

INTERNATIONALIST PERSPECTIVE

25

SOMALIA

CLINTONOMICS

CRISIS & CLASS

STRUGGLE IN EUROPE

**GLOBALISATION AND
THE STATE**

INTERNATIONALIST PERSPECTIVE

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SOMALIA

Militarism with a Humanitarian Mask

It's early January 1993, the cold war is over, and the Pentagon is a hub of feverish activity. More than twenty thousand US troops are in Somalia, where they have begun to actively disarm the rival clan armies, and impose a de facto American protectorate. An aircraft carrier battle group, detached from the Somali operation, has launched its planes at Iraqi targets as punishment for repeated violations of the Gulf war cease fire accords, and provocations, which have challenged the Pax Americana in the region. Military planners are making preparations to implement President Bush's pledge --made in the final days of his presidency -- to intervene in the Balkans in case Serbia sends troops into either Macedonia or Kosovo (the later juridically a part of the serb state), and to militarily enforce the UN's no fly zone over Bosnia. Those same planners are also preparing to intervene in Haiti with a Panama style operation, in case the military junta fails to bow to US pressure to restore the Aristide presidency (which is increasingly seen as the only way to staunch the flow of refugees to the US). In a real sense, the intervention in Somalia, "Operation Restore Hope", has already deserved its name: the Somali operation has restored hope to the Pentagon -- hope that its centrality in the post-cold war world has been clearly recognized within the ruling class, hope that "public opinion" has been mobilized as efficiently as have its Marine battalions. the dispatch of the Marines to Somalia has been a success inasmuch as it has played a vital role in preparing the way for US military interventions and operations to come.

Somalia in itself is of little strategic or economic importance to American imperialism today. With the elimination of the global threat once represented by Russian imperialism, and the absence (for the moment) of a new imperialist constellation opposed to the US superpower, Washington has no overriding need for military bases in Somalia. Nor have raw materials or a pool of cheap labor motivated the present military operation. Any direct strategic or economic benefits have played a distinctly secondary role in the decision to intervene in Somalia. (In the interests of being comprehensive, however, a short list of potential strategic benefits

should be mentioned: given the current instability in Kenya, where the US navy has its key East African docking facilities, the prospect of such privileges in the Somali port of Berbera has some appeal; in addition, there is the concern that the chaos in Somalia might have led to the emergence of another



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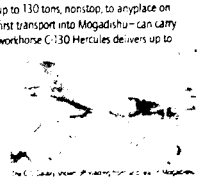
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This full-page ad in the *Washington Post* the day after Clinton's Inauguration picked up on the theme of hope and offered America the chance to buy a multimillion dollar military plane for the "humanitarian relief" of both Somalia and Lockheed sales.

fundamentalist Muslim regime, which could have further destabilized the horn of Africa.) The decision to intervene in Somalia must be sought elsewhere: in the debates within the American ruling class over how best to assure its continued global hegemony, and the role of the military in the "new world order"; and in the recognition that the effective use of American military power -- particularly in the absence of a clearly designated "enemy", such as Russia or its proxies had been -- depends on the prior reshaping and remolding of public opinion.

A real debate is ongoing within the American ruling class over how best to preserve its world domination into the next century. At the least, the new Clinton administration marks a growing recognition that unless the US takes steps to restore its economic competitiveness, its present military supremacy will soon be at risk. This shift to economic concerns, and the centrality of the burgeoning budget deficit, in the thinking of the ruling class, has made the Pentagon (and its bloated budget) a tempting target, especially in a period when the US faces no immediate global challenge. Those policy makers who recognize the continued importance of military power to America's global hegemony have been concerned that, in the interests of reducing the budget deficit, and rebuilding America's shattered infrastructure, the needs of the Pentagon might be sacrificed. The situation in the US, and perhaps more to the point, in Britain, after 1919, when deep cuts were made in military spending, with devastating consequences in the 1930s and the early years of World War Two, is a frightening historical parallel -- and proof of the capacity of the capitalist class for a myopia regarding its own long term interests. The Somali operation, precisely because of its relatively low risk, but high visibility, character, has provided the proponents of military preparedness with a test case on which to "prove" their arguments for the need for a high-tech, mobile, and quick response military machine in a world which, in a certain respect, has become more dangerous now that the cold war is over.

As the American ruling class learned to its dismay in Vietnam, popular support for a military operation is an absolute necessity in the present epoch, a precondition for the effective prosecution of any war, big or small. Since Vietnam, the difficulty of mobilizing public opinion in support of the use of American military force has been an inhibiting factor in the calculations of the US government. Even at the time of the Gulf war, considerable reservations over the use of force were expressed within the ruling class, and had that war been prolonged or resulted in high US casualties, public opinion might have quickly shifted in favor of the "doves". It is here that the Somali operation assumes its

true importance. The US has already achieved what no one would have thought possible: a vast military operation has been successfully presented to the public, with virtually no dissent, as a humanitarian undertaking; the dispatch of battle ready Marines has been "sold" as a mission of mercy; as far as public opinion is concerned, the US army may as well be the Salvation Army, dispensing food and medicine to the hungry and sick.

It is impossible to underestimate the significance of being able to successfully present the use of military force as an aid mission, the dispatch of combat troops as an humanitarian endeavor. The fact that real people are being helped, are receiving food and medicine that they were not receiving before, only helps to establish the humanitarian character of the operation in the eyes of the public, and thereby creates the ideological climate for other and bigger military operations to come. For example, in the US, the Somali operation has already disarmed one of the Pentagon's traditional opponents within the ruling class: the congressional black caucus, the organization of black political leaders in the US Congress. These politicians are solidly behind the Somali operation, whereas they just as solidly opposed the use of force in the Gulf two years ago. At that time, their argument was that disproportionate numbers of blacks would be casualties in any conflict, and that the money spent on the Pentagon would be better spent on rebuilding America's cities. Today, these same politicians are the most vocal in the demand for the presence of US troops in Somalia. Had the US intervened in Bosnia instead of Somalia, black politicians would have been quick to point out that the US cared more about the suffering of whites than blacks. Now, if US troops are sent to Bosnia, those same politicians will be hard pressed to oppose the operation without appearing to say that humanitarian missions in Africa are okay, but not in Europe.

What is true of black politicians is no less true of the liberal churches, which have adopted a pacifist position ever since the Vietnam war. The symbol of such opposition to the use of American military force anywhere in the world over the past three decades has been the reverend William Sloan Coffin, whose opposition to Desert Storm was no less vocal than his opposition to Vietnam. Having held aloft the banner of Christian pacifism for so many years, this influential clergyman (influential in certain ruling class circles as a moral voice) has now blessed American military intervention in Somalia. Indeed, not only is Operation Restore Hope an example of doing God's work in the eyes of the eminent pastor, but he has stated that military intervention in Bosnia may also be warranted on humanitarian grounds.

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Crisis and Class Struggle in Europe

Although the recession is officially over in the US, the economic situation remains poor. The huge budget deficits, which in the 1980s counteracted the tendency to stagnation, have now been transformed into an obstacle to an economic recovery (see "The World Economy: The Light goes out at the end of the Tunnel" in IP 24, p.1). For a year now, the crisis has been hitting Western Europe full blast. The perspective drawn up by the EEC, which foresaw a rate of growth below 1% for 1993, shows that on this side of the Atlantic also, the crisis is far from over. The capitalist class does not want to face the fact that the system for whose administration it is responsible is up against the wall, trapped by past efforts at remedy. It promises to jump start the engine through "public works" (Clinton), or "growth initiatives" (the EEC). But, as we indicated in IP 24, "demand cannot 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." (p.1) Therefore, there are no illusions about a possible capitalist economic recovery in Europe or in the US.

The unification of Europe behind the leadership of Germany constitutes a response of the bourgeoisie to the crisis, each great power increasing its control over the markets and zones for investment of its neighbors. As with every capitalist restructuration, it means that the survival of the strongest countries will take place to the detriment of the weakest. The imposition of uniform measures on countries of vastly different economic strength means a still more bitter competition than before. The successive devaluation of the Italian lira, the English pound, the peseta, the escudo, and the Irish pound, clearly illustrate this process.

The basic axis of the policy followed by the capitalist class to maintain its profits consists in laying-off masses of workers, and in reducing wages. Unlike earlier crises, every country, and every sector, is involved in this gigantic restructuration. In 1992, the unemployment rate exploded in several European countries: Great Britain, France, Germany, Ireland. But what is perhaps more indicative of the depth of the crisis, is the fact that sectors previously touted as "futuristic" are today plunged into the race to restructure.

Just look at the spectacular loss of jobs in the computer sector (IBM for example), and the rationalization in the banking sector. The military sector, whose expansion was the springboard for previous recoveries is also laying-off masses of workers. The state apparatus itself is reducing the number of its employees (Italy, France). However, the worst is yet to come. Thus in European steel, 50,000 jobs will be lost by 1995.

These massive lay-offs are being accompanied by an unprecedented attack on those still working. To relieve the budget deficit which affects profits, the state is attacking the working class directly (through wage freezes), or indirectly (through reductions in unemployment benefits, pensions, health insurance, and higher taxes). Over the last few months, plans to massively and frontally attack the working class have been adopted in several European countries. In Italy, the capitalist class has decided to reduce the budget deficit for this year by cutting health expenditures, raising the retirement age to 65, freezing wages in the public sector, and imposing new taxes. In Spain, the "socialist", Felipe Gonzalez, decided to increase taxes, and the VAT, as well as reduce state expenditures by way of a wage freeze, and a freeze on unemployment benefits, for state employees. In Sweden too, a cut in public spending is on the agenda; in the birthplace of the welfare state, workers will have to work longer before being able to retire. In Great Britain, the Major government is closing the coal mines, reducing investment credits for rail lines and public transport, as well as freezing the wages of public sector workers. In Belgium, the Social-Christian government has decreed a general rise in taxes, and a cut in unemployment benefits. If France seems to be relatively unscathed for the moment, it is not because of the gentleness of the Socialists, who until recently constituted its government. On the contrary, those pretended defenders of the workers had not waited for Maastricht to defend the interests of capital, and lay-off workers.

