

## Class, War and the New World Order

These two texts are written as a means to initiate a discussion along the perspective of "no war but the class war", first of all among revolutionary individuals and groups in Sweden, but of course also as an effort to link this discussion to the similar discussion internationally. The first part was written during the plans by the US and the UK to attack Iraq, plans that were realised during last Spring. The 2nd part is more focused theoretically on a couple of aspects of war and class struggle, the war as "also" (or rather in the end) a class war, and the target this time in relation to a theory of rent concerning the global oil production.

This kind of attempt to a communist perspective is rather rare, at least in Sweden, where an unholy alliance between Stalinists, Trotskyists and Anarchists/Syndicalist are re-running a nationalist, democratic intra-capitalist perspective against US (only) imperialism and a more or less explicit support for the counter revolutionary Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi state under the slogan of support for the (abstract) right of all oppressed people to national independence, as if capitalism with its world market and class as a global category were but malicious and idle imaginings. Nothing new beneath the sun, when it comes to the Left, but something we have to oppose as one moment of trying to develop the real class movement and consciousness.

We'd be more than happy for all response to this effort

Translated into English in October 2003

### Part I<sup>1</sup>

The world did not change on September 11, 2001, when the Twin towers in NYC fell. The only new about that terrorist attack was that what happens to millions of people all over the world every day for the first time struck the US. Behind the attack was not the poor and oppressed people of the so called Third world, but, most probably, the Islamic network Al Qaeda, trained by the US/CIA and inflated by billions of oil and speculation dollars. The American reply was prepared long before the question was asked and did not serve to extirpate "international terrorism" nor to liberate the people of Afghanistan from the Talibans, the former allies of the US in the war against Soviet Russia, but to secure their own interests in particular, and capitalism as a system and the capital relation as such in general. Partly cynical and partly conspiratory you could say that September 11 occurred conveniently for the US capital and its administration. Beneath the terror attacks and the "war against terrorism" is capitalism, its crisis and class struggle.

### Capitalist Wars and the New World Order

Capitalism entered the historical arena dripping with blood and in its becoming it had to crush or transform all pre-capitalist relations and replace them with its own. Money and the State serves as an abstract unification of capitalism's competing individuals, but even if money efficiently may dissolve pre-capitalist social relations it is not sufficient to create the preconditions for the becoming of the capital relation; the seller of the commodity labour-power, liberated from its means of production and thus totally dependent on wages to survive. This process 'is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire.'<sup>2</sup> Thus, capitalism requires force, both in order to tear land and means of production from the immediate producers and create an exploitable proletariat, and to batter down all historical obstacles to the circulation of commodities and money. Capitalism also requires the emergence of the modern bourgeois State as its defender. Industrial capital demands law and order, peace and stability, to secure its investments. Mercantile capital is different, since it is not producing any surplus value, its profits are the result of its either accidental or enforced monopoly that allows it to "buy cheap and sell dear". With the nowadays fashionably focusing on finance capital it is rather quite contrary; it feeds of chaos, instability, strong fluctuations of currencies, interests and stocks. Thus, with industrial capital, capitalism could dress up well in the image of the defender of civilisation and peace; their apologues try hard and well also today, without nobody really listening. However, and as said before, WWI was the turning point that exposed capitalism's inherent tendency towards war.

Capitalism is the war of all against all – the competition between the different capitals under the imperative of "increase or die", between capitalist class and proletariat, and of course also between workers – and the State tries to encompass this anarchy for the long term possibility of accumulation of the (its domestic) total capital. However,

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<sup>1</sup> Part I served as an introduction to 'Behind the 21st Century Intifada', by *Aufheben* (UK), pp. 126-143. Part II was the introduction to 'Kriege gegen das Erdölproletariat', by *Wildcat* (Deutschland), pp. 91-98. This translation has left out those parts from the Swedish originals explicitly referring to the *Aufheben* and *Wildcat* articles. (At least Pt. I is based on, first of all, the *Wildcat* articles Global War for the World Order Pts I and II, almost to a point where I feel a bit ashamed... However, I have tried to quote and refer properly. P.H. note)

<sup>2</sup> *Capital*, Vol. I.

on international level no such central authority exist – and no *Empire* for that matter – even though some international organs aim at the same result, for example the UN and the IMF. But there is a dominating nation state that by imposing its own national interest may impose a general capital's interest on a world scale; Britain colonial interests, the Pax Britannica, and later, Pax Americana, the US interests in competition with Soviet Russia, whose fallen mantle Political Islam today may be considered to have, at least tried to, shoulder. With an insufficient domestic surplus value this competition leads to international rivalry, imperialism, a struggle for hegemony within the "world order". The growth of capitalism also brings with it (or is rather based on) an antagonistic proletariat, and war ultimately serves as a weapon against the development of an international proletarian movement.<sup>3</sup>

### **The Afghanistan Case – a crossroad in the history of imperialism**

Afghanistan has been visited with war for over 20 years, when Soviet Russia laid its imperialist hands on it. The victims are at least 1.5 million dead, even more are made refugees. The strategic weight of the country is its geographic position, and the control of Afghanistan means the access to the whole Central Asian area. Ethnic and religious conflicts, and the competition among the adjacent countries, have been considered an impediment for a solution. But what solution?

