marxist analysis of capital and its developmental tendencies.

What of the ICC's charge that categories like the formal and real domination of capital are tainted by "modernist" implications? "Modernism", as the ICC has always used this term means a liquidation of the revolutionary core of Marxism, specifically the rejection of the proletariat as the revolutionary subject under capitalism; in fact, the view that the working class has become "a class-for-capital", an atomized mass totally integrated into the capitalist state. At the very outset, it is bizarre, to say the least, to be accused of rejecting the revolutionary core of Marxism simply because one sees the need to grasp, appropriate and incorporate into the arsenal of revolutionary theory certain key concepts of Marx himself! Can there be any basis whatsoever for the ICC's fear that concepts such as the formal and the real domination of capital are tainted by modernism? Given the ICC's unwillingness to even discuss what for Marx were the fundamental forms of being of capital, it is difficult to see on what basis this fear is grounded. In fact, the basis for the ICC's attitude can be found not in Marx's manuscripts -- which have never even been studied by the ICC as an ORGANIZATION -- but in the misinterpretation of the categories in question by certain organizations in the milieu. Specifically, within the Bordigist milieu in the 1960's and '70's elements such as Jacques Cammatte and Invariance developed the theory of the working class as a class-for-capital supposedly on the basis of Marx's analysis of the change from the formal to the real domination of capital sketched in the Grundrisse and the Results.... Rather than contest a dubious interpretation of Marx's categories, the ICC out of a suspicion for anything "new" (even if in this case the "new" were categories layed out by Marx a century earlier, but only now brought to light) chose to ignore, or worse, denigrate, a body of texts which had they been appropriated (or even simply politically studied) might have armed the organization theoretically in the face of the state capitalist leviathan.

As part of their policy of heaping scorn on those whose concern is to debate and discuss, the ICC asserts that if we take the change from the formal to the real domination of capital as an epochal moment in the life of the capitalist mode of production, this is tantamount to saying that the decadence of capitalism must be pushed back into the mid-nineteenth century, if not the eighteenth. The basis for this startling assertion is a combination of a misreading (rather a non-reading) of the texts in which Marx elaborates the concepts of formal and real domination of capital, and a polemic carried on with the Mexican revolutionary group Alptraum. The Mexicans insisted that there was a link between the change from the formal to the real domination of capital and the decadence of capitalism (though failing to see a connection between these and the

universal tendency to state capitalism). However, the Mexicans (mistakenly in our opinion) also placed the change from the formal to the real domination of capital in the year 1848, thus superimposing what for the Bordigists is THE epochal political change internal to capitalism onto the Marxian economic categories. Taking Alptbaum's interpretation as valid (if one made the change to the real domination of capital central), the ICC concluded that the economic category must be vacuous since it led to the aberrant position that capitalism had entered its decadent phase when it was on the threshold of its greatest period of expansion (1848 - 1914). To add a further layer of confusion, the ICC chose to interpret the category of the real domination of capital as meaning not the generalization of the extraction of relative surplus - value to the whole of the capitalist mode of production, not the dependence of capitalism on the extraction of relative surplus - value, but the mere appearance of this category on the capitalist landscape, its very inception -- thereby situating it at the very outset of capitalism. Based on such misreading -- willful or otherwise -- the ICC believes it has exorcized the spectre of Marx's categories of the formal and real domination of capital.

In fact, far from being situated in the eighteenth century, or even in 1848, the change from the formal to the real domination of capital was only completed after 1914, its final triumph stretching into recent decades with the spread of the real domination of capital to virtually the whole of the vital agrarian sector. It is precisely the changes internal to capitalism as a global system brought about by the definitive triumph of the real domination of capital, changes necessitating the STATIFICATION of capital and the emergence of the state bureaucracy as the functionaries of capital, i.e. as the capitalist class, that led us to reopen the debate on state capitalism with our discussion text. In our opinion that theoretical discussion must proceed. That the dogmatism and sectarianism of the ICC is such as to seemingly prohibit its participation in such a discussion is both the occasion for sadness at the bankruptcy of an organization to which we devoted so much of our militant lives, and one more sign of the morass into which so much of the revolutionary milieu has sunk over the past decade.

MAC INTOSH

## PART 2

### DOCUMENTS

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## problems of the period of transition (Bilan 1936-37)

In this issue we are publishing the second and final part of Mitchell's study of the period of transition, with its special emphasis on economic problems in this period. This study originally appeared in 1936-37, in numbers 28, 31, 34, 35, 37 and 38 of BILAN, the publication of the Italian Communist Left in that period. We urge our readers to consult IP # 11 for the first part of this text, as well as our comments on it.

