

internationalist papers

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To the Reader • When a comrade dies • In the chaos of inter-imperialist disorder • The necessity of the revolutionary party • This latest war • Behind the false "war or peace" option • Revolutionary defeatism is the only answer • Against the imperialist war: pacifism or revolutionary defeatism? • "There is no war that be not infamous, there is no peace that be desirable, until the reign of capital lasts" • The chain of wars will not be broken until the struggle against capital returns to revolutionary marxism • "Pious Wishes" will not stop the destructive course of capitalism. Only the international proletariat, led by its party, can put an end once and for all to the system of profit, exploitation, destruction and wars • *Back to Basics*. Orient

Suplemento en Español El imperialismo de los portaaviones

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INTERNATIONALIST PAPERS 12

(SUMMER-FALL 2004)

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The working class is revolutionary or it is nothing
(Karl Marx)

TO THE READER...

It was only inevitable that this new issue of Internationalist Papers would be almost entirely devoted to the so-called "Second Gulf War": not a "war against terrorism" for us, but a new stage in the (long and contradictory) process leading to a new world war, a war among competing imperialisms. In the pages that follow, the reader will find analyses, commentaries, and leaflets – our positions on the war and how to fight against it, at the same time preparing to fight against the new world massacre to come: an issue, this last one, which is dealt with at large also in the article on the "Necessity of the Revolutionary Party".

But the "Second Gulf War" does not occupy the whole issue: an accurate critique of the "Anti-Global Movement" follows, although such a movement – a clearly middle-class, reformist, even reactionary one – , after occupying the foreground for several months (with the complicity of sensational-seeking mass media) thanks to its very nature and aims, now seems on the downhill. But the issues involved in it are old-time ones, and all of them veritable enemies to a revolutionary perspective: and so it was worthwhile to devote space to it as well. In the "Back to Basics" section and in the "Suplemento Español", two important texts of ours are included, which – written yesterday – very clearly speak for today and tomorrow: i.e., in perfect Marxist language and tradition!

"Socialists have always condemned wars between nations as barbarous and brutal. Our attitude towards war, however, is fundamentally different from that of the bourgeois pacifists (supporters and advocates of peace) and of the anarchists. We differ from the former in that we understand the inevitable connection between wars and the class struggle within a country; we understand that wars cannot be abolished unless classes are abolished and socialism created; we also differ in that we regard civil wars, i.e. wars waged by an oppressed class against the oppressor class, by slaves against slave-holders, by serfs against landowners, and by wage-workers against the bourgeoisie, as fully legitimate, progressive and necessary. We Marxists differ from both pacifists and anarchists in that we deem it necessary to study each war historically (from the standpoint of Marx's dialectical materialism) and separately."

Lenin, *Socialism and War* (1915)

In memory of Bruno

WHEN A COMRADE DIES

Just try and stop a silk worm from spinning...
Goethe

When a comrade dies, a cell of the party-organism disappears and the whole organism suffers. Not all cells are identical: each has its own history, its own characteristics but – by complementing one another and serving one and the same objective and one and the same programme – they are all vital and precious for the overall functioning of the organism. And, of course, when one vanishes, its place is taken by another and yet another, and this is what keeps the organism alive: yet, it is still a question of death and therefore of travail and suffering.

The cell that vanished from our organism on 20 August 2003 is “comrade Bruno” and – even amidst the constant turnover of generations of militants – he leaves no small void in all of us. Because in the history of our party, Bruno represented the living link between the generations that had the great fortune to experience the tumultuous decades of revolutionary struggle and those whose task has been (and still is) to struggle against the current through the darkest years of the counter-revolution. It is this link between generations of revolutionaries which, together with the theory and the tactics, is the main feature of the revolutionary party: its extension in time, beyond immediate circumstances, phases, moments – its assurance of the continuity of a movement projected towards the future of the species. As we read in the *Communist Manifesto* of 1848, “Communists fight to reach the objectives and immediate interests of the working class but in the present movement they also represent the future of the movement itself.”

Born in Turin (Italy) in 1909, in a family with strong socialist traditions (his father was sentenced in 1898 as editor of a socialist newspaper and lost his job as a school-teacher for several years; one of his uncles was to join the Italian Communist Party in 1924 in the section of the so-called “terzini”), as a very young man (still at the University of Pavia) Bruno was close to the positions of “Giustizia e Libertà”. In 1930 he met Carlo Rosselli in Paris and became part of the clandestine committee. At the age of twenty he was arrested, in April 1930 (during the “Moulin affair”, from the name of the informer who reported the group to the Fascist police), and sentenced to two years in jail. In Viterbo prison, from which he was released after a year and a half, he gradually moved away from “Giustizia e Libertà”. In ’34 he took part in the constitution of the internal socialist centre directed by Morandi and was in contact with militant anti-Fascist circles in Milan and Turin. In 1935 he was arrested again and exiled for three years to a small village in Southern Italy, where he began to approach the positions of the Communist Left – a process that became increasingly more distinct over the following few years, first through his collaboration with the Fraction’s review abroad, *Bilan*, and then during his imprisonment in the concentration camps of Isto-

nio and then Camerino, where he was to meet some of the Left's long-term militants. His first meeting with Amadeo Bordiga when the latter was isolated in Naples, and the foundation of the Internationalist Communist Party, together with Onorato Damen, with the clandestine newspaper *Prometeo*, date back to 1943. It was Bruno who was mainly responsible for creating the clandestine network of the organisation in the north of Italy, with such precious and unforgettable militants as Fausto Atti and Mario Acquaviva (who, in 1945, after the end of the war, were to be killed by the Stalinists). After this, his work for the restoration of Marxism and the party-organ (in close contact with Bordiga) became incessant: up to the foundation, in 1953, of *Il Programma Comunista*, which he directed up until his death. This work also found expression in his professional life as a translator into Italian, with editions of basic texts of Marx and Engels on India, China, and Russia, on the 1848 Revolution in Germany, the unpublished Chapter VI of the *Capital*, and finally of the whole of *The Capital*.

For fifty years "Bruno" meant the helm of the party. Our readers are well aware of the place we assign to the individual: determined by historical forces, in unceasing dialectics with them, a living expression of the programme, the theory, the organisation, and (it cannot be otherwise) a means of conveying them. This is what Bruno was: one of those power-lines (and only the history of the class struggle can dictate their numbers, dimensions and power) through which the energy of Marxist doctrine and Communist tradition runs, and which are only efficient if they are connected, by means of thousands of other lines, to an organisation and a class.

In one of our classical texts, we read: "For us an individual is not an entity, a defined unit, separate from all the others, an isolated machine, or one whose functions are directly fuelled by a line that connects it to divine creation or any other philosophical abstraction of this nature, such as immanence, the absolute spirit and similar sophistications. The manifestation and function of the individual are determined by the general conditions of his/her surroundings and society with its history. What takes place in a person's brain has been prepared by his/her relations with others and by the existence, also in intellectual terms, of others." (1)

This is what "Bruno" signified. His work within the party and Marxism was constant, untiring, methodical, even in our organisation's most critical moments. Those who were close to him over all these years, those who had the good fortune to work in close contact with him, experienced his serenity, his radiant nature, his unceasing commitment, his refusal to make a personal issue of matters, his cast-iron determination to work for the party: for a party that does not foresee personal gratification or rewards and which, by reason of its very programme, stands "outside personal and electoral politicking."

As we take our leave of him, there can be nothing but gratitude for everything that Bruno has been. As well as the commitment to continue his work – with the same discretion and devotion and the same enthusiasm.

1. "Lenin nel cammino della rivoluzione" (1942: now in *"Estremismo, malattia infantile del comunismo"*, condanna dei futuri rinnegati, Edizioni Il Programma Comunista, Milano, 1973, pp. 27-28).

IN THE CHAOS OF INTERIMPERIALIST DISORDER

Yesterday

It seems an eternity since, amidst the smoking ashes of the Berlin Wall and, soon afterwards, the wave of euphoria and enthusiasm accompanying the implosion of the constellations surrounding the ex-USSR, world capitalism celebrated “the end of history” through the most authoritative of its apologists. Second-rate chroniclers competed to celebrate the pomp and splendour of the “best of all possible worlds”, to the accompaniment of orgiastic odes to Democracy, Liberty and – naturally – eternal Peace. Throughout the western world, the Party Stalinists and official trade unionists belonging to the “legalist” and “democratic” opposition, scrambled to cast off their old habits and, in order to re-locate as quickly as possible in the sphere of the institutions responsible for controlling and stultifying the proletariat, even ventured a little further: they remembered that in their younger days they had all been a little “American” and – goodness, gracious! – how could one fail to notice the thread leading from the Normandy landings to Tex Willer and Kennedy, from John Wayne to the moon landing and consumer liberalism “made in the USA”, all icons of a “way of life” that made it possible to win the Cold War?... Class war became a discarded tool, “obsolete” according to the grammar of Monsieur le Capital. Indeed, social classes themselves would soon disappear, buried under toxic mountains of luxury consumer products and the end of a hard economic cycle that would, as if by magic, yield to permanent well-being. In all fields of science, the attack on determinis-

tic concepts went hand in hand with the same old patter about the defeat of the materialistic concept of history and the death of Marxism, inaugurating a season of new idealisms and exasperating a range of manifestations of an existentialist nature, public and private, religious and non-religious.

But it was written – in the cast-iron necessity of the laws regulating the evolution of the modes of production and capitalism in particular – that this unfortunately vast mass of over-paid servants and useful morons would very soon be plunged back into insecurity and panic. Despite the pretty stories (carefully dictated, by the way), that the numerous hucksters busied themselves selling to the highly acclaimed “public opinion”, the reasons for the collapse of the false socialism on the far side of the iron curtain were not ideological but tremendously material: they sprang from its capitalist economic basis which, as it opened up increasingly to the world market, had suffered the consequences of heavy counter-blows, starting with the 1974-75 crisis (a crisis of excess production which had shaken the entire world economy, then concentrated substantially in the West and in Japan). It was the inevitable result of the inexorable laws of capitalism which, thanks to the second imperialist slaughter, had forced it into a mad, as well as blind, race to accumulate

(1). Too many goods and too much capital at the heart of capitalism meant increasingly feeble pay-offs by capital and could not help producing devastating effects in

1. “Il corso del capitalismo in Russia (The Course of Capitalism in Russia)”, *il programma comunista*, no. 7 – 8/1999.

outlying areas, where mechanisms of compensation (and robbery) were inadequate to deal with the consequences. The exaggerated development of the second post-war period, whilst laying the foundations for the rise of new powers in Asia, such as China or India, had led to the revival of old powers, like Germany and Japan, which had begun to compete with American economic supremacy, an aspect highlighted by the crisis generated by excess production, with the need to strengthen competitiveness (and more support from the state) and to fight in order to secure sources of raw materials and markets for goods. This is why the American bourgeoisie was obliged, as early as this, to make plans for endeavouring to maintain its supremacy through diplomatic and military policies aimed at securing a position (both financial and territorial) that

would guarantee its control of the fluxes feeding the economy of the imperialist countries constituting the biggest threats to American leadership, and the income connected to this leadership.

The 1991 war

When the opportunity presented itself, the Gulf War was the further, explicit declaration and demonstration of this policy. Not by chance was it followed by the well-known declarations of Bush Senior on the “New World Order” which – rather than to Saddam or any other down-at-heel “dictator” – were mainly addressed to Germany and Japan. In the National Security Strategy, which came one year after “Desert Storm”, and even more clearly in the Defence Planning Guidance six

months later, it was stipulated that the prime objective of American foreign policy was to prevent “the re-emergence of a new rival”. After having sustained “the integration of Germany and Japan in a system of collective security guided by the United States”, it was emphasised that, in order to pursue the established aim, the United States would have to work “in order to prevent any hostile power from dominating a region whose resources, if strictly controlled, would be sufficient to generate a world power. These regions include Western Europe, East Asia, the territory of the ex-Soviet Union and South-west Asia.” They would strive to “take sufficient account of the interests of the industrialised nations, as to dissuade them from challenging our leadership or endeavouring to overturn the constituted economic and political order” (2). American policy, confirmed by two World Wars, has always been to prevent the emergence of a rival power in Europe and Asia. The control of Eurasia, where 70% of the world population and 2/3 of known energy sources are concentrated, and which Brezinsky defines “the chess board on which the competition for global supremacy continues to be played,” becomes the exposed nerve ending of the stars and stripes empire: this is the area where it is necessary to suppress the demands for re-distribution that the dynamics of capitalist economic development (which – we should not forget – is essentially unequal and therefore alters the respective power conditions of individual national capitals competing for the planet) necessarily impose on the various imperial powers that have grown strong thanks to post-war accumulation.

The 1991 war represented a turning point in the pattern of relationships between the imperial powers. Generated by the necessities that the crisis of economic supremacy imposed on American foreign and military policy, it was a requiem for the old

2. This, and other recent and less recent documents published by the American administration, have frequently been mentioned in previous articles appearing in our Italian press, including, amongst others: “The Battle for Central Asia in the Pattern of Interimperialist Conflict” (no.2/2002); “The Crisis of American Imperialism and the Competition for Central Asia” (no.6/2002); “USA-Iraq. Bourgeois Hypocrisy on War and Peace” (no.7/2002); “The Evolution of Military Policy by Ruling American Imperialism, Reflected in the Increasingly Acute Nature of Interimperialist Clashes” (no.1/2003) and “Post-war Iraq. A New Test of Power in the Interimperialist Conflict” (no.3/2003).

system of alliances inherited from the world war and joint Russian-American dominion of the world. Entirely financed by the Gulf monarchies (which thus purchased their security and political survival), by Japan and Germany, it was also – in the eyes of “allied” diplomacy – proof of American determination to anticipate and hinder her closest rivals – those whose economic power had approached that of America – and of her aspiration to succeed in applying independent home policy on the world chess board, as well as being proof of her appetites.

By means of the Gulf War, in a single move, the USA managed to downsize Iraq as an emerging regional power and reference point for the Middle-East, obtain direct control of the power supply to Germany and Japan (which import mainly from the countries around the Persian Gulf) and secure a military position aiming at the control of the Persian Gulf by creating a network of bases with their central point (at least up until the war in Afghanistan) in Saudi Arabia, for decades their special ally amongst the petrol-monarchies of the gulf.

The next ten years

The ten years that follow are years of economic and financial crisis and recurrent wars (duly discussed at the time in this newspaper), all linked to the dynamics of a system whose convulsions are an expression of the urgent need to overthrow it and are all based on the underlying material conditions of a mode of production where the ownership of means of production stands out against the producers of the whole world output – contradictions that are exasperated by the condition of imperialism, as it represents the supremacy of financial capital as the means of control and distribution of the world's plus-value, extorted from the proletariat by the bourgeoisie. Despite its “experts” and its “strategists”, the bourgeoisie is un-

able to understand the nature of the crises and imperialist wars generated by capitalism, since it is now an entirely useless and parasitic class, which can only seek to conserve itself at the price of indescribable social wastage of resources and people. This is the reason for the terror of the bourgeoisie, but above all of the vast in-between classes, when faced with present disorder and the search – futile and fuelled by the media – for a “guilty party”, in the person of This or That Person, of a certain government leader rather than another. A vain and illusory attempt: Marxism has always maintained – and hard facts must be the proof – that violence is perfectly “involuntary”, or necessary, and determined by the mode of production and that every historical event is the result of a clash of forces that are historically determined. “Statesmen” are unaware that they are basically acting according to the material conditions that have been determined and which arise from a specific capitalist economic terrain that they must sustain. In this exchange, the different superstructural factors, including the sphere of political and religious convictions, may affect the form the struggles assume at a historical level and even their progress: but they cannot affect the outcome, which, in the end will derive from the tendencies of movements and laws that are the expression of the economic substrata.

If American capital now insists, through its governing bodies, on the necessity of a long-term “war” to defend “American values”, after a decade of hypocritical verbal acrobatics to justify “peace-keeping operations” and “humanitarian wars”, this is the expression and indication of the gravity of the crisis and its acceleration towards an acute phase in the contrasts between imperial powers, a phase dictated by the need to redefine, each to his own advantage, shares in the world market and the sources of plus-value. It highlights the greater “awareness” and consistency of

the American bourgeoisie compared to their European and Japanese counterparts (here, too, China is an exception, as is summed up in the now famous publication by the two high-ranking military leaders on “war without limits”) (3). However, there is a big difference between this and talk of a “world war now in operation”: it is best not to play around with striking phrases and slogans, coined perhaps in a comfortable living room, so as not to create confusion between an ongoing process, the management of which is closely linked to that of the crisis (and which may continue for decades), and the time when an open and officially declared military clash between imperial brigands will present the Party and the international proletariat with very different tasks. At the same time, to superimpose an open imperialist war fought out between the powers onto a given form of the inevitable struggle between these same powers, according to a pattern devoid of breaking points and qualitative changes, would mean to be ignorant of the ABC (not to mention the whole sequence of the alphabet!) of the dialectics between economy and politics, crises and wars and revolutions, on which the whole of Marxist theory is based. Open warfare between imperialisms develops in specific conditions, produced by a number of factors, linked to its dual significance as a “regulator” of relations between imperial powers corresponding to changes in the economic basis and hierarchies, and as the ideal tool for conserving the system of bourgeois

dominion over a superior mode of production and the proletarian class that represents it.

Decaying imperialism

The chaos and disorder pervading bourgeois society today are none other than the reflection – and most evident

demonstration – of the parasitic nature of modern capitalism, as well as of the peak of decay reached by that phase of imperialism that represents the “highest point” of capitalism – the phase in which the basic conditions that make up its DNA (and that are based on the material aspect of world economic relations between the classes) reach their logical conclusions and are destined to fester. This “global disorder” reigns both in the economic sphere and in the political sphere of relations between States: the former cannot fail to spill over into – and affect – the latter and the forms assumed by the “competitive struggle” for the defence or procurement of adequate spaces for exploiting the capital that each of these States represents and “organises”, from the biggest to the smallest and whatever form of government it assumes or whatever coalition may at a given time assume the management of the capitalistic machine that is the bourgeois State. In order to explain the present international situation (apart from referring to the methodology and contents of Marxist theory and, in particular, to a small work by Lenin with a significant title that past and present “theoreticians” from the bourgeois camp try in vain to exorcise: *Imperialism*), it is necessary to start from the crisis that has the whole of capitalism in its grip and that has progressively worn away any balance between imperialist powers established at Yalta to sanction the divisions made at the end of the Second World War. The dynamics of accumulation in the second post-war period brings the American crisis to the forefront (as the US can no longer deviate it outside the country onto competitors or allies) and – with this – the crisis of the system of alliances which align into competing factions. According to Lenin’s analysis in his text on imperialism, the economic subdivision and, through this, the “right” to take possession of shares of the world’s plus-value, is pro-

3. Q. Liang – W. Xiangsui, *Guerra senza limiti* (*War without Limits*), Italian version, Libreria Editrice Goriziana. See also various articles published in no. 23 of *Aspenia*, “Il tempo della Cina” (“The Time of China”).

portional to the strength, and thus to the capital, of individual powers, and this strength changes as economic and political development changes. World order after the war was upheld by undisputed American hegemony and was based on the following material conditions: 1) the USA flooded the market with goods, 2) it became the world's "creditor" and ultimate financier of the system, 3) the dollar, which could still be converted into gold, was the currency used as a unit of calculation, a means of payment and international reserve in the system of payments.

These conditions, which were the expression of the USA's "capitalist power" (further supported by military power) compared to other countries, began to waver with the growth of Japan and Germany and later other countries, right up to the China of today. It is the rate at which these countries accumulate capital that is closing the gap and making the political "constrictions" corresponding to the old balance of power increasingly intolerable. The usurious role of the dollar allowed the USA to establish its value quite apart from concerns with the balance of payments. America's trade balance registers a deficit for the first time in 1971 and from 1974 onwards grows steadily; the net result of international investments, which gives the measure of the balance of international investments, registers a deficit for the first time since 1914 – in 1985. From this date onwards, the USA becomes net debtors: a situation which worsens from 1990 onwards, until it is the world's most indebted country. Moreover, with regard to the balance of payments, starting in 1973 the USA records a deficit every year with the exception of 1979, 1982, 1985, 1989, 1998.

As the basic economic conditions deteriorate, the dollar – which allows the USA to "produce" paper money and oblige the rest of the world to produce those goods that American currency can afford, actual-

ly buying "on credit" and allowing a spread of the monetary basis which is thus able to finance consumption and investments without generating inflation – also sees its hegemony challenged: and to balance international relations the USA is obliged to make increasing use of military force to preserve its supremacy as a real *rentier* State. The present decadence of American imperialism is implicit in its role as the net "absorber" of foreign capitals. The USA has seen the deficit in its trade balance double from 1999 (291 bill. dollars) to 2003 (550 bill. dollars), with a 2004 forecast set at 610 billion. The total foreign debt comes to over 18 000 billion dollars (and this consists increasingly of bonds, which are short-term and easy to sell), while the balance of payments, which recorded a 1999 deficit of 124 billion, now has a deficit of 374 billion (an estimate that rises to 462 for the current year).

Thus the dollar, until now the unchallenged lever of the American economy's parasitic role, by means of which it has managed to drain from abroad the capital necessary to finance its own needs and maintain its consumer levels and leading position in the hierarchy of the empires, is suffering more frequent blows due to the pressure of the figures previously quoted and to competition from the commercial and financial area set up around the euro on the one hand and the surplus of Chinese and Japanese capital (the latter possessing a considerable share of the American debt) on the other. The latter countries could well become the pole of attraction for an antagonistic Asian block.

In this situation, where 20% of international reserves are already quoted in euros, the USA could certainly not permit the Iraqi example (dating back to autumn 2000) of quoting oil prices in euros, to be imitated internationally. Not by chance, the first measure passed by the new Iraqi administration, set up in place of the "hos-

tile régime” of the ex-ally, Saddam Hussein, was to re-establish quotations and invoices for oil prices in dollars.

The greater instability of capitalism over the past decade has thus arisen from the radical change to the economic basis of relations between the various imperialist powers. The constant trade disputes (over steel, agriculture or service industries) and the return of more or less heavily disguised protectionist policies, secret diplomatic manoeuvres, such as the search for new military bases, in order to guarantee a quicker and more effective projection of power onto the areas of conflict or for reasons of control or deterrence, the increase in military expenditure (recently increased to 401.3 bill. dollars), re-structuring of political and military alliances, are all ingredients used by the USA to try and defend the status quo and, thereby, its own parasitical position and control over the biggest shares of world production and world profit. It is undeniable that this is preventive action on America’s part; however, the objectives are not the so-called rogue states, but China, Japan, Germany, Russia, France and anyone else who might upset their plans.

In the previously quoted articles in this newspaper, we emphasised and provided ample documentation to show how the race towards Euroasia and for the control of the oil lines linking the Mediterranean to Asia represents a crucial aspect in the present phase of clashes between empires. In the age of domination by financial capital, the control and occupation of a territory or a geographical area are not important in themselves but inasmuch as they make it possible to weaken the adversary. The “war on international terrorism” is one of the tools used in this game. One of the leading theoreticians of American imperialism, Z. Brzezinsky,

who elsewhere has expressed very well the need for US power to keep its al-

lies in the role of vassals, concerned that, despite US global power, the “patterns of social change” might threaten its leadership on the world chess board, wrote in 1993: “History teaches us that a super-power cannot remain such for long, if it fails to spread, confidently and emphatically, a message of importance to the world...But the message must originate from an inner moral code and define a standard of behaviour...standing as an example to others...” (4) The American reference to the “nation chosen by God” or to the “historical task of being an example to the world” is neither casual nor simply cunning rhetoric: in defence of “values” (i.e. the present consumer levels) and above all of “national interests”, all available resources are mobilised; and what better than to declare war on “terror” in order to map out the Middle East to American advantage, occupying Central Asia with a dense and closely linked system of military bases – as had already happened after the Balkans wars – so as to maintain, thanks also to all this, the control of the world financial system?

The “war on terrorism” and the clash between the USA and Europe

The objective of the US “war against terrorism” is to seal their control of an area that is of strategic importance to the engines of production of their more direct competitors and, by means of this control, re-align and re-design to their own advantage, the system of alliances between states. In addition, we should not underestimate the need to re-locate military bases abroad, in line with the new directives regarding the projection of power and control of US imperialism: this relocation was one of the most important direct consequences of the “Enduring Freedom” operation launched against Afghanistan. Following recent settlements in the ex-Soviet republics of Central Asia, the USA can now count on military bases in 130

4. *Il mondo fuori controllo* (A World Out of Control), Longanesi, p. 96.

countries, through which they secure a network of control over all the crisis areas. These, and not pacifist or humanitarian sentiments towards the afflicted Arab masses, are the concerns – obviously not homogeneous or unequivocal – of the European bourgeoisie – like its Russian, Japanese, Chinese or Iranian counterparts, to quote a few. As a columnist in the highly bourgeois Italian economic daily, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, pointed out: “If the United States succeed in doing in Baghdad what they have done in Kabul, i.e. replace a hostile régime with a friendly one, they will make the Middle East and Asia into a single geo-strategic area, a vast zone under their direct influence and a straitjacket which none of the oil-producing countries, not even the Iran of the ayatollah, will be able to escape.” (5) The exploitation of the Al Qaeda “nebula” and of reactionary Islamic fundamentalism, produced by the failure of Arab unity due to bourgeois influences, are part of this “hidden” but all-out fight between imperial powers. “The basic characteristic of modern terrorism,” wrote a French author on military affairs in 1992, whilst commenting on the transition “from the order of Yalta to the disorder of nations”, “lies simultaneously in the internationalisation of the phenomenon (international terrorist networks exist), in its banal nature (the high frequency of attacks) and in the links between terrorist groups (whatever their objectives are...). These characteristics explain why international terrorism – i.e. terrorism manipulated by different States – is, and doubtless will be, one of the necessary transitions in the power relations amongst nations – and therefore a necessary transition phase in the planet’s geopolitical revolution” (6)

In *Revolution and Counter-revolution in Germany*, Engels pointed out that “Generally speaking the difficulty of giving full expression to political opposition creates a sort of religious opposition [...] the pro-

fane and dangerous opposition to temporal power is concealed behind the most sanctified and apparently disinterested struggle against spiritual despotism.” The Frankenstein created by the Americans, first to deal with the Russians, drawn into the trap of Afghanistan in December 1979, and later to regulate, to their own advantage, the whole of the central Asian area and attempt to disturb Russia and China within their own borders, has turned against its creator: not for the widely announced and demagogic aim of restoring the caliphate, but because of the eminently material dispute over power in Saudi Arabia, one of the strategic axes of American policy in the Middle East up until September 2001, together with Israel, Turkey and Egypt. On 11 March 2003, in the infamous slaughter of proletarians in Madrid, the “hand” of fundamentalism gave Europe its own “11 September” to act as a catalyst. The pantomime following the attack, with the Spanish government miscalculatedly eager to take advantage of it to settle its accounts with the ETA, demonstrates just how hypocritical are the bourgeois tears shed over these episodes (how can we forget the fake slaughter at the Racak market, which sparked off the war in Bosnia?). Here again an episode of mass killing, “these explosions of panic, moreover with no precise aim, directed against no-one in particular,” to use the words with which Engels firmly condemned as anti-proletarian the dynamite attacks of 1895 in London), made its timely appearance, even though it is too early to argue that it may turn out to be in favour of the “American side” or the “European”, and thus the ‘hand’ may have acted as the voluntary or involuntary agent of American imperialism or of its rivals in Europe.

The fact remains that the clash between the United States and Europe (guided by France and Germany) is be-

5. Alberto Negri, “Il greggio iracheno sulla scacchiera americana (Iraqi oil on the American chessboard)”, *Il Sole 24 Ore*, 17/9/2002.

6. Pierre Lellouche, *Il nuovo mondo (The New World)*, Il Mulino, p. 560.

coming increasingly severe and global and it should come as no surprise that, as well as being concerned about Chinese growth (7), American strategies should take into account the possibility “that the alliance between the USA and Europe may collapse, due to an intensification of trade wars and competition for leadership regarding questions of security.” (8)

And we must not forget that as early as 1997 one of the most highly regarded “consultants” of the American administration’s economic staff declared to *Il Sole 24 Ore* that the introduction of the euro might lead to “disagreement and war within Europe”, even “to war between Europe and the United States.”

The process of European unification, conditioned by inevitable divergences of interests within the EU, as well as American interference – also strongly based on interests – is constantly seeking a common foreign and military policy capable of supporting the single currency, yet this is a vain attempt without a political centre which cannot be obtained peaceably. The present situation, in which both the larger and smaller European imperialists seem to be moving as one, is very soon destined to crack under the force of material pressure that the need to expand will bring to Ger-

man capital, and the reactions that this will lead to amongst the old and new members. Meanwhile, since the Madrid attack, after which the EU attempted to accelerate its controversial common defence plan and voted a “mutual aid pact” against terrorism (which smacks very much of legislation aiming at the use of military force for internal purposes, against the proletariat – you never know...), a new terrain of conflict with the USA has

opened up with regard to settling the situation in the Middle East. Given the legitimacy of the fresh blood shed by the dead in Madrid, the EU responds to the American proposal for a “great Middle East” with democracy imposed on it from above by American “values” and missiles, with its own “vision of stability”, centering on the proposal of “intense consultation” and, obviously, a more important role by the UN, to support democratic reforms in the area. This European “recipe” means none other than a greater determination to pursue independent spaces for the expansion of European capital (first and foremost that of Germany) and greater negotiating power for the control of a territory of prime importance for supplying energy. (9)

In the age of imperialism, Lenin reminded us, peace is a preparation for war and no more than a pause between wars: for the working class to forget this lesson, pursuing the “sirens” of pacifism and reform, coming, perhaps, from a bourgeoisie temporarily weakened in terms of military force, means preparing its own destiny as “meat for slaughter” in the fight between powers for which the conditions are already being assembled. The only possible answer is to break the bars of cross-class politics, resuming the out-and-out struggle to defend our own material living conditions, opposing all exhortations to social peace and to the higher principle of defending the “supreme good” of the country, up to the point where the conditions for the overthrow of capitalism and the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat are prepared, under the guidance of the Communist Party. Only Communism, a mode of production based on a classless society and on the harmonious development of the Human Species, can put an end to imperial wars and become the historical alternative to the barbaric chaos of decadent capitalism.