War was for a long time the solution. It was in no way total chaos, but rather a stable economy for those actively participating, on which their profits turned, and it was a process that radically rearranged the social relations in spite of all opposition. This war had in twenty years the effects that earlier development dictatorships and reform programs had not succeeded in achieving. The war in Afghanistan can be described as an almost textbook example of »primitive accumulation«, i.e., the ripping of humanity from its subsistence relations and the establishment of capitalistic relations. The ethnicization was only a means of holding the war in place.<sup>4</sup>

Ethnicity is often asserted to be the reason for war, just like religion. The material basis as being a class antagonism via competing nation states is then left out of account. Fuel is consciously and actively added to ethnification in order to divert from the real motives and to get some sort of a "popular motive" for the war.

Afghanistan is not only an example taken from the school book of "primitive accumulation", but also an example of an studied "ethnification".

In opposition to the general representation that ethnic groups already existed for an indeterminate time, most of the ethnicities in Afghanistan were only created in the course of the twentieth century. Driven by scientific enthusiasm to classify people on the grounds of cultural qualities, ethnologists created a whole series of ethnic groups: Thus the Nuristani, Paschali, Aimaq, or Farsiwan. The concept of »Tadjik« originally came from residents who would not let themselves be ethnically classified. Therefore today we speak of the ethnic group of »Tadjiks«. Because of the various scientific claims, it is unclear how many ethnic groups there are in Afghanistan today. While a German treatment comes to about 50 ethnicities, the Russian counts 200.

There are no concepts that say how an Uzbek, a Hazara, or a Pashtun has to be. Whoever claims that all Pashtuns are Sunnis errs grossly, where there are in the territory of Kandahar and in the Afghan-Pakistani border region also Shiite Pashtuns. Whoever claims that all Pashtuns speak Pashtu errs as well. Thus Tadjiks in Jalalabad or Hazara in Ghazni also speak Pashtu. In opposition to the governing Kabulers, who insist on their Pashtun identity but sometimes speak not a single word of Pashtun. The fallacy of Western politics, however, is to equate the ethnic groups with the military-political movements, and to interpret them as a unified bloc. In the contemporary debate it goes unnoticed that in spite of the ethnicization of the war, an ethnicization of the masses is nowhere to be found. Because to most Afghans all the war parties are equally hated. Also the ethnic problematic for them is of no importance. Thus it goes wholly into oblivion that for the Afghani population, not the ethnic group, but rather, as before, the family, the clan and the village create the essential identity reference. Even the relevance of ethnicity as a military-political peg remains limited in the Afghan war: Innumerable commanders and battle units change fronts out of political opportunism and economic incentives independent of ethnic category. [Conrad Schetter: The Chimera of Ethnicity in Afghanistan, Die Neue Zürcher Zeitung, October 26, 2001].<sup>5</sup>

Twenty years of war has meant a thoroughful social transformation. The former agrarian and nomad economy has been crushed, starting with the devastation by the Soviet Russian army of the fruit yards and the mining of the countryside, and the country has run through an rapid urbanisation, to a great extent due to the creation of refugee camps, something always being the first step of a proletarianisation process. Both the militias and the people became dependent on foreign food deliveries and payment, and for the first time the economy, which before to 50% stood outside money

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Conkers or Bonkers? – Humanitarian War in Kosovo, *Aufheben* #8, Autumn 1999.

