

There will be no peace. At any given moment for the rest of our lifetimes, there will be multiple conflicts in mutating forms around the globe. Violent conflict will dominate the headlines, but cultural and economic struggles will be steadier and ultimately more decisive. The de facto role of the US armed forces will be to keep the world safe for our economy and open to our cultural assault. To those ends, we will do a fair amount of killing.

Major Ralph Peters

*Constant Conflicts*, «Parameters», Summer 1997

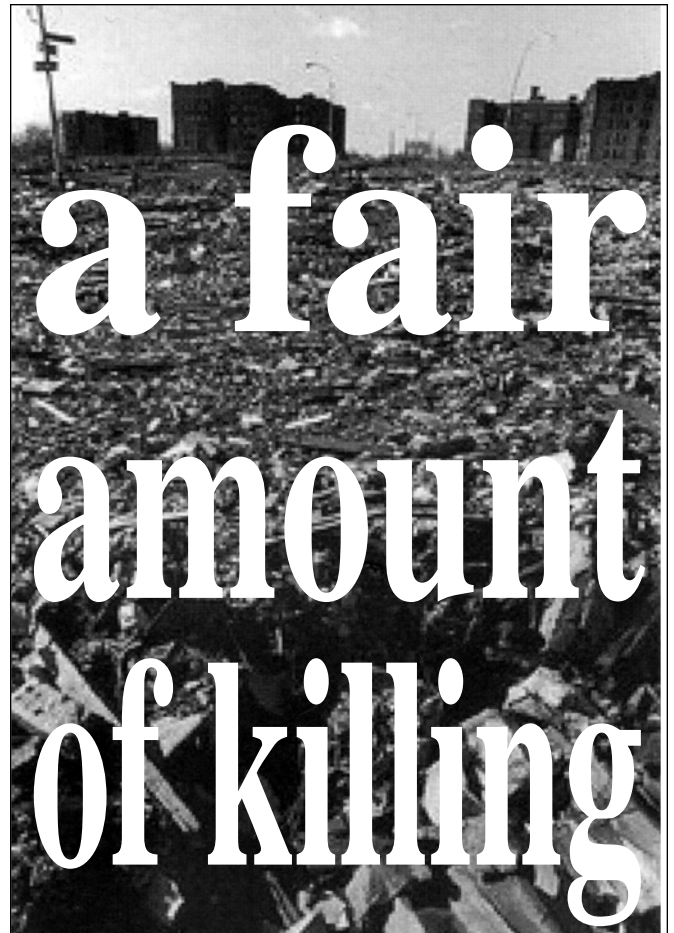
**T**he current war in Iraq is the first large-scale war to have at stake the accelerated globalization of the reproduction of capital. The vestiges of both world wars which organized the contemporary epoch are finally disappearing; all the concurrent poles of global capitalist accumulation have been brutally redefined in their relation to the United States.

#### FROM THE DEFEAT OF THE WORKERS MOVEMENT TO THE RESTRUCTURING AND THE WAR

The current war imposes, on a global scale, the form and content of the capitalist relation of exploitation such as it arose out of the restructuring born in the defeat of the workers' movement at the beginning of the seventies. From the Communist Parties to all the forms of leftism and of councillism and autonomism, from the German revolution to May 68 and the Italian 'Hot Autumn' by way of the civil war in Spain, the issue was always for the proletariat to put forward a social reorganization on the basis of its power acquired in capitalist society. Not all the cows were grey, but all were in the same meadow. The very modalities of the reproduction of capital confirmed this power as a workers movement and working class identity which found their most solid marks in the compromises elaborated within national frameworks, where in a more or less coherent manner the accumulation of capital was secured. The proletariat was the class of associated labour and as such it subverted the capitalist forms of appropriation and exploitation of this associated labour, which thus revealed their limits. To the demand for self-sacrifice in order "to get out of the crisis" it cheerfully replied that the obligation of wage-labour merited only a quick death.

The capitalist class took up the challenge laid down by this vast movement of labour revolts. From the right to the left, it was a matter of clearing all the obstacles to the even flow of exploitation and its reproduction. In opposition to the previous cycle of struggles the restructuring abolished all specification: statutes, welfare, fordian compromise, division of the global cycle into national zones of accumulation, into a fixed relation between centre and periphery or into zones of internal accumulation (East / West). The workers movement disappeared and working class identity became a retro chic. The extraction of surplus-value under its relative mode, in this restructuring, this class struggle, had to constantly shake things up and abolish any obstacle to the immediate process of production, the reproduction of the labour force or the relations between different capitals. Today this process does not comport any element, any crystallization or fixed point, which could pose an obstacle to its necessary flow and to the constant upheaval which it requires.

