

CR

State monopoly capitalism

Gretchen Binus, Beate Landefeld and Andreas Wehr

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Hans-Peter Brenner

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Nordahl Grieg's commitment to peace

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plus letter and Soul Food

Mike Quille

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THESE ARE dangerous times for our class and for peace in the world. As *CR* goes to press, the Trade Union Bill is going through the House of Lords, George Osborne's Comprehensive Spending Review is threatening further destruction of our public services, and British armed forces are in action in yet another Middle Eastern country – this time Syria.

While Jeremy Corbyn and the majority of the Parliamentary Labour Party stood by the Labour conference decision to oppose bombing of Syria – despite David Cameron's allegation that all who took that view were "terrorist sympathisers" – the 66 craven Labour MPs who backed Cameron have actually assisted the Tory and media campaign to undermine Corbyn and thereby to neuter Labour as an effective opposition. This must not be allowed to succeed.

Within the last 14 years, Britain has been involved in wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya and now Syria. But no-one should think that the bombing will make Britain any safer from terrorist attacks. It will kill and maim more innocent civilians and create more martyrs. The whole history of these Western military interventions confirms that outcome.

The stakes in the region were already high enough with Turkey's shooting down of a Russian bomber. Britain's involvement increases the risk of further incidents which could lead to a rapidly escalating conflict between NATO and Russia, with untold consequences.

If Cameron and his supporters were really serious about combating Daesh/ISIS and Al-Q'aeda, they would be demanding that Turkey, Saudi Arabia and the other Gulf states close down financial and logistical support for all terrorist groups in Iraq and Syria. But Cameron will not do that. He has gone to war for one purpose only – to defend the economic and geopolitical interests of Britain's ruling monopoly capitalist class, whether that means access to resources like oil or selling weapons to reactionary governments in the Middle East. Monopoly capitalism inevitably means imperialism and war.

And here we come to the crux of the matter, the link between the war on Syria, the Trade Union Bill and the attack on public services. These are not wilful aberrations – they flow from the strategy of British monopoly capitalism, in particular its dominant finance sector, to maintain profit levels in the face of cut-throat competition in the world. But it cannot do that without the aid of a strong interventionist state – hence state monopoly capitalism.

The state, through the Tory government, is intervening in

industrial relations to hamstring trade unions, particularly in the public sector. It is reducing benefit levels in order to drive unemployed and sick people into precarious employment, thus lowering the overall value of labour power. It is cutting back on public services, not only to reduce the taxes on big business, but also to open up new areas for private profit.

Until the overthrow of socialism in the USSR and the German Democratic Republic, state monopoly capitalism was an active field of research there. In Britain, the concept of state monopoly capitalism has been at the heart of the Communist Party's programme, *Britain's Road to Socialism*, since its 3rd edition in 1968. However, the lack of understanding in the British labour movement about the connections between the state, monopoly and imperialism is widespread.

As a step towards redressing this, *CR* has concluded an agreement with German publisher PapyRossa to serialise a translation of their recent monograph *Staatsmonopolistischer Kapitalismus (SMC)*, by Gretchen Binus, Beate Landefeld and Andreas Wehr. Chapter 1 appears in this edition of *CR*, and the remaining three chapters will be published in succeeding issues. If there is sufficient interest, a *CR* pamphlet may thereafter result. Inevitably the monograph has rather more focus on Germany and less on Britain, but we hope that it will stimulate studies of the specific nature of Britain's state monopoly capitalism.

Inevitably Chapter 1 of *SMC* is rather longer than our normal maximum of 5,000 words, and the same applies to a second contribution here, Hans-Peter Brenner's *Islam as Reflected in the Marxist Critique of Religion*. Given the rise in Islamophobia following the Paris massacre, this comparative study of all three Abrahamic monotheistic religions is important. The article complements the two-part series *Oppression and Freedom in the Old Testament*, by Thomas Wagner, in *CR76* and *CR77*. Hans-Peter shows that in all cases the proclamation of 'uniqueness' of the respective God leads to the rejection and exclusion of non-believers or believers in other faiths. "Whether this is converted into violent terrorist actions," he says, "is simply a question of political and military power and opportunity."

In rebuttal of the media campaign against Jeremy Corbyn, we present Robert Griffiths' SO Davies Memorial Lecture, *Leadership and Rebellion in the Labour Movement*, which compares Corbyn with Davies himself, Keir Hardie and Nye Bevan. Then Martin Jenkins' article, *Mao Zedong: On Contradiction*, takes us back to basic Marxist philosophy, stressing the importance of contradiction in dialectics and how an understanding of it can be creatively applied to the analysis of society and the development of appropriate strategies.

Two cultural pieces with contemporary relevance round off this edition. Lars Ulrik Thomsen introduces us to the Norwegian communist poet and dramatist Nordahl Grieg, and his fight for peace and against fascism; while Mike Quille's *Soul Food* column returns us to the Middle East, focusing on two expatriates – Kurdish poet Choman Hardi and Syrian poet Amir Darwish.

Regular readers will note some design changes in this issue. After 25 editions, our former designer Andy Vine has stepped down. We thank him for all his hard work. Happily, he is succeeded by Nick Wright. The substantial content of this edition has however forced a reduction in the number of illustrations, for which this editor takes full responsibility.

Islam as reflected in the Marxist critique of religion



by Hans-Peter Brenner

Given the current world-wide discussion on ‘Islam’, ‘Islamic fundamentalism’ and the like – controversial among Marxists too – I have considered it useful to re-present an earlier contribution of mine, which embeds the question of Islam in an assessment of all three Abrahamic monotheistic sister religions, which not only have common historical roots in the current Middle East, but were also entangled at a very early stage in the socio-economic and political-power upheavals and struggles of the time.

IF WE APPROACH these origins theoretically, then much of what is difficult to evaluate today becomes easier to understand. Actually a reworking – or better still a revision – of this 10-year old contribution would really be necessary. After all, the only remedy nowadays is a deep sigh and the expression “God willing” – not totally forgotten by atheists – or, in Arabic, “*Insha’Allah*”. However, time is scarce, and in any case the market is saturated with important new publications in this area. So here goes with what occurs to me.

Marxism and Criticism of Religion

Islam is one of the three great monotheistic and related Abrahamic religions: Judaism, Christianity and Islam. It is valid to judge all the specific features of the origin and history of dogma of these religions by means of the historical-critical, indeed historical-materialist, approach fundamentally developed and fostered by Marx and other materialist critics, describing religion as “false consciousness”. The basic assessment of religion by Marxism-Leninism as the “opium” of the people, as a phenomenon of the superstructure and an instrument for the exercise of domination applies as much to Islam as to the two sister religions.



In my opinion it would be short-sighted to discuss Islam primarily or indeed exclusively in terms of the slogans ‘fighting fundamentalism’, on the one side, or ‘resisting Islamophobia’, on the other. For Marxist-Leninists it is in the first instance essential to appraise all religions, including the three Abrahamic faiths, at a critical distance. Only after that is it appropriate to deal with specific characteristics, aberrations and fundamentalist currents in one or another of the three religions.

I would therefore like to start by reminding readers of a few key ideas in the Marxist critique of religion in general.

First: in *Anti-Dühring*, Engels summarises the basic religion-critical attitude of Marxism as follows:

“All religion, however, is nothing but the fantastic reflection in menminds of those external forces which control their daily life, a reflection in which the terrestrial forces assume the form of supernatural forces. In the beginnings of history it was the forces of nature which were first so reflected, and which in the course of further evolution underwent the most manifold and most varied personifications among the various peoples. But it is not long before, side by side with the forces of nature, social forces begin to be active – forces which confront man as equally alien and at first equally inexplicable, dominating him with the same apparent natural necessity as the forces of nature themselves. The fantastic figures, which at first only reflected the mysterious forces of nature, at this point acquire social attributes, become representatives of the forces of history. At a still further stage of evolution, all the natural and social attributes of the numerous gods are transferred to one *almighty* god, who is but a reflection of the abstract man. Such was the origin of monotheism, which was historically the last product of the vulgarised philosophy of the later Greeks and found its incarnation in the exclusively national god of the Jews, Jehovah. In this convenient, handy and universally adaptable form, religion can continue to exist as the immediate, that is the sentimental, form of menrelation to the alien, natural and social, forces which dominate them, so long as men remain under the control of these forces.”²

Second: in one of his ‘late letters’ on historical material-

ism, Engels wrote to Conrad Schmidt:

“And now as concerns the more rarefied ideological fields such as religion, philosophy etc; these have a prehistorical fund of what today would be called rubbish which was taken over lock, stock and barrel by the historical period. In so far as these various false conceptions of nature, of the nature of man, of spirits, magic forces etc, are economically based, it is only in a negative sense; false conceptions of nature are the corollary of the low level of economic development of the pre-historical period, but also on occasion its precondition if not its actual cause.”³

That people, faced with natural phenomena which were incomprehensible on the basis of their complete lack of scientific knowledge, looked to the help of an explanatory model in which ‘supernatural’ powers were driving forces, is considered by many critics of religion as a central cause for the origin of religious ideas. This approach has a philosophical tradition dating back for centuries, as we find already in Greece of the 6th and 5th centuries BCE and Rome of the 1st century BCE. Democritus, the first materialist philosopher, expressed the opinion that religion was based on the fear of terrible natural occurrences. With Xenophanes of Colophon, a member of the Eleatic school, and with the Athenians Anaxagoras and Antiphonos, the idea is found that people create the gods according to their own conception. The Roman author and materialist Lucretius Carus (1st century BCE), and after him the Roman philosopher Papirius Statius, expressed similar ideas. Pliny the Elder (1st century BCE) stated the opinion that people had attributed human properties to the gods because they themselves were weak and ailing beings.

In his study, *Religion in the History of the Peoples*, published in 1968 in the Federal Republic of Germany, the Soviet religious scholar S A Tokarev quotes Xenophanes as follows:

“The Ethiopians maintain that their gods are snub-nosed and black, the Thracians on the other hand imagine their gods as blue-eyed and red-haired. ... If the bulls and other animals could depict their gods, the bulls would present theirs in the likeness of bulls, the horses on the other hand as horse-like.”⁴

The Marxist critique of religion is inconceivable without such philosophical fore-runners. However it developed the critique further and overcame the purely anthropomorphic starting-point. Robert Steigerwald describes the concern of the Marxist critique of religion and its connection to pre-Marxist criticism in the following words:

“Marx took over ... the thesis of the anthropomorphic character of religion, but combined this immediately ... with the question of what that would then be for people who produced religion for themselves, why they would have done it. And he answered: people produce religion because their social conditions are inhuman. Religion is the fantastic realisation of the human essence, because the real, worldly, realisation of this essence has not been achieved. This occurs because the social development does not yet allow the comprehensive knowledge and thereby mastery of the human conditions of life. These are still soulless conditions. Religion however is the soul of these soulless conditions.”