<sup>4</sup> Global War for the World Order (Part I), *Wildcat* [[http://www.wildcat-www.de/en/zirkular/61/z61e\\_war.htm](http://www.wildcat-www.de/en/zirkular/61/z61e_war.htm)]

<sup>5</sup> Ibid

relations, has been totally monetarised.<sup>6</sup> Where agriculture may be taken up again occasionally it is about "cash crops", i.e. for the world market, mainly poppies for opium and heroine production. Transport and smuggling of goods, mainly from the tax free ports of Dubai to Pakistan and the states in Central Asia, is a major source of income, where an economy is emerging based on wage labour and profits. This transformation has also transformed the class relations and composition. The old subsistence economy was far from idyllic; the clan and village structure was based on a feudal rent system.<sup>7</sup>

With the transition to a war economy a new elite emerged whose power wasn't based on control of ground and water, or the respect of the local population. The media label of the war lords as "tribal leaders" or "clan chiefs" is totally misleading. This transition was also helped by the fact that the US, Pakistan and Saudi Arabia chosed not to support the traditional land possessing elite, but only the Islamic parties in the struggle against Soviet Russia. These may have arisen from the local communities, but were now independent from them, their influence was based on foreign deliveries of arms and money. For the peasants these militias often became the second best source of income, after their subsistence foundations had been crushed; to become soldiers,

often only as a transitional halfproletarianization, as can be read in the firm ritual of summer offensives and the cessation of fighting for the harvest time, along with the opposition to forced recruitment in the villages.

Only in their independence did the militias discover their "ethnic" ascriptions as Tadjiks, Pashtuns, or Hazaris, in order to be able to possess their own »tradition« and naturalistic identity - these identities were practiced and demonstrated in downright massacres in the style of ethnic cleansing. Everybody participated in them: Dostum's troops against the Taliban (already by then a container being used as brutal means of mass death, as has now occurred again in November at Mazar-i-Sharif), the Taliban against the Hazaris, or Massud against the Hazaris in Kabul.

The constant shifting of coalitions, groups, and fronts in this war - that goes just as much for the warlords as for the influence-grabbing states - seems irrational only to those believing in the warlords' ethnic, religious or tribal camouflages. The whole time it has had to do with maintaining this war as a period of transformation and as an income source, and it was literally that which the apostles of globalization preach: insertion into the world market.<sup>8</sup>

Another way of make sure of at least some basic subsistence for the poor population is to put the *sons* in the Koran schools, the *madrassahs*. It is from these the Taliban phenomena ocured, and whose preconditions were created in the Pakistan refugee camps. These schools are financed by rich Islamists, mainly from Saudi Arabia, and serve their interests. They fill atleast two functions; ideological schooling and as militia organisation. The latter can be illustrated by the fact that these schools were being closed when the "students" were sent to the front. The Talibans managed to take the power in Afghanistan because they, to the foreign interests, provided a form to create stability within the country, something that was needed, because of its central position for the transport routes to Central Asia. This is also why some of their initial supporters were the transport maffia in Quetta in Pakistan and Kandahar in Afghanistan, looking for safe transports to Turkmenistan. But what went wrong in the relations between the Talibans and the US?

The real problem the United States and other Western countries had with the Taliban wasn't the presence of Bin Laden, nor the *Shariah*, nor the oppression of women, nor the cutting off of hands and feet--international oil firms and Western governments from all over the world managed to cope with all that, as long as the oil supply was insured and the profits alright. The Taliban's mistake was that they could not achieve the necessary stabilization of the whole country and also could not enter into direct collaboration with other countries in order to do so.<sup>9</sup>

The competing imperialist powers in Afghanistan is first of all the US and Russia, but also Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, India, Iran and China. What they are after is not only the transport routes to the Caspian Sea and its oil sources, but also, and maybe first of all, the whole political-military and economic direction of the five states becoming "independent" in 1991 - Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Tadjikistan and Kyrgyzstan (the US also has bases in Georgia); an area approximately ten times Germany - that for the Afghan warlords are providing an operating base for Islamic groups, and that must rely on the support of either Russia or NATO. Thus, the permanent wars have "stabilized the instability of the whole Central Asia"<sup>10</sup>, in that they were supported by all parties with money and arms, also linked to similar wars in Chechnya, Tadjikistan and Kyrgyzstan.

In June, 2001, Russia and China for example initiated an organisation for co-operation, "The Shanghai Organisation for Co-operation", with the four Central Asian states Kazakhstan, Tadjikistan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan to join them in their struggle against rebels and separatists, and as a counter-strike against the US presense.

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<sup>6</sup> Cf. Ibid

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> Global War for the World Order (Part II), *Wildcat* [[http://www.wildcat-www.de/en/zirkular/64/z64e\\_war.htm](http://www.wildcat-www.de/en/zirkular/64/z64e_war.htm)]

<sup>10</sup> Global War... Pt. I

## Oil – the lubrication of global accumulation

How, then, can oil, the production and distribution of it, and the domination over the major oil producing areas be of such importance? It goes without saying, if you consider the meaning of oil in capitalism of today, as the major lubrication of global accumulation. The whole technical organisation of production, and the composition of the working class, is tied to oil, that in the early 20th Century started to replace coal. With the decline of coal as the major source that section of the working class was disarmed that for many – left and right – symbolized the revolutionary threat; the miners.

