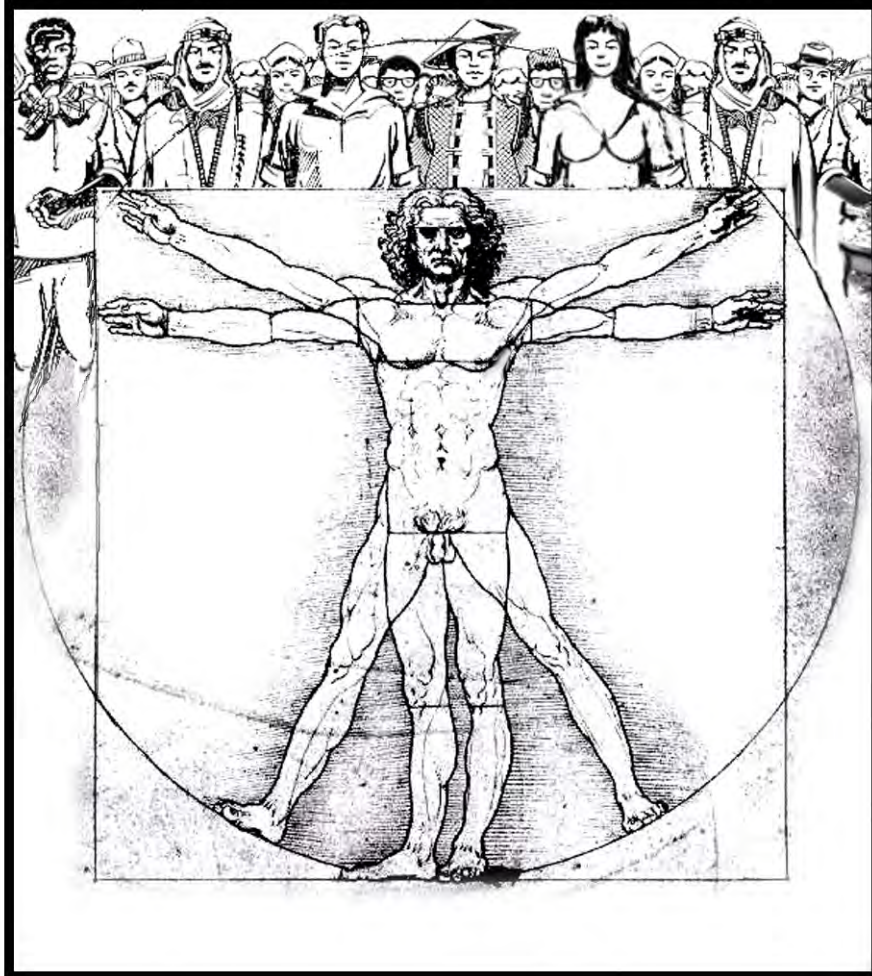


# INTERNATIONALIST PERSPECTIVE



HOW IS REVOLUTION  
POSSIBLE ?

A Debate about «Human Nature »

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# WHICH REVOLUTION?

## *A DEBATE ON THE QUESTION OF ‘SPECIES BEING’*

*Over the past several years, our group has sought to analyze the bases for the functioning of the capitalist mode of production, and in particular, the impact of the real domination of capital on it. One aspect that we have also focused on has been how fundamental economic changes were integrally linked to changes in the organization of society in all of its other domains. Those changes involve the composition of the social classes, the very configuration of which has been modified, the specific modes of exploitation of the proletariat, and both the way in which it sees itself in the world and the bases upon which it can defend itself. The debate that follows originated in the effort to understand how our class, which -- under the impact of the penetration of the law of value into every aspect of life, common and individual – is subject to the full impact of alienation, can extricate itself from that condition; how a class that has been stripped of its traditional benchmarks, and has had to bear the full weight of an effort to reduce it to a disposable commodity, can still grasp its key role in the advent of a new kind of society.*

*The concept of species being has not been unanimously accepted within our group, and readers of this issue of IP can see the different, sometimes even contradictory, positions articulated on this issue. What is crucial for us is to be able to have an open and thoroughgoing debate on the fundamental question of the conditions for the development of the political consciousness of the proletariat within the framework established by the way in which the capitalist mode of production functions now.*

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## SPECIES BEING, SOCIAL BEING, AND CLASS CONSCIOUSNESS

The aim of this contribution is to re-start the debate on class-consciousness. To take up again – as did Marx – the term “species being” makes it possible to grasp the fact that the movement of the proletariat, in its thinking about the perspectives for, and the construction of, a new society, is the result of the conscious action of our class, and, therefore, of both political reflection and willful action. This vision separates it from one that sees the revolutionary perspective as an automatic result of the growing pressure exercised by the economic crisis alone. The political action of the revolutionary class is the outcome of a process of questioning in which the degradation of its conditions of existence and political reflection intersect; it is rooted in the human needs denied by the functioning of capitalism. It is precisely through its efforts to satisfy its basic needs that the class can become conscious of the absence of any hope for their satisfaction in capitalist society, of its position as an exploited class, of its alienation within this system, and thus of the possibility of breaking loose from it. The process through which

consciousness develops occurs by way of the exacerbation of the opposition between its social being and its species being – and it is these different notions that this article seeks to develop.

### **1) Species Being<sup>1</sup>**

To speak of species being and social being means at the outset placing oneself on two different levels. When one speaks of species being, the reference is to a concept of human nature, and a concept is an abstraction. That abstraction only exists concretely when it assumes a form

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<sup>1</sup> « Species being » in English, *l'être générique* in French, are the accepted translations for Marx's concept of *Gattungswesen* in his “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844).”

– a social form. If species being represents human nature, human needs, in a large and abstract sense, social being would be the way in which those general tendencies and those needs find a concrete form and expression; a form that is constantly changing and evolving in a dynamic interaction between the historical conditions and the praxis of the human collectivity that lives it. Social being, thus, reflects every aspect of the transformation that this praxis has on the objective conditions that make up the social environment, as well as the effect on the consciousness that the collectivity develops through its own practice. In that sense, it is mistaken to oppose species being to social being: one cannot exist without the other.

But can one speak of a “human nature” or is it created by the very activity of social being? In a sense, one must answer both questions in the affirmative. In effect it seems clear to me that the human species is marked by certain broad features, and that these are essentially the same in all epochs, in all cultures. At the same time, the forms in which these features express themselves depend on the social context within which they are placed. The life force and death force [pulsion], the drive to understand [pulsion épistémophilique] (the need to understand the world), the need to belong to a collectivity and to bond with other members of that collectivity, the need to give and to receive love, creative activity, the aesthetic quest, are all elements that mark our species from the cave paintings of Lascaux to its most formidable technological developments. What puts the human being perpetually in motion, what makes her never stop, what makes him never satisfied, is the quest for, and expression of, his species being through the mediation of her praxis. In that respect, one cannot speak of species being without inscribing it in history, that is to say, in the movement of continual transformation that man effects on his environment in the effort to satisfy his needs.

Here is how Marx defined species being in the 1844 Manuscripts: “To say that man is a species being, is, therefore, to say that man raises himself above his own subjective individuality, that he recognizes in himself the objective universal, and thereby transcends himself as a finite being. Put another way, he is individually the representative of mankind.” “Man is a species-being, not only because he practically and theoretically makes the species – both his own and those of other things – his object, but also – and this is simply another way of saying the same thing – because he looks upon himself as the present, living species, because he looks upon himself as a universal and therefore free being.”<sup>2</sup> “The animal is immediately one with its life activity; it is that activity. Man makes his life activity itself an object of his will and consciousness. He has conscious life activity. It is not a determination with which he directly merges. Conscious life activity directly distinguishes man from animal life

activity. Only because of that is he a species-being.”<sup>3</sup> “It is therefore in his fashioning of the objective that man really proves himself to be a species-being. Such production is his active species-life. Through it nature appears as his work and his reality. The object of labour is therefore the objectification of the species-life of man: for man reproduces himself not only intellectually, in his consciousness, but actively and actually, and he can therefore contemplate himself in a world he himself has created. In tearing away the object of his production from man, estranged labour therefore tears away from him his species-life, his true species-objectivity, and transforms his advantage over animals into the disadvantage that his inorganic body, nature, is taken from him.”<sup>4</sup> Marx defined a human nature, a human essence of man, which is situated beyond modes of production or features of the environment. One of the characteristics of alienation or estrangement, for him, is precisely the loss of this species being. The capitalist mode of production renders the product of production alien to the person who has produced it, thus making man alien to himself – and, therefore, to his human essence; that is to say, alien to the universal, collective, character of the human being, to his need for bonding, for creative activity, for knowledge, for self-consciousness and consciousness of his environment, as well as alien from his capacity to project himself into the future.

## 2) Social Being: The Individual Alienated By The Capitalist Socio-Economic Matrix

Social being is, therefore, the effort to manifest [révéler] species being, through a determinant social practice, and to satisfy its fundamental needs.

Throughout human history, there has been repression of human needs, exploitation, domination. These social relations have been situated in a context of real scarcity and the submission of human survival to the hazards of nature – even if these two elements have progressively evolved. The capitalist mode of production brought with it a number of fundamentally qualitative changes: for the first time in history, the human collectivity has developed the means to potentially put an end to scarcity, and has potentially succeeded in freeing its survival from the contingencies of nature. Capitalism has made it possible to free us from the reign of necessity. Alas, we know all too well the next chapter of this history. In order to survive, the capitalist system must preserve scarcity. There, resides a fundamental contradiction of the system: it contains within itself its own negation; its evolution and its very development imply its end. That contradiction between the development of the productive forces and the mode of production compels the capitalist system to produce not more freedom for individuals, but more destruction and a

<sup>2</sup> Karl Marx, “Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844)” in Karl Marx, *Early Writings* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), p. 327.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 328.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 329.

growing alienation. "The political economist tells us that everything is bought with labour and that capital is nothing but accumulated labor, but then goes on to say that the worker, far from being in a position to buy everything, must sell himself and his humanity."<sup>5</sup>

In the same movement, there develops, on the subjective level, alienation. Alienation marks a break [coupure] between the activity of man and his species being: in his overall activity, the human being becomes alien to himself, alien to other humans, alien to what constitutes his human essence. He is reified and cut off from his links to nature. And the social relations in which she acts refract this reified image of a human-commodity. Her praxis is no longer the effort to reveal and give shape to her species being, but rather negates species being in an alienated relationship of man to himself. From being creative, human activity has become sterile, and the only perspective for individuals stuck in that social relationship is to ... do nothing ("lazy" adolescents, the "whatever" generation). Alienation also entails a loss of the consciousness that the human being has of his species being and of his identity. But the "motor" that makes it possible for man not to lose himself in that alienated relationship to which his daily practice condemns him, is precisely his consciousness and an intuition of his unsatisfied species being. In decadent capitalism, man, overcome by his own creations, is no longer the master of them; she no longer controls the machine, but is controlled by it. The widening gap between the basic needs of one's species being and their negation by the very practice of men, permits the emergence of a discontent that goes beyond simple economic demands, culminating in a questioning and in a quest for the satisfaction of real needs. The existence of species being, therefore, constitutes a key element in the process of the development of consciousness and of questioning by the proletariat, through the pressure that it exerts on even the most alienated individuals.

"The machine accommodates itself to man's weakness, in order to turn weak men into a machine. .... [The capitalist] turns the worker into a being with neither needs nor senses and turns the worker's activity into a pure abstraction from all activity."<sup>6</sup> "This estrangement partly manifests itself in the fact that the refinement of needs and of the means of fulfilling them gives rise to a bestial degeneration and a complete, crude and abstract simplicity of need ...."<sup>7</sup> The activity of the worker, far from being a creative activity, where man realizes and affirms himself, is an activity that impoverishes him, "in which he mortifies his body and destroys his spirit." "The result is that man (the worker) feels that he is acting freely only in his animal functions – eating, drinking and procreating, or at most in his dwelling

and adornment – while in his human functions he is nothing more than an animal."<sup>8</sup>

Marx tells us that we can see alienation at two levels. First, in the relation of the worker to the product of his labor: this latter becomes alien to him, and to produce it, man must become alien to himself and to other men. That is because the product of the activity of the worker belongs to another: the activity of the one who produces constitutes her own torment, but is a pleasure to another. The external world appears alien and hostile. Second, in the relation of the worker to the act of production: as an activity alien to man, the act of production creates in her a feeling of powerlessness and of submission, "activity becomes passivity, power becomes powerlessness."

Alien to his own nature, man is also alien to his real needs. And to complete this process, the dominant ideology unceasingly diverts the individual from his quest for his human essence and the satisfaction of his needs, and perverts those needs by providing them with false gratifications.

Let us take some innate features of the human personality, and see how they fare under capitalism today.