STRENGTH AND WEAKNESS OF THE WORKERS REACTION

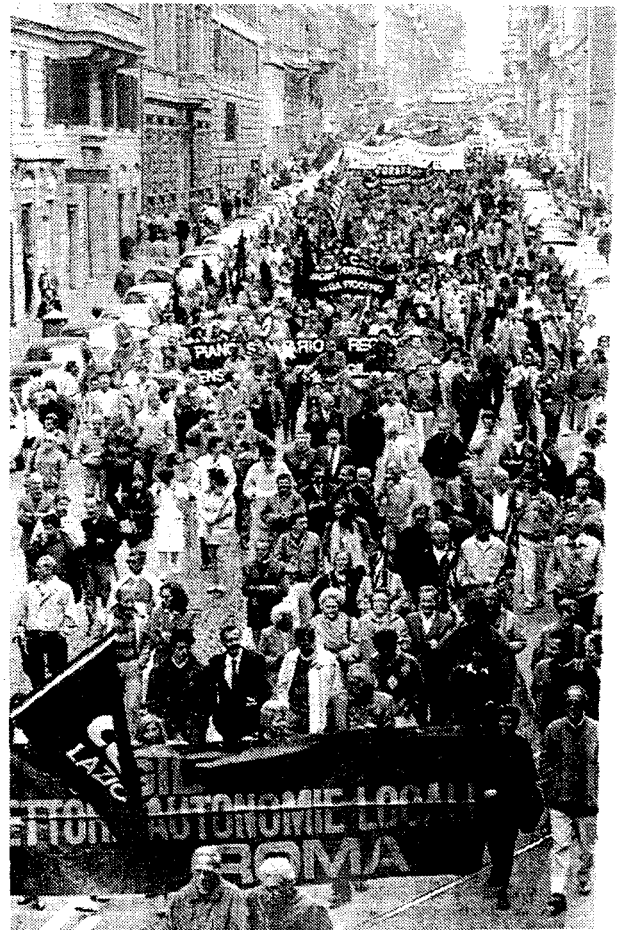
Over the past several years, the absence

of important struggles in Europe could have led to the view that the workers were absorbing the blows of the bosses without reacting, had allowed themselves to be totally paralyzed by the fear of unemployment or war, and were only concerned about preserving their own particular jobs. Or rather, that if there were struggles, they were prosecuted in an essentially corporatist spirit, to defend one's own particular turf. In short, the perspective of a generalized struggle, the outcome of a conscious unification, could have appeared more distant and improbable than ever (see IP 20, on the historic course, for an analysis of the reasons for the low level of struggle in the recent past). In that context, the strikes and demonstrations that exploded in the spring of '92 in Germany (see IP 23), and, in the Autumn in Great Britain and Italy, made it clear that the working class was very much alive as a collective social force, and that it would not allow itself to be sacrificed on the alter of capitalist profit. Social tensions were not limited to Europe. In the US, for example, ten years after the strike of 60,000 miners in 1981, the unions prepared for a long strike in West Virginia. In China, after having hesitated to close the coal mines and to increase food prices for a long time, out of fear of unleashing a class explosion, the CP decided to lay-off 30,000 miners, and 70,000 workers in related industries, and envisaged a 400,000 reduction in the number of miners by 1995. The reaction now hangs in the balance.

In all these different movements, we can see manifested the basic characteristics of the class struggle in the present period: its explosiveness, its spontaneity, its massive character, and the tendency to self-organization. In Italy, after having born the blows of the bourgeoisie, notably with respect to the end of the sliding scale of wages, the workers reacted as a single person to the Amato plan. The protest movement, which took the form of massive demonstrations, spread like wild fire through the great industrial cities of the North and South alike (Milan, Bologna, Genoa, Naples, and Turin). The fact that the demonstrations preceded the calls of the unions in several places, and went beyond them in others, shows the spontaneous character of the workers struggle.

Recent experiences of struggle bear witness to a certain maturation of class consciousness. We want to focus on two aspects of this. First, the fact that the Italian workers, in numerous locales, violently confronted the unions. The unions, after having signed the agreement to end the sliding scale of wages, defended a counter-austerity plan even harsher than the government's. It remains an open question why the unions made so little effort to hide the identity between their own interests and those of the government (a phenomenon not specific to Italy, but also

found in countries such as Spain, where the unions declared themselves ready to negotiate a new anti-strike law with the government). The weakness of struggles in the preceding period is probably one part of the answer. The fact that the unions are financed by the state is another: it's not hard to understand their concern to put state finances on a sound footing. But, it is also possible that the unions deliberately wanted to participate in an offensive of the bourgeoisie against the working class, so as to intimidate it, and that they tried to prevent the unleashing of struggles out of fear that they wouldn't be able to control them. Whatever the case, the workers clearly saw the identity of interests between the unions and the state. The image of union leaders trying to speak to the workers



Italian Workers Protest Austerity

under police protection, behind bullet proof screens, is a concrete illustration of this fact, graven on the memories of all who witnessed it. This awareness (which was not only theoretical, but which manifested itself in practice, by way of confrontations) of the

the integration of the unions within the state apparatus is the fruit of the loss of illusions which occurs in a subterranean fashion, even in the absence of struggles, and which can be seen in the diminution in union membership. It is important not to underestimate the significance of such things: even if the bitterness of workers was heightened by the openly anti-working class attitude of the Italian unions, that confrontation merely illustrates a more general tendency, true everywhere, and in a constant way. The workers can only count on their own strength, and must resist all state organizations which try -- in the name of "struggle" -- to reduce them to passivity.

The second salient fact is the capacity of workers to channel the discontent that cannot be translated into open struggles. The imposing demonstrations of protest against mine closures in Great Britain was not the work of the English miners alone. They were joined by large numbers of the unemployed, and by public and private sector workers. The workers thus demonstrated their potential, once mobilized, to be a pole of orientation and organization for the rest of the working class, whose discontent has accumulated, but which has not yet found the collective strength to be expressed on its own.

Why did a movement as explosive and massive as the one in Italy, at no point seem to threaten the government, which moreover did not change its plans one iota? It is important to recognize that the recent movements indicate more a loss of illusions on the part of the workers, than a genuine clarification of the perspectives for struggle, and the means to develop it: self-organization, and generalization of struggles. In that respect, they certainly do not yet mark the end of the difficulties that the working class faces in developing its struggles.

In both Great Britain, and Italy, the strikes remained very limited. That marks a general tendency in the present period. A reduction in the number of strike days has been seen in several countries, notably, Great Britain and France. It would be a mistake to see this as indicative of an absence of combativity. The movement against mine closures in Britain is a good illustration. On the one hand, the union leadership refused to call a general strike, especially since such an act, given the level of accumulated discontent, would have rapidly escaped their control. On the other hand, the workers themselves, who wanted to go on strike, did not take the initiative, and allowed themselves -- despite violent protests -- to be reduced to passivity by the unions.

The absence of genuine self-organization is just as flagrant. If the demonstrations in Italy took place outside of, and even against, the unions, they were quickly canalized by the initiatives of union officials, as well as by

base unionists: the multiple "coordinations". The opposition between official unions and coordinations constituted one of the most pernicious traps by which to control the combativity of the workers. The organization of rival demonstrations, the rejection of the official union demo of October 2 by the dissidents, all contributed to replacing the fundamental question of "what is to be done to struggle effectively?" by preoccupations having little to do with the real issue. The break with the unions was recuperated and nullified by alternative union structures closer to the workers.

To the absence of open struggles, and self-organization, one can add the absence of perspectives as dominant features of the present period in Western Europe. The workers no longer have many illusions in the system, but they have not yet developed a clear understanding of the fact that capitalism, driven solely by the quest for profit, can and must be destroyed so as to give way to a different mode of production: communism, based on the satisfaction of human needs. In the absence of a clear proletarian perspective, the workers are still trapped by the perspectives advanced by the union general staffs, and the base unionists. "Reject Maastricht", "keep the mines open", that is all that these defenders of the capitalist system have to propose. The status quo or a return to an earlier situation. These "perspectives" have nothing to do with the real meaning of proletarian struggle. The proletariat does not fight to be exploited by "its own" national capitalist class rather than by an alliance of European bourgeoisies. Nor does it struggle to keep open obsolete plant and factories. Modernization, the introduction of a more and more sophisticated technology, by rendering superfluous a good share of unnecessary human labor, is a source of misery only in a capitalist system. In the framework of a communist society, based on the satisfaction of human needs, it would be a sign of the liberation of man.

Adèle

**INTERNATIONALIST
PERSPECTIVE**

US

What 's New in the White House?

There is a change at the helm in the White House and, contrary to what some in the revolutionary milieu think, the candidate preferred by those most influential in the American capitalist class did not lose. Indeed, the ruling class has several reasons to congratulate itself on the unfolding and outcome of the last election:

-While the election campaign began in an atmosphere of widespread cynicism and disenchantment with all candidates and with elections in general, over the course of the campaign, the illusion in bourgeois democracy as a means to change the course of society and improve life in the future, gathered considerable strength. The election turnout was the highest since 1968, and more than 5 % higher than in 1988, when barely half of the eligible population voted. The belief that the election results will somehow stop the decline of living standards, became more widespread than could have been imagined at the outset of the election season.

-A president who was identified with the status quo, whose ideology and rhetoric was steeped in the past period of cold war and few threats to America's global economic domination, was replaced by one intensely aware of the erosion of American economic power and the threats resulting from European and Japanese competition, and whose ideology is better adapted to the needs of mobilizing society for American military intervention in a post-cold war world.

-The candidature of Ross Perot not only helped to stir up new interest in the elections. It also made it possible for Clinton to get elected with a "landslide-victory" (in the electoral college) even if only 23,76% of the total electorate voted for him. But Perot made his biggest contribution to capitalism's future by focusing his campaign, and therefore the mass media's attention, almost entirely on the threat resulting from the ballooning public debt. By doing so, he prepared the terrain for the harsh austerity-measures which the new president will have to take.

-Finally, Clintons victory ends the notorious "gridlock" in Washington, the paralysis caused by the Democrats' control of Congress and the Republicans' grip on the White House. "Divided government" was not always a problem in the US. Often it was very convenient because the differences between the two parties reflected more a calculated division of labor than real

disagreements over policies. Under Reagan for instance, the Republican control of the government allowed the left wing of the Democratic party to play an oppositional role, containing the resistance against the brutal austerity-policies of the government, while the right wing of the party provided Reagan with enough support in Congress to push these policies through. But under Bush, real policy differences grew, because of an increasing awareness that some of the policies of the Reagan years had left a disastrous legacy for US-capital (the ballooning of debts, the neglect of the crisis in education, health care etc) and required some change of course; and because of the need to adapt US-policies to the reality of the post-cold war world and the intensified competition with Europe and Japan. Countless times, government initiatives died in Congress and laws were killed by a presidential veto. Under Clinton, we can expect to see the political apparatus of the capitalist state act in a more unified and forceful manner.

* * *

At the beginning of the election season, Bush's reelection seemed a foregone conclusion. The propaganda fest around the collapse of the enemy bloc, followed by the short and successful Gulf War, had pushed his approval rates higher than any post-war president had ever enjoyed. He seemed therefore the logical choice to lead US-capitalism in "the New World Order". But pretty soon there were signs that the continuation of Republican government implied problems for the efficiency of capitalist rule and inevitable exacerbation of social austerity. The euphoria of the cold war and Gulf war victories evaporated remarkably fast under the blows of the deepening economic crisis. The particular manifestations of this crisis in the US were seen as closely linked to the policies of Reagan and Bush: the incapacity to stimulate the economy because of the weight of debts amassed in the '80's; the deterioration of health care, pensions, of the living conditions in the cities and the increased crime resulting from this, because of the brutal austerity-policies under Reagan and Bush; the erosion of the competitive position of the US because of the neglect of education, infrastructure, etc. in the same period.

