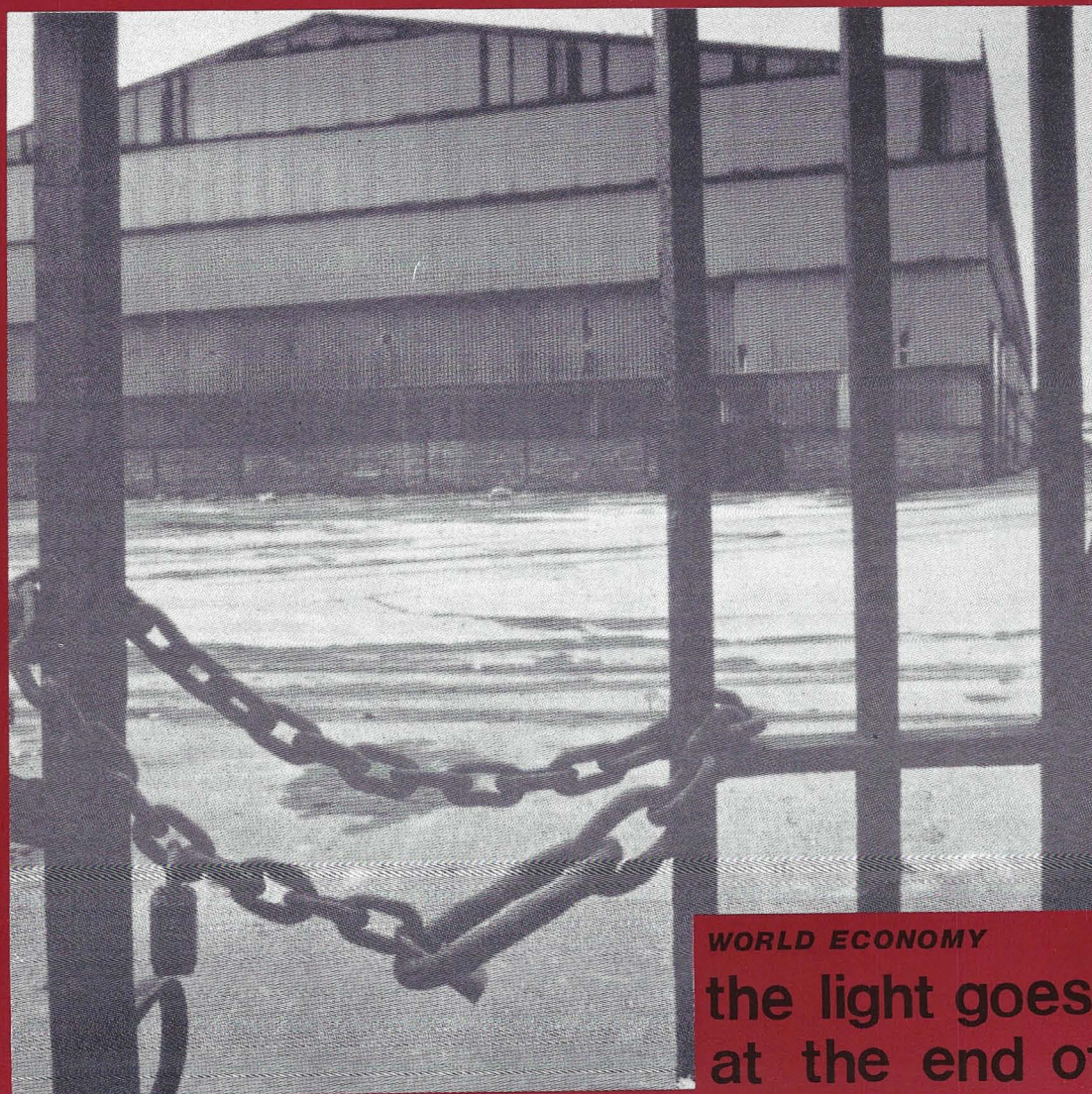


INTERNATIONALIST PERSPECTIVE



WORLD ECONOMY

**the light goes out
at the end of the tunnel**

INTERNATIONALIST PERSPECTIVE

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WORLD ECONOMY

the light goes out at the end of the tunnel

With the price of oil and other raw materials continuing on a downwards slope, with low inflation and low short-term interest rates in place in key countries, with the US recession over (officially at least), one would expect an economic boom, at least in some parts of the world. Instead, the picture is invariably bleak, ranging from growth too anemic to stop the spread of poverty in even the strongest economies, to a catastrophic collapse of production in parts of the former Eastern Bloc and the "Third World".

"Not since World War II has the economy been so weak for so long", The New York Times noted recently (8/29) in an article pointing out how all (bourgeois) economic forecasters had been far too optimistic. This has changed too. Now you hear more and more of them speak of "the invisible recovery" or even "the contained depression", as the J. Levy Economics Institute quite aptly describes the current situation.

The bourgeois economists have not only run out of excuses, they have run out of ideas too. Since the outbreak of the crisis at the end of the sixties they have come up with many ingenious ways to contain the problems, to postpone them into the future. It seems like this future is here now. The crushing weight of debt is making any significant recovery of the world economy impossible. And the capitalist economists don't know what to do about it. Recently, in Wyoming, "an all-star cast of economists gathered to search for the Holy Grail: a formula to reverse the trend in which growth in the industrial world has slowed decade by decade since World War II." (New York Times, aug. 31, 1992). "The growth problem is the productivity problem", said Herbert Stein, chairman of the Council of Economic Advisers in the US under Nixon and

Ford, "Nobody, not even all the Nobel prize winners in economics, knows how to correct that". The best the Nobel prize winners in Wyoming could come up with were recommendations to invest more in education and infrastructure, which, helpful as they may be, don't even come close to confronting the roots of the problem, because these roots can only be found in the very system on which

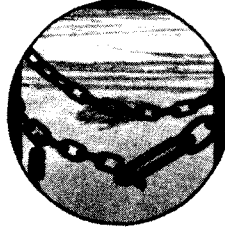
their own wealth and status depends.

World capitalism has truly worked itself into a bind. Since 1990, the world economy has grown less than 1%. The longer this stagnation lasts, the more bankruptcies and unemployment increase, the more profits are crushed by interest-obligations and the weaker the international banking system becomes. The world economy will not even temporarily recover unless demand is stimulated. But demand can not be stimulated without accelerating deficit-spending. And deficit-spending can no longer be accelerated without igniting inflation and/or pushing up interest rates so high that another, even more devastating, recession would be triggered.

A TRAIN IN SEARCH OF A LOCOMOTIVE

The US is no longer able to play the role of locomotive, pulling the world economy out of the hole. The last time it did so, in 1983, it used basically 3 mechanisms:

- creating demand by doubling military expenditures;
- stimulating consumption by the capitalist class by giving the rich huge taxbreaks, amounting to hundreds of billions of dollars;
- attracting foreign capital to finance its deficit spending through a policy of high interest rates.



None of this can be done today. Military expenditures cannot be increased, not so much because the US lacks an imperialist rival which would justify them, but mainly because they already are on a very high level (higher still on average than during the Reagan years). The US simply cannot afford to raise them significantly just as it cannot invest massively in things like infrastructure and education. With a debt-load of more than 4 trillion dollars which is increasing at a rate of 13,000 dollars a second, interest payments on the debt are already the third largest item (and soon the second largest) of the US budget. For the same reason, a significant tax stimulus is out of the question. And no longer can the US count on an endless influx of foreign capital to finance its budget and trade deficits. To prevent its anemic post-recession growth from imploding into yet another recession, it had to chop its short-term interest rates to 3%, the lowest level in three decades and 6.5% lower than those of Germany, making dollar-denominated securities unattractive for foreign investors.

Can any other country or group of countries take over the US locomotive role and stimulate demand enough to launch a recovery of the world economy?

Germany has increased its public spending rapidly since 1990. This year alone, it's spending more than \$ 120 billion on propping up the former GDR and it has spent a great deal in the rest of the former Eastern bloc too. The costs of integrating a bankrupt Eastern Germany turned out much higher than expected. As a result, Germany's budget deficits grew more than eightfold. To keep them under control, the government hiked income taxes, tried to drive down the wages of public sector workers (with only limited success, see the article on the strikes in Germany in our previous issue) but mostly increased its borrowing.

Like the US in the early '80's, Germany jacked up its interest rates steeply to attract foreign capital. Tens of billions of dollars began to flow to Germany. Like the US in the '80's, Germany acted as a vampire to the rest of the world economy, robbing it of much needed capital, weakening other countries' currencies. Other European currencies, linked to the D-Mark in the European Monetary System, were forced to follow and hike up their interest rates too. But it was clear to all that the weaker European countries would not be able to withstand the deflationary pressure of high interest rates for very long, so the flight of

capital away from the Pound, Lira, Peseta etc continued, until they were forced to devalue (which will not necessarily prevent the exchange value of their currencies from going down even further). During this entire chaotic episode in September and despite heavy pressure from its European partners and the US, Germany lowered its interest rates by only 0.25%, claiming it couldn't do more because of inflationary pressure. So Germany's deficit-spending turned out to be a burden rather than a boon for its main trading partners.

What about Japan? Even with its stock market off 60% since 1989, with several of its economic sectors in decline and its banks wobbling, Japan is still by far the healthiest among the world's major industrial economies. During the '80's, Japanese capitalists became a lot wealthier, not as a result of tax breaks like those in the US, but because their strong competitive position made them the first beneficiaries of the increased demand which those US-tax policies generated. Japan became the world's largest creditor; its export of capital played an important role in keeping the world economy growing (from 1985 to 1990 Japan's capital outflow reached 596 billion dollars). The US was the main target of its investment but when the speculative bubbles in the US began to explode with the Stock Market crash of 1987, more Japanese capital stayed home. But then Japan's own speculative bubbles burst with a collapse of real estate and stocks, a wave of bankruptcies, etc. As a result, "Japanese banks and financial institutions are facing the most severe situation since the second world war", according to its Finance Minister Hata. Faced with stagnation, Japan is not as powerless as other industrial powers because it doesn't have to worry about a heavy debt overload. While other major powers are running huge deficits (in the US for example, the budget deficit equals 5% of the GNP, in Italy 11%). Japan's fiscal surplus equals 3% of its GNP. Therefore Japan is the only industrial country that is in a position to launch a serious demand-stimulating expansion program. And it did so this past summer, adopting a public investment program worth about \$86 billion. While part of this program will do no more than prop up sagging real estate prices, others may stimulate demand and thereby counteract, albeit modestly, the stagnation of the world economy. But at the same time it will keep more Japanese capital at home (already in 1991, Japan imported more capital than it exported) and thus deprive the rest of the world of a much needed investment source.