7. See the document *Vision 2020*. A subsequent article in *Internationalist Papers*’s next issue will deal with the other critical area of the planet, the one extending from Asia and the Pacific to the Indian Ocean.

8. See: *Global Trends 2015*, quoted by Di Francesco-Dinucci, “L’impero americano d’occidente” (“The Western American Empire”), *Il Manifesto*, 26/5/2002.

9. See: “In Medioriente e Iraq una ricetta europea” (“A European Recipe for the Middle East and Iraq”), *La Stampa*, 27/3/2003.

The necessity of the revolutionary party

If we take two events very different in terms of weight and significance, such as the war in Iraq and the public transport strike in Italy (rather than any other struggle for claims that might break out in France or Germany, or anywhere else at the heart of the capitalist world) and we study them carefully, we immediately notice a common term of analysis in both.

The war in Iraq, conducted by the strongest capitalist power (the United States) *in order to* maintain its global supremacy through the control of an economically and strategically vital area, and *against* the ambitions of its rivals (Europe, Russia, Japan, China) amidst an increasingly serious crisis in the process of the capitalist accumulation and exploitation of wealth worldwide, has reached a stalemate and is provoking keen reactions. However, these reactions are incapable of breaking out of the dead-end of “popular resistance”, armed, guided and oriented by explicitly bourgeois local factions (and not only - how strong are European and Asian interests in the area!), in competition with one another and in practice subordinate to the play of appetites and conflicts between imperialist powers, whose sole victims continue to be the proletariat and the dispossessed masses (1).

Light-years away from Baghdad and its surrounds, agitation by the public transport workers has provided us with an excellent example of how the proletariat (even its traditionally more ‘protected’ segments) instinctively manages to regain battle cries and modes of action of a purely class-related nature, such as unannounced strikes with no pre-defined duration or location, yet is unable, in itself, to move beyond the fight for its immediate claims, marking time and retreating, just as other categories start their own fights (e.g. the steelworkers of Terni, to limit ourselves to an Italian example).

The imperialist war, although confined to a local theatre of war, and the economic attack on the material conditions of salaried workers are both events that can only find limited, isolated responses, inadequate or impotent in the long term, if this response is confined to the tiny space and time marked by the absence of a political Party of the international workers’ movement.

In both cases – both from a general political point of view and at a specific economic level – what is strongly felt is therefore the need for a revolutionary party, as the only one that can lead the proletariat of the Mid-

1. See below the detailed analysis in the article entitled: “The second Gulf war. The chain of imperialist wars will not be broken until the struggle against capital returns to revolutionary Marxism”.

dle East out of the dead-end of a struggle (even an armed struggle and a brutal one) for ends that are *not its own* and that, at the same time, is a party that can organise and guide the proletariat of urban, capitalist cities beyond the limits (which it is unable to cross alone or spontaneously) of partial fights for its rights, in order to prepare it and direct it towards the destruction of the capitalist mode of production when the objective conditions are mature. The revolutionary Communist party is the only one that can bring about, *through its general activity and patient daily work* (itself part of this activity), *alongside and within the ranks of the working class*, the necessary union of partial fights for claims and the overall struggle for the emancipation of the proletariat, between the proletariat at the centre and in the outlying areas of world imperialism, between different banners and sectors of a *single* proletarian army.

We have dwelled several times on the characteristics of the revolutionary party and on the trajectory of a tradition that dates back both to the great struggles of the Nineteen Twenties and to the theoretical bases, programme and tactics established since 1848, and which, *alone*, has been able to draw the essential lessons of the counter-revolutions. This party must be based on a solid body of theory, on irreproachable principles, on a precise programme with which all militants are familiar, on a "rose of possible tactics" firmly anchored to principles and theory, on a closed and well-disciplined organisation, politically tempered, with international roots, capable of developing, *even when the general situation is historically unfavourable*, (as it continues to be today), the whole range of activity that distinguishes it, "all the forms of activity suited to favourable moments as far as the actual balance of power permits them" (2). This party must continue to perfect the theory that was produced as a single body, studying and analysing unceasingly capitalist reality and mode of production and so preparing future generations of militants for the enormous tasks that await them (now and in the future: to guide revolutionary development, to take power, to direct the dictatorship of the proletariat, to introduce all the political, social and economic measures that are destined to open up prospects for socialism – no mean task!). It must work in close contact with the working class, openly combat bourgeois and middle-class influences – which always exercise a paralysing influence on it, by corrupting it, deviating its efforts towards objectives that do not belong to it – and, if and when the balance of power allows this, organise and direct its struggles beyond the sole limits of its immediate claims and towards *political* objectives. Because, as Lenin has taught us in *What Is To Be Done?*, "political class consciousness can *only* be brought to the workers *from outside* economic struggles, from outside the sphere of relations between workers and bosses" (3).

In all this there cannot be even the tiniest element of primitivism, spontaneous activism and volunteerism: "the belief that bringing these forces into play, however widely and efficiently they are organised, can change the situation, shifting it from a state of stagnation to the launching of the overall revolutionary struggle, is still a volunteerist concept

2. "Considerazioni sull'organica attività del partito quando la situazione generale è storicamente sfavorevole (1965)", in *In difesa della continuità del programma comunista*, Edizioni il programma comunista, 1970, p.166.

3. Lenin, *What is to be Done?*, Chap. III: "Trade union politics and social-democratic politics" (it is worth remembering that the term "social-democratic" means "communist" in this case).

that cannot and must not find a place in the methods of the Marxist International. Parties and revolutions are not created. Parties and revolutions are directed, bringing together the international revolutionary experiences that are of use, in order to ensure the best possible terms for the victory of the proletariat in the battle that is the unavoidable outcome of the historical period in which we are living" (4).

There is not the slightest element of fatalism or "waiting to see" in this, according to which the party will rise up again sooner or later, we do not know exactly how and when: instead we know only too well that the party must wait for the masses but that, on pain of defeat, the masses must not find themselves in the position of having to wait for the party, whose formation and preparation must by far precede the moment in which the proletariat will be able to directly challenge the political dominion of the bourgeoisie.

The Communist Party – this is what distinguishes Marxism from the hosts of rebels and opponents of various kinds – is an organ of the proletarian class, but not part of it, in the sense that it does not arise out of it but out of the historical necessity for a mode of production that is superior to capitalism, which is responsible for wasting resources and people. This Party is not born of spontaneous struggles, nor can it be improvised; it is the product of the working class movement from Marx up to the present, and its monolithic body of theory – restored in the light of lessons learned from the counter revolutions – constitutes the basic weapon without which it would be unable to exist or take action as a historical subject.

From all this (the issue is vast and we shall never tire of repeating this) arises also the necessity for *the revolutionary preparation of the party and of the class*: without this, without the long, anonymous, underground work against the current (the work of theoretical clarification and active intervention: the two aspects are inextricably linked), without this full-circle political battle, addressing every aspect of bourgeois society and against the organisations deriving from it, despite them defining themselves working-class or proletarian, there is no party, there is no working class that can learn to fight for itself, there is no revolutionary prospect, there can never be a direct attack aimed at destroying the political bases of bourgeois class domination, there can never be social organisation that satisfies the harmonious development of the Human Species. And the proletariat will merely go on fighting for crumbs that will then be snatched away again, and allowing themselves to be massacred for causes that are not their own.

4. "Partito e azione di classe (1921)", in *Partito e classe*, Edizioni il programma comunista, 1972, p.46.

THIS LATEST WAR

The following articles appeared on the pages of our Italian-language newspaper Il programma comunista, during 2003, at the time of the US intervention in Iraq. All together they form the only basis upon which a real internationalist, class opposition to imperialist wars can be founded.

Behind the false “war or peace” option

It is clear to everybody that what now interests all the chancelleries of the various imperialist brigands, falsely listed amongst the paladins of peace or of war, is the form that Iraq and the oil-producing Middle East will assume in the post-war period or, in any case, at the end of the present tug-of-war. It is on the control of energy sources and their commercial routes and distribution to the markets that what the various courts of analysts and economic, political and military experts call “global security” for the congested industrial machinery of the capitalist world depends. A capitalism that must necessarily consider it “vital” to control an area where it is presumed 60 to 70% of the established conventional reserves of raw oil is concentrated, and “top priority” (again in the words of English and American documents published in the press) to defend a raw material whose cost is a major factor in determining the profit margin of the main industrial sectors. As in classical pirate stories, those who control these key points in the pattern of world accumulation can secure for themselves a sort of strategic position and acquire a degree of advantage over their most direct competitors. It is always on the global ground of each State’s bourgeois interests that the selection of alliances between imperialists take shape, in an unceasing chain of manifest or concealed actions, where there is

certainly no lack of “blows beneath the belt” and there will be no lack of “ideological varnishing”, from which a moral justification will emerge for peace or for war, to be tossed to numbed and helpless public opinion.

Recent statistics have confirmed the slump in world commerce and the stagnation of production in the world’s leading economic centres, apart from China, which is pursuing its march forward in the inter-imperial hierarchy and now loudly demanding a place at table when the booty is shared out. Moreover all the metropolises of world capitalism – including China – are struggling with an internal or foreign debt on the point of exploding, since the debt (internal or foreign, or, as for the USA, both of these) has been the lever that has allowed world economy to be drugged over the past few decades, to allow capital to be exploited to its full potential and, thus, to increment production for production’s sake (profit), which is the aim of the capitalist mode of production.

In the age of imperialism – a superstructure of capitalism and the direct continuation of it – the laws governing the operation and development of capitalism do not cease to apply, just like the contradictions that accompany this development, undermining the basis and very existence of

bourgeois economy and dominion and revealing at every turn its transitory nature on a historical scale. Thus the central concentration of capital and the prevalence of financial capital accentuate the contrasts between states instead of alleviating them, since they demand more urgent intervention by the State in order to defend bourgeois dominance both within national borders and abroad, also in terms of competition between the different and opposing interests of other bourgeois States.

The development of historical processes does not admit any voluntarism and the “protagonists” of world politics are none other than the form, or the physical and personal representations, by which certain class instances or necessities manifest themselves and gain ground – in our own specific case, those of the ruling, bourgeois class. The crisis which has been in a chronic phase of ups and downs since the mid-Seventies, when the long, post-war cycle of expansion came to an end and the firmly established hierarchy of the dollar-standard and the US role as leading world creditor was interrupted at an international level, has obliged all bourgeois States to become more determined and aggressive in the defence of their own space and their own interests on the world market. Slowly but irreversibly, the necessity is advancing of adjusting the political superstructure of relations between the imperialist States (still conditioned by the balance of power of the late post-war period) to the new economic basis that has formed over the course of the last half-century. In other words, according to a process that is neither mechanical nor linear, the movements in world economic structure determine the imperialist demand for a new division of the planet: the significant redistribution of the plus-value produced by the international working class, to be more compatible with the new economic hierarchy and with the new relative bal-

ance of power, the manifestation of capitalism’s unequal development. The signs of this upset balance in the relationships amongst States are the economic, monetary and financial crises that have succeeded one another and interacted, as well as the political and diplomatic contrasts and wars, up until now territorially limited but nevertheless bearing a global significance as regards the balance of power and inter-State relations. In this context, the military ground is merely a concentration and synthesis of this pattern: it can never be considered and evaluated in isolation, outside its relationship to the politics and economy of every capitalist State. Today the USA insists on the war against Iraq because it must urgently realise the remaining capital of its absolute military supremacy (in the past 50 years the American defence budget has been, on average, 50% higher than the European one and the present military budget of the USA ranks higher than the sum total of budgets for the next ten countries in the list). This military supremacy is increasingly divorced from absolute economic supremacy: the American share of world production has in fact sunk from 50 to around 20% and the USA at present holds the highest international debt with a trade deficit that is now over 400 billion dollars (whilst the dollar’s role in international usury is undermined by the decreased competitiveness of American goods and the introduction of the euro).

The American sense of urgency is fully shared by their faithful British ally, a purely parasitic and “rentier” power, whose foreign policy is dictated by the demands of the pound sterling, by the City and the multinational oil companies. England’s presence in the EU – a shapeless federalist mess destined in the long term to pay the price of its lack of political centralisation (which cannot, however, be substituted for, or drawn up, at the conference table

without causing a violent rupture of the national balance in the member countries) – is increasingly proving to be a factor that conditions Franco-German attempts to break free of America's tutelage, conditioning which tends to become suffocating, following the extension of the NATO and the EU itself to countries like Hungary, Poland and Romania, effectively channelled into the mechanism of American military and financial control.

French and German opposition to unilateral action by the USA is dictated by their fear of not being able to gain sufficient control over the post-war situation: their European Convention project appears as a preventive act to avoid total subordination to US foreign policy by means of the "new" Europe, which has grown, despite them, to the point of being too strongly influenced by American directives.

The guidelines of recent American doctrine on national security confirm how American imperialism is obliged to anticipate the moves both of its competitors on the Asian (China, Japan) or European (France, Germany) scenes, who are making moves to question the American order of things, and of regional powers, such as India, Iran or Russia, who aspire to a more profitable position in the business of international piracy. The explicit declaration by the USA of a possible "preventive war" to support and defend its own national interests on the world chessboard, a war to be waged "alone" or with "occasional" and "varying" alliances (i.e. dictated ad hoc by various joint business interests) sums up a necessity dictated by the requirements of strategic control through which the USA endeavours to react, insisting on its own power policy, to its relative economic and financial – and hence structural – decline. For the logistics of the "preventive war" it becomes of fundamental importance to

win stable military positions and bases, to set up a system able to render the military potential for projecting the power of rapid-intervention forces effective, since territories also have to be defended against the possible return of enemies or the growing appetite of allies. Following the 1991 Gulf War, the war in the Balkans and the war in Afghanistan, the USA has obtained the result of planting in Eurasian territory the scaffolding for a military set up consisting of strategic bases (the last of which, after those obtained in Central Asia, is a base in Qatar, negotiated for a twenty-year period and to be used as the headquarters for operations in the Gulf area). Thanks to this set up, American imperialism has almost surrounded China (which they are pressing to become an ally and on which they are counting for a favourable outcome to the process of Korean unification) and has brought Russia round to a more moderate line (since Russia has had to give up its monopoly on the transit and distribution of resources coming from the Caspian area and, with this, any remaining, independent claims as a global power) – all this as an anti-German move. As we have repeatedly demonstrated in our press, the strategic control of the oil-producing areas in Asia and the Middle East has been the operational priority of the American administration since Carter, i.e. since the turning point of the mid-Seventies, with a clear continuity of positions, quite apart from the political colours of the president in office. For the USA, preventing the emergence of new contenders and limiting the access of the ex-USSR were side effects of the same logic according to which the geopolitics of energy are subordinate to the general necessities imposed by command over the share of the world's plus-value that every national bourgeoisie attempts to defend or to turn to its own advantage in the "space" of the world market.

For Marxism, all the politics of the ruling classes, whatever the ground on which they are carried out or whatever form they are pursued under, have a significance totally determined by and functional to the widespread reproduction of the relations of production, on the basis of which these politics cannot fail to arise and to develop. All this also applies to open military action, since war is one of the means by which capitalist imperialism reproduces itself and perpetuates the basic conditions for the primacy of financial capital and social parasitism. What is really at stake today in the totally bourgeois confrontation over the war in Iraq is the post-war situation in the Gulf with its new equilibrium and the consequences for control over the flow of energy. The disarming of Iraq, the UN inspectors' reports and UN deliberations are all fig leaves by means of which "pacifists" and "interventionists" now defend, from different sides and out of opposing interests, their "right" to interfere and divide out the booty – in the name of which they may well be dispatching

troops tomorrow (as France is today in the Ivory Coast) or become the supporters of talks (as the USA with North Korea). The proletariat can expect nothing from adhering to one or the other bourgeois camp, except the prolonging and aggravation of its captive state and subordination to the enemy class and to the latter's plans for social conservation, regardless of whether this waves the flag of European neo-chauvinism or that of the abject and hypocritical morality of the stars and stripes. To the infamy of imperialist war or peace, the world proletariat can and must oppose none other than the unyielding defence of its own living and working conditions and the future of the Species, refusing to be recruited in any way to support war or peace in the ranks of the bourgeoisie and tirelessly giving priority to the attack on its own bourgeois class – fighting in the context of its class Party to prepare the conditions for overthrowing capitalism – the only way to put an end to the true causes of imperialist wars, which lie at the heart of capitalism itself.

Pacifism in all forms opens up the way to imperialist war

Revolutionary defeatism is the only answer

Several times in our press we have examined the reasons for this new American (and English, and...) attack in the area reaching from the Balkans to Central Asia through the Middle East, as well as the constant diplomatic tug-of-war or lack of it. Here, we are interested in dealing with the responses towards which a movement that truly wishes to stop the imperialist war should be moving.

First of all, we stress: "*imperialist war*". That is, a war whose roots are to be found in the *irremediable* contrasts typical of the culminating phase of capitalist development – the phase where this mode of production reaches the peak of its destructive

potential and putrefaction, where competition and the extortion of plus value become frenetic, where control over sources of raw materials and sharing out of the markets become essential, especially in a time of crisis like the present. It is a war that follows a pattern determined by material laws: in the very same way that development of capitalism into imperialism is determined by material laws – a pattern which the Communist movement (as an economic and social science) has known perfectly for a hundred and fifty years.

This *imperialist war* pacifists would like to oppose: both lay pacifists belonging to the area including (with some different

shades of meaning or perplexities) the greens, the 'Ulivo' (party of the Olive Tree), supporters of old-time Stalinists (Rifondazione Comunista) and a variegated range of disobedient non-globals (in a word – and looking beyond the borders of miserable... 'Little Italy' – a strongly diluted form of social democracy), as well as the religious pacifists, from His Holiness the Pope to various different churches and denominations, grass-root communities, street-worker priests and whoever else you can think of. All of them animated by strong moral indignation: war hurts, brings suffering and destruction, does not serve to smooth out differences but creates new ones, etc. etc..

How can we possibly deny it? The fact is that for all of these people, according to a convergence of opinion that is becoming more evident day by day, the "war" is, on the one hand, a sort of metaphysical evil and, on the other, the product of the egoism and obstinacy of individuals, of one powerful and heartless man or another (perhaps with a personal interest in certain raw materials, certain sources of minerals or oil). For them, the enemy is not a mode of production which – after representing an initial step ahead for the human species and saving it from the obscurity and historical backwardness of feudalism – exhausted its positive and propulsive phase long ago and is now agonising with all the disastrous and inauspicious effects of an agony that is being prolonged beyond all limits. No, the enemy is one villain or another, some personification of metaphysical evil or another. Who should finally be replaced, through a vast movement of opinion and indignation, by good guys, entrusting the safeguarding and monitoring of all this to the eagle eye of international organisms, some of which already exist (the UNO, the NGO network, democratic channels of participation, certain 'friendly' governments, the 'movement of movements', Porto Alegre as a happy oas-

is, etc.), and some of which have yet to be created (from the grassroots, by a general spread of conscience that would pervade people, groups and parties with its moral principles: in a word - evangelisation).

In the midst of all this, is there any talk of "mode of production"? of "economic laws"? of "imperialism"? of "class"? of "states" as the tools used by a ruling class to detain power? Please! Things of the past, covered in mould, best forgotten! Viva Jesus Christ, viva Saint Francis, viva Tolstoy, viva Don Ciccio, viva subcomandante Marcos, and Naomi Klein (and now viva Lula and Chavez, too)! They (and others yet to come) will be entrusted with the mission of restoring morality to history, after Bush, Blair and all the other baddies have trampled it underfoot out of mere personal interest and extreme greed. The fact that this way of thinking (this most banal project of universal pacifism) is identical to that of Enemy Number One (on one side the goodies, on the other the baddies: the really good goodies, the really bad baddies) does not concern these people in the least, lost as they are in a sea of molasses, priestly rhetoric and fine sentiments.

How, then, can the war be stopped? By rings-of-roses, rainbow flags on balconies, big folk festivities in the "south of the world", appeals and petitions by famous people, a piece of white cloth tied to your arm or your bag, a bunch of leaflets thrown into the chamber of Parliament, round tables with panels of experts and speeches on television, and so on. All that can be expected of a body of opinion is to bring into operation that vague, impalpable and fleeting essence that constitutes "conscience"; all that can be expected of a purely moral stance is thumping of chests, falling to the ground with your eyes shut. Is all this enough to stop an *imperialist war*? And supposing there were to be another clamorous "attack", perhaps at the

heart of “pacific” old Europe, where would all these fine souls stand? Historically, pacifism has always proved to be quite ready to side with warfare, once...the appropriate conditions have matured (there is no lack of examples, both in the First and in the Second World War) – *to become acutely nationalist and chauvinist*, when “*the country is in danger*”. Wait and see...

But it is not just by its willingness to be transformed into warmongering that pacifism opens up the way for imperialist war. It does so in a far more subtle, deeper and more dangerous way. It does so (according to its very nature) by *disarming* - in the face of imperial war - all those (individuals, social groups, classes) that fall into the trap. It is *theoretical, political and material disarmament*. To forget and deny the economic origins of the impulse towards war that is inherent in capitalism, particularly in its imperialist phase, means *disarming*. To fuel any illusion of appeals to a sense of morality or cultivate confidence in organisms considered to be impartial (the UN!) means *disarming*. To lead people to believe that the problem lies in a few lurid individuals usurping a healthy, democratic (?) way of life, which should, instead, be revived and indeed strengthened, means *disarming*. We are no sorry Cassandras when we say that before very long we shall be witnessing the most ‘amazing’ pirouettes, the most ‘surprising’ of about-turns, when the knotty problems of pacifism in all its various forms have to be seriously and urgently disentangled. If it has not been sufficiently opposed, and in good time, it will, unfortunately, be too late. The work of disarmament will have progressed and put down roots and the way will be wide open for a new world massacre.

How, then, can we fight against the imperialist war (and at the same time neutralise the pacifism that opens up the way to it)? Firstly by recognising that it is indeed a

question of an *imperialist war*, and thus rooted in a mode of production that possesses its own specific characteristics. Next, by fighting *against this mode of production* and its particular economic laws. But what does this mean? What are the implications and the strategic and tactical developments involved?

The Communists’ brief, when faced with imperialist wars, has always been *revolutionary defeatism*. This means refusing to side with any of the opposing fronts and open battle against the bourgeoisie in your own country. It is true that now, after more than seventy years of counter-revolution, during which Fascism, Stalinism and democracy have given one another a hand in destroying the Communist programme, the memory of a tradition, the sense of certain concepts, it is difficult to launch a slogan like *revolutionary defeatism*. It feels like crying in the desert. Yet all the slogans of revolutionary Communists are projected towards the future, since they point both to an objective to be achieved and, at the same time, to the path that should be followed to achieve it. The time when a slogan like “*revolutionary defeatism*” will be able to mobilise and bring together the proletarian masses, carrying with them those who are tired of bleating and feel the urge to return to the fight, may seem to be a long way off. Yet this slogan encompasses a strategy which *also* regards our miserable present.

Revolutionary defeatism today means refusing to conceive of the capitalist economy as the collective good, to be defended and supported. It means refusing to yield to the blackmail of sacrifice in favour of the national economy, or “donating your work to your country”, which tomorrow becomes “donating your life to your country”. It means refusing to sacrifice your own needs in terms of living and working conditions (higher pay, shorter working hours, employment, health protection inside and outside factories, med-

ical care, pensions, housing, etc.) to the fluctuations of the national economy. It means refusing to limit, isolate, attenuate or suspend your own battles because of a “social pact”, made necessary by the “critical period the country is going through”. It means refusing to ban from prospective action terms like “*indefinite general strike without warning, halting production, workers’ pickets*”. It means refusing to think in terms of “nation” or “fatherland” and starting to think once more in terms of “class” and, above all, of “*international class*”, gathering together to support the weaker and more easily blackmailed and exploited categories, those who are (beyond all rhetoric) true class brothers – the immigrants. It means starting to build up once more a network of organised relations from factory to factory, from one struggle to the next, from one category to the next, being well aware that in all this the official trade unions (which take the fate of the national economy so much to heart) will *always* represent not a natural ally but a true enemy. It means starting once again to *side with a class to defend basic objectives* (jobs, living and working conditions, the unchal-

lenged *use of strikes as a weapon*). It means starting once more to reason in terms of *revolutionary politics*, a *revolutionary party*, real and tangible *internationalism*. These and no others are the preconditions, the first steps to take in the direction of *revolutionary defeatism*. They are already the beginnings of *revolutionary defeatism*. We are well aware that the road is a long and difficult one. It has to go through the phase of opposition to the state (which is not a neutral body but a tool for defending the interests of national capital), an arduous retrieval of concepts and habits lost in time, a break with the trade unions that have gone over to the other side of the barricades or whose practices and prospects are confused and contradictory, the worldwide reorganisation of the international Communist party, equipped with firm theory, a political programme that is not based on day-by-day improvisation, serious organisation - not one of heralds and wordmongers.

Yes: ours is a battle cry, the same that Communists have been shouting for a hundred and fifty years. Because that’s what is needed; not bleating, whining, prayers and appeals.

A leaflet **Against the imperialist war: pacifism or revolutionary defeatism?**

As the use of words yields to the use of arms, a few concepts must be urgently restated:

- imperialist war is the inevitable consequence of contradictions that are all to be found within the capitalist mode of production grounded on competition, the market, the extraction of plus-value – in a word on everyone waging war on everyone else;
- in a deeply critical phase such as the one that began halfway through the ’70s, the problem of raw materials (the control of

areas rich in them and the routes along which they are moved) becomes of prime importance, so that all countries are affected by it, *with no exceptions*;

- the new US attack in the Gulf – following the one in 1991 and subsequent attacks in Kosovo and Afghanistan – corresponds exactly to this logic of control (and containment and exclusion of other countries *just as interested* but not yet in a strong enough economic or military position to challenge the strongman of imperialism);

- we must not talk in over-simplified terms about an ‘oil war’ (or cry scandal at the connections between some puppet or other and other some oil multinational or other) but about a clash between imperialist forces equally driven by the crisis, which is a prelude – when the time is ripe – to a new world war.

It is thus truer than ever that any reply to the prospect of imperialist war that fails to envisage the necessity of a fight (long and difficult) against this mode of production, against capitalism as an economic and social system, is not only destined to fail but itself becomes a tool (no matter how involuntary) of political disarming and disorientation, of illusion and frustration. It is not useless moralising, whining, praying, appeals, signatures, petitions, waving of rainbow flags and white rags, round tables and famous names that are needed, if we really want to fight the slide downwards, through major and minor clashes, leading (not because of the evil of individuals but determined by material, economic, conditions) to new, worldwide slaughter.

We need to return to a *class* and *not an inter-class* perspective, where the historical interests of the world’s working class come first. This is the only social force truly able – when guided by revolutionary Marxism – to put a spanner in the works of imperial warfare (the latest and acute expression of the same war that is waged every day in workplaces, amidst growing

exploitation, the despair of endless migration, the misery of unemployment).

- Refuse all solidarity with the world’s ruling class and thus *first and foremost* with your own bourgeoisie *in whatever form it takes*
- Refuse all support for “the superior needs of the country” with the excuse of “the exceptional circumstances” and refuse to sacrifice your own immediate interests (living and working conditions, wages, hours, pensions, medical care) to what become “the demands of the national economy”
- Refuse to side with any of the forces at war or to support the “pacifism” of one country or another or one political force or the other, the faces of national capital which are only playing for time because they are not yet ready to join the fight
- Proclaim an indefinite general strike without limits of time or space, as a means of blocking the war effort by your country’s bourgeoisie and to show the true face of all those forces (political and trade unionist) that declare they are against war but in practice have the interests of the country’s national economy at heart (and are thus preparing for war in the long term) No pacifism, no excuses, but revolutionary defeatism!

There is no other way to stop the imperialist war or to sabotage it when it is already spreading.

A leaflet

May Day 2003

“There is no war that be not infamous, there is no peace that be desirable, until the reign of capital lasts”

Workers! Proletarians! Comrades!

Today, as in the past, the world proletariat would not only have the right, but also the duty, to pull down the national flags flown at our demonstrations, on our day of cele-

bration, by political and union leaders who have betrayed the workers’ struggle everywhere and prevent class reorganisation. Once again, as it lays whole continents to waste, the international bourgeoisie delegates to its national represen-

tatives the task of chaining the proletariat to one national interest or the other under the flag of the “fatherland”. And whilst the international chancelleries squabble over the spoils of war, the only peace, guaranteed not by an agreement between States but by the dismal power that unions and “left-wing” parties still unfortunately exercise over the masses, is the infamous “social pact”.

Never as clearly as now, perhaps, has the political and economic collapse of the bourgeois régime been so evident to the whole world. Economic crises follow one on the heels of the other, in production, in finance and on the world’s Stock Exchanges. States which ranked amongst the rich countries ten years ago are being strangled in the grip of a dramatic recession, whose backlash will soon inevitably be felt by the western powers.

Whilst unemployment, under-employment, “black” labour, starvation wages and the now unsustainable cost of living are increasing the misery of millions of exploited people everywhere, the historical strongholds of capitalism, in America and Europe, are outliving their time. Governments of every political colour, “right-wing”, “left-wing” and “centre”, have, for decades now, been obliged by the laws of the capitalist relations of production to adopt the same measures everywhere against salaried workers and, beyond the streams of rhetoric on “peace”, “freedom”, “democracy”, “human rights”, to let loose wars, to fill the prisons with immigrants and to violate at every turn the rules that they themselves established for themselves only the day before.

