



# ***INTERNATIONALIST PERSPECTIVE***

**Behind the current  
struggles, the need for a  
new society is raised**

**The agony of Bosnia**

**The development of the productive  
forces and the decadence of capitalism**

***Spring 1996***

**29**

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# movements in France and elsewhere

## A NEW PERIOD OF STRUGGLES HAS BEGUN

In November-December 1995, in France, over a period of more than three weeks, more than two million strikers defied the austerity measures concocted by the French government. From the railroads, the strike gradually extended to the whole of the public sector, here and there even affecting the private sector. In France, though also in other countries, the working class rediscovered the path of unified class struggle, and realized that resignation leads nowhere: only determined struggle and solidarity can unite the class and make the bourgeoisie backdown. A new period of struggles has begun. But what are its perspectives?

In our December 7 leaflet, distributed at demonstrations in France and Belgium, and reprinted in this issue, *Internationalist Perspective* responded to that question, and pointed out that "The future rests entirely on the capacity of the workers to create a free and conscious association working for the transformation of society with a view to the satisfaction of human needs. Communism is not dead; it has not yet begun! We are not fighting for the status quo, but for other perspectives."

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In France, protesting against the austerity measures decided upon by the Juppe government, the railway engineers went on a general strike at the end of November. Besides the measure for the "rationalization" of the French railroads, the Juppe plan included an attack on social security, and in particular delayed in the age at which workers are to be entitled to their pensions. While the unions undertook the task of dividing the workers (the leadership of the CFTD accepted the spirit of the Juppe plan, FO and especially the CGT canalized the workers bitterness), the engineers spontaneously extended their protest to the whole of the rail system.

The engineers demonstrated that opposition to the Juppe plan need not be a sectoral or corporatist reaction, but rather a response to an anti-worker attack affecting not merely the whole of the public sector, but indeed the whole of the population. The delay in the pension-entitlement age illustrated the contradictions of the bourgeois system. While unemployment figures have only grown, it appears senseless to most workers to put off the year of retirement, a step which can only be to the detriment of the young.

The message was received loud and clear: the Paris metro, the post office, teachers, government workers, EDF (the electricity utility), France Telecom, Air Inter, indeed the great majority of "public services" rapidly joined the movement. More than two million strikers thus paralyzed the French economy for

several weeks. On several occasions, very large demonstrations mobilized workers in the principal cities of France: Paris, Marseille, Lyon, Nantes, Bordeaux. These were massive demonstrations bringing together workers in the public sector, but also numerous delegations from the private sector, as well as students. The movement thereby revealed its unitary character.

The strike movement of autumn '95 was massive, developed in a determined manner, and encountered - here was something new - considerable support and sympathy on the part of the general population. The demands put forward by the strikers constituted a rejection of austerity for anyone. It was only after three weeks that the bourgeoisie succeeded in disarming the movement, thanks to the efforts of the unions to sabotage it. Throughout the strike, the unions were extremely active: the base unionists (in particular the CGT) supported the movement, participating in its growing radicalization, but canalizing it, little by little, towards the classic objectives of the defense of the existing conditions of the public services. This permanent presence of the unionists would prevent the emergence of more independent initiatives on the part of the workers, and the creation of autonomous organs of coordination, as had been the case in the last strike by engineers in France.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE AUTUMN '95 MOVEMENT

The movement of November-December '95 is the most important movement of the working class in France since May '68.

- Important surely in terms of the number of workers on strike: more than two million workers arm-in-arm protesting against the austerity measures of the Juppe government.
- Important also because of the duration of the movement: more than three weeks of struggle, paralyzing not just the heart of France (Paris), but also numerous French provincial cities. Three weeks of determined struggle, during which a feeling of solidarity could develop and be maintained without any demoralization.
- Important above all by virtue of the initiative of the workers: the unions could only join in and ratify the decision of the workers to struggle. The workers did not limit themselves to union slogans; they really took control of the strikes, organizing pickets, and extending the strike to other sectors. But the unions did not just stand idly by, and continued to attempt to control the struggle: throughout, the unions sought to direct the movement, and become the spokespersons for the strike. This time, the unions did not openly oppose the initiatives of the base, and portrayed themselves as the most implacable defenders of the movement.
- Important too, because it went beyond the union corporatism of each for themselves: solidarity between workers was its hallmark - solidarity between strikers and non-strikers, solidarity between workers and students. Far from being passive, the workers spontaneously extended the movement, contacting other work places, and forging a solidarity to strengthen the struggle.

Numerous examples demonstrate the above. In our leaflet, moreover, we highlighted this fact: "The only possible way forward is the one taken by the strikers: as large as possible a generalization of the movement; its extension to other sectors, and even beyond national frontiers! To do this, we cannot rely on the union apparatus, ever ready to restrain and divide us. Self-organization of workers, outside of any kind of political or union control!"

These struggles represented an important step beyond the existing situation: the determination not to continue to bear the burden of an austerity policy

imposed by the employers and the state; a refusal of atomization, manifest in a return to collective struggle, to massive mobilizations, and by new sectors joining the struggle. For the workers, all that meant the appearance of a new consciousness: it became possible to take up the struggle, to make demands, to mobilize and demonstrate its discontent, often in a violent fashion, as in Italy and Spain, but above all, massively. And for the first time in many years, an international extension became possible: in Western Europe, notably in Belgium, other workers reacted at the same time against austerity measures.

After more than three weeks of struggle, far from a breaking of the ranks, far from being discredited in the eyes of the populace, far from being demoralized, the strike in the French public services was still mobilizing new sectors, despite the maneuvers of the unions, thereby creating new possibilities - at the moment of public demonstrations - for the expression of solidarity between the workers of diverse enterprises. Besides, far from being contained within the borders of France, the strike movement had a real echo, and provided the impetus for a renewal of struggles on an international scale. In Belgium, attacks on social security were also on the agenda. Belgian railway engineers went on strike in November and December, at the same time as the strikes in France. Thus, not only was the French rail network paralyzed, but Belgian rail was too! Strikes also broke out in Italy, Spain, and even in Luxemburg, where public service workers stopped work in protest against the government's austerity policy. There existed a real potential for an international extension of the struggle.

All of these struggles shared the same dynamic: a rejection of what the bourgeoisie liked to call "social peace." In their rapid spread, they reinforced a major contradiction within capitalist society: that between capital and wage labor. The autumn '95 strikes highlighted the fact that class struggle is an essential component of the contradictions inherent in capitalism, and that the past, and momentary, weakness of the workers in no way meant the end of the fundamental contradiction between labor and capital.

But this moment also indicated the present limits of working class combativity. Despite the worker's determination, and the massive character of the strikes, the movement could not provide itself with a real autonomous organization, organs of struggle independent of the unions. And despite certain local initiatives, the movement lacked the strength to extend itself to the whole of the private sector. Similarly, while the international situation was propitious, the social movement was largely confined to France. A reaction to austerity, the movement in France could not mobilize itself behind new

perspectives, could not expand the horizon of the struggle.

## **THE PREMISES OF THE MOVEMENT**

The French autumn did not come out of nowhere, nor from chance. Throughout the world, workers reacted, putting an end to the passivity of the '80s. This had been going on for several months, as we pointed out at our public meeting in Paris in June 1995.

If the working class still bore the scars of a social recomposition produced by the ongoing economic transformations, and the closure of the traditional type of factory and office, a change had nonetheless occurred within the working class, notwithstanding the weaknesses which persisted. We could make a long list of struggles which, taken in isolation, had little or no significance, but which can be seen today to have constituted the premisses for the movement which exploded at the end of 1995. Numerous struggles broke out over a period of six months, indicating a new level of activity within the working class; the relative apathy of the '80s was over.

Indeed, the very social climate had changed. The triumphal declarations of certain politicians regarding the crisis were modulated little by little. Despite the maneuvers of the bourgeoisie, the workers reacted more and more openly. New sectors engaged in struggle, such as the technicians, and staff, at Alstom or Air France. Often, it was simply a matter of wage adjustments which indicated a rise in the temperature of the class. Similarly, the most marginal sectors, such as teachers and students, experienced - for more than a year in Belgium, over several months in France - the limits of any union-organized mobilization, and the refusal of the state to accept any demands, even those that were relatively minimal. The absence of any perspective offered by bourgeois society appeared more and more clearly, and indisputably galvanized the workers into refusing to continue to bear the costs of austerity. The "changes" promised with such fanfare (as in France) at the time of recent electoral campaigns, turned into the same thing in France, Belgium, Spain, and Italy: continuation of the austerity policies mandated by the very logic of the capitalist crisis. The worsening of the world capitalist crisis, meant - for the workers - a still more incessant assault on their living conditions: reduction of wages, and of the social wage, loss of jobs, an increasingly precarious existence. Strikes continued during the elections in both France and Belgium, clearly showing the lack of credibility of all

of the candidates. Six months after the formation of new majorities, and new governments, in France, Spain, and Belgium, the workers were out again, thereby indicating how little impact the traditional discourse of the bourgeoisie still had on them.

Behind these struggles, questions were imperceptibly posed as to the perspectives for the future: unemployment, austerity, refusal to accept the present situation. And these could only further the development of class consciousness. The struggles put an end to the past inertia and, moreover, no longer unfolded in an isolated fashion: a territorial multiplication of conflicts occurred, struggles were no longer confined to one region. Clearly, the times were changing, even if it was not yet possible to speak of a fundamental transformation in the balance of forces between the classes. In comparison with earlier struggles, where the workers essentially reacted to factory closures and to lay offs within the "possibilist" and legalistic framework of the unions, the recent struggles posed not merely wage demands, but demands for the improvement of labor and living conditions which put in question the totality of the austerity policies of the bourgeoisie. From the resignation of the '80s, the working class had passed to a new will to react globally, to a new determination no longer to accept the costs of the crisis of capital. The strikes in France therefore revealed a maturation of consciousness, a will and a possibility to struggle anew, and no longer to accept as coin of the realm the promises of the bourgeoisie.