CURES THAT KILL

While capitalist economic policies in the '70's sought to protect profits in the first place by preventing a sharp contraction of the markets, which meant pushing the pedal of money-creation all the way to the floor until the world economy tottered at the brink of hyper-inflation, in the '80's the emphasis shifted. Now the defense of profits was undertaken mainly through various methods of cost-cutting, i.e. the reduction of taxes, the elimination of regulations, the decline in wages, the elimination of employment through automation, the integration of low-wage countries into "the global assembly line" etc. All this caused a sharp reduction of the living standards and thus of the buying power of non-capitalist consumers. This decline in demand was compensated for by the massive increase in spending by the capitalist class and their hangers-on, especially in the US. But by the beginning of the '90's their demand tapered off, too. The weight of the debt accumulated during the '80's on companies and consumers is only part of the explanation. Even the demand of rich people can at some point no longer be significantly expanded. And the generalisation of the use of computers and new automation technology in the workplace was largely completed by the end of the '80's, while the bleak perspectives of the world economy discouraged the expansion of production capacity. So there remains no realistic hope for a robust expansion of the demand of the capitalist class in the foreseeable future, while in the meantime, demand of non-capitalist consumers is further

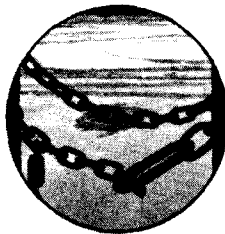
reduced. Noting how, despite a decline in sales, profits increased in the US in the first half of 1992 thanks to a decline in wages and employment, a New York Times-reporter wrote: "Thus the very things that have helped profits have reduced demand for the things business make" (8/30/92). An astute observation from which, characteristically, nothing is concluded. With his vision limited by the blinders of "the national interest", a bourgeois journalist can't see the larger picture and can't point out that competition forces all other capitalist all over the planet to do the same thing: to try to prop up their profits in ways that at the same time, reduce the demand for the commodities they must sell.

The continuing stagnation of the world economy will further reduce global demand outside the capitalist class, when more workers are eliminated from the production process and wages are driven down further, as each capital tries to survive in the exacerbated competitive struggle. The humongous budget deficits will force a new round of attacks on the social wage, on welfare, on social security. Policy-makers are finding themselves between rock and a hard place: ignoring the deficit problem has become impossible but any serious attack on the deficit by raising taxes or reducing social spending, further reduces demand and increases the deflationary pressure on the economy, and any further weakening of the economy increases the deficit problem. Any possible policy has to be a juggling act, like tossing a hot potato from one hand to the other. Only this potato doesn't cool off, it gets hotter and hotter.

The attempts of the capitalist class to contain this problem by trying to work out more global planning, by seeking coordination between their respective economic policies, by organizing production more efficiently, by globalising production processes throughout the world economy, may buy them some time but do nothing to solve their problems. Yet these trends do clarify the possibility of solving the problem by eliminating capitalism, by removing the profit-motive as a condition for production, and organizing global production and exchange of goods on the basis of "from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs". The worsening dilemma of capitalism and its futile attempts to solve it will help revolutionaries to make this increasingly clear.

ECONOMIC WAR

While its economic crisis pushes capitalism towards more globalisation, at the same time, it exacerbates the competitive struggle between the major industrial powers. The pressure for protectionist measures increases. The GATT negotiations aimed at removing protectionist barriers are stalled because of



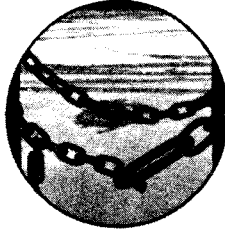
the contradictory interests of US and European capital. In the meantime, each major power is increasing its grip on its neighboring markets and investment zones. The US recently concluded a "North American Free Trade Association" (NAFTA) with Canada and Mexico. Japan is turning South East Asia into its manufacturing and merchandising backyard and is beginning to displace the US as the most influential power in the region. And despite recent difficulties, the European Community is continuing on its path towards economic and political integration, under the inevitable leadership of Germany. But it would be a mistake to see in these developments the emergence of three "trade blocks", fighting each other by erecting protectionist walls around their zones of influence. Each major power has far more to lose by such a development than they could possibly gain. And they know it. The capitalist class isn't blind to the lessons of its past. Wholesale protectionist measures triggered and worsened the depression of the '30's. It can be safely assumed that these blunders will not be repeated. It's true that the protectionist trend has increased in the US (in 1980, 20% of American products received some protection in the form of import quota and tariffs, in 1992, 35%) but these measures remain modest compared to the infamous Smoot-Hawley Act of 1930. The US could afford to take them because of its dominant power; at the same time it has been able to force Japan to lower its protective barriers somewhat in recent years. The protectionist trend will continue to exist but it will probably remain in check as long as there is no imminent danger of the formation of new military blocs (which, in the long run, would be the logical outcome of the process of ever more ferocious competition for a shrinking world market). The integration of the European market, the conclusion of the NAFTA accord and the penetration of Japanese capital in South East Asia is rather an expression of the opposite trend, towards globalisation of production and distribution.

But this doesn't mean that the economic war isn't heating up. The weapon of choice, however, is not protectionism but monetary policy. The US has been driving down short-term interest rates, not only to combat stagnation at home but also to make its exports cheaper, by lowering the exchange value of the dollar, and thus gaining an edge over its competitors. At the same time, the lower interest diminishes the return on dollar-denominated holdings, alleviating the weight of debt obligations. No other country in the world could run such high deficits (in

government-spending as well as in trade), requiring massive borrowing, and simultaneously drive its interest rates so low. It would be severely punished by a massive flight of capital. The US can do it because of its position as world leader, being the strongest economic, military and political power, and thus the "safe haven" in turbulent times. Its dollar is the world's reserve currency, which makes a massive flight away from it impossible.

Until now. The collapse of the Eastern bloc, which removed the inevitability of US leadership for the rest of the West, and the rising economic power of Germany (and to a lesser extent, of Japan) are threatening to change the rules of the game. The penetration of German capital in Western Europe continues at a fast pace. Germany is also the largest investor in what used to be the Eastern bloc; to the degree that some Eastern European countries find a role in the global economy (mostly as low wage-areas for German capital) they will be economically and politically directed towards Berlin. Through its policy of high interest rates and the Mark's reputation of stability in contrast to the dollar, Germany is attracting a massive influx of foreign capital. More and more capitalists from all over the world have holdings in Marks.

To some degree, Germany's monetary policy is aimed at fighting off inflation, but to some degree it might also be an expression of its ambition to dethrone the US as the world's leading economic power. If present trends continue, it is possible that the dollar's position as the world's reserve currency will soon be threatened by the Mark (or possibly later by the currency of a German-dominated Europe). This would not only represent an unacceptable loss of power for the US, but it also would deprive the US of guaranteed access to capital to finance its budget- and trade-deficits. When this danger grows, the US would be forced to try to prevent it by hiking its interest rates sharply, and/or use its military-political power to apply some economic blackmail. This would lead to a general and steep rise of interest rates which could push the world economy into an even deeper recession. Even if the big powers can avoid such a conflict by seeking a compromise on their monetary policies, interest rates will tend to rise, to the degree that the industrial countries succeed in crawling out of the present stagnation (long term interest rates in the US are already twice the level of short term rates). Last year, despite zero-growth of the world economy, global borrowing



was higher than ever. If forecasters are right and the pace of economic growth increases a bit next year (3%, the IMF hopes *), the competition for capital will increase and therefore the pressure on interest rates too. This means an increasing weight of debt, forcing new rounds of austerity measures and wage and employment cuts that choke off growth. In the meantime, the weaker countries will be even more deprived of capital investments. Countries of the ex-Eastern bloc will be shaken by hyper-inflation, countries of the "Third World" will see mass starvation

at historically unprecedented levels. The light is indeed going out at the end of the tunnel and there is no exit sign, except the flickering but bright flame of hope of the international working class revolution.

Sander
September 23, 1992

*) Since this article was written, this prevision has been revised to 2%.

DECOMPOSITION

Having forgotten the theoretico-political bases upon which it was constituted, plagued by the weaknesses of the workers struggle over the past decade (see our texts on this subject), the ICC has survived by reducing the proletariat to a pure object of its phantasms. In pretending to pierce the veil that surrounds the capitalist world, the ICC has, in fact, revealed its own reality to us: that of a group in the midst of theoretical decomposition.

This trajectory of degeneration was opened by the debate on class consciousness, which was closed by our expulsion in 1986 (see our texts): in the new vision of the ICC, revolutionary consciousness only fully exists in the party, and the party, being identified with that consciousness, can no longer be an object of criticism; instead, it is compelled to transform itself into inert, dead, matter, devoid of movement and development. Today, the circle is closed: the system of the ICC has snapped shut on it like a trap, inasmuch as the class which justifies its existence, has itself purportedly fallen into inertia: "it is important to be particularly clear about the danger that decomposition represents for the capacity of the proletariat to fulfill its historic task. ... The decomposition of society, which can only worsen, can also, in the years to come, mow down the best forces of the proletariat, and definitively compromise the perspective of communism. Thus, because the poison spewn

continued from p. 16

by the putrefaction of capitalism spares none of its components, none of its classes, not even the proletariat ... the phenomenon of the decomposition of bourgeois ideology, such as it is occurring today, essentially presents itself as an obstacle to the development of the proletariat's consciousness..." The ICC is trapped between a Scylla and Charybdis: its original sacralization of the proletariat has given way to the most complete disillusion! From its glorification of every workers struggle, conceived as mechanically leading to a revolutionary upheaval by the end of the 80s, the ICC has now fallen into the pit of despair. It is that very despair, that it has now transformed into its "new analytic framework".