After half a century of imperialist “equilibrium”, new systems of alliances are more or less timidly coming forward. These are not at all the consequences of “warmongering” attitudes on the one hand or “peaceful” attitudes on the other,

as much of bourgeois propaganda would have us believe. In the imperialist age there is no “peaceful” State, no “democratic” bourgeoisie: there is the fight by financial capital, which penetrates into the pores of society, to overcome competitors, to win new markets. But, despite appearances, the old mole has continued to dig away at the contradictions of the bourgeois régime. What seemed to some naïve souls to be a monolithic and invincible “empire” like the Roman one only yesterday, is staggering under the pressure of underlying economic forces. These are smashing, a piece at a time, the system of political and economic agreements arising from the second world war. But the fall of the Roman empire, two thousand years ago, meant the dawn of a new mode of production, whilst the ruins of this one are merely a prelude to the third world war, unless the Communist revolution victoriously manages to anticipate it.

Today, whilst the imperialist vultures, reconciled to some extent after their recent arguments, will be running to Asia – headed by Russia and Europe – for the feast of “reconstruction” and the banquet of the concessions (at least the few contracts that have not already been allocated), we see the proof that the second Gulf war is just the last link in a chain of massacres that cannot be broken as long as capitalism survives.

For us international communists it is clear that only the overthrow of this cursed social régime will be able to ban war from our history. This means abandoning any disarming pacifist or reformist illusions and returning to the objectives and methods of the class struggles that have always been part of the proletarian tradition.

These are thus our tasks:

Resume the class struggle. Begin to defend anew, and vigorously, our living and work-

ing conditions, opposing the ruling class, their state and national and international capital, a battle front that does not recognise internal divisions based on age, place, nationality, gender, category, language or any other, and utilizing the most extensive and centralised struggles possible.

Permanent organisation of the proletariat. Work to recover organisms able to centralise, link and direct battles for economic defence, openly opposed to the sabotaging practices of the national unions and with a full understanding of the betrayal (to the full advantage of the bourgeois economy) by the central union organisations and opportunist parties and mini-parties.

Refusal of any concession to the State and to the national economy. Insist that the State is not an organism standing above class interests, “representing all citizens”, but the centralised and armed body that, in each country, defends the power of capital against the threat of the overwhelming majority of the exploited, and that the national economy is not a resource that belongs to everyone and which everyone should therefore take to heart, but instead the sum of capitalist interests – those that oppress and exploit us in the factories, on the streets, at the market and in our homes, and in whose name we are invited to take the side of one warring government or another.

General strike unlimited in time and space. Recognise the necessity of opposing force with force – not with colourful torchlight processions and inconclusive gatherings but retrieving the general strike as an economic and political weapon and, by means of this, striking a blow at the most delicate point of capitalist organisation: the very source of profit – produc-

tion; gathering together workers of all categories and from all regions so that they are able to experience their collective strength and make it felt once more, instead of the frustration deriving from isolation, fragmentation and passivity.

Revolutionary defeatism. Refuse to yield to the sovereign power of capital, openly proclaiming that the imperialist war will not have us, either as a tool of massacre (whether by means of the old traditional technologies or the new, sci-fi technologies), or as the victims designated for the next wars, openly breaking with the bourgeois State, no longer just at the economic level of work relations, but also politically and militarily. Not a single man or a single coin for imperialist wars: an open fight against our national bourgeoisie, be it Italian or American, German or French, Serb or Iraqi.

Fraternisation amongst the soldiers belonging to the warring armies. Declare that the nature and aims of the proletariat are international and internationalist. Turn arms against the imperialist State, demonstrate the necessity of the international union of the proletariat, above and beyond imperialist groupings and fronts, against our common enemy: capital.

We know. This is a long and difficult route but there are no alternatives. Today, like yesterday and tomorrow, the internationalist communists are in position: side by side with the proletariat of all countries and against the wars of capital, in the hard, daily work of defending and disseminating the theory of Marxism and the international party – the two weapons that will finally allow us to attack the heavens and move from the pre-history to the history of humankind.

The second Gulf War

The chain of wars will not be broken until the struggle against capital returns to revolutionary marxism

1. Engels' quotation is from the first re-edition (1895) of Karl Marx, *Le lotte di classe in Francia dal 1848 al 1850*, now found in K. Marx & F. Engels, *Il 1848 in Germania e in Francia* (Rinascita, Roma: 1948), p.122. For Lenin, see *L'imperialismo, fase suprema del capitalismo* (Rinascita, Roma: 1956), p.12.

2. In particular the following articles of our newspapers in Italien *il programma comunista*: "Allarme per lo stato dell'economia Usa" n.1, 1990; "Sulla crisi generale dell'imperialismo americano" n. 4, 1990; "A che cosa approda la 'clintonomics'" n. 2, 1993; "Piu' aggressivo che mai l'imperialismo Usa" n. 2-3, 1994; "Giappone-Usa, scontro fra monete, scontro fra imperialismi" n. 3-4, 1995; "Capitalismo senile e incontrollabilita' di flussi monetari e finanziari" n. 5, 1995; "Crisi economica e scienza marxista" n. 9-10 1998; "Dietro l'intervento americano in Iraq" n. 1, 1999; "L'imperialismo e la lotta per il controllo delle materie prime" n. 3 & n.7-8, 2000; "Corso del capitalismo: Usa," n.9, 2000; "Una nuova prova di forza nella contesa interimperialistica," n. 3, 2003.

"In evaluating events and series of events in the contemporary history one is never able to trace back to *original* causes. Even today, when the specialized technical publications provide so rich a fare, it is not possible in England as well to follow the course of commerce and industry in the world market and the changes that overtake production methods, in a manner to be able at any moment to draw up a general balance of these multiform factors, in their complexity and continuous change, in addition to which the most important factors operate in an impending fashion before erupting unexpectedly and violently onto the surface." With his usual crystal-clear manner, in 1895 Engels restated the very difficulty that had faced Marx a half century earlier when it came to applying the materialist method in his study of the 1848 revolution in France. Naturally, we must confront these same difficulties if we want to lay out the historical background in which contemporary imperialism operates, often in a contradictory and non-linear fashion. To identify the ultimate economic causes, today as in the past, is an impossible task, given their ever more twisted and complex intermingling; but identifying the historical tendency, imposed by latent laws of development, that characterize the present phase of capitalism, is not simply a possibility but an *obligatory duty for the revolutionary party*. Engels quotation may be continued with a citation from the initial pages of Lenin's *IMPERIALISM*, a book to which we will return: "To depict the objective condition [of the ruling classes of all the warring countries], there is no value in citing isolated examples or data.; the complexities of social life are such that one can always pull together a bag of examples or facts in support of any thesis. One must take the *totality* of all indices relating to the *basis* of economic conditions of the world in its *entirety*" (1).

As a result, a comparison of the two Gulf wars will allow us to identify a fundamental tendency, that in the last decade has undergone a clear historical acceleration. We will do so on the basis of a series of articles dedicated in our press to the Middle East and the course of imperialism over the span of the last ten years (2).

The first gulf war

In the US, the first Gulf war was preceded by a number of failures in banking and insurance, a growth of difficulty in the automotive sector, and a deepening of unemployment, accompanied by the spectacular stock market crashes of 1987 and 1989. The prelude to these goes back to the preceding decade. For the US this was characterized by the growing loss of

larger areas of the world market resulting from the increasing commercial aggressivity of Germany and Japan, the consequence of low internal productivity, a growing difficulty in achieving a return on capital poured into industry and agriculture, the gradual falling behind to the point of the abandonment of entire productive areas and their transfer to more lucrative areas of the world, plus technological obsolescence. The last is one of the many paradoxes of a capitalist economy in which production is for sale, and since in essence technology is a product, it is sold away to where the returns are the highest. Important sectors of American industrial capital, despite—or because of—the market crashes of 1987 and 1989 voluntarily turned to gain by speculation and financial manipulation, with the first supported by the strength of the dollar, the second by US military power as well, and both enjoying credit extended by many in the world, whether real or presumed friends and even declared enemies. This condition, certainly not new yet accelerating, represented something more than the prevalence of finance over production. Behind the change, lay an intricate process reducing the US to being the leading debtor nation, with retardation in the areas of industry, commerce, and technological innovation. With the collapse of the USSR, which seemed to open the treasures of the eastern market, there was a reduction of an important element in the US equilibrium, military spending, which deepened the visible cracks in the domestic economy, with inevitable consequence for the international scene.

In the years preceding the first Gulf war, Japan's economic growth was unprecedented, openly aspiring to be the leading power in the Asian region. Across a many-year interval, actually from 1951, it had registered at 7.1 percent annual growth, to be sure aided by the recovery from the destruction of World War and the Korean and Vietnamese Wars at its doorstep (1950s-1960s), still twice the US annual average. Until the Gulf war, this massive growth was also tied to governmental protectionism and aid in exports actuated through large conglomerates, whose prices were quite high in comparison to world-market prices. During the same period, 1975-1991, Germany registered an annual growth of close to 3 percent which allowed it to enact an expanded domestic social policy with measured increases in wages. Both nations found themselves ever more drawn into international competition with the US.

The first Gulf war gave the US some breathing space, thanks to the growth of war industry and related technologies, without resolving nevertheless internal structural difficulties. It served nonetheless as a show of force to the two German and Japanese competitors—with the latter two being better prepared in the productive field, but much less so in the military—and as a means to reaffirm the international power of the dollar and US strategic control over vital geo-strategic areas. Notwithstanding the UN cover, the war was a strong warning to the world. Having made their point, the US leadership saw no need to go on to Baghdad.

Some considerations

The first Gulf war was not, if one looks carefully, a "voluntary choice" from amongst equal options, with the decision adopted after a knowledgeable economic analysis to resolve in that fashion economic and social problems

on a world scale. In general, *no war*, unless it is one of those wars obviously intended to loot which have characterized the entire colonial phase of capitalism, is decided by Capital as a conscious solution to the difficulties in internal and foreign markets. War as a *continuation of politics by other means* is in the DNA of capitalism and is also an economic aid of the first order, but every war is decided at times at the last moment, emerging from a series of tendencies that can be also antagonistic. Nonetheless, the convergence of a number of new factors—"new," but in large measure foreseen by us well in advance—that more or less present themselves on the national and international chess board simultaneously—i.e., the collapse of the USSR, the growing antagonism in markets, the necessity well understood in the American scene of the need to undertake initiatives against experienced and competitive capitalisms (Germany, Japan), the intensification of the diplomatic offensive aiming in the same direction, renewed pressure from the military, the necessity to exploit the moment to take possession of one of the vital centers of world energy, aside from its geo-strategic importance in the future—all of which had to lead to *that war*, aside from the knowledge that the wars of capitalism always have some determined purpose, and do not occur accidentally or because of the wickedness of this or that individual, be he/she the exponent of an absolutist theocracy or the representative of the most evolved democracy.

Between the two wars

The decade following the first Gulf war witnessed a progressive intensification of the contrast and the sharpening of the tendencies afoot.

1) The US, that had reacted to internal and international tensions with a policy that was oriented to a semi-controlled liberalism ("Reaganomics"), now passed onto a phase of cautious and moderate state interventionism. Clinton's programs were oriented toward increased social spending; they sustained a re-launching of industry, at the same time showing greater aggressivity in the world markets. This is the period of NAFTA (Mexico, US, and Canada) and GATT (as an anti-CEE function), of the threat of blocking all Japanese exports to the US.

2) The clash amongst currencies begins to be felt. On the block is the decision which money system will occupy the role of world reserve currency for the entire capitalist system: a question of the first order, from the moment that this will be the terrain on which rests the destiny of the exports of goods and capitals. After the unilateral breaking of Bretton Woods, the dollar has continuously lost exchange value with the yen and the mark, even though it remains the key currency in international finance. The cost of devaluation was borne above all by Japan and Germany.

3) The crisis breaks out in Japan, which reacts to meet foreign competition with gigantic fusions between bank and industrial capitals. This led to diplomatic and commercial activity of a wide range on all the Asian area, and became more aggressive after the Gulf war leading to a commercial expansion even into Europe. With respect to the US, this was the phase

that was initiated and marked by an embryonic Germany-Japan axis, well advanced on the economic level but not on the military.

4) There is a growing speculative pressure on currencies. From 1992, with increasing frequency, all the European currencies come under speculative threats, due also to the strength of the mark. The oscillations more or less force the various governments to raise interest rates in failed attempts to oppose the rising of value of the mark. In 1994, the US increased the interest rate to counter the fall of the dollar, leading to the withdrawal of capital from abroad, from Mexico in particular, which caused the crisis in that country.

5) There are reactions to the dollar policy. After the Mexican crisis, OPEC threatens to cut itself from the dollar, substituting the mark. There is an immediate reaction, but as we will see, this is a form of extortion very dangerous to the US, and as a result destined to be renewed in future years.

6) The search for production finances becomes more frantic, along with the quest for additional financial capital. Pension, investment, and insurance funds are drawn in, all handled by transnational elements whose activity becomes uncontrollable, for all practical purposes. Speculation invades all sectors of finance and the economy; from there it translates into politics, with the resulting speculative scandals that invest governments and multinationals.

7) Diplomatic tensions become acute. Certain accords between US-EU fail; meanwhile Germany raises the question of the strategic leadership of NATO. The US reacts strongly and alludes to a break with the Kohl government, which backs down with apologies.

8) As the problem of Asia came to the fore, with China at the very center, the last decade will be remembered as one of wars, more so than its precedents. The war in the Balkans is, from several aspects, a continuation of the Gulf war, but directed at the heart of Europe, involving an area that in the past was the grazing field of German capitalism and where Russian intentions, more from necessity than desire, were no longer a factor. The campaign for rearmament, the reestablishment of a military industry, the *longa manus*—the long hand—drawn to a region that figured as transfer zone for Caucasian oil to the Mediterranean—these, not the principles of a violated democracy, are the underpinnings of a war that has rearranged the geo-politics of the Balkans.

9) *In conclusion.* The entire last decade unfolded within a phase of chronic worldwide overproduction, which led, between one thing and another, to a mad race to centralize capital and to a series of gigantic fusions across the planet. While the expectations of the “new economy” evaporated with the bursting of the stock market bubble, this led to a frenetic euphoria regarding consumption, with blowbacks on production, on profits, and again on consumption. There followed an artificially-hyped consumption, artificial because it is essentially based on credit build up not sustainable in the long run.

The background to the second gulf war

Marxist theory clearly demonstrates that absolute rent arises from the right of property; the proprietor - either single owner or imperialist state - for that reason appropriates a part of the total surplus value produced. Absolute rent is based on the monopolistic right of some against others, and assures large profits to the holders. It follows that to control ground-rents and all other forms, amongst them financial, is one of the fundamental elements of imperialism. If in the 19th century the matter was settled amongst large landowners and regions, today the struggle is between states for control of the planet.

The tensions to access these funds become particularly acute when it is a matter of energy sources that feed the economy of all states. Dependence on natural resources, and therefore the need to control prices which affect the level of profit, is the key to understanding the economy in this phase of imperialism. Control of resources determines for every nation the basis of inequality in industrial development; control of prices lie at the base of the rate of profit in each nation.

Beyond that, it must be recalled that the near totality of commerce in the sale of oil is in the broad sense carried on in dollars, since dollars are the international currency, and until now this has guaranteed to the US the role of international usurer.

The growth of US imports has transferred untold billion of dollars to the far corners of the globe. Seeking investment, these dollars have returned to the US in the form of purchased government bonds and stocks, even if risky and speculative. In these circumstances, the first to lose will be those whose naiveté led them to place their "faith" in such certificates, and those proletarians of this or that company or state agency forced into becoming stock holders, often of "their" company.

Therefore, in the forced and unnatural growth of the rate of profit, one must not discount the primacy enjoyed by the dollar as international currency. This is a condition that appears increasingly dubious, as noted with the worsening exchange rates notwithstanding the tie between dollars and the price of natural resources.

The dollar became the fiduciary international currency from the time after the Second World War, when the gold standard was dropped. The dollar's "backing" rested on the victorious military outcome of 1945, and the subsequent penetration of American goods into all world markets. But it remains "the currency of one state and as such is intrinsically tied to the fortunes of that state. It follows that having extended the dollar to the entire world as the international valuta, this means that the destiny of the world is tied to the US" (3) and, as a consequence, the fate of the US to the world. In the 19th century, sterling occupied the role of the dollar, but at that time there was nothing like the present financial rent because England, the principal exporter, was also the principal importer. Today, instead, the commercial exchange between the US and the world moves in only one direction, since the US are absolute importers. "Sooner or later,

3. See our article "*Monete nazionali e internazionali*" in "*Prometeo*," n. 12, January-February, 1949, p. 546.

dollars circulating abroad will end up being spent in the US; hence the economies of the other nations assume an ever more dependent and artificial characteristic subject to all the dangers implicit if or when at any moment the dollar crisis deepens and transforms even that 'strong valuta' into a namesake for hot potatoes, for all who possess it" (4). Today, menacing clouds are gathering over the dollar, threatening to turn it into a "hot potato" for all owners: the clouds are represented by the euro.

4. *Ibid.*, p. 547.

How may one measure the actual "power" of the US? To be sure, we are not referring to its military might, which appears to be much less imposing today than during the lightening war of last April. We are dealing with something else: that is, if this "might" is not about to collapse its role as the economic-political powerhouse in the arena of world imperialism. The reality is the US can be "blackmailed" with a play on its currency; their technology is on the whole in the hands of multinationals and foreign companies; they are heavily dependent on the ingesting of foreign financial capital; they are not able to sustain wars all over the world; and everywhere they incite growing anti-American nationalist reactions in the nations of the Third World.

The US is without doubt the first military power of the world. On the basis of this obvious consideration, there have arisen all too often erroneous beliefs in the possibility of revolutions. The military might of a state is a reflection of its actual economic strength, and it can be nothing else than that. The thesis according to which the US enjoys some sort of international mandate financed by the world in return for some sort of international police service, that is advanced by some theorists, makes sense only in the expansive phase of the last imperialist cycle when, with its victory in the World War, the US imposed its capital on the entire world. However, the question that has begun to emerge with ever greater clarity is the following: how long will American economic superiority continue to dominate the world with its dollar, production, markets, thereby allotting to itself vast chunks of international surplus value? Additionally, when the international economy shows accelerating signs of sinking, and the inter-imperialist relationships are such as to recall into consideration the very equilibria and rapports that had been settled and seemingly enjoyed international authority—to be sure, here too always decided by necessity, not pious wishes—can the US continue to manifest "unilateral" hegemony in a world globally in crisis?

The question of reconstruction

It's an old tune sung by the upholders of imperialism, the affirmation that this world is more democratic with regard to the old colonial system thanks to the abandonment of overseas empire and the practice of "protectorates." In reality, the old empires were abandoned because they had become too expensive to run militarily and generated too much social instability. Whatever is the future status of Iraq, it will not remain as in the past. Imperialism has substituted the old system based on a colonial occupation with another that is far more remunerative for the capitalistic economy: financial control of vassal countries. Financial domination has eliminated all the old boundaries of the strongest former empires, has sub-

jugated the weakest to ties of economic indebtedness, but under the laws of dialectics the same fetters fit around the necks of the strongest. The in-house local governments become intermediaries for the banks of the strongest imperialist state. In the second postwar, this was the US. At the same time, the clash between the stronger imperial states becomes more acute, leading to the impositions of duties on imports and the commercial wars involving agricultural products and steel, etc.

Given these premises, that all Marxists agree have operated for a century in the world economy, one can more easily understand how one of the primary aims of the US in Iraq had to be the Iraqi state bank, its top offices and the political ties leading out from them, that constituted for decades the control of the nation under the ruffian leadership of Saddam.

Some of the democratic press has suggested that the US intervention was motivated exclusively by oil, and more precisely by the fact that the White House is decisively in the hands of a *camarilla* that controls some private companies dealing heavily in oil. There has been a diligent listing identifying of names of people close to Bush, underlining what the Italian moralists identify as the highest degree of "conflicts of interests." It has been said that this or that American company, whose corporate leadership was headed by this or that figure of the Bush administration, is receiving, or has received, fat contracts. Other "observers" have carefully drawn up diagrams which candidly illustrate how non-US companies are being "screwed" out of the feeding trough. And not simply in the figurative sense. That this could be one form of US pay-back to its "allies" is so obvious a possibility that no time should be lost commenting on it. Nonetheless, we must stress that not one of these "allies" - Germany, France, and Russia in the lead—was against the war on Iraq *in principle*. They would have supported the war if *their conditions*, that of an equal division of booty had been met. But it was clear that these states, notwithstanding the sour grapes and their impulse to intervene quickly with their raggedy police forces, remained left out like the "cockled" husband looking on from afar. The booty had been identified from before the beginning, and it was not simply a matter of Iraq's notorious wealth, oil. One must credit the Bush camp for having played its hand without compromise: from March 2003, Bush's goal consisted in the privatization of some 200 Iraqi state structures described as a capitalist *bonanza*, and the creation of an independent central bank. Independent means *not dependent on the old Iraqi regime* which at the onset of 2000 had planned a conversion in international dealings from dollars to euros. "Independent" signifies *completely dependent on the International Monetary Fund and US-dominated World Bank*. Hence in a news item little noted in the international press, on July 7 the US announced the substitution of Iraqi currency by a *renovated autonomous central bank* (5). The military-industrial complex at the leadership of the US has to impose on Iraq an immediate return to the dollar, thus sending out a warning to the other ruffian regimes - Iran and Saudi Arabia in the lead, but also Nigeria and Venezuela, and to those contemplating a conversion to the euro - that no flight from the dollar will be tolerated.

Beyond that reason, one may consider other motivations having to do with oil or with geo-strategic location.

5. R.A. Oppel Jr., "Iraqi Economy Faces Key Changes", *International Herald Tribune*, July 8, 2003.

The cost of production of a barrel of petroleum in the Middle East may reach \$1.50 whereas the extraction of the same quantity of oil from the Gulf of Mexico, with the added expense of a platform rig at sea and transportation to port, may reach \$13 or more. On the world market the price of a barrel may range from \$22-28. As one can see, the differential rent would lead to a gushing of dollars to the US, needed to cover the frightening hole in the balance of payments and in closing the huge domestic deficit, and would be in addition to the capital in-flow resulting in the purchase of US paper. But while the first two would leave domestic enterprises the freedom to act, the last gives competing imperialisms the opportunity to acquire chunks of the US economy.

If these considerations are accurate, we can well understand how the Iraqi question brings into play a gambit that embraces the entire globe, and that Iraq, posited between the course of ocean-going tankers and Central Asia, also a fountainhead of future oil, is a crossroads where today the contentions are still muffled, but remains a site with the potential of future inter-imperialist conflicts.

To everyone his own troubles

As we have seen, the second war in Iraq must be seen in relation to a *tendency* in imperialism's contemporary historic phase. It consists in the acceleration of a generalized process of crisis in the sector of industrial production, and its affect on the circulation of finance capital, a rapport that, necessarily, ends by being reciprocally dependent. The consequence is the growth of military and nationalist tensions that are found in all states. We produced data to support that view, stressing that, whatever the reason advanced for the military intervention in the Middle East, its enactment is not based on one or another options, but on an *all together of factors that reciprocally interact*—from control of oil resources to the flow of financial and rental returns, to the military and diplomatic pressure arising from the chancelleries of the main imperialist states, and the obscure pressures of state and private lobbies.

Meanwhile in Iraq, the Western armed forces continue their actions that should prepare the ground for the arrival of the technicians from oil companies authorized by the American government. It is true that the armed partisan resistance is creating increasing obstacles, tapping into religious, nationalist and populist sentiments. The attacks on the pipelines and not only on the foreign military but against Western civilians as well suggest that the Iraqi bourgeoisie, born and nourished on the oil revenues, cannot and is opposed to abandoning its interests. This has led to a number of American fatalities and downed helicopters, particularly near the huge Mosul fields, an area craved by American companies led by Exxon-Mobil. There have been English losses too, who are compensated at least intentionally with the oil basins around Basra. Even the Italians have had to endure some casualties, with the attack on the position at Nassiriya, situated on ENI's (is the Italian state oil company) "turf," where it has the prospect of making some 2 billion dollars (6). And the French, Germans and Russians who had contracted with Saddam for an ample crack at the oil?

6. *Il Sole-24 Ore*, November 123, 2003.

We are not privy to the secret deals amongst the imperialistic governments, but no one wants to remain with an empty hand; international retaliations are to be (will be?) expected soon. The real banquet has not yet begun, even if there is much to indicate that the fare will be somewhat strongly tainted.

7. In social and historical situations one acts not merely with brute force, but more often "the actions of individuals may be coerced by a simple threat or the approval of violent actions". This form of violence - potential or virtual - "is an indispensable fact in the unfolding of history and in the alternating of classes and institutions. This is not a matter of praising or condemning, but of recognizing what is unfolding at various times and in various situations..." Quotation taken from our text, "*Forza, violenza, dittatura nella lotta di classe*," in *Prometeo*, n.8, 1947, now in *Partito e classe* (Edizioni Il programma comunista, Milan, 1972).

8. *Italia Oggi*, November 6, 2003.

In these last weeks the scene has been enriched by new indications even in the possibility of "potential violence" (7). The US has intensified pressures on the monetary exchange rate, devoting its attention above all to the Chinese *renminbi* - Bush's trip to Beijing followed in the line of those seeking some Asian bone to gnaw - and to the Japanese yen. The act was similar to the one after the first Gulf war: an accelerated tendency to devalue the dollar, the lure of the Asian markets, and, with respect to 1990, pressure on the euro. In 2003, the dollar has lost some 30 percent against the euro, and 10 percent against the yen. Intended to beat the competition in the world markets, this move has not been sufficient to keep industrial plants from utilizing no more than 75 percent of their capacity.

On the other hand, the US must do all it can in the coming months to re-establish - at least on the level of propaganda - its economic credibility at home. The "re-launch" may take all of one morning, but is indispensable if Bush is to present himself in the 2004 presidential election with all his cards in order. It's not an easy move to carry out, given the objective tensions in the world today. The European Union will not remain with its hands in pocket, and has declared all the Balkans as a "free trade zone" seeking to find oxygen for its own "zero growth." Meanwhile, within the borders of the US, there is the possibility of tariffs being placed on imported goods, from steel to food imports, that may reach penalties of 4 billion dollars (8).

In Asia, all seek to survive. China which has already become the manufacturer for the world produces goods at such low prices that they invade all markets: this puts China into conflict with the US, but China cannot revalue the *renminbi* in view of menacing social conditions induced by a growth rate of over 8 percent. Japan responded to the decade-long crisis in her financial and productive sectors with a politically rigid salary policy and a series of gigantic restructuring steps that depress internal demand, and is clearly reluctant to proceed to a re-evaluation of the yen.

Anti-imperialism or anti-capitalism

In this arena of tensions, there is an indispensable and urgent need for an international movement arising from the base of production and finance to pose clearly the question of autonomous *class power*. The decades-long counterrevolution has nurtured the worse confusion amongst the working class and its potential allies; to be frank, attention is now dominantly influenced by petty-bourgeois tendencies that run the gamut from a simplistic, romanticized rebelliousness to an actual genuflection before the ruling class. Under these guidelines, the struggle is never directed against the economic structure of capital, but against its social, political, and military manifestations: i.e., above all, *against imperialism*. Of the actual structure, that is, the very heart of how capital forms itself on the

body of labor, *the anti-imperialist movement shows no interest*. In fact, for the longest period, that movement does not recognize the existence of social classes, each marked by its own character and historical prospects. At most, the movement perceives "the exploited" and "the exploiters," "rich" and "poor." Hence, this anti-imperialist struggle, not to be confused with the classical movement that arose after the First World War, has grown for the most part out of a popular reaction against injustice, against the unequal distribution of wealth, against exploitation - for more peace, democracy and liberty. Every time a new aggression appears imminent, or new tendencies indicate new worldwide disequilibria, the reaction takes the form of anti-Americanism, although always in retardation to the event. The anti-imperialist movement sees the social problems as essentially *moral*, and the object of the struggle becomes, then, to act against this or that interest - from high finance to the oil barons, to a certain commercial group, all capable of any infamy in the extant monopolistic system.

First of all, we note that the implication of these tactics is that a determining class system does not exist. Moreover, "the people" are asked to oppose, "by turn", a "killer" of innocents, a "bandit" who will sack the planet, a "liar" who will seduce the innocents. We also must stress that the pacifists' tendency to reduce the Anglo-American attack on Iraq or elsewhere to a simple matter of stealing the oil resources is not only an oversimplification, but displays a fundamental misconception of the entire historical process now afoot. When, despite huge pressures from Great Britain, Iran nationalized the oil industry on October 22, 1952 and Mossadegh broke off diplomatic relations, it took only 10 months to depose him; by the spring of 1954, a consortium of Western oil companies had made a triumphal return to Teheran, while the US was ladling out its usual "humanitarian aid" in the form of a conspicuous distribution of dollars. And when in 1958 General Kassem, after having overthrown the Iraqi monarchy, began to lay claim to the oil fields and raised the question of Iraqi claims to Kuwait, a British protectorate at the time, it took only a bit longer (4 years) to dispose of him. Summarily, how long have the Western imperialist powers run into difficulties in dealing with the Middle East? And why has it become necessary to occupy territories *today*?

What pacifism cannot understand is the simple fact that *imperialism has no other choice*, and that the fictitious political independence possible in the past, reinforced with the occasional lopping of heads, no longer works today because of the presence of new factors: the American need to cut European and other "allies" out of the Middle East; to damper excessive "independence" by the Iraqi financial bourgeoisie, as always, ever ready to go to the best offer (the euro), and so on. In general, the *petite bourgeoisie* is unable to grasp that capitalism can no longer be led back to a liberal phase, and that by its very nature must move on to its last phase, fascism. In economics, this is "an attempt at self-control and self-limitation of capitalism, to limit through some centralized discipline the more alarming economic aspects that tend to render unsupportable the contradictions of the system"; from an ideological point of view - and one should not underestimate the persuasive fascination of imperialism - fascism will not hesitate "to mouth a mythological program of universal values, and

9. From our text: "*Le tesi della Sinistra - il ciclo storico del dominio della borghesia*" to be found in *Per l'organica sistemazione dei principi comunisti* (Edizioni il programma comunista, Milano, 1973), pp. 79-80.