What has come to be called the Fordist phase of capitalism, which meant the real subsumption of the workers to capital, is totally based on cheap and safe access to oil. With the oil crisis 1973, a debate started, looking for an alternative to oil

- not least because into the position of the miners a petroleum-producing proletariat had stepped, whose combativity was increasingly felt. But as long as oil let itself be used in an adequate quantity as a component of the capital circuit, it would remain in the center - especially as a greater part of the total fixed capital (machinery, transportation vehicles, electricity and heat production) that is supposed to be valorized is bound to this energy form and is based on precisely this strategy of dispersal of production segments to supplier firms, and the scattering of production with heavy transport vehicles.<sup>11</sup>

Why, then, this focus on Afghanistan, not yet having any oil production? It has to be seen in relation to Saudi Arabia, allied to the US since the end of WWII. They were, for the American capital, the ideal deliverer of oil;

a low-population country with enormous oil reserves, under strict control of a feudal kingdom, that the local population, in largest part still Bedouin, was content with, and which could exploit and control the above all immigrant population in oil production.<sup>12</sup>

This country created an enormous wealth, very much as a result of the oil crisis 1973, something that not at all threatened the American interests. They bought loads of arms from the US and helped financing the letting and doing of the US internationally, for example the Afghan Mujahedin, Contras in Nicaragua, the arming of Iraq in the war against Iran, the 1991 Gulf War. These petro-dollars were also an important driving force in the international finance markets. Since the end of the 90s it has become harder for Saudi Arabia to play this role, which have made the need for alternative safe oil sources acute. The compromise between oil capital and the domestic working class has collapsed, which provided enormous profits, in the form of rent, for the former, and an almost labour free income for the latter. This compromise was based on the (proletarian) population in the 70s and wasn't able to work with the rapid growth of population annually at three to five per cent today. In 2000 they were more than \$150 billion in debt. When the price of oil fell in 1998 the weak economy got in a crisis, that has even further sharpened the opposition within the Saudi elite, for which bin-Laden is but an expression.<sup>13</sup>

## Political Islam and Arabic nationalism

With bin-Laden we arrive at Political Islam, the present version of Arabic-Islamist nationalism.

Arabic-Islamist nationalism has gone through three "phases" since the army of Napoleon invaded Egypt in 1798, an invasion that started the modern intervention of the West in the Arab world: liberal nationalism, Arabic socialism and Islamism.

As a political movement, liberal nationalism was formed around Muhammed Ali in Egypt, with the aim of overthrowing the "oriental feudalism", and instead modernize, i.e. capitalize, the country; however, something that failed. Liberal nationalism tried to unite a muslim nation, *umma*, to oppose West imperialism.

The Arabic socialist movement emerged from the ruins of liberal nationalism, with the same basis as European Fascism and National Socialism, and aimed to be the driving force behind the capitalist industrialization in a étatist project, state socialism/capitalism. "The Green Shirts of Young Egypt", Antun Sa'adas' "Popular Party" in Syria, among others, tried to break the British and French imperialism in the Middle East, and when the German imperialism failed they turned towards the road of industrialization and modernization under Russian protection. When Sadat changed allies from Russia to the US, signed a peace contract with Israel and subordinated Cairo under the IMF and the World bank, Arabic socialism was dead and in the vacuum a new movement and ideology emerged, Islamism.

The forerunners of the present Islamic movement was Hassan el-Banna's Muslim Brotherhood (Ikwan al-Muslimun), founded in Egypt in 1928, with the aim of denounce modernism and to re-create (Sunni-) Muslim rule. However, Islamism first gained state power not through the Brotherhood, but in Iran under the Shi'ite Ayatollah Khomeini, however, whose influence in the Muslim world, as a minority party, was limited. Instead, the Muslim masses

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

were mobilized with greater success by more recent editions of Islamism, the GIA in Algeria, Islamic Jihad in Egypt, Hamas in Palestine and the Talibans in Afghanistan, and also the al-Qaeda network of bin Laden.

However, the hostility of Islamism toward modernism and (American/West) capitalism is contradictory.

While Islamism *appears* to be an ideology and political movement that is adamantly opposed to modernity, and which seeks to reinvigorate traditional Islamic beliefs and institutions, it is very much the product of the destruction of the pre-capitalist Arab-Islamic world, and both as ideology and political project is irretrievably stamped with the imprint of modernity and capitalism. (In this respect, Islamism has much in common with Nazism, with its ideological recourse to a pre-capitalist *Gemeinschaft*, and Aryan religion, even while it instantiated the most brutal realities of capitalism and imperialism in its social relations and political project.)<sup>14</sup>

Islamism as a political system is constituted on state racism, however not based on skin colour but on a separation in society based on biology, as apart from the relations of production of Marxism, or of the ideas of bourgeois democracy.