## **A NEW PERIOD OF STRUGGLE HAS BEGUN**

The times have changed. What we have previously analyzed as a downturn in struggles during the period 1985-1994, is clearly over. For many months, workers have no longer been immobile, have no longer accepted the discourse of the bourgeoisie or the effects of the crisis. Within the working class, there is a new determination to demand a better tomorrow. Only the working class, through the intensification of its struggle, can interrupt the catastrophic spiral of the capitalist crisis, and lay the bases for a new society.

These kinds of changes were germinating in the struggles of 1995, and were fully expressed in the autumn movement in France. For millions of workers,

what is increasingly obvious is that capitalism no longer has anything to offer:

- It was the children of workers, students, in France, Belgium, and the US..... who had also experienced the limits of the promises of the bourgeoisie.
- It was the teachers, who throughout Europe were sacrificed on the altar of the restructuring of the educational system in the name of a fallacious modernization of teaching.
- It was the public sector workers, in France, Belgium, Italy, Spain, and Luxemburg, who were increasingly faced with the pure and simple liquidation of whole categories of work, so as to assure the necessary profitability.
- It was the tens of thousands of workers who found the factory gates shut, and were to be allowed to taste the joys of unemployment.

As a result, the workers of France reacted massively, and with real solidarity, even if they were still burdened by the weight of the past. In other countries, the reactions were no less determined, although less radical. It was no longer a matter of corporatist demands, but rather of a movement responding to the needs of the whole population. The stakes of the struggle were thereby transformed, and expressed a general repudiation of the policy of austerity.

The elements of real change were therefore brought together: a new combativity, spontaneity, the massive nature of the strikes, their extension, generalization of the struggle, rejection of corporatism. A new period of struggle was opened by the autumn '95 movement, closing the phase of lethargy of the '80s:

- A new period, because it openly expressed a rejection of the bourgeois policy of austerity.
- A new period, because it expressed a rediscovered combativity within the class, not just in France, but elsewhere too; not just in November-December '95, but for many months. The autumn movement in France had been preceded over the previous months by a series of conflicts which presaged the autumn outbreak.
- A new period, because it unleashed the perspective of an rejection of the traditional discourse of the bourgeoisie, despite union recuperation. More than ever, the bourgeois alternatives of left and right have lost credibility.

More than ever, our slogan "communism is not dead, it has not yet begun!" indicates the path to take.

F.D.

December 20, 1995

## **leaflet distributed in France and Belgium**

# **BEHIND THE CURRENT STRUGGLES, THE NEED FOR A NEW SOCIETY IS RAISED**

After long years of social apathy and shameless glorification of capitalism, the workers of the public sector in France, and students in France and Belgium, reminded us in a spectacular way that the society we live in is a class society. The "social rupture" we hear so much talk about, is in the first place a historic rupture between the interests of workers and those of capital which exploits them. Railroad workers, bus and subway conductors, employees of many "public" services and students have spontaneously manifested, in strikes and demonstrations, their anger at the new attacks on their living and working conditions. In France, this discontent took the form of the most important strike movement since May '68. In Belgium, it was expressed in more dispersed strikes. But everywhere, the problems and the reactions are of the same nature.

### **SACRIFICES DON'T RESOLVE ANYTHING**

Those who govern us, always have good reasons to justify the need to accept new sacrifices: to wipe out the public debt to meet the criteria for European unification, to save the social security system, to save the nation or the company threatened by international competition. And indeed: from their point of view, all these are unavoidable, because they are imposed by an international economic system of which they are the managers. Capitalism is in crisis, everywhere and deeply. To save the existing social order which lives on profit obtained from the exploitation of labor, the global price of labor power must be lowered, whether directly or indirectly - lower wages, reduction of health care coverage and pensions, lay offs, intensification of labor, loss of job security...

Can these sacrifices open the way to a better future? They have promised us this for years, without result. Every "necessary" sacrifice only prepares for yet another "necessary" sacrifice. The reason is simple. By lowering the price of labor power, capital can temporarily increase its profit; but this profit, reinvested in more advanced means of production, brings a decline of the rate of profit and sharpens competition. Then it requires another decrease of the cost of labor, and so on... There is no escape from this vicious circle without confronting the capitalist social order which reigns today on the planet.

It's clear: the problem goes much deeper than this or that government, this or that policy. If Juppe were replaced by Jospin or Hue, the form would change, but not the content. Haven't the "socialists" and the "communists" already proven this, in France, in Belgium and elsewhere? None of them has a solution to the crisis and they're all contradicting themselves. They tell us that the working week must be shortened to absorb unemployment, and, at the same time, that we must work longer before retiring!

### **TO FIGHT AGAINST AUSTERITY...**

Workers don't fight to make austerity less unbearable, or to divide the sacrifices more evenly; they fight in the first place to manifest their refusal of austerity, of sacrifices. That is the strength of the movement in France: what counts is not so much this or that particular demand but the affirmation of a general refusal, common to all, of the new, generalized attacks on their living conditions. Some see in this a proof of the "selfishness" of the workers, in particular of those of the "public" sector. But is it selfish to refuse sacrifices which will only prepare new sacrifices for everybody? Is it not rather the only

possible humane reaction to an economic system which is increasingly inhumane?

Every time when a government wants to lower wages, it claims that it's only abolishing unjustifiable "privileges", that it only wants to "restore equality" between one sector of the working class and the others. But these so-called "privileges" are never more than a form of wage that complements the normal wage, which is often ridiculously low with regard to the skills of the worker. Let them not confuse us on who the enemy is. The enemy is not workers who get a different form of wages, but the governments, who want to attack all wages, and to do this, they want to divide the workers and set them against each other.

## **...FOR A NEW SOCIAL PROJECT**

The refusal of capitalist austerity is a necessary first step, but it isn't enough. Let us not have any illusion about our future. Even if the government retreated, it would be only temporary. In 1968, it took ONE YEAR for the increases of wages stipulated by the accords of Grenelle to be nullified by inflation. We can't constantly turn backwards and cling to illusions about the "social security" of the past. After all, to retire after 37.5 or 40 years of often deadening labor - is that paradise? We must look to the future, towards new perspectives.

The economy based on profit, wage labor and the accumulation of capital has had its time. Humanity has today gigantic socialized productive forces which, when reorganized, would make it possible to meet the needs of the entire world population. Unemployment, the bankruptcy of companies, the colossal wealth devoted to armaments and government bureaucracies, are an incredible waste of labor and productive forces. It isn't the workers, but capital that is wasting social wealth!

The future depends entirely on the capacity of workers to create a free and conscious association for the transformation of society to the satisfaction of human needs. Communism isn't dead, it hasn't yet begun! We don't fight for the status quo, but for different perspectives.

What we will really gain in this movement is the consciousness of our force, of our solidarity, of our potential capacity to threaten the existing social order. In France, the Juppe government is seeking but one thing: to isolate the striking workers, in order to defeat them resoundingly, like Thatcher did in Britain 15 years ago. The only road possible is the one already traced by the strikers: the largest possible extension of the movement, extension to other sectors and even beyond the borders! To do this, we cannot count on the trade unions, which are always ready to contain and divide the movement, whenever the opportunity arises. Self-organisation of the workers, outside all political or trade union control!

December 7, 1995



# THE AGONY OF BOSNIA

The accords signed in Dayton, Ohio, this past November, are unlikely to mark the end of the Bosnian phase of what can be termed the wars of the Yugoslav succession. Indeed, the agreements initialled by all parties to the conflict, Serbia, Croatia, the Bosnian government, and - after several days - the Bosnian Serbs, contain within their own provisions the seeds of new conflicts which await the 60,000 NATO troops to Bosnia (more than 20,000 of whom will be American), as a *de facto* army of occupation, marks a new stage in the wars of the Yugoslav succession, which erupted when the Titoist state disintegrated in 1991. In addition to indicating those factors which are likely to make the Bosnian peace a shortlived one, we want to analyse the strategic and geo-political framework within which the whole conflict in the ex-Yugoslavia has unfolded. Finally, we also want to show why the calls for Western intervention on the part of the left, from Paris to New York, have actually exacerbated the orgy of mass murder and ethnic cleansing which has become a hallmark of the wars of the Yugoslav succession.

We will proceed by first situating the Dayton accords within their broader geo-political context. We will then focus on the ways in which Western intervention, far from halting the atrocities, has only expanded the scope of ethnic cleansing. Finally, we will look at the factors which make the peace agreements, imposed on the warring parties by the US, inherently unstable.

As long as the Cold War divided Europe between the US and Russia, the existence and viability of the Yugoslav state, re-established by Tito in the wake of the defeat of Germany in World War Two, was assured. From the moment of the Tito-Stalin break in 1948, Yugoslavia, through the alliance it concluded with Greece and Turkey, became a *de facto* associate of NATO; its military armed and supplied by the US, its economy firmly linked to that of Western Europe. Strategically, Yugoslavia blocked Russian access to the Adriatic, and the Eastern Mediterranean; and in case of war, the Yugoslavian army was charged with slowing the advance of the Warsaw Pact forces into northern Italy (which posed the danger of turning NATO's vulnerable southern flank) and southward towards the Adriatic and the Mediterranean.