10. Lenin, *Imperialismo*, p.83.

11. That historically has nothing to do with the lurid terrorism in the nationalist matrix pullulating in the toxic cultural mix of the bourgeois mafias, private or state.

having turned them upside down espouse the need for liberal collaboration of classes... The fulcrum of this new ideology will no longer consist of Liberty and Equality, but the Nation, the Homeland, the People, the deified State" (9) - and in the US, Democracy, of course!

The road taken by pacifism

1914 forever closed off one phase of capitalism, that devoted to democratic and liberal societies. The capitalist economy continued to retain a progressive function in the development of productive forces. As a consequence, notwithstanding the fight Marxism waged against social-democratic politics, there developed in the working class a reformist current that led to the defeat of the revolutionary movement, moving each party to support its own bourgeoisie in the world war, thereby destroying internationalism and leading millions of proletarians to their deaths.

Eighteenth century reformism believed it stood at the head of an ascending phase of history. The world wars of the 20th century have demonstrated that capitalism has exhausted its forward thrust. It has nothing more to give, if not dramatizing its policing and military capabilities, in the midst of which totally disoriented masses are offered ever new *democratic reforms* by a bureaucratized leadership. The enormous growth of financial capital in rapport to productive capital, the transformation of the state from the organizer of internal markets and production to parasitic structure of a usurious nature, the intermingling of state and private monopolies to become simply "rings in a chain of imperialistic struggles amongst the most conspicuous monopolies for division of the world" (10) all of which render any form of pacifist class collaboration the most precious ally of capital. By proposing a return to a liberal-democratic stage of capitalism, pacifism becomes, in fact, both a reactionary theory and a defeatist movement in relation to the class struggle.

Pacifism represents an additional form of potential violence, by ideologically "aggressing" against the forces that seek social emancipation. Beyond that, by actually creating obstacles to a reawakening class movement, pacifism cannot oppose - if only from the fact that as a projection of a "half-class," it is singularly without power - the ever growing militarization of society. But this militarism, that remains in the shadows as long as the bourgeoisie is able to deal with their affairs in a peaceful manner, leads to, in times of international tension, the penetration into the proletariat of the worst of ideologies - the patriotic and nationalistic. Having exhausted its role, at that juncture pacifism consigns the workers movement to its enemy.

If pacifists have always claimed success in impeding the growth of class struggle, they have never been able to prevent an imperialist conflict from breaking out, with the slaughter of millions of proletarians sent to butcher and be butchered on every frontier. Priests or holy men of all races and religions - now no longer in name of peace alone, but of a superior value: defense of "civilization" or of a "democracy" in danger - have blessed the national flags, the guns in defense of the "homeland in danger," the struggle against "class terrorism." (11) Pacifists in time of

peace, belligerent in time of war, but always in the service of capital, one history of the past two centuries. Tomorrow, the proletariat should treasure this memory.

Third Worldism

Amongst the faux opponents to the war in Iraq, one could not miss the phalanx of the anti-imperialist "third-world groups."

Generally developing from a moral consideration, that recognizes the real phenomena of growing third-world debt amongst the poorer nations and the proletarianization of ever wider areas of peasantry, composed of the landless, small landowners and strata of obsolete artisans ruined by industrialization, the "third-worlders" base themselves on the anti-Americanism US economic and political policies have stirred up around the world. In the third-worlders' ideological make-up there is no understanding of the general process of proletarianization that has engulfed the poorer regions of the planet; they view the intrusion of business men, financiers, and representatives of large capital into the "internal affairs of a country" as the consequence of sinister maneuvers. Let's be honest, in a sense that is usually the case, to the degree that the economics of imperialism rests "on a personal union between the bank and the major industrial and commercial enterprises, creating a fusion either by means of stock ownership or the combination of the foreign banks one way or the other with the native enterprises" (12); the mind of third-worldism is unable to comprehend that the investment of capital in the form of money or goods is an unarrestable aspect of the contemporary mode of production.

12. Lenin, *Imperialismo*, p. 49.

Three "errors" in the service of capital

As we have said, third-worldism has a dubious understanding of imperialism, not seen as a superstructure of capitalism but as a sort of new mode of production with hybridized feature. As a direct consequence one might say, it deduces three decisive errors on the level of political program, rendering pacifism anti-imperialist on the face of things and anti-communist in reality.

The *first error* is the total abandonment of the classical communist view that the fulcrum of revolution is found *in the very heartland of the imperialist metropolises*, the pulsating centers of the economy, without whose overturn no social transformation is possible in any part of the globe. The transfer of this fulcrum to the deserts of the Middle East or the tropical and equatorial forests following the flow of rivulets from financial or commercial capital is itself a consequence of the retardation of the social struggles in the industrialized nations, as are also the ferocious struggles that have occurred in the ex-colonies throughout the 20th century. This is the "peasant revolution" longed for in the views of Che Guevara and Castro, the historical transformation that these ideologies would wish to see realized by a conglomerate of classes destined to disappear with the capitalist economy. For this reason communists have no program that upholds the struggle of the small landholder in defense of his limited property, or

13. So wrote F. Engels in his "*Critica al programma del partito socialista francese*" 1892, cited in the Italian translation now in "*Non è un partito proletario quello che corteggia la piccola proprietà contadina*" in *Il programma comunista*, n. 13, 1961.

14. Lenin, *L'imperialismo*, pp. 111-112.

for the division of the feudal estates. "There is no worse disservice we can render to the party or to the small peasantry than to awaken even the thought that we intend to defend everlastingly small-parceled property. It would be like closing the road to liberation for the small peasantry... On the contrary, the duty of our party is to indefatigably explain that their condition is without hope so long as capitalism is in power, that it is impossible to hold on to their parceled piece; *that it is unavoidable that large-scale capitalist production will pass over their small aggregate*, impotent and technically laggard, *the way a train could barrel through a train stop. Behaving in such a fashion we would indicate the inevitability of economic development, that would indicate to the small peasantry the correctness of our position*" (13). That the same holds true in our days for the small artisan and the small store owner of the urban areas is obvious.

On this question, the Communist International in 1920 laid out the correct tactics in keeping with Marxism. Every help to anti-imperialist movements would have been extended at the time, but only within the prospective of the *permanent revolution* taken from the 1850 Instruction of the Central Committee of the League of Communists. The social basis of this program could only be the industrial proletariat that had achieved its first victory in backward Russia of 1917.

The *second error* is to seek goals that have been by-passed by history, to wit, the condition of liberal democracy, according to which each nation is to be allowed to select its own particular development; as if this were possible on the basis of some mysterious force, in a harmonious fashion following a conscious plan, not only in defiance of all historical evidence but also in the absence of any real possibility. But is an autonomous economic development possible in the newly industrialized countries? More to the point, is some sort of technical progress possible not only in these nations but also in the those of the older capitalism? "To the degree that one introduces, if only momentarily, monopoly prices [and monopoly is the deepest economic base of imperialism], one paralyzes, to a point, the incentive to technical progress and every other form of progress... The tendency to stagnation and putrefaction, that is the character of monopoly, continues" (14). Those are words written almost ninety years ago, and since confirmed by thousands of pages, accounts, tables, and world conferences that today testify to the increased misery of the Third World!

Born from a basis of gradual-reformism, one is not surprised that third-worldism does not betray itself even when it finds itself in a situation where capitalism is fully developed, as is the case with the region of Central and South America. The support rendered to struggling movements is not based on a criticism that is fundamental and capable of illuminating the relations between classes, but rests principally on a confusion typical of opportunism when it comes to explaining the role of classes and their historical function.

Therefore, after having declared the class struggle to be dead and buried in the Western nations, anti-imperialism resurrects the same in

lands of recent capitalism but in hybrid fashion, attributing the function to historically non-antagonistic classes that are found in the populist "*minestrone*," and therefore deprived of social legitimacy. The result is the obsessive demands for more democracy, more liberty and more development. On the theoretical basis of third-worldism, one discounts the move to practical action. Since we are in the hands of ideologies whose social bases are represented by the middle classes served by contradictory economic interests, rising today and falling tomorrow, it follows that contrary to their exclamations on globalism and internationalism the adherents of these views are always ready to impede any autonomous action by the local proletariat, whilst standing on a nationalist platforms that defend native capital against a foreign competitor, national banks against a foreign banks, and uphold native control of resources against foreign seizure.

The *third error*, the consequence of the other two, is the self-limitation of the movement to the *national concerns of the underdeveloped nations*, demonstrating more than anything else the deforming, anti-internationalist heritage left by the Stalinist-Maoist schools of "national liberation." The laborious reconstruction that our party undertook in the course of a series of analyses starting in the 1950s on this crucial theoretical Marxist position, dedicated to a scientific study of the development of capitalism, which we returned to in the last twenty years, is there to confirm once again how today and yesterday the "national factor" represents the touchstone with regard to the positions of adversaries.

In an early period, it was necessary to define the "geo-historic areas" in which *that* economic problem - the passage from conditions of mercantilism to capitalism - and *that* political problem - the transitory alliances amongst anti-feudal classes - were to be raised, and in *what* conditions. Marx had already indicated that after 1871 all of Europe was to be excluded from any return to the national question and compromises based on class collaboration. For this reason, European communists fought without respite amongst other things against those clearly reactionary and petite-bourgeois ideologies that espied in totalitarian monopolies - as much as they were anti-liberal in economics politics and anti-liberal in politics - a tendency to return to an anti-capitalist and anti-democratic eighteenth-century feudalism, and in the process ensnaring a bewildered proletariat in the nets of a *united front* with his enemies.

Today like yesterday, it is necessary to take a good look at some of the fundamental components "third-worldism." In short, these are: 1) if, and to what degree, there exists in a given country forms of production belonging to diverse historical areas; 2) if, and in what measure, these contrasting forms have generated conflicts amongst antagonistic classes—if, that is, the bourgeoisie continues to play a progressive role in the development of productive forces; 3) if, and to what degree, the overall arrangement of the economic relations amongst the various states near or afar—financial flows, exports of raw materials, of labor, of manufactures, and so on—and the forms that at a given moment the growth of class struggle makes possible an intervention into the internal social dynamics; 4) and finally, even in the case that in

15. Lenin, "*Sotto la bandiera altrui*" in *Opere complete*, Vol. 21, p. 129.

the interior of that given area there arises violent class struggles amongst social classes, to determine if they really represent a rapport between forces and programs that are historically antagonistic. The analyses our party conducted on the development of imperialism, not only in the metropolis but even of geo-historical areas seemingly peripheral at one time such as Asia, the Middle East, South America and a good part of Africa, led us to the conclusion that components 1, 2 and 4 are already largely *passé*, whereas as regards the positions of the classes in play, notwithstanding the complexity of the movements of non-linearity, and even the heterogeneity indicated by the positions, programs, and deviations more or less indicated with respect to the general tendency of the historical becoming, the following affirmations are as useful today as they were yesterday: "We can know and we know what class is at the center of this or that epoch, determining the fundamental contents, the principal direction of development, the essential particularities of the historical situation" (15).

Third-worldism and Iraq

What is the significance of the Iraqi affair? The trajectory of its economy was anticipated in our criticism of nations of recent formation. The Iraqis had to close the gap that separates them from the advanced nations making use of an accelerated development possible only through the acquisition of technology and manufactures from other nations. In the past, Japan was the classical example. But in Iraq no form of industrial development around some significant productive capital proved possible, perhaps for reason of geographical location, or for reasons of transportation, or the high costs of starting up in a region with low productivity. The only attraction for Anglo-American capital were the immense oil resources, that rely on an essentially imported technology to which the native bourgeoisie eventually hitched its wagons, leading to a slow but gradual growth of an industrial base of some weight. For the most part, though, this is a parasitic capitalism of the nth degree, living from an international financial network resting on the value of the dollar. With Iraq, there is also the matter of dealing with heads filed with a mystical religiosity, a parallel to the democratic mysticism found in the West. This helps make understandable why in view of the more than 75 percent unemployment found in the laboring force (the London "*Economist*"), the Iraqi proletariat does not find within itself the reason and strength to react, and therefore falls - as did the European proletariat more than fifty years ago - into the trap of supporting a partisan resistance, under the flag of the national bourgeoisie.

With all that, in following the lead set down by the "prophets" of "socialism in one country," from Stalin to Mao to Castro, third-worldism has nothing better to say than to repeat the shameful lie of the duty "to defend the national identity," or to continue the struggle against a "rapacious" foreign capital; meanwhile, anti-globalism continues to declaim with disdain every "interrupted dialogue," pretending not to notice that the proletariat is not only excluded, but will never participate, except when compelled on the heels of the first roar of the cannon.

What we stand for

In contrast to the pacifists and third-worldism who have no programs of action or final goals to defend, communists stand for the following clear positions.

1. Just as war emerges from capitalism, so democracy is congenial to the natures of capitalism and war.

2. Proletarians don't have to chose between opposing forces, divided as they are by differences of flag, language or race. They are opposed all the wars of capital, and these will be ended only by a revolutionary war.

3. We are not obliged to enter the ranks of *liberal* or *neocon* thinkers of USA provenance in defense of a new order or whatsoever liberty; or obliged to stand amongst those marching in support—with words alone—of nationalism or pan-Arabism.

4. The two wars of the Gulf were NOT wars of the rich against the poor, of the North against the South. They are expression of tensions that rip through the subsoil of world imperialism, and that at the moment pits an uncertain coalition led by the USA against a local financial bourgeoisie, racist like all the others.

5. The business of Iraqi reconstruction can bring about solidarity and cohesion amongst some predators, and tensions and envy from the excluded from the banquet. In Iraq, the "resistance" in name of the defense of the country, of one's "own" capital, of one's "laws", is the total negation of classical communism.

6. For the small and middle bourgeois, laic or religious, "peace" stands for a class-collaborative pacifism. Candlelight parades, round tables, marches, and petitions do the work of the war-makers because they hinders the rearming of the proletariat. *IF* pacifists could be consistent, they would recognize that moral reasons serve those who want the war because they must fight it, as well as those who oppose and must endure it. They would understand that the moral stance of each side rests on material bases, having little to do with to the rights of man or the violation of God's will. The only admissible pacifism is revolutionary: Not pacifism, but class war; not class collaboration, but the unity of the proletariat against all enemies!

7. Both pacifism and third-worldism speak in the name of violated rights, both national and international. But domestic national rights are guaranteed by the very courts and bodies committed to social repression, as does military force in relations amongst states. The strongest has enjoyed always the "right" to violate international norms, and then arrogates to itself the right to re-establish new norms. Far from rejecting this practice, communists defend this right for the armed proletariat, and its full application on the day of victory.

We have discussed herein positions that are basic and indispensable, to which we will return in the future: they remain the only point of departure from which to mount a class opposition to the wars of capitalism.

*On The “Anti-Global Movement”:***“Pious Wishes” Will Not Stop the Destructive Course of Capitalism. Only the International Proletariat, Led by its Party, Can Put an End Once and For All to the System of Profit, Exploitation, Destruction and Wars**

“A ‘struggle’ against the politics
of the trusts and the banks which
does not strike at the economic basis
of the trusts and the banks can only
be a pacifism and a bourgeois
reformism, so many so pious wishes.”

Lenin, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism* (1917)

The “anti-global” movement, the “movement of movements”, “Seattle people”, “civil society”, “globalization from below”, “Global Social Forums”: a rainbow of names, acronyms, definitions, covering a wide variety of positions and at the same time a substantial lack of political discourse. This, in brief, is the true reality of the movement which, in recent years, has captured the attention of the media, always timely in building castles in the air and offering them up to the audience as the last word in modernity (or, depending on one’s taste, “post-modernity”!). This movement has inevitably given rise to its “master thinkers”, the radical chic journalists and intellectuals always ready to ride the crest of the wave, with egos that swell proportionally. But communists must “patiently explain”, as Lenin said, and thus, patiently, to that we turn.

QUESTIONS OF METHOD*Going Over Old Ground*

Our method consists in examining and evaluating facts (both those of yesterday and of today) in the light of Marxist science. We thus move entirely against the grain of bourgeois ideology, which goes about extracting “theories” and “strategies” from the facts, as they present themselves, but which isolates every individual fact as something *new* requiring on every occasion *new* interpretations, *new* answers, *new* tactics. On the contrary, the power of communism consists precisely in its capacity to deduce from the analysis of the capitalist mode of production in its complexity the laws of its comportment (on the economic level as well as in the domains of the social and the political) – laws destined to retain their validity for the entire historical arc

of the dominance of this mode of production.

It is not a question of foresight and still less is Marxism for us a Bible from which to extract the appropriate chapter and verse, opening up *Capital* at random. Marxism is, rather, a *science* which, in the course of more than a century and a half, has demonstrated its own validity (and only we, as internationalist communists, can affirm this with such certainty and serenity, after having fought against all the deformations, the reversals, the distortions and the betrayals of Marxism, from Social Democracy to Stalinism). A science which, in contrast to bourgeois science, is not conditioned or limited by the inexorable law of profit, but which was on the contrary born whole from the economic, social and political subsoil (and not from the ingenious minds of “singular thinkers”), and can show itself in all its truly powerful possibilities to be a real exploration probe of today, yesterday and tomorrow.

A Faceless “People”

The variety of positions which set apart this proteiform phenomenon can only be of interest to a bourgeois sociologist or to a diligent state police inspector. On the other hand, a materialist inquiry immediately uncovers a tenacious common thread unifying all these “movements”.

The movements in fact contain French peasants pushing chauvinist agendas; priests and popes of various confessions, but all of them hand in glove with anti-communist ecumenicism; radical intellectuals with a wide audience, such as Rifkin and Klein; trade unions historically and traditionally connected with unbreakable chains to their own government bosses, such as the American AFL-CIO (to say nothing of the three major Italian unions!); ecologists looking for

“solutions” within the framework of the capitalist economy; Third Worldists calling for the abolition of debts only to rush to the feet of the rulers of the bourgeois world with the declared aim of obtaining lucrative loans; NGO’s, proud of their own (unconscious?) role as a bridgehead of imperialism in the markets of the Third World (like the missionaries in the epoch of colonialism); anarchists and anarcho-syndicalists who have become (and not the day before yesterday) tireless supporters of democracy as an abstract social form. The common thread unites all of them with the formless and unprincipled ideologies of the middle classes, which, consciously or not, they all embrace with enthusiasm.

These people, after having put forward a banal analysis of imperialism – one moreover acceptable to any crackpot – then converge to defend something like the “program for action” we find well summarized in the latest issue (July-August 2001) of *Bandiera Rossa*, the Italian publication of the Unified Secretariat of the Fourth International: defense of public services; struggle against pollution; defense of jobs; struggle for land; cancellation of the debt; democracy: anything goes on a laundrylist from reformism to a prayer to Our Father Who Art In Heaven. To these points, we can add others, taken for example from the “Declaration of the NGO Millennium Forum” (May 2000): a different distribution of resources; international peace and demilitarization; “fair trade, not free trade”; a rigorous political control of investments in the underdeveloped countries; an end to genetic piracy ¹.

We could moreover continue, quoting from the countless documents produced during these months: the

1. We quote from the Italian version, in M. Pianta, *Globalizzazione dal basso. Economia mondiale e movimenti sociali*, Manifestolibri 2001, p. 163. Subsequent quotations are from the same text.

creation of a fund for the struggle against poverty; taxation of short-term transactions on international financial markets to help poor countries ("Tobin Tax"); the strengthening of the entrepreneurial capacity of indigenous people, who could thus become "self-employed" (which is nothing but the pious and absurd wish to develop a class of local entrepreneurs capable of exploiting local manpower: the unacknowledged objective of the... "national road to exploitation"!)). And we neglect here the whining about on the "struggle" against disease, the exploitation of women, the lack of "education", armaments...

In essence, the main documents in which the "Seattle people" have expressed their own opinions about imperialism are a Franciscan hymn to the human being, to freedom for all, to the "common fatherland", to peace and security – all these wonderful things which are, nonetheless, threatened by globalization under the control of the great multinationals, which increases inequality within and among countries. States are becoming weaker (which, for "civil society", is obviously a threat to peace and freedom), while the transnational private sector is becoming stronger and stronger, and the free and uncontrolled market is "destroying many national economies". The result: "the entire edifice will collapse with grave consequences for everyone" (it is clear that "civil society" cannot conceive of any social form except that in which it can wheel and deal).

***So Many Programs,
All Of Them Petty-Bourgeois***

The technique of counter-revolution is always the same: a monster takes shape which is declared to be outside of capitalism, and against this monster people expose themselves with blunted and rigorously inter-classist weapons in the

name of peace and freedom. This was the nature of anti-fascism, and it is the nature of the anti-globalization movement of today. Tenaciously rooted in the humus of reformism, all these movements have nothing, and can have nothing to say on the *fight for a revolutionary international class autonomy*; on the dialectical relationships which exist between *class struggle, classes and a class party*; on the *principles and ends of such a struggle*; on the *historical necessity* of breaking any tie to the middle classes, to the state apparatus and to opportunism.

Where were the anti-globalists when, in Genoa, a few weeks before the G8 meeting, the police charged, with the greatest enthusiasm, against the steel, metal and auto workers who had thrown themselves into a struggle for bread and their jobs? Where was "civil society" during the tremendous clashes between the police and the laid-off Daewoo workers several months earlier? For what reason could they not muster the energy to show up in the plazas of Argentina, filled with tens of thousands of starving demonstrators?

But, it will be said, "What about *violence*? Don't we have here *two totally different movements*, one insurrectionary, the other reformist? Is it not perhaps true that the most determined groups used violence (however blindly), but a violence both generous and class-based? Perhaps poorly led, but revolutionary? Do we not therefore have a duty to come to the defense of those who 'struggled', leaving in their wake dead, wounded and prisoners, against the forces of the police at the recent meetings of the G8 (Genoa being the last instance), thus, for these same reasons, going up against the state and against imperialism?"

There is no doubt that the bestial violence which the Italian state (following

the Swedish state, the Czech state etc.) displayed at the G8 meeting in Genoa only confirms that this “right-wing” government, exactly like the “left-wing” governments of European Social Democracy, speak the same language: that of the increased armoring of the state and the fascist transformation of its entire apparatus. But this should not be a surprise for anyone, except for those who idealize the state and see in the state “‘the realization of the Idea’ [...]. And from this then follows a superstitious reverence for the state and for everything connected with it, which takes root the more readily as people from their childhood are accustomed to imagine that the affairs and interests common to the whole of society could not be managed and safeguarded in any other way than as in the past, that is, through the state and its well-paid officials”².

Once again: this should not be a surprise to anyone except those who have forgotten or who never knew that all states are characterized by “the institution of a *public force* [which] consists simply of armed men, but also of real appendages, prisons and penal institutions of every kind, of which the society of the gens knew nothing”³.

Thus to reduce questions of class and violence solely to the “form” assumed by social tensions would be, obviously, to lose sight of the reality in which classes move. The party naturally has an obligation to subject to its own critique every aspect of society in which initiatives of struggle break out and in which clashes between elements and social groups develop, even when the finalities determining such struggles and clashes are not in the direction of a revolutionary overthrow. It is also the duty of the party to intervene, within the concrete limits of its current possibilities, in these demon-

strations, to clarify its own positions, which can neither compromise on the level of tactics nor ideology. Our inquiry on the contrary should begin from the class content of such tensions, counterposing not *methods of struggle but programs of action, the effective prospects of struggle and historical goals*. Only on this basis will we be capable of judging such movements, and thus establish our position in their struggles, on the basis of our theoretical baggage and historical experience.

As we have previously indicated, part of our method consists in continually repeating, at the cost of being boring or “out of fashion”, and certainly “against the current”, the key concepts of communism, particularly where economic and political analysis is concerned, because it is the latter which make possible an understanding of the real and which indicate the strategy to be followed. In the specific case under consideration, the vacuity of the statements and proclamations of the “anti-global” or, if one prefers, “Seattle people”, can be gauged precisely in terms of these key concepts, such as “the state”, “imperialism”, “democracy”, “classes”, and of analyses grounded in Marxism such as that relative to the economic crisis which erupted in 1975. Let us then go over that old ground.

PRESENTATION OF OUR ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

It is necessary to begin with the economy, because it is precisely on that terrain that perverse or inadequate analyses wind up orienting the “movement” toward perverse or inadequate objectives, and at any rate outside of any revolution-

2. F. Engels, quoted by Lenin in *State and Revolution*, p.66

3. F. Engels., *Origins of the Family, Private Property and the State*.

ary perspective: and this quite independently of the “good faith” of many participants, really convinced that they are “in motion” and “struggling” against a series of “injustices”. We will thus proceed by pulling apart the economic analyses of the “anti-global” movement, not merely and not so much by submitting them to a critique (for they amount to very little), but by counterposing to them a real Marxist analysis.

Imperialism

A study of the making of a world economy, which Marxism foresaw from its birth (as anyone can verify by reading the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* of 1848), should begin with an exposition of the formation of the capitalist mode of production – demonstrating that the global market is an inexorable law, even if in reality we are dealing with distinct capitals and markets, involved in ferocious competitive struggle. Such a study would show, moreover, that the contradictions are *created not in the market but in production*, that such contradictions shift tensions and inequalities onto the international market simply by the fact that it is in such markets that the realization of surplus-value extracted in the production process takes place.

The fundamental tendencies of the current economic period, an understanding of which is indispensable for formulation a correct revolutionary politics, can be summarized in the following way, which our current laid out in its re-reading *Capital* over half a century ago, and of which we do not need to change a comma in order to “understand contemporary reality”.

1. Modern capitalist production cannot exist if there is not a capital, which does not belong to the owner of the means of production, provided by the banks at a certain rate of interest. “The bourgeois,

arrived at his ideal form, reveals himself henceforth to be stripped bare of all property, mobile and immobile, without money, and above all without scruples. He does not invest or risk anything of his *own*, but the mass of products, and hence the profit, legally remain in his hands. *The bourgeois got rid of private property, bringing about not a few other benefits: it is his strategic position which must be snatched away from him* [our emphasis]. (“Proprietà e capitale”, in *Prometeo*, III, series II, Nov. 1950).

2. The modern company presents the following characteristics: “It has no headquarters, factory or plant of its own, but from time to time installs its ‘workshop’ and its own offices in one location placed at its disposal as a customer, which even runs up a debt on the books for this plant, workshop and impromptu constructions. [...] He might have tools and machines of his own, *but more often, transplanting himself to disparate and far-away locations* [our emphasis], he either leases them or acquires and resells them on the spot, or manages to have himself paid the entire amortization. [...] In this typical form, the enterprise subsists, along with surplus-value and profit, which are generally very high, whereas all property in real estate, moveable tools and even a standard of ready cash disappears” (*ibid.*)

The Lesson of Lenin

It would, moreover, be sufficient to re-read the whole text of Lenin on Imperialism to grasp the abysmal vacuity of the supposedly “anti-globalist” analyses. Lenin’s text analyzes the development of capitalism between the late 19th and early 20th centuries – a development implicit in the very nature of capitalism and spelled out in *Capital*: the *irresistible* tendency toward monopoly, toward the

interpenetration of industrial and finance capital, toward a preponderant role of banks and the stock market, toward the exportation of capital, toward the internationalization of economic life, toward the subjection of entire continents, of the entire world, to the dictates of imperialist capitalism, toward control of the sources of raw materials and of commercial routes, toward ever-sharper inter-imperialist conflicts... We read:

Private property, based on the labor of the small property owner, free competition, democracy, i.e. all the slogans, in short, which the capitalists and their press use to deceive the workers and peasants, are things of the past. Capitalism has transformed itself into a world system of colonial oppression and of financial strangulation of the overwhelming majority of the world's population by a handful of "advanced" countries. And this "booty" is shared between two or three world marauders (England, America, Japan), armed to the teeth, which involve the whole world in *their* war, for the sharing of *their* booty ⁴.

One can laugh (or cry) reading the "anti-globalist" proclamations, which think they are so "new" that they require "new languages", "new strategies", and "new discourses", and which in reality do nothing but discover the obvious, and then refuse to act in consequence. For example: "The agreements of the Uruguay Round primarily favored the transnational corporations, at the expense of national economies, of the workers, the peasants and the environment [*the latter three – by the way – being of course notoriously well defended by national economies!*]. Further, the WTO system [*the arch-enemy of the "anti-globalist" militants!*], its rules and procedures are not democratic [*and why should they be, given that it is an organization of capital for capital?!*] and

are not accessible to civil society [??], thus marginalizing the larger part of the world population" ⁵.

Pathetic! Much better to return to Lenin!

In the chapter entitled "The Concentration of Production and Monopolies", Lenin retraces the stages through which an ever-greater competition and concentration develops, in which monopolies are born, and imperialism comes into being (and at the same time the necessary material basis for the passage to a *higher mode of production* is set). He writes:

Competition becomes transformed into monopoly. The result is immense progress in the socialization of production. In particular, the process of technical invention and improvement becomes socialized.

This is no longer the old type of free competition between manufacturers, scattered and out of touch with one another, and producing for an unknown market. Concentration has reached the point at which it is possible to make an approximate estimate of all sources of raw materials (for example, the iron ore deposits) of a country and even, as we shall see, of several countries, or of the whole world. Not only are such estimates made, but these sources are captured by gigantic monopolist combines. An approximate estimate of the capacity of markets is also made, and the combines divide them up amongst themselves by agreement. Skilled labour is monopolized, the best engineers are engaged; the means of transport are captured: railways in America, shipping companies in Europe and America. Capitalism in its imperialist stage arrives at the

4. Lenin, "Preface" to the French and German editions of *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, pp. 10-11. This and all subsequent quotations are taken from the International Publishers 1939 edition.