This characterisation of the *differentia specifica*⁶ of the

Marxist critique of religion, in distinction from the bourgeois non-materialistically based critique of religion, leads ultimately to a decisive consequence. It sees the actual relevance of the critique of religion not in the debate around this or that religious doctrine, but rather locates it in the political area. In this context, once again, Robert Steigerwald:

“The main task is not the struggle against religion, as the bourgeois rationalists asserted, rather the struggle against those relationships which lead towards the construction of the religion. The criticism of religion must lead the way to the criticism of society, to revolution.”⁵

In this connection the well-known thesis of religion as the “opium of the people” falls into place. The Marxist critique of religion is far too often reduced to this in a false way, but Marx had only taken up a formulation of a high Anglican bishop, who had spoken of religion as “opium for the people”. However, in contrast to the bourgeois critics of religion before him, Marx now posited the question of why the people needed this “opium”, and thereby formulated the relation between criticism of society and of religion. The corresponding passage reads in context as follows:

“The foundation of irreligious criticism is: *Man makes religion* But *man* is no abstract being encamped outside the world. *Man is the world of man* The struggle against religion is ... indirectly the struggle against the world of which religion is the spiritual *aroma*. *Religious* distress is at the same time the *expression* of real distress and also the protest against real distress. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of spiritless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people. ... The demand to give up illusions about the existing state of affairs is the *demand to give up a state of affairs which needs illusions*. The criticism of religion is therefore in *embryo* the *criticism of the vale of tears*, the halo of which is religion. ... The task of history, therefore, *once the world beyond the truth* has disappeared, is to establish the truth of this world. ... Thus, the criticism of heaven turns into the criticism of the earth”⁷

The fact that the religions as “inverted consciousness” should pass through a life of their own, including their own theoretical-historical development, is all of a part with the fundamental principles of Marxism-Leninism. However, religions are not all the same, and offer quite distinct starting points for criticism as well as for cooperation. They change in the course of history. The statements of the respective “holy scriptures” are subject to differing interpretations and to changes of significance. Theological schools develop, which particularly accentuate this or that side of the respective religion or are subject to the entire doctrine of a line of interpretation and can contend with each other most intensely – up to physical annihilation. In particular, the connection between the religions and the ruling classes changes over the course of history.

The form of religion or religiosity in the service of the respective ruling classes which becomes a favoured form of ideological influence on the oppressed and dominated classes, depends on many-sided factors which we shall not go into here.

Thus far, we have encountered a few remarks on the basic Marxist approach to religious questions. Now let us consider Islam ‘reflected’ in this Marxist mode of consideration.

Historical, economic and cultural conditions which led to the origin of Islam

Marx and Engels did not express their views on Islam at length, but they did express them unambiguously. They pursued studies on the “Asiatic mode of production”, studied Persian and Turkish history and appreciated the achievements of Arabic-Persian cultural and philosophical history. Engels admired and was enthusiastic about Persian, and in 1853 learned the language within a period of a few weeks, in order to read lyrics and prose in the original. Both he and Marx concerned themselves over and over again with the development of Asiatic peoples and states, especially with the Indian sub-continent, under the rule of British colonialism. Marx articles, *The Future Outcome of British Rule in India* and *The British Rule in India*, both from 1853, became particularly famous.

In the 1850s Marx wrote many commentaries and analyses for the *New York Herald-Tribune*, on the Russian-Turkish War and Britain policies with regard to China, Afghanistan and Burma (eg *Persian Expedition in Afghanistan and Russian Campaign in Middle Asia*). From that time he and Engels also concerned themselves with Islam. An important article on which they relied in the middle of the 1850s was that of the French writer François Berniers, who had lived at the court of the Indian rajah Aurangzeb. In this phase they also definitively took a position away from the Eurocentric image of history of Hegel, who pursued the “philosophy of history” and not the “description of history”, and who detected in world history the “salvation” of humanity from its Creation and the Fall of Adam and Eve up to the God-given redemption.

In Hegel interest in Asiatic history an idealised picture, influenced by Goethe *West-Eastern Divan*⁸, was dominant, incorporating a particularly ‘tolerant’ imprint of Persian Islam. Marx, as a student of Hegel, was also influenced by this historical consideration. In the 1850s, Marx – according to a 1983 study by the Martin Luther University in Halle – “did not put Hegelexpressions on the matter in doubt, but he interpreted them quite differently – economically and politically – and as a revolutionary took a position in favour of the oppressed, totally in opposition to Hegel”⁹

The change from “philosophy of history” to “description of history”, with regard to the Middle East, first occurred in Germany in 1852, with M Duncker *Geschichte des Altertums (History of Antiquity)*, and in England via G Rawlinson 1862 work, *The Five Great Monarchies of the Ancient Eastern World*. Here an objective limit to the knowledge about the history of Islam is evident, which for example led Marx to the erroneous supposition that the ‘key’ to understanding the history of the whole Middle East and its Arab peoples, was that there had been no private ownership of land. He reasoned that this, in combination with climate changes, had led to the decay of water conservation and hence of the settlements and cities on the Arabian peninsula.

There exists an exchange of letters between Marx and Engels from early summer 1853, in which they carefully consider, in the sense of a real historical description, the socio-economic and cultural conditions for the origin of Islam. From this it is evident that Engels was primarily engaging thoroughly with this theme at this time, using the specialist literature then available. He refers to reading a book by the English clergyman Charles Forster, *The Historical Geography of Arabia*, which he and then Marx also regarded as a really well-grounded work.

“Yesterday I read the book on Arabian inscriptions, which I

told you about. The thing is not uninteresting, repulsive though it is to find the parson and biblical apologist forever peeping through. ... The thing is called *The Historical Geography of Arabia*, by the Reverend Charles Forster. The best things to emerge from it are:

1 The supposed genealogy of Noah, Abraham etc, to be found in Genesis is a fairly accurate enumeration of the Beduin tribes of the time, according to the degree of their dialectical relationships etc. As we all know, Beduin tribes continue to this day to call themselves Beni Saled, Beni Yusuf etc, *ie* sons of so and so. This nomenclature, which owes its origins to the early patriarchal mode of existence, ultimately leads up to this type of genealogy. The enumeration in Genesis is *plus ou moins*¹⁰ confirmed by ancient geographers, while more recent travellers have shown that most of the old names still exist, though in dialectically altered form. But from this it emerges that the Jews themselves were no more than a small Beduin tribe like the others, which was brought into conflict with the Beduins by local conditions, agriculture etc.

2 As for the great Arab invasion, you will remember our discussion when we concluded that, like the Mongols, the Beduins carried out periodic invasions and that the Assyrian and Babylonian Empires were founded by Beduin tribes on the very same spot as, later, the Caliphate of Baghdad. The founders of the Babylonian Empire, the Chaldeans, still exist under the same name and in the same locality. ... In this way the Mohammedan invasion loses much of its distinctive character.

3 In the South-West, where the Arabs settled, they appear to have been a civilised people like the Egyptians, Assyrians etc, as is evident from their buildings. This also explains many things about the Mohammedan invasion. So far as the religious fraud is concerned, the ancient inscriptions in the South, in which the ancient Arab national tradition of monotheism (as with the American Indians) still predominates, a tradition of which Hebrew is only a small part, would seem to indicate that Mohammedreligious revolution, like every religious movement, was *formally a reaction*, a would-be return to what was old and simple."¹¹

Marx replied to that by return of post on 2 June 1853:

"As regards the Hebrews and the Arabs, I found your letter most interesting. It can, by the by, be shown that 1. in the case of all eastern tribes there has been, since the dawn of history, a general relationship between the SETTLEMENT of one section and the continued nomadism of the others. 2. In Mohammedtime the trade route from Europe to Asia underwent considerable modification, and the cities of Arabia, which had had a large share of the trade with India etc, suffered a commercial decline – a fact which at all events contributed to the process. 3. So far as religion is concerned, the question may be reduced to a general and hence easily answerable one: Why does the history of the East *appear* as a history of religions?

On the subject of the growth of eastern cities one could hardly find anything more brilliant, comprehensive or striking than *Voyages contenant la description des états du Grand Mogol*, etc by old François Bernier (for 9 years Aurangzebphysician) ...

Bernier rightly sees all the manifestations of the East – he mentions Turkey, Persia and Hindustan – as having a common basis, namely the absence of private landed property.

This is the real *clef*¹², even to the eastern heaven."¹³

Then again the response from Engels to Marx:

"I shall not be tackling the history of Mohammed himself for a few days yet; so far it seems to me to have the character of a Beduin reaction against the settled, albeit decadent urban fellaheen whose religion by then was also much debased, combining as it did a degenerate form of nature worship with a degenerate form of Judaism and Christianity."¹⁴

The Common Roots of the Torah, the Gospel and the Qur'an¹⁵

Several common practices of Jews and Muslims testify to ritual commonalities: eg the obligatory circumcision of young boys; the prohibitions against eating pork and drinking wine; and the ban on representing God, animals or people pictorially, in order to give no cause for idolatry. Moreover, while being monotheistic, Judaism, Christianity and Islam also share a large number of common prophets, from the common forefather Abraham up to the common (between Islam and Christianity) prophet Jesus.

The Old Testament and the Gospel are also recognised by Islam as scriptures inspired by God. In Arabia there exist to this day many settlements with Jewish and Christian communities, which influence each other in a many-sided way in their religious ideas. In her short presentation, *Der Islam: Eine Einführung (Islam: An Introduction)*, Annemarie Schimmel arrives at the conclusion that Arabia would probably have been Christian around the turn of the 6th/7th centuries CE, if Mohammed had not appeared.¹⁶

This expert opinion coincides with the old evaluation by Marx and Engels of the close connection between Islam and Judaism. In the above first-cited letter to Marx, Engels referred to this intimate relationship:

"It is now quite clear to me that the Jews' so-called Holy Writ is nothing more than the record of the ancient Arabian religious and tribal traditions, modified by the Jews' early separation from their tribally related but nomadic neighbours. The circumstance of Palestine being surrounded on the Arabian side by nothing but desert, ie the land of the Beduins, explains its separate development. But the ancient Arabian inscriptions and traditions and the Koran, as well as the ease with which all genealogies etc can now be unravelled, show that the main content was Arab, or rather, generally Semitic, as in our case the Edda¹⁷ and the German heroic saga."¹⁸

The often described and commended free and still tolerant social intercourse with heterodox believers or non-believers (here the Jews) followed quite obviously from the fact that the religious interpretations of Mohammed at this time, still stronger than in the later canonised form of the Qur'an, corresponded to an eclectic mixture of doctrines and legends, which all three Abrahamic religions (Judaism, Christianity, Islam) more or less share in common.

Aside from Marx and Engels, August Bebel also concerned himself at times very intensively with the origin story and the paramount role of Arabian culture in Europe in the Middle Ages. In his article, *The Mohammedan Arabic Cultural Period*, composed during his half-year-long period of incarceration in 1877-8 but relatively unknown up to the present-day, Bebel wrote:

“The Middle East is the birthplace of the religions which pre-eminently come into consideration for modern culture. Judaism, Christianity and Islam emerge one after the other from one womb, and all three stem from one and the same ethnic race, the Semitic. One of these religions was built up on the others, and developed according to the specific character and educational level of the peoples, through which it preferentially propagated its own particular nature. ... If we pursue the origin of the three religions further back then we find the Jewish religion, as the oldest of the three, in the religion of the ancient Egyptians, which Moses as one of the initiated had particularly got to know, and its source again in the Brahmanic religion of the ancient Indians. One line of development flows from the ancient Indian, as the oldest of all the religions based on monotheism, into Buddhism and the teaching of Zoroaster and Confucius, both of which religions still exist today in the greatest part of Asia and dominate nearly half of the human race. After the extinct ancient Egyptian religion, Judaism, Christianity and Islam make up the other line of development. The latter two have split again into various denominations and a mass of more or less subordinate sects.”¹⁹

Mohammed initial ambivalence towards Judaism

After his flight from Mecca to Medina in the year 622 CE, Mohammed found openly favourable conditions for his teaching. Tokarev sees causes for this in the fact that the Medina inhabitants were on very bad terms with the Mecca aristocracy and were readily prepared to take the field against them. Mohammed was supported by several of the tribes from that place, and he attempted to draw the Jewish communities to his side. In the year 632, after he had gained numerous followers, he was able to occupy Mecca.