The duality of drives [dualité pulsionnelle] (life/destruction) implies a balance between two opposed forces, to which one must give a preponderant role to the life force [pulsion de vie]. True, the exact determination of the two is specific to each person, and depends on the individual's own history. However, I think that the phase of decadence, and in particular the destructiveness that constitutes so important a feature of the functioning of capitalism, shatters that balance between the two drives in the direction of a preponderance of the destructive drive. In the ambient violence, and with its corollary of an absence of any [opposing] perspective, individual destructiveness is either directed towards the "other" or turned against oneself. We know that in our "civilized" societies, suicide is one of the principal causes of death amongst youth.

The need for bonding with another, and its gratification, is transmogrified under decadent capitalism into an immediate gratification in which the possession of "things" substitutes for the establishment of a bond with a love-object. Ideology thereby defines human nature by its opposite: the human being, by definition, social [grégaire], would be – thanks to capitalism – finally liberated from all his dependencies; we would finally become self-sufficient unto ourselves, and individualism would become the quintessence of individual freedom.

A first consequence of this concerns the way in which one's identity is formed; the modification of traditional benchmarks, the recomposition of classes, leads individuals to seek out substitute groups within which to

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 287.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 360.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 359.

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 327.

belong: race, religion, region, with all the alienating features that such forms of belonging entail.

Because they are connected to a second consequence of the negation of bonds and dependencies – the defensive regression towards the most archaic modes of psychic functioning – one then ends up in the domain of the binary opposition (friend/enemy, in group/out group, good/bad), and in a narcissistic falling-back [repli] into self-referentiality. The “other” is not recognized as a person, at once different from, but -- at the same time -- as of equal value to oneself: she is the same or an enemy – all difference is intolerable. We are no longer within the perspective of a harmonious human community in its diversity, but instead that of a disparate conglomeration, threatening and without meaning. Such binary modes of functioning lead us to project onto the “other” a threat to ourselves: the stranger will be someone who directly endangers our life, either by coming “to take our food,” or by being a menacing criminal. These archaic mechanisms establish a dangerous situation in which the individual feels himself threatened. It is my view that the alarming [inquiétant] economic and social context tends to make that defensive, archaic, functioning predominant, and we have here a link between ideology and a real psychic phenomenon: in order to isolate individuals and to strengthen its network [dispositif] of social controls, the ruling class brandishes the threat of generalized insecurity represents by migrants, the young, gypsies, in short, everyone that can be made into the “other.” In exchange, increasingly “fragile” individuals stigmatize that “other” as the embodiment of what makes them so insecure, thereby reinforcing the distrust, the competition, between individuals, and – as a result – providing a justification for the ideology and the violence of the ruling class.

Another element through which this binary vision is articulated is the reification of the individual. The human being is a commodity, a tool, and must – like a machine – perform, run smoothly. Here too, ideology and a psychic mechanism are linked: in a binary vision, everything that is not good is necessarily evil – it’s the “logic” of all or nothing. Where capitalism leads us to be ever more competitive, the binary mechanisms respond in terms of idealization/breakdown: the least fault is a grave threat to our identity and to our place in society, and, therefore, we must continuously cultivate our body, our youth, our image, so as to try to emulate the ideal models with which society presents us, and which we must try to keep free of any contamination by negative elements. “Hide your aging, your madness, your depression, your sadness, your illness, so they will never be seen,” that is the motto enjoined by our fears and by capitalist ideology!

Finally, the need for love and recognition has been perverted into a need for power and social standing, translated into the reign of private property. “Private property has made us so stupid and one-sided that an object is only ours when we have it, when it exists for us as capital or when we directly possess, eat, drink, wear,

inhabit it, etc., in short, when we use it. Although private property conceives all these immediate realizations of possession only as means of life; and the life they serve is the life of private property, labour and capitalization. Therefore all the physical and intellectual senses have been replaced by the simple estrangement of all these senses – the sense of having.”<sup>9</sup>

### 3) Class Consciousness

Therefore, there exists a tension, an intensely conflictual relation, between species being and social being. Decadent capitalism crushes and diverts human needs and their satisfaction to an ever-increasing degree. But, what must be stressed is that this conflictual relation is posed in a different way, depending on one’s class. For the ruling class, if it wants to survive as a ruling class, it must maintain the status quo, and, therefore, has no other choice but to evolve towards ever greater madness (since its human needs are less and less met), and towards the hopelessness born of the absence of any real perspectives. The only thing that it can allow is reformism, that is to say, it can project a “capitalism with a human face,” so much in vogue today, and the “alternative globalization” [“alter mondialiste”] movement, that is its reflection.<sup>10</sup> But, come what may, the ruling class can only continue to widen the gap between social being and species being, and to pile destruction on destruction. There will, then, develop all sorts of pathologies: of bonding, of self-estimation, with a withdrawal into oneself and the return of archaic psychic mechanisms (marked by a heightened division between good and evil, culminating in a frantic quest for the ideal and perfection; an intensified opposition between friend/enemy, and a brutal and intense violence directed at purported and phantasmagoric enemies. For the proletariat, by contrast, things are posed in a radically different way. Its very existence within capitalist social relations constitutes a contradiction, one that represents a potentially dynamic and transformative element. Besides, the survival of proletarians is not linked to the continuation of their status as a wage-working class, but, on the contrary, to their liberation [dégagement] from their role in capitalist social relations, leading to the constitution of a true human community, one that is classless. That is why, among other reasons, the proletariat is the bearer of a perspective both for itself and for the human community as a whole. That is also the difference between the class consciousness [of the proletariat] – which leads to the kind of questioning that can illuminate the very roots of [social] contradictions – and the “consciousness” of the bourgeoisie, which is not a real consciousness, inasmuch as that class must remain ignorant of what undermines its

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<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 351-352.

<sup>10</sup> In continental Europe today, those on the left who oppose the present *forms* of globalization, but who acknowledge that a certain globalization of the economy is progressive, style themselves not as anti-globalization, but as “alternative globalists,” *alter mondialistes* – a distinction not yet current in the Anglophone world.

species being precisely so as to maintain itself as a ruling class. The sole perspective for the working class to free itself is clear-sightedness; the sole perspective for the ruling class is blindness.

It is in this double conflictuality – the one between species being and social being, and the one between recognizing itself as a class in order to negate itself as a class – that consciousness develops, and another perspective can be elaborated. Class consciousness is the mediation through which the collectivity can extricate itself from alienation, by going beyond the break [coupure] between praxis and species being. Class consciousness, thus, leads to a consciousness of being, Humanity rediscovered in the bond with other humans. As much as alienation cuts off the individual from his own needs and her own nature, just as much does class consciousness make it possible for individuals to experience their real needs through the concrete social activity that this consciousness produces. Just as species being is inseparable from the form it takes through the practice of social being, so class consciousness is inseparable from the activity that flows from it and that deepens it. Consciousness of being is the consciousness of the working class, consciousness of having is that of the ruling class.

I believe that to pose things in this way establishes the question of consciousness as a reaction to the totality of the conditions of life – and not just to the degradation of economic conditions. Here, too, we can see the necessary link {intrication} between subjective and objective conditions. It is not enough that economic conditions worsen for political consciousness to develop. The proletariat can certainly react to the degradation of its conditions of existence within the framework of its own alienation, by racist or patriotic reactions, etc. Thus, there is no mechanical, automatic, link between economic pressure and action of the proletariat. What makes it possible for the working class to extricate itself from its alienation, is the development of the political consciousness of its status in society, and of the negation of its human essence in the social relations within which the capitalist mode of production places it.

One can then ask how, in a context in which the reigning ideology has infiltrated all the pores of society to the point where it has perverted our very psychic functioning, a reaction of de-alienation can emerge. Just as the deepening of the economic crisis and the attacks on the material conditions of life are factors that clearly reflect the trajectory of the economy and its perspectives, the increase of alienation, the growing negation of the individual and her human, material, and psychic, needs, are a factor that impels individuals to question themselves, and to extricate themselves from the yoke that stifles them. The penetration of the law of value into all aspects of our lives and of our social condition, demonstrates to us – in a caricatural way – the commodity status of the human being, and thereby reveals its senselessness. Just as caricatural is the widening gap between human needs and

the so-called needs defined by capitalism as being those of “civilized” individuals. That factor, increasingly perceptible and difficult to tolerate, is probably an important lever for the development of a consciousness of the perspectives and the functioning of the capitalist social relation. To pose the question of the development of political consciousness, and of communism, brings us back again to the question of human needs and the human essence of individuals. Species consciousness is the consciousness of the universal and social character of man. “When communist workmen gather together, their immediate aim is instruction, propaganda, etc. But at the same time they acquire a new need – the need for society – and what appears as a means has become an end. This practical development can be most strikingly observed in the gatherings of French socialist workers. Smoking, eating, drinking, etc., are no longer means of creating links between people. Company, association, conversation, which in its turn has society as its goal, is enough for them. The brotherhood of man is not a hollow phrase, it is a reality, and the nobility of man shines forth upon us from their work-worn figures.”<sup>11</sup> “It can be seen how the rich man and the wealth of human need take the place of the wealth and poverty of political economy. The rich man is simultaneously the man in need of a totality of vital human expression; he is a man in whom his own realization exists as inner necessity, as need. Given socialism, not only man’s wealth but also his poverty acquires a human and hence a social significance. Poverty is the passive bond which makes a man experience his greatest wealth – the other man – as need.”<sup>12</sup> A fundamental element on the proletariat’s path [to consciousness] is, therefore, its capacity to rise above its isolation, above competition and hostility towards others. Among other ways, that manifests itself from the moment that the class begins to struggle. The bonds and the necessary interdependence with others, as well as solidarity, are factors that reappear spontaneously when an open struggle is unleashed. And whatever its outcome, or the weaknesses of the movement, that collective experience always leaves its mark even when individuals return to their isolation. “The individual is the social being. His vital expression -- even when it does not appear in the direct form of a communal expression, conceived in association with other men – is therefore an expression and confirmation of social life. Man’s individual and species life are not two distinct things, however much – and this is necessarily so – the mode of existence of individual life is a more particular or a more general mode of the species-life, or species-life a more particular or more general individual life. As species-consciousness man affirms his real social life and merely repeats in thought his actual existence; conversely, species-life confirms itself in species-consciousness and exists for itself in its universality, as a thinking being.”<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 365.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 356.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 350-351.

Far from sanctifying the “movement for the movement’s sake,” we must, therefore, reaffirm the dynamic that is contained and deployed in the class struggle. It is the possibility of renewing the characteristics and needs inherent in the human essence. When we spoke of the social movements of 1995, we spoke of a new period. That did not imply the renewal of a wave of class struggle that would develop throughout Europe, but designated certain features, absent until then in earlier movements: a questioning, however confused, about the global perspectives offered by the society, and a participation in those class movements that did not entail an attachment to any specific demands, but rather to a global dynamic of uneasiness, of discontent, of a consciousness still confused as to the general nature of the deep roots of that discontent. In a certain sense, the movements of 1995 presented, in germ, the potential to go beyond the stage of an economic struggle [lutte revendicative] alone.

Another factor, which is a negative feature under the reign of the capitalist mode of production, but a dynamic factor in the development of the consciousness of the proletariat, is the fact that the technological progress of modern capitalism makes the role of human labor less and less vital and central to production. The industrial worker was already subject to the machine; he is now relegated by the latter to the rank of a an obsolete and superfluous object, merely swelling the ranks of the mass of the chronically unemployable. It is the importance of labor and know-how that are repudiated, but it is the very existence of the working class and its central place in production that is put in question. For the proletariat, the perspective of concretely glimpsing [entrevoir] a classless society is, therefore, contained in this fundamental contradiction of the capitalist mode of production.

#### 4) A Provisional Conclusion

Class consciousness is not stimulated by morality or utopian ideology. It is born of the suffering and exploitation of the working class, and in the quest, of that class, for the means for its own survival.

The evolution of the capitalist mode of production and the reign of its real domination, which extends its transformative power to the whole of the planet, and also to the very depths of our relations to the world, to nature, to other humans, has accentuated, in a spectacular way, the need to build a new society. On the one hand, for the first time in history, technological progress has made it possible for human beings to free themselves from the reign of necessity and scarcity. On the other hand, that very technological progress shows to what extent it can only lead to ever greater aberrations in the bonds that individuals have with their human, natural, and working, environment; to what extent those advances are the bearers of destruction and alienation. Indeed, those very advances show to what extent the activity of man has become a sterile activity, separated from his creative needs; at what point the direction in which the capitalist mode of production is heading compels human beings to close the gap between their deepest aspirations and the way in which they are gratified in society.

The concept of species being is a fundamental lever in the process through which the consciousness of that gap [écart] arises. The return to the fundamentally social, gregarious, nature of the human being, to her need for solidarity, constitutes the perspective for the rejection of the present socio-economic system, and also delineates the contours of what must be a new society.