This undermined Bush's leadership capacities, not so much because other politicians had better proposals to address these problems, but because Bush was inevitably

identified with them and could therefore not credibly claim that he was best placed to "solve" them. His promises could simply not come across as believable and therefore he would not be able, as president, to hold out the illusion of a better future, even as he demanded new sacrifices.

Even on foreign policy, supposedly Bush's strong suit, the continuation of Republican government posed serious problems. Ideologically, the Republican foreign policy was wholly rooted in the cold war, in the fight for domination against the "communist" enemy. The disappearance of this enemy created an ideological vacuum, a scramble for a fresh ideological rationale in sync with the new situation. The emergence of a strong isolationist current within the Republican party, led by Pat Buchanan, testified to these difficulties. The feebleness of Bush's response to Buchanan's challenge, which dominated the early Republican primaries, did not bode well for his future capacity to win popular support for a continuation of the military buildup and military intervention abroad.

While Bush was fighting off Buchanan in the Republican primaries, the debate in the Democratic primaries quickly led to a convergence around a centrist program, aimed at correcting the excesses of "Reaganomics" while also rejecting a return to the traditional "tax and spend" Democratic policies of the past. This was possible because of the attenuation of the class struggle. In the '80's, the need to shepherd working class militancy within the system, had driven the rhetoric of Democratic campaigns to the left. The Democratic primaries of the last three elections were dominated by the challenges of Ted Kennedy and Jesse Jackson and union-support was decisive in the victories of Mondale and Dukakis, who could be portrayed as "captives of labor and other special interests". During this period, there was indeed a "left-in-opposition-strategy", a division of labor in the political apparatus of the capitalist class: The very logic of the "winner takes all"-rule of the American election-system implies that both parties must position themselves in the "middle of the road" of (capitalist-kneaded) public opinion in order to win. The fact that the Democrats -like the Labour-party in Britain -did not really confirm to this law in the '80's, shows it was more important for them to contain the discontent in the working class than to win the elections. But in recent years, the danger of class struggle waned in the US, as in most other industrialized countries. Not because discontent diminished but because the struggle entailed greater risks, because of a loss of illusions of what a struggle under the guidance of the unions and the left could obtain, and because of a lack of self-confidence by the class and thus a lack of perspective for autonomous struggle, which can at least in part be explained by the confusion generated by the

enormous changes the working class was undergoing in its own make up (see articles in past issues on the recomposition of the working class). Paradoxically, the working class struggles less, not because it has more confidence in the capitalist system, but because it has less illusions. Contrary to what we expected, this disenchantment did not automatically lead to greater self-reliance and autonomous struggle, at least not in the short term.

So what the Democrats were facing was not rising workers' militancy but widespread cynicism, a disbelief amongst workers (but not just limited to them) that the system could be made to work for them. This in itself attests to the weakness of capitalism's ideological control and is therefore not without danger for it. But it is a different situation, requiring a different response. So the unions kept a conspicuously low profile in the Democratic campaign and those candidates spouting the traditional left-wing trade-unionist rhetoric such as Harkin were quickly marginalized. The modest success of the quirky candidacy of Jerry Brown showed the potential for a "new left" to arise, should the situation require it. But it didn't, and after he pacified angry auto workers in Michigan, Brown retreated into the shadows. He didn't even get to speak on prime time at the Democratic Convention.

The main challenge for capitalism was to give the voters an illusion of empowerment, of having a stake in the system; to convince them that the elections offered a real alternative, not just a choice between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. That, of course, was in the first place the job of the media, especially TV, which devoted considerably more time to the elections than they ever did in the past. They were greatly helped by Ross Perot, who brought excitement to the horse race, the sense that "this time, things were different", and who was portrayed, initially at least, as a new kind of leader, untainted by politics, a straight-talking no-nonsense kind of a guy, a knight on a white horse, a man of the people. In the meantime, both Bush and Clinton were roughed up by the media. All this can be easily explained as good business practices: the networks, like all successful capitalist enterprises, kept an eye on their profits; they needed these little dramas for their viewing rates. But quite apart from their own narrow interests, these tactics also served the global interests of US-capital very well.

The participation of the Texan billionaire undoubtedly did a lot to rekindle interest in the race and he quickly rose to the top of the polls, attracting support from both Republican and Democratic clienteles. But once he got there, his free ride was over. The media suddenly were filled with stories which painted Perot as a mean, bigoted, paranoid autocrat. Perot probably never was an acceptable candidate for US-capital. His quest for power

without the support of an established political apparatus made him too unpredictable, too risky. But he was very useful for a while. His attacks were mainly directed at Bush and soon the election coverage was dominated by the mudslinging between the Bush- and Perot-camps. Clinton meanwhile, stayed above the fray and was portrayed as dignified and serious compared to his two rivals. Especially after the Democratic Convention, the mass media became increasingly supportive of the Democratic candidate. The way in which the two party conventions were covered showed a stark difference. The Democratic Convention was portrayed as a real triumph, a celebration of unity, the coming of age of "a new kind of Democrats". The fact that Perot withdrew from the race at the height of the convention, supposedly because of "the revival of the Democratic party", further enhanced the positive feelings. The Republican Convention on the other hand, was portrayed as badly divided, and dominated by the extreme right. Its party-platform, which hardly differed from that of 4 years ago, was now described as a sinister document, written by dangerous zealots. From then on, the media increasingly closed ranks behind Clinton. Even traditionally pro-Republican papers such as the Wall Street Journal, supported him. The research group "The Center for Media and Public Affairs", calculated that, between Labor Day and Election Day, of all non-partisan evaluations of the candidates on network-TV, only 29 % of those concerning Bush were positive, compared to 52 % for Clinton. This doesn't mean that a group of conspirators in a smoke-filled room decided that Clinton was their man and gave its secret instructions to the media. Rather, over the course of the campaign, which was between two candidates both acceptable to capitalism, the debate within the establishment, its bureaucracies, think tanks, policy groups, academic and other institutions, etc, led to a growing consensus that Clinton, both because of his leadership style and his policy-proposals, was the best candidate; and this growing consensus translated into growing media-support.

A very different analysis of the campaign was expressed by the ICC, which stated, in the October/November issue of Internationalism (# 79, the same article appeared in World Revolution) that "the re-election of Bush most clearly coincides with the political needs of American capitalism" and that "the media is being used to undercut the Clinton campaign and help Bush win the election". Here we see yet another stunning example of this group's schematic thinking, in which reality, when it refuses to conform to the scheme, is simply discarded. Or twisted. Because if you want it badly enough, your scheme can explain anything. The Perot offensive against Bush? Just a ploy to facilitate Bush's victory, according to the ICC. The harshly negative way in which the

media portrayed the Republican convention? You'd think that couldn't do the Republicans any good, right? Wrong! This was done, Internationalism writes, "to augment Bush's underdog, Harry Truman-style come from behind campaign ploy"... However, in the next issue of Internationalism (Dec./Jan.), the very same person wrote: "The election of Clinton was no accident, nor a sign that the bourgeoisie has lost control of the political situation. It corresponds to the needs of American capitalism in the present conjuncture..." First, the reelection of Bush corresponds to the needs of American capitalism. then. in the next issue, the same needs require the election of Clinton! In its International Review #72, the ICC, in order to prove that the bourgeoisie wanted Clinton to win, uses exactly the same arguments it used earlier to prove the bourgeoisie wanted Bush to win! (the role of the media, the candidature of Perot)

It is of course very well that the ICC abandons its earlier, ridiculous position, but it is also despicable that, once again, it tries to cover up a mistake, instead of facing it. So concerned is this group about its brand name image (its recruiting tool) that it cannot muster the courage to discuss in its press where it went wrong, condemning itself thereby to repeating its errors in the future.

Its first "analysis" was so mistaken because it was not based on reality, but on the "left-in-opposition-theory" which, in the context of its theoretical vacuity, has become a rigid scheme. We don't deny that a division of labor within the capitalist political apparatus, in which a strong left faction is kept in opposition, where it is untainted by government-responsibility so that it can subvert and contain working class resistance, often corresponds to the objective needs of the capitalist class in this period. But it is a big mistake to conclude from this that therefore this strategy is being uniformly applied. Objective needs do not automatically translate onto the subjective level (otherwise, capitalism would no longer exist) and the threat of class struggle is not the only factor that comes into play in the political decision making process of the capitalist class. Interimperialist rivalry, the competition with foreign capital, the deepening of the economic crisis, are shaping capitalist strategies too, and contrary to what the ICC assumes, the differences on these issues between the capitalist parties are not always merely a mystificatory screen hiding Machiavellian unity; especially not when global changes occur and require new responses. And when we analyse how these factors interact, which the ICC doesn't do, we obviously have to analyse how their weight changes. It would be foolish to think that the capitalist strategy is unchanging, regardless of whether the threat of class struggle, or interimperialist conflict, is intensifying or waning.

* * *

Because important changes have occurred in all of these factors, the return of the Democrats to the White House has several advantages for US-capitalism. So what consequences will it have? How will it affect US-policy?

On foreign policy, few significant differences between the two parties emerged during the campaign. Both Bush and Clinton proposed only slight reductions in the cold war-level of military expenditures, both strongly favored a forceful military presence abroad to defend US-global interests, each rejected the isolationist reactions within both parties to the end of the cold war. If anything, Clinton came out more vigorously than Bush in favor of military intervention abroad, in trouble spots such as the Balkans.

The US no longer faces an enemy bloc in a global struggle for world domination. On the other hand, the stability that resulted from the neat division of the world into two zones of influence has disappeared too. And the dislocations which this brings with it, are further fanned by the deepening of the economic crisis. The US, as the leading capitalist power, has the prime responsibility to prevent these dislocations from disrupting the efficient functioning of its global system of exploitation. Furthermore, it wants to discourage the emergence of a new rival power that could challenge its political, economic and military leadership. Therefore, the need to project its power on the world scene and to play the capitalist world's policeman does not diminish. Quite the contrary. But because in the short term, there is no longer the danger of escalation into a global confrontation, military interventions abroad have less risky implications and will often be possible on a smaller scale. On the other hand, it will often no longer be possible to justify them as necessary responses to threats to the US's "national security", instigated by the enemy bloc. But that's precisely the sole foundation upon which Republican foreign policy rhetoric has been based. The Democrats, on the other hand, have already, since Woodrow Wilson clothed foreign policy goals in much broader, moral mystifications, such as the defense of human rights, etc. Furthermore, their capacity to mobilize popular support for US-military intervention is untainted by Iran-contra, Iraqgate and other scandals of the Reagan-Bush era, which have exposed the hypocrisy and cynicism of Washington's global machinations. Clinton therefore is better positioned than Bush to fill the ideological vacuum left by Moscow's defeat. He will be more effective in combating isolationism and drumming up support for America's global intervention.