The disintegration of the Soviet Union, and the end of the Cold War, meant that the integrity of the

Yugoslav state was no longer vital to the West. While Germany, seeking to bolster its economic prospects in Central Europe, provided support for the independence of Slovenia and Croatia in 1991, neither the US, nor its British and French allies, recognised the real strategic danger that the breakup of Yugoslavia posed. As a result, the Germans prevailed on the European Union to grant recognition to Slovenia and Croatia, a move the Americans quickly seconded, despite their misgivings. The breakup of Yugoslavia then became unstoppable, and two weak and unviable states, Macedonia in the south and Bosnia in the north, declared their own independence rather than remain in a Yugoslav state that was little more than a facade for a greater Serbia. The West, having acquiesced to Slovene and Croat independence, had little choice but to accept the birth of a Macedonian and a Bosnian state which the geo-political situation consigned to becoming wards of the West as the only viable alternative to being carved up by their neighbours, in particular the Milosevic regime in Belgrade, which was determined to finally create the greater Serbia of which Serb nationalists had dreamed since 1914.

As the Serbs manoeuvred to create their greater Serbia, they waged a murderous war in eastern Slavonia (which was a part of Croatia) and seized the Krajina region of Croatia (one third of the country) where Serbs had been a majority since the 17th Century as well as creating a Bosnian Serb republic, beginning the savage process of ethnic cleansing which has become the quintessential feature of the wars of the Yugoslav succession and undertaking the murderous siege of Sarajevo, where Serb, Croat, Muslim, and Jew had for centuries lived side by side. What outraged the ruling class in London, Paris and Washington was not the brutality of the Serbs, not the orgy of mass murder in which they engaged, but the geo-political danger that a wider Balkan war would constitute. Were the Serbs to succeed in forging a greater Serbia through the annexation of eastern Slovenia, the Krajina, and the 70% of Bosnia which they claimed (including Sarajevo), not only would this have made newly independent Croatia unviable (with more than a third of its territory in Serb hands, and the country virtually cut in half by the Serb occupation of the Krajina), but the Serbs would then have turned to ethnic cleansing in the Vojvodina (against the Hungarians), in the Sandzak (against the Muslim Slavs), and in Kosovo (against the Albanians), as well as to a probable invasion of Macedonia with the

Serbs dividing it between themselves and the Greeks. Such an outcome was fraught with danger for the West: in addition to widening the war to include Hungary and Albania, which threatened to intervene to protect their co-nationals in the face of Serbian attacks, the Bulgarians had territorial claims to their own in Macedonia (whose Slav population Sofia considers to be ethnic Bulgarian), while the Turks had already made it clear that they would protect Albanians and Muslims, thereby raising the prospect not just of a wider war, embroiling the whole of the Balkans, but of a Turkish-Greek conflict that would turn the eastern Mediterranean into a war zone.

The strategic interests of the West demanded that the war not be widened; which is to say that the claims of Belgrade, and the Milosevic regime, to constitute a greater Serbia had to be thwarted. Whatever differences there were (and are) between Germany, Britain, France and the US in the Balkans (and there are many), there was, and is, fundamental agreement on the need to oppose the creation of a greater Serbia which threatens to fatally destabilise a region close to the economic heart of Europe, and close to the already unstable Near East.

Having failed to prevent the breakup of Yugoslavia in the first place, the West was not prepared to directly confront the Serbs on the ground in Bosnia. Such an attempt, in the first flush of Serb victories, with a still intact and well supplied (i.e. Serb) army to back the Krajina and Bosnian Serbs, would have entailed not merely upwards of 80,000 NATO troops, but the near certainty of a bitter ground war (short though it might have been) and subsequent guerrilla warfare, for which the Western (and, in particular, the American) public had not been ideologically prepared or mobilised by their ruling classes. Therefore the West preferred the indirect approach of first containing the war, and only later putting a more definitive end to Belgrade's pretensions to constitute a greater Serbia. To that end, the US guaranteed the frontiers of Macedonia, and sent American military units to patrol its borders. To that end, too, French, British and Dutch troops were sent to enforce the Western-sponsored UN declaration that Muslim cities such as Sarajevo, Gorazde, Zepa and Srebrenica (the last three being the remaining Muslim enclaves in eastern Bosnia) were 'safe havens'. The same goal led NATO to impose a no-fly rule on the Serbs in Bosnia. And it was to that same end that the West had economic sanctions imposed on the Milosevic regime by the UN. If the West's strategy failed to prevent the death of several hundred thousand non-combatants (most of them victims of mass murder or the deliberate killing of civilians), and the creation of a mass of several million refugees, it accomplished its goal of containing the war and preventing the realisation of a greater Serbia. Moreover, this strategy also severely

weakened the Belgrade regime by its sanctions, which - together with the cost of the war - have bankrupted Serbia, and brought about an economic collapse, even while sapping the will of the Serbian population to sacrifice in the service of the patriotic ideal of a greater Serb homeland.

This past year saw the zenith of Serb power, with the fall of Srebrenica and Zepa, which the Blue Helmets were incapable of preventing, the resultant mass murder of thousands of Muslim civilians, and what seemed like the beginning of a final assault on Sarajevo. Yet 1995 ended with the Serbs having suffered probably fatal reverses on the ground, and the humiliation of signing a peace treaty which turns over to NATO occupation even the now much diminished territory of the Bosnian Serb republic itself. The policy of containment of the wars of the Yugoslavian succession, pursued for the past four years has now given way to direct NATO intervention - under American auspices and command - in the ex-Yugoslavia, with the acquiescence of the Milosevic regime itself.

This dramatic turn of events began over the summer with the unleashing of the Croatian blitzkrieg in the Krajina, carefully planned and prepared by 'retired' American generals on loan to the Zagreb regime, utilising the mountain of sophisticated American military equipment, and the specialised training, provided to the Croats over the past several years. In a matter of just a few days, the Croat army had completely cleared the Krajina of the Serbs who had militarily occupied it since 1991, and - as we will see - engaged in a wave of ethnic cleansing that has virtually eliminated the Serb civilian population for whom the Krajina has been home since the 17th Century.

This was quickly followed by the NATO decision to attack Serb military targets throughout Bosnia, in response to the Serb assaults on the safe havens, and the renewed Serb shelling of Sarajevo. The virtual destruction of the Serbian ground control and communications network, as well as considerable military hardware, prepared the way for a Croat-Muslim ground offensive in Bosnia which in the course of just a few weeks changed the battle lines such that the Muslims and Croats now controlled more than half the country (whereas just a few weeks earlier the Serbs controlled more than 70%), and the loss of the Serb stronghold of Banja Luka (and with it virtually all of northern Bosnia) seemed imminent.

It was at that moment that the US, taking advantage of its patient diplomacy with the Milosevic regime, and holding out the carrot of an end to economic sanctions, and a deal that still left the Serbs with nearly half of Bosnia, brokered a ceasefire. That led straight to Dayton, and to the American plan for a

Bosnian peace treaty, which the US would impose on all of the warring parties, though it satisfied none of them.

While the Dayton accords preserve the fiction of a single Bosnian state - with a group presidency, a legislature and a central bank - there is a *de facto* partition of the country into a Muslim-Croat federation, and a Bosnian Serb republic, each with its own president and legislature. It is there that real power will be found; indeed, the Muslim-Croat federation is itself, in fact divided into what are now effectively two separate, Muslim and Croat politico-military entities, and it remains to be seen if the US can forge them into a single functioning state. What the Serbs have gained is international recognition of their Bosnian Serb republic, with nearly half the territory of Bosnia, and the prospect that this entity can forge its own links with Serbia proper, and even effect an Anschluss in a year or two. What the Croats have gained is far more territory than their numbers would warrant, as well as Serb acquiescence to a phased withdrawal from eastern Slavonia (in an American orchestrated accord that preceeded the Dayton treaty). What the Muslims (or Bosniaks) have gained is recognition of their sole control over Sarajevo, the turning over of key Serb suburbs of Sarajevo to the Muslim government, and a corridor to the Muslim enclave of Gorazde. These latter two provisions obligate the Serbs to turn over a considerable swathe of territory to the Muslims, territory whose civilian inhabitants are Serbs loyal to the Bosnian Serb republic and committed to a greater Serbia; and therein lies the danger which the NATO forces will face as they attempt to enforce the accords on a recalcitrant, and well-armed, populace.

However, before exploring the risks of an outbreak of new fighting, this time directly involving NATO ground forces, we need to first see how the 'humanitarian' appeals of an Anthony Lewis or Bernard-Henri Levy for NATO intervention in Bosnia, for a NATO riposte to Serb atrocities, has itself prepared the way for some of the worst ethnic cleansing, and mass murder, in the wars of the Yugoslav succession. While the 'selling' of the accords, and of the need for NATO (including American) troops to enforce them, proceeds through appeals to the people of the West to put an end to the indiscriminate killing, rape and mutilation of civilians, the Western ruling classes who have undertaken this media blitz had themselves planned, and organised, the Croat offensive which involved a campaign of ethnic cleansing that in a matter of a few weeks this past summer made the Krajina virtually Serb-free, culminating in the systematic murder and mutilation, by the Croat military, of those remaining Serb peasants too old to flee their homes. Again, when Croat and Muslim troops, backed by Western air power, and equipped with Western arms, occupied

Serb lands in north-western Bosnia this past fall, a new round of vicious ethnic cleansing began; and when the Dayton accords gave back to the Serbs some of this territory, Croat troops began the systematic burning of villages rather than return them in habitable form to Serb civilians.