**ROSE**

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## SOCIAL BEING AND SPECIES BEING: A RESPONSE TO ROSE

Rose’s article is particularly welcome, because it situates our discussion at the very heart of one of the issues that should most concern revolutionaries today: the development of *consciousness*. Moreover, there is no hint in Rose’s article of the economic reductionism that has haunted much of the communist left, and which has insisted that a catastrophic economic crisis -- provided it occurs at an historic moment when the working class has *not* been defeated and is not yet ideologically mobilized by

the capitalist state -- will generate the class consciousness necessary for a revolutionary upheaval. Thus, in the ICC, we basically held the view that class consciousness would spontaneously develop within the proletariat as a result of a catastrophic economic crisis, in a situation where the working class had not already been defeated by capital. It seems to me, that both elements of this vision were *mistaken*. The vision of the ICC assumed that a political defeat inflicted on the working class, the triumph of the



counter-revolution, was necessary to consolidate the rule of the bourgeoisie over the proletariat, and thereby prevent the development of its class consciousness. Such a vision failed to grasp how in the epoch of state capitalism, capital's ideological control over the working class, its complex web of control mechanisms, its very capacity to shape the mode of subjectification of the proletariat, meant that its political power was no longer dependent fundamentally on coercion, as had been the case in the epoch of capital's *formal domination*, or throughout the ascendant phase of capitalism. Thus, neither simple force and violence nor a prior political defeat of the working class has remained the condition for capital's control of the socio-political landscape. Indeed, the power of capital increasingly depended on what Gramsci had termed hegemony, which was a cultural and ideological phenomenon as opposed to one based primarily on coercion. Moreover, it also seems clear that even a catastrophic economic crisis, and a sharp and lasting decline in the standard of living of the working class, does not in the epoch of capital's *real domination* necessarily entail a development of class consciousness on the part of the working class. Indeed, nationalism, fascism, xenophobia, and ethno-racism, can perhaps assure the hegemony of capital even under conditions of "barbarism." Rose's article makes clear that the development of consciousness is no automatic result of even the most catastrophic economic crisis; that what is at stake is a complete upheaval in social being, one that is in no way guaranteed by even the most devastating economic crisis.

It seems to me, that this is the point of departure for Rose's article. On what basis can we expect class consciousness to develop if we cannot depend on a devastating economic crisis, even in the absence of a bloody counter-revolution, to necessarily generate it? For Rose, the existence of a *species being* that stands in sharp contrast to the *social being* of humanity under the conditions of capital's real domination, is the answer. The article argues that beneath social being, and its multiple historical forms, there is a species being, what Marx defined as a *human nature*, a *human essence*, which is innate to the species. I find this philosophical anthropology, with its concept of an essential human nature that will constitute the basis for the development of class consciousness, unconvincing. It is the very existence of this species being, and the claim that the existence of such an innate or a-historical human *nature* is integral to Marxism, that I question. Indeed, for me, with respect to the human species, there is *only* social being, in its multiple historical forms.

Rose says that a "large part" of our identity, of what I have in other articles termed our existence as *subjects*, "is inscribed in a determinate material, social, historical, context." In the broadest sense, I would say virtually the *whole* of our subjectivity or identity as *human* beings is historical, social, and cultural. As biological creatures there are elements that are neither social nor cultural,

certain innate needs and drives, but in that regard I am a minimalist, and more to the point, even with respect to these innate needs and drives, the *forms* that they take are not biologically given, but socially and culturally shaped, and historically variable. Beyond even those innate needs, everything else that constitutes us as subjects seems to me to be historical, social, and cultural, the product of our interaction with our environment and other individuals and classes. Whereas, with other species, changes in their being are historical only in terms of the long sweep of the evolutionary process, with human beings, the transformation of their being, their "nature," their subjectivity and identity, is a social not a predominantly biological process. The material conditions that generate transformations in the social being of humans, including the factor of contingency, of the aleatory, are the focus of Marxist theory – of both an historical materialism worthy of the name, and of a revolutionary politics directed to the transformation of the social being that capitalism has impressed upon us.



But what of Marx's own claim that man has a species being? This was clearly Marx's view in 1844, a view consonant with his Young Hegelianism of the time. Indeed, that vision seems to me to be integrally linked to a Hegelian philosophical anthropology and philosophy of history, a vision that Marx would largely – though never completely – *overcome*. The first problem with this vision is that any historicity of species being is a *once only* phenomenon. It is generated with primitive communism (or with the birth of the human species) and then becomes both innate and unchanging; that is, it then loses its historicity. Human being, in the form of species being, once it emerges, then becomes *fixed* and *a-historical*. For me, such a vision constitutes a formidable obstacle to the historicity of human being and social relations that I believe is constitutive of Marxism as a theory. The

*Hegelian* provenance of the young Marx's conception of species being, Rose's reliance on the Paris manuscripts of 1844, also leads to a *teleological* vision of history, in which the end or goal is fixed at the outset, and in which history becomes a narrative of a loss of the paradise of primitive communism, man's alienation in class society, and the regaining of paradise (albeit on a "higher" level) through the communist revolution. Such a teleological vision, such a philosophy of history, even when Hegel is stood on his feet, bears an uncanny resemblance to Jewish-Christian eschatology, in which the historical process is pre-ordained, and in which, on the one hand, humankind's *freedom* to produce itself (one of the bases of Marxism, for me) is implicitly denied, and on the other hand, the "fact" of contingency, the aleatory, in history is replaced by *determinism* (to me the mortal enemy of Marxism). While the messianic tradition has been, and can be, a rich source for the historical memory of the working class today, it must be separated not just from its theological, but also from its *metaphysical* integument, if it is not to become an ideological straitjacket, an obstacle to the project of human liberation. It is the combination of teleology and determinism, together with what I see as its reliance on an a-historical view of human nature, that I find at the basis of this concept of species being, despite the disclaimers that Rose has made.

Does this mean that we must dispense with concepts such as "alienation" and human "nature"? Not at all! But, these concepts need to be refunctioned so that they are *prospective*, not retrospective, historical not a-historical. Capitalism alienates us from the potential to explode the prevailing forms of social being; from the possibilities to be other than the subjugated beings that inhabit the world shaped by the law of value (the forms of social being so clearly described by Rose in her article). Capitalism denies us the possibility of creating/producing new forms of human nature – forms that are not trapped in the prevailing modes of subjectification. The concept of species being, in my opinion, blocks the way to the very *historicity* of human being that holds out the promise of the revolutionary transformation that can break the links to both the pre-given and existing forms of subjectivity in which humans have been historically trapped.

It is the very trajectory of capitalist development that provides the material bases for that promise, even as that same trajectory also contains the no less real threat that the project of human liberation will be thwarted. Let me, then, briefly sketch the bases for a vision of the development of class consciousness not bound to a concept of species being. One of the insoluble contradictions of capitalism is that on the one hand, it provides for levels of control of the subject population, and especially of the working class, that go way beyond what force and violence alone make possible; it provides the bases for an hegemony which includes the very "construction" of the subject that the capital accumulation process requires. On the other hand, however, capital's necessity for constant technological

development and innovation, for the development of the productive forces, including the most important productive force, the *collective laborer*, requires a considerable degree of freedom and autonomy for the subject, lest technological and economic stagnation result. This latter was the fatal weakness of both Nazism and Stalinism in their competitive struggle with Anglo-American capital. The very weakness of those regimes *vis à vis* their democratic rivals was fatally exacerbated by the coercive political and ideological structures with which they sought to counteract the economic strength of Anglo-American capital. Those coercive political and ideological structures were not simply due to the need to try to overcome historical techno-economic deficits; they actually reflected a grave weakness of the control mechanisms relative to their imperialist rivals, and compromised the very effort to overcome Anglo-American capital both on the world's markets and in a military struggle. One feature of the power of Anglo-American capital was precisely its ability to harness the creativity and innovative potential of the collective laborer. Yet, that very capacity, even in the increasingly limited form permitted by capital today, that very element of freedom and autonomy, that has been the historical fruit of centuries of struggle against class oppression, and of working class struggle against the depredations of capital, the historical *memory* of which the collective laborer can draw on today, constitutes a basis upon which resistance to capital and its control mechanisms can arise now and in the future. Because capital has, through a complex historical process in which contingency has played a powerful role, produced a human subject, the collective laborer, marked by a mode of subjectification entailing unprecedented degrees of freedom and autonomy, together with no less unprecedented possibilities for control on the part of the ruling class, and because the accumulation process denies a capital entity the ability to completely suppress those elements of subjectification entailing autonomy on pain of losing the competitive struggle with potential rivals, a "ground" for the development of class consciousness is both the *product* of the historical trajectory of capital, and an *ineliminable* element of its present functioning. That historical mode of subjectification, and not any kind of species being, for me, provides a basis for *optimism*, despite the increasing barbarism of capitalism in the present epoch. It is surely no guarantee, but it provides a *material* basis, a contingent historical *space*, for resistance, and, indeed, an ideological and political challenge, to the hegemony of capital. In my view, it provides a more solid theoretical basis for understanding the possibilities for the development of revolutionary class consciousness than does the theory of a species being.

MAC INTOSH

# HUMAN NATURE: A WORK IN PROGRESS

## *A Contribution To The Debate On 'Species-Being'*

### **The starting point:**

The starting point of this debate is the desire to better understand the process of class consciousness, in order to contribute to it. It serves no purpose to discuss the role of the revolutionary minority if we can't imagine this process. The classic responses of councilism and Leninism are formulaic: the first swears by the formula:  $W+C=R$  (a developed working class plus economic collapse equals revolution), the second believes (in the best case) in  $W+C+P=R$  (I guess I don't have to spell out what the P stands for). Both stand in the teleological, Hegelian, tradition of Marxism: they see this process as happening inevitably, history as a program that unfolds as it's meant to unfold. In the first, consciousness is entirely passive. The working class makes its revolution reacting impulsively to events, without knowing the implications. In the second, the party knows, it embodies class consciousness, its direction makes it possible for the class to overcome the obstacle of capitalist ideology. Implicitly, both positions base themselves on a certain view of "species-being," of human nature. In each case there is an underlying view as to what human nature is capable and incapable of in different circumstances. They should make clear why they believe what they believe, but they never do.

We think that neither party nor crisis make the working class revolutionary. Does that mean that we don't have to consider human nature? Or is the opposite true? If the working class doesn't automatically make its revolution because its income and social security are collapsing and the party shows them the way, what does give it the will, the motivation, the insight, to do it? Don't we have to look beyond the economic grievances of the working class to find the answer to that question? And does that not lead us to consider other core aspects of human nature in the working class that are oppressed by capital and that create the desire to break that oppression?

Another argument to investigate this further: the more capitalism's real domination is developed, or in other words, the more it is based on automated mass-production, the smaller the part that attacks on wages, direct pauperization, represents in the totality of ways in which the capitalist crisis affects the working class. The reason is that the more productivity grows, the more the relative cost of wages declines. Today, capitalism's crisis affects the working class in many ways not as workers specifically but as human beings: Wars, the destruction of

the environment, the destruction of social services, the destruction of community, the growth of insecurity and anxiety...Is it not necessary that the working class, in its struggle, develops an understanding of how all these aspects are linked with its fights for wages, employment and other workplace-related issues, in order to grasp the scope of its undertaking? Is it not the case that the revolution is possible because the working class embodies a human nature that is threatened by capitalism, and only it is in a position to defend it?

### **The biological base: a mixed bag**

Does a species being, a human nature across social classes exist? Like all other species, we have a common genetic make-up. But we are a special animal, the one that changes the world, through its consciousness. Since consciousness is what makes us different, it has to define our species being. Is it also in our genes, an evolutionary outcome created through natural selection? Some think that consciousness is indeed entirely genetically programmed; that all our individual as well as group traits have been selected by evolution. Take sexual jealousy, a trait that is common across cultures and ages. It can be assumed to be genetically universally successful in the long run, since jealous people will prevent their partners from having sex with others, while spreading their genes through sex with non-jealously inclined people, so that over thousands of generations, only the genes of the jealous will survive.

In this way, one can assume that there are many other traits in humans that have either died out or have become universal, depending on their genetic success, just as in other species. Most of that selection process took place when humans still lived in a form of society we call "primitive communism". Since the time that people painted those wonderful images in the caves of Lascaux, mankind has presumably undergone very little change in its genetic make-up. Genetic evolution is favored by living in small groups, in which new, successful traits can generalize relatively quickly, with limited outside intermingling but with a universal incest-taboo to curtail negative variations. The larger the intermingling, the more mutations cancel each other out.

The implications of the assumption that our species being is created essentially in this way, are deterministic. We can have illusions about deciding our own fate, but in reality we only do what our genes tell us to do. We're programmed. We can think what we want about war but mankind is doomed to wage it again and again, because

evolution has favored the selection of aggressive genes in our struggle for survival.

But even if we accept for a moment that all our characteristics are genetically determined, the implications are not as simple as that. Evolution has promoted contradictory characteristics: it rewards cowardice and courage, aggression and meekness, conformity and creativity, altruism and egoism, tenderness and brutality, solidarity and competitiveness. These are all genetically successful traits, in groups as well as individuals. The biological base of our species being is a mixed bag, a complex vat of raw material.

The limitation of genetic evolution to explain consciousness and therefore species being becomes clear when you look at something like suicide. With the above theory, you can “prove” that suicide does not exist. Humans who are genetically inclined to suicide have less time to transmit their genes so that, over enough generations, the suicide-gene is weeded out. Why then is it a growing phenomenon?