On domestic policy, the priority of the new president would have been the same, whoever would have been elected: to stop the explosive growth of the budget deficit without

excessively weakening the overall economy. Since Reagan took office, Federal debt has more than quadrupled and it keeps growing at a rate of more than 13000 dollars every second. The cost of interest, \$ 199 billion in the last fiscal year, now exceeds the total of all Federal spending for education, science, transportation, housing, food stamps, welfare and law enforcement. This enormous burden mortgages the entire world economy (see article on the economic situation in our previous issue) and it also undercuts the US's competitive position. When Reagan became president the debt was 26,5 % of the gross domestic product, now it has climbed to 51,1 %. That is the highest ratio of debt to economic output since the 50's, when it reflected much of the bill left over from world war II, and is considerably higher than in Germany, France or Britain (Japan has a surplus). Attacking the structural debt is therefore not a matter of choice for the US government. Even more so because crises ignored during the election campaign, such as the one looming in the commercial banking sector, are likely to make the bill even steeper. In 1992, 104 US-banks went under and put the banking insurance fund for \$ 5.5 billion in the red. The Office of Management and Budget predicts that the shortfall of the fund, which must be paid by the Treasury, will climb to \$ 72 billion in 1995. And so on.

If Clinton were to ignore the debt-problem he would quickly be punished by havoc in the international financial markets and forced to change course in order to save the dollar and stop the rise of long term interest rates. So the new president has very little leeway on economic policy.

It may be that Clinton will use another mix of measures than Bush would have. It may be easier for him to raise taxes than it would have been for Bush, who based his campaign once again on a no new-taxes-pledge. But whatever concrete measures he takes, the emphasis will be on more austerity, more misery for those segments of the population who are already the hardest hit by the deepening of the crisis. Already during the campaign, Clinton was quite blunt on the need "to force people off welfare". The high expectations created about the improvements in living conditions which the Clinton victory will bring, will only be filled with the excuses and rhetoric in which the austerity-attacks will be packaged. In reality, poverty and all its social consequences, will continue to spread under the Clinton-government.

This does not mean that Clinton will bring no changes to American domestic policy. The ballooning of the deficits is not the only negative legacy of the Reagan-Bush era for US-capital. In its eagerness to buildup the military and give tax cuts to the rich, the Reagan/Bush administration has cut deeply into spending on education, transportation,

infrastructure, scientific research and other areas of vital importance for US capitalism's competitive position. Now that the end of the cold war has fanned the global competition between the strongest economic powers, it's in the interest of the American capitalist class to try to correct some of this neglect. This requires a stronger role for the state, not only to redirect resources towards investments necessary for the overall effectiveness of the US economy but also to cut unproductive costs that are a growing burden on American capital. A good example is health care, on which the US spent more than 14% of its total economic output last year, 12% more than in 1991. This is considerably more than its competitors (according to the OECD, in 1990 the US spent 12,2%, France and Germany 8%, Japan 6,5% and Britain 6,1% on health care) and without reform, medical spending is expected to go up by 12 to 15% a year, swallowing more and more of the total GNP. The Reagan-Bush government, wedded to its ideology of deregulation and absolute trust in "the magic of free market", was unwilling to tackle this problem. Only in the midst of the election campaign, did Bush come up with a health care reform plan, but even that proposed nothing to rein in costs. Health care costs are going up in all industrialized countries, due to the aging of the population and a variety of other factors. In many countries -Italy and Germany are recent examples- the state intervenes to limit their growth, at the expense of the sick. In the US, however, the problem is exacerbated because the Federal gov't. has so far done almost nothing to limit global health spending. It's true that the Reagan-Bush administrations have cut billions out of Medicaid and Medicare, the government-health programs for the poor and the elderly, and out of a variety of programs for preventive care, etc. And in the same period, many thousands of companies have reduced or eliminated health care insurance for their workers. About 40 million Americans now have no health insurance and many others have only very limited coverage. But the result of these short-sighted policies, which have greatly reduced the accessibility of primary and preventive care for the poor and the un- or underinsured, has been that many millions of patients are discouraged from seeking medical help at an early stage of their illness, so that, when they finally seek help because they have no other choice, they are much sicker and require much more expensive treatment (as a result, Medicaid- and Medicare spending have grown rapidly despite the huge cutbacks). Add to that the growing health costs resulting from rising poverty and social decay, the enormous administrative costs resulting from the need to deal with more than 1500 different health insurance companies, the total freedom of health care providers and pharmaceutical companies to set their own prices, and you get a recipe for astronomical cost-escalation.

Only a global intervention by the Federal gov't., imposing spending limits on the entire sector, streamlining its procedures and improving the accessibility of preventive care, can begin to bring this escalation under control. In contrast to the Republicans, the Democrats have worked out various proposals towards that goal and Clinton has promised to act on them in the first 100 days of his administration. But it would be naive to expect, given the urgency of the deficit-problem, that such a reform will be carried out without a decline of quality of care for many millions of patients.

Likewise, we can expect Clinton to redirect some resources towards infrastructure and other spending that shores up the overall competitive position of US-capital, which might improve the US's position on the world market. But again, it would be very naive to expect something of the size of Roosevelt's "New Deal", that could make Clinton's promises of robust growth and a rapidly expanding job-base even temporarily a reality. Unlike the '30's, capitalism today doesn't have any more reserves that it can mobilize through a state-directed reorganization. Clinton has no better solution for the crisis than Bush did. The deepening of the crisis will quickly dissolve the false hopes raised by him and confront the working class with the hard truth that the problem is the entire capitalist system, not just one of its factions, and that real hope can only grow in its own, autonomous struggle.

Sander
Dec. 1992

DISCUSSION

Globalisation and its Implications for the State

The following text is a contribution to the debate on the perspectives of the present period. In previous articles we have already emphasized that the globalisation of capital has accelerated in the last 10-20 years. The following article tries to situate this phenomenon in a more general historical context. While doing so, it also raises points which challenge some aspects of our concepts pertaining to the control of the state over capital. The globalisation of capital is in our view an undeniable tendency, but it is also clear that it cannot happen in a unified, harmonious or peaceful way: the enlarged reproduction of capital inevitably means the enlarged reproduction of capital's contradictions. Therefore, the question: who controls this globalisation (each national state, the most powerful nations, or supra-national organisms) is worth discussing in a more profound way. It has important implications for the political organisation of capital in the present and the future period.

The current political situation is presented as a time of changes, heralding, according to bourgeois ideologues, "a new world order". It's true that the '90's are times of great uncertainty for the bourgeoisie: uncertainty about what happened in the East, about the depth of the recession, about the evolution of imperialist tensions. During the last several years, the capitalist economy has been going downhill, accompanied by the military crisis in the Gulf and the oil shock that went with it, the difficulties of European unification, and the growing military interventionism under the shield of the US, in the name of humanitarian aid. Like all preceding crises, the current economic crisis forces all factions of capital to important economic restructurings and political realignments. Today, we are witnessing a movement which seems contradictory: on the one hand, the global development of the multinationals, the planned creation of a unified European market, the internationalisation of financial and stock markets, all seem to favor integration in a gigantic planetary market. On the other hand, regionalism is on the rise, demanding more narrow, protected political-economic spaces. The globalisation of the economy continues, corresponding to capitalism's very nature. But

the current economic crisis is disturbing the process in a contradictory sense: an acceleration of the tendency of globalisation, going beyond the prerogatives of the nation-state and, at the same time, the formation of new, more narrow political entities, based on the region.

It is clear that the model of the nation-state, which has been the framework of social-political activity for the last two centuries, is undergoing profound changes. It's important to see them because they are linked to the ideological attacks undertaken by the different factions of the capitalist class to increase exploitation and justify attacks on the living conditions of the working class. These transformations in the state result from capital's tendency towards concentration, which is also constantly changing the very make up of the working class. To understand and explain the changes that are taking place is part of the necessary work of demystifying the mechanisms of the capitalist economy.

History shows capital's capacity of reproduction and enlarged reproduction going beyond the antagonism between regional and national questions. The economic necessity to reproduce has repercussions on the political organisation of capitalism. Because of its specific dynamic, capitalism could go beyond the social formation where it had its roots (the medieval city) and launch the conquest of the planet. After having subjected the cities and having laid the foundations for the financial conquest of the political power of the ruling feudal classes (more or less quickly, depending on the regions), capital went on to the conquest of the Americas, using the existing political structures. This movement of expansion brought numerous changes, in its level of accumulation as well as in the political organisation of the state.

The capitalist system of production marks a break with all preceding economic systems, because now the law of value doesn't just determine "economic life", but the entire social system of the modern world: it determines the content of the ideology that corresponds to that new system, as well as the new and specific relations between the economic base of the system and its political and ideological superstructure. We can also affirm that the international dimension of

capital exists from its very beginnings and remains a constant hallmark of its system through all the stages of its development.

The capitalist system is international, in the sense that all parts integrated in this system participate in an international division of labor which involves the bulk of consumption and production goods as well as their distribution. There are also a number of factors that conditioned the cristallisation of the capitalist mode of production (the extension of commercial transactions, the affirmation of "modern" forms of property, the extension of free wage labor) which capitalism imposed gradually in its area of development through political revolutions that allowed it to control and build up a new state apparatus.

Capitalism has always been an internationalising system, poised towards conquering the planet by supplanting other modes of production. The process of accumulation of capital which determines its dynamic and which itself is determined by a globalised law of value, operating on the bases of a limited market of commodities and capital, inevitably produces the global polarisation that exists today: the contrast between the center of capitalism and its less developed periphery (which cannot close the gap). Indeed, the geographical and economic division in Europe between a more developed West and a less developed East dates back to at least to the 16th century. With the first industrial revolution, the countries of Europe could produce enough commodities to sell on the markets of Russia, the Indies or Japan, in exchange for the products of those countries. Western Europe used the gold or silver to which it had access on the American continent, to finance its imports from the East and colonize it economically. Europe accumulated at an increasing speed and in a climate of growing political security, extending capacities in science, technology, trade, warfare, etc. The first industrial revolution is only a period of acceleration within a long tradition of accumulation of knowledge, inventions, and productive innovations.

Pushed by the logic of its accumulation process, the bourgeoisie always sought to occupy a hegemonic position in business. Historically, the economic unification of the world by capitalism is a recent phenomenon. Britain's hegemony was only established after China and the Ottoman empire were "opened up" (1840) and revolts in India were put down (1875). The industrial leadership and financial monopoly of Britain didn't bring a real hegemony: England didn't dominate the European continent and its hegemony in the rest of the world was challenged, not long after it was established (in 1850-1860), by its competitors, Germany and the US, which by the end of the century were industrial and military powerhouses, even if London kept for a much longer time a privileged financial

position.