State racism and the biologization of social relations are integral to the obsession with "purification" that animates Islamism -- not the purification of the individual's soul, but the purification of the social fabric itself. (...) This state racism, and biologization of social relations, are features of one dimension of capitalist modernity, its dark side, epitomized by Auschwitz, Babi Yar, Dresden and Hiroshima, all the quintessential products of high capitalist civilization, and inseparable from it.<sup>15</sup>

The Islamist rulers, like those in Iran with its developed oil industry and bin-Laden's oil based speculation wealth, are capitalists, and as such integrated in the global capitalist economy. The interest of the latter with its presense in Afghanistan must be seen in relation to that he from there may be able to destabilize the secular regime of Pakistan, with its nuclear arsenal, and then to be able to overthrow his competitors within the Saudi Arab regime and from there gain control over a large part of the oil reserves of the world. Islamism may be considered as a reaction against the US hegemony, a reaction,

that portends mass death or brutal oppression for the populations of that world, an outcome that can only be averted by a class struggle to overthrow the very capitalist social relations that have generated it and of which Islamism is the current local manifestation.<sup>16</sup>

The Islamist groups, and the states within which many of them have their bases, have been, and is being today, used by the imperialist powers; the US, for example, actively supported the Afghan Talibans in their struggle against Soviet Russia and sent weapon to the Muslim army in Bosnia during the civil war 1992-95, despite the arms embargo of the bourgeois states, and helped the Muslim soldiers with training camps together with Iranian agents and Afghan Mujaheddin; Israel supported Hamas to undermine PLO authority in the Palestine struggle. But in the dirty game of imperialism allies are shifted, the one more ugly than the other. The Talibans and Hamas have both bit the hands that fed them. Our question today is, if it is considered possible to see Islamism/Political Islam, however contradictory their history, as a tendency towards and an effort to a sort of "unified green power" in the struggle against US hegemony within the New World Order?

### **Iraq today and the Gulf War 1991**

The war in 1991, when Iraq had attacked its neighbour, Kuwait, had one decisive motive; oil. However, not only in an immediate meaning, as a natural resource, but the full dimension of oil in global accumulation – and class struggle.

The Gulf War was also about securing the recycling of petrodollars through the Kuwaiti banks, crushing the militant "oil proletariat" of both Iraq and the Middle East in general and asserting a New World Order following the collapse of the USSR.<sup>17</sup>

Also the occurring war is aimed to re-consolidate the hegemony in the Middle East and Central Asia. Between 1991 and 1997 at least 1.2 million Iraqis (including 750 000 children) have died, as estimated by the UN, as the result of lack of food and medicine, due to the war. In 1991 the US *officially* said they could defeat Iraq through a short war. However, US and British air force has until today bombed the "No airflight zones". They talk about the same strategy

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<sup>14</sup> Islamism: Political Ideology and Movement, *Internationalist Perspectives* [<http://users.skynet.be/ippi/thlist.htm>]

<sup>15</sup> Ibid

<sup>16</sup> Ibid

<sup>17</sup> Conkers or Bonkers...

even today, which may illustrate the *ideal* modern capitalist war, that,

should not concern any normal citizen of a warring country, but should rather be prosecuted by a paid army (or, in the spirit of neoliberalism, the poor soldiers (...); they should be short, so that no great debates arise (remember: The NATO bombardment against Yugoslavia was originally supposed to last only two days!); and they should be able to be represented as targeted surgical hits, sparing the civilian population--this presentation of war has become the primary task of the media division.<sup>18</sup>

The war in 1991 was ended by a significant movement of desertions in the Iraqi army, and for example the cities of Al Shoura and Al Sho'ela were controlled by the deserters and their sympathisers. The Iraqi regime was struck by insurrections both in the North (among the Kurds) and among the poor masses in the South, but they were brutally crushed by the Saddam Hussein who had managed to survive the war alive and kicking (sic).

It is similar actions – desertions and refusal of reporting for duty in both camps - that is providing the immediate hope for a stop to the war plans, along with the public opinion at home, and the class struggle. Concerning the latter, the UK authorities has gotten their war plans in a problematic situation due to the striking fire fighters; the same goes for if the working class start fighting the reduction of welfare driven through because of the war credits.