Looking again at jealousy: the assumption was that, if at some point in time some people were jealous and others were not, they were genetically different. But that is just a guess, something that can neither be proved nor disproved (for now). Let's say that the guess is right, that in that mixed bag of evolution, there is now a universal jealousy-gene (or combination of genes). Does that mean that I have no choice but to act jealously? My point here is not to debate which choice is the right one, but to affirm that there is a choice, both because of my complex and contradictory nature and because I am a thinking being, a product of a collective process of consciousness that shapes how I look at the world, at my choices and actions. I think that the same is true in a collective sphere, for groups, for classes and for mankind in general now. In both cases, for the individual and the collective, the choices are obviously shaped by outside conditions: I may not be jealous now if I don't see the situation as threatening, but I may become so when that changes; in the same way the working class reacts differently when it sees the capitalist crisis as a threat to itself. But while the changes in the context inform the choice differently, it remains a choice, based on an active (and thus not pre-ordained) understanding by mankind, and the working class in particular, of its situation.

## **Human nature is not innate**

Since the specificity of humankind is its consciousness and consciousness develops itself, species being is necessarily a product of history, a work in progress. I think it's valid to speak of “species being” because there is a collective consciousness of the species that is not unique to a class or a culture. That is why you can take a peasant from the Andes or a remote Chinese village and put him in New York: it won't take him long to fit in. A bourgeois can become a proletarian and a proletarian bourgeois without

changing their human nature, not because their genes stay the same but because both, despite their conflicting class interests, are the product of the same collective consciousness.

A human does not acquire species being by being born. There is the Tarzan-myth, a man raised by apes yet being wholly human, a model-human to boot, a splendid specimen proving the superiority of the white race. In reality, the rare cases of humans raised outside human society show that Tarzan would not have become human but at best a weird hybrid. As a human, he is frozen in a very early developmental stage, even after integration in human society. Human nature is not innate, you acquire it by living in society. It therefore changes together with society itself.

Although by definition it is not class determined, different classes live it differently -- stimulate and develop certain aspects of it, suppress and develop alienation from others. So they change it too. Individualization has been a long-term trend in the development of our species being. For hundreds of thousands of years, the border between men and their natural environment, and between “I” and “we” subjectively hardly existed. Humans lived in unity with nature and each other, not in the romantic sense in which such phrases are used today, but because their consciousness did not make distinctions which for us are self-evident. Yet you could say that, because of this magical unity with the world around them and the submergence of the ‘I’ in the “we”, they were subjectively immortal. They didn't bury their dead because they were too much “we” to care about the loss of a particular member of the group. The first ritual burials, about 80, 000 years ago, showed a new consciousness of humans as individuals, presumably as a result of more complicated interaction and division of labor and thus a sharper sense of loss when a member of the group died. Individualization developed together with specialization. So it was really under capitalism that it most drastically altered our species being. In his article on the same subject in this issue, Mac Intosh makes a good point about the need for capitalism under real domination to stimulate individual freedom and autonomy (the qualification “relative” needs to be added) despite the fact that this undermines its control over society. Real domination developed specialization to the hilt but it's really a feature of capitalism as a system, not just of its latest phase (ascendant capitalism brought on the age of enlightenment, the age of reason, against the magical group thinking of feudalism). Capitalism changed our species being, not through ideological influence but by creating new social practices, which create a new understanding by men of the world. So species being today is very different from what it was under “primitive communism” yet it is still the same, in the same way as a man is different from the child he was, yet still the same person.

We all know that the first years of a person's life have a tremendous formative influence. The same might be true for our species being. The way we experienced life under

primitive communism, which constituted about 98 % of humankind's history, cannot but have left deep imprints on our collective consciousness. It must have left a very deep longing for community that stands in conflict to the reality of capitalism, despite the fact that capitalism alienates us from it. An urge for a "paradise regained" which feeds into the working class struggle. Yet when we look at this, we also have to look at other childhood legacies in our species being: the tendency to magical thinking, to turn to self-deception when facing apparently insurmountable obstacles. When we really think that the concept of species being is useful to understand how humankind can accomplish a communist revolution, we must also look at it to understand why men have made such horrible, self-destructive, choices in the course of their history, and not just blame the productive forces.

The reasons why we pin our hopes on the working class include the worsening of its specific conditions and its position of potential power over these conditions: the working class already operates the productive forces and is thus in a unique position to gain control over them and to choose to overthrow capitalism. But there is another reason that is to be found in the way species being is lived by the working class. Only the working class under capitalism lives in conditions that favor the cooperation and natural solidarity on which a post-capitalist society must be based. Resistance to conditions that threaten its basic needs naturally lead to collective action, to self-organization and living solidarity. It's not just a matter of

efficiency, of having no other means to fight, but also that through this collective action, it reconnects with our deep-seated need for an empowered communal existence.

### **The anti-climax**

Primitive communism and class societies have all formed the species being that exists today. Inevitably, our species being is not harmonious and stable but contradictory and evolving.

It seems useful to try to understand it better and relate it to the subjective conditions for revolution. But (and that's disappointing and exciting at the same time) it will not make us able to predict if and how a revolution may occur. We can't know. We'll have to find out. We can predict some things that will happen, but we can't predict how the working class will choose to react. It stands on the historical scene, loaded with the luggage of millennia, with its baked-in core of social being, its baked-in gift of creativity, its baked-in capacity to think and imagine, its baked-in tendency to self-deception, and so on. Its choices are not pre-determined and that also means that we can participate in the choosing, if we see ourselves as part of it and not standing outside of it; neither as leaders nor as spectators. If we find a candle, we should light it, if we have a match, we should strike it.

### **Sander**

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## WITH THE CRISIS OF CAPITALISM, WHAT IS THE PERSPECTIVE FOR A NEW SOCIETY?

It is no secret that the capitalist economy is in trouble: crisis, unemployment, famine, destruction, ecological catastrophes, war, all that is what capitalism today has in store for humankind. The 21<sup>st</sup> century is firmly on the path already blazed by capitalism in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. We are in an unprecedented situation. Everything seems to be situated on the same level: massacres fill the daily news, and yet we often have the impression that there is nothing extraordinary about them. In the mental evolution of the past hundred years, there has been a profound crisis, a break: the Holocaust. Yet the systematic extermination of a population has since become commonplace.

Is humankind condemned to submit to this situation? Is humanity compelled to bear this agony without any perspective for its end? Is there an alternative to this capitalist system that has wrought these horrors? Is another

kind of society possible? These are the questions to which we will attempt to respond. But are they the right questions? Do we not risk veering into utopianism, and wrangling in an abstract way about future conjunctures, all the while knowing that in such ideal projections, you cannot take all the factors into consideration? Would it not be better to ask why all the elements for communism are not yet assembled? What is it that today blocks and prevents the revolutionary development of communism? It is not so much a matter of demonstrating that the old world must be, and will be, destroyed, as it is of understanding the bases for that destruction.

We intend to raise several questions. In the first place, we will survey the present situation, the crisis of capitalism. What is to be done in the face of it; is there a possible alternative? Historically, a transformation is

always possible. That is what history shows us. The very contradictions of capitalism constitute the material basis for such a transformation to occur.

Then we will try to understand the actual stakes of that transformation. But to do what? What exactly is it necessary to change? Ambiguities exist with respect to the perspectives for a revolution. The case of the Russian Revolution and its final outcome open the way for skepticism, neo-liberalism, and reformism. The necessity of a transformation means resituating the question of utopia as a function of man's desire and his joy, all the while taking into account the factor of difference [*altérité*].

Finally, we need to raise the question of revolution itself, of a top to bottom transformation. How? The heart of such a transformation lies in the revolutionary struggle of the proletariat, as the outcome of the development of the social relations of production. The possibility of such a transformation poses the question of the action of the proletariat, where social being can express species being; the very negation of an exploited class.

## 1. CRISES AND CONTRADICTIONS OF CAPITALISM

There is the reality of capitalist exploitation and the contradictions that it engenders, not only *vis à vis* the development of the productive forces, but also in terms of the species being of man. To understand capitalism is not to write an esoteric treatise, it is to make a critique so as to grasp the actual process of the production of capital. The development of humanity takes place through a succession of social forms, of which the first is by far the longest, primitive communism, over a course of millions of years, then slave societies, giving way, in Europe, after thousands of years to feudalism, with capitalism in existence for only some hundreds of years. In vast zones of the planet, capitalism has only extended its domination in the course of the last century. However, capitalism has transformed the world more than all the social forms that have preceded it. Does that constitute *progress*?

Capital incarnates the development of the productive forces, the accumulation of social wealth under its purest and most abstract form. While earlier modes of production were based on the production of objects of utility, of use values, of which only a surplus was exchanged amongst producers, capital has brought about the penetration of exchange into the very process of production, labor power being exchanged against a wage, and has thereby made exchange value and its universal form, money, into the veritable goal of production, the absolute criterion of wealth, the new god on earth. In capitalism, human relations dissolve into value-relations, but while the capitalists acquire power and wealth, and make themselves the voluntary agents of capital, the wage-worker experiences this dissolution as a loss, an alienation from her own self, a form of enslavement. It's a question of an historical process that has taken on different forms as a

function of the same development of the relations of production. Man is no more than a slave to this new god, whose only utility, which determines his right to live and to eat, is to increase value, to produce a surplus-value by his labor. The secret of the prodigious social development brought about by capitalism lies in that extreme exploitation and alienation. The secret of surplus-value is the real Marxist discovery, inasmuch as it exposes the reality of exploitation. That operation, unlike profit, which is tangible, is invisible, inasmuch as the theft of labor power is not seen, embedded as it is in the exchange of commodities.

The reality of a world that is dying under the weight of its economic, ecological, and military, convulsions, has taken the place of prosperity for all, and demonstrates the logic of the quest for profit at any price. In that respect, the ripening of both objective and subjective conditions make possible a social upheaval. Materially, revolution imposes itself as an alternative to capitalism. In the final analysis, the most decisive contradiction of the capitalist social relation, the one that permits its transformation into a new society, is the contradiction between capital and labor, expressed by the struggle between the capitalist class and the proletariat. In its development, capital not only confronts its economic contradictions, but it also creates its own gravediggers and the very possibility of the society called upon to replace it. In the capitalist relation, living labor represents the negation of capital, its active, human, side. That's why the proletariat is the only class able to confront the capitalist relation, to objectively comprehend it, and to embody a revolutionary perspective – practically and theoretically. But are we talking about an ineluctable process?

## 2. NECESSITY/DETERMINISM AND UTOPIA

How does the necessity for revolutionary change manifest itself? To grasp the perspective of communism, we often base ourselves on the evolution of capital, interpreting in a productivist fashion what Marx has said. And it is clear that the evolution of capitalism, the concentration of capital, the socialization of the means of production brought about within the framework of the capitalist system, constitute the objective bases for the possibility of a change to another type of society. But, how to build such a new world? A fundamental question, to which numerous, but not necessarily satisfactory answers, have been given: utopian, Marxist, anarchist, nihilist, religious; there is faith in God, in the party, in the nation, in the state. It's apparent that the schema of the Russian Revolution is outmoded. Though, for some, doubts subsist, manifesting themselves in a nostalgia for Marxism-Leninism.

Historically, two visions have existed within the revolutionary movement. One is an *evolutionist* vision that sees the emergence of a new society on the basis of the premises of capitalist society itself. Here, the question of

consciousness is not even posed; a strict determinism reigns, reducing the movement to communism to a simple kind of productivism, and interpreting Marxist theory as an explanation of the ineluctable laws of motion of society. The other vision is a *voluntarist* one, that insists on the conscious activity of the proletariat as the key to change – though different interpretations exist with respect to the level of consciousness required, the origins of that consciousness, and the way in which it is generated.

We want to look at these two visions in terms of our own understanding of Marxism. For us, Marxism is a political theory that explains the social and economic trajectory of society, one that interprets the relations that exist between the different components of society, and that insists on the importance of the action of social classes in the evolution of society. It is a theory that shows how man, as an historical subject, confronts his alienation, and realizes himself through action. The history of humankind, traced by Marxism, is the history of struggle between social classes.

For Marxism, communism is a movement that is the embodiment of a revolutionary transformation of exploitative society, inscribed in the general course of socio-economic transformations. Communism is, therefore, understood as a social emanation in the service of the individual, as a conscious and intentional phenomenon. It is a possibility arising on the bases of the development of the relations of production. This has nothing to do with any sort of determinism, and with the conceptual arsenal that claims to be the indispensable basis for a scientific pseudo-Marxism. Here, I am referring to the notion of “economic laws,” “historical necessity,” or to any sort of idealist voluntarism.

## **A. Determinism Contra Marxist Theory**

Marx claimed that until the present time “material” conditions have been determinant, but he added that that would not always be the case. Moreover, that “determination” was global in nature, not some kind of mechanical causality. The material conditions of social life are determinant, among all sorts of other causes, and, overall, the division of society into different castes, orders, and classes. These material conditions of existence of society regulate – more or less indirectly – the diverse spheres of human activity and thought. Moreover, those same material conditions change historically; they are a function of a given socio-economic context. Their necessity, then, is historical, and not immutable.