#### GUIDELINES FOR A PROLETARIAN ADMINISTRATION

[...] Within the historical limits assigned to the economic program of a proletarian revolution, its fundamental points are the following:

- a) collectivization of the means of production and exchange already "socialized" by capitalism;
- b) the monopoly of foreign trade by the proletarian state, an economic weapon of decisive importance;

c) a plan for production and distribution of the productive forces based on the structural features of the economy and on the specific role that it will be called on to play in the world and socialist division of labor; but a plan which must strengthen the material position of the proletariat in the economic and social process;

d) a link up with the world capitalist market based on the monopoly of foreign trade and seeking to obtain the means of production and consumer goods which are deficient, and which must be subordinated to the fundamental plan of production; the two basic guidelines presiding over such a link up are the need to contain the pressures and fluctuations of the world market, and to prevent the integration of the proletarian economy into that market.

It is obvious that while the realization of such a program depends -- in part -- on the level of development of the productive forces and on the cultural level of the laboring



masses, its fate essentially rests on the political power of the proletariat, the solidity of its power, the balance of class forces on a national and international scale, without in any way separating the material, cultural and political factors which are strictly interdependent. But we must insist -- to take the example of the mode of appropriation of social wealth -- that if collectivization is a juridical measure as necessary to the establishment of socialism as it was to the abolition of capitalism, it does not automatically bring about a transformation of the process of production. Engels has already warned us against this tendency to see collective property as a social panacea, when he showed that within capitalist society "... the transformation, either into joint-stock companies, or into state ownership, does not do away with the capitalistic nature of the productive forces. In the joint-stock companies this is obvious. And the modern state, again, is only the organisation that bourgeois society takes on in order to support the general external conditions of the capitalist mode of production against the encroachments as well of the workers as of the individual capitalists. The modern state, no matter what its form, is essentially a capitalist machine, the state of the capitalists, the ideal personification of the total national capital. The more it proceeds to the taking over of productive forces, the more does it actually become the national capitalist, the more citizens does it exploit. The workers remain wage-workers -- proletarians. The capitalist relation is not done away with. It is rather brought to a head. But, brought to a head, it topples over. State ownership of the productive forces is not the solution of the conflict, but concealed within it are the technical conditions that form the elements of that solution." (Anti-Duhring) And Engels added that the solution consisted in grasping the nature and function of the social forces that acted on the productive forces, so as to then submit them to the will of all and transform the means of production from "master demons into willing servants".

This collective will is clearly the political power of the proletariat which can alone determine and see to it that the social character of property is transformed, that it loses its class character. The juridical effects of collectivization can, moreover, be limited by a backward economic structure; and this latter, consequently, makes the political factor still more decisive.

In Russia, there existed a huge complex of factors capable of engendering a new capitalist accumulation and a dangerous class differentiation, that the proletariat could ward off only by the most energetic class policy -- which could alone preserve the state for the proletarian struggle.

It is undeniable that together with the agrarian problem that of small-scale industry constitutes the stumbling block for the whole proletarian dictatorship, a heavy burden which capitalism lays on the proletariat; and

one which will not disappear by simple decree. One can even say that the main problem facing the proletarian revolution in all capitalist countries (save, perhaps, for England) is the most implacable struggle against the small producers of commodities and the small peasants -- a struggle all the more difficult as there can be no question of expropriating these social strata by violence. The expropriation of private production is only economically feasible in the case of enterprises that are already centralized and "socialized"; and not in the case of individual enterprises which the proletariat is still incapable of running efficiently and making more productive, to which therefore it cannot be bound and which it can only control by way of the market. This latter remains a necessary intermediary in order to organize the transition from individual labor to collective labor. Moreover, it is impossible to envisage the proletarian economy in an abstract manner, as a juxtaposition of types of production in their pure state, based on opposed social relations ("socialist", capitalist and pre-capitalist), which evolves uniquely as a result of competition. This is the thesis of centrism, revived by Bukharin, which said that everything that was collectivized became ipso-facto socialist and that as a result the petit-bourgeois and peasant sector was inevitably drawn into bosom of "socialism". In reality, each sphere of production more or less profoundly bears the imprint of its capitalist origin, and, therefore, there is not a juxtaposition but an interpenetration of contradictory elements; contradictory elements that fight it out under the impulsion of a class struggle developing with still more fury, although under less brutal forms, than during the period of open civil war. In this battle, the proletariat, based on collective industry, must be guided by the necessity to subject to its control -- right through to their total annihilation -- all the economic and social forces of capitalism, which have already politically collapsed. However, the proletariat must not commit the mortal error of thinking that because it has nationalized the land and the basic means of production it has erected insurmountable barriers to the activity of bourgeois agents. The process, both political and economic continues on its dialectical course, and the proletariat can only move it towards the goal of a classless society on the condition of strengthening itself internally and externally.