Rudi Paret, whose translation of the Qur’an is still today regarded as the most scientifically based in Germany, however judges the relationship of Mohammed to Judaism – not only in Medina – far more critically than Tokarev. In his book, *Mohammed und der Koran (Mohammed and the Qur’an)*, there is the passage:

“The preponderant majority of the Jews turned down his message, even after a personal contact. Only a few individuals changed over to him, including Abdullah ibn Salam, who in later tradition is celebrated as a model convert.”²⁰

The Jewish community of Medina maintained the utmost reservation with regard to the Prophet.

Mohammed considered initially:

“that it would come to an understanding or at least to a compromise. The state of suspension lasted until the year 624. ... During this time the Prophet held fast to the thesis that Islam was basically in agreement with Judaism. ... The Prophet wanted to base himself in worship on Judaism, but not to merge with it. Conversely he could also not expect that the Jews on their side would simply cross over to Islam. Only, they should simply not dispute Mohammed, *ie* recognise him as the envoy of God to the Arabs, just as the same was prepared to see a true religion in Judaism. ... The invitation directed to the Jews, to recognise his preaching as a confirmation of their own divine revelation (Quran 2:40), was earnestly intended.”²¹

The Old Testament, the Jewish Torah and the Christian Gospel are recognised by Islam as divinely inspired scriptures. According to the Qur’an, Jews and Christians, as “keepers of the scripture”, stand on a step close to Islam and belong to the same category as Muslims – the “People of the Book”. However, at the same time they are condemned for having deviated from these scriptures and revelations. They have become unbelievers through ‘heresy’, and are regarded as apostates, who must be combated as such.

In this context, Surah (Chapter) 9 Ayah (Verse) 29 in the Qur’an says that war is to be waged against those who are “People of the Book”, if they “do not recognise the religion of Truth”.

And in Surah 9 vv 30-35 this is substantiated at length:

“30. The Jews say that Ezra²² is God[Allah’s] son. The Christians say that the Messiah is the son of God. These are merely verbal assertions in imitation of those unbelievers who preceded them. May God ruin them. How do they turn away from the Truth?

31. They take their rabbis and their monks for their lords apart from God, and also the Messiah, son of Mary, whereas they were commanded to worship none but the One True God. There is no god but He. Exalted be He above those whom they associate with Him in His Divinity.

32. They seek to extinguish the light of God by blowing through their mouths; but God refuses everything except that He will perfect His light howsoever the unbelievers might abhor it.

33. He it is who has sent His Messenger with the guidance and the True Religion that He may make it prevail over all religions, howsoever those who associate others with God in His Divinity might detest it.”²³

Persecution and militant altercation with the Jews

The first phase of a search for compromise with Judaism, which ran into the ground over recognition of the particular role of Mohammed as the greatest of all the prophets, ended soon and turned into a bloody suppression of the Jewish tribes living in the region. Rudi Paret writes:

“The altercation with the Jews had a bloody sequel. The three large Jewish tribes of Banu Quaynuqa, Banu Nadir and Banu Quraiza were one after the other thoroughly set upon, besieged and subdued in their settlement area in Medina, although they were formally connected with Mohammed and his followers. The Quaynuqa were permitted, after their subjugation and the surrender of their estates, at least to emigrate (624 CE), likewise the Nadir (625). However the tribe of the Quraiza found no clemency after their subjugation (627). To be sure, Mohammed did not hit upon the decision in his own person; he rather entrusted it – evidently on tactical grounds – to Sa’d Ibn Mu’adh, a man, highly respected on all sides, from the tribe of Aws, the former ally of the Quraiza.”

This companion of Mohammed was himself severely wounded in the fight against the Quraiza. As “judgement” all the men of the Jewish tribe were to be killed. Paret writes:

“In the course of the following days about 600 Quraizans were massacred. The women were shared among the Muslims.”²⁴

The affiliation of these Medina tribes to Judaism is gen-

erally blanked out in the relevant literature. The whole is presented as an inner-Arab struggle for power. Paret also does not present this incident with the intention of judgement, denunciation or partisanship against Mohammed. On the other hand he even signals a high measure of understanding for this massacre:

“Mohammed had to reckon with the possibility that the Jews would make common cause with his opponents, should the power relation ... shift to his disadvantage. After the acute danger had been overcome, secure relations for the future ought to be created precisely by the elimination of Jewish population groups.

Concerning the Banu Quraiza massacre, it should be considered that the practices in conducting war at that time were in many respects more brutal than we are accustomed to in the era of the Geneva Convention. Mohammed must however be measured with the yardstick of his time.”²⁵

This was not the only massacre. The fight against the Jews was pursued further in Mohammed's lifetime. Paret writes in this context:

“The Jewish question as such was thereby still not conclusive. Presumably a number of adherents of the Jewish faith community continued to live in a sort of diaspora among Arab tribes and among relatives in the city. Besides there were still closed Jewish settlements in a few oases located in the North. In Khaybar, the most important of these oases, the expelled community of Banu Nadir had at that time found shelter (625 CE). In the following period they had naturally intrigued against the Prophet and had participated directly in the coalition which in 627 had laid siege to Medina.

Soon after his return from Hudaibiyya²⁶, Mohammed set out on a military campaign against Khaybar. The various Jewish strongholds of the oasis were taken one by one; however – and this is important – their owners were allowed to remain in possession of them, together with their extensive estates, with the collective fine that in the future they would have to pay out half of their harvest yield to the Muslims. With similar conditions Mohammed accepted the subjugation of the Jewish settlements of Fadak, Wadi al-Qura and Taima.”²⁷

In his book, *Die Stimme Allahs: Religion und Kultur of Islam (Allah's Voice: Religion and Culture of Islam)*, Karl Prener, professor of the science of religion at the University of Graz, also expounds the view that Mohammed had hoped that the Jews of Medina would recognise him as an Arab prophet. As this did not happen,

“it came in the year 624 to the event called ‘the break with the Jews of Medina’, which has also found its outcome in the Qur’an in the light of a so-called ‘list of transgressions’ of the Jews (Surah 7 vv 159 ff). The consequence of this outcome was that the Prophet turned away from the established religions, first from the Jews, later also from the Christians, whilst the direction of prayer was changed from Jerusalem to the Kaaba in Mecca.”²⁸

I have explained above in detail, on the basis of Paret's description, why it did not come, after all, just to this symbolic ‘renunciation’ of both other Abrahamic religions. After Mohammed's return to Medina – at the head of a large military force

– the Christians and Jews there were also subjugated. Muslim troops advanced against the Jewish and Christian oasis settlements and subjugated them. Between 630 and 631 the majority of the heathen tribes of Arabia also yielded, by accepting Islam, so that in 631 the Prophet was able to pronounce polytheism as abolished.²⁹

The Qur’an and the relation to foreigners and ‘Unbelievers’

Tokarev writes about the general relation of Islam to ‘non-believers’ and ‘unbelievers’ respectively:

“This is stated here clearly in the Koran; eight months out of the year [four months are regarded as ‘forbidden’ –HPB] it is necessary to fight against people who believe in many gods, infidels, to destroy them and capture their property.” [Qur’an Surah 2, vv 186-90, 212; Surah 3, vv 5, 29, 36, 74, among others –HPB]. “This is a vivid manifestation of fanaticism and intolerance of other religions, and is typical of Islam more than any other world religion.”³⁰

Actually the Qur’an distinguishes between the followers of various non-Mohammedan religions. All forms of polytheism are sharply rejected. Thus, in Surah 9, v 123, it states:

“Fight the unbelievers who gird you about, and let them find firmness in you”.

Tokarev goes on to say:

“In practice Islam makes no real distinction between the followers of different religions. All of them are regarded as infidels, *Giaours*, and must either be destroyed or made to submit. Under the banner of *jihad*, Mohammedan preachers have, up to the present day, stirred up believers to a war of extermination against all unbelievers, for example also against the Russians and the Red Army.”³¹

This strict demarcation between the *umma*, the community of believers, and the rest of the world was also characterised in Marx's assessments. In an article for the *New York Daily Tribune* of 15 April 1854 he wrote:

“The Koran and the Mussulman legislation emanating from it reduce the geography and ethnography of the various people to the simple and convenient distinction of two nations and of two countries; those of the Faithful and of the Infidels. The Infidel is ‘*harby*’, ie the enemy. Islamism proscribes the nation of the Infidels, constituting a state of permanent hostility between the Mussulman and the unbeliever. ... How, then, is the existence of Christian subjects of the Porte³² to be reconciled with the Koran?”

‘If a town’, says the Mussulman legislation, ‘surrenders by capitulation, and its inhabitants consent to become *rayahs*, that is, subjects of a Mussulman prince without abandoning their creed, they have to pay the *kharratch* (capitation tax), when they obtain a truce with the faithful, and it is not permitted any more to confiscate their estates than to take away their houses In this case their old churches form part of their property, with permission to worship therein. But they are not allowed to erect new ones. They have only authority for repairing them, and to reconstruct their decayed portions. At certain epochs commissaries

delegated by the provincial governors are to visit the churches and sanctuaries of the Christians, in order to ascertain that no new buildings have been added under pretext of repairs. If a town is conquered by force, the inhabitants retain their churches, but only as places of abode or refuge, without permission to worship.³³

Constantinople having surrendered by capitulation, as in like manner has the greater portion of European Turkey, the Christians there enjoy the privilege of living as *rayahs*, under the Turkish Government. This privilege they have exclusively by virtue of their agreeing to accept the Mussulman protection. It is, therefore, owing to this circumstance alone, that the Christians submit to be governed by the Mussulmans according to Mussulman law, that the patriarch of Constantinople, their spiritual chief, is at the same time their political representative and their Chief Justice. ... The patriarch is responsible to the Porte as to the conduct of his co-religionists. Invested with the right of judging the rayahs of his Church, he delegates this right to the metropolitans and bishops, in the limits of their dioceses, their sentences being obligatory for the executive officers, *kadis*, etc, of the Porte to carry out."³⁴

This analysis by Marx of the attitude of the Qur'an towards the 'unbelievers' is clearly distinct from that of Bebel, in the article mentioned above. Bebel saw the position of the non-Muslims in the Islamic countries in a more positive light:

"Mohammed taught that it was essential to spread out the new faith with all means; the unbelievers should be combated or won to the new belief. Yet he made a distinction between the unbelievers. Insofar as it was a matter of Arabic tribesmen, these should, as soon as they were overcome and accepted the new faith, be recognised as having completely equal rights. However, if the unbelievers were of foreign origin then, if they yielded before they had been defeated and their country captured, they should be seen as denizens (clients). In this case they were to retain their land, but they were obliged to raise a determined poll- and land-tax, which flowed into the treasury of the Prophet and later into that of his successors, the Caliphs, and had to be distributed by these between the believers and tribesmen according to specific rules."³⁵

What then is true today of these two very diverging assertions? I refer to a standard textbook by Werner Ende and Udo Steinbach, *Der Islam in der Gegenwart (Islam in the Present Day)*, which has undergone various editions over the past 30 years. In the chapter, 'Islam and the Non-Islamic Minorities', Albrecht Noth, professor of history and culture of the Middle East, writes:

"The otherwise guaranteed free practice of religion is not supposed to be manifested demonstratively before the eyes of a Muslim general public. Activities or professions, in which Muslim competition seriously exists, are not supposed to be controlled by adherents of a minority. A directly typical reaction of the minorities to the latter is their avoidance of the professional 'free spaces' less frequented by Muslims: in recent times, eg, engineering (already traditional), medicine, jurisprudence (so far as it has to do with imported European legal forms) and (likewise already traditional) banking systems. ...