As revolutionaries in not war waging countries it is first of all about fighting the enemy at the home front, like in all wars as well as during the capitalist peace, to increase the propaganda for revolutionary defeatism and – with the strongest emphase there is – to stress and clarify the capitalist essence of this situation and that it *only* is the communist revolution that will be able to end the capitalist wars.

PH, January 2003

## Part II

With the initiation of a discussion on class, war and the New World Order as expressions of the capitalist crisis, we tried to propose a framework based on the material foundation for the hegemonical struggle in general, and the wars against Iraq and Afghanistan in particular. Our aim with this was to try to reach an understanding of the present situation and thereby go well beyond an ideological and moral, in short idealistic, notion, and with these insights direct our activities specifically against the war and in the end for communism.

What we wanted to stress was the class dimension of the present situation, and our thesis was that this war, and all capitalist wars, in the end are waged against the proletariat. However, we do not see the class war as something reductionistic onedimensional, but as a moment within capitalism and its wars as a totality.<sup>19</sup>

In the below, we wish to continue this discussion, and part of that is the translation and publication of the Wildcat text "Kriege gegen das Erdölproletariat".

But first a few words on the meaning of oil, or this time rather the oil rent, when it comes to the oil producing proletariat and the Middle East in relation to global accumulation and class composition.

### Marx, surplus value and the theory of rent

The rent of land is established as a result of *the struggle between tenant and landlord*. We find that the hostile antagonism of interests, the struggle, the war is recognised throughout political economy as the basis of social organisation.<sup>20</sup>

Oil, crude and refined, play a major part of the present capitalism, which we tried to discuss in the above. As a raw material, then as auxiliary material and a consumer commodity, it needs a specific analysis apart from but in relation to ordinary means of production and subsistence. Fluctuations in price and supply have effects on the rate of profit. Our point is, that a precondition for the understandig of the role of oil, not the least geo-strategically, and to avoid extra-economic conspiracy theories, is a specific theory of oil rent. A good example of this is the book from 1985, *The Economics of the Oil Crisis – Theories of Oil Crisis, Oil Rent, and Internationalization of Capial in the Oil Industry*<sup>21</sup>, by the American economist Cyrus Bina.

Marx analysed the rent, as one of the specific forms in what surplus value was divided, first of all in *Capital* Vol. III. What he was concerned about was a specific theory of ground rent based on the specific property relations of agriculture. What we need, is a specific theory of rent based on the specific property relations in the oil producing areas

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<sup>18</sup> Global War... Pt. II

<sup>19</sup> We see many interrelated aspects of the war and the capitalist crisis: the US struggle for securing its position as hegemonical power; the struggle against and between their competing colleagues; the geo-strategical goals (cf. Afghanistan and Balkan); oil; the US domestic class war, its crisis, deficit. Cf. *Wildcat*, "The Bush Administration's Fear of War... and What Forces Them to Wage It" [[www.wildcat-www.de/en/actual/e020war1.htm](http://www.wildcat-www.de/en/actual/e020war1.htm)].

<sup>20</sup> Marx, *Economical-Philosophical Manuscripts* of 1844.

<sup>21</sup> St. Martin Press, New York, 1985.

and states.

Modern agricultural property was a necessity in the process of becoming of capital. But with the creation of modern agricultural property, the conditions for a propertied class in opposition to capital were created. With its monopoly of land, soil and natural resources did not only exclude the labourers, recently forced away from their means of subsistence and totally dependent on the wage<sup>22</sup>, but also the capitalists. Once capital was established, this precondition became an obstacle to the self-expansion of capital, since it sucks part of the surplus value that could have been accumulated by capital. The monopoly of land thus provides the material basis for a reactionary land owning class.<sup>23</sup> However, along the process of maturing of capitalism, modern landed property tends to become annihilated, what – in abstracto – gives us the two major classes of capitalism; the capitalist and the wage labourer. Today, as opposed to when Marx was writing, agriculture is totally capitalized. But the juridical right to control over a specific area sub-soil hosting such an important raw material as oil, *once again*<sup>24</sup> leads to a phenomena corresponding to ground rent; the oil rent, that demands its own specific analysis. Here, too, as an obstacle to the "pure" accumulation and flow of capital, as a result of the nationalization/monopolization of oil under the banner of state socialism/capitalism/Islamism. It is as such an obstacle we are – *theoretically!* – concerned when looking for a perspective to the war against Iraq, the geo-strategical position of the Middle East and the US desperate struggle for hegemony since the fall of *Pax Americana*.