This claim that social, political, and cultural, life is conditioned by necessities of an essential order was not new. Materialists had always made that claim, thinking above all of essential, individual, needs. Marx enlarged and relativized what was meant by “material” needs: they would be “socio-historical” needs, that varied from one class to another, and depending on the specific epoch. Marx, then, shifted the analysis onto the “social” plane.

There exists a close, “necessary,” link, an interdependence between social needs and social relations (division of labor, property relations, etc.). A certain set of social relations defines a “mode of production.” For a given period, those social relations are dominant; they define the respective classes, while nevertheless being characterized by great historical and individual variability.

“Economic” necessity is, therefore, nothing other than one of general “social” interests and needs. The first, and most imperious, being “material,” in particular when masses of men are at the limits of their possibilities for survival. This is not a question of an “external” necessity. It is, rather, on the contrary, a question of internal, essential, needs. And this necessity is not so much “mechanical” as it is vital: it is of the order of existence. This is what compels both exploited and oppressed classes, as well as ruling classes, to act. The latter, in order to stay in power, must assure the reproduction of the prevailing social relations (property relations, relations of exploitation, etc.) upon which that power rests. Here is the source of the class struggles that mark history, sometimes latent and muffled, sometimes bursting forth into crises and revolutions when the most threatened social groups have nothing left other than recourse to violence.

History is not left to chance, but it is also not regulated by a pre-determined and inflexible necessity. On the whole, Marx said, history follows a certain course, a general line of development, within which the consciousness and will of individuals has only played a modest role, at least until now. The fundamental, finally decisive, process is the development of the material and social forces of production. It occurs through stages, and through all sorts of detours and complications. The great historic epochs succeed one another according to an order that we can comprehend, because each one prepares the way for the next, albeit not intentionally.

## **B. Idealism And Utopia**

Marx’s idea is that what is good for man will be realized in a classless society, based on a high level of production. Marx was not so much concerned with defining the good for man, as he was in showing how happiness can be realized in society. What interested him was the concrete realization of the conditions within which man can attain happiness, rather than the abstract features of such a condition. Basically, he saw that happiness in the elimination of man’s enslavement to natural and economic forces, the overcoming of conditions in which, according to Kant, man is a means and not an end. But Marx went further than Kant. He showed how treating man as a means and not as an end was a function of economic conditions, conditions that compelled some to serve others as a means to increase their wealth, to assure their power and privileges.

Such a perspective, even one based on a materialist analysis, can only be transformed into an idealist vision

once there is no economic basis to ground what might occur. Marx himself did not develop a very detailed vision of what the future human society could be. He left that to the utopians. Moreover, today, we must deal with the denaturation of the very concept of communism at the hands of Stalinism.

## The Utopian Current

The utopians posed the question of the definition of man and his needs in an idealist fashion. Utopia is the product of nostalgia for a golden age, unreal and past, an expression of man's desire for peace, happiness, and the joy of living in ease and comfort. In primitive communism, life in man's original communities, it was all about survival, the promise of one's daily bread. Then, a man alone was a dead man; only the group, bound together had any chance for survival. And that is still the case. But the old dream remains, in part because we don't feel any more alive than our ancestors, or more certain of our future: distress [*angoisse*] is still our lot. And when we look at history, we see communities having a tendency to develop in periods of real tension or social upheavals, when the need to accomplish economic and political tasks makes themselves felt. At the dawn of human history, there were no scribes to transcribe the first dreams of humankind. The house replaced the cave; the community remained, but became more structured, more planned. Villages arose. Village communities have survived for long periods of time in the entire world: the German *Mark* only disappeared around the 15<sup>th</sup> century under the impact of a youthful capitalism. The *Mir* in Russia survived until the Russian Revolution, and the *Mushaa* in Palestine and Syria didn't disappear until well into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The *Zadruga* in Serbia and Albania shared everything, food and clothing.

But perhaps we need to go back to the *Essenes*, who lived a century before Christ, in Palestine. The division of goods was especially striking: the *Essenes* shared their provisions, and had the rule of taking their meals in common, seated at the same table. Their clothes were also common, not personal, property. They also shared their abode. Pacifists, they made no weapons. We have here a political measure: the *Essenes* were the first to have really *chosen* to live in community. For them, it was not a matter of organizing their social life that way in order to survive, but rather of living according to their beliefs, which is a meaningful political decision, proper to humankind. This movement would inspire the first Christian communities. If primitive Christians resembled the *Essenes*, it is because they too wanted to share goods, work, and life. The *Essenes*, crushed, were exterminated. In Egypt, another Jewish sect established the community at Thebes. The Christians, victorious and proliferating, smashed their own communities under the weight of divergent interests. But all that would hardly affect the form of society in general, the social basis of which remained slavery. Communities with a shared life arose throughout the middle ages: *Cathars* and other millenarians. Then came the influence

of Jan Hus at the beginning of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. *Hutterite* communities, which still exist in North America, the Anabaptists, with Thomas Münzer: no private income; consumption of goods, food and clothing, is completely collectivized; children are raised in common.

But, we must await Fourier to discover a coherent theory of such a community. Fourier's impact was acknowledged by Marx, who saw in the system of phalanx's "the rough draft for socialism." Fourier believed that he had provided humanity with "the key to happiness." The state, thought Fourier, is incapable of assuring the happiness of humankind; it must take control of its own destiny. What makes Fourier less annoying than most other utopians, is that – besides being very poetic – his system integrates the need for conflicts and takes into account the phenomenon of desire. The utopians all imagined ideal cities, in which their utopias confronted the issues of modern urban life. Thus, Fourier, with his phalanx's, anticipates Le Corbusier. Cabet described his ideal city in his *Voyage to Icaria*, where he foresaw traffic moving on the right, security for pedestrians thanks to street-gardens protected from vehicular traffic, and the development of forms of transportation in common. In 1825, inspired by Fourier, Robert Owen bought a large tract of land in Indiana, and founded the first communist colony. Others would follow. Owen imagined a community living in harmony and cooperation, and sought to reorganize society through the creation of small associations possessing the land, and living, in common. Within the workers' movement, it is the anarchist-communists who have virtually alone concretely posed the problem of social life without the state.

The Commune is a universal dream, the dream of those who are dying of hunger, believing in abundance, of those dying alone, believing in fraternity. It is always a future oriented life. Nonetheless, utopia, as such, is effectively outside of history, a product of the imagination and of evasion. Marx stopped posing the question of the ideal society to be realized, and instead asked: what possibilities does society have within it? The Marxist method abandoned the ethical question, which is about good and evil, and instead had as its premise the fact that capitalism contains within itself the possibility of another society – that will be the starting point for a new problematic, and that will have to be grasped theoretically. By contrast, the Marxist philosopher, Ernst Bloch, in *The Principle of Hope*, articulated the opposite idea: the ideal is the utopia that becomes real, and he opposed the idea that many utopians themselves had, in which utopia is the attraction of a past, golden age. For Bloch, utopias were visions of a communist future in gestation. For him, Christianity had been revolutionary, only to later be deformed. Whether one agrees or not, these ideas are interesting and merit discussion.



### 3. THE REVOLUTIONARY PERSPECTIVE

We must now think about the possibility of revolution, taking into account the necessity for it. For us, the materialist conception of history is focused on the material conditions for the action and transformational activity of man, making possible his liberation from class subjection. As such, it cannot be linked to any kind of determinism, or to any sort of utopia. It's about the freedom to act, and not a deterministic necessity; about freedom as self-affirmation and self-realization, as liberation from the constraints of class. That entails the free development of the individual, and not her absorption into an indeterminate mass.

History has demonstrated that there is always change. Capitalism does not escape that logic: change is necessary. But the passage to another society entails a political revolution. It is also apparent that all attempts at reforms, of "humanitarian" transformations of the system of capitalist exploitation, are doomed to fail. The logic of capitalism is implacable, and the needs of accumulation and capitalization leave no room for feelings of compassion. The alternative "socialism or barbarism" might have seemed to be an abstract formula during the years when illusions were still possible, but today, the cruelty of its truth is demonstrated on a daily basis, in the lives of each of us. If in 1848, communism was a hope, in 1917, the action of the proletariat made that revolution possible, and showed that if society is to change, it is human beings who are the motor of that change – as a function of the material and historical possibilities. In this article, we hope to correctly pose the question of this change as a function of the reality of the contradictions of capitalism. The general crisis of capitalism, to which we have pointed, indicates that the capitalist social order has had its day, and that a new social order is necessary and possible.

The necessity for a new social order seems clear. Marxism is not a neutral, antiseptic, theory. Its point of view is that of one of the components of class society: the proletariat. That's why we must speak of praxis. On the bases of that praxis, Marxist theory can demonstrate the "limits" to the development of the present economic system, even as its transformation can only result from a political act, and not a mere theoretical perspective.

Marxist theory includes the global trajectory of humankind, from an historical point of view, and situates it in a framework linked to the development of the productive forces, which can permit humankind to free itself, to overcome its alienation [*se désaliéner*] resulting from its original dependence on nature. It focuses on the diverse ways in which the relationship to nature, and class relations, can manifest themselves. It's not a question, however, of describing the future society, despite the existence of a series of reformist, humanist, and utopian efforts to do so.

### The Difficulty of Describing the Future Society

It is in his *Anti-Dühring* that Engels provides us with a theory of the evolution of society towards communism. He recalls that the first stage of common property was then negated by private property; the transformation of common property into its opposite, private property. But in its turn, private property would become a fetter on production, and transform itself into its opposite, common property, a return to the original state, but at a higher level. Private property, itself a negation, bears within it its own negation. This process illustrates the third of the dialectical laws, the negation of the negation. Such a formula does not mean the pure and simple annulment of one condition, but rather, the realization, through struggle, of a higher stage of evolution; the outcome of a new synthesis, from which will be born new contradictions, in their turn the source of a new evolution. Marx said little about what might happen after the contradictions had been resolved, the resolution of the contradiction, constituting – for him – the beginning of human history. It is apparent that a clear picture of this future history still eludes us, at least with the conceptual tools that we now possess. We cannot leap over our own time in order to imagine a utopian world.

### What does the Vision of Man Entail?

What Marx sought was the liberation of man from his enslavement to exchange value. For Marx, it is only when real, individual, man will be able to fashion himself as a subject, a subject determining the meaning of his own actions, that emancipation will have been accomplished. I define species being as what constitutes the essence of man, which is expressed by the pursuit of understanding, and social being as the aspect of man constructed by the socio-economic framework into which he is plunged. These two "moments" exist in a state of tension. The existence of a "human nature," of certain innate tendencies, is a constant that persists in social being, however stifled, however perverted, by the socio-economic framework.

Historically, each civilization inscribes itself in time and space through the elaboration of a determinate culture. It is indispensable that the task of transmitting those cultural values be carried out by the time that an individual becomes an adult, as a function of a determinate mode of social being, so that the society's survival can be assured, and each individual can find his or her place in collective and social life.

### Transmission

That transmission of cultural values varies historically. Transmission entails a dialectical movement making it possible to link the heritage of the past to the necessity for change in the present, so as to be able to prepare the future through a qualitative leap. In pre-

capitalist societies, the steps to becoming an adult were rigidly codified, as a function of a social being that was perfectly integrated, and could often be assured by a simple initiation ritual that assured social stability. Artistic expression made it possible to regulate the inscription of an existential quest in which the claims of species being manifested themselves, and might disturb what had seemed to be an integrated social being.

We must not forget that, for Marx, if men find themselves inscribed in social relations that they have not consciously willed, they have nonetheless produced their own forms of social existence. They seek a goal, and they may reach it, but they also might create something else, social relations that they did not set out to create! Contrary to the productivist vision, Marx showed that in separating man from his own nature, from his own active life, from his vital activity, alienated labor made the human species alien to itself. Such an outcome does not occur in a mechanical way. Marx pointed to the, obstacles to, the fetters on, the harmonious development of the twin aspects that constitute the self: the individual and the communal; in short, he pointed to humankind's alienation. Thus, for Marx, alienation separates the worker from nature, and from his own body, by taking from him that non-organic "body" that constitutes the object of his production, and of the labor process. The goods produced by the worker escape his control, and in the form of commodities, they take on a life of their own, thereby permitting the circulation and valorization of capital. However, with the development of the productive forces, labor tends to become specialized, what Marx termed the division of labor creating another form of alienation, by narrowing the scope of human potentiality. The tool, then, supplants the body; indeed, the body is transformed into just another tool of production, thereby losing any possibility of autonomous expression.