The capabilities of adherents of non-Muslim minorities in specific areas of 'governmental' administration and hence their absolute necessity in Islamic history are just as traditional as the distinctly strong opposition and propaganda against the employment of non-Muslims in administrative functions, since here would be seen the danger of a – not to be tolerated, indeed unthinkable – domination of Muslims by non-Muslims. For the same reasons, even if they are also expressed differently – with regard to the verbalism of equality – non-Muslims today have unequally vaster difficulties than Muslims to achieve and retain leading positions in the hierarchy of state officials.

The distrustful defensiveness of the Islamic majority against a decisive entrance of minorities into all levels of the inner structure of a Muslim state corresponds to the centuries-old fear, again today very lively, of Muslims that the minorities would tend to collaborate with foreign non-Muslim opponents of Islamic states. ... The non-Islamic minorities in general have to bear the burden of proof."³⁶

Short excursion: the Armenian question

Given the centenary of the massacre of the Armenian, Christian, population in Turkey in 1915, the question arises whether the trivialisation, concealment and denial of this genocide is not just the typical reaction of a bourgeois-capitalist state, which believes that thereby it can preserve its opportunities for entry into the imperialist EU; or whether it also reflects the basically defensive attitude of the Qur'an towards unbelievers, described up to now from Marx to Prof Noth.

The 10-volume Soviet *World History* characterised this episode as follows:

"The chauvinistic policy of extermination towards enslaved nationalities was pursued most ferociously by Turkey. In May 1915 the Turkish government issued a law on the evacuation of Armenians from the zone lying near the front line, whereby the Armenians were however also expelled from the whole of Anatolia. The evacuation was accompanied by mass pogroms and murders. The possessions and food supplies of the Armenians were taken, and as a consequence hundreds of thousands of people died from hunger and illnesses. Altogether more than a million Armenians perished. In this period half of the Armenians living in Turkey were exterminated."

Yet the Christian Armenians were not the only ones persecuted:

"At the same time the repressive measures against the Arab population were sharpened. In the years 1915/16 the Turkish authorities ferociously persecuted the participants in the national movement in Syria. Many representatives of the Arab national movement were thrown into prison or even put to death... Great Britain misused the Arab liberation movement for its own interests."³⁷

The Old Testament and the relations with 'unbelievers'

The defeat of the Jewish-Christian Arab tribes by Mohammed and his followers strongly recalls the phase of the war of conquest and annihilation by the Israelites on their return from Egypt, under the leadership of Moses and his successor Joshua. In the last two 'Books of Moses' – the Pentateuch – the Old Testament presents an almost unbelievable account of

death- and extermination-campaigns of the “chosen people of God” against the local Arab population. In the Book of Deuteronomy this genocide-like war policy is legitimised. It is given in brutal openness in Chapter 5, vv 1-5:³⁸

“When the Lord your God brings you into the land you are entering to possess and drives out before you many nations – the Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites, seven nations larger and stronger than you – and when the Lord your God has delivered them over to you and you have defeated them, then you must destroy them totally. Make no treaty with them, and show them no mercy. Do not intermarry with them. ... This is what you are to do to them: break down their altars, smash their sacred stones, cut down their Asherah poles³⁹ and burn their idols in the fire.”

Yet it was not only a matter of the destruction of non-Jewish symbols and furnishings:

“But the Lord your God will deliver [these nations] over to you, throwing them into great confusion until they are destroyed. He will give their kings into your hand, and you will wipe out their names from under heaven. No one will be able to stand up against you; you will destroy them.” (Deuteronomy Ch 7, vv 23-24)

It was thus a matter of the systematic extermination of people. The description of the conquest of Jericho and the annihilation of its inhabitants or also of the city of Ai in the Book of Joshua ends concisely as follows:

“They devoted the city to the Lord and destroyed with the sword every living thing in it – men and women, young and old, cattle, sheep and donkeys.” (Joshua Ch 6, v 21)

“When Israel had finished killing all the men of Ai in the fields and in the wilderness where they had chased them, and when every one of them had been put to the sword, all the Israelites returned to Ai and killed those who were in it. Twelve thousand men and women fell that day – all the people of Ai.” (Joshua Ch 8, v 24)

The destruction of the five Canaanite kings and the conquest of the six Canaanite cities was a brutal massacre on a large scale. After the slaying of the five kings, the slaughter went on, according to Joshua, Ch 10, v 28 ff:

“That day Joshua took Makkedah. He put the city and its king to the sword and totally destroyed everyone in it. He left no survivors.”

And in this way Joshua also destroyed the other cities – everything and everyone “put to the sword”. “He totally destroyed all who breathed”

The Book of Numbers reports a ‘retaliation campaign’, ordered by Yahwe, between Moses and the Midianites, in which not only the usual slaughter of the defeated ensued:

“They fought against Midian, as the Lord commanded Moses, and killed every man. Among their victims were Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reba – the five kings of Midian. They also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword.” (Numbers, Ch 31, vv 7-8)

So far, so bad and so usual. But then something unheard-of occurred:

“The Israelites captured the Midianite women and children and took all the Midianite herds, flocks and goods as plunder. ... They took all the plunder and spoils, including the people and animals, and brought the captives, spoils and plunder to Moses” (Numbers, Ch 31, vv 9-11)

However, Moses in no way thanked them for the rich booty:

“Moses was angry with the officers of the army – the commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds – who returned from the battle.

‘Have you allowed all the women to live?’ he asked them. ‘They were the ones who followed Balaam’s advice and enticed the Israelites to be unfaithful to the Lord in the Peor incident, so that a plague struck the Lord’s people. Now kill all the boys. And kill every woman who has slept with a man, but save for yourselves every girl who has never slept with a man. ... So Moses and Eleazar the priest did as the Lord commanded Moses.’ (Numbers, Ch 31, vv 14-18, 31)

And the plunder was simply gigantic:

“675,000 sheep, 72,000 cattle, 61,000 donkeys and 32,000 women who had never slept with a man.” (Numbers, Ch 31, vv 32-35)

Jihad – not an invention of Mohammed

Hence does Islam, with the aggressive attitude of its fundamental “holy scripture”, with the Qur’an, stand differently in comparison with the other two Abrahamic religions? Are the ‘holy scriptures of Judaism and Christianity’ less intolerant regarding nonbelievers and ‘unbelievers’?

No! The “chosen people” of the Old Testament followed a picture of God, which in its aggressivity and intolerance towards ‘unbelievers’ was scarcely less aggressive than the “Allah” of the Qur’an. And also the Christian ‘Trinitarian’ God is not less intolerant, and this second oldest of the three Abrahamic religions is scarcely less strict than its two sister religions in its claim to absoluteness:

- “I did not come to bring peace, but a sword.”
- “Who is not for me is against me.”
- “I have not come to abolish the Law or the Prophets but to fulfill them ... not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished.”

Admittedly, these clear sentences of Jesus, directed against the unbelievers, are thinner on the ground than the corresponding statements of the Qur’an. However, in the practice of the violent enforcement of Christianity we find scarcely any distinctions from the violent propagation of Judaism or Islam. The intolerance of Christianity towards so-called heathens or ‘true faith’ dissenters is considered as no less brutal historically than that of its two sister religions.

The conversion of Germany by the ‘apostle of the Germans’, St Boniface, began with the murder of 5000 Saxons. The conversion of the Viking-inhabited Scandinavian countries was a history of extermination. The barbarous crusades to free the ‘Holy Land’ were a bloodbath without end on the

Arab-Turkish population. The conversion of Central and South America by the representatives of the 'Holy Inquisition' (whose successor organisation provided Pope Benedict XVI in 2005), was a chain of genocide on the native American people. And the anti-Judaism of the Catholic church, from ancient times up to the middle of the 20th century, the anti-Jewish programs in the Middle Ages in all the European states dominated by the Catholic or the Orthodox church – these also were roots and predecessors of the 'Holocaust' under German fascism.

Karl-Heinz Deschner wrote in his book, *Abermals krähte der Hahn (Again the Cock Crows)*:

"The church was only tolerant as long as it constituted a minority and an overwhelming majority stood opposed to it. However, as soon as the state granted a privileged position to Christianity, the demand for tolerance and religious freedom was gone."⁴⁰

As Deschner says, the cross was actually raised "over ruins and dead bodies":

"As long as the church was powerless, its leaders asserted over and again that the deprivation of religious freedom ran into godlessness; only the Lord must rule with a rod of iron, and no Christ must lay claim 'to cleanse and purify the threshing floor and carry off the chaff himself'; no Christ could 'kill foes and sentence transgressors of the law to death by burning or to stoning' – according to the Church Father Chrysostomos (Matthew Commentary, 46th homily)"⁴¹

But in the 4th century CE the tide turned. The first Christian Roman emperor, Constantine, began a merciless fight against 'heretics' with the blessing of the Roman church. The centuries-long chain of exclusion and physical destruction of millions of dissenters (eg 'heretics' like the Huguenots and Cathars in France) by the Inquisition was explained by the great theologian of the Middle Ages, Thomas Aquinas, as nothing short of a 'godly duty'.

"What concerns the heretics, they are guilty of one sin that justifies to remove them not only from the church by means of the church-ban, but also to remove them by capital punishment from this world. It, however, is a much more serious crime to falsify the belief that is the life of the soul, than to forge money that serves the earthly life. If, however, forgers and other wrongdoers are fairly and lawfully transported from life to death by worldly rulers, with how much greater right can heretics immediately after their condemnation of heresy not only be discharged from the church-community but righteously executed."⁴²

All of this is not simply long-past 'deepest Middle Ages'. Naturally, the current-day top of the Vatican has also adapted itself to dealing with 'nonbelievers or unbelievers'. It is only 63 years ago that the then most powerful cardinal in the Curia, Alfredo Ottaviani, said, with a view to the protestant minorities in Italy and Spain, "In the eyes of a true Catholic, so-called tolerance is not in place."⁴³

And I recall the assessments of the 'historic' and before long 'most holy' Pope John Paul II, in his speech in front of the Brandenburg Gate on 23 June 1996, in which he celebrated the victory of the counter-revolution in the socialist countries with the following words:

"The Brandenburg Gate was occupied by two German dictatorships. ... It is exactly in this place in Berlin that the cruel mask of communism, for which human longings for freedom and peace are suspect, was revealed for the whole world to see. Above all it feared the freedom of the spirit."⁴⁴

There, and also in dealing with Marxist and materialist ways of thinking, the thousand year-old spirit of intolerance of the Catholic church, concerning 'nonbelievers', is reflected. In the Catholic church treatment of Marxist-inspired theologians of Latin America, who saw in the Marxist critique of capitalism a recognisable means of explaining the social impoverishment of the masses, we saw in the 1990s the latest action of the spirit of the Inquisition and of the struggle against 'heresy'.

And we may compare in that context the statement of the not-yet Pope, Josef Ratzinger, who in his homily at the inauguration of the Conclave warned precisely in this sense about "fundamentalist relativism".

If the Catholic church today were to possess the political power in Europe which it had a few hundred years ago, then there would be no theological and rhetorical chastisement of Marxists.

Nietzsche was correct – and here Deschner also agrees with him:

"Not their love of humanity, but the impotence of their love, prevents the Christians of today from burning us."⁴⁴

Summary

From the Marxist critique of religion, from its rejection of a religious superstition garnished with theological subtleties, historical legends and irrationalisms, which derives the right to oppression, exclusion and physical elimination of 'unbelievers and heretics' from the supposed 'message' of its respective 'sole God' – from this critique of any religion the rejection of any form of religious fundamentalism is ultimately derived.

For that reason it is ultimately not decisive whether we are dealing with Christian, Jewish or Islamic fundamentalism.