The agrarian question is clearly at the heart of the complex problem of the relations between the proletariat and the petite-bourgeoisie after the revolution. Rosa Luxemburg rightly pointed out that even the Western proletariat in power, acting in the most favorable conditions in this domain, "... would crack more than one tooth on this hard nut, before resolving the thousand and one complex issues arising from this gigantic task." There is no question of resolving this problem -- even in the most general sense -- in the present text, and we will confine ourselves to indicating the basic elements: the integral nationalization of the land and

the fusion of industry and agriculture.

The first measure is a juridical act, perfectly realizable immediately after the seizure of power, in concert with the collectivization of the basic means of production; the second can only be the outcome of a process affecting the whole of the economy, a result which is an integral part of a world socialist organization. These are not, therefore, two simultaneous acts, but staggered in time, the first conditioning the second and the two together conditioning agrarian socialization. In itself, the nationalization of the land or the abolition of private property is not a specifically socialist measure, but in the first place a bourgeois one, making it possible to complete the bourgeois-democratic revolution.

Together with equal access to the land, it constitutes the most revolutionary step, the most extreme step, of that revolution; but when all is said and done, as Lenin put it, "the most perfect foundation from the point of view of the development of capitalism, it is at the same time the agrarian regime most amenable to the passage to socialism". The weakness of R. Luxemburg's critique of the agrarian program of the Bolsheviks concern precisely the following points. In the first place, she did not emphasize the fact that while "the immediate seizure of land by the peasants" had "absolutely nothing to do with a socialist society" (a point on which we are in complete agreement), it did, however, represent an inevitable and transitional stage -- particularly in Russia -- from capitalism to socialism. And that it was "the shortest and the simplest formula to attain a twofold goal: to smash large scale property and by the same measure to attach the peasants to the revolutionary government; that as a political measure for the consolidation of the proletarian socialist government it was a tactic of the first order". In the second place, Luxemburg did not point out that the slogan "land to the peasants" taken over by the Bolsheviks from the program of the Socialist Revolutionaries was to be applied on the basis of the integral suppression of private property in land and not as she asserted on the basis of the transition from large scale landed property to a multitude of small, individual, peasant holdings. It is not correct to say (one need only review the decrees on nationalization) that the division of landholdings extended to large scale, technically developed, holdings, inasmuch as these latter would subsequently form the basis of the "Sovkhozes", -- though they were, it is true, of little importance with respect to the whole of the agrarian economy. (It is worth pointing out in passing that Luxemburg, in indicating her own agrarian program, said nothing about the integral expropriation of the land, which would, however, have an important place in the later measures, while insisting only on the nationalization of large scale and medium scale property.)

Finally, in the third place, Luxemburg limits herself to showing the negative side of the division of the land (an inevitable evil), to denouncing the fact that it cannot suppress, "but only increase social and economic inequality within the peasantry, aggravating class oppositions there"; while it was precisely the development of the class struggle in the countryside that allowed the proletarian power to consolidate itself by winning over the proletarianized and semi-proletarianized peasants that would constitute the social basis for extending the influence of the proletariat and assuring its victory there. Luxemburg would clearly underestimate this political aspect of the agrarian problem and the fundamental role that the proletariat had to play, basing itself on the political domination and possession of large scale industry.

It would be a mistake not to see that the Russian proletariat faced an extremely complex situation. By virtue of the dispersion of innumerable small peasants, the effects of nationalization would be very limited. One must not forget that the collectivization of the land does not necessarily bring about that of the means of production linked to it. In Russia, that was true of only 8% of the latter, while 92% remained the private possession of the peasants; by contrast, in industry, collectivization affected 89% of the productive forces, 97% if you add the railroads, and 99% for heavy industry alone.