This framework has less and less to distinguish it from the "anti-capitalism" propounded by diverse leftist factions of the bourgeoisie, or its ecologist variants. Where the leftists drone on about the power of the trusts or the rich nations, and the ecologists see man only as a destructive force, the ICC bemoans sexual excess, drugs, or the power of the Mafia, grasped as increasingly autonomous realities. Both the real power of capital, and the real potential of the working class, have been banished by the theory of decomposition.

ALMA

WAR IN YUGOSLAVIA

the hidden face of capitalist order

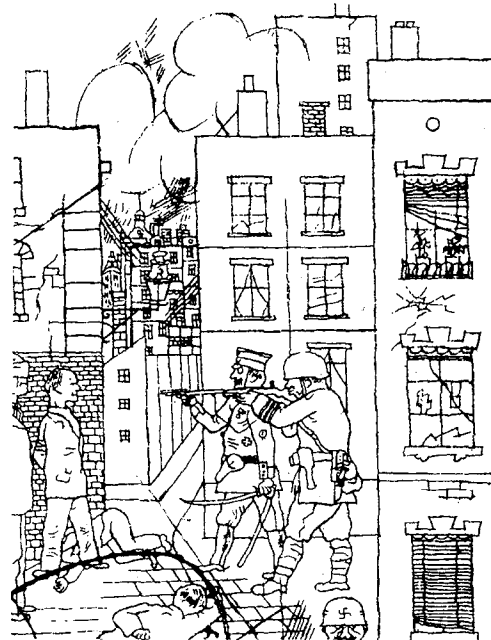
The carnage in what was once Yugoslavia has already exploded one myth propagated by the mass media and think tanks that function as a vital part of the late capitalist state: that the end of the cold war, or to be precise, the victory of American imperialism over its Russian rival, would usher in an epoch of perpetual peace and disarmament.

Faced with the incredible brutality of the conflicts that have erupted in Yugoslavia, with the barbaric "ethnic cleansing" practiced by Serbs and Croats in Croatia, and now by Serbs, Croats, and Muslims, in Bosnia-Herzegovina, the mass media and think tanks in the West have propounded a new myth: these conflicts, with all their barbarism, are the products of backward, underdeveloped, societies; the slaughter and cruelty that characterizes them is an atavistic reversion to a medieval past that the civilizing processes of modernity, i.e. capitalism, were not yet able to completely overcome. In short, the carnage in Yugoslavia is rooted in the semi-feudal, peasant, world of clans, blood feuds, and religious crusades, not the enlightened, technological, scientific, world of value production, markets and capital.

This myth is as baseless as the short-lived myth of a capitalist world at perpetual peace. However useful it is to capital to convince the mass of the population that the carnage in Yugoslavia (or the Caucasus, or Somalia) has nothing to do with the "civilized world" (save to threaten to unleash a flood of refugees upon it), that it is a function of "backwardness" as opposed to "development", the fact remains that the barbarism that we are seeing on our T.V. screens has more to do with the future of our capitalist civilization than with its pre-capitalist past. If the mass murder of civilians in Bosnia reminds us of the activities of the Nazi Sonderkommando in Eastern Europe in 1941, and if the relentless and merciless destruction of Sarajevo, and its civilian population, reminds us (or should remind us) of the fate of tens of thousands of civilians in German and Japanese cities in 1945 as the allies bombed them around the clock, it is because like those atrocities of World War Two, the carnage in

Yugoslavia is a product of the barbarism of capitalism in its phase of decadence.

However bloody were the clan feuds or religious crusades of the pre-capitalist Balkan world, they bear no more than a superficial resemblance to the present day carnage. The war in Bosnia is not characterized by a proselytizing zeal, by demands for apostasy on the part of the populace that characterized the medieval religious crusade. Nor is it fueled by the



determination to avenge personal injuries or insults typical of blood feuds, with their strict prohibitions against violence to women and children. Its dynamic is based on absolute enmity towards the enemy, defined as the Other, reduced to a dehumanized object which must be exterminated. The barbarism in

Yugoslavia is fueled by nationalism, the ideology par excellence of capitalism, the real logic of which can be seen revealed in the corpse strewn streets of towns with names like Vukovar and Zvornik. It is not merely the technology (AK47's, mortars, and rockets) which separates the carnage in 1992 from the violent past of the Yugoslav lands. It is the very logic, the dynamic, the goal, of the slaughter itself, mass murder, extermination, absolute enmity, objectification, which together with the technicized means of destruction stamps it as the noxious fruit of decadent capitalism. No account of the carnage in Yugoslavia can avoid the question of what specific combination of factors has led the rival states and proto-states struggling to emerge from the ashes of the former Yugoslav state to engage in the ongoing localized warfare.

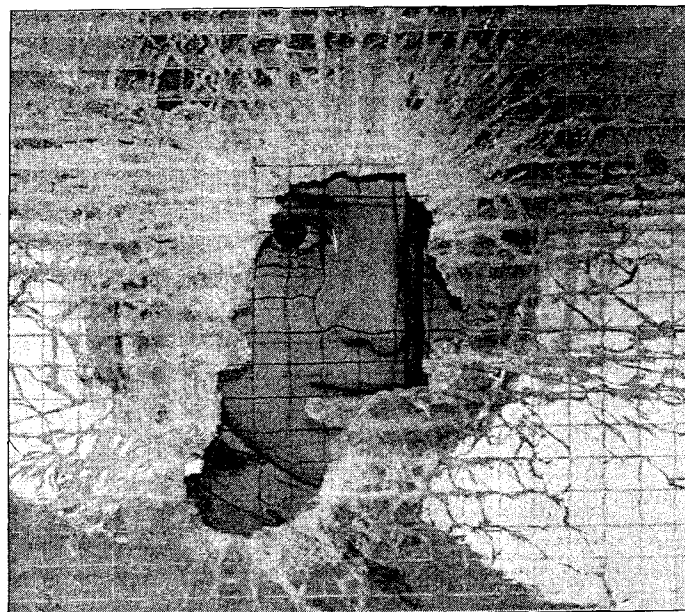
Since its foundation in 1918, Yugoslavia has basically functioned as a greater Serbia, dominated by a capitalist class and state apparatus inherited from the pre-World War One Serb monarchy. While the composition of that capitalist class changed drastically after World War Two, and the triumph of Stalinism, despite Tito's efforts to create a genuine Yugoslav ruling class and state, the three pillars of capitalist class rule, the party bureaucracy, the industrial bureaucracy, and the military-security apparatus, remained essentially Serbian. As long as the cold war lasted, neither bloc was prepared to tolerate a change in the status quo in Yugoslavia, which meant that no matter how the Slovenes and Croats (or rather the Slovene and Croat segments of the ruling class) resented Serbian rule, the integrity of the Yugoslav state was never in question.

The end of the cold war, coming in the midst of a devastating economic crisis, produced internecine warfare between the various factions of the ruling class, divided along ethnic lines. Each local ruling class sought to assure its own power by seeking to create a national state, one that corresponded to "ethnic" group whose loyalty and labor would assure the success of that capitalist enterprise.

The end of the cold war, and the eclipse of Russian imperialism, meant that the great powers no longer had an overriding interest in the preservation of the Yugoslav state, or that they would intervene to preserve it. Faced with the disintegration of Yugoslavia, the only way for the Serbian ruling class to maximize its power was to extend its sway beyond the borders of the two federal Serb states of Serbia and Montenegro, so as to swallow up the Serbian inhabited areas of Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina. Inasmuch as the Yugoslav army (JNA) was controlled by the Serbs, the process of incorporating vast sections of Croatia and Bosnia, and of arming and supplying local Serb militias was greatly facilitated.

The Croat ruling class also had territorial ambitions beyond the frontiers of the federal republic of Croatia (large parts of which had been inhabited by Serbs for hundreds of years). The Croats were determined to seize vast areas in Western Herzegovina that were inhabited by Croats, thereby setting the stage for the Serb-Croat carve up of Bosnia-Herzegovina, a process that has involved the horrendous ethnic cleansing that has become a hallmark of the war in Yugoslavia.

The Muslim ruling class in Bosnia hoped to assert its own claims to local hegemony despite the fact that Muslims make up less than half the population of that federal republic. If the Muslim population has been the main victim of the mass murder in Bosnia thus far, there can be no illusions that if the Muslim ruling class had the military upper hand now held by Serbs and Croats in Bosnia, that it too would not engage in ethnic cleansing (or even that it hasn't already, though given its military disadvantage, on a smaller scale than its enemies).



A child peers through the bullet-shattered window of her home in Sarajevo's embattled Dobrinja district.

What must be clear is that this carnage in Yugoslavia is the result not of the collapse of capitalism, but of the necessary assertion of power on the part of the various national factions of the ruling class, each seeking to assure and expand its power in a world riven by multiple crises, each seeking to bind the working class to its lethal regime through the ideology of nationalism. If the working class has not rushed to the colors in Serbia, Croatia, or Bosnia, neither has it rejected the nationalist poison and launched a class, an internationalist,

response to the barbarism. That alone constitutes a real victory for capital, one for which the working class is already paying dearly with its blood, as the death toll mounts in Sarajevo.