In the course of four centuries of development, the capitalist logic was affirmed by the conquest of the state apparatus, molded to serve its interests. The national-political framework developed by the "enlightened" monarchs of the 17th and 18th centuries in Europe, constituted a privileged space, for protection against international competition, and for the construction of a protectionist customs systems. But this did not exclude change, as the successive stages of capitalism's expansion and its saturation demonstrated. Each of these successive stages can be defined by the specific forms of the domination of capital over labor and by the corresponding forms of expression of the bourgeoisie's existence. In this way we can distinguish first the phase of mercantilist manufacturing from 1600 until 1800, then the phase of "large industry" from 1800 until 1914 -both analysed by Marx- and finally the period of Taylorism-Fordism which is coming to a close today. In those three phases, the forms of organisation of material production constituted the basis of the expansion of national capitals, shaping the global system through their competition. Indeed, centralized capitalism was formed, over the centuries on national bases, which were the products of alliances and social antagonisms that varied from country to country. The national markets were not exterior to these formations. They did not operate according to a purely economic rationality, but expressed the social relations on which the hegemony of the bourgeoisie was based.

On the political level of the state, the large international bureaucracies began to appear in the second half of the 19th century. These organisations marked the beginning of multilateralism. The final act of the Congress of Vienna (1815) and Aachen (1818) organized the diplomatic relations between the different states and reflected the internationalisation of the economic relations, as well as the balance of forces between the different states.

From the beginning of the "large industry" phase, or the period of hegemony of British imperialism, the opening of the world market (especially between 1848 and 1914) was shaped by the contrast between the industrial centers (which were historically constituted on the basis of feudal-bourgeois national states) and the colonial, non-industrialized, periphery. After having pushed aside France, British hegemony sunk into crisis because of increased German and American competition in a context of overproduction and saturation of different national markets.

But the clamoring for a redivision of the world by the new kids on the bloc, Germany and the US, led to the first world war. This not only meant the opening of a new era of the capitalist market. The enormous destruction of

productive forces also showed the limits of the internationalisation of capital, its decadence. The international economy began to autonomize, to follow its own logic, relatively independent from the national logic. But this development took form mainly thanks to the imperialist policy of the state. Through its influence, this tendency was imposed beyond national borders. An international chamber of commerce was created in 1919, after the war. This chamber elaborated a set of rules to settle international commercial disputes. Between 1918 and 1945, the main industrialized centers waged a ruthless battle for control of national and international markets.

But after the defeat of the Berlin-Rome-Tokyo Axis, the world market was reconstructed under the hegemonic protection of the US. Meanwhile the USSR, an economic power of the periphery, used the Axis' defeat (after choosing the right side just in time) to take control of the semi-industrial periphery of Eastern Europe, and launched a crusade to "liberate" the entire colonial periphery from Western control. In the central industrialized countries, Keynesianism reigned supreme, based on state-interventionism that was supposed to assure unending growth to the benefit of all.

But the state of the post-war period did not just intervene to stimulate modernisation and guide development. Often it played the key role in the economic decision making process. At first, the US, provider of the reconstruction of Europe, supported efforts towards unifying Europe's economies. The globalisation of the economy picked up speed after the war, at the expense of national structures which suffered as the dislocation of many companies transgressed national economic systems. From 1945 to (more or less) 1970, production levels grew rapidly almost everywhere. In this period, the GNP became the main instrument to measure economic growth, and growth the main index of economic development. Everything seemed to evolve in the same, positive, sense. The world economy expanded at a high growth rate.

But every multinational company is fragile, vulnerable to market fluctuations and never ceasing competition. Its narrow profitability-interests coincide badly with the policies of the national states. Therefore contradictions abounded between the interests of the states and those of companies and movements of international capital. The emergence of multinational companies forced the bourgeoisie to tighten international control over exchanges that took many forms; commodities, services, capital, workers. Since 1947 the GATT has become an important framework for negotiations on commerce and customs tariffs, reflecting the tendency towards a universalisation of exchanges. In 1947 it had 23 members, in 1992 103. Increasingly, the globalisation of capital was characterized by

a tripolar interpretation between the US, Japan and the EEC which translated into an intensification of commercial exchanges and an interpenetration of capitals. This required adaptations of the international organisations, under the control of the big economic powers.

This growing interdependence of nations, not limited to the economic sphere, is a reality in the entire world, marking the globalisation of capitalist expansion. It is clear that countries no longer control their national future. Most key decisions are taken outside of them: international monetary agreements, price-agreements on commodities, conditions imposed for capital-investment (IMF). The international organisations, controlled by the big powers, will be the stake of coming confrontations to impose new



influence. There is also another type of interdependence: in a world so dependent on technology, many agreements are necessary to make international systems (air travel, radio frequencies) workable. All this imposes limits on the national states.

But what characterizes this period is the mutation of capital in its relation of ownership. Capital which so far always was national, controlled and protected by the national state, tends to lose this quality. In its place, or rather alongside it, a dominating globalized capital emerges, driven by its financial segment, globalizing at an incredible speed. Financial multinationals and

international financial control organisms tend to become autonomous in relation to the classical national state structures. They characterize the new phase of capitalism.

Alongside the phenomenon of economic restructuration, we also see a reorganisation of the state apparatus, made necessary by the new situation of capital. Every branch of the state, while still controlling or protecting a part of the national capital, is forced, little by little, to give up part of its prerogatives to a globalized economic space, which does not yet possess political control structures (the perspective is not, however, the creation of a global superstate).

We are witnessing a double polarisation, which is a source of tensions and distortions, and which, in the context of deepening crisis, effectively pushes the restructuration by the state of the defenses of more narrow territories. This double movement is the key to understanding the current evolution: the world economy, far from being the mere sum of all economic activities or a juxtaposition of national economies seeking to conquer the international markets, has become the whole of these activities and economies. So the restructuring of the political state occurs under the pressure of these two logics of reproduction: the national and regional one, and the one of globalised capital, which is at the same time national and global.

In the current era of globalisation, the state-framework, inherited from the Fordist era, a centralised state with or without a parliamentary regime, seems to have become obsolete for regulating the economic flows. Besides this phenomenon intrinsic to the movement of capital, a major event has influenced this in recent years. Yesterday's international system was dominated by the opposition between two imperialist blocs. But the end of the East-West conflict has not opened a reign of peace, a new balance of relations between the nations. It permits the appearance of a new economic relation between the industrial nations which also manifests itself in a reorganisation of the role of the big international organisations. They come under pressure from protectionist movements, in order to gain technologies necessary to remain competitive. The traditional state will still have an interventionist role -through subsidies- and will survive.

This protectionist tendency will of course not be fundamental but it creates tensions in international relations. It is clear that today no national government, and even less regional authorities, are able to control the movement of capital and the transfers of

technology for their exclusive benefit. Regional regroupments will become more pronounced and will create new tensions. In the competition between the central poles of global capitalism, positions are not symmetrical. The US and Japan are not merely geographical zones of the global economy under construction. They remain and will remain national economies. Their states will maintain their national structurations while benefiting, because of their relative strength, from the construction of the global economy. Europe on the other hand, is not in a similar situation and it's not a given that the construction of the EEC will lead it there. Europe is stuck with its heritage, a juxtaposition of national economies historically constituted as such. The EEC is not a supranational state and will not be one after the total unification of the European market. The task of the EEC has been, despite its current political troubles, to facilitate the emergence of "national or transnational" oligarchies, big enough to operate on the world market and to organize the retreat or even disappearance of those parts of the national capitals that are incapable of bringing about such a change. Maastricht is in a way the crowning of this phenomenon, even if a new state apparatus for the EC is not on the agenda.

The current evolution towards globalisation is the result of the historic movement of valorisation of capital. The supranational structures for regulating the blind movement of capital appeared at the beginning of this century. From simple referees they transformed themselves, to become more and more autonomous in relation to the traditional states. The US was able to impose a certain control over many of these international organisms, but economic contradictions are pushing towards a new balance between the three poles of concentration of capital (the US, Europe and Japan) and towards a strengthening of structures of control and regulation between them. The failure of this tendency would imply a flight towards another solution than arbitration and the recourse to the traditional means to resolve conflicts of interests between the poles of economic concentration: war.

F.D.

DEBATE

Proposals for a New Platform

The drafting of a new revolutionary platform, which will act as a compass for the proletariat in its struggle against the capitalist state, requires a thorough re-examination of a whole series of concepts. Marxist methodology has a privileged status at the present time. As Marx pointed out: "the anatomy of man provides the key to the anatomy of the ape". At a more general level, that means that present history is not, contrary to what is reflected in certain vulgar conceptions, a simple repetition or a simple mechanical result, of the past, and that revolutionary theory cannot content itself with repeating old "truths". The analysis of the contemporary forms of capitalism must provide new bases for understanding the fundamental antagonism which pits labor against capital in a social system based on the production of exchange-value. A critique of past conceptions is both possible and necessary. It alone will provide the new coherence required by the gravediggers of capital. Neither the proletariat, nor the revolutionaries in its midst, can live with illusions. Revolutionary theory, which is one of the leavens of class consciousness, is only distinguished from the ideologies of the past by its capacity to make an incessant critique of its own bases and results; to illuminate the past, and to open the door to the future.

That is why we are publishing this text of comrade G.S., a member of the Paris discussion circle. It has its point of departure in just such concerns, and refuses to see revolutionary theory as a completed and untouchable dogma. Some of the ideas raised in this text merit a long and serious debate. Unfortunately we cannot begin it within the framework of this introduction. The coming

debates on the new, projected, platform will surely do that. However, it seems to us that G.S.'s vision of capitalism, such as it existed in the last century, fails to grasp it globally. Without wanting to make a blind apology for the progress intrinsic to capitalist relations of production, without denying the aspects of alienation and barbarism already present in the last century, let's recall what Marx himself said about this social system which had begun its conquest of the world: "Production based on capital thus creates the conditions for the development of all the properties of social man, of an individual having the maximum needs, and therefore rich in the most diverse qualities; in short, of a social creation as universal and total as possible, because the more the cultural level of man increases, the more enjoyment he can derive." (*Grundrisse*)

It is because capitalism itself revolutionized social relations, and because the development of the productive forces, of which it was the bearer, by generalizing surplus-labor, had only begun, that the seizure of power by the proletariat and the establishment of a communist society, was not possible in the last century. Communists had as their essential task to develop the long-term organization of the proletariat. Social-democracy, the rapidly degenerating character of which is correctly pointed out in this text, failed in that role. That does not mean that it didn't represent a moment, though a limited one, in the development of the proletariat's consciousness, or that its global rejection does not simply reflect a confusion regarding the characteristics of both capitalism and the proletariat in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The EFIC has invited us to debate their project for a new platform. Let's debate... but let's start first by specifying how we can debate.