Although the agricultural stock of tools only represented a little more than a third of the total stock of tools, it constituted an extensive base for a development favorable to capitalist relations, taking into account the enormous mass of peasants. It is evident that from the economic point of view the central objective that would have made it possible to contain and ward off this development could only be the organization of large scale industrialized agricultural production, with a highly advanced technology. That, however, was dependent on a general industrialization, and consequently on the proletarian aid of the advanced countries. In order not to be caught in the dilemma of perishing or providing tools and consumer goods to the small peasants, the proletariat -- while seeking to achieve an equilibrium between agricultural and industrial production -- had to make its principal thrust the class struggle in both the countryside and the city, while always keeping before it the perspective of linking that struggle to that of world revolution. Allying itself to the poor peasant so as to struggle against the capitalist peasant while aiming at the elimination of small scale producers -- the vital condition for collective production -- constituted the apparently paradoxical task imposed on the proletariat in village politics.

For Lenin, that alliance was alone capable of saving the proletarian revolution until the insurrection of other proletariat's. But it implied, not the capitulation of the

proletariat to the peasantry, but rather the old condition to overcome the petty-bourgeois hesitation of the peasants oscillating between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat by virtue of their economic and social situation and their incapacity to carry out an independent policy; a condition for leading them into the process of collective labor. To "eliminate" the small producers did not mean to crush them through violence, but, as Lenin said in 1918, "to assist them in reaching the 'ideal' capitalism, because equality in access to the land is capitalism brought to its ideal state from the point of view of the small producers; at the same time, it is necessary to make them see the deficiencies of that system and the need for a collective cultivation". It is not surprising that during the three terrible years of civil war the experimental method could not enlighten the "socialist" consciousness of the Russian peasants. If, in order to keep the land against the White bands, they supported the proletariat, this was at the expense of feeding the workers and of vital requisitions for the proletarian state.

The NEP, though restoring a more normal situation, would also re-establish "freedom and capitalism", a situation that above all favored the peasant capitalists, an enormous ransom that would lead Lenin to say that with the tax in kind "the kulaks would tread where they had never trod before". Under the leadership of centrism, incapable of resisting the pressure of the renaisant bourgeoisie over the economic apparatus, the state organs and the party, but on the contrary inciting the middle peasants to enrich themselves while breaking with the poor peasants and the proletariat, the outcome could only be the one that we now know all too well. A perfectly logical coincidence of events: ten years after the proletarian insurrection a considerable displacement of the balance of forces in favor of bourgeois elements, which corresponds to the introduction of the Five Year Plans -- whose realization must be grafted onto an unprecedented exploitation of the proletariat.

The Russian revolution attempted to resolve the complex problem of the relations between the proletariat and the peasantry. It failed, not because a proletarian revolution could not succeed, not because only a bourgeois revolution was on the agenda, as Otto Bauer and other Kautsky's maintained, but rather because the Bolsheviks were not armed with the principles for a proletarian administration, based on historical experience, which would have assured economic and political victory.

[....] It remains for us to examine some of the norms of economic administration that we think must condition the link between the party and the masses, and which are a basis for the strengthening of the dictatorship of the proletariat.

Any system of production can only develop on the basis of enlarged reproduction, that is

to say, the accumulation of wealth. However, a type of society expresses itself less through its external forms and manifestations than through its social content, through the motive force that presides over production; in short, through its class relations. In historical evolution, the internal and external processes come into contradiction constantly. Capitalist development has shown that the growth of the productive forces at the same time engenders its opposite, the decline in the material conditions of the proletariat -- a phenomenon characterized by the contradiction between exchange value and use value, between production and consumption. We have already said that the capitalist system was not a progressive system by nature but by necessity (under the goad of accumulation and competition). Marx would emphasize this contrast by saying that the "development of the productive forces only has importance to the extent to which it increases the surplus labor of the working class, and not because it reduces the time necessary for material production." (Capital)

Starting from a fact that is characteristic of all types of societies, the inevitability of surplus labor, the problem is, therefore, essentially the mode of appropriation and destruction of surplus labor, the mass of surplus labor and its duration, the relation of this mass to the total labor, and finally the rhythm of its accumulation. Right off, we can quote this other remark of Marx: "the true wealth of society and the possibility of the continuous growth of the process of reproduction does not depend on the length of surplus labor but on its productivity, and on the more or less propitious conditions in which this productivity operates." (Capital) And Marx immediately adds that the basic condition for the establishment of the "reign of freedom" is the reduction in the length of the labor day.