The role of the great powers in the Yugoslav crisis must also be appreciated if we are to grasp the complex strands that have intersected to produce the carnage. As we have argued, the final disintegration of the Yugoslav state, and the open warfare that followed is not a function of the intervention of the great powers, but rather of their willingness to allow the localized imperialist conflicts to erupt and run their course. The idea, bandied about by some revolutionaries, that what we are seeing in Yugoslavia is a confrontation between American imperialism and a nascent German imperialist bloc (with the Americans backing the Serbs, and the Germans the Croats) is wrong, not because a clash between America and Germany in the future can be ruled out, but because no real evidence of such a clash, much less one defining the course of events in Yugoslavia today, can be offered. If Washington initially was cool towards Slovene and Croat independence, and sought to avert the breakup of the Yugoslav state, it was not to back Serbian imperialism against Germany and its Croat "puppets", but to try to prevent the kind of violent conflicts (and refugee problem in the heart of Europe) that might necessitate American military involvement in an area that had ceased to be a zone of great power confrontation, and where the US sought to avoid becoming deeply involved. If Germany backed the Croats, and initially talked about EC military intervention to halt Serb aggression, it was not to challenge the US, but to prevent unending military conflict, instability, and a flood of refugees in the heart of Central

Europe. Even if such a choice corresponded to its own interests (Germany is closest, geographically, historically, and economically, to Croatia, and Slovenia), at the present time, Germany has no interest in provoking an open imperialist conflict with the US, from which it is sure to emerge a loser. In the end, American and German policy coincided: both countries backed the embargo against Serbia, recognized the independence of Slovenia, Croatia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, and at the same time opposed military intervention to force the Serbs to withdraw from the conquered regions of Croatia and Bosnia (or even to force an end to the fighting).

What concerns the US and Germany in Yugoslavia is not a clash of interests fought out through a proxy war, but the spread of instability throughout the Balkans, which if it involved Albania, Greece, Bulgaria, and Turkey, would compel some kind of intervention. That is the undesirable outcome that the great powers seek to avert through their "diplomacy". The fate of the civilian population, provided that as refugees they do not overrun the West, means nothing to the forces of capital. Indeed, if the great powers have not actually launched the present conflicts, the system of which their power is the embodiment -- capitalism -- is responsible for the mass murder and extermination that is drenching the Yugoslav countryside in blood. That kind of warfare is the real meaning of the new world order that capital is desperately trying to construct. We have seen it in the form it takes when the great powers are directly involved: in the ruins of Baghdad, and other Iraqi cities. In Yugoslavia, we now see it in the form it takes when the great powers leave the local nationalist/imperialist thugs free reign.

MAC INTOSH
September, 1992

A new Discussion Group in Paris

A discussion circle has been formed in Paris, with the aim of participating in the drafting of a "new revolutionary platform" (see the appeal in IP #23).

This circle is committed to meeting on a regular basis for serious theoretical work. It will hold regular meetings, and will circulate all written contributions. The circle invites all interested persons to get in touch with it, either to correspond, or to

get involved in the face to face debate (the time and place of meetings will be communicated to those interested).

While awaiting the opening of a post office box in Paris, you can address correspondence (without any other mention) to: Destryker, BP 1181, Centre monnaie, B-1000, Bruxelles, Belgium. On the inside, please indicate: "for the Paris discussion circle."

THEORY OF DECOMPOSITION

OR



DECOMPOSITION OF THEORY?

The tradition of the dead generations weighs like a nightmare on the minds of the living. And just when they appear to be engaged in the revolutionary transformation of themselves and their material surroundings, in the creation of something which does not yet exist, precisely in such epochs of revolutionary crisis they timidly conjure up the spirits of the past to help them; they borrow their names, slogans and costumes so as to stage the new world-historical scene in this venerable disguise and borrowed language.

(Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte)

In the history of capitalism, periods of difficulty for the proletariat in becoming conscious of its revolutionary being are frequently accompanied, in the realm of the ideas put forward by its revolutionary

minorities, by falsifications -- recognized or not -- and even by the pure and simple abandonment of Marxist theory. Such theoretical drifting sooner or later culminates in the integration into the bourgeois order of those who proclaim themselves to be "the most conscious element of the working class."

The objective being, the forms of struggle, the subjectivity, of the proletariat are constantly shaken and transformed by a series of factors linked to the very history of capital. If this class exists as an exploited and alienated class as long as the relations of production remain subject to the law of value, it is still necessary for it to forge the theoretical weapons which permit it to grasp the historical unfolding of that "essence" which impels it to repudiate -- by necessity -- its "unhappy" condition. Revolutionary minorities have often been responsible for their own disappearance, by articulating rigid, fossilized, ideas as the very basis of their

existence and practice. Rather than understand that the proletariat, as a dynamic class, can never be encapsulated within rigid concepts, that it can never be reducible to the party itself, its organized factions prefer to engage in an act of deception, attributing to the working class their own failings. What can then happen, is that the original understanding of the proletariat as a revolutionary class can be turned into its exact opposite: the negation of any revolutionary praxis by this class, the negation of the possibility of humanity satisfying its own needs through communism.

The present period, marked by enormous problems at the level of the conscious practice of the proletariat, is not exempt from that kind of phenomenon. As a result, the trajectory outlined above has come to fruition in the increasingly regressive course followed by the ICC. Profoundly rooted in the already anemic life of that group, its new pseudo-theory of "social decomposition" as the phase that capitalism has entered, could well be transformed into the ICC's swan song, and ultimately make it a party to the reproduction of the established order.

Let's be clear: in the ICC, the production of an "analytic framework" (of which the theory of social decomposition is one example) progressively assumes the form of the drawing up and imposition of decrees, one sometimes annulling another, much like what would happen in a Kafkaesque universe. For the militant, acting on the basis of blind faith in the "rightness" of the collective body of which he or she is a part, there can be no possibility of questioning the internal logic of theoretical innovations. These latter descend from above, much like the manifestations of the holy spirit. No text of the ICC, therefore, need take account of the overall theoretical coherence that would have to underpin the concept of social decomposition. The task of ascertaining whether or not such a coherence exists thus falls to us.

An authentic revolutionary practice can only be founded on an untiring hunt for illusion, for mystification, and, therefore, for ideology, everywhere it hides itself. The greatness of Marxism, which is also the greatness of the proletariat, its capacity to function as a theory adequate to the needs and to the praxis of that class, reside precisely in that capacity to pierce the veil of mystification. Today, Marxism, as a living theory, must expose the ideological substratum that continues to nourish totally retrograde conceptions of social being. The theory of "social decomposition" merely reproduces certain aspects of that dominant ideology. The theory of social decomposition implicitly refurbishes the theoretical constructs of bourgeois metaphysics; it is a throwback to non-Marxist concepts of social history, it represents a negation of the revolutionary project, and it is grounded in a mystified representation of capitalism.

THE DIFFERENT LEVELS OF THE NEGATION OF MARXISM

As the century, indeed the millenium, draws to a close, for the ICC, capitalism is entering an era of social decomposition. This phenomenon is purportedly the result of the incapacity of the fundamental classes integral to that mode of production to impose their specific social projects. These classes (the bourgeoisie and the proletariat) are in effect struck by a paralysis. The social system can only collapse: for the ICC, it has embarked on that path by sinking into a state of interminable chaos. Thus, while continuing to insist, as it has for nearly twenty years, that the historic course remains one of decisive class confrontations, at the very same time, the ICC -- against even the most rudimentary logic -- decrees the entrance of capitalism into a whole new phase, about which one can only ask what it still has in common with preceeding phases. The vision of the ICC is captured in the following statements: "While the contradictions of capitalism in crisis can only worsen, the incapacity of the bourgeoisie to offer the least perspective for the whole of society, and the incapacity of the proletariat to affirm its own perspective at the present time, can only lead to a generalized decomposition, a rotting in place of society". Or: "This phase of decomposition is fundamentally determined by new, unprecedented, and unexpected historic conditions: the situation of a momentary impasse in society, of 'blockage', of the mutual 'neutralization' of its two fundamental classes, which prevents each of them from making their own decisive response to the open crisis of the capitalist economy".



George Grosz:
Les piliers de
la société,
1926.

The simplistic character of this schema must not make us underestimate the significance of either the different presuppositions or conclusions which are implicit in it. Several ideas, some of which are a "must" in the coteries of contemporary metaphysicians, are blended together in this new ideology.

1. The Negation of Social Being as a Dialectical Process

By definition, "a body in decomposition sees each of its constituent elements separate and undergo an alteration, followed by a putrefaction." That at least is what we can read in any good dictionary. If capitalism, as a global expression of determinant social relations decomposes, that would mean that the social classes which constitute it would "separate", breaking their mutual and organic links, and entering a phase of "putrefaction." The ICC, to be sure, points to the "temporary" character of this putrefaction; but apart from Christ, who brought back Lazarus from the dead, it is fair to ask who could bring back to life a body that is already decomposing ... temporarily, of course!

However, it is more important to see that in this new "logic" of the ICC, the elimination of classes is no longer the outcome of an open antagonism, consciously and voluntarily assumed by the proletariat: instead, it unfolds as some sort of "objective process"; it is the end point of a process of dissipation, of a "natural" process of aging, that characterizes class societies. As a result, the class consciousness of the proletariat, as a power of negation, and as the sole force capable of transforming the world, is no longer operative as both possibility and necessity; it is relegated to the dustbin of history.

The idea of a "paralysis of the contending social classes", marks an at least implicit return to the idea of destiny, of a fatalism, that shapes social being. Such a vision can only distort and dull consciousness, much like religion, which was the first target of Marx's indignation and denunciation.

a) A Positivist Approach

The assimilation of the social structure to a "natural body", the parallelism implicitly established between them with respect to their modes of existence and the manner in which they expire, constitutes in itself an oath of allegiance to every metaphysical conception of social being. For Marx, however, social being is distinct from the order of the a-historic given. Any theory that seeks to grasp social being must make a radical break with the prevailing objectivizing approaches. The dynamic of social being cannot be assimilated to a

purely biological process, or to the movement of the planets, the study of which -- under the form of the elaboration of physical laws -- first opened the way to bourgeois science. Marx understood social being as the site of man's transformative practice, the outcome of his own action (conscious or not) applied to things and to himself. Any vision which reduces that distinctly human practice to an unimportant factor, and which breaks the dialectical relations that it establishes, can only confirm and sanctify the reigning order.