I - PRELIMINARY : Question of method

The collapse of the USSR is a major event in this fin de siècle, but this fact, important

as it may be, cannot by itself justify the need felt by revolutionaries to bring their platform up to date. As a matter of fact, Gorbachev's fall and the failure of Russian style state capitalism are not elements enough to ground such a theoretical effort. In my opinion, it is rather in the social-economic conditions determined by the rhythms of the general crisis of capitalism in the last 25

years that we must look for the reasons which impel us to reflect radically, i.e., going to the roots of things. Anyway, Perestroikas's adventures were entirely dependent on the crisis process on a world scale, and the present Yeltsin administration proceeds from the same economic imperatives which dictated Gorbachev's conduct... even though the counter-putsch (dissolution of the Soviet Union's Communist Party) grants him more freedom on a political level. The collapse of the USSR as an archaic capitalist state has therefore a symbolic importance regarding the international ideological campaign which identifies it with the death of communism. But, from this point of view, the old platform is a solid basis: "there are no 'socialist' countries...." even if, contrary to its hopes, it was not the proletariat's onslaught which destroyed one of the "capitalist bastions"!

Many of us adhered, in the 60s and 70s, to a political analysis which theorized the situation in these terms: the end of the counter-revolution and the international revival of class struggle. If we can still say today that this perspective of the historic course was confirmed at that time, we must indeed admit that it was seriously damaged in the 80s which, in relation to what some predicted, did not appear as "the years of truth"! Without drawing the conclusion that the historic course has changed, we must take into account the factors in the evolution of the crisis which produced such an inertia in the proletariat that the struggle's revival was blocked. If we are not blinded by some sort of religious faith, we can but admit that since the mass strike in Poland (1980), the workers' dynamic has considerably diminished, be it at the level of an autonomous expression or even at the level of militancy. The reflexes of corporatist withdrawal and of strictly defensive demands had the upper hand throughout this past decade.

The 90s seem to aggravate, or at least to prolong, the weaknesses of a proletariat which endures the crisis and gives up the initiative to the ruling class: for example, an ever increasing unemployment and mutation of labour on the one hand, the Gulf war and exacerbation of nationalist conflicts in Eastern Europe, on the other hand. In relation to this, the ICC's platform -to which the EFIC still refers- suffers from an obvious archaism because it is oriented too much towards the previous necessity which was to highlight the difference with the counter revolution. Therefore it appears as an enumeration of positions defined most often "in negatives" (anti-parliamentarism, anti-unionism, etc...). Due to the stagnation or the falling back of the struggles, in any case of the stoppage of the revival, the evolution of the historic

course now requires that we also define our positions "positively", to indicate that it is still possible to create another society which can put an end to the capitalist system, whose catastrophic implications threaten the very survival of humanity. From this point of view, a new platform should be formulated differently from the old one (ex.: set forth "what we are", but also state "what we want"!!!). There is no question about throwing away the fundamental positions which mark the famous "class lines" (according to Marc C.'s expression) drawn from the historical experience of the proletariat, but to incorporate them as the basic nucleus in a text more oriented towards the future.

In brief, the elaboration of a new platform should lead to a theoretical document from which would flow an analysis of the evolution of the historic course, integrating the principle lessons from the class struggle and stating perspectives for the future. Rosa Luxemburg used to say that the proletariat could only dispose of some "sign-posts" to set up communism. Still it is necessary to decipher them!

Therefore I am for a substantial debate because what is at stake is crucial: not only must we avoid standing only on the old basis, under threat of sclerosis, but we must also take the pulse of the proletarian class in order to participate in the struggle against capitalist strangulation. It is by reasserting and proving the validity of communist theory, that we can better combat confusion and weaknesses. It is by acting thoroughly at the level of consciousness that revolutionaries play their role in the class.

In the framework of this debate, some old positions (the concept of decadence, the idea of Marxist filiation, the notion of the working class...) can be submitted to a critical examination and put into question in the light of a globalizing and non dogmatic theorization.

Let's look at the fundamental questions...

II - The concept of decadence

The real keystone of the old platform, this concept seems untouchable because its questioning would mean the forsaking of the coherence of all of the positions. Is that so certain?

We speak of capitalism as a "decaying social system", but what is the reality at the economic level? Is not capitalism defined first of all as a "mode of production" which, since its origins and because of its nature (search for profits, accumulation,

competition,...) * never cared about the satisfaction of human and social needs? In what sense does the situation of the proletariat in the XIX^e century, and more particularly in the years 1820-1840 (see "The Condition of the Working Class in England" by Engels) imply a certain "ascendancy" within the framework of bourgeois society? Quite the contrary, the dehumanization suffered by the proletarians is then, for communist theoreticians, the essential guarantee of their radicalism in the perspective of setting up a new society (1). If they can still snatch a few crumbs from capitalist expansion, it is only through class struggle. The system of exploitation, in its liberal version, never cared about "social plans": it left pauperism to charitable organisations. In so far as it did not represent a danger for the balance of the system and social order, misery was by no means a preoccupation of capitalism. Politicians could use it for propaganda to be elected in some situations of emergency (ex.: Louis-Napoléon Bonaparte after the days of June 1848), but anyway the bloody repression had already done its work (Cavaignac) and the only program really applied would be one of economic development in the exclusive interests of capital (industrialization, banks...). For the rest, the bourgeoisie tried to settle their domination (ex.: in urban space, the big works of Haussmann) and did not concede the "right" to go on strike, except under the pressure of strong social movements, or for fear of an extension of workers' solidarity (in 1864 the International Association of Labour had just been created in London!).

What we call "reformism" is rather a product of the policy of "workers" parties and unions which emphasized a few "improvements" at the level of working conditions and used them as so many steps for their political career in capitalism, domesticating the proletariat and especially devaluating the revolutionary project through the progressive role assigned to the state to facilitate capitalist accumulation (see hereafter on Marxist filiation). Hence Marx's famous reaction advising the proletariat to write on their banners, not minimal demands (a fair days pay for a fair days work) but the revolutionary formula: "Abolition of wage labour!". Social-democratic "reformism" could blossom at the end of the XIX^e century resting upon the side effects of imperialist expansion: the European workers could then benefit from a few crumbs at the expense of the exploited from other countries, whose natural riches were plundered (thus the II^e International did find positive aspects in colonialism and sanctioned the unequal development which profits the centre of the system at the expense of the periphery). There was never a social

"ascendancy" relating to some "good will" of the system, nor even according to the determinism of its economic development! It is only in the regions of the world where the concentration of capital was the strongest that certain political factions of the system elaborated social tactics founded on the acceptance by proletarians of the capitalist contradictions and of competition among themselves.

We can consider that 1914 is indeed a hinge-date because it symbolizes the moment when the system, having achieved the constitution of a world market, finds itself confronted by insurmountable contradictions which were brought to their breaking point due to the limits of the earth. Is not the saturation of markets a theory centred on the geographical restriction of the human framework as it is? Leaving no pre-capitalist zone or formation, or economy, the system passes from a formal domination, still relative in relation to the previous history of the human species, to a real domination where the law of value becomes the compulsory and absolute reference of all social exchanges within the relations of production. But, beyond the confinement in "cycles of crisis, wars and reconstructions" which historically condemns the system, can we say that its real domination is equivalent to an economic decadence which would justify the qualification of "decadent social system" in relation to a period where it would have been "beneficial" for humanity? From the point of view of the development of the productive forces, it is clear that this real domination constitutes a brake vis-à-vis the possibilities offered by the technological inventions at the level of the capacities of production. It means thereby that the whole of the system has no other future but catastrophic, even at the level of its relation with nature, since the ecological balance is more and more threatened. Even if an increasing part of the development can only be accomplished through generalized debt, it would be absurd to assimilate decadence and stoppage of the productive forces, as Trotsky did at the beginning of his "Transitional Program" (1938). It would also be absurd to consider that the armaments sector is the symbol of a decadent economy through the transformation of productive forces into destructive forces, whereas this sector remains a privileged field of accumulation thanks to the orders that the state can place by extracting money (taxes) from variable capital (see chap. 32, in "The Accumulation of Capital" by Rosa Luxemburg).

It seems to me that the evolution from a formal domination to a real domination gives a better description of the historical process

than the Manichean opposition between ascendance and decadence.

If the concept of decadence is to be kept at all costs, as appropriate to a phase of historical decline of the capitalist system, then it would be good -to avoid confusion- to specify to what extent the application of this concept to the living reality brings about a different understanding of the unfolding of this decadence in relation to ancient systems (feudalism, slavery). As a matter of fact, the very own dynamic of the capitalist mode of production cannot lead to a "rotting on itself" (some sort of "social decomposition" as in ancient times or the middle-ages!). Founded on the necessity of a constantly enlarged reproduction as a condition of accumulation, capital will always have bounds, convulsions which can lead to a new world war with the new constitution of imperialist blocs on a military level (2). In that sense, barbarism is inherent not to what would be a stoppage of its development, as for previous modes of production, but, on the contrary, to the catastrophic pursuit of this development by the reproduction at an ever higher level of the conditions of capitalism. By reinforcing its real domination, the capitalist system creates devastation, ejecting outside its sphere all that is no longer necessary for the functioning of its economic "high-tech" machine (today, an ever increasing part of human labour), but in the absence of a revolutionary proletariat, it also operates the social recompositions adapted to the new data in the labour process, likely to assure a balance permitting good enough business. If the massive unemployment and increasing misery of the excluded provoke explosions, riots which become dangerous because of their extension but not because of their content (no link with the class terrain), the repressive apparatus is there to face and bludgeon down the insufficiency of the so called "food assistance" or "humanitarian help" of all kinds. In short, even sowing ruin and desolation, capitalism continues its race like a fast-speed train. Because of the limited conditions of its reproduction, it is on a fatal slope for humanity, but capitalism doesn't bother because "in the icy waters of selfish calculation", the sharks are satisfied with a short term profit and don't suffer from their historical blindness.

III - The idea of a Marxist filiation

The EFIC declares at the beginning of its positions that it claims a programmatic continuity "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" (!). If we look carefully at the history of the revolutionary movement, this concern about continuity -on theoretical and organisational levels- raises serious problems, particularly on the role played by social-democracy and the II International since their beginning (see the Critique of the Gotha program by Marx).

The biggest lie of the XX^e century is the idea that communism could be realized and could exist in certain countries -like the USSR- without abolishing the world market. Before the Stalinist mystification of "socialism in one country", Lenin had called "state capitalism" the economic regime which was born with the Octobre 1917 revolution. Still, while expecting the outbreak of a world revolution for a definitive and complete smashing of the capitalist system to be possible, he considered that this form of "state capitalism" was progressive since he identified it with an antechamber of socialism" (!). The conception which aims at controlling the accumulation of capital via the state (or the self-managed union, in the case of anarchists) as a means to reach a new society was characteristic of the period of formal domination of the system. It weighed on the whole workers' (and revolutionary) movement to such an extent that it canalized it ideologically, and not merely through reformism, in the direction of a social and political adaptation to the movement of capital. It started with Ferdinand Lassalle (see the predominant influence of his analysis in the Gotha Program in 1875), prolonged by Engels' bow to the Erfurt program in 1891 (3), then completed with "the renegade Kautsky and his disciple, Lenin" (reference to the title of a postscript by Jean Barrot to K. Kautsky's brochure: "The Three Sources of Marxism"), this counter-revolutionary theorization -among many others (ex.: pacifism, parliamentarism, etc.)- was all the more insidious as it was recognized as "official Marxism" in relation to Bernstein's revisionism. The leading elites and other experts of social-democracy sanctified this kind of evolution by making a separation between a "minimum" program, which considered the exploited class (=the proletariat) only as an economic category of capital striving to get a place in the working process, and a "maximum" program for which communism was not only put off indefinitely (the "final goal") but appeared as a mere prolongation of the development of the productive forces permitted by capitalist accumulation. If the Bolsheviks and Lenin re-established the necessity of a violent break with the existing order, they nevertheless kept this vision of a world where productivism was the symbol of the key to happiness for humanity, hence the famous formula of V. I. Ulianov, "Communism is the

Soviets plus electricity" (!).