## What We Seek

What Marx sought was the emancipation of humankind, synonymous with a true re-appropriation of all the human feelings and powers, which would only be possible through the abolition of private property. For Marx, then, the source of social life lay in the human body, in work. It will be through self-transformation that the faculties of species being will be unveiled. Then humankind will achieve consciousness, with neither physical obligation nor constraint. Thus, for Marx, the more man develops his personality, the more he can become aware of what links him to other human beings, thereby posing the necessity for communal life. We need to investigate this vision of the free, human, subject, as Marx saw her, of how she will fashion herself, as an expression of her potentialities. The third of Marx's *1844 Manuscripts* tells us that: "Activity and consumption, both in their content and in their *mode of existence*, are *social activity* and *social consumption*." (Karl Marx, *Early Writings* (New York: Vintage Books, 1975), p.349). Marx deals with the issue of consumption because he places

sociality at the core of anthropological existence. He distinguishes property as "exclusive, immediate, consumption," in the sense of "having," from another kind of consumption: that by which "Man appropriates his integral essence in an integral way, as a total man," (*Ibid.*, p.351), that is to say, with all the organs of his own individuality. This is really liberation for that other mode of consumption, based on the abolition of private property, that is, the total emancipation of all human feelings and qualities. By contrast, private property is criticized as what makes "us so stupid and one-sided that an object is only *ours* when we have it, when it exists for us as capital, or when we directly possess, eat, drink, wear, inhabit it, etc., in short, when we use it." (*Ibid.*) We can therefore assume that in non-private consumption, the object itself is not valued solely for its "utility," but for its potential for ontic development.

Private property is "ownership," that of *having*, while what Marx sought is "consumption," that of the being that would be born with communism. We, therefore, need to think about a human consumption in which the very senses – the organs of consumption -- stand in sharp contrast to what exists in a society of restricted consumption, of private property. We can then see that surplus-value and primitive accumulation constitute the triumph of having, which has usurped the role of real consumption, replacing it with its narrowest form. The emancipation of man is, more fundamentally, for Marx, the emancipation of consumption from its fixation on objects. It's a matter of freeing generalized, social, consumption from the restricted consumption of capital.

## The Possible Passage Towards Communism

With the division of labor in the framework of class societies, a divorce is established between the individual and the universal; the fragmentation that results hems in man, and prevents him from giving expression to all the potentialities of his species being. Apropos of communism, in *The German Ideology* Marx asserts that no one will be hemmed in by a restricted circle of activities, that each person will be able to shape him or herself in any branches of activity of their own choosing. The prospect of the transformation of work into a different kind of activity is possessed by the worker in capitalist society only outside of the work for which he is paid a wage, with its objects of which she has been dispossessed, and from which he is alienated; outside of the world of commodities, of the means of production, of the value that belongs to the capitalist; the world in which capital has become the effective reality. Work must be seen as a simple possibility that depends on the contingency of the effective reality of capital, controlled by the owners of capital.

The forms assumed by capital, labor, and their antagonism, have profoundly changed over the course of time. The class struggle that arises in response to the crisis of capital has greater difficulty in exploding onto the

historical scene than it did in the past, even as it is – at the same time – compelled to attack the prevailing social order in a more thoroughgoing way, and is thereby the bearer of a greater potential. That permitted Marx to theorize the possibilities contained in the labor of the worker, from the historical moment when capital became autonomous. We are, then, in the presence of a dynamic vision, which is open-ended.

The strike action of the proletariat, provided it is generalized, can stop the process of accumulation and valorization of capital. The struggle of the proletariat can also show us how communism can develop. Marx said that revolution would breakout from the proletariat, because it experiences inhumanity. By that act of negation, the species being of humankind can manifest itself: the refusal of alienated labor, leading to creative activity. What's at stake is a dialectical movement through which the worker asserts him or herself as a non-alienated person, which manifests itself through solidarity. Here, we can, therefore, foresee a definition of communism.

In *The German Ideology*, Marx summarized the problem of humankind's survival: at the very outset, humans found conditions favorable for their development; in producing their means of existence, they transformed nature, and thereby transformed themselves. The definition of the species being of humankind entails rejecting any utilitarianism in favor of a vision of self-realization, satisfaction of the self, an aesthetic vision of humankind, one permitting the development and flourishing of its personality. Another question, however, needs to be posed: how are the more morbid or destructive drives and capabilities to be controlled? Marx does not ignore this issue. For him, the species question is naturally productive, not in the economic sense of the term, but specifically as a function of the transformation of the self and the world. In that respect, the concept of species being is not idealist, but takes into account both historical and social evolution. Even before Freud, Marx showed us how through the expansion of his creative endowments, which assume nothing other than the development of all the human faculties as such, without measuring them according to a given standard, man can reproduce himself, not in a genetically or socially determined way, but in his species totality. Man does not seek to remain a pre-given entity, but rather seeks to discover himself in the absolute movement of his becoming, thereby positioning himself historically.

Today, it is clear that communism does not mean the expropriation of private capitalists with the goal of a generalized statification of production, distribution, and exchange of commodities. Statification does not signify socialization!

The Marxist philosopher, Henri Lefebvre, distinguished between *growth* and *development*: “The quantitative growth of production can go hand in hand with a qualitative stagnation of social praxis and social

relations.” (*Autogestion*, No. 1, December, 1966.) What is revolutionary power in action? For Herbert Marcuse, who believed in the collapse of the capitalist system, capitalist society would not perish because of its internal contradictions or through the action of the modern working class; it would, instead, be struck dead from the *outside* by the mass of those who could not enter the system, who were its rejects. But exactly who are those without hope, about whom Walter Benjamin said, “it is to those without hope, that hope is given”? It seems to me, that those truly without hope are not those who have not yet entered the “consumer society,” but those who have been saturated by it. It is the very experience of that society, which will make it possible to put the consumer society in question.

## The Perspective for Struggle

Humankind never remains indifferent. Despite alienation, reification, the weight of ideology, humankind has always sought to affirm its species being. Primitive man, in his original state, the slave, the serf, and then capital's creations, man as a machine, then cybernetic man, each has posed the question of a history of humankind as a function of the quest for another kind of society. The slave revolts, the revolts of the Roman plebes, of the artisans of the middle ages, to the revolts of workers against capitalism, express the desire, however unconscious, to fashion themselves as a subject, to smash reification, to embrace and instantiate their species being.

The halt of production, besides the devalorization of capital, permits the worker to reposition herself, and to again become, by his non-production, a potential producer of a new harmony, de-alienated with respect to any possible valorization of a commodity. It is in that way, that humankind can re-appropriate the world, that it can regain the full use of all its bodily powers; a movement of solidarity and expressiveness that is – unfortunately – all too often recuperated by the leftists in their mobilizations.

Marx showed the possibility about which we have been speaking, when he said that workers appropriate a new need, a social need, human fraternity, from the moment that they decide to no longer produce for the accumulation of capital. This is opposed to any metaphysical position asking humankind to explain its actions before a higher entity: God, the State, or the Party. It is also opposed to any instrumental reason claiming that humankind exists to serve pre-determined social objectives: the social good realized by the State or Party.

All of which brings us back to the question of the crisis and the conditions for the renewal of the class struggle, all the more difficult as the counter-revolution has been, and remains, the longest in history, and encompasses several generations. The real domination of capital has changed the situation, not of exploitation, but the precise conditions through which this occurs. This situation of contemporary capitalist exploitation has

thrown up new obstacles to the possible expression of humankind's species being. However, the centralization of capital brought about by the accumulation process, the forms of socialization imposed by capital on virtually the whole of the planet, have also created the general conditions for the social action that could make possible the expression of that very species being. Globalization also participates in that process, thereby creating the possibility of the appearance of a new consciousness on a planetary scale. We are seeing a growing proletarianization that is provoking a profound dissatisfaction, linked to an ever-growing frustration of old habits of life and of taste. The way in which goods are consumed today, the pseudo-relations between individuals, reinforces the dissatisfaction, which is becoming generalized. It is less a question of showing that the old world must be, and will be, destroyed, than of understanding the modalities of that destruction; how it will unfold.

The positivist vision of communism as the direct result of the development of the productive forces is false. The penetration of the law of value into the whole of social existence increases inhumanity, but perhaps it is through this very process that humankind can discover its own humanity. The idea of man as anti-nature, as totally external to nature, is surely an aberration. The nature of man is biologically given (we are primates), even as the activity of man modifies, both in himself and outside himself, the pure natural "givens."

## Is There an End?

For the moment, humankind is driven by its needs, which have led it to create capital, from the domination of which it has not yet succeeded in freeing itself. Marxism tells us "man produces to be able to free himself from scarcity." Once scarcity has been overcome, what will humankind want? Even a generalized strike will not, in an automatic way, resolve the problem we have posed. If, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the factory was a meeting place for workers, if, at that time, a strike could be a real proving ground for the class struggle, and made it possible for the worker to identify himself by virtue of having a class consciousness, the situation is different today. It is those differences that necessitate a renaissance of Marxism, a diligent pursuit of our theoretical tasks, now.

**F.D.**

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## Perspectives On The International Situation

# NOTES ON THE CLASS STRUGGLE

To speak of the class struggle means understanding how one of the fundamental contradictions of the capitalist mode of production develops, and how that contradiction evolves within the global social relations that define capitalism. You cannot treat economic transformations and their implications on the one hand, and – in a separate way – try to analyze the class struggle. And, it is also as a result of those very transformations, that you cannot analyze the movements of the exploited class as if that class was still one of massive concentrations of workers in factories organized on a Fordist model. The *real domination* of capital entails a profound transformation and evolution of the forms of production, and, therefore, of the forms of struggle and the way in which the proletariat sees itself as a class, conceives its capacity for action and resistance, represents the world and its place in it. How to struggle

today, when you are isolated in front of a checkpoint on a production line; how to struggle, when you are a temporary worker, with no security whatsoever? Certainly not in the same way as when you are situated – by the very organization of the production process – within a collectivity linked together by those very procedures of production. So too, those transformations compel us to put aside the outdated distinctions between workers who directly produce surplus-value and those who do not; to develop a much more global understanding of the labor process, and of the activity of a "collective worker." Workers that we would have formerly situated within the petty-bourgeoisie, today find themselves proletarianized by their conditions of work and existence. Even if this pertains most directly to the highly industrialized countries, and if what are cynically termed "emerging

nations” by the international exploiting class are still characterized by older forms of the production process, the framework of the globalization of the economy leads us to define the proletariat in a different way. To speak of the class struggle, then, involves situating it within this global framework. So, to continue to analyze social movements with a vision of the working class of the past, entails an a-temporal conception that does not take account of the fact that a mode of production is something living, something that changes.

The movements of '95 opened up what some comrades of IP termed a “new period,” in which besides the traditional demands concerning working conditions, a diffuse questioning concerning the perspectives provided by capitalist society also made their appearance. This factor seemed to us to be particularly important both by virtue of its content and its newness. What makes it possible for struggles to assume a revolutionary dimension is the fact of passing from resistance to the effects of exploitation to a questioning of its very causes. It is in seeing that capitalism is not an eternal system, in separating themselves from its internal logic, that workers can progressively disentangle themselves from the alienation that perpetuates their exploited status, and permit them to create the space for collective reflection through which the idea of a different society can be born. It is also by connecting the different aspects of the deterioration of their conditions of existence (insecurity, violence, the destruction of nature, stress, and so many others) with the functioning of the mode of production, that this latter will be seen as a global economico-social relation the ramifications of which extend to every aspect of society and to the lives of all its members.

### **WHAT HAS BECOME OF THIS QUESTIONING?**

Social grumbling is perceptible in a generalized way, especially in the majority of countries in Western Europe, as can be seen in several ways.

It is always tricky to attempt to quantify the extent of social discontent according to the figures for strikes, adding up the number of strike days, etc. Nonetheless, and this basically concerns Western Europe for which we have the most information, strike movements and demonstrations are regularly taking place. If we base ourselves on the criteria used in the past (autonomy from the unions, extension of demands and spread of movements), these movements are not on a “higher” level. Nevertheless, they bear witness to a dissatisfaction that nothing seems to quiet, and that extends to the most diverse sectors, such as teachers, health-care workers, youth, pensioners. These kinds of movements directly question the role of the state as a guarantor of social coherence and well being, and we can hope that this questioning potentially leads to a more global questioning about the very function of the state in capitalist society. The state increasingly appeals to private solidarity to

compensate for the unraveling of local collectivities, and to take over the tasks officially assumed by the “public powers.” In response, there has been a widespread mobilization of age groups, statuses, and social sectors. Countries, such as Italy, for example, have regularly seen massive street demonstrations.

The demands consist, above all, of an attempt to resist the loss of earlier gains: often, it is less a matter of demanding a raise in wages or improvements in this or that aspect of working conditions, than stopping the systematic degradation of systems of social security, the reduction of the number of workers assigned to a given task, or the increasing of the work load or the insecurity that accompanies a job. That could mean that there is no longer any hope of linking an improvement in living conditions to the continued existence of capitalism, and that all that is left is to try to protect what remains of the elements necessary to survival.

Even countries used to social calm (either through the ruling class's capacity for social control or by virtual of more open terror), have experienced social agitation: in Germany, reactions against the cut backs in social allocations or reactions in key industrial sectors, such as the auto industry; in China, whose formidable economic development has come at the price of a systematic impoverishment of large segments of the population, already at the verge of starvation, workers' struggles and peasant revolts have clashed with the forces of repression for many months.