The ICCs new analytic framework increasingly reduces Marxism to a sort of "natural science. As Georg Lukacs made clear: "... when 'science' maintains that the manner in which data immediately present themselves is an adequate foundation of scientific conceptualisation and the actual form of these data is the appropriate starting point for the formation of scientific concepts, it thereby takes its stand simply and dogmatically on the basis of capitalist society. It uncritically accepts the nature of the object as it is given and the laws of that society as the unalterable foundation of 'science.' In order to progress from these 'facts' to facts in the true meaning of the word it is necessary to perceive their historical conditioning as such and to abandon the point of view that would see them as immediately given: they must themselves be subjected to a historical and dialectical examination". (History and Class Consciousness, p.7)

ADDRESS

AND

PROVISIONAL RULES

OF THE

WORKING MEN'S INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION,

ESTABLISHED SEPTEMBER 28, 1864,

AT A PUBLIC MEETING HELD AT ST. MARTIN'S
HALL, LONG ACRE, LONDON.

b) The Negation of Historical Materialism and of the Revolutionary Project

The slow and progressive emergence of social relations dominated by the law of value led Western thinkers to legitimate the embryonic capitalism, and, therefore, to break out of the ideological straight-jacket inherited from the Middle Ages. The first

objects of criticism were the religious systems which only envisaged man and society as the simple, passive, reflection of the unfathomable divine will. The necessity for the bourgeoisie, as a rising class, to establish and consolidate its power, therefore, historically made it possible for humanity to conceive itself -- for the first time -- as a being in becoming. The philosophical genius of Hegel, whose system represented the culminating point in this train of thought, perceived behind this historical process, a principle of universal domination, or rather, a dialectical relation of "master and slave", which, for him, was alone capable of accounting for the movement of humanity. Finally, the assertion of those ideas which emphasized reason (Enlightenment philosophy, the German Aufklärung) against all obscurantism, opened up the possibility for man to see himself as the subject of his own history. To the old theorization of the real by way of antinomical concepts, such as subject and object, spirit and matter, concepts that were merely the echo of a humanity subject to domination, there was now brought to the fore a vision that restored to man the capacity to shape his own "destiny." The Hegelian dialectic of master and slave, an essentially individual relation, claimed only to pertain to a dialectic of the spirit (Geist). The triumph of the subject was the triumph of spirit as such, of which the state was the highest incarnation. The Hegelian system culminated in an apology for the new political powers.

The materialist reversal brought about by Marxism consisted in opening up the ideological prison that the institutionalization of Hegelian philosophy had constructed. The dialectic that Hegel had adumbrated was turned against his system by being ingeniously applied by Marx to the functioning of capitalism. The so-called social contract, established by the bourgeoisie, could then be demystified, just as the false universality of the principles of freedom and equality, as an alienated representation of the movement of capital.

Determined to understand how this principle of domination was metamorphosed under capitalism, Marx shifted the dialectic from its idealist pedestal (triumph of spirit and of the state), and grasped it as the dynamic intrinsic to the new mode of production based on value. By grasping the growing and absolute domination of value over the whole of the relations of production, and, thus, over humankind, Marx could also identify the new revolutionary subject specific to contemporary history, the one who would be compelled by necessity to overthrow the existing order: the class of proletarians, the deprived class par excellence, in whom the new, unhappy, condition of humanity, and universal alienation, was objectified. If Hegel had systematized the idea of the human being as an active individual, Marx showed how that

philosophical abstraction could take on flesh and bones in the existence of the proletariat as a class, and in the struggle with which it radically confronted the bourgeoisie and capitalism as a global system. The dialectical relation bourgeoisie-proletariat, capital-labor, exchange-value - use-value, must be resolved through the conscious overcoming of its alienated condition by the proletariat. Capitalism disowns the needs of the proletariat: in its turn, the proletariat will disown capitalism. From that dynamic will emerge a humanity liberated from oppression in all its manifestations.

However, by seeing the fundamental social classes as "paralyzed", the ICC is led to freeze the proletariat in this alienated condition, and to deny bourgeois domination as a real power. Let's listen once again to the ICC: "... in an historical situation where the working class is not yet able to immediately wage a struggle for its own perspective, ... the communist revolution, but where the bourgeoisie can propose no perspective whatsoever, even a short term one, the capacity that the bourgeoisie still preserved in the past, in the very course of the period of decadence, of limiting and controlling the phenomenon of decomposition, can only collapse under the blows of the crisis." Meanwhile, a little further on, the bourgeoisie is presented as a truly omniscient and Machiavelian class. "The phase of decomposition results from the capacity of the bourgeoisie to slow down the rate at which it sinks into crisis, notably through state capitalism at the level of the imperialist bloc. This results from the experience of this very class, which prevents it from hurling itself into the adventure of a generalized imperialist confrontation without a sufficient political adherence on the part of the proletariat." In fact, what emerges from this jumble of contradictions is that with the new vision of classes that the ICC has, alienation is perpetuated as the condition of a "fallen" humanity. Farewell to historical materialism, farewell to the whole revolutionary project.

c) The return to Vulgar Materialism

The new analytic framework of the ICC represents a negation of Marxism on other levels as well. It is clear that things that are dead, which for the ICC would have to include classes that are paralyzed, could not express a contradiction -- unless one was prepared to turn one's back on the most elementary logic. Not only would such entities not express contradictions, but their interactions would increasingly be debased. This pretended overcoming of the dialectical relation of capital-labor, of bourgeoisie-proletariat, the social relation which conditions capitalism as a DIALECTICAL TOTALITY, is a theoretical aberration. The dialectic does not proceed from an act of faith, and is not one method

among others for the apprehension of social being: it is inherent in social reality itself, operative in time and space. The negation of the dialectic is the repudiation of social reality as movement and change; such a repudiation necessarily accompanies the reproduction of the dominant order.

The ICC is increasingly led, by its description of chaos as such, to reduce capitalism to its pure phenomenal appearance, to cut it off from its essential historical core, which sets it in motion as a relation between two classes in constant motion. The idea of a paralysis of these two social classes in the present phase of capitalism, amounts to denying the organic totality of capitalism as first and foremost the expression of an interaction, of a reciprocal action, as a permanent feature of the class relation. In this simple register of "chaos", which is what the new analytic framework of the ICC amounts to, one can less and less even suspect that underlying it all is the fundamental class antagonism borne by capital, and the development of the law of value. The possibility of a revolutionary theory such as Marx's, however, resides in its capacity to penetrate beyond appearances, and to show how "behind" each category which seems to function in itself and for itself (the illusion which is the basis of alienation) there resides a class relation which conditions capitalism as a totality. By contrast, the ICC has a vision that is increasingly severed from social reality: if social classes are paralyzed, it becomes more and more difficult to recognize the capitalist appearance as a dissimulation of a living rapport de forces between classes.

The "theoretical" evolution of the ICC is taking it onto the same slippery slope down which those who would become the official theorists of the Second International, on the way to being integrated into the bourgeois state, had once gone. The political function of Bernstein's revisionism being to deprive the proletariat of its revolutionary future, it also had to denature Marxism itself, and to undercut its very foundations (all the while claiming to defend it). As Lukacs put it: "the vulgar materialists, even in the modern guise donned by Bernstein and others, do not go beyond the reproduction of the immediate, simple determinants of social life. They imagine that they are being quite extraordinarily 'exact' when they simply take over these determinants without either analysing them further or welding them into a concrete totality. The crudeness and conceptual nullity of such thought lies primarily in the fact that it obscures the historical, transitory nature of capitalist society. Its determinants take on the appearance of timeless, eternal categories valid for all social formations. This could be seen at its crassest in the vulgar bourgeois economists, but the vulgar Marxists soon followed in their footsteps". (History and Class

Consciousness, p.9) As Lukacs showed, vulgar materialism consisted essentially in breaking the dialectical link, established by Marx, between the apparent functioning of capital, and the real class relations. There is less and less for the ICC to begrudge in that form of the reduction of Marxism to ideology.

c) An Allegiance to Contemporary Ideologies

All of twentieth century ideology has sought to undermine the dialectical vision of social reality articulated by Marx, while at the same time appropriating certain concepts put forward by him. The mass production and consumption of these ideologies is merely a reproduction of alienation. Their extreme "scientificity" and "technicity" serve as a so-called guarantee of their authenticity. However, their real function is to eliminate from the historical process the perspectives borne by the proletariat.

For example, this is the case with the historians of the Annales school in France, who have purported to eliminate from history anything having to do with class domination: history would merely be a simple superimposition of "neutral" structures (the family, material life (sic.)), glorified in their regional particularisms. History as movement, let alone one driven by class antagonisms, becomes more and more of a mirage. The cataloging of traditions here replaces any revolutionary élan.

But even where the concept of domination still operates in contemporary ideology, it takes as its reference point biology or behavioral psychology, as the highest sciences. In the first case, "social inequalities" are presented as having a genetic basis (as in socio-biology and in racist ideologies); in the second case, "behavior inherent in the human species" would be the sole catalyst for social relations.

With respect to the concept of totality, it is emptied of any content, in order to make way for a conceptualization of chaos or disorder, perceived in an identical fashion in the structures of matter and in social life (c.f. Prigogine)

Finally, the imposters who have invented systems theory, have now completed the pillaging of the Marxist heritage, by emptying their "systems" of any class content: their babbling about "complex interactions", and the "self-regulation" of a-historical structures, is simply a fraudulent effort at the dilution of revolutionary consciousness, and the "end" of social history. The class content of the idea of autonomy, of self-organization, has been usurped for the benefit of a system which supposedly functions "by itself, in itself, and for itself", completely indifferent to history.

These examples, which we could infinitely multiply, bear witness to the amplitude of the robbery to which Marxism has

been subjected by the ideologues of the twentieth century. The ICCs abandonment of historical materialism, through its vision of capitalism as a chaotic structure, and a certain withering away of class, have simply added another voice to this funeral choir.

2. The Return of Transcendence

Such an abandonment, and the negation of the proletariat as a revolutionary subject, have been accompanied in the history of the workers movement by the return to other sources reputed to hold out the promise of good in the world as it is. From the end of the last century, Bernstein and the revisionist movement, or still later, the Austro-Marxism of Otto Bauer, sought the impossible reconciliation of Marxism and the transcendental philosophy of Kant. The progressive integration into the bourgeois state of Social Democracy, or the defeat of the revolutionary wave in the 20s, were not unrelated to that bastardization of Marxism.