The passage to the phase of real domination (constitution of a world market becoming saturated) imposed a radical critique not only of the tactics or mistakes of the II and III Internationals, but of the theoretical foundations upon which they stood and had developed. The left (or ultra-left) oppositions to both these Internationals tried to make such a critique but often failed because they did not go far enough into the historical roots. Rosa Luxemburg, right in the middle of the German revolution (December 1918), made a speech on the program of the Spartacus League during the founding congress of the CP and she was among the few who was not afraid to criticize the founders (Marx-Engels) for having bowed to the opportunist practices and theoretical betrayals of social-democracy. The revolutionary thrust necessitated, then, an historical leap to find again the program of 1848 and achieve the split with reformist and counter-revolutionary policies:

"Official Marxism was used to cover all the deviations and forsakings from the real revolutionary class struggle, all this policy of semi-opposition which condemned the German social-democracy and the workers' movement in general, including the union movement, to imprison themselves voluntarily within the framework and the terrain of capitalist society, with no serious will to shake it and transform it.

Well, today's circumstances allow us at last to say in our program: 'the immediate task of the proletariat -in few months- is no other than to make socialism become a truth and a fact and to destroy capitalism top to bottom'. We stand on Marx and Engels' terrain of 1848, which, in principle, they never left.

Now we can see at last what is real Marxism and what was this "Ersatz" form of Marxism which lasted so long in social-democracy as official Marxism. You can see, following its representatives, what has become of this Marxism today. Only look at David, Ebert and Co. We see in them the official representatives of the doctrine which, for decades, was shown as pure and genuine Marxism. No, Marxism does not lead there, to a counter-revolutionary policy with Scheidemann! True Marxism also fights those who try to falsify it; it uproots, like a mole, the foundations of capitalist society..."

1848-1918: seventy years later, Rosa Luxemburg claimed the validity of the integral communist program as a historical necessity for the proletariat and humanity before the threatening capitalist barbarism, and the main target of her criticisms was Engels' introduction of 1895, when the brochure "Class

Struggles in France" was reprinted. She was all the more right as, in the 1890s, Engels not only made an analysis which provided cover for the policy of the social-democratic leaders, but he participated in the struggle against the so called "Youth" opposition and their exclusion.

Less known than the Bremen Left (Pannekoek), this opposition headed by Paul Ernst and Bruno Wille deserves our attention and its existence reveals the contradictions of social-democracy long before the end of the XIX century. Rejecting the wait-and-see policy theorized by August Bebel and supporting an offensive strategy of class struggle, the "Youth" criticized parliamentarism and the corruption which goes with it, bureaucracy in the organisation, "state socialism" (!), i.e. a policy of collaboration with the state in order to improve progressively the situation of the working class. Once excluded, this opposition tried to organize as an "Association of Independent Socialists" (VUS), but this effort did not last (1891-93). To get more information on this group one can read the article "The Leftist Movement of the "Youth" around 1890" by Hans Manfred Bock in the university work "La social-démocratie dans l'Allemagne impériale" (directed by Joseph Rovin, 1985).

It appears today that the "Marxist heritage" is far more theoretical than organisational: it is to be found in the splits which took place in the various oppositions and factions which saw Marxism as a living method of investigation of social-economic reality (and who organised... for that purpose!), and not in the so-called orthodox continuity with its blackmail on discipline and preservation of an organisation transformed into an institution. Is it necessary to recall that Marx himself never fell into "organisational fetishism", and preferred to dissolve the Communists League or the first International rather than feeding illusions about formal frames with no content? If the Russian revolution is to be criticized as an outdated model (party taking power, role of the Bolsheviks, etc...), why not extend the historical criticism to the previous model, ie social-democracy? Excepting their attitude towards the first world war and their use of violence, the Russian Marxists (Bolsheviks) remained under the theoretical influence of the German Marxists (social-democrats), particularly under the influence of the "experts" of the leading group. They merely prolonged and extended -given their administration of the capitalist reality through the state- the idea of a communist movement where individual needs are sacrificed on the altar of an abstract and totalitarian collectivity. Facing the lie of the USSR's collapse identified with the

failure of communism, nothing is more urgent than asserting again, with Marx, that communism is impossible without the emancipation of the individual! What better definition of a new society indeed than the one stated in the 1848 Communist Manifesto: "In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association, in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all". ("Proletarians and Communists")

IV - The notion of working the class

When the platform states : "The working class is the only class able to carry out the communist revolution against capitalism", we need now to know of what class we are actually speaking. With the evolution of the technical composition of capital (increasing weight of dead labour compared to living labour) under the pressure of the crisis, the share of manual workers or industrial workers (blue collar) has considerably diminished. Today the fragmentation of the proletariat manifests itself in a constellation ranging from the excluded (long term unemployed) to the new highly qualified workers (operators of automatized systems), by way of all sorts of part-time workers ("short-time jobs", fake training courses...). Moreover, the extension of wage labour includes within the proletariat different strata (tertiary sector, services...) which are not directly productive but belong to the masses exploited in the interest of capital, since they assume the functioning of intermediary sectors. Submitted to the dominant ideology, buying into the illusion of individual autonomy in the sphere of consumption (thanks to credit, etc.), all these proletarians accept -for the moment- the principle of competition among themselves at the expense of the struggle and the search for their own class identity. Under the blows of the crisis, the proletariat will end by recomposing itself and by again finding its way towards unity. We must get rid of a certain type of romantic vision of the working class which considers its configuration as unalterable whereas the capitalist system does not stop altering the conditions of its reproduction. The proletariat remains indeed the only force able to overthrow capitalism and bring about communism, but the present proletariat looks no more like the proletariat of 1968 or 1936 than of 1917-23; nor, still less, than the proletariat of the Paris Commune or of 1848! In that sense, the notion of a more global proletarian class, seems to me more satisfactory, more adequate in a period of real domination, than the notion of working class (classe ouvrière), too much identified with strictly "industrial" workers, being therefore a minority in society.

For a more detailed analysis of this question, see my study: "The necessary recomposition of the proletariat", whose first part was published in Internationalist Perspective no. 22 and no. 24.

These first proposals aim at fueling the debate on the elaboration of a new platform. Others will follow in the months to come, according to the evolution of the discussions. Old positions on the content of communism and the period of transition, the role of the party and class consciousness..., will be examined in turn.

Guy S. (Paris discussion nucleus)
July 1992

(1) For Marx indeed, as can be seen in the text "Utopia and revolution" (see the brochure "Workers councils and socialist utopia" in Cahiers de discussion pour le socialisme de conseils, May-June 1969) : "it is in the paroxysm of misery that the workers are supposed to become conscious of the necessity of a total revolution, of a regenerated society". In 1845-46, in "The German Ideology", Marx and Engels could not conceive any possible improvement in the labour process; quite the contrary : "Labour, the only link which unites them to the productive forces and to their own existence, has lost for them any appearance of a self manifestation, and does not maintain their life but enervates it". Work= dispossession of oneself = material and/or moral misery. One of May 68's slogans echoed these basic equations: to lose one's life earning it !"

(2) It is curious to see that, since the collapse of the USSR and the Gulf war, the capitalist world seems -apparently- to confirm Kautsky's theory about "super-imperialism": "It is not impossible that capitalism may go through a new phase where the policy of cartels would extend itself to foreign policy: the phase of ultra-imperialism, i.e. of super-imperialism, the phase of "common exploitation of the universe", by financial capital united on an international scale" (see "Neue Zeit", september 1914, an article written shortly before the war). As we can see, these words of Kautsky were immediately contradicted by facts! Today, the conflict in Yugoslavia shows us that a recomposition of rival imperialist blocs is beginning and that the military domination of a single imperialism (the USA) on a world scale, cannot last.

(3) Engels did not always bow to revisionist tendencies. In the "Anti-Dühring" (1878, then reprinted in 1885 and 1894), he was better in combatting Dühring's doctrines (negation of the dialectic, positivism, vulgar economism...) which had an influence on social-democracy, than Lassalle's ones.

PUBLIC MEETING

Towards a New Platform

In the editorial of Internationalist Perspective # 23 we announced that our group is working towards the elaboration of a new revolutionary platform and we appealed to the revolutionary milieu to participate in this. So it was logical that the public meetings we held last fall in Paris and Brussels were on this subject. During these meetings, we were able to develop and explain the reasons for orienting ourselves towards a change of platform and to tackle some of the essential points concerning our method.

This is the balance sheet of these meetings and other contacts outside of them. Our initiative evoked some interest from the CBG (Communist Bulletin Group) and more clearly so from a number of non-organized elements, especially in Paris, where recently a discussion group was formed, whose main objective is to debate the elaboration of a new revolutionary platform (see IP # 24). On the other hand, most organized groups showed little interest in this initiative (such as the CWO (Communist Workers Organisation)) or have simply denounced it, a treatment we are used to from the ICC (International Communist Current). As for the FOR (Ferment Ouvrier Revolutionnaire), it showed an open attitude in the discussion, but was very critical of the proposal itself, saying that the platform of the ICC was always wrong, while its own platform was always right. All this is not surprising - organisations are rarely willing to question their own past and to look for new perspectives, if they are not forced to do so by the class struggle. Still, we hope that groups such as the CWO and the FOR will be able to translate their openness to debate into an openness for the idea that a new platform is needed. And we especially hope to go forward with the interested elements.

The elaboration of a new revolutionary platform is in part linked to our own history - as a Fraction, our essential task is to draw the balance sheet of the bankruptcy of the organisation we're coming from, the ICC, and to synthesize what we've learned in a new document that defines us - but it is made necessary even more so by history as such. The platform of the ICC of 1976, which we defended and continue to defend, was in our view an important effort of political clarification in the '70's and could serve as a beacon ('pole de reference') for regroupment of revolutionaries at that time. But 20 years later, the general context has changed. The text reflected the state of the discussions within the political milieu at that

time; it showed a revolutionary enthusiasm about the rise of class struggle, it reaffirmed the revolutionary role of the proletariat against the ideologies of the counter-revolution, and it denounced bourgeois mystifications. We think that this framework has become insufficient and inadequate for today, and that the same is true for the platforms of other organisations of the revolutionary milieu. Three important elements have marked the present period:

- 1) The enormous difficulties of the proletariat in developing its class struggle, which contrasts with the optimistic perspectives which a good part of the revolutionary milieu, and the ICC in particular, had 10-20 years ago;
- 2) The crisis of the revolutionary milieu itself and the degeneration of the ICC in particular;
- 3) The collapse of the Eastern bloc, which has ended the post-war period characterized by the permanent division of the world into two rival imperialist blocs.