There is a global anxiety that can manifest itself at any time, a fear for the generations to come. And there is a sense of the general disfunctionality of society: scandals in food production and processing, the destruction of nature, a climate of violence, all of which have begun to be seen, not as specific concerns (e.g., of ecologists or pacifists), but rather as phenomena generated by the very structures of the economic system, and therefore affecting the existence of everyone, where previously such concerns were esoteric, and left to scientists or to eco-freaks.

With respect to class movements, then, we are seeing an agitation that expresses itself in an ongoing way. This is significant, not to make a plea for the movement as such, quite apart from its content, but because it is by putting itself into motion that our class for a time breaks out of its isolation, its acceptance of the logic of exploitation, has the experience of collective action and ultimately of solidarity, can feel its power (as when the workers in the Opel factories of Germany through their strike blocked the factories of other countries), and can escape the apathy in which the reigning ideology has plunged it. We have also seen the workers of a particular enterprise or sector join a strike or demonstration of another sector, even if these links remain transitory, and are not transformed into a real extension of the struggle. All of these factors constitute so many positive steps.

With respect to their content, these are essentially movements of resistance. One possible hypothesis is that this attitude of resistance indicates that the class no longer has any hopes regarding capitalism, and that this might constitute the birth of a serious reflection on its future prospects. But, when we speak of the “future,” we need to situate it on an historical scale. This is a second positive factor. By contrast, and this is a negative factor, the attitude is still one of resistance, and not yet a reflection on the actual possibility of the emergence of a new society. Moreover, no links have been forged by the class between these movements, these local manifestations of resistance, and this constitutes an additional negative factor: everyone struggles for his own survival, and notions of solidarity and collectivity have great difficulty in expressing themselves in a framework that transcends the local.

Still, we must stress the fact that this social unease is present on an ever-larger scale in society, and finds extremely varied expressions. Linked to the strike movements and the demonstrations of workers, new or old, around the defense of their living standards and working conditions, there exists a climate of questioning, an inchoate turmoil, that can assume unexpected forms, and, therefore, which it is difficult to evaluate. This is especially true of youth who are often mobilized around ideas that can best be described as anarchist, of temporary or marginalized workers carrying out actions of social sabotage in the wake of what can be termed situationism, and of isolated individuals gathered up into a variety of movements, such as *alter-globalism*. While it is very clear that this assortment of movements and actions is not part of the action of the working class, it nonetheless expresses a broad-based social unease, a search for “solutions,” and an expression of rejection of the way in which society now functions.

Even before we make an analysis of these diverse movements, it's important to evaluate their impact on the working class. Are they a factor of confusion or do they reinforce the climate of generalized social unease, out of which can emerge reflection on another kind of society? It seems to be a little of both at the same time. There is definitely an element of confusion sparked by these movements, inasmuch as they are not clearly based on class. But, at the same time, working class resistance itself does not go against the tide of the prevailing social climate. Everyone is discontented, anxious, and even if strikes remain limited to the sector or enterprise in which they break out, they still occur in a social framework tending to manifest a generalization of discontent.

There remains a question, one that I pose as such, and for which I now have no firm answer: how to make sense of this whole anarcho-situationist-nihilist mode of thinking. To make sense of it, because the role of revolutionaries is surely not to only see in society what appears to conform to their usual schemas, to ignore the rest, to say that it doesn't exist, under the pretext that those factors and the praxis connected to them are not

expressions of the working class. Since the anti-globalization movements, a social praxis has developed that especially involves youth. To understand why youth are more involved in these types of actions, rather than being drawn to more “classical” revolutionary groups and ideas, should make us reflect on what is probably a different way in which youth pose the question of perspectives, in which they perceive our own conception of communism, and all this as a function of the transformation internal to capitalist society, which has changed the way in which we can today represent the world and its future. The fall of the Berlin wall and the ideological turmoil around the collapse of the so-called communist regimes has had an undeniable impact on the question of perspectives as well. Specifically, I want to focus on two groups: youth and isolated marginal/short-term workers.

These latter are often workers integrated into production, but atomized by the functions that they fulfill. Here is how the newspaper *Le Monde* describes them: “There is a new category of workers, rather young, very educated, integrated into society, but without any real status and often with difficulty in making it to the end of the month. .... So long as these marginal/short-term workers come in all types and are atomized, it is difficult for them to organize real mass actions or large-scale demonstrations. .... Instead, their rebellion manifests itself in pin-point and violent acts, in blockades or work place occupations. Among these marginal workers, one also finds a host of collectives, of networks, and of associations that work in concert.” Moreover, *Le Monde* signals the multi-national existence of these marginal workers, and, for example, points to the mass demonstration of 70, 000 of them on the streets of Milan, Italy on May 1, 2004. Compelled by their status to find other forms of expression for their discontent, these workers come together around specific projects for action, rather than in more traditional organizations for the defense of their interests and for reflection. This phenomenon seems to both intrigue and worry the ruling class, which makes it an object of academic research and organizes conferences in an effort to understand what gets these workers going. For us, this poses a question that goes beyond the actions themselves, which often seem festive and without real perspectives (although without more information, one hesitates to form a definitive opinion): are we seeing in outline form new kinds of contestation by workers that are the direct result of the technological transformation undergone by capitalism (e.g., programmers having a consultative status, and always moving from one enterprise to another, engaged in specific and short-term tasks, researchers, etc.)? It seems clear that we need to be attentive to – what are for us -- unusual kinds of contestation, that flow from new kinds of work relations.

Another group on which I want to focus some attention is youth. Whereas just a few years ago, it seemed as if youth was a period lived in a virtually egotistical state, without social questioning, without the least

collective activity, and without political action, this “whatever” generation, as it has been called, now seems somewhat involved in a broader form of social contestation. Whether it’s a question of mobilizations of youth joining demonstrations of workers, of student movements, or – in a new, still hazy form – a sometime radical movement, apparently generated by anarchist speeches and slogans, they come together, here again, rapidly and for specific projects (a discussion forum, a mobilization, etc.). What is positive in this situation is the mobilization of this age group around concerns linked to the future of society (and their own future in particular), and not just around immediate interests, though these mobilizations seem to occur in a scattered, though pinpoint way.

What seems common to both these groups is the new and generalized character of their activity, their somewhat diffuse character, their independence from any political group, their rejection of any *permanent* kind of self-organization, the new means for contact that they utilize (the internet, mobile phones, more or less informal networks), as well as their coming together around a specific project rather than around more general and long term perspectives.

#### WHAT PROVISIONAL CONCLUSIONS CAN WE DRAW CONCERNING THE SOCIAL CLIMATE?

It seems clear that a profound social unease continues to express itself on the most varied terrain. This is the case whether we are dealing with the working class (and proletarianized sectors) or with segments of the population that are sometimes difficult to clearly put into a familiar social class, such as youth or marginalized workers. This social unease, which regularly manifests itself in struggles, marks a break with the reigning order, and to that extent, constitutes a positive experience of collective action for those involved in it. We have a tendency to underestimate it.

The presence of the *unions* in these various movements is a reality that cannot go unnoticed. First off, we have to acknowledge the “crisis” through which the great trade-union organizations of Europe have passed, the expression of which is the significant fall in the rate of unionization, and sometimes too the open revolts by shop-floor delegates. More and more, the unions are seen as the specialists in the negotiation and administration of the conditions of work. Just as one goes to a lawyer when you have to deal with the judicial system, so one goes to the union when you need to settle a work dispute. To a certain extent, the real function of the union is thereby revealed: it exists to permit the logic of exploitation to be perpetuated, so that the two opposed parties can make concessions without putting the very logic that has brought about the conflict to be put in question. Even so, the unions are less and less seen as the real defenders, the allies of the exploited, in any sense. But, they remain present, and I believe that they will be there for a long time to come.



Workers demonstrate against lowering pensions in England

Their work of sabotaging struggles, of not putting into question the veritable bases of exploitation, will remain possible so long as a questioning of the factors that produce the degradation of working conditions does not explicitly occur as a struggle winds down. There are, therefore, two levels on which to oppose the unions: the first is that of the actual struggle which seeks to resist the recuperation and sabotage of the strike; the second level is that of a comprehensive understanding of the role and class nature of union organizations. It seems clear that an understanding of the function of unions in maintaining capitalist relations of exploitation cannot be left to a repetition of the partial opposition of shop-floor delegates at the moment of conflict. But, while these delegates can be conspicuous in strike movements, and if the rate of unionization continues to fall in a significant way, the path to *self-organization* on the part of the workers necessitates a more global *political* understanding, which remains a long-term project. This is also what explains how very radical workers in the midst of a strike can be opposed to union delegates and at the same time still harbor illusions in the radical expressions of base unionism.

This raises another issue: the difficulty in questioning the perspective provided by capitalism, which would lead to a serious reflection on the possibility for the emergence of a new society. A generalized unease and anxiety pervades all strata of society, manifesting itself in various ways as a function of the terrain of the social class in which it is felt. Nevertheless, there has been little by way

of serious reflection on what is to be done, and even less by way of connecting it to the resistance of the working class. What reflection there has been, can be situated within the logic of the reigning system: “capitalism as it is doesn’t work; therefore, we must re-think it by making it a more equitable system, one that is respectful of the individual” is the discourse *à la mode* on the elimination of Third World debt, fair trade, micro-loans, etc., etc., which are spawned by the various social forums and alter-globalists. What must be said is that it is extremely difficult to extricate oneself from the prevailing logic, and to claim that something other than capitalism, however reformed, is possible. The collapse of the so-called communist system, and all the analyses of it, has reinforced the feeling that Marxism and the whole historical heritage of the working class constitutes no perspective. The dominant ideology hammers home the idea that nothing other than this system is possible (that that’s the way things have always been): capitalism is eternal, and it is useless to think of ways of eliminating it. It is undoubtedly the weight of this ideology that leads some of those who engage in protest to mobilize around limited projects rather than to engage in a broader activity of reflection on the positive prospects for a totally different way for society to function.

However, those contestationist elements represented by youth and marginal/short-term workers (among others) show us another way to react: affirming a will not to be incorporated into any sort of political organization, unable to organize in a permanent way, to become a part of a long-term activity and perspective, these elements organize in a more immediate, rapid, way, within the framework of a specific project rather than at the traditional class sites, with a multitude of small networks (in the image of the internet and its sites), and in a movement that constantly organizes and re-organizes in actions as it goes along. Apart from an appreciation of the actual content of these actions, we need to be aware of the fact that we might be seeing new forms of contact between workers that correspond to the ways in which capitalism has profoundly modified the very structure of the labor process. We must, therefore, focus our attention on these forms of communication and group activity, which we have so far ignored (discussion forums via the internet, elements gravitating around ideas, the anarchist press, seemingly non-class mobilizations like the one of 70,000 marginals in Milan, etc.).

**ROSE**

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## *On Imperialism*

# THE US AND IRAQ

With no resolution in sight for the Iraq imbroglio, it is nonetheless still possible to draw some tentative conclusions about the results and prospects for American hegemony in both that country, and throughout the Middle East.

Despite the evident pleasure within the ranks of the ruling class in France, Germany, Russia, and China, at the inability of the U.S. to simply impose its will in Iraq, no significant faction of capital in any of those countries is now prepared to directly challenge the U.S., to seek a precipitous withdrawal of American troops from Iraq, let alone to covertly support the insurgency. Given the weakness of potential rivals to American hegemony, there is, for the moment, no alternative for these capitals to American domination in the region, and the security it provides for the flow of oil and gas, as well as for investments and markets. Whatever Paris, Berlin, Moscow, and Beijing, thought of America’s decision to invade Iraq, and whatever joy the discomfort of the

Americans now gives them, they have little choice but to also seek the stabilization and normalization of the situation in that country.

With respect to the original American decision to invade Iraq, and to topple the regime of Saddam Hussein, events have both vindicated the Pentagon’s plans for accomplishing the military task with a relatively small and mobile force (150, 000 thousand troops, against the half million assembled just to eject Saddam from Kuwait in the first Gulf War), and shattered the illusions of the neoconservatives (neocons) who shaped American foreign policy, and whose vision of creating a stable post-war Iraq that would be a reliable “partner” for the U.S. revealed a shocking lack of understanding of the complex realities of politics in Iraq. Let us briefly address each of these points, because they illustrate both the *extent* and the *limits* of American power.