Marx theory of rent concerning agriculture was a result of his general critique of the political economy. The foundation for the capitalist ground rent was the production of value and the class relations related to that. Ground rent do not arise from the physical quality of nature, and thus common for all forms of society, i.e. eternal, ahistoric, but is "a *phenomenal* manifestation of the interaction of the structure of accumulation and the structure of landed property in capitalism. Rent is therefore (1) a social category, and (2) an historically unique category and specific to the capitalist mode of production [Bina, 1985]."

Ricardo meant that ground rent arised from different qualities of land and that this differences led to what he called a differential rent, where the land of the lowest quality determined the price – of, in his case, corn – and that the land of higher quality would get a surplus in relation to that of the lowest quality. However, what Marx showed, with the development of the forces of production the best and the worst land won't always be the same. Marx here talks about two different – however interrelated – kinds of differential rent; DRI with a given investment of capital where fluctuations in the fertility of the land give rise to a differential rent, and DRII where the quality of land is given, but a different amount of capital is invested. For Marx it all was about going beyond the question of the distribution of rent to the question of the dynamics of capital accumulation in relation to the obstacle landed property provided for agriculture. Marx theory of differential rent is related to his general theory of value, based on the *social necessary labour time*, as apart from theories based on the immediate, technical embodied labour time, as for example that of Ricardo.

### Theory of rent in the case of oil

What was valid for ground rent as a phenomenal manifestation of the specific property relations in agriculture, is also valid for the oil rent and the specific property relations related to it. This obstacle to the "pure" accumulation arised historically with "the *separation* of the ownership of hydrocarbons from the ownership of the oil fields" [Bina, 1985]. In states and areas where the ownership of the ground surface juridicially include the sub-soil, the owner of the oil, that is the capitalist producer, is opposed to the obstacle of the property right to the land hosting the oil. The land owner can appropriate oil rent while the capitalist investor appropriate profit. The creation of the social value of oil comprises, given the property relations above, an intra-industrial competition.<sup>25</sup> The differential rent of oil is thus the result of global competition, where the most productive area, the Middle East, above all Iran, and the least productive area, the US, are competing about the wealth.

Thus, given the different productivity in the production of oil in different areas of the world a differential rent arises, as the whole oil sector has been capitalized and organically tied together on the world market, a differential rent arises that the oil producing states can appropriate. This oil rent is a reductionn of the surplus value the international oil capital could have accumulated.

### Some words on the development of the oil industry and the property relations

In the above we stressed Bina's thesis that a theory of rent concerning oil *once again* is valid. This is so, because it was first in the beginning of the 70s, what he calls "the era of capitalist production and internationalization of capital", that the organic determination of value, rent and price developed. This was the last of three distinguished phases of the historical development of oil production.

The first phase, "the era of early concessions", lasted between 1901 and 1950 and was charatarized by the international oil corporations dividing the Middle East region among themselves by obtaining the right to exploitation

<sup>22</sup> Cf. *Capital* Vol. I, the Chapter on the Primitive Accumulation of Capital.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. *Grundrisse*

<sup>24</sup> Since the 70s. See below

<sup>25</sup> Cf. *Capital* Vol. III

through direct political dominance. Each area was often as large as the respective state, and the contracts lasted about one century. This era was also characterized by the presence of pre-capitalist social relations and lack of private property of land. The pricing during this era was mainly arbitrary and administrative and not governed by the law of value.

The second phase, "the era of transition of capitalist development", lasted between 1950 and 1970 and was characterized by an ever more capitalized production of oil. The OPEC was formed and the Iranian oil industry was nationalized in 1951 (the Mexican in 1948, and the Iraqi first in 1972). The latter led to an economic embargo by the international oil corporations, together with their respective government, and a boycott of Iranian oil that lasted for two years. The boycott was ended with the US-supported coup d'état against Dr Mossadegh. The oil industry was denationalized again and the Iranian masses was put under the rule of the Shah for 27 years, to the Iranian revolution, in which the oil workers played a major role, and which, as a last resort to avoid a successful proletarian revolution, led political Islam to power.<sup>26</sup> Another characteristics of this era is the use of "posted prices" for the transferring of crude oil within the international oil corporations, and which worked as the basis for a calculated rent for the authorities in the oil states. During this era this price form was used for calculating the relation between oil rent and price.

The third era, as said above, started around the beginning of the 70s, only a short while before the oil crisis – the first in history – in 1973-4<sup>27</sup>, and meant the total capitalization of oil production and the associated property and class relations. On the world market the US and the Middle East oil was linked in an organic relation, that gave rise to a capitalist oil differential rent.

