

## **ON THE CAPITALIST SYSTEM**

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Capitalism develops through competition. That is to say, through inter-capitalist competition and the antagonism of capitalism with the Workers States. In the past, particularly when there were no Workers States, the capitalists could compete and launch wars fairly much as they liked. Now, they face Workers States. They can still make wars, but no longer as they like. This generates important tensions and contradictions inside the capitalist system.

The capitalists are much weakened by having to compete against each other and against the Workers States as well. With a desperate need to lower prices to keep on top of competition, the various capitalists renew their attacks on the working class and increase their use of automation. It had not been their intention to spend more on 'constant capital', but competition forced them to do it. This is happening now, every day. Not all the capitalists can afford it, only the biggest can. Worldwide, this liquidates huge layers of the capitalist class. This liquidates therefore huge layers of the working class and petit bourgeoisie.

This cannot be altered. This is the capitalist system. We are not dealing here with capitalists, but with the capitalist system. You can have a more intelligent capitalist, or one who manages to

last longer than the others; some find the means to survive or create defensive strategies. In the end, however, their survival takes place at the cost of the many other capitalists who go out of business. Capital can only operate on the market - and on the market, the survival of the winners can only be at the expense of all the rest. This happens every day, all the time, and the workers are thrown out of work as a result.

This crisis was always happening in the past. In the worst cases of such crises, the remedy of the capitalist system was generalised world war. Because this liquidated what they call 'excess capacity' and 'excess manpower', inter-capitalist competition could re-start and bring forward a new cycle of economic activity. Capitalism used to fall back on this solution in former times. Now it finds the next generalised world war much harder to organise.

All in all, it is not the aim of the capitalists to liquidate manpower. They are driven to it. Their need to compete drives them to it. The unprecedented level of world competition today drives them, like never before, towards large-scale and generalised war.

Over the recent decades, the capitalists retreated many times in front of their world war solution. At a certain point, they decided to grant unemployment-pay. This payment is quite alien to capitalism. It is unnatural to its system. It generates inside the system the rise of new elements that break the internal norms

of capitalist functioning.

On the part of the anti-war movements, the rejection of the US missiles<sup>1</sup> is an act that shores up the Workers States. Those who reject the Yankee missiles are essentially the masses of the world. The masses see that the Yankee missiles are there to smash progress and life; and they also see that when the Soviets go anywhere militarily, they stimulate progress in every way. In any capitalist country, there isn't one single mobilisation of the masses against the Soviet Union; but there are thousands against the capitalist system. The Socialist governments, the Socialist Parties, the petit bourgeois parties and even the big bourgeois governments (like that of France) must govern with petit bourgeois support. They do not want to antagonise the petit bourgeoisie that votes for them. Because the petit bourgeoisie supports the anti-war demonstrations, these leaderships camouflage their support for war. This is the reason why they tone down their pronouncements against the Soviet Union. They speak in the name of their countries' interests, but they keep to generalities. Regarding the US missiles for instance, none of them has said: "The missiles are there to defend us from the Russian threat." Not even US imperialism actually dare say this. They fear the way the masses reject the Yankee missiles even if this serves the Soviet Union. In all this, the masses of the capitalist countries show that they are clear. There is not just

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<sup>1</sup> This refers to the US Pershing 1 missiles already deployed in Germany in 1979; and to the US project to deploy the longer-range Pershing 2 throughout Europe, which happened from 1983 onwards. This subject matter is more developed in other chapters of this book. Editorial

the working class in those masses, but very large layers of the petit bourgeoisie as well.

Capitalism is no longer free to launch total war as it used to do in the past. Not in the way of the past. It can no longer terrify the masses as fully as it used to. It fears that there are going to be popular reactions this time, and that it will not be able to control them.

Capitalism dreads the road on which it stands. It is unsure of where it takes it. It is not over-concerned by people being jobless - it can always use this to lower the wages. The danger it perceives is that the unemployed could join Communists, or similar others, who decide that power must be taken. It was precisely to make this less likely that capitalism granted unemployment pay.

One must start from the fact that the capitalist system has become utterly incapable of raising the standards of human life. It can no longer grant any improvement. This abjectness shows in the way Germany - the 'great' German capitalist State - owes fortunes to the capitalists. This is of course one of the ways through which the State is kept under the heel of capital, and dominated by it.

But times are changing.

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