These factors permit us to see the tendency that must be impressed on the evolution of the proletarian economy. They also compel us to reject the conception that sees the absolute proof of "socialism" in the growth of the productive forces. This idea was not only defended by centrism but also by Trotsky: "Liberalism makes a pretense of not seeing the enormous economic progress of the Soviet regime, that is to say, the concrete proof of the incalculable advantages of socialism. The economists of the dispossessed classes simply ignore the rhythm of industrial development, which is unprecedented in world history." (Lutte des Classes, Juin 1930) We have already pointed out that this question of "rhythm" would remain uppermost in the mind of Trotsky and his Opposition, though it in no way corresponded to the mission of the proletariat; this latter consists in changing the goal and motive of production and not in accelerating its rhythm on the backs of the proletariat, as happens under capitalism. The proletariat has no reason to devote itself to the quickened "rhythm" of production, and this for two reasons: first, it in no way conditions the construction of socialism, inasmuch as socialism can only be of an

international order; second, the meaninglessness of such a preoccupation will be quickly revealed by the contribution of the technology of advanced capitalism to the world socialist economy.

When we pose as a primordial economic task the necessity to change the goal and motive of production, that is to say, to orient it towards the needs of consumption, we are evidently speaking of a process and not an immediate result of the revolution. The very structure of the transitional economy as we have analyzed it cannot automatically produce this economic outcome, because the survival of "bourgeois right" lets subsist certain social relations of exploitation and labor power -- to a certain degree -- still retains its character as a commodity. The policy of the party, stimulated by the economic demands of the workers, expressed through their trade union organizations, must tend to abolish the contradiction between labor power and labor, which was developed to an extreme by capitalism. In other words, for the capitalist use of labor power with a view to the accumulation of capital, there must be substituted a "proletarian" use of this labor power with a view to the satisfaction of purely social needs, which will facilitate the political and economic consolidation of the proletariat.

In the organization of production, the proletarian state must base itself on the needs of the masses, developing the branches of production that respond to those needs, taking into account the specific material conditions that will prevail in the envisaged economy.

If the economic program remains in the framework of the construction of a world socialist economy, and consequently remains bound to the international class struggle, the proletarian state can all the more devote itself to the task of increasing consumption. By contrast, if the economic program takes on an autonomous character, directly or indirectly oriented to a "national socialism", a growing part of the surplus labor will be swallowed up by the construction of enterprises which in the future will have no justification in the international division of labor. In fact, these enterprises will be devoted to producing means of defense for the "socialist society" in construction. This is precisely the fate that has befallen Soviet Russia.

It is certain that any improvement in the material situation of the proletarian masses in the first place depends on the productivity of labor; this latter, however, depends on the technical development of the productive forces, and consequently on accumulation. In the second place, it is linked to the output of labor corresponding to the organization and discipline within the labor process. Such are the fundamental elements which also exist in the capitalist system, with the characteristic that there the concrete results of accumulation are diverted from their human goal to the benefit of accumulation in "itself". The productivity

of labor is not translated into objects for consumption but into capital.

It would be pointless to hide the fact that the problem is far from being resolved by the proclamation of a policy seeking to enlarge consumption. But it is necessary to begin by affirming it because it is a matter of a major directive irreducibly opposed to the one which places the emphasis on industrialization and its accelerated growth, and inevitably sacrificing one or more generations of workers (centrism openly declares this). Now, a proletariat "sacrificed" even for objectives that appear to correspond to its historic interests (the reality in Russia shows that this was in no way the case!), cannot constitute a real source of strength for the world proletariat. It can only be diverted, under the hypnotic effect of national objectives.

There is, however, the objection that you cannot enlarge consumption without accumulation, and that you cannot have accumulation without a more or less considerable levy on consumption. The dilemma will be all the more acute as it will correspond to a restricted development of the productive forces and to a relatively weak productivity of labor. It is in these worst of all conditions that the problem would be posed in Russia, and one of its most dramatic manifestations was the "scissors" phenomenon.

Basing ourselves on the internationalist perspective that we have developed, we can affirm (so as not to fall into abstractness) that the economic tasks of the proletariat are primordial. The comrades of "Bilan", animated by the sound preoccupation of insisting on the role of the proletarian state on the world terrain of class struggle, have unfortunately limited the importance of the problem of economic tasks; they have done this by viewing the "economic and military domains (1) as only secondary details in the activity of the proletarian state, though they are essential for an exploiting class" (Bilan, p.612). We repeat, the program is determined and limited by the world policy of the proletarian state, but once that is clear, the fact remains that the proletariat will have to be vigilant and devote all its class energy to trying to find the solution to the formidable problem of consumption which will condition its role as a "simple factor in the struggle of the world proletariat".