### Capital intense industry, with a disturbing proletarian surplus population

The oil industry is capital intense. The exploration of new sources, the starting phase of production and the process of extraction is expensive. With the capital intensity it follows that a less number of (immediate) labourers/producers possess a relatively higher strategic position in the value production in comparison to the more labour intense production. However, by the oil proletariat we do not only consider the immediate producers and their families, but the whole proletariat in the oil producing areas and states; in health care, construction, service, infrastructure, the unemployed, the migrants, etc. Their wealth demand a part of the enormous surplus value – in the form of rent – generated by oil, and it was on this foundation the class compromise rested. But, as we said above, this compromise have been revoked. Since the 90s many of the oil states in the Gulf are in debt, to a large part due to the dramatic population growth, a "extra" population even it demanding a slice of the oil royalty pie, and that is insurrectionist. A large part of the increasing costs for the population growth is thus costs for repression. For the US, oil import – to provide its population with a continuous cheap supply of energy – is the single largest post in the deficit.

Our hypothesis, bold as love, we admit, is that, when it comes to the wars in the Middle Eastern oil areas, they are in the end wars against the oil proletariat<sup>28</sup> – as one aspect of the hegemonical struggle in the New World Order, as we tried to discuss above – is based on what we have tried to show in the above. That is, given the specific relations that is at hand in the oil based value production, providing the States in the area, as possessors of the land hosting the oil sources, with an oil rent, reducing the surplus value of the "free" capital, with the specific expressions of the class antagonisms this leads to, makes the unified capitalist class – individually and united, or as Marx's "veritable freemason society"<sup>29</sup> – wishes nothing but to annihilate that obstacle the proletariat constitutes – above all that part of the proletariat outside the immediate process of production – and to continue and forever increase the production of surplus value; "an oil production without workers", as *Wildcat* puts it. It is, inter alia, against this background we see the slaughtering of the Middle Eastern workers relieving in continuous wars.

Saddam Hussein and his elite troops are still alive, despite two wars. He was saved in 1991 because he better than all alternative despotes could crush the insurrections arising both in the South and in the North, that for instance took expression as a movement of councils. Operation Desert Storm was first of all aimed at civilian targets; 95% of all force production was struck, stopping the water pumps; all three factories for production of chemicals cleaning the water was bombed, poisoning the water for the irrigation systems; no pumps for draining worked, leading salt water to accelerate the process of desertation; 45 major bridges over Euphrat and Tigris was bombed, just as train stations, cars and taxis; the sanctions forbid import of food, which increased food prices with at least 20%. Since the Desert Storm

<sup>26</sup> Political Islam, as one expression of local bourgeois fractions longing for power and the oil royalties. See part I; Bina/Zangeneh, *Modern Capitalism and Islamic Ideology in Iran*, Macmillan 1992, and Bina/Badie, *Oil and Rentier State: Iran's Capital Formation, 1960-1997*, 2002 [[www.sba.luc.edu/orgs/meca/volume4/oilrentier](http://www.sba.luc.edu/orgs/meca/volume4/oilrentier)]

<sup>27</sup> The crisis was *triggered off* by the oil embargo initiated by a group of Arab states as a response to the American support for Israel in the Arab-Israeli war. However, the increase of oil revenues to the Middle East was not the *cause* of the crises, but its *consequence*. Neither the crisis nor the oil price was decided by OPEC or the US *voluntarily*. The economic basis, for which the crisis was an *expression*, was rather the drastic increase of production costs in the US crude oil production. When the least productive producer get even less productive "it leads to the reorganization of production by way of crisis, which would result in the formation of new value, a new rent structure, and new prices of higher magnitude" [Bina, 1985]. The OPEC "price increase" in the 70s was thus a response the the internal reorganisation of the industry. See also Bina/Zangeneh, 1992.

<sup>28</sup> However a hypothesis Cyrus Bina is sceptical towards, meaning that "war is not the cause but the symptom", in an email of September 24, 2003.

<sup>29</sup> Capital Vol. III

traversed – the recent war excluded – 1.2 million Iraqis have died partly because of the bombs and the shootings and partly because of the collateral damages listed above. Between the war in 1991 and last Spring the capitalis peace meant one ton of bombs over the Iraqi people every week.

**Some last, but not concluding words**

This piece was written, as we said above, to initiate a discussion on class, war, the capitalist crisis and communism. We wanted this discussion to be a starting point for revolutionary intervention in the movement against the war, as part of the general struggle for communism. The aim was not to publish a historical or economical, or what ever from the bourgeois partial fetish disciplines, essay, what may explain the weaknesses of this piece that we are fully aware of. This is not the point to close, but to express all the open ends of the discussion on a revolutionary perspective of war, crisis and communism.

PH, September 2003