5. From "Documenti del controvertice di Seattle: Stop Millennium Round, Nov. 30, 1999"; quoted in M. Pianta, *Globalizzazione dal basso*, cit., p. 157.

threshold of the most complete socialization of production. In spite of themselves, the capitalists are dragged, as it were, into a new social order, a transitional social order from complete free competition to complete socialization.

Production becomes social, but appropriation remains private. The social means of production remain the private property of a few. The general framework of formally recognized free competition remains, but the yoke of a few monopolists on the rest of the population becomes a hundred times heavier, more burdensome and intolerable (*Imperialism*, p. 25)

The banks play a special role in this process, and in the chapter entitled “The Banks and Their New Function” we can read, after a long presentation of facts and documentation:

In the place of individual capitalists, there emerges a single collective capitalist.

The bank, holding the current accounts of many capitalists, seems to perform a purely technical, auxiliary task. But once this operation has assumed gigantic dimensions, a handful of monopolists dominate the industrial and commercial relations of the entire society in such a way that, through their relationships among themselves, current accounts and other financial operations, they attain above all the possibility of being precisely informed on the ongoing businesses of individual capitalists, and thus of controlling them, and influencing them, expanding or restricting credit, making credit easy or difficult, and ultimately of completing deciding their fate, of fixing their profitability, of taking away their capital or giving them the possibility of rapidly increasing it, and in enormous proportion, and so on (*ibid.*, p. 35).

Thus: “The concentration of production;

the monopoly arising therefrom; the merging or coalescence of banking with industry – this is the history of the rise of finance capital and what gives the term ‘finance capital’ its content” (*ibid.*, p.47), that is, the creation of a “financial oligarchy” of which Lenin analyzes in detail the characteristics, the strategies, their ability “to resort with impunity to all sorts of shady tricks to cheat the public” (*ibid.*, p.49); the cycle through which “capitalism, which began in small-scale usury capital, ends its evolution by creating a gigantic usury capital” (*ibid.*, ff) , and thus concludes the chapter entitled precisely “Finance Capital and Financial Oligarchy”:

It is characteristic of capitalism in general that the ownership of capital is separated from the application of capital to production, that money capital is separated from the application of capital to production, and that the rentier, who lives entirely on income obtained from money capital, is separated from the entrepreneur and from all who are directly concerned in the management of capital. Imperialism, or the domination of finance capital, is that highest stage of capitalism in which this separation reaches vast proportions. The supremacy of finance capital over all other forms of capital means the predominance of the rentier and of the financial oligarchy; it means the crystallization of a small number of financially “powerful” states from among all the rest (*ibid.*, p.59)

We now come to the main characteristic, the real motor of imperialist expansion: the export of capital. And once again we have to quote at length, because the passage touches a real nerve and because it is always good to reiterate:

Capitalism is commodity production at the highest stage of development, when

labour power itself becomes a commodity. The growth of internal exchange, and particularly of international exchange, is the characteristic distinguishing feature of capitalism. The uneven and spasmodic character of the development of individual enterprises, of individual branches of industry and individual countries, is inevitable under the capitalist system. England became a capitalist country before any other, and in the middle of the nineteenth century, having adopted free trade, claimed to be the “workshop of the world”, the great purveyor of manufactured goods to all countries, which in exchange were to keep her supplied with raw materials. But in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, *this* monopoly was already undermined. Other countries, protecting themselves by tariff walls, had developed into independent capitalist states.

On the threshold of the twentieth century, we see a new type of monopoly coming into existence. Firstly, there are monopolist capitalist combines in all advanced capitalist countries; secondly, a few rich countries, in which the accumulation of capital reaches gigantic proportions, occupy a monopolist position. An enormous “superabundance of capital” has accumulated in the advanced countries. (*ibid.*, p.62)

Consider now the following passage, which seems to have been written precisely (but almost a century earlier) for our angry “anti-globalists”:

It goes without saying that if capitalism could develop agriculture, which today lags far behind industry everywhere, if it could raise the standard of living of the masses, who are everywhere still poverty-stricken and underfed, in spite of the amazing advance in technical knowledge, there could be no talk of a superabundance of capital. This “argument”

the petty-bourgeois critics of capitalism advance on every occasion. But if capitalism did these things it would not be capitalism; for uneven development and wretched conditions of the masses are fundamental and inevitable conditions and premises of this mode of production. As long as capitalism remains what it is, surplus capital will never be utilized for the purpose of raising the standard of living of the masses in a given country, for this would mean a decline in profits for the capitalists; it will be used for the purpose of increasing those profits by exporting capital abroad to the backward countries. In these backward countries profits are usually high, for capital is scarce, the price of land is relatively low, raw materials are cheap. The possibility of exporting capital is created by the fact that numerous backward countries have been drawn into international capitalist intercourse; main railways have either been built or are being built there; the elementary conditions for industrial development have been created, etc. The necessity for exporting capital arises from the fact that in a few countries capitalism has become “over-ripe” [*and today it is rotten and putrid! Editor’s Note*] and (owing to the backward state of agriculture and the impoverished state of the masses) capital cannot find “profitable” investment (*ibid.*, p.63).

Less than thirty lines, which make a clean sweep of all the theoreticians of “redistribution”, of “aid to poor countries”, the “Tobin Tax”, and more generally of all the “anti-globalists”!

An exposition of Lenin’s entire text cannot be undertaken here. We can merely note that the chapter immediately after the analysis of the export of capital is entitled “The Division of the World Among The Great Powers” and shows how “capital created a world market long ago”,

6. The completion of the division of the world only means that there no longer exist any “places in the world unoccupied by capital”; the successive events of the capitalist economy, nonetheless, are continuously putting up for grabs the status quo of the division of the world, through inter-imperialist conflicts.

7. As recently as 1996, the U.S. internal market absorbed 91.4% of GNP; the comparable figures were 79.2% for Italy, 80.7% for Germany, 77.1% for UK, and 81.3% for France; the only country similar to the U.S. was Japan, with 91.1%.

the most conspicuous monopolists for the division of the world” (*ibid.*, ff.). And then, in the chapter “The Division of the World Among the Great Powers”, the dynamic and the effects of such a division are traced out, through the control of the world and of raw materials, a division which is ever more acute and aggressive, giving rise to countless local conflicts, culminating *inevitably* in world conflicts.

Summing up, then, what are the characteristics of imperialism?

- 1) The concentration of production and capital developed to such a high stage that it created monopolies which play a decisive role in economic life.
- 2) The merging of bank capital with industrial capital, and the creation, on the basis of this “finance capital”, of a “financial oligarchy”.
- 3) The export of capital, which has become extremely important, as distinguished from the export of commodities.
- 4) The formation of international capitalist monopolies which share the world among themselves.
- 5) The territorial division of the whole world among the greatest capitalist powers is completed (*ibid.*, p. 89)⁶

A long detour, but a necessary one.

with the creation of “great monopoly associations” and “world cartels”, how these “state and private monopolies interpenetrate each other and how all of them are merely links in the chain of the imperialist struggle among

Nothing New

To these analyses, we can only add the following considerations, on the basis of the development of postwar imperialism:

1. Although the oldest capitalist zones (England, France, the U.S.) also continue to grow, their curve never inflects, but the average rates of growth are continually declining.

2. The U.S. operates a whole series of productive sectors on a monopoly basis (e.g. telecommunications, the Internet), which guarantee increased super-profits and makes possible the creation of an enormous balance-of-payments deficit. The European Union’s loans to the U.S. are based on the promise of future payments in dollars and on the fact that interest payments on foreign capital invested in the U.S. are made in dollars.

3. The “globalizing” network, in its brute reality, is that which attracts the European economies in an iron grip toward the U.S. precisely because of the super-profits which the U.S. are still able to guarantee, especially through the control it maintains over international financial flows and thanks to the preeminent role of the dollar in the international system of payments.

4. For their part the U.S. fulfill their role as international policemen, making possible repositioning, more or less mandatory, of capitals in the world arena, using every type of apparatus or organization of international control and of an internal market whose absorptive capacity, while enormous⁷, (it was no accident that consumer credit was invented in the U.S.) can only exhaust itself, in spite of the infinity of media persuaders, with the sharpening of the crisis of overproduction and the increasing rates of unemployment. The current crisis, which elicits copious tears from various winners of the Nobel Prize for economics and which again and again brings down interest rates, (reflecting the tendencial fall of the

average rate of profit in the world economy), cannot fail to have long-term consequences both at home and abroad (Europe) for the American power.

At the end of the post-war cycle, therefore, the lesson to be drawn from this drugged economy is the following. Since its progressive surge already came to an end a century ago, it can only set in motion two systems of accumulation, based on public debt and bank credit respectively. In both cases, it is nothing but an enormous process of surplus-value extraction, carried out under the laws of the most democratic and civil states: pacifist by definition, fascist in fact.

Neo-Liberalism and State Control: Two Sides of the Same Coin

It is necessary to re-establish certain essential foundations, rejecting any alternating counter-position between the two forms and stages of capitalism, free-trade liberal and monopolistic, respectively. In no part of the world has monopoly capitalism ever existed without free trade subsisting in many sectors. We wrote in 1956: "If capitalism develops mercantilism to the maximum and expands markets, through competition, to unprecedented geographical areas, it does so by breaking up pre-existing monopolistic spheres reflecting the limited circulation of commodities. If capitalism, historically, claims the category of *competition* for itself, the earlier seigneurial form of property claims for itself the category of *monopoly*. The original accumulation of money capital often arose from monopolies, as did the early capitals of kings and states which gave rise to large manufacture, to the great mining and navigational companies [...]. The capitalists always maintained that their system achieved perfection once the obstacles of the earlier phase were eliminated, impediments they attributed to the presence of feudal

remnants, and Marx proved that even if this hypothesis was admitted, his revolutionary theses were fully confirmed: the first of them was the relapse into monopoly and economic totalitarianism"⁸.

In 1912, or two years before the outbreak of the First World War, the German economist Kestner (quoted by Lenin in *Imperialism*) showed the systems to which the capitalist economy had to resort: depriving competitors of raw materials; forming reserves of labor power to be drawn upon when necessary (organized today in statist trade unions); depriving competitors of means of transport and closing markets; methodically lowering prices in order to ruin those not organized in cartels; depriving competitors of credit and, where necessary, boycotting them. This Kestner, though a bourgeois, had understood the reality of capitalism much better than the deluded anti-globalists of today!

After almost a century, two world wars, hundreds of local wars, tens upon tens of millions of civilian deaths, ethnic slaughters, incomparable environmental destruction, frightening increases in proletarianization on a world scale, "civil society" enters the arena asking for "more justice" from exactly those organizations (the UN, the World Bank, the IMF, the WTO, "governments", etc.) which, *as products of the successes of the last world massacre*, are solely and exclusively the representatives of cannibalistic imperialisms whose single purpose is to delay the revolutionary demolition of capital!

"Civil society" thinks that imperialism can "correct its own errors", eliminate its own egoisms, and become more altruistic. This vision of things – the vision of priests, of traitors to Marxism and of imbeciles – thinks that with good will the multinationals (the necessary evolution of

8. *Struttura economica e sociale della Russia di oggi* (1956; Edizioni Il programma comunista, 1976), pp. 380-381.

what were once called “cartels”) can eliminate crises. Let us once again turn to Lenin:

On the contrary, when monopoly appears in *certain* branches of industry, it increases and intensifies the anarchy inherent in capitalist production *as a whole*... The disparity between the development of agriculture and that of industry, which is characteristic of capitalism, is increased... [capital meanwhile] overflows the brim, as it were, flows abroad, etc. At the same time the extremely rapid rate of technical progress gives rise more and more to disturbances in the co-ordination between the various spheres of national economy, to anarchy and crisis. (*Imperialism*, pp.28-29).

It is an old Marxist thesis, and one we find completely confirmed in reality, that imperialism and finance capitalism are a superstructure of the old capitalism. All the facts which so upset “civil society” are there to confirm it ⁹.

1. In the middle of the 18th century, the income of the most advanced countries was a little more than twice that of the underdeveloped countries; today the difference is more than twenty times greater. That is an immediate consequence of the industrial revolution, of the process of concentration and centralization of capitals, of the successive development of the holding companies in the sector of production and especially in the financial sector (the parent company controls the majority of stock in an international chain of affiliates). As Lenin

wrote: “The prevalence of finance capital over all remaining forms of capital leads to [...] the selection of a few states which are financially ‘stronger’ than others” (*Imperialism*, p.90).

2. Confirming the Marxist

law of uneven development, and against the theories of super-imperialism or of a federation of imperialisms which have been in fashion from Kautsky onward, there remain important differences between countries, on the level of organizations, economic strategies, control of resources, specializations in different sectors, and in military power. The portions of GDP invested abroad differ significantly; the flow of industrial profit oriented toward finance capital has grown continuously since the end of the Second World War, and in fact grinding down the situation of workers in industry.

3. The deregulation of markets, which elicits such tears in “civil society” (i.e. the liberalization of financial activities, with the removal of the national constraints on the mobility of capital, the expansion of financial and speculative activities throughout the world), broke through during the 1980’s. According to the bourgeois economists, up to that point states had maintained control over the movement of local capitals, so that reproduction expanded within national borders, “in order to ensure a balanced economic development”¹⁰. That this is an absurdity is clear to everyone except to those who, for decades, drew their inspiration from self-management and “socialism in one country”. Capital, by its nature, invests profit where it can and where it pleases; it speaks no national language except the international language of surplus value, to be extracted in any place and in any fashion. The fact that there has been a hypertrophic acceleration of finance capital over productive capital (a phenomenon which, as we have seen, is nonetheless a fact intrinsic to the production mechanism of capital, which is the production of growing surplus-value and thus to be located in ever more distant places), arises from the fact that the crisis of the 1970s – a structural crisis of overproduction, delineated

9. We only mention some of them, in order to avoid the incomprehensions reported by Pianta himself, *op. cit.*

10. Cfr. M. Pianta, *op. cit.*, p.43.

decades in advance by our movement and which closed the period of postwar accumulation to mark the beginning of a period of instability, only to end in either revolution or the Third World War – the crisis of the 1970s signified on a world scale the growing difficulties in valorizing productive capital. The crisis thus led to a hyperspeculation, diverting the plethorical excess of capital into the world markets of finance; and there is no nation state which can limit its movement without bringing about the collapse of the entire system. But the latter is, as we have seen, exactly what causes “civil society” to tremble with fear.

“Civil Society” and the Reality of Imperialism

For what reason are the globalizing transnational monopolies, the multinational corporations, the “decline of the autonomy and of the efficacy of national politics”, the enemies of “civil society”? Essentially, because these monsters are no longer democratic, and impose their own laws on smaller capitals: they are no longer satisfied with the average rate of profit, but demand a higher one. This has the result of snuffing out any possibility of “development” for backward countries, and world disequilibria are increasingly sharpened. The remedy, for “civil society”, can thus only be the following: the small capitals must attain the same rate of profit as the big ones; this will revitalize the national and international economy; production and distribution will recover their lost harmony. The predatory aims of neo-liberal globalization, therefore, are to be opposed by the efforts of governments, in the name of everyone.

But “desires” are one thing, and harsh reality is another. Here it is:

1. The countries of the so-called Third World do not, in fact, aspire to expel the capitals which are crushing them, but

rather to attract more of them: this would in fact be tantamount, in an exquisitely petty-bourgeois logic, to more development, in a “healthy competition” with the imperialist states, in the unrealistic hope of sucking in a growing share of international capital, provided that the interest is “fair”.

2. Cancelling the debts of the “poor countries” is a phrase with no economic or political meaning. These states can impose nothing on the octopus of imperialism, and imperialism can do nothing but loot the planet to sustain itself. The papal invocation to the Eternal Father for more justice on earth is one thing, the unrhetoical necessity that the underdevelopment of three-fourths of humanity exists to prop up the hyperdevelopment of the other fourth, another. “Cancelling the debts” of the “Third World” means nothing but preserving them on the world market like tanning hides, to be beaten even more finely.

3. Equal consumption and trade, or better “fair and equitable” trade in the U.S. and in Burkina Faso is certainly a nice thing. However, a similar situation, which Marx, already in 1847, showed to be impossible between two individual producers, becomes farcical in 2003 when applied to nation states. The supporters of “fair and equitable” consumption, their gossip aside, ought to think more about the “fascist”-type politics of states – i.e. their capacity for intervening in the economy and in the internal and foreign markets, a capacity which developed on the international level precisely to prevent any form of “equality” in either the sector of production or of consumption. Let us listen to and gloss from Marx, who writes in *The Poverty of Philosophy*: “In every epoch the good bourgeois and the philanthropic economists complacently formulated these innocent vows”¹¹.

11. The following quotations are from Karl Marx, *The Poverty of Philosophy*, Beijing 1996, pp. 61 ff.

And Marx quotes Boisguilbert, according to whom it is necessary that foodstuffs are always present simultaneously and with proportionate prices: if their prices are “disturbed”, the result is the disruption of the market, and poverty. This is followed by a quote from Atkinson:

“[...] All nations have attempted, at various periods in their history, by instituting numerous commercial regulations and restrictions, to effect, in some degree, the object here explained [...] But the natural and inherent selfishness of man [...] has urged him to break down all such regulations” (p. 62)

At issue is the fair proportion between supply and demand, “which is once again becoming the object of so many pious wishes” and which “ceased to exist long ago”. Marx comments: “*Those who, like Sismondi, wish to return to the correct proportion of production, while preserving the present basis of society, are reactionary...*” (ibid., our emphasis). In fact, at that time, in the early 19th century, production followed consumption, whereas today “production precedes consumption, and supply does violence to demand”.

Thus, the egalitarian exchange that philanthropic economists dreamed up at the individual level has been transformed, in the heads of today’s deluded people, into equal exchange between those productive and distributive monsters called capitalist states.

Ever-Renascent Proudhonism

Those who yesterday were against “monopolies” (and first of all the PCI, the Italian “communist” party, obviously for filthy electoral motives: its courtship of the petty bourgeoisie, the middle classes, etc.) and who today have become the “pluralist left”, shout against “neo-liberal-

ism” and “deregulation” (but always for the same sordid reasons). They talk about a “third way” that exists only in their heads: a democratic alliance between the strongest and the weakest governments (hopefully joined together in a confederation), in the name of some “eternal principle” sanctioned by an Enlightenment agenda or some other paleo-Christian movement: *liberté égalité fraternité* in society! in politics! in the economy!, all in the name of superceding egoisms and the “guilty indifference” which “unfortunately” still has a grip on the “powerful of the world”. This is, then, a movement with a Proudhonist flavor, with a not unimportant difference. In 1850, that was in fact the outlook of artisans and those who worked the land, who were still small proprietors not yet expropriated by the impetuous advance of capitalism, and who saw in the course taken by history the laws of their inexorable death as classes constituting the backbone of a superseded economic system condemned to extinction. Today, it is a movement of the petty bourgeoisie and the labor aristocracy of the imperialist countries which, while not in any way owning the means of social production, a long period of post-war accumulation allowed to snatch off the backs of the underdeveloped countries and an impoverished proletariat a *relative* well-being, and which see their own real economic and social catastrophe emerging on the horizon.

Precisely for this reason, they seek to set themselves up as “civil society”, full of those “pious wishes” which make them believe they are the arbiters of the world – a world which, quite to the contrary, will in the end crush them in the grip of the crisis and international competition on the labor market. The only hope for salvation of these formerly privileged groups is in openly *throwing their support for the revolutionary demands of the*

proletariat, for the destruction of, and not in support for an economy which has outlived its usefulness, and which cannot overcome its contradictions except by the continuous expulsion of labor-power, periodic destruction of wealth and massacres of men and women in every corner of the planet.

Not even the most ardent supporter of the market today asserts that the market can have rules. The market is the jungle in which capitalists starved for profits confront themselves as well as sellers whose survival depends on the quantity of commodities they succeed in selling at the expense of their competitors. To think that the state can become a regulator of exchange means not understanding the lesson of fascism, or of state intervention in the economy: a system which is protectionist and which pushes to the maximum the contradictions in the world economic arena. These are contradictions which not even the mirage of an *absurd* "super-imperialism" such as the U.S. can avoid, because its iron laws are uneven development, the international division of labor, and competition generated by monopoly. Once again, Lenin:

"The facts prove that the differences between the individual capitalist countries, e.g. with regard to protectionism and free trade, only determined unessential differences in the forms of monopoly, or in the moment when it appears, but the rise of monopolies, through the impact of concentration, in, generally, a universal and basic law of the contemporary stage of capitalist development [...]. The basic result of the history of monopolies are as follows: 1) 1860-1870, the apogee of free trade. Monopolies are only embryonic. 3) After the crisis of 1873, substantial developments of cartels [...]. 3) Boom to the end of the nineteenth century and the crises of 1900-1903. The cartels become

one of the bases of all economic life. Capitalism has been transformed into imperialism." (*Imperialism*, p.16 ff)

THE "THEORETICO-POLITICAL FOUNDATIONS"

If, at this point, we devote so much space to the political critique of the positions of individual spokespersons or so-called "theoreticians" of the anti-globalist movement, it is not because such positions represent any specific novelty. In our tradition, the polemic with the "contradictors" of Marxism is not an occasion to cross swords with this or that individual, but to counterpose the correct communist perspective to "discourses" which at certain moments (having as their primary accomplice the disastrous theoretical disorder produced by more than seventy-five years of counter-revolution) take center stage with a clamor inversely proportional to their real substance.

Marcos, or "National Narrow-Mindedness"

Rightly invoked by all the anti-globalists as the forebear of their movement, Sub-Comandante Marcos seems to have finally achieved his real objectives with the spectacular Zapatista march on Mexico City, accompanied by the worst representatives of populist publicity hounds currently on the scene, from Bové to Montalban, from Saramago to Oliver Stone. The apotheosis took place on March 11, 2001, when the march was triumphantly greeted in the Mexican capital by the newly-elected President Vicente Fox, who, the well-informed tell us, is universally recognized as the "genuine expression of the popular will"¹².

What were the objectives of the movement? Essentially,

12. We are quoting the article of I. Ramonet, "La marche de Marcos", *Le Monde Diplomatique*, March 2001.

two: that “the indigenous people of Chiapas can enjoy the same rights as a white man anywhere in the Republic” and that “elections are no longer synonymous with fraud” (cf. Regis Debray’s 1996 interview with Marcos). The petty-bourgeois character of this program will become clear in the following analysis.

The neo-Zapatist movement began officially on Jan.1, 1994, precisely the day that NAFTA, the North American Treaty between the United States, Canada and Mexico, went into effect. This treaty, as everyone realized, meant the end of the rural economy of Chiapas, moreover already condemned to extinction, where three million indios, living in miserable conditions, are ghettoized¹³.

What is the cause of the malnutrition, of the disastrous sanitary conditions, of the extremely high level of poverty in Chiapas, which is nonetheless *one of the richest regions in Mexico* in terms of natural resources (water, oil, minerals, gas)? Is it really to be found in the fact that “the destiny of states is no longer [?] determined by politicians [?], but by other forces, and particularly by the financial markets and the logics of free exchange”?¹⁴ Or is it rather, as Marcos himself claims, in the fact that

“the values of the market [he is speaking here of the “novelty” of globalization] are imposing themselves everywhere and not only determine the functioning of governments but also that of the media, the school, and even of the family”? (*ibid.*)

The unspoken implication is that *before* so-called globalization, the destiny of states was determined by politicians, *before* schools and families freely made their own decisions, *before* ethnic

minorities were respected (but in Chiapas there is no ethnic question!), *before*, perhaps there was electoral fraud, and perhaps, yes, “democracy” was not perfect, but it was nonetheless *our* doing, it was a political question *internal to our country*, and it was not subject to pressures from the abhorrent “outside world”, from *other people’s* capital.

The anti-globalization ideology of Marcos, we freely admit, has a more tragic origin than the obviously repellent ideology of a French Bové or the Northern Italian Cobas del Latte (grassroots organisations of dairy producers). Whereas the latter are small landowners who have invested capital in land and who are today suffering from the successes of an international competition which is ruining them, in Mexico we are confronted with the collapse of a rural economy which for a long time was based on an archaic legacy, the collective use of at least part of the resources of the land (pastures, forests, water). Throughout the world, during the past decades and centuries, wherever the mode of production tied to spontaneous harvest and ancient foraging and farming, to the land, to small plots, to very small-scale village artisanry, came into contact with the productive forces set in motion by capital, we have seen tragedies like the one which Chiapas is living through today. This was the reality of 18th-century England, and some of the most inspired pages of *Capital* are there to prove it. This was the reality, from the 16th century onward, in Latin America, and subsequently, wherever colonialism established itself. This is the reality today, for dozens upon dozens of pre-industrial peoples, who have to some extent managed to survive only by seeking refuge in the great forests, or the deserts, or in the Arctic. This is the reality in China, where we are witnessing one of the most brutal processes of urbanization and proletari-

13. The reader will find information and comments in our article in Italian, “L’epilogo del movimento zapatista e la lotta delle masse contadine povere”, *il programma comunista*, no. 3, May-June 2001.

14. This was the shameless assertion of H. Bellinghausen, “one of the foremost experts on the Zapatista insurrection” according to the definitions of *Le Monde Diplomatique*, cit.

anization ever to occur in the history of humanity, whereby within a few years cities with millions of inhabitants arise from nothing. We read in the *Communist Manifesto* (the italics are ours):

“The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society. Conservation of the old modes of production in unaltered form was, on the contrary, the first condition of existence of all earlier industrial classes. Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones. All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real conditions of life, and his conditions with his kind.

The need of a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere. The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of Reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood. All old-established national industries have been destroyed or are daily being destroyed. They are dislodged by new industrie, whose production becomes a life and death question for all civilized nations, by industries that no longer work up indigenous raw material, but raw material drawn up from the remotest zones, in-

dustries whose products are consumed, not only at home, but in every quarter of the globe. In place of the old

wants, satisfied by the productions of the country, we find new wants, requiring for their satisfaction the products of distant lands and climes. In place of the old local and national seclusion and self-sufficiency, we have intercourse in every direction, universal inter-dependence of nations. And as in material, so also in intellectual production. The intellectual creations of individual nations become common property. National one-sidedness and narrow-mindedness become more and more impossible, and from the numerous national and local literatures, there arises a world literature”¹⁵

Anyone who, after reading these magnificent pages from 1848, can still claim to speak of localism, of the defense of minorities, of “human rights” within bourgeois society, is either mad or reactionary. Our purpose here is not to cynically pose the question of the “peoples without history”. Their tragic disappearance, made worse by all the kinds of brutality undergone under the impact of the unstoppable expansive force of capitalism, cannot be avoided; but their sufferings can be mitigated only to the extent that such peoples are not forced to pass through the monstrosities of primitive accumulation. This is possible only to the extent that they enter into an alliance, not with their “own country”, but with the international revolutionary proletariat. Or, in other words, to the extent that they become, bringing along all the historical rage produced by exploitation and massacres, *a contingent of the international revolutionary proletariat*.

It will not be enough for Sub-Comandante Marcos to genuflect before the idolatry of the state which had become

15. Marx-Engels, *Communist Manifesto*, London 1967, pp. 83-84.

momentarily an improvised “democracy”; it will not be enough for him to adopt “a strategy of non-violence to win the hearts and minds of an international public opinion increasingly convinced that concern for the indios is a ‘sacred’ cause”; and it will not be enough for him to call for the intervention of his new ally, the Mexican national state, against “other movements, much more radical, intolerant, desperate and violent than we are. Because the ethnic question, here as elsewhere, can give rise to fundamentalist movements capable of carrying out every type of homicidal madness”¹⁶. Wherein, if we read correctly, this “more radical movement”, which disturbs the sleep of the Comandante, is nothing but the armed proletariat, led by its revolutionary party.

Having thus re-established the reality of the processes at work, in which we recognize not “new mechanisms” ostensibly requiring “new forms of struggle” (which are, in reality, always the same, the forms of the opportunists and the reformists: pacifism, democracy, human rights), but the iron grip of the laws of capital which at all times and places come down to the extraction of surplus-value from living labor, we are now dealing with the question of the forms of struggle against world capital and not merely against this or that political regime to which capital entrusts the optimization of its own functioning, whether that regime calls itself a democratic republic, or a hereditary monarchy, or fascism.

By not understanding these elementary truths, the neo-Zapatistas renounce an international vision of the emancipation of the working classes, and wall themselves off in a reactionary, nationalist ideology (“we are indigenous people and we are

Mexicans. [...] Today we are marching so that this Mexican flag will accept us as its own”, as Marcos declared a few months ago, on the eve of the march on Mexico City). Such national/petty-bourgeois ideology feeds on the poverty and desperation of millions of individuals: but it is not the poverty and desperation of disinherited proletarians, “who have nothing to lose but their own chains”. It is the ideology of men who, having lost their own patch of land, nourish ambitions of reclaiming its ownership; who want the government to defend the status of potential small landholders against the invasion of “foreign” capital; who in substance want to perpetuate the condition of the eternally exploited, which they can overcome when, having had to give up their lands and their villages, they unite with millions of other urban proletarians in the only revolution which can restore to them, not as individuals *but as a class*, the enjoyment of gigantic collective social resources, according to a common plan.