Indeed, behind this Western tolerance for ethnic cleansing when it is in the service of its own strategic goals, there is the recognition that a Pax Americana in the ex-Yugoslavia requires the existence of ethnically homogeneous states, with a compact territory from which minorities have been forcibly excluded. To the Croat and Serb demands for a state based on blood and soil (whatever that means in a population which has historically spoken the same language, and inhabited the same land, for centuries), must be added the effort to forge a Bosniak nation, and a Bosnian language, in a land where such an 'identity' and such a tongue, was non-existent five years ago. Ethnic cleansing is a pre-requisite for such an outcome, which abhors the mix of people and cultures, and the tolerance which accompanied it, which characterized Sarajevo or Tuzla before the outbreak of war. Indeed, Tuzla provides an excellent example of the xenophobic outcome of the war in Bosnia, and its culmination in the attempt to forge a Bosniak nation or ethnos. Before the war, Tuzla was 55% Muslim, and the only Muslim city which did not vote for the Muslim leader, Izetbegovic's, political party, the SDA. Today, most of the Serbs are gone from Tuzla, replaced by Muslim refugees from eastern Bosnia (now in Serb hands), and the town is over 90% Muslim, a veritable Bosniak stronghold ideologically speaking. And that is why, though the Western media may wring its hands over ethnic cleansing in the abstract, the governments of the West will only construct their 'peace' on the bases of the results which ethnic cleansing brings.

It is precisely for that reason that the prospects for a durable peace in the ex-Yugoslavia are so dim. There still remains a large Serb minority in Zagreb, which challenges the Croat demand for ethnic purity. In eastern Slavonia, the accords signed by the Croat and Serb regimes guarantee the rights of the Serb inhabitants after the return of the region to Croat rule. The probability, though, is that the Serb population of the region will be either expelled by the Croats, or that it will fight to preserve the Serb 'race' in places such as Vukovar where the ethnic cleansing of Croats first occurred in 1991; and a new round of warfare between Croatia and Serbia will explode. The Dayton accords, to be enforced by NATO, guarantee that the exclusively Serb population of Sarajevo suburbs such as Ilidza, Vogosca, and Grbavica - which the Bosnian Serb militia has held in the face of determined Muslim offensives aimed at relieving the siege of Sarajevo - will be allowed to remain, even while their militia is disarmed and these neighborhoods are handed over

to the authority of the Muslim government and its army. Indeed, in the case of the suburbs of Sarajevo, the demands for ethnic purity had to be sacrificed for the short term in the interests of achieving a viable land bridge to Sarajevo for the Bosniak regime. However, the future of the the Serb population of these towns is doubtful in a Bosniak state. Meanwhile, it will be left to the French troops occupying Sarajevo, and the persuasive powers of Milosevic, to disarm the Serb militia, and deliver these suburbs to their new Bosniak masters. Beyond Croatia and Bosnia, there remains the ethnically diverse populations of the Vojvodina, the Sandzak, Kosovo and Macedonia - so many powder kegs waiting to explode.

If the Dayton accords do not presage a durable peace in the Balkans, or even in Bosnia, it is not because of bitter, and intractable, rivalries between American, German, French, and British imperialism. The unity of the West, under American leadership, which the Dayton accords, and the deployment of 60,000 NATO troops in Bosnia, has demonstrated, while surely not permanent nor free of real tensions, is nonetheless the determinate factor in the unfolding of the wars of the Yugoslav succession. What fatally undermines the prospects for a Western imposed peace, for a Pax Americana, in the region, however,

is the contradiction between capital's need for ethnically homogeneous states, with their xenophobic ideologies, as a basis for its political rule, and the existence of still multi-ethnic populations, the legacy of the multi-national empires which still dominated the regions of central and south-eastern Europe before 1914. Two world wars, with their legacy of mass murder and genocide, have still not produced the ethnically pure states which best assure the rule of capital on its peripheries. The killing fields of Srebrenica and Banja Luka, and those still to come, are necessary to complete the process whose culminating point was symbolised by the smoke stacks of Auschwitz. Yet, the very ferocity of these wars - in a region so close to the industrial heart of the West - threatens to escalate, and escape the control of the great powers, drawing them into its vortex. It is this dilemma that NATO faces as it undertakes its first ever engagement beyond the frontiers of its own member nations.

MAC INTOSH

November 28, 1995

## debate

# THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRODUCTIVE FORCES AND THE DECADENCE OF CAPITALISM

The "Three Stages of the Concept of Decadence," written by Mac Intosh in the last issue of *Internationalist Perspective* questioned one of the bases of the theoretical baggage of the Communist Left, and of groups such as the International Communist Current (ICC). In effect, the concept of decadence<sup>(1)</sup> constitutes the framework for the platform of the ICC, from which we have come. Even if we have deepened our own conception of decadence, that concept continues to play an important role for us. Mac Intosh is correct to insist that Marxism is alien to any form of dogma, of eternal truth, and that every programmatic element, even one as important as the concept of the decadence of capitalism, must be subject to critique and confrontation as historical reality changes. He is also right to suggest that the theory of decadence, as it has been developed by the ICC is insufficient, and requires a thorough critical re-examination. However, I don't believe that the elements of the critique of the ICC's conception contained in his text are convincing. Mac Intosh makes two basic criticisms in his text: on one hand, a critique of productivism; on the other hand, a critique of the ICC's concept of decadence as a definitive slackening in the growth of the productive forces. These two criticisms are based on a recognition of real problems; but not being situated in an adequate framework, they do not appear to me to provide an adequate and coherent critique of the conception of the ICC, nor a coherent framework for a new understanding of the world. In my view, the elements for a more general, and a more adequate, theory of historical development must be sought elsewhere.

## DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRODUCTIVE FORCES AND PRODUCTIVISM

Mac Intosh first criticizes the conception of the ICC for being "hopelessly, and inextricably entangled with the productivism that is capital's Trojan horse

within the camp of Marxism. This productivism makes the development of technology and the productive forces the very standard of historical and social progress; within its theoretical purview, as long as a mode of production assures technological development it must be judged to be historically progressive."<sup>(2)</sup> Nobody can contest the fact that productivism has had a devastating impact within Marxism, and even more, that it has only too rarely been subjected to revolutionary Marxist critique. The accumulation of capital in Russia under Stalin was undertaken in the name of the "necessary development of the productive forces." Trotsky himself, at the time in opposition to Stalin, glorified this development of the productive forces in Russia, seeing in it the proof of the superiority of "socialism" over capitalism. Only a few groups of the Communist Left denounced this productivism as alien to Marxism. As an ideology glorifying the growth of the scale of production, and of the productivity of labor, productivism is the ideological expression of capital par excellence; the justification of its historic programme of the enlarged production of exchange value.

However, the critique of productivism cannot be made from a moral and abstract point of view, where it runs the risk of rejecting the development of the productive forces brought about by capitalism and the societies which have preceded it, and of simply turning its back on real history. This critique can only be made from an historical materialist point of view. In revealing the historical laws of motion which preside over the development of the productive forces, Marx provided all the elements necessary for a rational critique of productivism. If the development of the productive forces has been a fundamental law of all historical human societies until the present day, it is because humanity has not had the means to assure the full satisfaction of all human needs. This development objectively brings about the conditions for the passage of man from the reign of necessity to that of freedom; and it can only be accomplished under the antagonistic form of the division into social classes, which also results from the incapacity of humanity to assure the full satisfaction of the needs of

all. Capital is merely the apogee of this historic process; it is the extreme form of this imperative for the development of the productive forces based on the accumulation of generalized competition. The outcome of this historic process is communism, which brings about the passage of humanity to the reign of freedom. The meaning of communism is, therefore, no longer the quantitative development of the productive forces, but the liberation, the blooming, of the productive forces developed by previous societies. Even if a development - quantitative, but above all qualitative - of the productive forces is still the order of the day during the period of transition from capitalism to communism, which will be accomplished following the revolutionary seizure of power by the proletariat, it must be subject to the progressive realization of the satisfaction of human needs, the basis of the new society.<sup>(3)</sup>

In explaining this trajectory, Marxism demarcates itself both from a productivist glorification of the growth of the productive forces, and from the romantic yearning for a pre-technological world. The development of the productive forces is a factor of progress to the extent to which it brings humanity to the point where this development will cease to be a blind necessity. The historic "mission" of capital consists precisely in this development of the productive forces which is the condition for the emergence of a new society. And this "mission" will only be completed when capital demonstrates its incapacity to continue to pursue it, thereby precipitating its revolutionary transformation by the proletariat. If the decadence of an historical social form has any meaning, it can only be the expression of its incapacity to continue its progressive "mission" of the development of the productive forces. Therefore, one cannot reproach the ICC, any more than Trotsky or the Communist Left of the past, for basing its conception of the decadence of capitalism on this materialist criterion, which finds its justification in the whole Marxist analysis of historical development. To reproach capital with developing the productive forces too much is tantamount to reproaching its very existence. That can only lead to a moralistic position divorced from the development of history.

It is quite another thing to determine when this historical "mission" reaches its conclusion. Is it completed when all growth in the scale of production becomes impossible? What precise content does one give to this term "development of the productive forces?" What are the implications for the period of transition from capitalism to communism? It is over such questions that debates and divergences within the revolutionary movement have arisen, and will arise, and productivist interpretations can appear, as in the case of Trotsky's position on accumulation in Russia, to which we have already referred.