The rejection of the materialist dialectic results in an inability to see the critical at work in the real as such; it is necessarily accompanied by the theorization of other "forces" which can revolutionize the world. The choice between "good" and "evil" replaces the conflict generated by the relations of production, and proceeds on the basis of a universal moral consciousness.

The idea of social decomposition defended by the ICC has strong overtones of transcendence: the obscurantist description of the apocalypse which has overcome values and social practices, the emphasis put on the "rotting of society", paradoxically reactivate morality as the category through which the world is grasped. The inadequacy of morality as a means of transforming the world, inasmuch as it is a specifically bourgeois category, has been sufficiently emphasized by Marx. The flight into the ethereal world of pure and timeless values, is but one of the forms taken by alienation. A world that utilizes morality to describe and to change itself is a world in which private and collective interests can only maintain themselves in an increasingly contradictory state. It is one of the specificities of bourgeois society. Thus at the moment in which the objective impasse of capitalism, and the misery that it engenders, stand as a factual condemnation of transcendental values as a source of any real transformation, the ICC has implicitly rehabilitated them as a means of comprehending the world. We shall not have long to wait for such values to become the real crucible of the ICCs revolutionary faith. It already seems as if the ICCs revolutionary enthusiasm is only activated in the lowest possible denunciation of the demonic forces which rip at the social tissue. But it is its own demons that the ICC seeks to exorcise in this fashion.

The communist revolution, a necessity and possibility inscribed in the class existence and struggle of the proletariat, is being little by little reduced by the ICC to a simple "categorical imperative", with this latter being forged as a vague intuition of good and evil as absolute categories.

3. The Triumph of Irrationalism

The theory of "capitalism and of its classes as decomposed structures" is only a cheap variation on the theme of "the irrationality of history." It is a theme that is dear to bourgeois philosophy and culture in the twentieth century.

From the 1930s, the destructive potential accumulated in the entrails of capitalism and fully revealed by the first world war, had engendered a boundless nihilism and pessimism. The "disenchantment of the world", the perception of alienation as a permanent state, was accompanied by an exaltation of the "soul" as the only possible refuge for a lost humanity.

Meanwhile, the mobilization of the proletariat for two world wars, and its "participation" in the processes of reconstruction, served as a basis for theories of the integration of the working class.

Bourgeois pessimism, conjoined to this vision of a proletariat that was definitively crushed, reduced to the role of a mere cog in the mechanism of capitalism, was systematized into the idea of an absence of meaning in human history. The success of structuralism, with its verbiage about the "signifier" who no longer has a "signified", reflects a general ideological context in which the question of meaning is reduced to a pure matter of form.

The overall credo of this new bourgeois thinking puts both Hegel and Marx in the dock: their efforts to make the real rational, and their historicist conceptions of humanity, purportedly lead straight to the death camps, and in a more global fashion to triumphant totalitarianism, where man is only one dimensional (see Marcuse)!

The break between all the phenomena of barbarism, and the very movement of capital, the rejection of social reality as the site of a struggle between classes which transform themselves even as they retain their identity, nourish this general repudiation of reason, and the return to a conception of man as prey to the forces of evil.

The recent breakdown of the Russian bloc, falsely equated with the "defeat of communism", has given new life to the effort to put Marx on trial. Incapable of understanding the historic dynamic of the decomposition of an imperialist bloc, and seeing in it an additional basis for the passivity of the proletariat, The ICC has effectively joined the ranks of these inquisitors with the elaboration of its new

analytic framework.

4. The Triumph of Phenomenology

The link between the new conception of the ICC and the fashionable bourgeois ideologies, is strengthened by its purely phenomenological denunciation of capitalism. For that is what is at the heart of the description of the features of the phase of decomposition that the ICC serves up. "If one looks at the characteristics of decomposition, one can see that their common denominator is this absence of perspective:

- multiplication of famines
- the transformation of the Third World into an immense slum, in which hundreds of millions of human beings survive like rats in a sewer
- catastrophic "accidents": planes which crash, trains and subways turned into coffins, etc.
- natural disasters: floods, droughts, earth quakes, tornados
- destruction of the environment

And on the ideological plane:

- unbelievable political corruption: scandals, etc.
- growth of terrorism
- increase in crime
- development of nihilism, suicide, despair
- proliferation of drugs
- profusion of sects
- nullity and commercialism in the realm of artistic production "

This new phenomenology, replete with a lyricism in which insult replaces demonstration, represents one more break with the Marxist perspective, the radicalism of which consists precisely in bringing to light the fundamental, objective relations hidden from view by the chaotic appearance of this mode of production.

Aspects of decomposition, social decay, have always accompanied the march of capital. A reading of the works of Marx, or of Rosa Luxemburg, and their description of the ravages brought by capitalism in its "triumphal" advance during the nineteenth century, will attest to that. But the description of chaos as such has never made possible a global analysis, one which can expose capitalism at its roots and as a totality.

a) Capitalism: A System of Disequilibrium

In the classic economic vision, capitalism was represented as the simple play of supply and demand, making it possible to achieve social harmony through the satisfaction of human needs.

In breaking with such apologetic analyses by the economists of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Marx showed how the functioning of capitalism was incompatible

with the realization of human harmony, or of a social equilibrium of any sort. The alternation of periods of crisis (in the general sense of the term), and periods of vitality, constituted the very dynamic of capital, for him. Equilibrium prepared the way for disequilibrium, in an infernal logic.

The ICCs present obsession with the anarchy of capitalism, would seem to rest on some sort of naive belief in the possibility of a smoothly functioning capitalism.

b) No Self-Dissolution of Capitalism is Possible

According to Marx, capitalism, by subjecting humanity to the stranglehold of mercilous economic laws, deprived it of any control over its own destiny, eliminating the so-called reign of freedom that democracy was to have brought about. The necessarily enlarged accumulation of capital -- in both time and space -- is merely the enlarged accumulation of contradictions, and of growing misery.

The entrance of capitalism into its phase of decadence at the beginning of the century, far from signifying the collapse, as such, of the social system, demonstrated that its reproduction could henceforth only occur on the bases of ever more profound crises, the most tangible expression of which would be generalized war, and the train of social devastation that is its accompaniment. Similarly, periods of "reconstruction" already contain the germs of that power of destruction (in the form of armaments production, for example). The concept of decadence, then, pertains to the new mode of life of capitalism, after the rise of the productive forces that it had made possible in the nineteenth century. It encompassed the prospect of the horrific manifestations inherent in the maintenance of relations of production based on value. The ICCs idea of a specific era of social decomposition, that exists today, is the expression of its increasingly degraded concept of decadence ... which turns out to have been a concept devoid of meaning for it: "it would be a mistake to identify decadence and decomposition. If we cannot conceive of the existence of decomposition outside of a period of decadence, we can certainly envisage decadence without it manifesting itself in the appearance of a phase of decomposition". In fact, the history of the twentieth century has above all shown how the bourgeoisie has the capacity to preserve its class rule, whatever the price that needs to be paid, as long as the proletariat does not intervene to put an end to that domination. True, that domination has changed its forms, being concentrated essentially in the state, so as to compensate for the deficiencies of supply and demand. The war economy and fictitious capital are the bases for the survival of capitalism in its decadent phase.

By contrast, the idea of social

decomposition contains the prospect of capital rotting on its feet, riven by its contradictions to the point where its fabric snaps, and it expires without the revolutionary intervention of the proletariat. It is undeniable that the maintenance of capital has accumulated in the entrails of society a destructive potential that could destroy the planet: but that outcome could only be conceived as the result of a major conflict between imperialist powers constituted by the war-like logic of capital. Such, no longer seems to be the position of the ICC.

Within the framework of a Marxist analysis, there is nothing to indicate the possibility that capitalism would self-destruct. On the contrary, Marx has shown how crises, terrible though they may be, in the absence of revolutionary action on the part of the working class, can provisionally restructure the value relations that are the bases of capitalism.

finally, the the idea of a rotting of capitalism, inevitably opens the door to the idea of a "third way": neither capitalism, nor communism, neither bourgeoisie, nor proletariat, but a new system born of a sort of spontaneous generation. Such an hypothesis plays fast and loose with the specificity of the capitalist mode of production. In fact, the bourgeoisie will only be "paralyzed" when the proletariat establishes its own political domination, and attacks the value relations themselves.

One can speak, however, of a real decomposition of feudalism and the relations of serfdom, well before the bourgeoisie seized power. The autonomous movement of value, as an objective force, had little by little shattered all of the social, economic, cultural, and political, structures of the Middle Ages. The bourgeois evolutions sanctioned, at the level of the superstructures, that more or less completed dissolution.

However, capitalism established its totalitarian domination over social reproduction by dissolving into the fundamental relation of bourgeoisie-proletariat, all the strata who could still subsist outside the value relations. Even those geographic zones which had escaped its influence, have ended up becoming totally integrated. That's why the present dislocation of old national entities (USSR, Yugoslavia), the emergence of a vast constellation of regional sub-nationalisms or even tribalism (Somalia), are not expressions of the general decomposition of capitalism, as the ICC claims ("the breakdown of the Russian bloc has confirmed the entrance of capitalism unto a new phase of its period of decadence: that of the general decomposition of society"). While these phenomena indicate the depth of the crisis that is eating away at it, they also demonstrate the capacity of capitalism to be reborn, like a phoenix, under new forms, hideous though they may be.