We think that the comrades of "Bilan" have committed another error (2) in not making the distinction between an administration tending to the construction of "socialism" and a socialist administration of the transitional economy. This can be seen in their declaration that "far from being able to envisage the possibility of the socialist administration of the economy in a given country and in the midst of an international struggle, we must start by proclaiming the very impossibility of such a socialist administration." But what is a policy which seeks to improve the standard of living of the workers if it is not a policy of

socialist administration seeking precisely the overthrow of the capitalist process of production? In the period of transition, it is perfectly possible to generate this new economic course of production oriented to need, even while classes persist.

The fact remains that the change in the goal and motive of production does not only depend on the adoption of the correct policy, but above all on the pressure exercised over the economy by the organizations of the proletariat, as well as the adaptation of the productive apparatus to its needs. The improvement in the standard of living of the proletariat does not fall from the sky. It is a function of the development of the productive capacity, whether this be the result of the increase in the mass of social labor, of a greater output of labor resulting from its better organization or from the greater output of labor as a result of more powerful means of production.

Concerning the mass of social labor (assuming the number of workers to be constant), we have said that it is determined by the duration and intensity of the labor power employed. It is precisely these two factors -- linked to a fall in the value of labor power as a result of its greater productivity -- that determines the degree of exploitation imposed on the proletariat in the capitalist regime. In the period of transition, labor power still retains its character as a commodity to the extent to which the wage is bound to the value of labor power. However, it casts off this character as a commodity to the degree to which the wage becomes equivalent to the total labor furnished by the worker (an exception being made for the surplus labor necessary to provide for social needs).

In contrast to a capitalist policy, a real proletarian policy to increase the productive forces must certainly not be based on surplus labor arising from an increased duration or greater intensity of social labor, which under its capitalist form means absolute surplus value. On the contrary, it must be based on setting norms for the rhythm and duration of labor compatible with the existence of a real dictatorship of the proletariat; and it can only be based on a more rational organization of labor, on an elimination of waste in social activity -- although in this domain the possibilities of increasing the mass of labor will be quickly exhausted.

Under these conditions, a "proletarian" accumulation must find its essential bases in labor made available through more advanced technology. That means that the growth in the productivity of labor poses the following alternative: either the same mass of goods (or use value) results in a reduction in the total volume of labor consumed, or, if this latter remains constant (or even if it shrinks relative to the technical progress achieved) the quantity of goods to be distributed grows. In both cases, a reduction in relative surplus labor (relative to the

labor strictly necessary for the reproduction of labor power) can go hand in hand with greater consumption and be compatible with a real rise in wages -- in contrast to the fictitious rise under capitalism. It is in the new utilization of this productivity that the superiority of a proletarian over a capitalist administration appears -- in contrast to the matter of production costs, which as we have already indicated, is a terrain on which the proletariat will inevitably be thrashed.

It is the development of the productivity of labor that thrusts capitalism into its crisis of decadence, where -- in a permanent way and no longer only in the course of cyclical crises -- the mass of use values clashes with the mass of exchange value. The bourgeoisie is overcome by the immensity of its production, and it cannot dispose of it by filling the enormous demand of unmet needs save under pain of suicide.

In the period of transition, the productivity of labor will still be far from corresponding to the formula "to each according to his needs". However, the possibility of being able to utilize this productivity solely for human needs will transform the very framework of the social question. Marx had already pointed out that with capitalist production, the productivity of labor remains below the theoretical optimum. By contrast, after the revolution it becomes possible to reduce, then to eliminate, the capitalist antagonism between the product and its value, provided the proletarian policy tends not to reestablish the wage as the value of labor power -- the capitalist method, which diverts technical progress to the benefit of capital -- but rather to raise it more and more above this value, on the very basis of the productivity achieved.