## A SLACKENING IN THE GROWTH OF THE PRODUCTIVE FORCES?

In its fundamental texts on the decadence of capitalism, in particular in the texts of R.V. republished in its pamphlet *The Decadence of Capitalism* the ICC demarcates itself from Trotsky's position equating the decadence of capitalism with a pure and simple halt in the growth of the productive forces, and develops its own vision of decadence as expressing instead a definitive slackening in the growth of the productive forces. For the ICC, decadent capitalism continues to experience a growth of the productive forces, though the rhythm of this growth is modified. Mac Intosh pretends to refute this position by citing figures for industrial production which demonstrate an undeniable growth in the course of this century. There is absolutely nothing new in this argument - many other groups have previously made it - and it is completely misplaced. The answer to this argument is already contained in the ICC's own pamphlet. One can believe the answer to be insufficient, but one cannot content oneself with remaking the same argument and conclude that it refutes the position of the ICC.

This argument is based on a confusion between speed and acceleration, between growth and rate of growth, between arithmetic and geometric or exponential growth, which engenders what I will call the mystification of numbers. Just as in mechanics the deceleration of a body does not prevent it from continuing to move (unless it strikes an obstacle), so the slackening of growth does not prevent growth from continuing to occur. Now the figures cited by Mac Intosh only demonstrate one thing: that growth has occurred. But the analogy with mechanics stops there. Biological and derivative systems - and capital is one - possess the general characteristic of growth in a multiplicative manner, such that at a constant rate per unit of mass - or of capital - the speed with which the system as a whole grows does not cease to grow with the growth of the former. This property of geometric or exponential growth makes any comparison of absolute figures misleading. What counts is not the absolute growth, but the rate of growth; a slow rate of growth translates into a strong absolute growth over a sufficiently long term.

Let's take the figures cited by Mac Intosh. According to the source which he cites, world industrial production went from 100.0 in 1900 to 3041.6 in 1980, or a growth by a factor of 30 in 80 years. In appearance, in absolute terms, it is a question of vigorous growth. However, one can easily calculate that in fact this merely corresponds to an average rate of growth of 4.36% per year, which is anything but spectacular in comparison with the rate of growth attained by capital in certain phases of

strong growth. What is even more interesting is the way in which absolute growth varies with the rate of growth. Because of the multiplicative character of growth, a slight modification of the rate translates into a considerable variation of absolute growth over the long term. Thus, if industrial production had known an average rate of growth double the rate observed, or 8.72% - which is still modest enough - it would have attained a level of 80,441 in 1980, beginning from a reference point of 100.0 in 1900. A rate multiplied by 2 translates in this case into a growth 26 times greater after 80 years. In his text on decadence, R.V. takes as his point of reference for the rate of growth possible for developed capitalism, the rate of growth achieved by the US during World War II. In the space of five years, from 1939 to 1944, the industrial production of the US (benefiting from the expansion of the market for armaments) went from an index of 109 to 235, or a rate of growth of 16.6% per year. If that growth rate had been achieved by capital on a world scale throughout this century, industrial production would have risen from 100.0 in 1900 to 21,790.231 in 1980, or 7,164 times greater than the level of 3041.6 actually reached!

These figures could - with good reason - be criticized for their speculative nature; but that is not really the issue. What is important in these figures, on the one hand, is that they clearly show the pointlessness of merely registering a growth in the level of industrial production in the course of the present century, and on the other hand, that they provide us with an insight into the extent of the waste of productive forces on the part of capital - despite the growth that has been achieved. In the absence of the massive destruction of capital engendered by crises, wars, and the generalized unproductive consumption of production under the form of armaments expenditures and other state expenses, production today would not be two or three times, but really hundreds or thousands of times, greater than it is. In indicating what might have been, these figures show - at least on average - more of a brake on growth than the opposite. More fundamentally, we can see that the simple figures for production are totally incapable of indicating the real development of the productive forces of humanity on the historical plane, because they do not take into account the nature of the development achieved.

Quite apart from the question of figures, Mac Intosh's critique is also logically incoherent. In effect, Mac Intosh characterizes the decadence of capitalism as "a phase of value production in which there is a constant and violent devaluation and destruction of capital. The very devastating economic crises which have been a hallmark of decadent capitalism are temporarily overcome precisely through the frenzied development of the productive forces, and unprecedented technological innovation."<sup>(4)</sup> Although

this passage contains several confused or mistaken formulations<sup>(5)</sup>, it correctly puts the emphasis on the devaluation and the massive destruction of capital which characterize the decadence of capitalism. But the logical consequence of such phenomena is precisely a long term brake on the growth of the productive forces! In effect, if there is destruction of capital, the long term growth can only be slower than if capital was not destroyed. It is true that the massive destruction of capital often constitutes a stimulus to the development of the remaining capital, and to technological innovations. But this development, and these innovations, are in no way in contradiction with the long term slackening of the growth of the productive forces about which the pamphlet of the ICC speaks.

Here, we reach the heart of the problem: without being false, the notion of a slackening of the growth of the productive forces articulated by the ICC is nonetheless insufficient and inadequate to characterize the decadence of capitalism, or that of past societies. It focuses on surface phenomena, to what is apparent, though really only the result of a contradictory internal dynamic of capital. As I have emphasized above, the slackening of growth is only true for the medium or long term. It is only the consequence of a dynamic of growth and simultaneous or successive destruction of capital, which expresses the contradictions of the latter. For Marx:

"At a certain stage of their development, the material productive forces of society come into conflict with the existing relations of production, or - what is but a legal expression for the same thing - with the property relations within which they have been at work hitherto. From forms of development of the productive forces these relations turn into their fetters. Then begins an epoch of social revolution."<sup>(6)</sup>

In that celebrated passage, Marx speaks of conflict and fetters, terms which express the contradictions into which society is plunged, and not a simple slackening of growth, a more quantitative, and descriptive, term introduced by the ICC. It is this conflict between the productive forces and the relations of production, this explosion of the internal contradictions of society, which characterizes the phase of decadence of a social form.

The insufficiency of the notion of a slackening of growth is patent in the immediatist application which the ICC generally makes of it. What is only the long term result of a contradictory process of growth and destruction, becomes for the ICC an essential feature discernable at every point and at all times. Throughout its history, the ICC has not failed to deny



or minimize any form of growth on the part of capital, or any technological innovations, as in the case of the computer and micro-chip revolution of the past two decades. A prisoner of appearances, the ICC only sees in reality a permanent stagnation, the final theoretical expression of which is its recent theory of "social decomposition" as the final stage of capitalism.<sup>(7)</sup>

Perhaps Mac Intosh wants to say precisely that in his text. But in criticizing the ICC on the quantitative and phenomenological terrain that it has adopted, he is trapped on the very terrain that he sought to put in question. And on that terrain he has lost from the outset, because it is not there that the problem is to be found.

## WHAT DEVELOPMENT OF THE PRODUCTIVE FORCES?

In this debate, until now we have ignored an essential question, one which is only too rarely discussed in the revolutionary milieu: what is meant by the development of the productive forces? The term is always used as if everyone knew what exactly was at stake. However, the issue is more complex and ambiguous than it appears at first. The problem is raised by the distinction which Mac Intosh hopes to establish in his text between the "development of the powers of the human species" and the "development of the productive forces," a term too tainted by productivism in his view. For me, that distinction only adds one more layer of confusion to the problem, and distances itself from the Marxist conception which I have cited above. For Marx, the capacity of humanity to emancipate itself from the reign of necessity rests precisely on its capacity to assure a sufficient level of material production to achieve abundance for all. Ergo, the "powers" of the human species - on the economic plane - is tantamount to the productive forces of which they dispose.

But Mac Intosh is right to raise the problem of the nature of the development of the productive forces brought about by decadent capitalism. The mere extension of the scale of production is incapable of accounting for the historical development of the productive forces, because a great part of production under decadent capitalism is devoted to the production of the means of destruction (armaments) and the unproductive consumption of the tentacular state. This growing part of world production does not count as a productive force if one looks at it from the historical perspective of the material conditions of the communist society to come. It only serves the reactionary goal of the perpetuation of the capitalist order, and would at best count as a productive force destroyed, and indeed as a destructive force (which is

clearly the case with armaments). This once again shows the incapacity of the mere figures for the growth of industrial production to mean the development of the productive forces on an historical level.

A better way to measure the historical development of the productive forces consists in linking it to the final goal: the liberation of humanity from the reign of necessity, and the achievement of "the free development of each" in communist society. To achieve that goal, one must "reduce the necessary labor of society to a minimum."<sup>(8)</sup> The level of development of the productive forces would then be more adequately measured by the extent to which humanity approached that goal, that is to say, by the reduction of the necessary labor of society. On that plane, the evolution of capitalism in this century is much more contradictory than its evolution in the nineteenth century. Then, the development of the productive forces led to a reduction of necessary labor time in process of production, and in the general process of the reproduction of society. It is that reduction of necessary labor time which made it possible for capital to grant reductions in the working day to the proletariat without jeopardizing its profit. In the twentieth century, necessary labor time has continued to fall as a result of the considerable increase of the productivity of labor in the process of production. But at the same time, the growing levy on surplus-value on the part of the state so as to maintain capitalist social order (support for the state apparatus, armaments, and other unproductive expenditures) have kept the labor time necessary to the reproduction of society at a high level. In other words, in the immediate process of production, workers do not only work to assure the reproduction of their labor power and for the accumulation of capital, but also, more and more, to assure the perpetuation of the prevailing social order. This considerable increase in the labor necessary to the preservation of the capitalist social order, as well as the historic tendency for the rate of profit to fall (which leads to pressure to increase the absolute and relative surplus value extracted from living labor) have prevented any substantial reduction of the working day of the proletariat in the course of the twentieth century, despite enormous gains in the productivity of labor.