In the capital-labor relation, which is increasingly shorn of the veils in which it was once shrouded, the working class is the class stripped of everything, and has no material power through which to provoke a gradual dissolution of the system which lives from its spoilation. Its only material force resides in its consciousness -- itself subject, given the totalitarian character of capitalist domination, to wide fluctuations. The development of this force is in no sense ineluctable. But it is the only thing which can put an end to the domination of the economy over humanity.

c) The Fundamental Contradiction of Capitalism

All the tangible disequilibria described above, in the final analysis, reflect the fundamental separation that capitalism has brought about between use-value and exchange-value. In this mode of production, social forces can only develop, or even simply maintain themselves, if they expand exchange-value so as to strengthen the process of the enlarged accumulation of capital. As long as exchange-value is enhanced, certain social needs can be met. But any blocage in its functioning, any halt in the profitability of capital, result in crises, and their negation of use-value and of human needs. It is this negation of its own needs that propels the proletariat to destroy the capitalist relations of production.

d) the Negation of the Function of Revolutionary Theory

In postulating capitalist chaos, in replacing the dynamic relation between classes by their "paralysis", the ICC also denies the specific role of revolutionary theory. Theory is only able to play its critical role if it is capable of grasping the transformative potential which resides in the relations of production. Conceived as such, it then becomes a revolutionary factor itself; it can respond to the needs of the class which is called upon to transform the world. That is the meaning of Marx's "Theses on Feuerbach": it's no longer a question of understanding the world, but of transforming it. The ICC has repudiated this role of theory; herein lies an abandonment of the very function of a vanguard.

CONCLUSION

The logic of the ICC is, therefore, one of a growing rejection of all the historic determinations that lead the proletariat to transform the world. Its theory of social decomposition is not specific to it: it exemplifies a general ideological strain in the contemporary world.

CONTINUED ON P 5.

The Necessary Recomposition of the Proletariat (2)



The following text is the second part of G.S.'s article, "The Necessary Recomposition of the Proletariat", the first part of which appeared in IP #22. This text is an integral part of the debate on the recomposition of the working class in the present phase of capitalism, which began in the pages of IP in number 15.

G.S.'s text has its point of departure in the view that the working class today is characterized by inertia, that it is content to play the role of a spectator in the midst of the ongoing political upheavals, leaving a free hand to the bourgeoisie. All that, in large part, due to the changes that capitalism has undergone over the past twenty years, which have affected the very identity of the proletariat.

G.S. thus poses, right from the outset, a fundamental question with respect to the development of class consciousness, and the causes of the disarray of the workers. G.S. develops his argument by reference to the modifications in the material conditions in which the capitalist exploitation of labor-power occurs. Thus, he shows that since the end of the 1970s, the crisis has brought about a growing heterogeneity amongst the working class, a loss of class unity, and that a new productive order has been enshrined, which goes beyond the limits of Taylorism in order to achieve greater gains with respect to the intensity and productivity of labor.

That perspective appears to us to be largely correct, and dovetails with what we ourselves have said. In M. Lazare's article, "The Recomposition of Classes under State Capitalism" (IP #15), that perspective was developed on the basis of our understanding of state capitalism today. An understanding of state capitalism is the basis for grasping the transformations occurring in the capitalist world. Thus, state capitalism removes the barriers between the different spheres of production, circulation, and consumption, effecting their unification. That unification produces profound changes both in the operation of the law of value, and in class composition.

In the article, "The Evolution of Capitalism and the Recomposition of the

Proletariat" (IP #20), Mac Intosh details the origins of this phenomenon, making it possible to better grasp the present evolution. He

points out that it is the real domination of capital, bringing about the extension of capitalist wage-labor to every sector of production, which is organically linked to the statification of capital. In addition, the real domination of capital implies the recomposition of both the capitalist and the working classes. It is that phenomenon which produces the obsolescence of Taylorism as the most advanced stage in the organization of the industrial labor process.

In the present text, G.S. provides extensive documentation of the precarious character of employment, so as to demonstrate the difficulties faced by the proletariat in re-forging its class unity. This brings us back to the original question: how can the fragmented identity of the working class be reconstituted? G.S. also shows the ideological disarray of the working class, the appearance of individualist behavior, and the essentially defensive nature of workers' struggles of late, compared to the movements of the 1970s.

It seems to us, that the underlying character of such struggles has always been defensive, contrary to what G.S. seems to say. What has changed, is the degree of extension of the present defensive movements, which seem relatively timid. In no case, has the bourgeoisie really been put on the defensive over the past twenty years. If the proletariat has not really gone onto the offensive--understood as a conscious offensive, leading to a revolutionary process--it is because capitalism has not yet been pushed into a corner.

The transformation in the composition of the proletariat is an element in explaining the slowness of the renewal of working class combativity. But the movement of capital, the development of its crisis, and the transformations in its apparatus of state control, are so many further elements which must be integrated into any analysis of the present situation.

(Translator's note: in this article, specific analysis is focused mainly on France, where the author lives. The dynamics he describes, however, are at work in other developed industrialized countries too).

This text is the continuation of the article begun in IP #22. After having seen how the working class suffered a setback during the '80's, we looked for the deeper causes of this situation (first part). In order to find them, we decided to examine the technical changes which occurred in the labor process during the last 20 years. We also began to reflect upon the state of the working class as an exploited class within the capitalist relations of production. Let's recall the structure of the article. Part two: what is the state of the working class? -A) The spectre of exclusion -B) The mutation of labor. Faced with the accelerated fragmentation from which the working class suffers, our analysis aims to unveil the embryo's of a recomposition from which a new collective identity could grow. This new identity will be indispensable to fight off the interindividual competition imposed by capitalism and to relaunch a class struggle that dares to attack. So now, on to the third section of part two:

II-C: The shadowy existence of temporary workers.

A recent statistical analysis of the evolution of the social landscape in France (cf. "Le Monde" of 7/13/92) shows that between 1982 and 1990, the number of unskilled jobs in the productive sector diminished because of automation (400 000 jobs disappeared in manufacturing) while at the same time, jobs multiplied in the service sector, where they also became increasingly instable. Indeed, the big companies try to subcontract all activities not directly linked to their production. As a result, 40 000 new small businesses (with no more than 50 employees) sprouted in these 8 years, just for subcontracting. These small companies are even more vulnerable to changes in the economic conjuncture and therefore quicker to lay off workers. More and more unskilled workers are ejected from production and evicted to the uncertain dependence of temporary work.

According to the same analysis, from 1984-85 on a strong push was given to what professional economists term the "new forms of employment", in order to try to play down the level of unemployment. Under the pressure of the crisis and the technological requirements, capitalism then began to strike hard in the traditional industrial sectors (steel, car industry, etc). The notion of flexibility became fashionable. Fluctuations in demand, the need for optimal use of the machinery and for low inventory, the need to adapt to the new technology... the motives to turn to temporary labor are many. This explosion of so-called "atypical" employment (part time jobs, interim labor, short term contracts, seasonal jobs, etc...)

was such that in 1989 more than 3 million workers in France were in the shadowy category of temporary labor. Shadowy because this category is not well defined and is situated at the periphery or the margin of wage labor. All together, temporary jobs now make up 20% of the total number of jobs in France; or 12% of the male and 31% of the female workforce. Mainly the young, and especially young women, fall into this category. These famous "small jobs" are well liked by management because they give them (for some categories of temporary workers) the means to avoid the obligations to pay the minimum wage which in France is adapted annually to the cost of living. They are also supported by the unions as substitutes for real jobs and therefore remedies against unemployment. And they receive a lot of attention from the media eager to convince us that the moon is made of green cheese. But only very rarely are they stepping stones to stable employment. The threat of exclusion does not shrink, quite the contrary: of the many new workers who joined the labor force in the '80's by becoming "stagiaire" (an 'apprentice-status which allows the employer to pay less than the minimum wage-translator's note), one in five remained stuck in this status, or was given another temporary statute and three in five were back on the dole the next year.

This trend towards increasingly uncertain conditions of labor is also visible in other countries in other forms, the US and Japan included. In Germany in 1987 (then still West-Germany) a third of the active population worked independently, under temporary or part-time conditions. In Great Britain, the number of full time wage earners with a permanent contract diminished by 1,07 million from 1981 to 1987, while all other types of employment rose by 1,7 million, to 36% of the workforce, or a quarter of all male and half of all female workers.

After the steep increase in the use of interim work in 1988 (+30%), some conflicts on this issue broke out in France in early 1989. Some temporary workers decided to fight. In the Citroen-plant in Aulnay, interim-workers organized a committee and forced management to give about fifty of them a permanent contract. In the Peugeot-plant in Sochaux (where there were 1380 temporaries out of a total workforce of 22,000) they also formed a committee when they realized that promised bonuses were not given to them. After they contacted the press, the bonuses were paid out. But such actions come under very difficult conditions. The open strike makes the temporary workers vulnerable to management repression. The committees must remain clandestine or they too become easy prey for punishment. That was the case in Aulnay, where those who openly revolted were ruthlessly fired. Sometimes, in other circumstances, the demands put forward by all employees take into account the defense of the temporaries. An example of this class solidarity was seen in February 1989 in the Heudenberg-plant in Toulouse. There, the workers went on strike for a monthly wage hike

of 1500 French francs for all and the permanent hiring of all temporary workers. But even in this situation where there was some proletarian unity reflected in the demands, the temporary workers felt the risks were too high for them: at the height of the conflict, the threat of being fired immediately kept most of them (only 17 joined the strike) on the job. After negotiations, management gave a permanent contract to only 35 of them and most workers got less than a tenth of the raise they had fought for.

These few experiences of struggle, which date back 3 years and have not been followed by significant movements since, show that the increased fragmentation of the working class into permanent, non-permanent and unemployed workers creates more heterogeneity in consciousness and therefore great difficulties in forging class unity. They also show that the trends toward more temporary labor is not necessarily something positive. It would be a mistake to think that this trend will in the long term facilitate a greater unity in the living conditions which would also homogenize proletarian consciousness. On the contrary. Despite their growing number, temporary workers are divided in many ways (different statuses) which allow the capitalist class to exert more pressure on them and to better manipulate them. The worst is that their temporary working conditions are the result of their ejection from the normal sphere of production and wage labor; of a real expulsion to the periphery of the system. As a result, a part of the working class is, like the unemployed, no longer determined by its place within the labor process at the heart of the relations of production: therefore, it has no capacity to throw a spanner into the efficient functioning of capitalism.