In all of the three related religions treated here we find as dogma the proclamation of the 'uniqueness' of the respective God. Accordingly, the rejection and exclusion of non-believers or believers in other faiths thereby results. Whether this is converted into violent terrorist actions is simply a question of political and military power and opportunity.

All three Abrahamic religions carry within themselves the easily aroused potential of terrorism against 'the others'.

It depends upon the strength of non-religious powers in society, on the strength of the ideas of the Enlightenment, of scientific socialism and materialism, and of the practical engagement for a secular state in a society, in which real freedom of thought operates, whether the fundamentalist tendencies in such religions develop to become the dominant streams.

*The German original of this article was published on the DKP web site, <http://news.dkp.suhail.uberspace.de/2015/02/der-islam-im-spiegel-der-marxistischen-religionskritik/>, on 15 February 2015. In turn that was a revised version of a lecture given at the Islam Conference of the Marx-Engels-Stiftung (24/25.04.2005), and published in *Marxistische Blätter*, 4-05, under the title 'Accurate Image of Islam'. Translation is by Martin Levy.*

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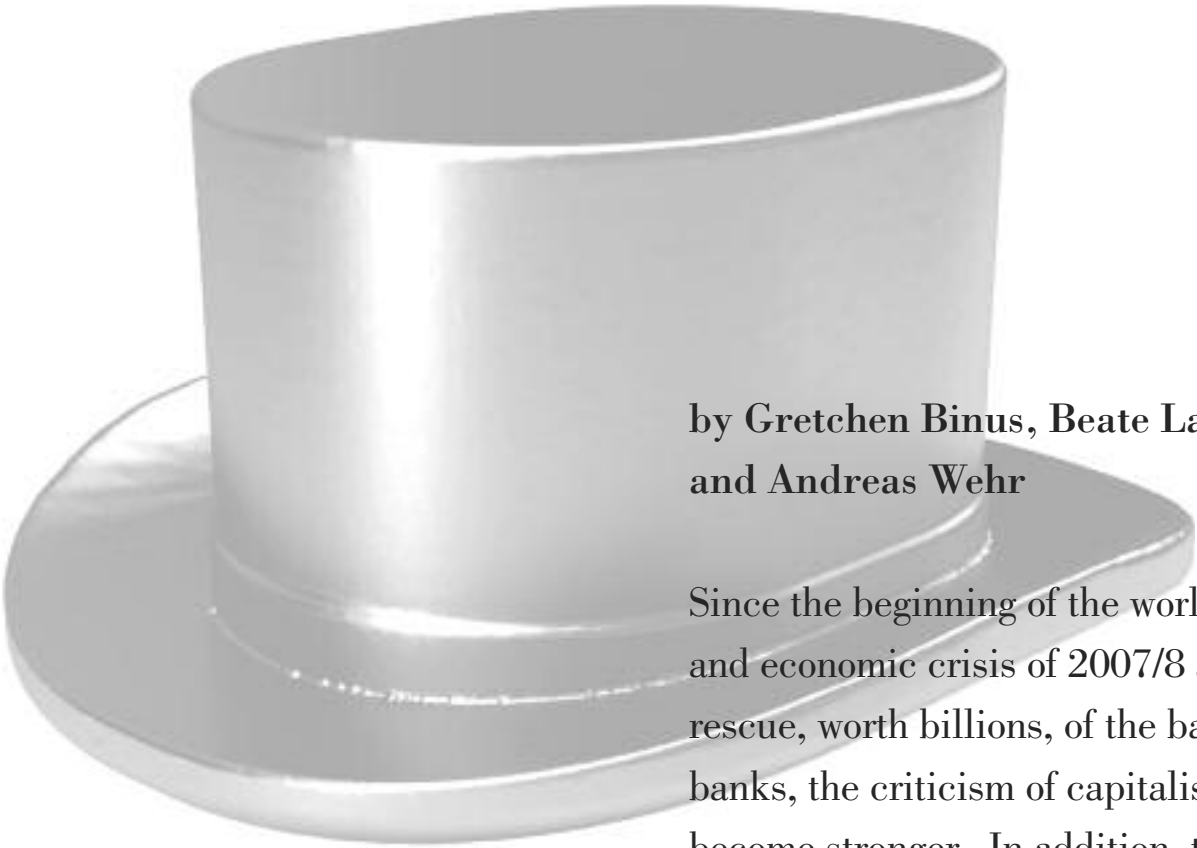
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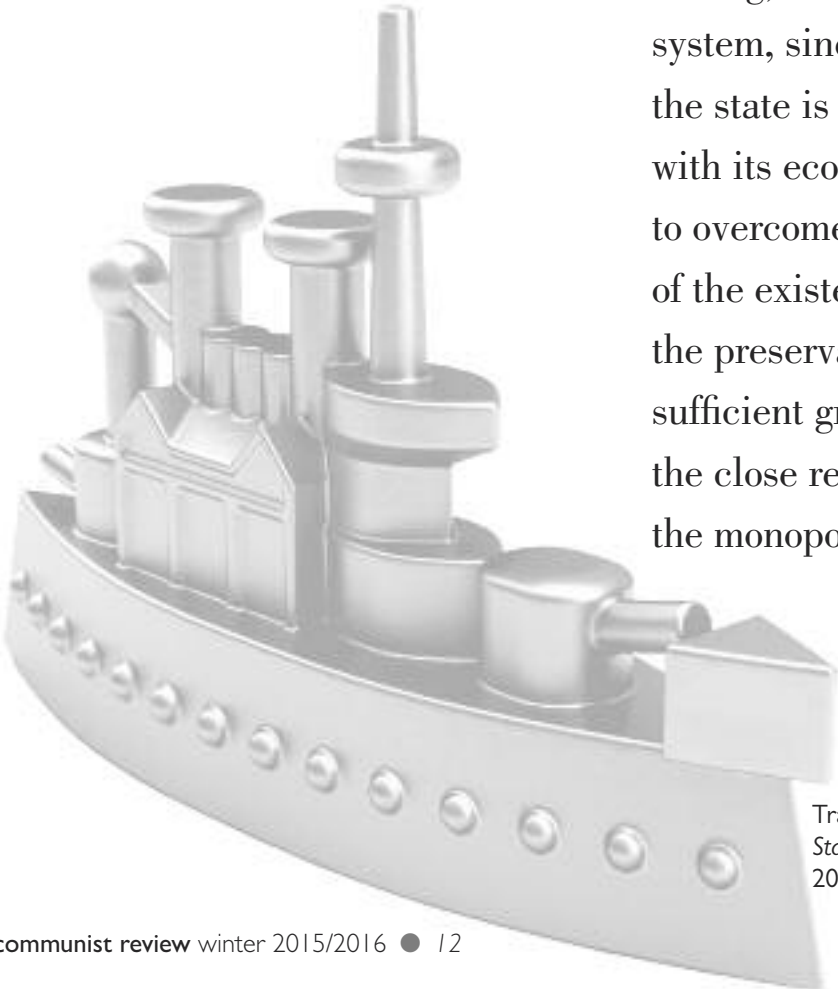
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State monopoly capitalism

Chapter I The origin of state monopoly capitalism



by Gretchen Binus, Beate Landsfeld
and Andreas Wehr



Since the beginning of the world-wide financial and economic crisis of 2007/8 and the state-rescue, worth billions, of the bankrupt major banks, the criticism of capitalism has again become stronger. In addition, the concept of state monopoly capitalism (SMC) is again arising, to characterise the current social system, since in all leading capitalist countries the state is intervening directly in the economy with its economic and political power, in order to overcome the crisis. Ultimately it is a matter of the existence of this system, but primarily of the preservation of monopoly power. These are sufficient grounds again to pay more attention to the close relationships between the state and the monopolies from a Marxist perspective.

Translated by Martin Levy with permission from *Staatsmonopolistischer Kapitalismus*, PapyRossa Verlag, Köln, 2015. Chapter 2 will appear in CR79.

1.1 Monopoly capitalism, imperialism and the general crisis of capitalism

In the Marxist Left the theory of state monopoly capitalism was for decades a strong scientific component of the argument with capitalism. Its theoretical structure, with the contradictory interrelationship of *state and monopolies* as central point, and with its impact on the whole of society, originated with the changes in the capitalist relations of production in the last quarter of the 19th century, with the transition to monopoly capitalism. It is the historical stage which replaced the capitalism of free competition. This period was marked by the founding of large corporations in industry, trade and finance in the wake of the concentration and centralisation of production and capital. As a reaction to the rapid development of productivity through the use of scientific and technical advances, the capital structures in the leading states of the time changed. With the development of joint-stock companies, trusts and cartels, as well as with the increasing role of credit, capital accumulation gained new possibilities for development, which had a serious effect on the total economic and political make-up of society. The transition to monopoly capitalism may be considered as a significant break in the development of capitalism. The development of monopoly power in Germany has been represented up to the present day by company names such as Bayer, BASF, Siemens, AEG, Krupp, Thyssen, Deutsche Bank, Commerzbank, Daimler, Allianz etc.

From the beginning this radical change occurred with the use of state powers or, as Georg Fülberth¹ writes, via “self-organisation of capital” and “support by the state for this self-organisation”. The involvement of the state became a factor in connection with the establishment of powerful monopolies. At the same time these corporations built interest groups – such as, in Germany, the *Centralverband Deutscher Industrieller* (Central Group of German Industries), founded in 1876, or the *Bund der Industriellen* (League of Industries), born in 1895. They were anxious to influence the state towards the enforcement of their demands. The German Patent Law of 1877 bears witness to this.²

Marxist theoreticians analysed this development as a consequence of the internal contradictions of capital utilisation, which forced capitalism to adjust ever more strongly to the growing social character of productive forces with forms of “social capital”, *without overcoming the existing social order*. Marx had pointed out that, in connection with the establishment of joint-stock companies, the capitalist mode of production would itself be cancelled inside the mode of production itself, that this contradiction produces monopoly in certain spheres and therefore provokes “state interference”.³

In 1890 Frederick Engels examined the interaction between the state and economic development, and observed “*Might (ie state power) is also an economic force!*”⁴

Two decades later Rudolf Hilferding characterised the relationship of monopoly and the state in connection with the further development of finance capital:

“Finance capital signifies the unification of capital. The earlier separated spheres of industrial, commercial and bank capital are now under the joint management of high finance, to which the masters of industry and of the banks are joined in intimate personal union. This unification itself has as basis the abolition of free competition of individual capitalists by the big monopolistic corporations. Through that the relationship of the capitalist class to the state power naturally also changes.”⁵

Vladimir Ilyich Lenin supported himself on these findings. He described economic monopoly as the core of the whole matter and at the same time identified the transition of monopoly into state monopoly capitalism as

“combining the colossal power of capitalism with the colossal power of the state into a single mechanism and bringing tens of millions of people within the single organisation of state capitalism.”⁶

In this period, and afterwards, other Marxist theoreticians also devoted themselves to investigating the network of connections between the economy and politics. Karl Kautsky, Nikolai Bukharin, Rosa Luxemburg and – after the First World War – Antonio Gramsci and Eugen S Varga all entered into theoretical studies on the role of the state in the self-developing capitalist social system.

The fact that, in the network of connections between the economy and politics, the specific relation of monopolies and the state becomes the decisive nodal point in the development of capitalism, is closely connected with the three historical strands of development of this system since the beginning of the 20th century: monopoly capitalism, imperialism and the general crisis of capitalism.

Despite the sophistication of their terminology, their status in capitalist development and the political assessment of them, the combination of these three processes is characterised by the narrowing of relationships between the state and monopoly – to the crucial feature of state-monopoly capitalism. Each of these phenomena, with the typical characteristics of capital utilisation problems, new competition relations, imperialist rivalries or crisis-ridden processes, places increased requirements for stronger integration of the state into the profit mechanism of capitalism.