This contradictory evolution perfectly reveals the growing fetter which capital represents for the development of society, the contradiction between the productive forces and the relations of production which Marx elucidated. The incessant technological progress accomplished by capital continues to raise the productivity of labor, to reduce necessary labor in production, and as a result to potentially to bring humanity nearer to the goal of communism. But, at the same time, that increase in productivity is negated by the preservation of the capitalist order, which



thereby demonstrates its reactionary nature in the present epoch. The development of the productive forces brought about by capitalism today is accompanied at the same time by a perpetual regression. That development therefore has ceased to constitute an historic justification for the perpetuation of capital. From the moment when the elimination of capitalism and the advent of communism are placed on the historical agenda, the development of the productive forces brought about by capital loses its value, or even becomes destructive, in terms of the needs of humanity. The continuation of the blind development of abstract wealth, represented by exchange value, is increasingly divorced from the satisfaction of human needs. Instead of bringing about a substantial reduction of the duration of labor, the increase in the productivity of labor leads to the expulsion from production of an ever growing mass of workers

globally, and when the political situation is propitious, to their pure and simple massacre in local or world wars as barbarous as they are absurd. The accumulation of capital is increasingly in open conflict with the long term preservation of the biosphere, and of its enormous biological diversity, to which humans have always been, and will remain, integrally linked. The historical progress of humanity today no longer occurs through the blind development of the productive forces such as it has been brought about by capital, by rather by their conscious development, oriented towards the satisfaction of human needs, so as to reach the higher stage "where the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all".<sup>(9)</sup>

M. Lazare

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1. "The World As We See It: Reference Points," No.27.

2. *Internationalist Perspective*, No.28, p.16.

3. See, on this point, our text "Economic Aspects of the Transition from Capitalism to Communism", *Internationalist Perspective*, No.27.

4. *Internationalist Perspective*, No.28, p.19.

5. Firstly, if the decadence of capitalism is characterized by a permanent devaluation and destruction of capital under the form of unproductive expenses and local wars, this devaluation and this destruction are not quantitatively constant; phases of massive destruction (world wars in particular) alternate with phases of robust enough growth (periods of reconstruction in particular). Secondly, it is not the frenzied development of the productive forces and technological innovations which make it possible to overcome economic crises. On the contrary, it is these very phenomena which hurl capital into crisis by lowering the rate of profit, and exacerbating overproduction. It is the devaluation and destruction of capital which makes it possible to temporarily overcome crises, and begin a new cycle of growth and technological innovation. Thirdly, the technological innovations achieved in the twentieth century are not "unprecedented" in the sense in which those achieved in the eighteenth or nineteenth centuries were no less fundamental

6. "Preface to The Critique of Political Economy" in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Selected Works* (Moscow - Progress Publishers, 1969), Vol. One, pp.503-504.

7. See our texts "Theory of Decomposition Or Decomposition of Theory?" and "Understanding the Real Changes in the World Situation" in *Internationalist Perspective*, No.24 and 26.

8. See Karl Marx, "The Grundrisse"

9. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "The Communist Manifesto".

## book review

# COMMUNISM HAS NOT YET BEGUN BY CLAUDE BITOT

Against the fallacious equation of communism with what was going on in the Eastern Bloc, against all forms of indeterminism ("we don't know where we're going", "there are no more perspectives"), Claude Bitot (CB) has written a Marxist analysis about the evolution of human society and the perspective of communist revolution in his book "Communism has not yet begun", recently published by Spartacus (Paris, 1995). His goal is ambitious. He starts out by re-examining the origin of the idea of socialism (which he traces back to early Christianity) and ends with the tasks of the period of transition to communism and the basic principles of future communism; along the way he analyses the development of Marxist theory and the events of 1848, 1871, the revolutionary wave of 1917-23, the two world wars and the post-war period. Such an effort must be applauded. With this book, CB brings a Marxist view of history, written in a clear and precise language, within everybody's reach. He reminds us that the capitalist mode of production is not eternal; that the proletarian revolution and the communism to which it can give birth are real possibilities today.

But there are also points on which his and our analyses clash, which we want to highlight in this article. Not to denigrate his book but, on the contrary, to stimulate the reader to read it himself and to contribute to the discussion of the fundamental questions it raises.

We won't say much on the first three chapters, which deal with the history of the workers movement before the First World War. We agree with CB's analyses that the objective conditions for a socialist revolution were not yet present in this period. So we also agree with his critical analysis of the revolutionary attempts in this period (1848, 1871) and of the theories defended by revolutionaries such as Marx and Engels.

Our disagreements concern his analysis of the 20th century. CB defends a number of hypotheses which are wrong in our eyes. His central hypothesis is that the absence of a victorious communist revolution until now is not due to a lack of maturation of the

subjective conditions (class consciousness) as such, but to a lack of maturation of the objective conditions (economic conditions). In his view, capitalism enjoyed vigorous economic growth up to the 1970s, and only recently (since 1974-75) has it entered a phase of irreversible historic crisis, the necessary condition for the emergence of the revolution. From this hypothesis a number of others flow concerning the interpretation of the main events of this century. First, on the historic analysis of the evolution of the capitalist system. CB rejects the concept of decadence, of a periodisation in the life of capitalism. Instead, he sees a progressive development of capitalism until the '70s, when, in his view, a catastrophic crisis begins. A second hypothesis concerns the world wars, which are not seen as moments of crisis of a system which has become an obstacle to humanity's development, but as mere moments of crisis of growth of the system. A third hypothesis concerns the revolutionary movements at the beginning of this century. Since for CB, the objective conditions were still immature, he sees the Russian revolution as voluntarist and utopian: there was no international revolutionary wave, at best, only a revolutionary surge in a few countries. For the same reason, he denies that a real International or a real party could exist at the time.

This overview shows that CB attempts no less than a complete reinterpretation of the history of the 20th century, which departs radically from the analyses of Marxists until now, in particular from those of the Italian and German/Dutch communist left (which are never quoted in this book). By no means do we have the idea that all the answers to today's questions have already been given by the theoreticians of the past. To the contrary, many times IP has insisted on the need to continue the theoretical work of the communist left - in particular on state capitalism, decadence, the evolution of capitalism since the Second World War. In short, we share CB's desire for theoretical renewal, but we strongly disagree with his answers to the questions of the current period. We want to comment in particular on three important points: the analysis of the development of capitalism, the analysis of the world wars and the analysis of the revolutionary wave of 1917-23.

## 1. DECADENCE OR FINAL HISTORIC CRISIS OF CAPITALISM?

The book is based on the idea that history is strictly economically determined. CB is right to insist that the succession of modes of production, from primitive communism to capitalism, was directed by the development of the productive forces; and that the ideas advocating communism, (more or less) emerged all through history (such as Babeuf's "Conspiracy for Equality" in 1796) but could not be realised. However, it seems a mistake to us to conclude from this that, if the proletariat has so far not succeeded in making its revolution, this is only due to a lack of maturation of economic development. For us, the passage of capitalism to communism is different from the transitions between earlier mode of productions, because the proletariat can in no way build up economic power within capitalist society. Therefore, for the first time in history, the subjective factor - that is, the consciousness of people of the necessity and possibility of the revolution - becomes decisive. And the development of this consciousness is not a mere mechanic reaction to the state of development of the productive forces; there is a time-gap between the levels of their development and the consciousness that people have of them. The maturity of the objective conditions of the revolution (development of the productive forces) and the maturity of the subjective conditions (development of class consciousness) are not the same, even if they are closely related.

How does CB support his theory that the capitalist system has developed continuously throughout the 20th Century, and that this development made the proletarian revolution impossible? He insists heavily on the fact that the productive forces continued to grow and that the world wars accelerated their development in a powerful way. This proves in his view that the concept of decadence, defended by the ICC <sup>(1)</sup> as well as IP, is a mistake. But his argument is based on a false premiss: the idea that there is an absolute limit, a point beyond which capitalism can no longer develop its productive forces. As long as this point is not reached, CB thinks all is well for capitalism. He thinks this point was reached in 1974-75, after which the system entered its final crisis. But there is no such absolute ceiling for the development of the productive forces. Capitalism is based on the constant development of value. Short of a revolution, capitalism will continue to develop its productive forces. But the quantitative development of the productive forces in this century does, in itself, not say much about the state of health of the system. In our view, the concept of decadence cannot be solely defined with purely quantitative criteria such as a halt or slowdown of the development of the productive forces. More decisive is the fact that, since the

beginning of this century, this development cannot be unilaterally characterized as progress for humankind <sup>(2)</sup>. On one hand, the continuous evolution of labor productivity means a reduction of necessary labor, which makes the passage to a communist society ever more possible. On the other, a growing part of social production is devoted to commodities that are useless (advertisement, gadgets of the consumer society) or potentially harmful for mankind. (all sorts of arms). On the basis of this criterion, the beginning of the 20th century must be seen as a major turning point in the evolution of the capitalist system. The development of the productive forces which took place since then was accompanied with devalorisations and unprecedented destruction of capital, whether through the two world wars, the development of a permanent and growing arms sector since the second world war, the many conflicts which the world has seen since then, or the collapse of the "Third World" and the Eastern Bloc in recent decades. More and more, the development of the productive forces goes hand in hand with the development of misery for the human species. The turning point, in our view, is not 1974-75, as CB thinks, but the beginning of this century.