But the lessons of history are not enough if one does not wish to understand them. In the tragedy of Chiapas, as in all the earlier ones, capitalism must follow its infernal course. The “democratic” government of Fox “freely elected by the whole people” will give its blessing to the “rights of the indios”, who will be given full citizenship and every form of guarantee of respect and cultural protection. Chiapas, martyred by centuries of capitalist pillage, will be flooded with schools, humanitarian and cultural associations, churches of every confession, movie houses, theatres and discotheques, and everything else in the gigantic Barnum circus of capitalist ideology; and in the wake of this there will come cops, hustling lawyers, tax inspectors, law enforcement officials, ecumenical priests, large and small shops, banks and bankers, with the inevitable throng of

16. Bellinghausen, cit.

Mexicans. We want to be indigenous and we want to be

scientists ready to sacrifice themselves for the good of humanity, seeking out these or those raw materials with a potential for making a splash in New York. And then? Where will they be then, these 3.5 million wretchedly poor people today being pushed to the limits of poverty? Will the Zapatista dream of a rural society of satisfied small landowners actually be realized? However high the great wall of China that Chiapas wants to erect around itself, how will it resist the “tenuous prices of commodities” industrially produced, if not by making itself into a capitalist territory in its own right? One might easily imagine – within the limits conceded by the international capital attracted to the area – the formation of a restricted circle of Chiapan speculators and wheeler-dealers who, thanks to some miserable sum grabbed up from the murky business they might drum up in this unhappy region, will be the first to subjugate the available wage labor, not giving a damn about sermons on the violation of the local language, on the culture that must be defended, and on the traditions which are dying out. And in the putrid stench of the market economy, against which the clamor of “civil society” somehow never lifts a finger, rural Chiapas will die. The wish, which is a hope, is that in this process the communist spark will be born.

Porto Alegre, or Arch-Reformism

Porto Alegre is the capital (with ca.1.2 million inhabitants) of the southernmost region of Brazil, Rio Grande do Sul. In this region, bordering on Uruguay and Argentina, halfway between Sao Paulo and Buenos Aires, 60% of the entire economy of Latin America is concentrated. It has particularly benefited from the creation of Mercosur, the common market of South America, within which 85% of the products circulate freely (but the anti-globalists do not like to talk about the fact that

this “advantage” has been enjoyed by the already-strong regional economy of the region). The productivity of labor is one of the highest in the country; technical schools and universities provide an excellent education. Privatization affects numerous firms, and particularly the petrochemical sector (Copesul). In Porto Alegre, in particular, illiteracy has been reduced to 5% (compared to a Brazilian average of 24%); infant mortality is at 21% (compared to a national average of 47%). These few facts are enough to capture the atmosphere in which one of the showcases of anti-globalist international reformism flourishes: direct democracy, i.e. the management of the budget and administrative choices, which has already lasted for twelve years.

In contrast to the Zapatista armed movement, whose social base is represented by a stratum in ferment of smallholders undergoing rapid proletarianization, the anti-globalist movement which acts in Porto Alegre, and uses it as a point of reference, refuses on principle to take up arms, adducing this curious argument from its own “Marxist” ideology. This position depends on various factors, of both a theoretical and practical nature. The latter derive from the extraordinary electoral success which the Brazilian Workers’ Party (PT)¹⁷ has been able to gain in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, where in 1998 one of its representatives became governor, following up on the 1989 election of the Trotskyist Raul Pont as mayor of Porto Alegre¹⁸.

The theoretical factors, which are behind this elec-

17. The PT includes militants of various “left-wing” formations, trade unionists, rank-and-file democrats, Trotskyists and Christian socialists inspired by liberation theology.

18. We take these facts and the following information from the article of Luis Pilla Vares, “Democrazia diretta nel sud del Brasile”, published in the Trotskyist Italian journal *Bandiera Rossa*, no. 2, Sept-Oct 2000. The author is a member of the popular democratic government of the state of Rio Grande do Sul. All sentences within quotation marks, where not otherwise indicated, come from the article itself.

toral success, are of particular interest because they claim to invoke the class struggle and are explicitly critical in their treatment of representative democracy (to whose uses the PT still owes its own electoral success), the latter being “entirely lacking in substance”, having been “increasingly transformed into a mere ritual”. Whereas with the Zapatists we are dealing with a popular movement which went from armed struggle to pacifism, but one still seeking legitimation from the state, in Porto Alegre we have a pacifist movement which refers to class (even though it never specifies *what* class) and which, precisely for this reason, asserts that it was elected to represent all the people in the government of an entire region (“direct democracy”). The banished souls of Bernstein and Kautsky can finally rejoice in some interclassist inferno!

Let us then have a look at the “doctrine” of these social innovators. The first point, which should be quite clear to everyone, is the thesis (as defined by the “critical Marxists”) for which “socialism” and the “authoritarian system of the single party” are incompatible. Now, it is of little interest to us to enter into the ideological muddle of the middle classes, but we obviously have an obligation to assess the scientific exactness of assertions concerning Marxism. We must, in fact, make ourselves clear on one of the vital questions of the revolution and of communism: that of the party and its relations with the class. Either the party in question, as in the case of Porto Alegre, is a gypsy circus procession of vote-mongers, “a theoretically agnostic party, on which diverse ideological tendencies have converged”, a “party of a new type, without precedent in the history of the political organizations of the working class”; or else it is a party in the Marxist tradition: neither a charismatic nor a mass nor an elite party, but the *or-*

gan of a class, a class which is revolutionary out of objective historical finality – a party destined to lead the class in the revolutionary assault, and to maintain its historical traditions of struggle and doctrine in the phases of social ebb. That such a party must be “pluralistic”, or “non-authoritarian”, can only cross the mind of petty bourgeois who, more than having strayed, have never had any historical perspective except that of being dragged wearily – to the extent that the boss allows it – in the tow of capitalism and its diversified forms and state organizations.

The theoretically-agnostic party which does so well in Porto Alegre is thus a party which, by reaching consensus with just about everyone, can certainly not be a class party. Nevertheless, the Brazilian Trotskyists continue unperturbedly to call for “a renewal of the will to struggle among the laboring classes”, the “beginning of a new phase of conscious class struggles”. They see the evidence of this “renewal” in the strikes in France and in South Korea, in the demonstrations in Seattle, and in the struggles of the Zapatistas in Mexico. This kind of confusion flows from the ideological premises of the movement: if the party is interclassist, the *classes* it supports inexorably become the *entire population*, “civil society”; and its political directives no longer exist, or become limited to pure and simple administration of the state. What the state might be, for these gentlemen, cannot be a matter for doubt: it is a structure which allows for the peaceful evolution of democracy, within which the various bourgeois and petty bourgeois parties divide and redistribute the “booty” of state jobs, while the basis of the bourgeois regime remains unchanged, according to the denunciatory expressions of Lenin in *State and Revolution*.

A claim on authentic Marxism is obligato-

ry for these eclectics as well. They find it in nothing less than the “Program of the First International” (“The emancipation of the workers will be the task of the workers themselves”). The application of this formula, which in Marx represented the war cry by which the armed proletariat settled accounts with any alliance with other classes and recognized its own autonomous historical destiny, becomes in Porto Alegre the bleating invitation to a “popular public sphere”, within which one enters into a “permanent dialogue with society”. In reality, in spite of the innocuous talk about social classes, the reformists and gradualists of the entire world see in Porto Alegre the realization of their secular ideal: class collaboration in the administration; elimination of social tensions; “masses who feel they are the makers of their own destiny, deciding the tasks to be realized and the uses of the funds of the budget”. How many times have we heard, since Marxism explained the necessity of social revolution, these invocations of mass participation! How many times have we heard the Social Democrats speak, illustrating the “successes” of reformist politics, about the “clearly revolutionary contents”, of a “substantial transformation of the relations between the masses and the state”!

Lacking a theory of the state, lacking an historical perspective, these “ideologues” take the structures of the state as they are and claim to make from them a “strategic project of democracy, a step toward utopia” (whatever that might mean!). Nonetheless we wish to ask a few questions of the enlightened “socialist” managers of Porto Alegre: does there exist, or does there not exist in Rio Grande do Sul, a police force, a group of functionaries assigned to collect taxes, a special agency of repression, a parasitic bureaucracy? If so, is this not the *state*, “a force, which has emerged from socie-

ty, but which places itself above it and becomes more and more distant from it”, in Engels’ perfect definition? If it is not, as you claim, if it is therefore an organ for the conciliation of classes, why does Brazil have more than 300,000 men in its armed forces for “defense”, at a cost higher than expenditure on education? And if the entire people participates actively in political management, to the point that even “a lot of cooks” make “decisions about the budget”, what does that all mean except that – as has been the case for more than a hundred years in all the democracies in the world – capital tends to involve all classes in a filthy social pacifism? What does that mean except that this tendency succeeds – without having moved by a comma the mode of production and distribution of products to the advantage of the poor classes – precisely where the petty bourgeoisie and the labor aristocracy, with “cooks” at the cutting edge (undoubtedly also well administered in Rio Grande do Sul), set themselves up for the whole society?

It may be the case (but we don’t believe it!) that the one million citizens of Porto Alegre decide, with equal authority and equal weight, on the uses of the budget. But, even if it is in a reformist perspective, we would like to know: is there a struggle in Porto Alegre for the limitation of the working day? of child labor? a struggle for wages? Is there, in other words, a *serious social reformism*, although this is no longer necessary, from the moment that classes seem miraculously to be disappearing? To delude oneself that “direct democracy” puts an end to “privileges, clientelism, and, in the last analysis, to the power of Capital over the whole of society” means coarsely confusing the most appearance-ridden, most frequent and most inherent aspects of capitalism – and moreover not essential to its development – with the

processes by which capital extracts the very lymph from the blood and nerves of the proletariat, in the land of idleness and luxury, of which Porto Alegre is the capital, just as in any Pakistani village. It means sowing illusions among the masses that the state, the “special force of repression” over the oppressed class, can be conquered peacefully, and then utilized for other ends, without preventively breaking and preliminarily demolishing its structures.

Let us read from another fundamental text, a reading which would be beneficial to all those who are so fascinated by the decoys of the “anti-globalists”:

“The petty-bourgeois democrats, these sham Socialists who have substituted for the class struggle *dreams of harmony between classes*, imagined even the transition to Socialism in a dreamy fashion - not in the form of the overthrow of the rule of the exploiting class, but in the form of the *peaceful submission of the minority to a majority* conscious of its aims. This petty-bourgeois Utopia, indissolubly connected with the idea of the state’s being above classes, in practice led to the *betrayal of the interests of the toiling classes...*”¹⁹.

To thus assert that “this is a class struggle [in which] the Gramscian concept of hegemony takes on an impressive concrete dimension” is to confuse the issue, admitting the existence of a class struggle (a class which is *never identified and never given any historical perspective and finality*) in the sphere of an equivocal “hegemony” – just as all of Gramscism, so admired by populists, in which the revolutionary dictatorship of the pro-

letariat is no longer even a faded memory, was wrong.

They are thus living on petty-

bourgeois illusions in the city of Porto Alegre, as long as capital gives its consent. They are exporting throughout the world their middle-class ideology, of “profit sharing” and of “management of the government”. It is the worn-out orchestration of impotence, of incapacity for struggle, of total surrender to the bourgeoisie. We have become well-acquainted with this Social Democratic ideology in previous decades. It is condemned by history from top to bottom, because it has no room for maneuver, and no possibility for autonomous initiative; it lives as long as it is functional for the smoother development of big capital. Its character is to transform itself rapidly, when faced with economic crises and world wars, into crackdowns on revolutionary workers, and into the cruelest nationalism and militarism.

Bové, or Four-Cheeses Chauvinism

On Aug. 12, 1999, in Millau, in the French Aveyron, a group of peasants undertakes the symbolic “dismantling” of a MacDonald’s under construction. Among them, a central role is played by José Bové, a trade-union official of the Confédération Paysanne, created in 1987 from the fusion of several organizations for the defense of small peasant producers. We underscore: *small peasant producers*. Not, in other words, a union of agricultural day laborers, or “rural proletarians”; but a series of organizations which are trying to protect the peasant smallholder threatened with the excessive power of either big agribusiness or international competition. These origins must be kept in mind, because they shape the “genetic heritage” of Bové’s movement and thus the character of his major contribution to the “anti-globalist” movement. Obviously we cannot review the history of the French peasant movement here: it suffices to say that it has always been the most obvious incarnation of the *reactionary* and *chauvinist* nature of

19. Lenin, *State and Revolution*, New York, 1943, pp. 22-23 (our emphasis).

the smallholder peasant, walled off in the defense of his own field, his own animals, and his own crops. There is further no need to recall the anti-bourgeois role (in the *overtly* reactionary sense) of the Vendée in the epoch of the French Revolution. Marxism has always had to neutralize this movement, precisely because of its limited and distorted vision, for its anti-proletarian connotations, for its openly conservative role, and for its “idiotism”.

Moreover, the whole discussion of the “agrarian question” is central to the communist perspective and it is precisely on this terrain that the revolutionary pretensions of all kinds have run aground. It is also an extremely complex question, which our Party has dealt with many times, among others in texts of vital importance such as *Proprietà e capitale* (1948-50) and especially *Mai la merce sfamerà l'uomo* (1953-54). We certainly cannot summarize the question here. But we can establish certain points: that capitalism is “genetically” incapable of assuring a development of agriculture consonant with the needs of the human species, but rather leads to the “ruin” and “destruction” of the land, as we have witnessed in particular in the last half-century (but the roots of the disorder are in the distant past, as important sections of *Capital* and so many writings of Marx and Engels show); that the communist perspective is not a network of small agrarian producers (whether in the Lacandona forest or in the French Aveyron), and still less linked to a reactionary “fair and equitable trade”, but rather a radically different relationship with land (and thus with agriculture and with food). What relationship? We read in *Capital*, vol. III, Ch. 46 (“Rent of Buildings. Rent of Mines. Price of Land”):

“From the standpoint of a higher socio-economic formation, the private property

of particular individuals in the earth will appear just as absurd as the private property of one man in other men. Even an entire society, a nation, or all simultaneously existing societies taken together, are not the owners of the earth. They are simply its possessors, its beneficiaries, and have to bequeath it in an improved state to succeeding generations, as *boni patres familias*.”²⁰.

Millions of light years away from the petty defense of a patch of land against the multinationals!

On the other hand, Bové himself argues for this pre-bourgeois and anti-Marxist position, when he traces the roots of his own movement to the counter-position Marx-Bakunin. He says: “We are reaching back to the origins of trade unionism with the Jura Confederation, the alternative to the Marxist project. At the birth of the First International there were two currents – Marx on one hand and Bakunin on the other – which pointed to different types of organization for the workers’ movement. Marx’s thinking on the trade-union question is focused exclusively [??] on the problem of the recovery of surplus-value [??] and on the role of the worker in capitalism [??]. The Jura Federation, on the other hand, has origins in the thought of Bakunin and I feel closely linked to that history”²¹

Having strutted his own political ignorance, the “dis-mantler” of McDonald’s then proceeds to explain what links him so closely to the Bakunist past: “The watchmakers’ union, in the

20. K. Marx, *Capital*, vol. III, London 1981, p. 911. On this question, cf. also our text of 1958 *Il programma rivoluzionario della società comunista elimina ogni forma di proprietà del suolo, degli impianti e dei prodotti del lavoro*, and in particular the chapter entitled “La questione agraria francese”, which seems to have been written...to anticipate the appearance of Bové & Co.

21. J. Bové, in J. Bové/F. Dufour, *Il mondo non è in vendita. Agricoltori contro la globalizzazione alimentare*, Milano 2000, pp. 129-130. The quotes which follow are taken from the same text.

Jura, included worker-peasants and workers, who had organized themselves in small workshops. Each one was autonomous and the boss of his own job, a productive and creative job. Their experience has given rise to a body of thought on the autonomy of the trade-union movement and on the contents of work itself.” (p.13)

Here is the constant and recurring dream of the petty bourgeoisie, in the peasant and artisan version: the dream of being (and remaining) “little bosses” in “their own little shops”. It is a dream which over the centuries has been nourished (in different but *convergent* forms) by anarchists and Social Democrats, Stalinists and workerists: to be “bosses of their own jobs”! It is here that Proudhon joins hands with Gramsci! “Let’s take over the factory! Let’s take over the pigsty! Everyone an independent producer!” Confronted with the inexorable march of capital, we make ourselves tiny, we seek to turn back the historical clock, to a pre-capitalist dimension, in which everyone was the boss of a small shop, or was an artisan not yet expropriated of the means of production – *people had not yet become proletarians, the constant nightmare of the petty bourgeoisie*.

Thus, it is obvious that putting forward such a perspective today, in the imperialist epoch, means playing a much worse role than that of the “petty bourgeois socialism” which was definitively shown the door in the *Communist Manifesto*:

“In countries like France, where the peasants constitute far more than half the population, it was natural that writers who sided with the proletariat against the bourgeoisie should use, in their criticism

the standpoint of these intermediate classes should take up the cudgels for the working class. Thus arose petty-bourgeois Socialism. Sismondi was the head of this school, not only in France but also in England.”²²

And what characterized (in 1848!) this “petty-bourgeois socialism”?

“In its positive aims, however, this form of Socialism aspires either to restoring the old means of production and of exchange, and with them the old property relations, and the old society, or to cramping the modern means of production and of exchange, with the framework of the old property relations that have been, and were bound to be, exploded by those means. In either case, it is both reactionary and Utopian.

“Its last words are: corporate guilds for manufacture; patriarchal relations in agriculture.” “Ultimately, when stubborn historical facts had dispersed all intoxicating effects of self-deception, this form of Socialism ended in a miserable fit of the blues” (*ibid.*, p.109)

Unfortunately, we now have to return to Monsieur Bové. In order to better clarify his own position (and here Proudhon and Gramsci join hands under the Aveyron moon, with a strong whiff of Roquefort, the national trademark cheese which must be defended against the ferocious attack of the protectionist surcharges on the other side of the Atlantic!), he adds that the experience of the Jura watchmakers’ union, as shown above, “was not unlike the struggle of the Lip workers who, at the beginning of the 1970’s, during a long strike, had begun the self-management of production and sales of watches.” (p. 130)

And there we have it, the eternally renewed myth of self-management,

22. *Communist Manifesto*, pp. 108-109.

of the bourgeois regime, the standard of the peasant and petty bourgeois, and from

through which the proletarians can be transformed into so many little self-starting entrepreneurs, adept at the production and especially the sale of commodities! This is the myth in which all the spontaneists and workerists regularly get together with the Social Democrats and Stalinists – a real infernal circle! Destroy the rule of profit? God forbid, no! They want to make themselves over in its image, “from below”, hopefully getting a “fair wage”, and for sure making propaganda for a “fair and equitable trade”! These made-over petty bourgeois from the “anti-global” extremists cannot live outside the shadow of capital, nor can they imagine a mode of production in which commodities do not exist. It is for this reason that they are intimately anti-working class and anti-proletarian: because they know that, precisely because of the location of proletarians in the mechanism of the production of profit, the latter are the gravediggers of capital, and thus they are terrified by them. Today, they squawk and whine about the overwhelming power of the multinationals, which risk turning them into so many wage-laborers and thus into proletarians. Tomorrow, they will line up – as has happened in the past with so many “revolutionary syndicalists” – with the class enemy, with the anti-proletarian and anti-communist phalanx. Welcome to Seattle!

The Lip strike, which Bové mentions, is precisely the most fitting example of a major working-class struggle which was betrayed (like so many others in the early 1970's) by ghettoizing it inside the limits of the factory and the logic of profit, by channeling precious energies toward non-class objectives and, at the end, by celebrating its funeral.²³

On the other hand, the whole position of Bové & Co. is a page from the book of classical French chauvinism (it is no ac-

cident that the word was born in France!): a defense with daggers drawn of the material and ideological borders of the fatherland, of its commodities and its products. The anti-globalization of the French peasants is an anti-Americanism with four (French) cheeses, or at most a Europeanism which can easily be transformed into “anti-any other nation which threatens national agriculture”, as we saw in the episode of the “mad cow” crisis: then Bové bitterly criticized the Italian decision – a minimal and quite insufficient measure, like all other measures taken at that time – to block imports from abroad, as dictated by the Italian meat lobby! Yes indeed: when one steps onto the terrain of chauvinism, one inevitably arrives at the point where the war is of all against all. The anti-globalists with a glimmer of common sense should be careful, and they will see how many surprises positions of this kind have in store.

“But”, someone will say, “Bové is fighting for better food, against the plague of fast food, etc.” Indeed: but the point – here as with the entire anti-globalist movement – is not so much in the critique of the existent, as in the political perspective being proposed. It is a fact that capitalism cannot assure decent food for the human species – a fact noted by Marxism since 1848. The problem is that the desire to change this state of affairs while leaving the capitalist mode of production intact means... precisely leaving things as they are. And no critique of those putting forward such “solutions” will ever be hard enough.

Naomi Klein, or the Stench of Conscience

Following the Third Worldist, legalist-gradualist and chauvinist forms, with

23. On this point, cf. our article from those years, which analyses the Lip struggle: “Il movimento degli operai della ‘Lip’”, *il programma comunista*, n. 17/1973.

24. N. Klein, *No Logo*, Toronto, 2000.

25. From the interview to the Italian monthly *L'Indice*, July-August 2001.

26. *Ibid.*

27 N. Klein, *op. cit.*, Ch. 2.

28. *Ibid.*

Naomi Klein 24 the *fourth*, and possibly the worst, form of counter-revolutionary opportunism enters the fray: the form which leverages itself on the Individual, on Subjectivity, on the Human Being.

In a recent interview, the author explains her objective: the struggle for democracy, for freedom, and to affirm our (?) right to be considered (by whom?) first of all human beings and citizens rather than consumers/investors. Only in this way, for Ms. Klein, "is it possible to derail disembodied and ferocious capitalism"²⁵.

The idea of discovering, with every rustling of the bushes, novelty in the economy and in society grows out of the necessity of announcing the death of the only doctrine – Marxism – which demonstrates the inevitable end of capital and the indispensable surgical intervention represented by an act of class violence. The nth expose of capitalist "injustices" – in the form of coercion on the job, of ideological submission, of destruction of nature, and so on – does not add much to what we know about this productive form since the time in which Engels described the situation of the working class in England. That this "civilization" produces misery, and increasing misery, was demonstrated by Marx as a necessary condition for the development of capital. For decades and decades this forecast has been reproached, precisely by those who are today compelled to recognize that ("in all these years [...] they had betrayed us: the poor are even poorer, entire continents have been reduced to total unlivability")²⁶.

But these belated—and unsolicited—recognitions, far from constituting a full acceptance of Marxism, constitute the premise for an "analysis" of the global-

ization phenomenon, once again peddled as novelty ("an extraordinary rediscovery of politics"!), and the refusal to adhere, without ever having considered it, to a revolutionary solution to the present contradictions, built into imperialism.

We do not want to gloss Klein's book. It will suffice to quickly summarize its basic theses. Here they are:

1. Today the largest corporations contract out the productive processes factories in the underdeveloped countries; these companies produce commodities (at low cost, exploiting manpower without the interference of trade unions, etc.) whereas the parent companies produce the image guaranteeing the good quality of the commodities..

2. For this reason in recent years there has been an enormous growth of advertising costs: a label has actual market value and companies invest in advertising.

3. Finally, on the Western market, a fierce struggle has arisen to impose the label, and no longer merely the commodities²⁷.

The purpose of the book is thus, in Klein's thinking, that the more people become aware of the secrets (?) of the global network of labels and logos, the more their indignation (!) will feed into the large political movement now taking shape, i.e. a vast wave of opposition which will take aim at the transnational companies themselves²⁸.

The "secrets" which Klein proposes to clarify to the applauding and swindled masses are already contained, for anyone who knows how to read, in Lenin's *Imperialism*. These open secrets have already been sufficiently elaborated in the preceding lines and we will obviously not repeat their... unmasking.

We must nonetheless underscore that, like the "Seattle people" as a whole, K-

lein fully subscribes to the “mercantilist” vision of capital, which could only function by imposing by force the acquisition of commodities. The fact that capital has always had recourse to every possible trick to extort profits is not a novelty. The mechanism was recognized and perfectly described ca. 155 years ago:

- “When the German market was saturated and the goods, in spite of every effort, no longer found an outlet on the international market, business turned to...second-rate production, shoddy goods, deteriorating quality, the adulteration
- of raw materials, the counterfeiting of labels (Klein’s accursed logos!), fictive sales, the discounting of bills of exchange and a credit system with no real foundation. *Competition ended up in a dog-eat-dog struggle, which is today presented to us as a turning point of universal history, the source of the most grandiose results and achievements.*” (Marx/Engels, *The German Ideology*, our emphasis)

Apart from this, Klein does not tell us anything about the *origins of capital*, i.e. about the processes through which a mass of money generates a greater mass of money. One senses here and there that for the author, everything resides in force and sleights-of-hand, i.e. in the attribution of a monopoly price to determinate commodities, and thus in systematic theft – and as a consequence nothing can be said on the *very existence of social classes*. In fact, the elements who participate in the anti-globalizing conflicts are described variously as “people”, “activist artists”, “cyclists”, “trade-union activists”, etc. or else as groups of uncertain definition, such as “rural communities”, “handfuls of crazies” (people who break windows), “fashionable radical movements”, and “citizens’ move-

ments”. *A class perspective is rigorously dispensed with.*

In essence, the thematics taken up in the book of Klein flow directly from the swamp of a capitalist market to the desperate search for outlets.

From the necessity of selling at any cost – because of the hyperproductive madness which flows from the rigid necessity of producing surplus value – a mediated process arises in which the company is no longer identified with this or that commodity, but rather with a philosophy of life: something like what, in Italy was germinated forty years ago in the headquarters of the Olivetti firm.

To succeed, the big corporation uses the system of sponsorship, and wins the favor of the widest possible spectrum of actors, literati, scientists, who makes testimonials for the label²⁹. The usual imbecile, chosen because he presents a level of intelligence even lower than that of the targeted audience, guarantees the sale of commodities of a quality roughly equal to that of the potential consumers. The moment is not far off when even insults – properly logoed – will become a vehicle of persuasion to buy, in the framework of the general social dumbing-down. Young people and their tendency to imitate are targeted (“they arrive in flocks, a salesperson said of the youngest customers [...] If you sell to one, you sell to everyone in their classes and to everyone in their school”)³⁰ and the schools are targeted through adulation, paying young “outsiders” who, working in the streets and in public places, convince their age cohort.

These sales techniques, which obviously have little to do with a serious analysis of the imperialist phase of capitalism, are not in fact seen by the author as a

29. N. Klein, *op. cit.*, Ch. 2

30. *Ibid.*, Ch.4

necessary consequence of the market system, against which the sole effective remedy is the destruction of the existing nexus of social relations in the sphere of production. On the contrary, once again the cause is located in *moral reasons*. In Klein's thinking, "the conduct of the multinationals is simply the by-product of a vaster global economic system which has slowly removed every barrier and limitation to trade, investment and outsourcing. If companies make agreements with unscrupulous dictators, sell off their factories and pay wages too low to live on this happens because there exists no international law preventing them from acting in this way"³¹.

Law and morality, above all! When the laws and the morality of the petty bourgeois rule the world; when the galleys of capitalist production are extended everywhere; when international tribunals work full tilt punishing some and rewarding others in the name of "universal rights", limiting excesses here, conceding well-being there, then we will live in a better world! Then there will no longer be crises, hunger, desperation and debts! Then the immanent laws of capital will be bent to the desires of the petty bourgeois, then the spectre of communism and revolution will be finally banished from the world!

We are thus face to face with the Individual, Consciousness, and Being. Once social classes are eliminated, history becomes the product of individual learning, and from the sum of so many little learned people flows that Cultural Revolution which has always been rooted in the ideology of the middle classes. And it is here that, in no sense paradoxically, the anti-globalist Klein honey-moons with the Gramsci who imagined a proletarian

Weltanschauung (exactly what communists have the revolutionary duty to abolish!), anti-Marxism together with pre-Marxism, inter-classism with bourgeois democracy.

It is on this basis that "a common imperative within the various movements that attack the multinationals" is formulated. And what is it, in Klein's view? Essentially, people have a right to know.³² It is on this basis that the two tactics of the "struggle" are grounded, and precisely the recourse to "tribunals", in which one can keep track of what the transnationals are doing,³³ and the recourse to the inevitable Internet, which can be used to diffuse information everywhere, and in this way provoke "burning humiliations" (!!) for the multinationals (*Ibid.*). *Tertium non datur*, there is no other way: but for Klein, "the most important thing is the right to sit down at a table and negotiate, even if one fails to negotiate the ideal agreement; it is the sacrosanct right to self-determination."³⁴ Thus to trust the companies for the defense of human rights, for Klein, means sacrificing the right of people to "govern themselves" (*Ibid.*) Klein looks to "elected representatives" to enforce these corporate codes of conduct (*Ibid.*). The "successes" of this strategy are proudly listed by the author: putting on exhibits, organizing internet sites, staging marches, organizing counter-summits and peaceful sit-ins, going "armed with sponges, soap and squeegee men to wash the facades of the big banks downtown", tainted as they are with the shame of Nazi gold and the weight of the debt of the countries of the Third World.³⁵ People dance and sing in the streets and in the public squares of the whole world against globalization.

And while they are singing and dancing, the proletariat continues to secrete surplus-value at infernal rhythms, as has

31. *Ibid.*, Ch.16

32. *Ibid.*, Ch.13.

33. *Ibid.*, Ch.16.

34. *Ibid.*, Ch.17

35. *Ibid.*, Ch.18

happened for centuries, for the happiness of the parasitical classes. We will have our liberation only when the proletariat dances and sings revolutionary songs on the bones of these movements, vile and cowardly as movements of the petty bourgeoisie have always been, ready to play its role as waterboy of capital when things are going well, but always available to hammer the proletariat in moments of crisis, with the usual weapons of social pacifism, democracy, “culture” and “progress”.