A general starting point for state monopolistic development remains *monopoly capitalism*, with which stage of development the foundations for the close connections of monopolies and the state were laid: on the basis of their economic power, big companies dominate the economic connections, the national and international economic relations, and act decisively on politics. Without analysing their strategies we cannot grasp all other social processes up to the current day; with their expansion into new markets and areas, it is a matter of economic and political *conditions* through which capitalism on the one side opens up new possibilities for development, as well as for progress of civilisation, while on the other side creating social conflicts and crises. And, with this development, the increasing tendency towards parasitism and decay in capitalism is unavoidable. Lenin complained that “most of the discussions on this aspect usually attach insufficient importance”.⁷ Today, with the accumulation of money capital in the hands of the few, there is quite another dimension of corruption and bribery than in Lenin time, and the growing war economy and escalating arms trade make a “parasitism squared”⁸ increasingly evident.

Imperialism brings a further approach to the shaping of state monopoly capitalism. Increasingly it is denoted as a new stage, era or phase, as a particularly monopoly-capitalist stage of capitalism. At the end of the 19th century, and the beginning of the 20th, a great number of theoretical discussions, particularly in German social-democracy, were concerned with the concept of ‘imperialism’, since at that time the political strivings of the rival capitalist big powers, such as England, France and Germany, for spatial-territorial widening of their



spheres of control, stood at the centre of disputes. With an eye on protection of the colonies and on new colonial conquests, the ruling elites posed the issue of a strong state with its monopoly of power – as a prerequisite to the realisation and maintenance of imperial power.

In their analysis, the Marxist theoreticians of this time referred particularly to the internal connection of economics and politics. Rudolf Hilferding, Rosa Luxemburg, Karl Kautsky and Nikolai Bukharin saw the basis for imperialism in the monopolistic power structure and economic strength, and particularly emphasised the role of politics and therefore also of the state in what was for them the most recent development of capitalism. They characterised imperialism as a political consequence and concomitant of capitalism. Hilferding wrote in 1910:

“Economic power signifies equally the disposal of the means of power by the state authority. The stronger the concentration in the economic sphere, the more unlimited is the control by the state.”⁹

According to Rosa Luxemburg,

“Imperialism [is] ... the political expression of the process of capital accumulation in its competitive struggle for the rest of the not yet sequestered non-capitalist world milieu.”¹⁰

And in 1915 Nikolai Bukharin underscored the necessity of investigating the structure of modern capitalism, to which the “policy of expansion”¹¹ referred:

“We have defined imperialism as the politics of finance capital. Therewith we uncovered the functional significance of that policy. It upholds the structure of finance capital; it subjugates the world to the domination of finance capital”¹².

In the theoretical debates on imperialism before the First World War, there were, as a result of the rivalries of the great powers and the growing danger of war, particular references to the causes lying in the economic foundations. In his 1916 pamphlet, *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism*, Lenin referred to Hilferding analyses and wrote in the preface:

“I trust that this pamphlet will help the reader to understand the fundamental economic question, that of the economic essence of imperialism, for unless this is studied, it will be impossible to understand and appraise modern war and modern politics.”¹³

Lenin summarised the most important characteristics of imperialism in the following short definition:

“Imperialism is that stage of development at which the dominance of monopolies and finance capital is established; in which the export of capital has acquired pronounced importance; in which the division of the world among the international trusts has begun, in which the division of all territories of the globe among the biggest capitalist powers has been completed.”¹⁴

Lenin also derived changes in politics from the objective economic conditions of this development. He described the political superstructure of the new economics as a “change from democracy to political reaction”.¹⁵ According to his view,

it is therefore insufficient to fight against the politics of the monopolies,

“because a ‘fight’ against the policy of the trusts and banks that does not affect the economic basis of the trusts and banks is mere bourgeois reformism and pacifism, the benevolent and innocent expression of pious wishes.”¹⁶

Lenin used the concept of *imperialism* synonymously for monopoly capitalism, *ie* for the economic basis as well as for the politics in the new stage of capitalism. Nikolai Bukharin however defined it as “the policy of finance capitalism, *ie* a highly developed capitalism implying a considerable ripeness in the organisation of production”,¹⁷ and equally as “a form of the competitive struggle ... in the epoch of finance capitalism” with utilisation of state power as the method of struggle.¹⁸ The essential Marxist discovery is thereby won, that the power politics for securing and widening the domination of the capitalist great powers is on the basis of monopoly power with its disposal over mighty economic potentials and of its drive towards outward expansion of imperialism. And so it has remained up to the present day with its new wars, in its present manifestation as the ‘new imperialism’.

The general crisis of capitalism is a third strand of the theoretical derivation of SMC. Many Marxists of the past century saw it as a historical crisis of capitalism in its totality, as a long-lasting crisis of the social system. Its beginning was accounted for by the formation of monopoly capitalism as a ‘process of decline’ of capitalist social formations; its emergence was associated with the consequences of uneven economic and political development – since these were expressed in the sharpening of contradictions, of the increase in crisis-ridden developments and of the class struggle, and thereby generally in the decay of capitalism as a system. SMC, with its function of securing capital accumulation, hence serves to adapt imperialism to the changed overall situation.

The general crisis in capitalist development openly emerged for the first time with the utmost sharpening of imperialist opposition in the First World War, with the revolutionary struggles of the working class and principally with the Russian Revolution of 1917, as well as the construction of the first socialist state. From there on, particularly however after the Second World War with the establishment of the socialist world-system and with the break-up of the colonial system, the general crisis was derived over a few decades in the Marxist theoretical construction, not only from the internal contradictions of capitalism but principally from the interplay of the struggle of both world-systems.

The Hungarian Marxist economist Eugen Varga, who was active in the Soviet Union from 1920, is considered to be the originator of the theory of general crisis. He studied the ways in which this crisis was distinguished from the regular capitalist crises, whether it is a temporary phenomenon or a step towards complete destruction of the capitalist social order, what differences there are from cyclical or usual crises of overproduction and what the long-term changes are in the overall condition of world capitalism.

In his article, *The Decline Period of Capitalism*,¹⁹ from the year 1922, Varga sketches the main features and essence of the decline. He sees it in the decay of the world economy, in consequence of the anarchical development of the capitalist mode of production; and designates the characteristics of a long continuous crisis as the chronic excess of fixed capital, the emergence of chronic unemployment, the replacement of accumulation by progressive depletion, the break-up of the

credit system and the deformation of the cycle of crises. With the analysis of restabilisation of capitalism in the 1920s and with the world economic crisis of 1929-33, Varga integrated the international conditions, the changed world situation, into the determination of the essence of the general crisis. According to his definition the general crisis is “that period in imperialism in which the dying capitalism has changed into an already partly dead capitalism”. He pointed out that the decline process of capitalism has “as consequence a continuous political crisis” – with a splintering of parliamentary parties, their incapability for independent politics. “Only the necessity of keeping the revolutionary proletariat down, unites for a time the squabbling layers and parties.”²⁰

Vargastatements on the general crisis – he also influenced its concept – found their way into further Marxist elaborations. In a monograph from the Institute for International Politics and Economy (IPW) in Berlin,²¹ the general crisis is described as a *particular historical period in the process of decline of capitalism*, in which the conditions for the historical replacement of capitalism emerge. It is therefore not a new stage, but rather a *system crisis* of capitalism, which embraces all sides of social life, the economy, politics, ideology and culture. Hence it can also not be overcome through the powers of the ruling system, rather only through a fundamental socio-economic transformation towards establishment of socialist relations of production. The first decisive condition for that is a revolutionary transition and a corresponding strength of the subjective factor. As long as these are not present, capitalism will continue to exist. It will find possibilities to adapt itself to the changing conditions with new movement patterns of monopoly capital. Included there are the further deepening of economic and political contradictions, new social conflicts and the increasing fragility and degeneracy of capitalism. As a second particular condition for the historical removal of capitalism, the close interplay of internal and external contradictions is highlighted. Above all, a premier status is assigned to the revolutionary world-process, especially to the development of socialism, since this acts both as a factor towards strengthening the fighting position of the working class in the capitalist countries and also as the driving force for crisis and disintegration of the imperialist colonial system.

In one of his last articles, after the Second World War, Varga had already made a characterisation of three stages of the general crisis, based on its main driving forces.²² This determination of stages, which was of significance in Marxist researches into capitalism up to the 1980s, can only be indicated briefly here:²³

- The first stage began with the First World War and the October Revolution and ended with the Second World War. Capitalism lost one sixth of the Earth as sphere of influence, the crisis of the imperialist colonial system was initiated, and the economic contradictions became sharper. At the beginning of the first stage the *system of state monopoly war capitalism* was at the same time formed.
- The second stage, from the end of the Second World War up to the middle of the 1950s, was characterised by the break-out of more countries from the capitalist world-system and the open decay of the colonial system. In the West people spoke of a “Golden Age” since “recovering from the war was the overwhelming priority for the European countries and Japan”.²⁴ In this period the state instruments for regulation of the economy were expanded. International organisations against turbulence in world economic relations were formed.

- The beginning of the third stage was said to start at the end of the 1950s – *ie* without a preceding world war, and although a highly developed domination of capital could aspire to economic and political stabilisation through extensive state intervention. However, from the beginning of the 1970s there was talk of a ‘particular qualitative sharpening’ of the crisis.

- Decisive for the new phase was the long-lasting crisis of over-accumulation, setting in from the beginning of the 1970s, with its social consequences for increasing political instability, for growing cultural and moral signs of deterioration and sharpened international conflicts. New state activities were now pushing forward as an indispensable necessity for the functioning of capitalism, particularly for the changed competition conditions due to monopoly capital, with the rapid scientific-technical progress and the problems of energy, raw materials and the environment. State intervention was therefore accelerated in all developed capitalist countries. Generally it was considered in this period that the transition to the state monopoly system was complete.

At the end of the 1980s Marxist research into the phenomenon of the general crisis was aborted. The world situation had gravely changed with the collapse of the socialist system in Europe. At the same time the pronounced euphoric orientation of this theory towards socialism as a primary driving force of the general crisis, often connected with prophesies of an approaching break-up of capitalism, was dropped. This situation called for a political-theoretical reorientation, particularly as other processes for the crisis-ridden development of capitalism are increasing in importance and new fields of conflict are arising within the system. Thus today the competition between the capitalist monopolies and the industrialised countries is strengthening to the utmost; the inner contradictions in the capitalist world are growing, despite the loss of the influence of real socialism on the conditions of struggle for the working class; and the nationally liberated developing countries have been confronted with the fight by the major powers for the redistribution of the world via the most diverse conflicts and wars.

Today, in view of both the frightening crisis-ridden condition of the world, and the visible cultural and moral decay of society, statements are made such as ‘a new major crisis’, ‘system crisis’, ‘existential crisis’, ‘organic crisis’, “major crisis of global finance market capitalism since 2008”²⁵ and indeed “the beginning of the final crisis of the capitalist system”²⁶. Up to now there has not been a theoretical concept to clarify this ‘crisis’ reality. Yet it is not *per se* a matter of a recourse to earlier theories, but rather of a scientific analysis of the reality as the basis for an anti-capitalist strategy.

1.2. Monopoly and state monopoly

The Marxist understanding of the nature of monopoly as a relation of power and domination remains of major significance for the understanding of the further development of capitalism. It is a matter here of the concept of a ‘modern’ or capitalist monopoly, which has developed in contrast to the monopolies of all other epochs “to being *the governing phenomenon of the capitalist social order* at a high level of its development”;²⁷ and thereby it is at the same time a matter of the perspective on changes in the capital relation, which in the present-day is simply characterised as *finance capitalist*.