His analysis of the crisis of 1929 is a good illustration of the confusion to which CB's premises lead. For him, the crisis of 1929 is caused by the fact that the markets were, until then, mostly limited to Department I (means of production), while the commodities of Department II (means of consumption) were going mostly to the bourgeois class. According to him, the crisis was overcome thanks to the development of mass consumption, made possible by increased productivity. Not a word about the role of public works or the development of arms production (not exactly Department III!) in the absorption of the crisis of 1929! Nevertheless, it was in the first place through these public works and later through arms production, that the economic machine was relaunched before the second world war. These artificial markets, created by the capitalist states themselves induced growth, essentially in the means of production (Department I) rather than means of consumption (Department II). "It's guns or butter", Goering said. So it's not clear which "increase of mass consumption" CB has in mind... It's significant that CB at no point in his lengthy book discusses the impact of the reconstruction and of war, the development of a permanent and growing arms industry after World War Two, or the survival of the capitalist system.

More generally, it seems absurd to explain the crisis, which is a crisis of profit, as resulting from a lack of consumption by the working masses. The source of profit is surplus labor - that is the difference between the value of the wages paid to the workers and the value of their work contained in the

commodities they produced. The ability to realise profit, to valorise capital, is limited by two factors. First, the rise of the organic composition of capital (the ratio machinery/human labor in production) means that commodities contain even less human labor and therefore less potential profit. Second, to transform the surplus value, which these commodities contain, into profit, they must be sold ("Export or die" was the war cry of all governments before World War Two). To develop the consumption capacity of the working class by increasing its wages, means only to increase the paid labor (wages) at the expense of the unpaid labor (profit). It's hard to see how this could resolve the crisis of profit.

Furthermore, CB contradicts himself: elsewhere he writes that the catastrophic crisis of capitalism (beginning in 1974-75) is a crisis of profitability, caused by the fact that the rise of productivity can no longer compensate for the rise of wages. In other words, the working class now consumes too much! If the current crisis were caused by an exceedingly high wage-level, it's hard to see what's so catastrophic about it. It would suffice to lower wages and cut employment (which the bourgeoisie has indeed done continuously since the 1970s) to resolve it.

## 2. CRISIS-WAR-RECONSTRUCTION CYCLE OR THIRTY YEARS WAR?

This brings us to the second thesis of CB, on the causes of world wars. Since CB denies that the capitalist system has been in a crisis of profit since the beginning of this century, he also denies that the world wars are resulting from the rivalries between the big powers, fighting for the conquest of new markets. So he needed another explanation of these major events of the 20th century. He found it in the work of a bourgeois historian, A. Mayer, who claimed, in his book "La persistance de l'Ancien Regime: l'Europe de 1848 a la Grande Guerre"(3), that the two world wars were actually "the thirty years war" of the 20th century. By this, Mayer, and with him CB, means that these wars were provoked by retrograde layers (nobility, high clergy) who wanted to put a brake to the development of capitalism to preserve their own, privileged position, but who were eventually swept away. The crushing of these retrograde layers is supposedly the key to the spectacular development of capitalism after the second world war. CB wholly swallows this theory, which he finds "suggestive and coherent". Well, not in our eyes.

Marxism has always explained society's great events on the basis of the developments of the productive forces and not on the base of the mindset of individuals, as reactionary as they may be. The immense capitalist and imperialist expansion which

took place before 1914, and its repercussions on the economies of the great industrial nations, are simply ignored in Mayer's theory. It is as if the economic antagonisms between the great powers, their struggles to get control over markets, the alliances they formed, never existed. CB doesn't see that, at the stage which capitalism had reached, expansion beyond national borders, imperialism and growing military expenditures, form an inseparable whole which hallmarked a new historic period for capitalism.<sup>(4)</sup>

Instead of a materialist analysis, CB gives us a view of history that seems to come straight out of a novel, in which the first half of the 20th century is described as an "eclipse" in the brilliant development of bourgeois society, and fascism as a semi-feudal, archaic "regressive force". Instead of defending the need for a revolutionary, proletarian perspective against the two-pronged enemy fascism/democracy, CB, from these premisses, concludes that democracy was the lesser evil: "In fact, the retrograde forces, by hindering capitalism's march towards real domination, only pushed back the socialist perspective, and, at the same time, gave a new legitimacy to bourgeois democracy. Fascism's worst product is anti-fascism, Bordiga could say, because the effect of fascism was indeed to turn the proletariat away from its struggle against capitalism and bourgeois democracy, to come to their defense. This said, was there any other solution? No, because fascism's appearance on history's stage as a retrograde movement, meant that history did not yet raise the question of the the suppression of capitalism. Otherwise, the left of the workers movement would have won."

CB also rejects the idea of capitalism being in the grip, since the beginning of this century, of a cycle of "crisis-war-reconstruction". In the last 15 years "there was no trace of a course towards war", he writes. The fact that Russia has, for now, thrown in the towel in the fight for world hegemony, seems to confirm his position. But the fact that the antagonism between the US and the USSR has not lead to a third world war, does not mean that capitalism has no longer any need for wars as a temporary way out of its contradictions. The reasons why the USSR couldn't launch a military attack against its enemy bloc were essentially economic (the weakness of its capital led, amongst other things, to an incapacity to keep up with the nuclear arms race), and social (the proletariat remained combative). In this situation Russia, the economically weaker competitor, was forced to withdraw from the race before it could fire the first shot. Consequently, the US could establish its hegemony over the whole of the planet without having to fight a war. It would be a mistake however, to conclude from this that from now on, world war is no longer a part of the capitalist picture, as CB seems to think. It is possible that the current American

hegemony is only temporary and that, in the future, the economic rivalries between the great powers would lead to military conflicts. Why otherwise would the different bourgeoisies continue to develop and accumulate the most sophisticated weapons?

### 3. 1917-23: A REAL OR VIRTUAL REVOLUTIONARY WAVE?

The third key point on which CB's positions and ours diverge concerns the revolutionary movements in the early part of this century. Following the logic of his idea that capitalism was then still in the midst of its development, CB affirms that the proletariat, in Russia as well as in the rest of Europe, was not ready for revolution. This for two reasons: it did not constitute the immense majority of the population, given the weight of the large middle and peasant layers, which were only definitely proletarianised after 1945; and it was "bourgeoisified", that is, it identified with a system of values and ideological representations that belonged to the ruling class. The take-over of power by the proletariat in Russia in 1917 is then seen as "utopian and voluntaristic" and the existence of a revolutionary wave in other European countries denied. At most, CB admits that there was a "revolutionary push" in Germany. He calls the Third International an artificial construction, which became rapidly clear, from its third congress on.

But CB's thesis leaves more questions hanging than it pretends to answer. What was to be done in Russia? To wait for the objective conditions to mature, and to denounce the workers' and Bolsheviks' attempt to force the course of history? That is untenable. This thesis is but an attempt to rationalize the defeat of the revolutionary wave of the beginning of this century.

We must distinguish two questions here. First: were the conditions that make the revolution possible present on an international level? Our answer is yes. The succession of insurrectional movements in different countries testify to it. They clearly worried the bourgeoisie, as shown by the blockade of Russia, the conclusion of a cease-fire with Germany in 1918 and the occupation of the important proletarian centres. Second: were these conditions more or less favorable to the revolution's victory? With hindsight, we can see a whole series of unfavorable factors which weighed heavily in the outcome of the revolutionary wave. The arguments advanced by CB (numerical weakness of the proletariat and insufficient separation from bourgeois ideology) certainly are amongst them, as are many others (such as the fact that the revolutionary wave emerged after a war, which imposed a division between winners and losers, and the lack of experience of the proletariat with the

new strategies of the bourgeoisie). In this sense, we can agree with CB that today, in certain aspects, the conditions are more favorable for the victory of a revolutionary movement. Indeed today, the proletariat has experienced all the characteristics of a developed society, it has lost its trust in all bourgeois forces, including those of the left, and it is not defeated by a world war.

### 4. CONCLUSIONS

His determinist analysis is at the same time the strength and the weakness of this essay. Its strength, because it allows him to say that capitalism isn't eternal, that the perspective isn't generalized chaos, that the communist revolution is a real possibility. Its weakness, because it tightly links the emergence of the communist revolution to the presence of economic conditions and does not recognize the enormous, primordial weight of class consciousness in the genesis of the revolution. One last example to illustrate this. CB thinks that the reason why the revolution hasn't yet broken out since the beginning of the final historic crisis, is that the attacks on the working class have not yet been sufficiently strong; that all the necessary conditions will be assembled when the absolute pauperisation of the working class reaches the depths of the worst conditions of the 19th century. But that's a mechanistic vision. Indeed, one could just as well reason that, if the working class of the major countries would allow the bourgeoisie to lower its standard of living to the level of the 19th century, it would mean that it's thoroughly dominated by its enemy class. In the revolutionary process, there is no "level X" of crisis and austerity measures that guarantees the unleashing of a revolutionary process on an international level.

CB's logic at first seems flawless and coherent. Yet on several points, it doesn't square with reality. His hyper-determinism cannot explain the major events of this century: the world wars, the military build-up, the exponential growth of fictitious capital (barely mentioned in this book), the revolutionary upheavals. He can only integrate these events in his analysis by putting them between parentheses (the first half of the 20th century, eclipse in the development of capitalism) or by denying them (the Russian revolution) or by robbing them of their historical significance. That is the main flaw of this book.