Identifying imperialism with the label and the logo, neglecting the reality of the megafusions of corporations, which mean megalayoffs – shifting the harsh reality of the crisis into the virtual world of the image, refusing to see the wave of misery which is about to crash down on a world choking with wealth – means either fleeing into the world of dreams or taking naive readers for a ride. It means not understanding that “globalization” is the same thing as imperialism and that the economy of waste, built into capitalism, has for a long time become an obstacle to the development of the productive forces. It means not understanding as well the meaning of what is now clear to everyone, namely that today “a reduction in productive capacity is good news”, in the words of an American analyst.³⁶

It means being on the eve of catastrophic collapses of the very temples of the world economy and raving in the grip of propaganda – a real fact, but nonetheless transient as the crisis advances – which, Klein maintains, appropriates for itself the most private zones of our naked individual life and ravages our subjectivity.³⁷

The Individual, the supreme bourgeois mystification, can croak without any regrets on our part. Better still, and notwithstanding its apologists who are recruited in droves in the middle classes,

the Individual has already given up the ghost with the passage through different modes of production, with the intensification and pressure of networks of ever more complex relationships, within which the individual, freedom and autonomy have become pure illusions. It is capitalism which definitively suppressed the individual as a subject and social form, to the extent that it swept away an archaic economy based on microproduction, on the family nucleus, and on artisanal production. And it has been bourgeois ideology, reactionary today as it was revolutionary yesterday, which pervades the middle classes – and unfortunately also broad proletarian strata – with the conception that history was instead the progressive liberation of man (first of the slave, then of the serf) from exploitation. The idealistic regurgitations which have their base in the petty bourgeois – on the latter’s idea of an eternal Morality, of the eternal Conscience, of the eternal Law – are disgusting most of all precisely because they were swept away by the inexorable becoming of history long ago.

A “Chilean State”?

One of the sharpest theoretical struggles fought by communism against opportunism and reformism concerns the conception of the state. That, behind the anti-globalization ideology, there is a palpable orientation in defense of the political and economic organizations of individual states, was not made up by us. The “Declaration of the Millennium Forum of the NGO’s, New York 2000” 38 openly says it. “States are becoming weaker [this is something that, for these servants of constituted power, for these idolators of the state, especially when blessed with the votes of millions of swin-

36. Cfr. “Da Tokyo all’America un’ondata di licenziamenti”, in the Italian daily *La Stampa*, Aug. 28, 2001.

37. See again her interview on *L’Indice*, cit.

38. In Pianta, *op. cit.*, p. 163. We translate here from the Italian version.

dled proletarians, is highly displeasing], while an irresponsible transnational private sector [only because it is obeying the laws of capital, against which “civil society” *has nothing to say?*] is constantly getting stronger”. The “Final Document of the World Social Forum of Porto Alegre”³⁹ openly says it. After having invoked solidarity “with the African people”, it calls for a struggle “for the defense of its [what is this “its”? who is this “it”? what are the social classes in play?] right to the land” and, a bit further, demands “that governments respect the obligations [sanctioned by whom, if not by the local bourgeoisies of which these governments are the representatives?] which are due them”, demanding moreover that the IMF, the World Bank, the WTO, NATO, etc. put an end “to their interference in national politics”: a shameful document, also signed by movements which claim to base themselves on Marxism and which as such are nothing but traitors to the working class.

It is indispensable, dealing with the confusion which rules in this argument, to go over some old ground on the question of the state. We will use once again Lenin’s *State and Revolution*, a book which the “Seattle people” will not like because it makes the mistake of clearly expounding solely class positions:

“The state is the product and the manifestation of the *irreconcilability* of class antagonisms. The state arises when, where and to the extent that the class antagonisms *cannot* be objectively reconciled. And, conversely, the existence of the state proves that the class antago-

nisms *are* irreconcilable... the bourgeois, and particularly the petty-bourgeois, ideologists, compelled under the pressure of indisputable historical facts to ad-

mit that the state only exists where there are class antagonisms and the class struggle, ‘correct’ Marx in such a way as to make it appear that the state is an organ for *reconciling* the classes... if the state is the product of the irreconcilable character of class antagonisms, if it is a force standing *above* society and ‘increasingly separating itself from it’, then it is clear that the liberation of the oppressed class is impossible not only without a violent revolution, but also without the destruction of the apparatus of state power and which was created by the ruling class...”⁴⁰

The keen anti-globalists, who in Göteborg, Prague, and Genoa experienced the impact of the clubs of the democratic police of all of Europe, are the very same people who the day before yesterday exalted the welfare state, and who today find themselves unexpectedly orphaned by the “paternal” state, the state which made itself the guarantor of “democratic freedoms” against fascist obscurantism, and which today, for who knows what reason, does not defend them from the assault of the rapacious transnational companies, the IMF and the World Bank.

Once again in *State and Revolution*, Lenin quotes Engels from *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*: “In the democratic republic [and here Lenin quotes Engels] ‘wealth exercises its power in an indirect but all the more secure way’, first of all through the ‘direct corruption of the functionaries’ (America), secondly with ‘the alliance between the government and the stock exchange’”. And then he continues:

“At the present time, imperialism and the domination of the banks have ‘developed’ to an unusually fine art both these methods of defending and asserting the omnipotence of wealth in democratic republics of all description...The omnipo-

39. Ibid., p. 187. We translate here from the Italian version.

40. Lenin, *State and Revolution*, pp.8-9.

tence of 'wealth' is thus more secure in a democratic republic, since it does not depend on the poor political shell of capitalism. A democratic republic is the best possible political shell for capitalism, and therefore, once capital has gained control [...] of this very best shell, it establishes its power so securely, so firmly that *no* change, either of persons, or institutions, or parties in the bourgeois republic can shake it."⁴¹

These words were written in 1917. Has something changed in the political framework of imperialism since then? *Obviously yes*. Two bourgeoisies of the Western world, one victorious and the other defeated in war, reorganized their own states according to fascist criteria, i.e. with methods favoring financial and industrial concentration through direct state intervention, support for companies in crisis, the reorganization of state finances, and collaboration between the classes. *All* economic powers, under false "democratic" pretenses and led by the U.S. and England, very quickly signed on for these programs of reorganization. Is there some enthusiast of the "Seattle people" that does not see how the fascistization and armouring of contemporary states, the *best democratic republics* in Lenin's words, are the sole and necessary political reality in which global capital *must move*?

OUR ROAD

Against Petty-Bourgeois Ideology

One threadbare and newly greened-over slogan of the anti-globalists proclaims that "another world is possible". Against this formulation, communists maintain that this society has for a long time been pregnant with a new mode of production and a new social system: without classes, without money, without a market, with-

out the accursed law of value which regulates all human relationships. Communists maintain that a society of this kind is not only indispensable to the future of humanity, but that it flows of necessity from the same laws of the existing one, precisely through the current centuries-old process of "globalization" which has pervaded every mechanism. If birthing of this new society is too long, if the revolutionary perspective which politically underwrites the destruction of the old society and the beginning of the road to a new mode of production seems far away, a role of the first order – on the social and political level – in the preservation of capitalist rule falls precisely to those who, whether or not they are aware of it, propose an alternative which seeks *to be halfway*: saving capitalism but rejecting those aspects which were intrinsic to it when it was born, and which the anti-globalists see instead as a product of human "evil". These people, and they have been around for a long time (and this is one of the most obvious peculiarities of petty-bourgeois reformism) transform that which in historical reality is a social science, with its laws and its theoretical apparatus, into a vile and banal "moral question", whose solution is to be found in either Teaching, or in Culture, or in Popular Education, (with the effigy of Gramsci at the forefront); they otherwise seek its solution in eternal Morality and Truth, violated by this or that "corrupt government", by this or that roguish leader, on the right if the government is "left-wing", on the left if the government is right-wing.

There is a constant thread running through the "struggles" of the middle classes – that authentic plague afflicting the world proletariat, particularly in periods of ebb – against big capital in the last half century. During the postwar recovery, the dominant theme was

41. Lenin, *State and Revolution*, pp. 13-14.

the struggle against concentration and monopoly, understood as the negation of the “freedom” of capitals to attain an average equal profit for all of them. In the same way and in the same perspective, the contemporary “struggle” is directed against the organization of capitals on a planetary scale and dimension, which for us communists has always represented the indispensable *premise* for the economy organized internationally and guided by a general species plan: this is what we call “communism”.

Our party conducted a dogged struggle against the petty-bourgeois ideology (most specifically that of the Stalinist parties throughout Europe after World War II) of “struggle against the monopolies” and defense of small-scale and liberal capitalism. Let us admit for a moment, and ad absurdum, that this reactionary ideology had won out against all the laws of the concentration and centralization of capitals, and of the gigantic tie-up between commercial, finance and industrial capital. Whatever the case, this ideology could not move in any other direction than that which, alone, can keep the commodity-based capitalist system alive. Only deluded people or renegades can set off on a path whose only focus is to stand in the way of the laws of history: laws that any bourgeois economist knows perfectly well. An example? “The public [...] called for the intervention of the state [“the U.S.A.”] against the ‘monopolistic effects’, which in fact, beginning with the Sherman Act of 1890, produced numerous anti-trust laws, almost all of which, however, were ineffective, so that the most powerful and famous of

the trusts, among which we recall Standard Oil (Rockefeller) and U.S. Steel Corporation (Morgan), continued to increase their power

even through various transformations.”⁴²

And these are the words of a bourgeois scholar!

The fact is that, in capitalism, the dialectic between concentration on one hand and competition on the other, is based on two elements which act in a relative, if also diverse manner, but always in conjunction. If the multinationals developed in a tentacular fashion everywhere, in spite of the pious laments of the reactionary defenders of small property (yesterday their names were Togliatti and Thorez; today their names, more modestly but no less repellently, are Bové, Rifkin, Klein, etc.), this does not in fact depend, as the spokesmen of “civil society” seem to imagine, on the fact that the multinationals can attain a permanently higher rate of profit on their own initiative, but from the fact that they can benefit from an ever-increasing mass of profit.

But the laws regulating the dynamic of small capitals are the same that apply to big ones. The leveling of the rate of profit, which occurs by continuously shifting, on a world scale, the capitals in the most profitable sectors, does nothing more than push competition within the capitalist jungle to the maximum. The super-extraction of surplus-value, an important part of which can no longer be reinvested in the productive sphere, does nothing but power the circulation of finance capital within and above all outside the individual nation-states. This has as a consequence the continuous recalibration of a rate of profit to which all productive branches must accommodate themselves, in a Sisiphsian labor to cancel out the inequalities of development in individual productive branches, which nonetheless are constantly reproduced. This requires on one hand continuous innovation to keep down prices

42. Luzzatto, *Storia economica dell'età moderna e contemporanea*, Padua 1960, part II, p. 448.

and squeeze competitors, and concentration and expansion of the market on the other: this, and only this is the golden law of capitalism.

The great cloud of dust kicked up by the recent discoverers of globalization only means that they seem to be unaware that every form of “common market” since the 1950’s was transformed into a jungle of capitalist concentration beyond borders, in the automobile, steel and chemical sectors, etc. Meanwhile, on the other hand, the giants created by nation-states pursued a customs policy aimed at containing imports, promoting exports, and favoring dumping. What, then, is new about the current brigand-like “commercial treaties” and “agreements” with countries of the so-called Third World, designed to strip them of all their resources?

A Long Road, But There Is No Alternative

To the recurring practice of reducing the question of “globalizing” capitalism to a political-moral fact of the “hypocrisy of states”, of the “violation of human rights”, of the “self-determination of peoples” (we quote from the above-mentioned “Declaration of the Millennium Forum”) we oppose the historically confirmed fact that, from Marx’s analysis in the mid-19th century until today, capitalism is governed by immanent laws which determine its complex movement. This is how we characterized this law, in a 1960 text of ours: “It is not the yearnings of personal capitalists to enjoy profits, but the impersonal exigency of social capital to increase surplus-value, a social force which only a revolution can demolish.”⁴³

When will the poor non-entities who today run around raving about the democratization of the economy understand that the only road to salvation for all of

humanity lies in the violent tearing down of the economic and social bases of the entire planet? And that this, far from being a utopia, is an urgent historical necessity which flows *from the productive subsoil of capitalism*? And that what, up to now, has prevented its realization is also the delayed reorganization of the international revolutionary movement, whose origins lie in the defeat inflicted by the combined reaction of Stalinism-fascism-democracy?

Obviously, these people will understand – and unfortunately, perhaps, it will not suffice – when the axe of the crisis and unemployment crashes down on them as well. But even then, and this is a sad lesson of history, they will not resign themselves to enlist under the banners of communism, for the violent destruction of the existing society. They will invoke “united fronts”, they will exalt “socialisms in one country”, they will support their own bourgeoisies in the world massacres, trying to demonstrate – and historians of the hired academy will not be lacking then, as they were never lacking in the past – that it was “the enemy’s fault”.

It is for this reason that the communist party today has the historical duty to go over old ground of theory and program, of principles and ends, which TOMORROW will guide the proletarian masses in the assault on all the fortified citadels of the bourgeoisie. Here, then, is our invariant road: no to any alliance with the middle classes! No to any attempt to pass off as class struggle what is only the atavistic fear of the petty bourgeoisie, of losing its own miserable, and often fictitious, privileges! Only the union of the international proletariat under the banners of communism will be able to lead to the destruction of all the state machines - whether in more

43. “Rivoluzioni storiche della specie che vive, opera e conosce”, in *Il programma comunista*, no. 12/1960.

or less developed countries - and to the final extinction of the state.

Two Centralities

Now, it has been obvious for communists since 1848 (but it becomes more and more obvious as the social contradictions intensify under the pressure of economic crisis) that the central element of this strategy of anti-capitalist struggle can only be the *international working class*. But this “centrality” is not, for us, an act of faith, and still less do we consider it a kind of “genetic heritage” inscribed in the DNA of every individual worker, as workerists and Stalinists would have had it. This “centrality” derives, quite... simply, from the location of the working class within *the capitalist mode of production*; it is this class and not other groups (the middle classes, young people, marginals, or other “revolutionary subjects” sucked out of the thumb of the radical-chic intelligentsia) which produces *surplus-labor and thus surplus-value, the heart of the mechanism of production of profit*. And this is true, independently of the consciousness which the working class (or the individual workers who make it up) has of this fact and of the consequences implicit in it, in economic and political terms.

Thus, the working class is the only social stratum capable of striking at the heart of the capitalist mode of production, going into motion on the basis of its *own* objectives and its *own* program, and to project itself toward that society without classes and without exploitation which has already been made possible, in its material basis, by the developments and transformations produced by capitalism itself.

meaning of the “centrality” of the international working class. The problem is that, from a Marxist point of view, this is not sufficient. It is necessary to add to this “centrality” an organization, a leadership, a theory of the past, present and future, a political program. And all this does not flow spontaneously from the objective course of things, from struggles and strikes, however generous and combative: centuries of struggles and strikes are there to demonstrate it. All this can only be contained in a revolutionary party, rooted in the class, capable of nourishing it daily in its experiences and its struggles, so that nothing of this “centrality”, this energy, is lost, *on a world scale*. A party capable of assuring this continuity, above and beyond the vicissitudes of the moment and the contingencies of situations, of generational shifts and periods of defeat and ebb, without which no struggle (neither partial nor final) can really pose itself within a revolutionary perspective. Trotsky wrote in 1920: “Only with the help of a party drawing on its whole historical past, which theoretically foresees the way forward and all its stages, and which concludes from them what form of action in the given moment is correct and necessary, only with the help of such a party will the proletariat be freed from the necessity of constantly repeating its own history from the beginning, with its hesitations, its uncertainties and its errors.”⁴⁴

Two centralities, therefore, one objective and the other subjective. Two preliminary unavoidable conditions, which are moreover in close and necessary relationship with the economic crisis: in the sense that the unfolding and deepening of this crisis in the course of the last twenty-five years makes these two centralities all the more necessary, all the more urgent, all the more inevitable.

44. L. Trotsky, *Teachings of the Paris Commune*.

Whether it wants it or not, whether it is more or less conscious of it, this is the

Today, however, after seventy years of counterrevolution (during which democracy, Nazism/fascism and Stalinism have worked hand in hand, with different *but convergent* roles and functions) the working class “unlearned” how to struggle for its *own* objectives: the memory and the experience of what it means to defend its own conditions of life and work have been forcibly stripped away, the working class has been compelled to take the field to defend everything that does not concern it (the fatherland, the national economy, democracy, peaceful coexistence, collaboration between the classes, etc.). Today, however, after seventy years of counter-revolution, the revolutionary party is reduced to a minority which not only struggles against the current, as is inevitable for every revolutionary party, but which for the moment has only the smallest possibility of really weighing on events and influencing those few workers’ struggles which burst forth from time to time, these thin social strata which are shaking off the torpor and the paralysis induced by the counter-revolution.

Precisely for this reason, it is necessary to work with an eye to putting these two conditions back on the agenda, however long and hard this work might appear (and undoubtedly is). If one does not go in this direction, one winds up working – *even without wanting to* – for new, disastrous, catastrophic defeats. It is in fact obvious that the economic crisis which opened in the mid-1970’s (and which we anticipated in detail twenty-five years earlier) is moving into an ever-greater acceleration and depth, *on a world scale*. We have already devoted (and will continue to devote) numerous articles and studies to it, and this is not the place to summarize them. Here it suffices to forcefully restate that either one works seriously to putting these two conditions back on the agenda, without immediatist

haste or subjectivist voluntarisms but with that serenity, dedication and continuity that sets revolutionaries apart, or else one accepts that the capitalist mode of production is headed for the only final solution for which it is known: a new world massacre. And acceptance means complicity.

How then can one work to advance these central conditions?

What Is To Be Done?

It is clear that, in this perspective, the *process of the international grounding of the party* is fundamental for us. This is a theoretical-political-organizational fact. It is thus a question of: *a)* re-establishing the correct communist positions, against every adulteration and manipulation, going once again over the old theoretical ground methodically, patiently, and inflexibly, without allowing ourselves to be swept up in either activist haste or in fatalistic passivity – a task at which our Party has never ceased to work over the last seventy-five years, dominated by the most brutal counter-revolution that the working-class and communist movement have ever endured; *b)* reposing the communist program as the sole real (and *realistic!*) perspective for immediate and future struggle, against all the supposed shortcuts (reformist or adventurist), which accomplish nothing but piling frustration upon frustration in an already stagnant and swamp-like situation; *c)* expand the theoretical-political range of action of the Party, in the awareness that this – the perennial task of anyone declaring himself a communist – is rendered all the more urgent and vital in the face of the economic crisis which is advancing inexorably and which is preparing bloody days of reckoning in the future.

For this, *the concept and practice of internationalism* are at the center of the theo-

retical and practical activity, the propaganda and proselytizing, of our Party, however small it may be. Because precisely on this terrain, in the past century, the world working class has undergone the most scorching defeat: from the bastard theory of “socialism in one country” to the proclamation of “national roads to socialism”, to all the episodes of “poor peoples’ wars” or artificial counterpositions between sectors of a class which can only be victorious if it is united.

But, for the reasons stated above, this process of the international grounding of the party is necessarily based on a serious and constant commitment to *working in close contact with the class*. Once again, this is anything but a simple task. It must take account of the disasters produced in the proletariat by the combined action of fascism, Stalinism and democracy, terms which are only apparently antithetical, but which conceal instead their unique class function – that of the counter-revolutionary preservation of the capitalist economy. And it must take into account the transformations which have occurred in the economic-industrial fabric under the pressure of more than twenty-five years of crisis, of the sense of disillusion and isolation into which whole generations of workers have fallen, of the conservative weight of the “labor aristocracy”, of the open betrayal carried out by political and trade-union organizations, of the spontaneist and individualistic temptations which periods of disorientation inevitably produce.

Thus, no illusions, no shortcuts, but rather a task carried on in profundity, knowing full well that the time will inevitably be long and difficult, but that precisely and only a *party perspective* assures a continuity beyond the highs and the lows, generational change, the possible defeats, toward a victory which

is prepared day after day, without any anxiety for individual recognition or personal or group self-promotion. The only sure road to follow is the one which passes through the refusal of class collaboration in the defense of the ostensible “superior interests” of this or that nation, the recovery of an authentic class front, around classist objectives and methods in all workplaces, rejecting every bastard ideology based on the “interests of consumers”, on the “struggle” against this or that industrial cartel, against this or that “fascism” in favor of this or that “democracy” – a road which breaks definitively with every reformist, gradualist, and individualist illusion. It is for these reasons that we set, with absolute urgency, the objective of recovering the classical forms of struggle which animated the great worker insurrections of the past. Taking up again the fight to wrest acceptable conditions of life and work through struggle does not yet represent the revolutionary break. Nevertheless, and this is the teaching of Lenin, the immediate struggle of economic self-defense is the necessary first step for beginning to climb the ladder which will lead the class to realize the inevitability of the supreme conflict.

Only through an effective resumption of working-class struggles, too long absent from the scene in Western countries, and their linkup with the movements developing in the rest of the world, in spite of the worst kinds of police states, will it be possible to pass from the reign of necessity to the realm of freedom.

Any perspective of class-based renewal will thus have to pass through the reconquest of some fundamental concepts:

a) Rejecting the blackmail of “national interest”. The national economy is not a common good: to impose its defense on

workers only means greater exploitation, the worsening of living conditions, the intensification of rhythms, mobility and precariousness, the multiplication of workplace accidents, reduction of real wages, the increased destruction of the environment, and a further accumulation of inter-imperialist conflict, destined sooner or later to lead a new world war;

b) *Rejecting all forced isolation of workers' struggles.* For decades, trade-union practice has been, on one hand, to disperse the energies of the workers (micro-conflicts, the isolation of struggles by department, factory, urban zone, region or sector, the preventive limitation of the strike in space and time, deviant objectives such as the defense of the national economy, of democracy, of legality, etc.); on the other hand, actively to contribute to their enforced isolation (the self-limiting of struggles in some "national interest", stiffening and bureaucratization of union structures, marginalization and denunciation of combative workers, etc.). All this must be combated, not in the name of a deceptive union democracy (an empty phrase, given the irreversibly anti-worker direction taken by the dominant unions over the past half-century), but in the name of an authentic resumption of class struggle, which must be at the most ample and vigorous possible. The strike, the picket line, the blockage of production and of commodities, the worker demonstrations, etc. are arms of the proletariat, and no one should be able to appropriate them for other ends, rendering them ineffective or turning them against the workers.

c) *Rejecting all internal divisions in the class.* Among the devastating effects of the counter-revolution and of the practice of opportunist parties and unions, has been the breakup of the class front and, as a consequence, the diffusion of localist and federalist ideologies, hostili-

ty, diffidence and competition among workers, and an exacerbated individualism. All this, far from constituting a road to salvation for the individual or for given sectors, only leads to more and more disastrous defeats. The working class can today hope to resist the attack which capital is launching against it, and to pass tomorrow to a counter-attack, only by re-forging its unity around classist objectives and methods of struggle, only recognizing itself (and thus acting), not as a formless sum of individuals but as a class, against all the attempts to break it up and divide it. And as a class it must return to the struggle against the divisive wage differentials, layoffs, mobility and flexibility, differentiation by age and sex, work in the underground economy and all forms of precariousness, the myth of professionalism, federalism, localism, racism, and all those relationships within the class which set workers against workers, men against women, the young against the old, "national" workers against immigrant workers.

d) *Rejecting all attacks on living and working conditions.* Capital in crisis is compelled to launch a violent attack against the working class (and also against broad strata of the middle classes which, up till now, have had the illusion of being protected against brutal surprises.) Workers must resist this attack and repel it, and can do so only by once again setting out on a class-based road and re-conquering a unity on this basis. But other attacks will follow, other attempts to foist off onto the workers the effects of a crisis that is not the result of bad management, private dishonesty, or personal egoism. These attempts will of necessity take diverse forms, some softer and more underhanded, others more harsh and explicit. The workers must therefore prepare themselves for a struggle whose results will necessarily be precarious, whose victories will be immediately

called into question, whose gains will have nothing lasting. What the class must undertake is a struggle of daily resistance, without falling into the illusion that it is possible to return to any pre-existing (and moreover illusory) situation of peace and idyll.

The workers must not allow themselves to be diverted toward false objectives. They must struggle today for their own physical survival, and demand:

- *Major wage increases, even larger for the worst-paid and most-exploited categories.* Because it is clear that today ever lower wages are not enough to sustain family nuclei under serious threat by present and future unemployment; that medical, public health and hospital assistance have become more precarious and at the same time more expensive; that the weight of rents, electricity, gas, public transportation and taxes of various kinds has become greater...
- *Major reductions in the work week, at the same pay.* Because, between churning of the workforce and over-

time, the anxiety of work is increasing every day, just as there is a dramatic increase in the incidents directly tied to the increase of productivity and savings on measures of control and prevention. To struggle for a reduction of the work week thus does not mean to nourish the illusion that such a reduction can reabsorb the unemployed, but to realize that it can have the effect of alleviating that anxiety, slowing down the tension to which millions of workers are subjected, and restoring a psycho-physical force which is currently being seriously corroded for the sole aim of extracting profits for capital. It means, in sum, also struggling to reconstitute a real class identity.

It will be this class identity, reconquered through intransigent struggles, which will allow the world working class, under the leadership of its party – the International Communist Party – to finally undertake the “assault on the heavens”.

And not the assault on this or that citadel, more or less fortified, in which the zombies of the G8, the WTO, or the IMF, are meeting for a few days.

Back to Basics

Orient¹

It is impossible to form a clear picture of the impending conflict without giving the peoples of the Orient due consideration. At present, they are grouped in a powerful bloc around Russia against the Western bloc, led by the white colonial great powers.

The adversaries of the Atlantic Alliance maintain that this was the overall perspective of the Russian revolution from the very beginning: an alliance of the working class in the western countries, on the one hand, and the oppressed non-white peoples with the Soviet state to overthrow capitalist imperialism, on the other. And even the journalists of the American camp, evoking the struggle as it was envisioned thirty years ago, pay tribute to their enemy for the unique historical continuity it has exhibited in its global strategy.

In September 1920, between the 2nd and 3rd congresses of the 3rd International, which was still firmly oriented in the direction of revolutionary Marxism, our journalists remind us that the Congress of Eastern Peoples was held in Baku with nearly two thousand delegates from China to Egypt, to Persia and Libya. The President of the proletarian International, Zinoviev (whose appearance was anything but warlike), read the final manifesto of the congress. The delegates replied to his speech in unison, brandishing their spears and swords. The Communist International exhorted the eastern peoples to overthrow their western oppressors by force of arms, and appealed to them: "Brothers! We summon you to a holy war, a holy war against English imperialism!"²

The battle-cry was also directed at Japan, calling for a Korean national insurrection. Zinoviev's speech also emphasized the Bolsheviks' hatred of the French and Americans, and in particular of the Yankee vampires who had drunk the blood of Philippino workers. But fifteen years later, Zinoviev had been executed, and his undertakers nonetheless claim that they are merely remaining faithful to his challenge. If we are to believe that newspapers that quote this earth-shattering appeal, Lenin already felt at the time that there would be a growing imperialist rivalry between Japan and the United States, and that he even offered the USA a military base on Kamchatka from which to strike the Japanese. This point appears highly dubious, but the perspective in the theses on the Eastern question adopted by the 4th Comintern congress was explicit, as the following quote shows:

"... a new world war, which will be fought out in the Pacific, is unavoidable, unless it is forestalled by the international revolution... The new war which threatens the world will involve not only Japan, America and England, but also other capitalist states (France, Holland etc.). It threatens greater destruction than even the 1914-18 war."³

The question is: Would modern Russia still be on the great revolutionary path defined and predicted by Lenin if, leading the Chinese, Koreans, In-

1. "Oriente," published in *Prometeo* No. 2, 2nd Series, February 1951, was written at the height of the Korean war.

2. *Pervyi S"ezd Narodov Vostoka*, Baku, 1-8 Sent., 1920g., *Stenograficheskie Otchety* (1920).

3. "Theses on the Eastern Question adopted by the 4th Comintern Congress," in *The Communist International 1919-1943*, ed. Jane Degras, vol. 1, p. 391.

dochinese, Philippinos and the Arabs of Egypt and Morocco, it were to attack the troops of the Western metropolises in the Orient?

For our own vulgar bourgeoisies, the yellow peril and the red peril are one and the same thing, and only the divine dollar appears capable of saving them from it. The spectre of the yellow peril is older. In the first part of this century, when Europe was becoming polarized into two enemy blocs in preparation for the first explosion of imperialist rivalries, Czarist Russia was squaring off with Japan, the most advanced of the Asiatic countries. The stakes in the conflict were precisely hegemony over the waters of the Yellow Sea and the Sea of Japan, the same as in the present bloody war⁴. Europe's military prestige suffered a serious defeat; the yellow Asiatics from Tokyo were more advanced than the white Europeans from Moscow in terms of capitalist organization.

Kaiser Wilhelm, later denounced as a maniac responsible for initiating the first world war, was an avid painter. One of his works depicted Germany in Valkyrie's armor at the head of the white races showing them the dull glow of the Asiatic menace on the distant horizon. The alignment of powers was unfortunately not the one prophesied by the imperial prodigy. Only Turkey, a Mongol people, joined Germany, while the Russians, French, English and Italians hurled themselves at her. On the other continents, the USA as well as Japan and China threw their lot in with the Entente.

The facile schema of a quarrel between races from opposed continents for the conquest of world hegemony was thus incomplete. Our modern journalists are, therefore, wrong to be tempted by the idea when they go so far as to see the resurrection of Carthage and its revenge on Rome in the movement's spread to the Mediterranean non-white world from Korea, Tibet and Indochina.

In the second world war, a re-armed Germany, once again accused of provocation, was the object of a campaign by all the oppressors and exploiters of non-white races in the name of freedom. Only Japan stood by Germans. At first Soviet Russia did not give much consideration to the declaration of war contained in the "anti-Comintern pact" between Germany and Japan. It only entered the war against Japan *pro forma* once the latter was dead and buried. It concluded an arrangement with Germany at the expense of an "oppressed nationality," Poland. It would take a major feat of imagination to integrate these events into the perspective one bourgeois journalist attributes to Lenin: a phase of national-revolutionary wars in the 19th century; then a phase of revolutionary class wars in Europe and a victory in Russia; and finally, a phase of national revolutions in the East and, simultaneously, class revolutions in the imperialist countries.