With the new decade, non-permanent working conditions were institutionalized in France: business, unions and politicians agreed to a new law, approved in June '90, which establishes a new way to manage the work force. In the name of the holy flexibility, companies can now, according to market demands, dispose of a wing of the variable work force which serves as a back up when demand rises and which isn't paid when demand goes down (so that the companies don't have to build up stocks).

II-D A CLASS OF IMMIGRANTS?

Can we say like the ICC does (see Revolution Internationale 206, Nov. 91) that the proletariat has always been a class of immigrants and that therefore, the problem of immigration can not create difficulties and additional confusion for the development of class consciousness? The electoral gains of the anti-immigrant "Front National" in working class areas that are in crisis, at the expense of the parties of the left of capital (the Socialist and Communist parties), rather seems to indicate that Front-leader, Le Pen, is not simply a scarecrow in the hands of the powers

that be. Unfortunately, he canalizes the resentments of workers onto a national-populist, xenophobic and racist terrain.

Because of the specificities of the development of French capitalism since the 19th century (most small farmers remained on their land), the proletariat in this country became a real "Workers' Babel". In contrast to England



and Germany, where the formation of the proletariat came about through a massive exodus of small farmers to the industrial zones, in France, immigration played a more fundamental role in the constitution of the proletariat. The census of 1982 revealed once again the important role of immigrant workers in the French economy: they represent 6,8% of the total population (or 3,6 million people) but 12,7% of the working class. As Gerard Noiriel, a social historian, remarked:

"Analysis by economic sector confirms this: 4,9% of the immigrants work in the primary sector (against 9,3% of the total work force); 63,8% in the secondary sector (against 41%) and 31,3% in the tertiary sector (against 49,7%). A more detailed breakdown of the figures shows that within the working class, the immigrants occupy the lowest rungs and they form large battalions of what since Marx has been called "the proletariat": 17% of all construction workers and a third of the unskilled labor in the automobile sector are immigrants. Half of the immigrants in the workforce are unskilled workers, against one fifth of the total workforce in France. Statistics on the geographical distribution of the population confirms the "proletarian" character of the immigration. Generally speaking, the more a community or region has a working class character, the more immigrants live there." (See his article "Workers' Babel", p 84-94 in "Workers, a silent and fragmented continent" Paris, 1992).

With this title, the author wanted to emphasize the heterogeneity of the immigrant

proletariat, which consists of scores of ethnic groups and nationalities.

Since the 1850's, successive waves of foreign workers were attracted by industrial development:

- from 450 000 in 1850 to about 900 000 in 1870;
- from 1 to 3 million in 1920-1930;

- from 1,7 to 3,4 million between 1954 and 1975.

In all these periods, the immigrants were used in the most thankless and devalued sectors of the labor market (such as building railroads, mining, textile sweatshops etc). The last ones to arrive were given the worst tasks. In the mines of northern France, for instance, the Belgian Flemish of the 19th century were followed by Italians, Poles, and then North Africans in the 20th century. Between the two world wars, France had the world's highest level of immigrant workers: 15% of the total workforce (and 40% of the miners and 30% of the road workers). In his novel "The Javanese", published in 1939, our friend and comrade Jean Malaquais gave a first hand account of the exploitation of immigrants of all origins. He describes the existence and working conditions of two hundred pariah's who extracted lead and silver from an old mine in Southern France. The owner didn't want to spend anything on modernising his equipment and instead relied on the sweat of his "Javanese" (Malaquais was one of them) whom he so designated because for the French this word symbolizes all that's foreign and incomprehensible.

This situation contains some positive elements that help to go beyond a national framework for the development of consciousness (The slogan of "the Communist Manifesto", "Proletarians of all lands, unite!" became concrete in struggles which involved workers of all origins). But at the same time, it created, under the permanent pressure of the system, a heterogeneity between immigrant workers and workers of French origin, which came on top of the heterogeneity already existing because of the multiple

ethnic and national differences between the immigrants. Starting with World War One, the capitalist class began to rationalize immigration, which became "an explicit and programmed element of the management of the industrial labor force" (G. Noiriel, *ibid*). While stocking the lowest levels of the workers' hierarchy, it played on the opposition between a workforce of immigrants which could be pressured maximally because of their lack of qualifications and integration, and a work force of natives who had more "choice", because of their citizenship and "recognized" skills.

In periods of crisis, when the choices are more and more restricted for all workers, this heterogeneity is even more negative: it impedes the development of class consciousness by dividing the workers and it favors the emergence of visceral (or even more "organized") reactions of the fascist/segregationist type (which are really based on the archaic idea of the possibility of an extreme protectionism to defend the national capital). And it is even more dangerous because

the glut on the labor market brutally pits against one another and confronts "communities" which have lived separately, to each other (despite the positive counterweight of the integration that occurred over the course of generations, there is still a gap between the ghetto's where the newest immigrants live and the nicer neighborhoods of French workers and immigrants who arrived earlier).

In the absence of a class struggle and of a revolutionary project which could be anchored in a real mixture of populations (which exists unfortunately only in a minority and in the lowest layers), xenophobic propaganda (of the likes of the Front National) finds a favorable echo amongst workers. They feel destabilized by the restructurations of the production process and threatened by unemployment, and the immigrants become the scapegoats for their difficulties. As we saw in the '80's, the consequences of this evolution are not only electoral gains for the extreme right but also a steep rise in racist crimes.

III REVOLUTIONARY IDENTITY AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

After staging a review of all the elements contributing to the fragmentation of the proletariat, the question which immediately arises is how can a class which is cut up into so many pieces, recompose its identity?

It's clear that this recomposition is a necessity, a fundamental stake for the development of class consciousness. This is also the analysis of Mac Intosh, who makes the distinction between "synchronous" strata (the "Gesamtarbeiter", or new collective worker, who is the product of the phase of real domination of capital) and the "non-synchronous" strata (which are no longer central to the production process).

"It's this question of the development of class consciousness that must become our preoccupation in the period ahead; but such a preoccupation is only fruitful if we first grasp the enormity of the recomposition of the working class and its implications". (IP #21, p 21).

This question becomes even more crucial when we take into account that this recomposition has not only produced a socio-professional upheaval but also an ideological confusion nourished by the individual autonomization in relation to the more collective values traditionally instilled in the factory-proletariat which had replaced the craft workers and artisans of the 19th century.

Old reflexes of daily solidarity, based on social practices determined by the reproduction of a way of life in workers' concentrations (workers' neighborhoods, same type of dwellings, factory discipline, etc) have given way, little by little, to individualistic behaviour breaking with an environment which is seen as too oppressive (family spirit, gender-based role division, restrictive morals, the cult of work etc). Desire for individuality has eroded a social space where subjectivity was

absent! Since the '60's (and despite the reappearance and later the deepening of the crisis), ideologies of consumerism and social success have fanned the aspirations for the realisation of the "Me", rejecting the reference to a "mythical us": the collective being of the proletariat, which until then was seen and celebrated as an essential value, received a beating because of the crisis of its representative ideology which no longer corresponded to the imaginary of the new exploited strata. Seen from that angle, the collapse of the USSR (that is, of a state capitalism falsely associated with communism) has only fanned confusion and the Western media had a field day celebrating the failure of "totalitarianism". But in reality a large part of the exploited class has only exchanged a "socialist realist" alienation, maintained by the unions and the parties of the left (the Social Democrats and Stalinists) for an alienation more "in sync" with high tech capitalism and the mutation of labor in the production process (the appeal to the capacities of autonomy and decision in the sectors of maintenance in relation to the automatisisation, see point B of the second part of this article).

Comrade RC also pointed to this ideological confusion in a letter he wrote me on the question of recomposition:

"The feeling of belonging to a community of the exploited has weakened considerably and new forms of competition between workers have appeared, and diminished the feelings of solidarity. The workers of 1992 have aspirations and are seeking life styles which are those of other classes and social categories.

That's why we see class struggles attenuate. Ideologically, the classes are getting closer and the dividing lines between them are getting blurred. The working class is being transformed more ideologically than socially. Any worker will deny that he is a "proletarian", a degrading term which is commonly understood as belonging to another time; the one of our forefathers. A loss of sociological identity, and therefore also of class consciousness, that's what characterizes the working class. Workers act and react more as "individuals", members of the community of labor according to the capitalist rules, than as members of a political class which has a communist perspective for society. That's why all the appeals of revolutionaries for a massive response by the workers and for an extension of their struggle fall on deaf ears." (Letter of 12/24/91)

We must therefore break definitively with all romantic visions of a working class with an unchanging profile, while the capitalist class does not cease its continuous modifications of the conditions of its reproduction. The proletariat remains, indeed, the only force capable of overthrowing capitalism and installing communism. But because of all the changes it has gone through, it no longer resembles the proletariat of 1968, of 1936 or

1917-23... and even less the proletariat of the Commune of 1871 or of the insurgents of June 1848!

Under the blows of the international crisis, the proletariat will reconstitute itself and will again find the road to its unity. It's around the concept of "the collective worker", in which "the earlier distinctions between blue and white collar, manual and intellectual, productive and unproductive labor, have been shattered and recomposed" (Mac Intosh, ibid, p 6) that this reconstitution is taking place. In this way, a more global "proletarian class" will take shape, which corresponds to the completed phase of the real domination of capital, and which will differ from the old "working class", which is marked by a strictly industrial character and by a minority status in society. As the central element in the heart of the system and resting on an enlarged base, this class will be the carrier of a social project. Confronted by the exploitation inherent in the whole of the system, it will only be able to forge its identity in a directly revolutionary way. The development of class consciousness will then no longer go through distinctive stages of economic struggles first, and political struggles later. On the basis of this revolutionary identity, class consciousness will abolish all separations, and will reverse the tendencies towards fragmentation, by offering perspectives to the excluded, the temporary workers and the immigrants through the general struggle against the capitalist system as such, including all its "democratic" and fascist factions. Then, Marx' famous prediction will be resolved: "The proletariat is revolutionary or it is nothing!" G.S. (July 1992)

**INTERNATIONALIST
PERSPECTIVE**

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.