Three essential aspects are hence to be designated:

1. The economic *monopoly* is a *historical category* in con-

sequence of capital accumulation, concentration and centralisation of production and capital. It is a further developed capitalist relation and not just a 'market form', even if it is displayed as an organisation of capital in diverse, 'oligopolistic' forms. Such organised big businesses as corporations, cartels, banks, insurance companies, investment funds and hedge funds are well-known. In their action on the market it is a matter of development of the competitive struggle by a new order of magnitude; but principally it is a matter of how the appropriation of profit may be maximised with the help of economic and non-economic power.

Grasping economic monopoly in its developing form is always a prerequisite for determining more precisely the *socio-economic basic structure of capitalism*. This makes it possible to analyse the way in which the power of big capital impacts on the total situation of society, on the development of productive forces, on the social position of working people, on political configurations and class relations as well as on international relationships. In the framework of the changing forms of organisation of monopoly capital, there develops the oppressive power of finance capital, the extension of its mechanism of control and the shaping of its dictatorship towards the enforcement of the stateimperial goals.

2. *Economic monopoly embodies property development in capitalism and that in close symbiosis with the necessary processes of appropriation for the further accumulation of capital.* In Volume 3 of *Capital*, Marx spoke of expropriation "as appropriation of social property by a few".²⁸ Only the power of disposing over increasing, powerful social capitals allows the monopolies a further development of productive forces, the mastery of material and knowledge resources, the disposal over the organisation of production and the appropriation of its outcomes, and thereby the realisation of profits. This Marxist concept of monopoly thereby contains at the same time the expropriation process of all other property-owners, necessary for further accumulation, a more and more centralised disposal over capitalist property.²⁹ *Without new forms of such capitalist expropriation processes capitalism cannot maintain itself and develop further.*

Accumulation and expropriation are hence continuously two sides of one and the same process in the development of overripe capitalism. Since its origin, economic monopoly has constantly been constituted from this symbiosis. Thus the monopolistic centralisation of ownership in joint-stock companies accomplishes ever new measures, and the power over the *socialised capital* on the part of a small number of large owners is secured by various forms of capital disposal among hundreds of thousands of small shareholders. At the same time all other property owners are cut out of the monopoly property sphere in their entitlements to income or property. That affects the income of the working class, and of the strata removed from the working class, such as small and medium-sized businesses. It is precisely in the last decade that this process has reached such a force, that the Marxist scholar David Harvey characterises the 'new' imperialism as *accumulation through dispossession*.³⁰

3. *Monopoly is the initiator of polarising competition.* It essentially constitutes the relations of competition. On the one side, on the basis of its power, it indeed breaks through the competition mechanism of capitals; on the other side, however, it under no circumstances negates competition as the "inner nature of capital"³¹, since capital can only exist as a large number of capitals in interaction upon one another. With the monopoly further development of capital relations a synthe-

sis of monopoly and competition arises, which leads to an extraordinary sharpening of competition. Jörg Huffs Schmid wrote:

"Monopolies are not established in competition; however, as a manifestation of concentrated and centralised capital, they are, like all other capitals, the outcome of competition, an element and instrument of competition."³²

This competition occurs between the big corporations on the national and international scale for the mastery of science and technology, and for resources of finance and raw materials. It occurs between the different size classes of capitalist businesses for existence and for expansion towards the securing of profits. At the international level it principally stimulates the fight for new spheres of investment and resources in complicity with the big powers representing the corporations, and it also takes place with regard to both intensity and the ways and means of state intervention for the benefit of the conditions of capital utilisation and location as well as for the shaping of national and international spheres of influence for the benefit of capital. Hence the shaping of the relationship between economics and politics, towards the realisation of corporate strategies, is determined by monopoly competition.

Altogether, monopoly always includes a mechanism for placing and overcoming the barriers to accumulation, immanent to 'private' capital. In this way it is a form of adapting capital to the changing conditions of existence. With economic and non-economic force, it breaks through the barriers to profitable capital investment and pushes through a redistribution of surplus value and surplus products of society to the advantage of the corporations dominating the economy. The capitalist system therefore continues to be monopoly capitalism, throughout all stages of its development up to today. At the same time, however, this process of adaptation to monopolising shows a changing character: it becomes defined as state-monopolistic since, with the effective cooperation of both leading elements of the capitalist power structure – monopolies and the state – many possibilities are created for the further development of monopoly and therefore at the same time for capitalism as a whole.

In the Marxist view, the essence of the state as political class rule through its dependence on the economic basis of the respective social formation is well grounded, and both the type and form of the state are determined by the production and property relations. State monopoly presents a new quality in the development of capitalism, as, with the development of productive forces, the scale of 'private' monopolising alone is no longer sufficient to secure accumulation. The rapid scientific-technical progress, changes in the political power relations and the increasing effects of long-term crisis processes require ever greater efforts to preserve the foundations of the system. State interventions to regulate the economy become therefore an unavoidable prerequisite of capital utilisation.

As an instrument of the ruling class the state overall has to secure the conditions for reproduction of capital. To that end, in addition to instruments of discipline and repression for securing the ruling power structure, we may count in conditions for the reproduction of labour power – such as education and health, legislated regulations for the arrangement of working conditions or measures for the protection of health. In this way the classical separation of economics and politics is broken and the state changes its character. With the help of the state, and by numerous fiscal methods, the barriers to private capitalability to cope with new social challenges can be broken

through and capital concentration and accumulation driven forward. The state in this way takes over the role of a ‘growth factor’. That means also that it has to preserve, as an ‘ideal total capitalist’ for its territory, the strategic interests both internally and externally of the relevant monopolies, whose growing power it makes possible and promotes via the state apparatus and new state practices. And the more that monopoly power expands under new requirements, the stronger the state is drawn into the totality of economic events. This is a characteristic tendency in the total development of capitalism, at each of its stages.

A few characteristics of state monopoly capitalism are:

- State interventions have become a permanent phenomenon. Discussions about ‘more’ or ‘less’ state in political discourse do not match reality. Indeed, contrary to all propaganda, there is scarcely one country in which the ratio of government spending to gross domestic product, the ‘state quota’, has fallen back in the last decades. With increasing monopolisation of the economy, especially with the growing power of finance capital, the scope and intensity of state interventions in the economy have constantly increased. At all levels – whether local, regional, national or international – there arise new structures, institutions and mechanisms for interweaving state, civil societal and monopolist forms of organisation, to realise profit strategies. If the state ‘draws back’, it only changes the direction of its regulation. Measures of denationalisation or privatisation predominantly benefit a lucrative monopoly capital utilisation.

- The forms of state intervention are very many-sided and show considerable differences. All the instruments of state economic policy of subventions, state contracts, fiscal measures, financing of research and development, promotion of exports up to direct state interventions in company structures and the ever closer personnel network of state apparatus and corporations are managed variably. State property itself is a very flexibly applied retention of power, since nationalisation in this context is not a socialist measure. It can be applied according to the profit-securing requirements of particular monopoly groups, or generally for securing the existence of the system. Privatisation of public property on the one side, and state participation in ailing big banks on the other, marks out the organisational abilities of the state to regulate the economy in the interests of the dominating big capital.

- There are *special features of state monopoly*. They arise from the fact that state monopoly development affects not only the economy, but also the whole of society under the influence of the most distinct factors or historical conditions. Thus the regulation of social processes for the maintenance of capitalist power becomes ever more important. It takes place in the turbulent tensions between redistribution in favour of the monopolies and social activities in the interests of maintaining the system, corresponding to the political power balance. In addition external factors also contribute ever more strongly to the development of state monopoly – such as the revolutionary movements in various countries, the international shift in the balance of forces and sharpened conditions of competition in the world, and the many global problems such as climate change, poverty and protection of the environment. And increasingly state monopoly also displays a comprehensive ideological aspect. Thus the regulating function of the state in the interests of monopoly capital appears to the general public not as a state capitalist form of profit regulation, but rather – especially as imparted

by the media – as an action functioning in the interests of the whole society, at present under the slogan of ‘international competitiveness’.

- An important central point of state monopoly is the contradictory character of the relationship of monopoly and the state, its ambivalence. The state is still relatively independent in its activity, also with respect to economic processes and political influences. The *institutional* separation of state and society makes it possible “to contribute to the repeated problematic regulation of expanded reproduction.”³³ Hence the state is in no way just an organ of power of monopoly capital. As a central component of the political system it is subject to the social relations of forces, has to take account of other classes and layers in the internal class conflicts, bind them into the system as a whole and do this to maintain a political class basis for monopoly capital. The state can only do justice to its contradictory functions if it maintains a relative independence. It is not subject to the compulsion of capital utilisation, it can mobilise social capital in the interests of the monopolies, launch state laws in their favour or torpedo democratic decisions, it can above all level the ground internationally for the realisation of profit of its ‘domestically anchored’ monopolies.

On the other side big capital also acts relatively independently. Thanks to their state-promoted positions of power the monopolies have through their associations significant possibilities for political influence on state policies, on the distribution of economic resources or on foreign policy aspirations. On the one hand, big business lobbies, in competition with each other, exert influence on state decisions; on the other hand, this is the way in which conflicts between monopolies and the state develop. Transnational corporations, as relatively independent international economic complexes with their own price and profit mechanisms, can circumvent national state measures and laws, they can make them unworkable.

The relations between monopolies and the state, definitely not free of contradictions, must prove themselves particularly in crises. Hence they are also subject to constraints of adaptation, and are free to change according to the changing interests of the respective ruling bourgeoisie. On the other hand the interventions of the state are continually reshaped depending on the political balances of power, through which possibilities also arise objectively for changes in social development. This does not just mean the degree of ‘subjugation of the state to the interests of capital’. The function of the state in the awareness of overall societal tasks also opens up opportunities for democratic forces to exert influence, by political pressure, on the direction of state monopoly regulation.

- *There are very distinct state monopoly variants*. Due to the unequal development of the capitalist system, they aim directly at the shaping of the economy for securing the existence of the system, as well as at the maintenance and extension of the competitive position. In this way, all other social areas such as politics, ideology and culture are affected.

Variant formation has occurred at different levels:

- a) *Nationally* different ‘models’ in the developed states have emerged corresponding to the historical and cultural traditions of their countries, their political class relations, their position in the world economy and in the financial markets.

The system of ‘planification’ in France is relatively well-known. It referred to a form of whole-economy long-term eco-

conomic planning developed after 1945. On the basis of 5-year plans an active state structural policy taking into consideration regional political aspects was operated, which signified for French big business an essential improvement of its capital utilisation.

On the other hand, for the USA as the dominant imperialist centre of power, the factor of military strength, and thereby the close connection of security policy with political and economic questions, had a particular significance in the formation of its state monopoly system on a continental scale – the building, to an extremely high level, of monopoly power concentration in industrial and finance capital, of an effective organisation in the area of science and research at a state-promoted high technological level.³⁴ The military-industrial complex as a state monopoly form of organisation acts up to the present-day as stimulus for the US strategy of world power.

In *Japan* during the post-war period, the MITI³⁵, founded in 1949, played a particular role in economic development, aligned with a high tempo of capital accumulation as well as with a support system directed at technology, innovation and export.