It would be even more difficult to reconcile the second period of the last world war with the anti-Western, anti-colonialist strategy. Moscow wanted nothing more to do with leading holy wars! It offered not just a few bases, but an open alliance with the number one enemy of the revolution, Great Britain, as well as the number two enemy, North America, which was in the process of arrogating Britain's traditional dominance. In order to save the imperialist giants and spare them the need to sever the tentacles in which they held the entire world and the non-white peoples prisoner (i.e., by means of the Suez and Panama canals), Russia tossed the flower of Soviet youth into the fray, arming it by means of a

4. The Russian fleet suffered a terrible disaster at Port Arthur in the 1904-1905 Russo-Japanese war, which ended in defeat for Russia.

series of drafts drawn on world capital in the form of a lend-lease, or worse yet outright gifts⁵.

The German capitalist center had no non-European possessions, and tried to conquer hegemonic control of the seas and the air with its own resources. Now that Germany has been smashed, the Anglo-Saxon metropolises have assumed undisputed control. And now Russia urges the immense masses of semi-disarmed peoples of the Orient to take up the offensive against these metropolises. It declares a new holy war, appealing to a forest of swords against the ruthless threat of a hail of atomic bombs. It deludes the fanatical but helpless fighters into believing that their own feet and fists have forced motorized divisions and aerial squadrons to retreat, while even the English press is able to expose the deception and perfidy of it all. Obviously there is something here that reeks.

A small man with a short mustache, calm voice and bright, clear eyes reads his theses on the national and colonial question from the lectern in the Kremlin. He solves the question with unprecedented lucidity, to the great satisfaction of the world representatives of the proletariat and Marxism. No, the 2nd International had not understood this question. It had condemned imperialism, but then fell back into its clutches because it did not understand the need to mobilized all its forces against this global enemy through defeatism and social insurrection in the mother-country, and national revolt in the colonies and semi-colonies. It fell into the trap of defense of the fatherland; its treasonous leaders had participated in the imperialist banquet, urging workers in big industry to accept a few crumbs of the fierce exploitation weighing down on millions of humans in other countries.

Today, he continued, we, the Communist International, Soviet Russia and the communist parties in the advanced countries who are working to conquer power and openly declare war on the bourgeoisie and its social-democratic lackeys, are forming an alliance between the young workers' movement, the nascent communist parties and revolutionary movements fighting to chase the imperialist oppressors out of the countries of the Orient. As a result of our theoretical discussions, we have decided to speak of national-revolutionary movements instead of bourgeois-democratic movements, because we cannot admit an alliance with the bourgeois class, but only with movements that occupy the terrain of armed insurrection. The word bourgeois was too strong, and so was the word national: former socialists like the naive Serrati and the shrewd Graziadei seemed perplexed.

But Lenin, unperturbed, continued his analysis. The theses summarize the positions he put forward⁶. Above all, a "precise analysis of the given environment, historical and above all economic," is necessary. This is the guidance to the method of Marxism, which does not admit ideological rules that are valid at all times. Serrati objected that he had combated the nationalist prejudice that Trieste had to be liberated from the Germans for six years; how could he applaud the Malaysian national-revolutionary? However, the proletariat would have supported the national struggle in Trieste in the situation of 1848, because in the midst of a Europe just emerging from the anti-feudal revolution, it was revolutionary. The same holds for the national wars in Europe, which Lenin showed were progressive until 1870. In 1914, these wars were imperialist and re-

5. An allusion to the lend-lease valued at 11 billion dollars which enabled Russia to obtain arms from the US during the second world war.

6. "Theses on the National and Colonial Question adopted by the 2nd Comintern Congress," in Degras, ed., *op. cit.*, pp. 138-144, which is quoted below. Lenin's preliminary draft of the theses and his report on the national and colonial question are to be found in his *Collected Works*, vol. 31.

actionary, even if they were fought over the same boundaries and behind the banners of the same ideologies. What interests us as Marxists is the level of social development.

What was the historical and economic context when Lenin presented his theses at the Kremlin, or when Zinoviev spoke at Baku a few months later? The theses indicate as the communists' primary objective the struggle against the democratic bourgeoisie to expose its hypocrisy. This hypocrisy concealed the reality of social oppression exerted by the owner over the worker in the bourgeois world, and the reality of the oppression of the colonies and semi-colonies by a small number of large imperialist states. To determine our strategy for the Orient, Lenin's theses emphasized a series of fundamental points. It was first of all necessary to destroy

"... petty-bourgeois national illusions about the possibility of peaceful co-existence and of the equality of nations under capitalism.... Only... united action will ensure victory over capitalism, without which it is impossible to abolish national oppression and inequality of rights.... The world political situation has now placed the proletarian dictatorship on the order of the day, and all events in world politics are necessarily concentrated on one central point, the struggle of the world bourgeoisie against the Russian Soviet Republic which is rallying round itself both the soviet movements among the advanced workers in all countries, and all the national liberation movements in the colonies and among the oppressed peoples." The International must also give consideration to the "movement towards the creation of a unified world economy on a common plan controlled by the proletariat of all nations."

Another fundamental aspect of the "eastern" tactic is the recognition of the need to

"... transform the dictatorship of the proletariat from a national dictatorship (i.e., a dictatorship existing in one country alone, and incapable of conducting an independent world policy) into an international dictatorship (i.e., a dictatorship of the proletariat in at least a few advanced countries, which is capable of exercising decisive influence in the political affairs of the entire world)."

Finally, the theses stress that proletarian internationalism demands:

"1) Subordination of the interests of the proletarian struggle in one country to the interests of the struggle on a world scale; 2) that the nation which achieves victory over the bourgeoisie shall display the capacity and readiness to make the greatest national sacrifices in order to overthrow international capitalism."

With these central points established, and on the basis of their confidence in the anti-capitalist revolutionary struggle in all bourgeois countries, even the most radical European left Marxists declared their agreement with the conclusions in the theses and with the speaker's cogent use of the dialectic.

From the preceding it is more than obvious that the modern press has no interest in reviving the historical perspective sketched by Lenin.

For millenia human groups lived under conditions in which peoples of different regions were not directly dependent upon one another. As a rule they never encountered each other and were not even aware of each other's existence. But at the outset of the capitalist era, new methods of production and communication connected all the parts of the

world. The revolution against the feudal powers shook Europe from one end to the other. Thereafter, there were no more national histories, but a single history, at least for the Atlantic part of the continent. The class of proletarians appeared on the scene of history and fought alongside the bourgeoisie in its revolutions. It joined a united front for liberal and national demands, and provided the new masters of society with irregular troops for insurrections and regular armies for the great wars that built nation-states. This is an historical fact, and the Manifesto adopts it as a strategic perspective for specific countries and peoples, such as those still oppressed by Austria and Russia.

There is no reason to hide the fact that national action means a bloc between classes, and in this phase, a bloc between the capitalists and workers against feudalism.

For the European area as a whole, Marxism dates the end of this phase at 1870. Just as it had done in 1848, the working class in the Paris Commune denounced the national bloc, fought alone and seized power for a long enough time to show that the form of this power is the dictatorship. As of that time, anyone who invokes national blocs between classes in the European area is a traitor. This question was settled definitively by the Third International, the Russian revolution and Leninism in theory, in organization and armed struggle.

There are still feudal regimes in the Orient. How will they evolve? The colonial powers have introduced industrial products and even set up factories in the coastal regions. Local crafts degenerate and within each country there is a return to work on the land. An extremely impoverished peasantry is subjected to direct exploitation by indigenous satraps and indirect exploitation by world capital. Wherever a local industrial and commercial bourgeoisie emerges, it is tied to and dependent upon a foreign bourgeoisie. It is difficult even to form a bloc against foreign domination. In only a few countries (e.g., Morocco), the feudal chiefs and large landowners form a bloc, but in general the impulse comes from the peasants and the tiny working class. They are joined, as in Europe during the romantic period, by the intelligentsia, torn between traditionalist xenophobia and the allure of foreign science and technology. This formless mass revolts, and the movement creates serious difficulties for the European capitalist classes, which face two enemies: the peoples in the colonies and their own proletariats.

But how does one get to socialism from a system of social economy such as those in the countries of the Orient? As in Europe, is it necessary to await a bourgeois national revolution supported by the poor working masses before proceeding to a local class struggle, and the formation of a workers' movement and fighting for power and for soviets? If it followed this path, the world proletarian revolution would take centuries. In 1922, the delegates from the Orient gave a clear answer: no!⁷ They did not want to have to go through capitalism and its host of atrocities, which popular, nationalist parades could no longer conceal. They wanted to forge ahead with the world revolution of the working class in the capitalist countries to erect the dictatorship of the dispossessed masses and the soviet system in their own countries.

Western Marxists accepted their plan. This meant that wherever the struggle against the feudal, agrarian or theocratic regime broke out at the same time as the struggle against the colonialist metropolises in the

7. A congress of communist and revolutionary organizations from the Far East was held in Moscow in 1922 at the same time as the 4th Comintern congress.

Orient, local and international communists would enter the struggle and support it. Their objective would not be a local, autonomous bourgeois democratic regime, but a revolution in permanence which would only end with the institution of the soviet dictatorship. As Zinoviev pointed out to a surprised Serrati, Marx and Engels never said anything different: this was their position on Germany in 1848!

The three periods may thus be delineated as follows. Until 1870 - support for national insurrections in the metropolises. From 1871 to 1917 - class insurrection in the metropolises: the only victory was in Russia. In Lenin's era - class struggle in the metropolises and national-popular insurrections in the colonies, with revolutionary Russia at the center, in a single world strategy which would only become obsolete with the overthrow of capitalist power in all countries.

In this perspective, the economic and social problem was solved in the guarantee provided by the "unified world economy on a common plan". Once it has become master of political power and the means of production in the modern West, the proletariat integrates the economies of the backward countries into a "plan" which, like the one the capitalist system is striving for today, is unified, but which, unlike that plan, has no interest in conquest, oppression, extermination or exploitation.

This is not the perspective of the impending third world war. First of all, the idea of the world inter-dependence of struggles, in terms of doctrine, strategy and organization, has been abandoned. On May 15, 1943, in violation of its own statutes, the Presidium of the Communist International arrogated the right to dissolve the organization, on the pretext that the changes that had taken place since the 1920s had made decisions regarding individual countries' problems impossible, such that each national party should become autonomous. The explanation for the move contained approval of the attitude of the US communist party, which had left the International in 1940! In fact, the cause of the split was reaction to the partitioning of Poland with Hitler! The text also stated that the rupture of international ties was necessary because the parties in Nazi dominated countries had to practice defeatism, whereas in the enemy countries they had to work for a national bloc. The official slogan was: full support to the war effort!

Lenin's historic perspective had thus been abandoned. The policy was no longer one of a bloc with national groups in revolt against a national or foreign government in a colony or semi-colony, but a bloc with the constituted government, the bourgeois, capitalist government, the imperialist government with its overseas possessions. The clear formula of 1920 for an alliance with all the enemies of the western capitalist great powers, was repudiated and reversed.

History is never easy to decipher. Now that Moscow's orders have changed again to a policy of upsetting the power of the warring governments of America and Europe from within, the alignment of states will be somewhat complicated, as it was on the eve of each of the other two wars. Meanwhile, the same Presidium of the Kremlin that scuttled the International is still responsible for deciding the double task of parties in the various states.

But unlike Lenin's program, the perspective is no longer an alliance of oppressed classes and peoples for the overthrow of capitalism in Amer-

ica and England. The way to the "international proletarian dictatorship" is totally cut off, and there is no further possibility of instituting the "world proletarian economic plan" which is alone capable of leaping over the bourgeois regime that has taken root in China—to the benefit of yesterday's Chiang Kai-sheks, tomorrow's Mao Tse-tungs and today's Titos. Everything has been renounced by a Kremlin that substitutes the possibility of "peaceful coexistence" under capitalism for the straightforward path of revolution, a Kremlin that no longer subordinates the interests of the first proletarian nation to victory in the most advanced countries, and that refuses the "national sacrifices" demanded and promised by Lenin, replacing them with a vulgar national state egoism! Given the repudiation and liquidation of all the Leninist guarantees, a national alliance and "bloc of four classes" including the local industrial and commercial bourgeoisie, which is promised a long future of capitalist economic development, can only be a base opportunism, even in the countries of the Orient. This opportunism has no reason to envy the total support given to the governments of the anti-German alliance during the war, a policy which was the unequivocal analogue of the Union Sacrée practiced by the Second International in 1914. Support to a Mao Tse-tung in wartime is just as reactionary as support to Roosevelt's regime during the last war, or support to the Kaiser's empire or the French republic in the war when Lenin was alive.

From the beginnings, the Marxist Left has shown that the great historical perspective of the revolutionary class has not changed since it appeared in society as a result of the introduction of new productive forces, and will not change until it has succeeded in definitively eliminating the old relations of production.

But today the majority of the class seems to be following the school that claims their study of new situations and experiences necessitates an alteration of this central perspective. The revisionism of the end of the last century used the same justification when it stated that peaceful forms of bourgeois development necessitated that the method of struggle and the dictatorship advocated by Marx be abandoned.

The one lesson that cannot be drawn from the history of the thirty years since Lenin's death is that the interdependence of constituted states and social economies has been relaxed. If this had happened, how could the Russian government have subscribed to the ultra-modern war policy which, at Yalta and Potsdam, sought to present the world with the spectacle of the complete annihilation of the defeated under a veritable international dictatorship of the victors? How could it have subscribed to the mystification of the UN which, in the tradition of Wilson's League of Nations in 1918, welcomed smiling adversaries in new holy wars who calmly clinked their glasses of champagne while blood was spilled on the battlefields of Korea?

It would be nonsense to offer the working class a perspective that confined it within the narrow framework of national problems.

Any theory that exchanges the world socialist plan for socialism in one country, which regards as possible not only the coexistence of hypothetical workers' states with the states of the bourgeoisie, but also even a coexistence of opposed centers of established military power, is nothing other than another "petty-bourgeois national illusion about the possibility of peaceful coexistence and of the equality of nations under capi-

talism" stigmatized in Lenin's 1920 theses. Nothing has changed since the programs of the League for Peace and Freedom of Mazzini and Kosuth stigmatized by Marx in 1864.

Capital is not about to renounce its single world plan of exploitation. It is strengthening the chains that burden the working class in all countries, whether "prosperous" or poor, as well as the enslavement in which it maintains the small states and the immense masses of the colonial countries. Consequently, any theory of coexistence and any large-scale agitation for world peace amounts to complicity in this plan for famine and oppression.

All attempts to call for a holy war to defend oneself against an attack which supposedly threatens a balance that is in fact impossible when one has long since renounced the supreme objective, i.e., the complete destruction of the imperialist centers, can have only one real content: to sacrifice the efforts of partisans and rebels to the aims of imperialisms that will exploit them just as does American imperialism, which was presented as one of the champions of world freedom in 1943.

Nonetheless, today the majority of the working class has fallen into the trap of the peace campaign, and tomorrow may be lured into more useless sacrifices in a partisan war; it has not returned to its autonomous revolutionary perspective, as it did after 1918. Perhaps we will have to wait for a new Lenin: but as Zinoviev admitted in a lyrical moment, Lenin might have been "the kind of person you see once in every five hundred years".

Five hundred years! And this at a time when the mass media is able to present the public with the lessons of episodes as resounding as the career of an Eisenhower who rose from being a halfback at his college to an army chief of staff, or of the latest changes in the bedrooms of heads of state!

The road to communism is not traversed in a single lifetime, nor even in several generations. But we will not have to wait five hundred years to see the policy of yesterday's anti-fascist, anti-German bloc, and the policy of today's Eastern so-called anti-capitalist bloc, which aims not for a world socialist republic, but for a national, popular democracy even more deceitful than Washington's version, both denounced in the same terms Lenin used with reference to the social-nationalism of 1914 - i.e., as treason. It will not take nearly that long for a unity of organization and struggle of the exploited and oppressed of all countries to be forged anew.

Until then, there will be no peace that is desirable, and no war that is not condemnable.

suplemento en español

EL IMPERIALISMO DE LOS PORTAAVIONES

LO QUE DISTINGUE A NUESTRO PARTIDO

La línea que va de Marx a Lenin, a la fundación de la Internacional Comunista y del Partido Comunista de Italia (Livorno, 1921); la lucha de la Izquierda Comunista contra la degeneración de la Internacional, contra la teoría del "socialismo en un solo país" y la contrarrevolución estalinista; el rechazo de los Frentes Populares y de los Bloques de la Resistencia; la dura obra de restauración de la doctrina y del órgano revolucionarios, en contacto con la clase obrera, fuera del politiquero personal y electoral.

internationalist papers

EL IMPERIALISMO DE LOS PORTAAVIONES

El imperialismo, en su aspecto general de conquista y dominación de los organismos políticos y económicos por parte de un centro estatal superior, no es un echo exclusivo del capitalismo.

Prescindiendo de su contenido social, existen numerosos tipos del mismo fenómeno histórico: un imperialismo asiático, un imperialismo greco-romano, un imperialismo feudal y finalmente un imperialismo capitalista. A los obreros revolucionarios nos interesa, sobre todo, la diferencia sustancial que distingue al imperialismo capitalista de su contraposición histórica, o sea, el imperialismo feudal.

Dejando a un lado siempre las otras diferencias fundamentales, el imperialismo feudal y el imperialismo capitalista se distinguen netamente en cuanto que el uno se manifestó en construcciones estatales que tenían fundamento territorial y terrestre, mientras que el otro se presentó en la escena histórica, sobre todo, como dominación mundial fundada en la hegemonía naval, y por consiguiente, en el dominio de las grandes vías oceánicas. Bajo el feudalismo podía ejercer una función imperialista el poder estatal que disponía de la primicia militar terrestre; bajo el capitalismo, por el contrario, que es el modo de producción que ha conducido a cotas inauditas la producción de mercancías y exasperado hasta lo inverosímil los fenómenos del mercantilismo ya insitos en los precedentes modos de producción, el imperialismo está conectado a la primacia naval, hoy convertida en primacia aeronaval.

Imperialismo capitalista es ante todo hegemonía en el mercado mundial. Pero, para conquistar tal supremacía, no bastan una potente máquina industrial y un territorio que les asegure las materias primas. Hace falta una inmensa marina comercial y militar, o sea, el medio con que controlar las grandes vías intercontinentales del tráfico comercial. Los acontecimientos históricos demuestran, efectivamente, cómo la sucesión en la primacia imperialista está ligada estrechamente, en régimen de mercantilismo capitalista, a la sucesión en la primacia naval.

La decadencia de la República veneciana, que se elevó a gran potencia y esplendor en la época de las Cruzadas, se inició con la pérdida del monopolio del comercio entre Asia y Europa. El tráfico intercontinental se desarrollaba, una parte por vía marítima, o sea, en el Mediterráneo y en el Mar Rojo, y otra parte por vía terrestre. En efecto, no existiendo el Canal que acostase el istmo de Suez, era necesario trasbordar las mercancías llevadas por las naves que atracaban en los puertos de la costa egipcia del Mar Rojo, a los carros terrestres y fluviales que aseguraban el enlace con los puertos mediterráneos, entre los cuales tenía la primacia Alejandría.

El descubrimiento de América había hecho a Portugal y España patrones de vastos imperios coloniales, los primeros en la historia del imperialismo moderno. Verdaderos precursores del imperialismo de tipo estadounidense, los portugueses no se preocuparon de la ocupación de grandes territorios, ocupándose sobre todo en tomar posesión de los pasajes obligados del tráfico mundial.

En el ámbito de tan grandioso plan, era indispensable conquistar la hegemonía en el

Océano Índico, puente de pasaje entre los continentes más desarrollados de la época: Europa y Asia. Así tuvo lugar que, partiendo de la Colonia del Cabo, conquistada a principios del siglo XVI, los portugueses metieron las manos en Ceilán y en Malaca, extendiéndose hasta el archipiélago de la Sonda, y más tarde en China, donde ocuparon Macao. Pero el golpe que hirió mortalmente la supremacía veneciana fue la ocupación portuguesa de la isla Socotra y del estrecho de Ormuz, situados respectivamente a la entrada del Mar Rojo y del Golfo Pérsico. De tal modo las antiguas vías de agua y de tierra del comercio euro-asiático fueron interrumpidas, y las naves que intentaban violar el bloqueo portugués eran undidas despiadadamente. Entonces, la República de Venecia y el Sultan de Egipto, para salvar los intereses comunes, estrecharon la alianza contra los nuevos patrones del Océano Índico, pero la flota aliada fue derrotada en la batalla de Diu (1590).

El resultado final de la lucha fue, que el tráfico intercontinental vino desviado hacia las rutas atlánticas, por lo que Lisboa se convirtió en el centro del comercio mundial y en la capital de la mayor potencia imperialista de la época, mientras Alejandría decayó rápidamente. La República de Venecia, a pesar del formidable golpe, consiguió durar largo tiempo, pero su primacía imperialista ya estaba perdida.

La historia sucesiva no se desarrolló de manera distinta. Ésta demuestra que el imperialismo burgués es el imperialismo de las flotas, porque su reino es el mercado mundial. Quien detenta la hegemonía mundial en el campo naval se habilita para la hegemonía en el campo del comercio mundial, que es el verdadero fundamento del imperialismo capitalista. Dos guerras mundiales demuestran cómo el imperialismo de los ejércitos cede inevitablemente el terreno al imperialismo de las flotas. Dos veces potencia terrestre como los imperios Centrales y el Eje nazi-fascista se han medido con las potencias anglosajonas, superiores en el mar y en el aire, y dos veces han salido del conflicto totalmente derrotadas.

La segunda guerra mundial ha presentado un hecho nuevo; pero hecho que se explica con las seculares leyes de desarrollo del imperialismo. Efectivamente, no sólo las potencias terrestres han conseguido una derrota absoluta, sino que también una potencia en el campo adversario —Gran Bretaña— ha salido derrotada de la enorme lucha, y no por capacidad destructiva del enemigo, sino por la superior potencialidad naval y comercial del aliado mayor: América. Para Gran Bretaña, la segunda guerra mundial, en cuanto a efectos provocados en el equilibrio naval mundial, debía representar lo que representó la República de Venecia la batalla de Diu. En efecto, Inglaterra no puede decirse ciertamente destruida, pero su primacía naval y su hegemonía han sido definitivamente superadas. La degradación de la flota ha conducido a la disgregación del imperio colonial británico que la flota mantenía precisamente unido. Hoy es la época del imperialismo americano. No por casualidad los Estados Unidos han repetido a costa de Europa la maniobra estratégica inaugurada por los portugueses en el siglo XV. Interceptando la vía de agua del tráfico comercial Europa-Asia (todos sabemos que el Canal del Suez no habría sido bloqueado si Nasser no hubiese gozado del apoyo estadounidense contra Inglaterra), los Estados Unidos han cogido por la garganta a Europa y han destruido definitivamente las tradiciones residuales imperialísticas británicas. Sabemos que es el imperialismo del dólar: éste no ocupa territorios, incluso “libera” aquellos sobre los que aún grava la dominación colonialista y los une al carro de su omnipotencia financiera, sobre la que vela la flota aero-naval más potente del mundo. El imperialismo americano se presenta como la más

pura expresión del imperialismo capitalista, que ocupa los mares para dominar las tierras. No por casualidad su potencia se funda en los portaaviones, en la que se compendian todas las monstruosas degeneraciones del maquinismo capitalista, que rompe toda relación entre los medios de producción y el productor. Si la técnica aeronáutica absorbe los mayores resultados de la ciencia burguesa, los portaaviones es el punto de encuentro de todas las ramas de la tecnología con la que marcha orgullosa la clase dominante. Aquellos que están deslumbrados por el imperialismo ruso hasta olvidar la tremenda fuerza de dominación y opresión de la potencia estadounidense, corren el riesgo de caer víctimas de las desviaciones democráticas y liberaloides, que son el peor enemigo del marxismo. No por casualidad la prédica liberal-democrática tiene su mayor pùlpito en la sede del máximo imperialismo actual. Esos no ven cómo la Rusia, cuyo expansionismo aún se desarrolla en las formas del colonialismo (ocupación del territorio de los Estados menores), está todavía en la fase inferior del imperialismo, el imperialismo de los ejércitos, es decir, el tipo que por dos veces ha sido derrotado en la guerra mundial. Diciendo esto, no se cambia una coma en la definición que damos de Rusia: estado capitalista. Se constata un dato de hecho. Todos los estados existentes son enemigos del proletariado y de la revolución comunista, pero su fuerza no es igual. Lo que cuenta, sobre todo, para el proletariado (el que verá coaligarse contra él a todos los Estados del mundo apenas se mueva para conquistar el poder) es tomar conciencia de la fuerza de su más tremendo enemigo, el más armado de todos y capaz de llevar su ofensiva a cualquier parte del mundo.

El imperialismo, con fuerzas prevalementemente terrestres, fue precisamente el del feudalismo. Esto no quiere decir que las potencias imperialistas que disponen de una limitada potencia naval transmitan tradiciones feudales, puesto que, si esto fuese verdad, el Japón habría alcanzado en la época de la segunda guerra mundial un nivel capitalista superior al alcanzado por Alemania, visto que la flota nipona era más aguerida que la alemana. Quiere decir solamente que, en la confrontación de las potencias imperialistas, o aspirantes al imperialismo, está en el primer puesto la potencia que posee la flota más grande. Es ésta la que para los fines de la conservación y represión capitalista, reviste una importancia mayor. Ahora bien, ¿qué potencia mundial puede desarrollar hoy operaciones de policía de clase en cualquier parte del mundo, si no aquella que posee mayor fuerza y movilidad? Rusia, pues? No, aunque si bien los acontecimientos húngaros (la represión en Hungría por parte de Rusia en noviembre de 1956) parecen haberle entregado el diploma de primer gendarme de la controrrevolución mundial. En verdad, tal tarea únicamente puede ser desarrollada por Estados Unidos, o sea, por el imperialismo de los portaaviones. Para ser precisos: por los cien portaaviones. La marina de guerra de Estados Unidos dispone actualmente de 103 naves portaaviones, sobre las cuales pueden tener su base —escribe “IL TEMPO”— cinco mil aeroplanos, comprendidos aviones a reacción y bombarderos de medio alcance, y varios centenares de helicópteros. Dentro de unos meses los astilleros navales de Nueva York y Nuevo Puerto entregarán a la U.S. Navy otros tres grandes portaaviones: el “Ranger”, el “Independence” y el “Kitty Hawk”. Otro del mismo tipo (clase Forrestal) ha sido encargado a los astilleros de Nueva York. Estas naves, actualmente las más grandes existentes en las marinas militares del mundo, tienen 315 metros de largas, cada una dispone de 100 aviones, pueden alcanzar la velocidad de 35 nudos y llevan a bordo 3.360 hombres como equipamiento y 466 oficiales. ¿Cuánto ha costado la “Forrestal”? doscientos dieciocho millones de dólares,

unos 130.800 millones de liras. Estas unidades serán superadas en dimensiones y características por el superportaaviones de la clase CVAN (Nuclear Attack Aircraft Carriers) que transportará 85 mil toneladas (frente a las 60 mil del “Forrestal”), tendrá un puente de vuelo de unos 400 metros largo y, accionado por 8 turbinas con energía atómica, alcanzará una velocidad y una autonomía nunca conocidas hasta ahora por ninguna potencia naval. Para acabar: los superportaaviones de la clase CVAN estarán dotados con misiles dirigidos por radio.

¡Figuremonos en que se convertirá esta máquina de dominio y de guerra –con el balance para la defensa anunciado por Eisenhower–, ahora que los USA no sólo prometen ayudas económicas a Oriente Medio, el que deberá aceptarlas antes o después, sino que cortésmente se ofrece para defenderles en caso de que requiriesen (petición sobre mando) su benévola ayuda militar.

La historia no ha visto jamás una potencia tan espantosa, permanentemente emboscada en los mares. El imperialismo de los portaaviones es el último recurso tremendo de la dominación de clase que no entiende perecer. Con él, la revolución proletaria deberá combatir la batalla decisiva. Así asume una claridad fulgurante las tesis leninistas sobre la revolución mundial, y caen miserabilmente las pseudo-doctrinas traicioneras de las “vías nacionales al socialismo”. La burguesía no se puede abatir nación por nación, Estado por Estado, sino sólo a través de la revolución de continentes y el abrazo insurreccional de los proletarios por encima de las fronteras. ¿Qué garantía de duración tendría un Estado revolucionario del proletariado surgido en una parte cualquiera del mundo, donde el imperialismo americano estuviese en condiciones de manejar, desde los océanos sus espantosas armas de destrucción? Para aplastar la potencia represiva del capital hará falta que el proletariado se levante en armas a escala mundial contra la clase dominante. Entonces existe una sola “vía” al socialismo: la internacional e internacionalista.

El imperialismo americano, con sus cien portaaviones, no solamente monta la guardia para la propia seguridad nacional. Monta guardia para el privilegio capitalista en todas las partes del mundo, en cualquier lugar que el proletariado represente una amenaza para la conservación burguesa. Y por qué, frente a la clase enemiga que unifica su defensa, el proletariado debería fraccionar sus propias fuerzas en el ámbito de las diversas naciones? La soberbia flota naval americana, que hoy aterroriza al mundo, se convertirá en un amasijo de hierros viejos si el volcán de la Revolución se reanuda y erupla. Pero será necesario que el incendio prenda en las naciones y en los continentes: en Europa, en Asia, en Africa, pero sobre todo en América. Veremos entonces en qué se convierte un superportaaviones atómico cuando la tripulación iza la bandera roja.

No escondemos, efectivamente, que hará falta esperar mucho tiempo para verlo. Pero estamos seguros que no se conseguirá verlo ni pronto ni tarde si las vanguardias del proletariado no adquiriesen una noción exacta del imperialismo capitalista.

(Il Programma Comunista, n.2 – 1957)

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