It is true that a certain fraction of the relative surplus labor cannot directly return to the worker, because of the very necessities of accumulation without which no technical progress is possible. Therefore, the problem of the rate and rhythm of accumulation must be reposed. And if it comes down to a question of extent, the element of arbitrariness will be absolutely excluded by the very principles delimiting the economic tasks of the proletariat, such as we have defined them. Nonetheless, it must be clear that the determination of the rate of accumulation will be established through economic centralism and not by the decisions of the producers in their individual enterprises, as proposed by the Dutch Internationalists (c.f. p.116 of their pamphlet previously cited). Even they are not convinced of the practical value of their proposed solution, since they immediately follow it with the statement that "the rate of accumulation cannot be left to the discretion of the different enterprises, and that it is the general congress of workplace councils that will determine the obligatory norm", a formula that comes down to a disguised form of centralism.

If we now turn to what has happened in



Russia, we must look beyond the false claims of centrism to have eliminated the exploitation of the proletariat through the collectivization of the means of production. What we see is that the operation of the Soviet economy and that of the capitalist economy, while starting from different bases, have come together and are both directed towards the same outcome: imperialist war. Both operate on the basis of a growing extortion of surplus value which does not return to the working class. In the USSR, the labor process is capitalist in its substance, if not in its social aspects and relations of production. In Russia, everything is directed to increasing the mass of absolute surplus value, obtained through the intensification of labor, resulting in the forms of "Stakhanovism". The material conditions of the workers are in no way positively linked to technical improvements and to the development of the productive forces; and in any case, the relative share of the proletariat in the social patrimony does not increase but shrinks. This latter is a phenomenon analogous to what the capitalist system engenders even in its best periods of prosperity. Moreover, the Russian regime practices a policy of lowering wages which tends to substitute unskilled workers (coming from the immense reservoir provided by the peasantry) for skilled proletarians, who are at the same time the most conscious.

[...] For some comrades, as we have already said, the Russian revolution was not proletarian and its reactionary evolution was preordained by the fact that it was brought about by a culturally backward proletariat (though by its class consciousness it placed itself in the vanguard of the world proletariat) which, besides, had to rule a backward country. To such a fatalistic attitude, we will limit ourselves to opposing the view expressed by Marx vis a vis the Paris Commune: although the Commune expressed an historical immaturity of the proletariat in taking power, Marx would attribute an immense importance to that step and find in the experience a wealth of lessons -- lessons, we can say, from which the Bolsheviks drew inspiration in 1917. While seeing the Russian revolution as also filled with significant lessons, we do not deduce from that fact that future revolutions will be a photographic reproduction of October. Rather, we insist that by its fundamental traits, October 1917 will leave its mark on these revolutions, and we remember what Lenin understood by "the international value of the Russian revolution" (Left-Wing Communism). A Marxist does not "replay" history, but he interprets it in order to forge the theoretical weapons for the proletariat, so as to prevent the repetition of errors and to advance the final triumph over the bourgeoisie. To try to grasp the conditions that would have made it possible for the Russian proletariat to definitively triumph is to give real meaning to the Marxist method of investigation, inasmuch as it allows us to add a new storey onto the edifice of historical materialism.

If it is true that the reflux of the first

revolutionary wave made it possible to temporarily isolate the Russian proletariat, we do not believe that it is in that fact that one can find the determinant cause of the evolution of the USSR. This latter must be attributed to the false perspective that flowed from the understanding of the evolution of capitalism in the epoch of wars and revolutions. The idea of the "stabilization" of capitalism would naturally engender the theory of "socialism in one country" and consequently the "defensist" policy of the USSR.

[...] In the next revolution, the proletariat will triumph independently of its cultural immaturity and economic deficiencies, provided that it concentrates not on the "construction of socialism" (in one country), but on the expansion of the international civil war.

Mitchell

#### Notes:

- 1) We are in agreement with the comrades of "Bilan" in asserting that the defense of the proletarian state is not posed on the military terrain but on the political plane, through its link with the international proletariat.
- 2) This is not a mere question of formulation, but is linked to their tendency to minimize economic problems.



## APPEAL TO READERS

We intend to make this magazine an instrument of political clarification and understanding of the situation today. We also need to have the tools necessary for direct intervention in the class struggle (leaflets, posters, newspapers). Our limited material resources and our small number makes this task very difficult. We appeal to our readers to help circulate Internationalist Perspective and to carry on political discussion with us. We ask you to subscribe to our magazine and to show a practical support for our efforts by giving a contribution if you can.



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INTERNATIONAL PERSPECTIVE regularly holds Public Meetings as an integral part of its determination to actively stimulate a real debate around the vital issues that face revolutionaries and the working class. For information on topics and dates write to our local address.

# 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.