Two wars against Iraq have demonstrated that in a world in which there is no power to challenge American hegemony, the Pentagon possesses the necessary resources to prevail on the battlefield in virtually any situation. Whereas doubts about the ease of defeating Saddam Hussein in his own country led the U.S. to agree to an armistice after ejecting the Iraqis from Kuwait, it now seems clear that the huge force that the U.S. had assembled back in 1991 would have had little difficulty in toppling the Baathist regime. Even the specter of urban guerilla warfare, so daunting to the Americans in Mogadishu, for example, has been revealed to be one in which American arms can prevail without massive casualties. That, at any rate, seems to be the recent *military* lesson of Fallujah. In that sense, Iraq has revealed the success of the Rumsfeld policy of creating a leaner, but more technologically sophisticated, fighting force. It is a testament to the recognition that the real limit to American military power *today* is not the opposition of armies or insurgents, but the potential unwillingness of the American population to support military ventures that do not quickly end in victory, that require massive buildups, and that result in large numbers of casualties; and the difficulties of creating more acceptable state forms that can assure control of the local population.

Yet, the failure of the plans of the neocons (Wolfowitz, Pearle, etc.) to quickly establish an Iraqi regime to replace that of Saddam Hussein, a regime that would assure security, that would have the trappings of democracy, and that would vindicate Bush's decision to go to war to topple the Baathist regime, has now put in jeopardy the successes won on the battlefield, and, at least, created the prospect that support for the venture within the American ruling class itself might unravel over time. Bush's success in linking 9/11 to the war in Iraq allowed him to prevail in last year's election, but the failure to stabilize the situation in Iraq could quickly erode his support. This raises the question of what is fueling the insurgency in Iraq, and what prospects there are for resolving it.

It seems to us that the neocons in the Pentagon, the State Department, and the National Security Administration, failed to appreciate the fact that the overthrow of the Baathist regime did not simply entail the replacement of one faction of the ruling class by another. What was at stake, in a country torn by ethno-religious antagonisms, was the elimination or drastic reduction in the power of the Sunni elites that had dominated Iraq since its modern creation in 1919 (and, indeed, even in the Ottoman epoch). In its place, the fall of Saddam entailed a vast increase in the power of the Shia and Kurdish ruling classes, with their combined power base in nearly three quarters of the population of Iraq. What added to the potential strength of the Shia and Kurdish elites is the fact that virtually all of Iraq's oil fields, the veritable basis for the wealth and power of a capitalist class in that country, access to which proceeds through the *state*, lie in either the Shia south or in northern regions (Mosul and Kirkuk) that

the Kurdish militia are eager to ethnically cleanse of Sunni Arabs because they are historically Kurdish; the Kurds there having been themselves ethnically cleansed by Saddam over the past twenty years. In the face of the prospect of so far-reaching a transfer of power *within* the ruling class, the Sunni elites, even those segments of them that chafed under Saddam's rule, have successfully mobilized a large part of the masses within the Sunni triangle to resist an American occupation that favors their ethno-religious rivals, and to prevent their loss of power.



The aim of the insurgency is not to inflict a defeat on the American military, so much as to create a situation where the U.S. will seek a political arrangement in Iraq that guarantees the Sunni ruling class a more powerful role than that which would result from any electoral process. The specter of car bombs and the casualties they inflict (largely on the Sunni population), the steady stream of American soldiers killed or wounded, as well as the behind the scenes pressure of the rest of the Sunni Arab world, are the means to that end. And, here, the Islamists, Iraqi and foreign, who are prepared to undertake suicide bombings, can play a particularly "useful" role. These latter, however, have a different goal than the Sunni elites with whom they are, for the moment allied. While the Sunni ruling class seeks more power, and access to the extraction of surplus-value, in an Iraq that will be no threat to American hegemony in the region, the Islamists seek to create a Middle East from which non-Muslim powers, especially, though not just, the U.S., have been ejected.

While the U.S. could permit a *de facto* partition of Iraq into Sunni, Shia, and Kurdish states, with security, and control of the oil fields assured in the south and the north by well armed Shia and Kurdish militias, which already exist, that is not an outcome that the Americans will choose, not least because it would alienate their allies throughout the Sunni and Arab world, from Saudi Arabia, to Pakistan, to Turkey. Far more likely will be a concerted effort to bring at least a large part of the Sunni ruling class into the state apparatus of a new Iraq, on the one hand, and

then to crush the Islamists, on the other. Whether that option is realistic; whether it will not alienate the Shia and Kurdish ruling classes; whether the ethno-religious rivalries in Iraq can be resolved without massive ethnic cleansing and even genocide; whether the Islamists have established a presence from which they cannot be easily ejected, whether an Iraqi state that can assure global capital the stability that it needs can be constructed – that

is the complex of issues around which the Iraq imbroglio will turn in the coming months.

**MAC INTOSH**

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## *On The Economic Crisis*

# PRISONERS OF VALUE

What is needed to keep the world economy going? And what are the needs of the process of capitalist accumulation today? At first sight, these two questions seem the same. Looking closer, they are not identical at all. In order to maintain the conditions in which the accumulation of capital can continue, existing capital must devalorize. But to keep the world economy going, this devalorization must be prevented, the bubble of fictitious capital must be further inflated. While (consciously) trying to do the second, (unconsciously) the agents of capital are really paving the way for the first.

Faced with global conditions of overcapacity and a falling general rate of profit, American capital has protected itself rather well in recent years. Gigantic tax cuts helped to offset the decline of its profit-rate, and low interest rates combined with increased deficit spending to feed the financial monster whose healthy appearance is so essential to prevent the house of cards that the world economy has become from collapsing.

The basic mechanism through which such a collapse is staved off, is well known by now. The strongest economy of the world, the US, accumulates huge trade deficits by continuously absorbing surplus production from the rest of the world. It pays for those by printing dollars that are backed by debt-notes that are bought with the savings of its trading partners. As absurd as this merry-go-round is, it seems to be to the advantage of everyone involved: the US gets the goods, the rest of the world gets the indispensable market of last resort.

But you don't need a degree from a fancy university to understand that this can't go on forever and that, the longer it does go on, and thus the greater the debt-load on the most pivotal player of the global economy becomes,

the more crushing will be its collapse. So the IMF and just about every economist in the world are warning that a steep crisis is inevitable if nothing is done. But the situation is described as a mere "imbalance", and the advice is simply to correct it: the US should consume less and save more and its trading partners should do the opposite. But there's hesitation in the advisors' voices. They realize that any serious attempt to correct the "imbalance" would trigger a global collapse too. There is little doubt that the elimination of America's trade deficit would depress the global economy, or that stepped up domestic spending by its main trading partners would merely move the creation of fictitious capital-bubbles to other, more risky locations.

The "imbalance" is not the cause, but a symptom of the disease. In the second half of the 1980's, Japan, which then had the largest single trade surplus with the US, tried to correct the imbalance by reinvesting more of its profits domestically. But this attempt to store more and more value in Japanese capital kept pushing up its nominal value, which crashed by the end of the decade. It was simply no longer believable that the Japanese economy could continue to valorize (to increase, or even maintain the value of) so much capital. When that belief collapsed, so did the value of Japanese capital. Something similar is now brewing in China, the country that currently has the largest trade surplus with the US. Increased attempts to store more value in Chinese capital, have led to inflationary pressure and the formation of speculative bubbles that are growing at a dangerous pace.

US capitalism created this "imbalance" for a simple reason: because it could. It alone has the power to keep buying goods from all over the world for mere paper, because of its money's role as the international means of

payment, the global reserve currency, and thus store of value. It continues to do so, not only because it still can, but also because it must. It is leading the capitalist world on a leap forward and it can't afford to stop.

But why is the rest of the world so eagerly subsidizing America's overconsumption? It is not a coincidence that the countries with the largest trade surpluses with the US are also the main buyers of the US' debt-notes. They want to prevent the dollar from falling steeply, because that would devalorize their own dollar holdings and it would make their exports to the US more expensive and thus diminish their access to the US market. But why is the latter of such vital importance to them? Why has Japan been buying dollars recently like crazy, on top of its purchases of US treasury notes? Why keep accepting paper for goods if it could just as well keep the goods -or make different goods- for itself?

The reason is to be found in capital's feverish search for protection against the mounting deflationary pressure. There is too much capital in relation to the opportunities for valorization. So capital must devalorize as it is doing already in many countries all around the world. As a result, capital all over the world is looking for where it can "park safely," where it can store value without having to fear that it will drop as a result of currency devaluations, stock crashes or other forms of devalorization.

So if the world continues to pump much of its savings into the US economy (80% of its net-savings, according to Morgan Stanley's chief economist Stephen Roach) it is because of the world's belief that it's safer to store value in dollar-assets than in yen, yuan or euro-assets. This belief is based on a belief in the economic-military-political power of American capital, which is unrivaled. But to the degree that the dollar is propped up with more and more debt, with fictional capital, the belief in it is based on fiction rather than fact. However, it's a belief the capitalist world has grown dependent on. If it collapses, the capitalist world crashes too. Even though the credibility of the dollar is undermined by the US' course towards ever more indebtedness and even though there is no realistic prospect to change that course, the world's faith in the dollar remains remarkably intact, despite its devaluation relative to the euro and yen. The reason is the lack of alternative options. In the tale of the naked emperor, the adults remained silent because they, in contrast to the child, dreaded the consequences of facing the truth. It was more pleasant to assume that they must not have seen it right, to

look the other way and imagine that the emperor was clothed after all. In the same way, the economic experts of the ruling class don't talk about the coming tsunami of devalorization, and prefer to imagine that there is no dollar-bubble on the verge of bursting, just a minor imbalance that will correct itself.

The US remains an economic powerhouse with a dominant position in several of the most profitable and promising sectors. At the same time however, its industrial base is more and more eroded, in part because it has been moved to China and other places where the cost of labor power is low. The relative decline of the US' economic power makes the other pillars on which its power -and thus also the belief in the dollar- rest, that much more important. This, more than anything else, explains the aggressive political and military stance of the US in recent years. It is in the first place in defense of the dollar that these wars are waged, but their destructive impact makes the US, as well as its opponents, (blind) agents of capital's drive to devalorize, to make room for itself.

It has been argued that the dollar-bubble will never implode because the rest of the world can't afford to stop supporting it. Because countries like Japan and China can't stop buying US debt, there is supposedly no limit to the US' ability to increase its debt. But while it may be true that they cannot stop, at some point they can't continue either. Even without a downturn that forces them to spend dollar-reserves for self-protection, the burden of continuously buying ever-larger quantities of US debt is bound to become too heavy. And if they stop buying dollar-debt, interest rates in the US will shoot upwards and in the contraction that follows, we'll hear the sound of bubbles bursting: stocks, housing and so on.

So the dependency is mutual. Just as the other countries must continue to feed the dollar-bubble, the US can't afford an implosion of the Chinese bubble. But that becomes increasingly difficult. China is navigating in an ever-narrowing channel between inflation and contraction. Its collapse may very well become the trigger of a global depression.

We have some hard but interesting years in front of us.

**Sander**

December 2004

# INTERNATIONALIST PERSPECTIVE

*Internationalist Perspective* is a review that asserts that Marxism is a living theory capable of returning to its roots, of producing a self-critique and of developing itself in line with historical social evolution. In that sense, if *Internationalist Perspective* defends the majority of the theoretical acquisitions of the Communist Lefts, *IP* considers that its principal task is to go beyond the weaknesses and the inadequacies of those Lefts in an effort of unceasing theoretical development. *Internationalist Perspective* does not claim this task is peculiar to it, but as the fruit of debate and exchange with all revolutionaries. This vision underpins the clarity of its contribution to the struggle and to the development of the class consciousness of the proletariat. *Internationalist Perspective* has no intention of bringing to the class a finished political programme, but rather participates in the general process of clarification which is unfolding inside the working class.

The mode of capitalist production, in its ascendant phase, greatly developed the productive forces. The proletariat could win, through struggle, lasting improvements in its living conditions and mass organisations such as the workers' parties or the unions represented this possibility of struggle inside the system.

Like all living systems, the capitalist mode of production, after its ascendant phase, entered a phase of decline bearing within it its own replacement by another society. The decadence of capitalism demonstrated its contradictions in the starkest way and the system became an obstacle to the development of society. Today, when the productive forces have never been more developed, capitalism throws entire populations into marginalisation, famine and violence.

The progressive movement from the formal domination of capital (marked by the lengthening of the working day) to real domination (characterised by the general incorporation of technology into the process of production) heightened the productivity of labour; it accelerated not only the development of capital but also the factors which pushed it into crisis as well as profoundly modifying the composition of classes and the conditions of their struggle. Struggles to 'reform' the system became illusory and permanent, mass organisations were totally integrated into the state, the guarantor of social control and cohesion.

The proletariat, by its condition within capitalism, is pushed to liberate itself from the alienation to which capitalism as a social relationship condemns it, and is therefore the bearer of a project of a society freed from value, money and the division into classes.

Such a project has never before existed in history. Although the Russian Revolution of 1917 was proletarian, it did not result in the emergence of a communist society. The so-called 'communism' of the countries of the Eastern bloc, such as that of Cuba or China, is nothing other than an expression of state capitalism. Indeed, the emergence on an historical scale of a new society can only be realised by the total negation of capitalism and by the abolition of the laws that govern the movement of capital. This new society entails a profound transformation of the relationship of man to himself and to his fellows, of the individual to production, to consumption and to nature, a human community dedicated to the blossoming of all and to the satisfaction of human needs.