In these characteristics the restructuring is global and creates a world in its image. The world is not a given framework. In this sense globalization is not a planetary extension, but a specific structure of exploitation and reproduction of the capitalist relation. The critique of globalization cannot be a point of departure for the contemporary critique of the capitalist mode of production.



With the restructuring of the relation of exploitation arose a new world. Where there had been a localization of joint industrial, financial and labour interests came about a disjunction between the valorisation of capital and the reproduction of the labour force. On the one hand the fractions or segments of the global cycle of capital form an "over-world" at the level of investment, the productive process, credit, financial capital, the circulation of surplus-value and the framework of competition. On the other, "those below" are entitled to compassionate assistance and "those even lower" to humanitarian missions. In the last analysis, the best to which we can aspire is to belong to this collective work force, bought out for a miserable social income and thereby individually and ephemerally exploited for less and less. This uniform flexibilisation of the reproduction of an increasingly devalued wage-earner implies the threat of being hurled into the circle below. Down there its "hell on earth": the "sub-world" of misery and rural exodus, the parallel economies of survival, the camps heavy with refugees. The modern spaces of televised suffering show the citizens the necessity of security and control mechanisms used to manage these human flows with exclusion and common injustice.

#### CRUEL LITTLE WARS GROWING UP FAST<sup>1</sup>

In this new world a system of repression installs itself almost everywhere, prepositioned according to a strict correspondence between the organization of violence and the needs of the economy, to the point where the distinction between war and peace, between police operations and wars, is erased.

In the favelas of Brazil, the prisons of the United States, the suburbs of the great metropolises, the free zones of China, the oil contours of the Caspian, the West Bank and Gaza, the police war has become the social, demographic and geographic regulation of the management, reproduction and exploitation of the work

<sup>1</sup> ALAIN JOXE, *The Empire of Disorder*.



force. The repression is permanent, not everywhere, but everywhere possible: “lightening” interventions, peace-keeping by force, police missions, humanitarian missions. It amounts to a global management: revenues on the verge of survival, a death threat for the masses of individuals thrown towards the cities by the destruction of agriculture, disposable after usage and massacred by paramilitary or parapolice.

The space of this new capitalist world is only the reproduction at all the levels (world, continent, countries, region, metropolises, districts) of this hell and its organization into circles. Exploitation and its reproduction organize a geography where in every territory the hierarchical world organization is constructed as an abyss. It was already the classic organization of the “american jungle”, its cities, its ghettos, its pretty suburbs, its Disneyland. At every level we find the same variety: an “overdeveloped” core; zones dotted with more or less dense capitalist focalisations; zones of crises and direct violence exercised against “social garbage”, margins, ghettos, a subterranean economy of the traffic of men and women controlled by different mafias.

If Trotsky defined fascism as Al Capone with the manners of big capital, today this formula must be over-turned; in these new articulations of social space it is big capital which has taken on the manners of Al Capone. The mafia are the only branch of international capital who handle at the same time financial capital and permanent localised violence; they are thus the natural allies of the “provincial governors” who begin cheap wars, small wars of conquest, wars between neighbours turned to ethnicisation and incorporating massacre and ethnic cleaning as common ways of dealing with the excluded.

It is never about the forming of a virgin space but about history. The zoning is in movement, the class struggle modifies it, transforms the levels of insertion, it is the frame in which it takes place and that it simultaneously builds (companies leave Indonesia where the manpower is “too expensive”, heading for Viet-

nam). It is a frame which has to be constantly imposed because it is constituted by the class struggles themselves which can even momentarily re-nationalize, try to recreate, as in Brazil, compromises at the hierarchical level assigned by the totality. The class struggle models and gives movement to this decomposition / recomposition; it imposes room for manoeuvre for every space and recreates the stakes for every territory in differentiations. At the same time as the world capitalist class and its local fractions impose all over the world a spatial shaping of exploitation.

In the aftermath of the little barbaric wars of Kosovo, East-Timor, Colombia, Panama, Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda and Zaire, Afghanistan, the current war is the first large-scale war which has for its object the shaping of this new global world-economy, the space created by the restructuring of the capitalist mode of production.