This said, it must be recognized that this book tries to fill a real gap. No Marxist theory has yet succeeded to explain the evolution of capitalism in

the 20th century in a clear, understandable and solidly founded way. The theory of Rosa Luxemburg, according to which the existence of extra-capitalist markets is the indispensable condition for the survival of the capitalist system, is clearly unable to explain the persistence of this system during this century. It's clear to us that we must be able to explain, within the context of the theory on ascendancy and decadence, the profound transformation which the capitalist system underwent during the last decades, notably by

using the concept of the passage from formal to real domination. So, while we disagree with some of CB's theories, we certainly share his concern for breaking with dogmas and actively researching new explanatory hypotheses.

Adele

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1. See their pamphlet "Decadence of Capitalism"
  2. See the article "The Development of the productive forces and the decadence of capitalism" in this issue.
  3. Published in "Collection Champs", Editions Flammarion, Paris.
  4. See for instance F. Sternberg, "The Conflict of the Century" and H. Claude, "From the Crisis to the Second World War".

# the economy in the Russian Revolution

## RESPONSE TO SANDER

In IP #28 we published a discussion article on "The Economy in the Russian Revolution" and a response to it by Sander. Without wanting to get into an endless polemic, I feel I should reply to this response. To me, it raises fundamental questions for our current debates. These questions concern three points:

- the return to the lessons of history;
- the role of revolutionaries;
- the future revolution.

### THE RETURN TO THE LESSONS OF HISTORY

Revolutionaries have always had the concern to return to past experiences. This tendency goes in the sense of the capacity, for the working class to reappropriate its history - that is, to see itself as a distinct class in a historic continuity. While the dominant ideology tends to deny the notion of classes with incompatible interests, and while the process of the "recomposition" of the working class makes this perception of the class of itself even more difficult, to return to the lessons of history gives back into the hands of the proletariat a part of what constitutes its historic identity.

But to return to the Russian revolution has an additional interest. In the revolutionary milieu of today - that is, the part of the class that possesses the clearest consciousness - the weight of Leninism is considerable. There is, therefore, a direct link between the critique of the positions taken by the Bolsheviks after the revolution and the examination of the political concepts of today, and their impact on the process of the development of class consciousness. It's no coincidence that, for an important part of the revolutionary political milieu, the Bolsheviks are the model to follow. That's why my critique took the point

of view of examining a certain type of political positions based on the immediate tasks and the seeking of the support of the masses, rather than the question of the chances of success of a worldwide revolution in 1917.

My aim was to make a modest contribution on the principles that must be combatted within the revolutionary milieu, in order to reach greater clarity. So I can only agree with Sander, when he writes, in his response: "Clearer revolutionaries would have had the merit of not portraying their economic management as "socialist". That would have saved the world a lot of confusion and mystification." (p.27)

### THE ROLE OF THE REVOLUTIONARIES

At the time of the Russian revolution, the Bolshevik party was a young party, influenced by social-democratic concepts. As a result, it developed a view on its role which was linked more to the immediate tasks than to the defense of global historic perspectives. Lenin wrote, in his April theses: "Our immediate task is not to "introduce" socialism, but only to pass control over social production and the distribution of products immediately to the Soviets of workers delegates."

This quote raises the question of the usefulness of the "period of transition", the period which follows the taking of power and which must lay the foundations for the construction of a new society. We know that such a period is inevitably very complicated: it is situated between the heritage of a society and the task of destroying its foundations. Through the contradictions and ambushes of this period, revolutionaries have only one weapon to guide them: their principles, just like class consciousness serves as the guide of the proletariat during the struggle for power. And precisely, what Sander's response completely dodges, is the question of the political principles defended by the Bolsheviks.

To take an example, let's return to the agrarian question. The peasants formed the majority of the Russian population at the beginning of the century. From the end of the 19th century on, progressive bourgeois factions examined the question of agricultural productivity. The idea of collective exploitation of the land existed and it functioned in the "agricultural communities" (M.I.R. and Obchtchinas). So it's clear that collectivisation was concretely realisable and was realised, even if within the framework of a capitalist society (we do not, of course, defend a "collectivisation" with that sauce!). From a political point of view, several currents confronted each other at the moment of the revolution: some wanted a collective organisation but without the exploitation of the capitalist relations of production; others were for the destruction of these collective structures and the distribution of the land. The position of the Bolcheviks on this was a "tactical" one, which I denounced earlier.

Amongst the peasants, there were rich landowners, well-off farmers and agricultural workers without land. In the aftermath of the revolution, the tendency went towards the abolition of the large estate, which was seen as a representation of the brutal exploitation of the peasants. The position of the Bolcheviks did not go in the direction of putting forward the general principles which could bring together the interests of factory workers and agricultural workers, of collective ownership of the productive forces and the distribution of this production according to the needs. Such a principle nevertheless guided the organisation of the peasants in certain places, such as in the Ukraine with the "Makhnovist" movement. It is quite elucidating to see how the Bolcheviks drowned this collectivist initiative in blood. In Russia, the Bolcheviks, far from basing themselves on the Ukrainian dynamic, hurried to legalise the distribution of the land, in order to consolidate their power. That inspired Lenin to write: "We have succeeded in basing ourselves for some months on the entire peasant class. That's an historic fact. At least until the summer of 1918, until the formation of the committees of poor peasants, we could stay in power because we had the support of all the peasants". (Complete Works, second French edition, vol. XV, p.19) For Lenin, the main thing was to consolidate Bolchevik power, even if this favored what he would call "a bourgeois revolution" in the countryside. It is this same "bourgeois revolution" which would refuse the provision of agricultural surpluses and starve the proletariat of the factories. The response of Lenin to this resistance of those on whom he had relied himself was the creation of "mobile groups", charged with forcible requisitions, which widened the gap between cities and countryside.

So, the position of the Bolcheviks on the question of the land was very explicit: not a defense of positions opening the way to a new society, but an immediate, "tactical" position of consolidation of power, without any consideration for its political impact, and with consequences that were answered with repression.

The same attitude prevailed with regard to all economic structures: as I showed in my article in IP #28, the main concern of the Bolcheviks was to develop the productive forces (their inspiration was the structures of young capitalisms such as in Germany) and the organisation of the society in the direction of a centralisation and a control, which would lay the bases of state capitalism.

The economic measures went in the direction of maintaining the existing structures which were simply submitted to "workers control". We know that economic activity raises the question of the dynamic which makes it function. The economic measures of the Bolcheviks did not go in the direction of destruction of the capitalist foundations (such as the law of value). The banks and industries kept their own organisation, and even their executives! The economic policy of the Bolcheviks was aimed more at the control of society than at its progressive destruction so that a new society could emerge. The wages were not changed either: they were never a simple tool to distribute the social wealth, but remained an instrument aimed at increasing the productivity of labor, and therefore, at the exploitation of the workers. We know, for instance, that piece-rate wages and productivity bonuses never really disappeared and were systematized outright from 1919 on. So it's clear that the Bolchevik policy, just like on the agricultural question, barred the road to a change of society, rather than opening it. This tendency hardened when they were confronted with class struggle: the Bolcheviks remained deaf to the growing divergence between the interests of a proletariat, which was still conscious of its victorious revolution, and a party which had taken over the exploitation of the masses. It's this progressive divorce which provoked class reactions from 1920 on, and which ended with the rebellion of the sailors of Kronstadt and its bloody repression by the Bolcheviks.

## THE FUTURE REVOLUTION

While we can only agree with Sander that the conditions of the future revolution will be different from those of the Russian revolution of 1917, we must avoid the trap of idealizing this future revolution. Indeed, even if the conditions of globalisation of the



economy favor the homogeneity of working conditions, and thus the consciousness that we face the same problem, we shouldn't forget that this process is not completed at the dawn of the revolution but continues in the very dynamic of the pre-revolutionary conflicts. Therefore, it is not certain that the context of a future revolution will not present serious difficulties for our class and its revolutionaries. There is, for instance, a new problem in the existence of whole layers of the population which are excluded from production, not because they have left it, but because they never entered it: populations of the "Third World", inhabitants of slums, and so on. Those will have to be won over to the revolution and its political goals. Similarly, when Sander tells us that the economic task of the future revolution will be how to re-orient production, in contrast to the Russian revolution which had to make the productive forces grow, he creates an opposition which hides the real economic problems. Sander portrays capitalism as a fruit that is ripe for picking. But despite the enormous development of the productive forces, decadent capitalism has created a relative scarcity and imbalances, such as in the management of the environment and natural wealth. The future revolution will probably have to do more than to re-orient production.

## CONCLUSION

Sander's response to my article contains a number of confusions and idealisations. In particular, his refusal to make a fundamental critique of the positions of the Bolcheviks, under the pretext that the context of 1917 prevented the development of a worldwide revolution, obscures the understanding of the role of revolutionaries in such a period. Whatever difficulties they encounter, revolutionaries must defend the positions which agree most with the historic interests of their class.

But this was not what guided the attitude of the Bolcheviks. They showed themselves poorly armed to understand the functioning of the capitalist system, what leads to communism, and their role as a revolutionary minority. It is clear that the measures taken in the aftermath of the Russian revolution had a negative impact on the consciousness that the proletariat had of its own action; in Russia, but also in other countries where there were also revolutionary movements. Thus, in 1919, while a general strike was paralyzing the Ruhr in Germany, the Bolcheviks condemned strike movements in Russia!

Rose

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