These issues require a deepened critical reflection on our theoretical framework. The question is not to know who was the first to get it right, as the ICC likes to claim with respect to events in the East (while carefully "forgetting" its mistakes on many other points) but to understand why the framework of our platform has not made it possible to apprehend globally the upheavals that took place. Instead of pulling out of one's hat, from one day to the next, a new analysis that is in contradiction with the programmatic body of the platform, as the ICC has done with its new framework of "social decomposition" (see IP # 24) we prefer to follow the rigorous method of analysis of our theoretical framework.

During our public meetings, we gave many examples of formulations of the ICC-platform which, in the light of the 3 issues mentioned above, are no longer valid. We have also insisted on the fact that fundamental points of Marxism are insufficiently developed in this platform as in several other platforms of the revolutionary milieu:

- 1) the nature of the proletariat, its recomposition over the course of history and its implications for the nature of its tasks and the development of its consciousness;
- 2) the nature of the future society which the proletariat will bring about: communism;
- 3) the transformation of capitalism in its period of decadence into state capitalism, as well as the economic bases for this

transformation (such as the passage from formal to real domination of capital) and of its survival in this period.

The decision to work towards a new platform is therefore anything but the fruit of activism or a heedless abandonment of our programmatic framework. Quite the contrary, it results from a long debate on the changes that occurred in capitalist society and of a critique of the positions of the ICC. Whether it is on the nature and development of class consciousness, on the recomposition of the classes under state capitalism or on the roots of the ICC's degeneration, we think we have made contributions that clarify several points of our programmatic framework.

Not everybody at our public meetings agreed with that. Sharp critiques on our perspective to change the platform came of course from the ICC, whose main activity at our public meetings consists in denouncing the fact that we, as well as other groups and elements present, exist.

This time, a representative of the ICC declared -without kidding-that the entire revolutionary milieu, with the exception of a chosen few (the ICC and the IBRP -we don't know if there are any others) are nothing but "dust". Proletarians, down on your knees: hear the Truth! The voice of God has descended on Earth...

We don't intend here to write an epilogue on the sad trajectory of this organisation from which we came, but to come back to some essential points of Marxism and on the inescapable contradictions in which the ICC locks itself by rejecting our perspective of changing the platform. The ICC has indeed criticized this perspective as being not justified, opposing to it the real "Marxist method", its own. In Brussels, we received a real lecture on the subject, where we learned that Marxism is "the application of the scientific method to history and the political, economic and social sciences" and that this method implied a rigorous procedure for changing a theoretical framework:
-either the old framework is insufficient and then it merely must be developed;
-or it isn't adequate and in that case a new one must be constructed; but you change a framework only when you have a new one ready, otherwise you're bound to regress, which we undoubtedly will.

We have already stated above that our approach is far from being fantasy-driven; that a change of the platform has become necessary because of history itself as well as possible because of the theoretical elements which we've already started to develop. We don't intend to throw the ICC-platform on the garbage heap before we have another one (nor after that, for that matter). But the argument of the ICC is a screen for ideas which are too pernicious and too widespread in the revolutionary milieu to ignore.

First, the concept of Marxism as "the application of the scientific method to history, the political, economic and social sciences", is but a pale social-democratic position, rightly criticized by Korsch and Lukacs at the beginning of this century. Marxism is scientific in the sense that it is based on an analysis of the objective reality; it is philosophical in the sense that it affirms itself as conception of the subject of history; but it is neither science nor philosophy because it sees itself as a moment in the objective and subjective transformation of the world by the proletariat. To reduce Marxism to a science means to reduce it to an interpretation of "objective" reality and to abandon the revolutionary transformation of this reality.

Secondly, even in science, the idea according to which you can't touch a theoretical framework until you have a new one to replace it with, is dogmatic and reflects more the ideology of the scientific hierarchy than the real practice. In reality, any discovery or new theoretical concept is preceded by doubts, the putting into question of prevailing conceptions. But these doubts and questionings are often smothered by the hierarchisation of scientific work and the positivist ideology which reigns among scientific types themselves. The fact that the ICC, like the Leninist currents in general, takes this hierarchisation and this positivism as its model, reflects its own dogmatic practice and says a lot about the "contribution" it can make to the proletariat: doubts, questioning must be banished (that is the essence of its theory on "centrism" or "councilism", the greatest danger for the proletariat). Follow the revolutionary elite!

Thirdly, the fact that the ICC refers to the need for a rigorous scientific method to criticize our perspective to change the platform is downright grotesque. The ICC itself insists ad nauseam on the historic importance of the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and the entry of capitalism into a new historic phase - no less! - the phase of "social decomposition". It has changed its basic positions on the back of its publications. It has published a new manifesto. But it doesn't see a need to change its platform! On the other hand, it has changed its platform some years ago, after our exclusion, on points it calls relatively minor, concerning the moment at which the parties of the second and third International joined the counter-revolution. The ICC acts like a good bourgeois: it invokes science when it feels a need to justify its irrational practices.

We, for our part, don't conclude from the preceding that the communist program is a

potluck dinner to which everyone brings what he likes. The communist program must be enriched, not impoverished; the new framework must be better than the old one. But we don't think that this work of enrichment and going beyond, necessarily implies a questioning of all established certitudes. And we also think that this questioning must be done publicly. Certainly, a platform is the document of an organisation at a given historical moment. But by launching an appeal to the revolutionary milieu to participate in the debate on this subject, we don't pretend to focalize on a particular platform, but rather to stimulate a more general critical reflection on the validity of the existing theoretical frameworks in the revolutionary milieu and to facilitate its public expression, which has already concretely begun.

ML

A NEW BOOK ON H. CHAZÉ

Communism and Counter-Revolution

This short article concerns the publication (in July 1992) of a 181 page French work intitled Gaston Davoust (H. Chazé) and the Internationalist Communist Left. We welcome both the theoretical and practical effort of the work's author, comrade R.C., who, despite the difficulties of the present period, has brought to a successful conclusion the task he set himself at the time of Davoust's death in September 1984.

The trajectory of this revolutionary militant, better known by his pseudonym of H. Chazé, is traced for us, starting with his childhood and adolescence. This biographical reconstruction is particularly striking (even if it sometimes fails to avoid the trap of mythification!) because it reveals the personality attached to the militant, who remained a profoundly humane, integrated, and aware, person, within this horrible world of the twentieth century -- a world shaped by the crisis of the capitalist system, two world wars, and the counter-revolution arising from the regime falsely designated as "communist"

in the USSR. Neither torment by the cops, because of his anti-militarist actions, and his role in strikes, nor the persecution by bosses, involving numerous layoffs, broke Chazé's commitment. That commitment, based on the principles of class struggle, was never shaken, either by Stalinist attacks, or by Nazi barbarism, which entailed imprisonment, first at the Fresnes prison, and then at the Sachsenhausen concentration camp.

This historical work is also especially relevant today (even if it sometimes loses itself in the details of factional quarrels) because, by situating Chazé's trajectory in the framework of the debates within the Internationalist Communist Left, it clarifies the positions defended by its several currents (Italian, and German-Dutch), which shared a common rejection of the policies of the Third International, which were based on defense of the USSR, policies which the left saw as counter-revolutionary. Since the recent collapse of the state-capitalist regime has been ideologically exploited by capital, with

its theme of the "end of communism", and by a democratic consensus, denying the very existence of class struggle, it becomes especially important to reflect on both the existence and content of the revolutionary critiques advanced from the 1920s on -- critiques which denounced any equation of communism with the regime established by the Bolsheviks.

In his opposition within the so-called French Communist Party (Left Opposition of the XV Rayon) to his break with Leninism, Chazé's evolution was based on his commitment to a classless society that the proletariat would bring about thanks to its revolution against capital on an international scale, that is to say, according to Marx, by "the abolition of the world market"! Chazé committed himself to the revolutionary perspective that he believed emerged from the actual experience of the proletariat: council communism. Marxism was for him a living, undogmatic, method, the nature of which has been captured by comrade R.C. as follows: "In agreement with Pannekoek, Davoust developed the idea that theory is not an 'invariant' program that reality must follow to the letter, but -- on the contrary -- a profound analysis of that reality, by way of Marx's method. In his letters, he insistently affirmed that theory is a tool that must be continually reforged, and retempered, in the heat of reality, in order to comprehend what has happened. To be a 'Marxist', was to always begin from the concrete reality, in order to rejuvenate the tried and true theoretical bases. To seek some

holy texts which could be applied to a situation transformed by the real rapport de forces in play, had nothing to do with the method of living and critical analysis that was the hallmark of Marxism. Theoretical notions must be abandoned or changed as a function of the evolution of social reality. For Davoust, Marxism was a theory completely free of any dogmatic or metaphysical fetters. His Marxism, like that of Pannekoek, was shaped by the direct experience of the class struggle. And he interpreted Marx in a living, non-rigid, fashion." (p.162)

The appearance of this work does not seek to replace the project that Gaston Davoust had envisaged, and which he did not have time to complete, namely, a history of the Union Communiste (Davoust's group). But, it has the merit of providing -- within the framework of an even broader panorama -- additional information on one of the rare groups which, in France during the years 1933-1939, evolved in the heat of events, and defended revolutionary positions.

While the work has been published in a limited edition; those interested in purchasing a copy should write to our Brussels address, and their letters will be forwarded to the author, who will then respond.

G.S.
(December 1992)

Somalia continued from p.2

While black politicians and liberal churchmen may be peripheral forces within the ruling class, the press and media are crucial to its functioning. The American media has embraced the Somali operation as its crusade, lovingly packaging it each night as a noble undertaking, one which proves the generosity of America. Not since World War Two (that last "noble crusade") have the media and the Pentagon worked so closely and harmoniously together. As a result, American public opinion, which is shaped by the mass media, has seldom been so receptive to the policy of military intervention.

While low casualties remain crucial to the retention of public "support" for such undertakings, if there are to be casualties, American's will bear them better if they are convinced that they serve an humanitarian goal. And therein lies the real significance of the Somali operation. Under its humanitarian mantle, provided by the media, America's high-tech warriors can prepare to dominate the skys over Bosnia, launch their missiles at Serbian targets, or send their warships to restore "democracy" in Haiti. Beneath the roar of jet bombers taking off for Iraq, can be heard the audible sighs of relief in the Pentagon.

MAC INTOSH
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**INTERNA
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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.