## IRAK : THE STAKES

### There is no more Middle East Question<sup>2</sup>

In the Middle East Israel is the veritable model, the spear head, for the shaping of such a social-economic space. By its existence alone, as a geographic cut in the Arabic world, incitation to religious division, sterilisation of resources in its military advances and its military outpost which has allowed it to directly strike any attempt for economic or political autonomy of the region, Israel always meant “backwardness” and “underdevelopment”.

Through the wars of 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973, the internal social contradictions of the Arabic world would develop and harden in the confrontation with Israel. The constraint to development imposed by Israeli presence became, by the existence and accompanying pressure of the Palestinian refugees, an internal constraint in the Arabic countries. The weft of traditional social relations decomposes, showing itself incapable of integrating the mass of refugees. The Palestinian refugee is henceforth an a-priori proletarian.

After 1967 the whole proletariat of the Middle East is taken up by the storm in which the crisis of the self-centred model of development takes shape. Israel, once it had occupied the Territories, reached the limits of its model of “self-sufficient” capitalist development based on “exclusivism”, the valorisation of “Jewish” work and the financing from the diaspora, and thus sets out on the road of manufacturing and it’s subcontracting, in which the Palestinians are harnessed as underpaid labour: a “little tiger” basing its economy on the fixing of a balance of power in the occupation. It is in this context that the PLO, of which Arafat has been president since 1969, appears as the last bastion of Arabic nationalism. After Black September (1970) in Jordan, the Syrian and then Israeli intervention in Lebanon in 1975 and 1982, the Palestinians are gradually eliminated as an autonomous force which had been able to destabilize the miscellaneous social and political systems of the region.

The war of 1973 opens a new phase in the development of capitalism in the Middle East. The oil crisis of 1973-74 was its spectacular beginning. But intoxication with the rent sterilizes the rent. This circulates as revenue in a fundamentally distributive economy, in which the work force is always “too expensive” and the golden faucets too numerous. With the rent, the surplus as revenue is already given and it is only a question of appropriating it. The local manpower has too many pretensions and it is necessary to substitute it, on wells and vessels, with immigrant manpower. The transfer of salaries profoundly modifies all the local economies at the same time that the necessity of this traffic of manpower, besides the reduction in its cost, implies the regional incapacity to reproduce a working class within the

<sup>2</sup> THÉO COSME, *Moyen Orient 1945 2002 Histoire d'une lutte de classes*.

existing capitalist relations. The system enters into crisis in the 80s, suffocated by the debts that it accumulated.

In this initial phase of globalization, on the basis of petrodollars, Israel and the Arabic countries competed in the reproduction and management of a work force founded on its preservation in a state of relegation until the point where it proves useless and is eliminated. The bankruptcy of the arabic national framework and the delegitimation of the state are then the foundations of the islamic renaissance. This expresses, organizes and controls poverty as such. It constructs the people as a community, on one side against the class reality, of the other one against the citizen (the two Satans). The “wretched of the earth”, from which certain expected the destruction of the “Western” capitalist system, became, following the universalisation of the capitalist mode of production, the “useless of the world”, the “poor men” who find the expression of their suffering and the communal form of their revolts in all the religions.

The iranian revolution was the deathblow for arab nationalism. But the islamic direction quickly made clear that its main function was social and demographic control over a crisis zone. It undertook a ten years war with Iraq, the unique purpose of which seems to have been the mutual extermination of the excess population, clamping down an unruly working class: the essentially Shiite manpower in the petromonarchies and the iraqi south.

The nationalism of iraq was also based on the circulation of the oil rent. Iraq did not dispute the rent economy, it disputed only its “parasitic” aspect, the contradiction of its development consisted in wanting to make of the rent the foundation of a state economy. It was itself led to dive into a tremendous growth of military expenditure. The unproductive character of these expenses is only a particular aspect of the absence of objectives and coherent industrial projects. Iraq could only hope for a resumption of oil exports and was not able to resist the fall of oil prices to under eight dollars per barrel. Saddam Hussein's iraq is not the ultimate avatar of self-centred arabic economic nationalism, it is the result of the contradictions and the failure, in the Middle East, of the integration of the region on the basis of the rent. With the full agreement of the west, the rental integration had subjected the proletarians to a project of development which had its foundation in the foreign debt and which by the end of eighties had become anachronistic. Everywhere there were specifically capitalist social relations and nowhere their proper dynamic of reproduction.

The result of the gulf war of 1991 imposed on iraq the insulation from the world market to which it had aspired and from which its fat uniformed organisers of famine were protected. Ten years ago the United States resolved the global problem of the rent through its control by the American state and the big oil companies. The war of 1991 takes care of the *necessary elimination of the autonomous figure of the rent-collector* as autonomisation of the rent in relation to the general readjustment of the rate of profit. The American victory disconnected the fixing, circulation and use of the rent from the needs, stakes, rivalries and specific characteristics (demographic, historic, economic, social and denominational) inherent to the site of production. It was a quick and neat piece of work, all in the name of the “international community”.

### The current war

This global solution has been allowed to stabilize, but only with the eviction of Iraq. If the war of 1991 was another war played out on the level of inter-state relations, the current openly proclaims itself as a regional moment of a “planetary solution” to the internal disorders of the globalization of the reproduction of capital: the american army intervenes in Kandahar, in Mogadishu or in Baghdad as in Los Angeles. The United States are imposing on their “partners” the new rules of the capitalist mode of production. In

the Middle East, as everywhere else, the economic interests of the United States situate themselves at a level of organization superior to that of every state of the region or of their sum. The globalism of american interests demands the deconstruction of national sovereign powers and the logic of territorial borders and the recomposition of national elements into functional branches with transnational vocations as part of a *reunification* of this new balkanised world under the “natural leadership” of the United States. “Hostile to the interests of the United States” indicates all that can pose an obstacle to the free circulation of capital: an absolute blackmail on the other economic powers, an absolute control over all capital flow. Iraq, due to its recent history, its demographic weight, its capacity for military nuisance and its oil reserves is the *inevitable obstacle to the implementation of this configuration*.

If the United States defines the enemy as “terrorism” it isn't just paranoid propaganda. Iraq is itself only a moment in a military process implicitly defined as recurrent; the enemy is no longer a targeted opponent but the unstable form of opposition and resistance intrinsic to the reorganisation of exploitation and its reproduction.

Islam is the model adversary in this context. The Islam that acted as the stooge of the United States in the breakdown of Arabic nationalism has disappeared as a national project. Contemporary Islam results from the questioning of the national framework of capitalist accumulation and from the paradoxical situation of the reproduction of a labour force simultaneously subjected to conditions of exploitation and reorganisation of work corresponding to a global cycle of capital and, by this very fact, reduced to the “re” creation of “traditional” conditions and frameworks of reproduction. From the Red Sea to Indonesia the problem is not a supposed contraction of capitalist development but on the contrary the enormous specifically capitalist development which has been advancing healthily for 25 years now. The resurgence of different communities finds its significance in their dependence vis-à-vis the world market. The situation of labour is fundamentally the same as in the most developed areas: the labour force confronts capital as a global social labour force. But while in developed areas it is *globally* bought by capital and *individually* used, there is no global purchase in the new



peripheries. Hence the importance of the disciplining of the work force (the counterpart to the ethnicisation of its reproduction) when faced with a proletariat become pauper who demands wealth in a love / hate relation to the United States.

For its part Israel is again the spearhead and the constraint in the regional history of capitalism. Zionism, its social-pioneer capitalism and armoured democracy, is dead; the "little tiger" on the back of palestinian labour ran out of puff. The balance that came out of the Gulf War had led Israel to conclude accords (in Oslo and in Paris) which were already widely anachronistic at the time of their ratification. The fragmentation of the national interest, the high-tech turn of the economy, the capacity of other sectors to manage as micro flows their manpower needs on a local scale with imported labour from the far east replacing it in larger flows, the identity of its military activity with its politics, assigns to Israel a quite particular role in the general regional framework of which this war must accelerate the implementation. Already in Israel the valorisation of capital is an interlocking of spaces. The months which preceded this war are the same months which saw the most extreme blurring of the distinction between war and peace, the confusion of which has characterized the Israeli State since its foundation and the confinement of the occupied territories. For its part the Palestinian Authority was de-legitimised in the movement of continual consultation with the occupying power which created it, it became a racket on temporary manpower and the resources coming from humanitarian aide. The second Intifada erupts as much against the Palestinian Authority as against the Israeli capitalist occupation. Sent back to the ghettos and local solidarity, Palestinian society and its struggle is ethicised, a completely modern ethnicisation. In it it finds the capacity to survive a balance of power which condemns it to a society of eternal foreigners and separates it from the Israeli proletariat. Even ethicised, it is this class struggle that sets the State of Israel against the Palestinians and it is in this struggle between classes that the new configurations of the reproduction of capital are everywhere conflictually constituted.

#### THE PACIFIST MOVEMENT

The pacifist movement which has appeared over the last months wants to protect society from the horrors of war, where society represents the totality of potential civil victims. It denounces and tries to prevent the outbreak of war as if there were still a question of it breaking out. It is afraid of the beginning of an uncontrollable and explosive chain reaction of which the warmongers would be simply unconscious. Constantly it repeats that the war will have unpredictable consequences. Unpredictable? The Spanish, Italian or English demonstrators (and even French) perfectly made the connection between the deliberate violence of the social reorganization of the Middle East and the violence already present and to come in the relation of exploitation. The pacifist movement, as such, meets the stakes head-on: the compromise, the social management of the reproduction of the work force and its exploitation is no longer a specific concern of the capitalist class. The war is the paroxysmal shape of this daily banality: "we take people and we throw them away". *Society is afraid*. The movement is *pacifist*. It is against the glaring necessity of the violence engrained in the restructuring of the capitalist relation and it is against this, *now*, in a way adequate to the acceleration of the restructuring that *this* war represents. This violence is so glaringly obvious that it is understood by the mother superiors. It is a mass movement precisely because it has these characteristics.

<sup>3</sup> Many nuns have been seen in demonstrating against the war.

It is pacifist because unanimist, interclassist, consensual. The demonstrators know that the current war is the expression of a general violence, but no call to the "class war" will get them to overcome this radical democratism which urges them to oppose the war as if it was only the expression of the will of a few politicians whose illegality and arrogance must be denounced. The movement defends a political and social management of conflicts, the realization of compromise at every level; it is against the institution of raw, physical and economic violence as a means of regulating social relations. It defends very concrete and very real interests and it has perfectly well understood the general function of this war as a paradigm of the new world order. All the subjects of the pacifist movement ensue from this: the war as a dysfunction, an imbalance which must be corrected by democracy, in a u-turn on behalf of our States (but the day after the start of the war Chirac corrected his own position by realistically recognizing that the new world order could not be anti-american), negotiation, citizens' control of international institutions, civil disobedience. If it is here that it finds its breadth, it also owes this to fractures in the global capitalist class which this war brings up, and to its equivalence in regard to certain factions. It constructs itself and exists in these fractures which give it unanimity in legitimizing it ... whether it likes it or not.

However, if the "international community" is torn apart by the American intervention it is unquestionably united in regard to the means of repression set to work in every country. From this point of view, on the "home front", the international landscape is uniform. All States listen, deeply moved, to the appeals to reason from the Popes of all churches, but it is the army or the police who intervene against those who exceed the limits of "symbolism"; that is those who question, in everyday life, that of which this war is precisely the accelerated formation: the transforming of the relation of exploitation.

The restructuring upsets *all social combinations*, all social relations founded on capital, it provokes an opposition between society and these multiple and successive upheavals. The pacifist movement is a *social opposition* to the restructuring but that is all: a social opposition. It is opposed to the social upheaval, but society is just the last result of the *process of production* in which the origin of this result, the process of production as process of *exploitation*, has been *abolished*, has vanished in a puff of smoke. This results in a paradoxical phenomenon: if the pacifist movement is really an opposition to the restructuring, the working class has not yet shown an immediate interest in participating. On the west coast of the United States striking dockworkers continued to load military vessels; in Great Britain the trade unions only intend to use the anti-Blair sentiment to try to settle their accounts with New Labour, in Italy the "PACE"<sup>4</sup> flags are less and less visible as we leave the city centres and the CGIL is more than timid in its calls to strike. This paradox is that of the *social commonplace* which, in its final composition, erases its own process of realization as result of the process of production. Class struggle and social movement are not mutually exclusive, they *interpenetrate*, but they never totally assimilate. In its opposition to American unipolarity pacifism forms an opposition *equal* to the restructuring in which the class struggle has disappeared in its result: the social movement.

<sup>4</sup> Peace, these rainbow coloured flags dominate the urban landscape of Italy.

**TO FOLLOW**  
From the restructuring of the relation  
of exploitation to communisation