In the Scandinavian countries, after the world economic crisis of 1929, the ‘Swedish Model’ of a welfare state arose as a *specific form of national state monopoly economic and social policy* on the basis of a *social compromise between labour, capital and the state*. It was oriented towards promotion of research, comprehensive social services and an intensive policy of education, and was connected with a higher burden of taxation on earned income and tax incentives for businesses,

In the *Federal Republic of Germany* the state monopoly system achieved particular characteristics through specifically targeted legislation: thus in 1952, with the Law of Assistance for Investment, leading to massive promotion of investment; in 1967, with the Law on Stability, as an anticyclical instrument, with comprehensive subventions; and, since the 2007-8 crisis, with a packet of legislative measures aiming to save the dominance of the finance sector.³⁶

b) Internationally above all, state monopoly capitalism develops with the rapid tempo of the internationalisation of economic life, the expansion of transnational corporations and finance institutes and the sharpened competition, with at the same time contradictory tendencies in various forms in the economic and political relations of the states with each other. The basis of these developments is the common interests of international monopoly capital and of the leading states in the functioning of the capitalist system. They are realised:

- via the activity of such institutions as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (the World Bank) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), with mechanisms for the maintenance and extension of the positions of the monopolies and leading states over the granting of credit or investment protection agreements;
- via the state monopoly regulations of the European Union (EU), by means of which an economically strong core exercises power over a weak European periphery;³⁷
- via the growing number of state monopoly strategic fora, such as the World Economic Forum in Davos (WEF), the internationally active lobby groups of different complexions such as the European Round Table (ERT), the Lateinamerika Verein³⁸, or the Goldman Sachs Group, chosen by the ruling elites to provide a ‘government of experts’.

Structures and institutions of this type in no way function independently of the national economic and political forms of

organisation and structures, but rather are most closely ‘enmeshed’ with them.

c) In all developed states *economic and social-political state interventions* play a primary role. With respect to their direction they appear likewise in different variants. According to Jörg Huffschmid³⁹ there are *two principal forms* – the *market radical-authoritarian, anti-state variant* and the *interventionist variant*. They find expression in the economic-political regulation mechanisms of *neoliberalism* and *Keynesianism* respectively. Both variants refer in principle to the same socio-economic basis. With both *it is a matter of the stabilisation of the capitalist economy on account of economic crises* or inadequate accumulation conditions for capital. But they are distinguished in the focus of economic and socio-political interventions by the state. The neoliberal direction, prevalent since the 1940s and ’50s and particularly strengthened in most capitalist countries since the end of the ’70s or the beginning of the ’80s, can be described as a radical-confrontational variant of capital utilisation. In its concept for a long-term economic policy it is oriented towards a ‘*market-based economic system*’ with ‘*free competition*’ and a ‘*strong state*’ which sets the ‘*framework conditions*’ for capital utilisation. It includes a whole arsenal of measures favouring capital expansion such as privatisation of public property and the pension systems, deregulation and cutting back of state investments and controls, as well as destruction of the social security system. It has been dominant in the Federal Republic of Germany since the world economic crisis in the 1970s. The Keynesian variant, on the other hand, rests on an anti-cyclical, demand-oriented economic policy, in order to boost the economy. It evolved in the period after the great crisis of 1929 to 1932, in the USA as ‘New Deal’, and after 1945 in Germany, Italy and other industrialised countries, and was the dominating concept into the 1970s. It includes state-financed investments – through state borrowing also – as well as a range of employment and social policy measures aimed at securing social peace internally.

d) Within the narrow context of both economic policy concepts there stands the model of private monopolistic regulation with a relatively independent weight of big capital, by virtue of monopolistic property- and power-structure over highly concentrated economic complexes.⁴⁰ Today, by the weight of corporate strategies of big capital, it also has a decisive significance nationally and internationally for the direction of scientific-technical progress, for the shaping of the structures of the economy and businesses, for the distribution of labour in society and for the character and shaping of globalisation. On a massive scale it influences the legislative activities of the state, and with the dictatorship of finance capital it exerts influence upon the whole regulation. Private monopolistic complexes such as the international finance groups or financial services groups, with their political-strategic networks, are considered to be among this variant.

e) In the variants debate, democratic development variants have also been put forward, as an alternative to the ruling policies and economy, aiming thereby in a period of unfavourable political and social relations of power for capital to initiate social progress with alternative solutions. Here we may invoke the Scandinavian or Swedish model, which was for a long time successful, due to a political array of forces with active trade unions, a strong social democracy and an orientation towards more social justice and job creation. However, as was shown, it had no permanence, as the existing power relationships were essentially unchanged.

In 1988, under the term “Reform Alternative”, Jörg Huffs-
schmid and Heinz Jung presented a strategic orientation as an
alternative to the dominant politics and economics within capi-
talism. It was at the same time considered to be part of a proj-
ect which should lead to the overcoming of the basic structure
of capitalism. Starting from a now changed world situation, *ie*
the lasting existence of two opposing social systems, they saw
in the capitalist countries a perspective of progress for a
change in the political power relationship, “which makes possi-
ble a different, peaceful, environmentally friendly, socially
acceptable development and a broader unfolding of the democ-
ratic process in SMC”.⁴¹ This concept disappeared with the
defeat of Eastern European socialism. Looking back, there
were critical discussions over the conclusions drawn therein,
and the opinions of the authors diverged. Huffs-
schmid considered a specification of left-reform politics to be necessary,
which he claimed needed to include the basic analysis of the
main tend- encies of the new universal capitalism and the
working out of alternative possibilities for development as well
as an illusionless analysis of power relations and of the existing
array of classes and interests.⁴² In Jungview, however, an op-
position to the system, which aims at more than just the reform
of capitalism, should under the new conditions of the loss of
both socialism and of the route towards it implied by the re-
form alternative, be distinguished as a fundamental opposition
– and this only in criticism of the existing conditions and with
theor- etically grounded visions of a new non-capitalist soci-
ety:

“The load-bearing capacity of a strategic orientation of the
reform alternative has become an open question for a left
opposition movement. Today, it cannot be decided theoret-
ically. The dynamics of the real movement will be the de-
ciding factor.”⁴³

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Leadership and rebellion in the labour movement

by Robert Griffiths

My title for this year's lecture, *Leadership and Rebellion in the Labour Movement*, is in honour of the fact that last year's lecture was delivered by Jeremy Corbyn who has just graduated from the position of being the Parliamentary Labour Party's most prodigious rebel to that of being its leader.

SO DAVIES WOULD have approved of this elevation although he would never have anticipated it. He, too, had been a serial offender against party discipline when representing Merthyr Tydfil from 1934 until 1972.

When Stafford Cripps was expelled for demanding Labour-Communist unity in a 'Popular Front' in defence of democratic and working class rights against fascism, SO had sprung to his support, alongside Aneurin Bevan. But whereas Bevan and another parliamentary colleague, George Strauss, were subsequently expelled in 1939 for their Popular Front campaigning, no such action was taken against SO – much to the disappointment of the *Western Mail*.

In the early days of the Cold War, in 1947, SO rebelled against peace-time military conscription as “a betrayal of the Labour Movement's traditions”.

He supported an amendment to the National Service Bill seeking to exclude Wales in the same way as Northern Ireland had been exempted. With the majority of Welsh MPs having voted against peace-time conscription in principle, backed by more than 700 Welsh trade union, community and religious organisations, SO told the Commons that Wales hated compulsion from Westminster and Whitehall – who had forced half a million people to leave his country during the inter-war depression.

Tory leader Winston Churchill congratulated Labour's leaders for withstanding what he called the “subversive ... degenerate ... feckless and crack-pate elements in their midst”, the “crypto-Communists and pacifists and other trends of left-wing opinion”, as those leaders briefly relieved SO of the Labour whip.

Shortly afterwards, SO joined other Labour MPs in wishing the Italian Socialist Party, and its leader Pietro Nenni, well in their electoral alliance with that country's powerful Communist Party. Labour's National Executive Committee reacted furiously and demanded a retraction. Most of the MPs retreated, but not SO, who declared his defiance at a May Day rally in Merthyr alongside Keir Hardie's son-in-law and South Ayrshire MP Emrys Hughes.

For months afterwards, SO's label as one of the 'Nenni Goats', as they were dubbed, was the source of much leg-pulling in his regular Saturday night haunt, the back-room of the 'Crown'.

More defiance followed down the decades. In May 1949, he was threatened with deselection as Labour's

parliamentary candidate after voting against the Government of Ireland Bill, which gave the gerrymandered Stormont parliament a veto over Irish reunification. He campaigned against US, UN and British military intervention in the Korean War and chaired the Welsh Peace Council – one of those supposedly ‘Communist-front’ organisations proscribed as ‘out of bounds’ to Labour Party members, like the British-Soviet and British-China friendship societies with which SO also happily associated.

He defied official Labour policy to campaign energetically alongside Plaid Cymru in the Parliament for Wales Campaign, culminating in the presentation of his own ‘home rule for Wales’ bill in the House of Commons. It was during his running battle over devolution, peace and Korea with Welsh Labour secretary Cliff Prothero that SO famously dismissed the Welsh Regional Council of Labour as “a conglomeration of nonentities”.

When the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) whip was withdrawn from SO in November 1950, it was difficult to be certain which of his dissident stances had sparked the retribution. In January 1952, after he had returned to the fold, Labour’s National Executive Committee fired a warning shot across his bows when they instructed the Merthyr Tydfil Trades and Labour Council to expel his wife Sephora for her activities with the British-Soviet Friendship Society and as an executive member of the World Peace Council.

Undaunted, a few weeks later SO joined the Bevanite rebellion to oppose the Tory government’s military spending plans – although he never considered himself a ‘Bevanite’, having taken a clear position against US imperialism, membership of NATO and the presence of US bomber bases in Britain. In 1953, he came close to expulsion from the PLP for denouncing covert US support for the strike movement in East Berlin. The following year, he was expelled – along with Emrys Hughes – for voting against the rearmament of West Germany as a member of NATO.

Another notable expulsion occurred in 1961, when SO, Emrys and Michael Foot were among five Labour MPs who forced a vote against the Tory government’s armaments policy which including hosting US Polaris nuclear submarines in Holy Loch, Scotland. For daring to uphold Labour Party conference policy – the one which prompted leader Hugh Gaitskell to proclaim that he would “fight, fight and fight again to save the party we love” – SO was sent into parliamentary exile for more than two years.

In the late 1960s, he again rebelled against the PLP in order to support official Labour Party policy by demanding the withdrawal of foreign troops from Vietnam and the reunification of that ravaged country.

On the domestic front, SO became increasingly disillusioned with the Labour government’s capitulation to the Bank of England and international finance (the so-called ‘Gnomes of Zurich’). He came close to suspension from the PLP in 1968, and then the following year when opposing yet another increase in the Selective Employment Tax (which SO described as a ‘contemptible and anti-working class piece of legislation’ which had already put 130 of his constituents out of work).

Of course, his ultimate act of rebellion was to reject deselection for being too old and disloyal and retain his seat at the 1970 General Election as an independent socialist.

I haven’t counted the number of times SO voted against the Labour whip during his 38 years at Westminster. But he was suspended or expelled from the PLP at least four times.

Compared with that, I don’t think Jeremy Corbyn will mind if I describe the Honourable Member for Islington North as a tame party hack. He has yet to have the whip withdrawn despite voting against the PLP on 535 occasions since the election of Tony Blair’s government in 1997.

Why the different treatment? Most of SO’s revolts were over red-hot issues of the Cold War. He sided unapologetically with the Soviet Union and the international peace movement against the British ruling class, British and US imperialism and NATO.

These were, literally, life and death issues on an enormous, historic scale. The very existence of capitalism was seen as being at stake. SO certainly believed so, and his principled stance throughout the Cold War decades could never have gone unpunished. Even so (and quite possibly because he had such strong local Labour Party and trade union support), he escaped the fate of those other left-wing Labour MPs who were all expelled and/or unseated by 1950 (DN Pritt, Lester Hutchinson, Konni Zilliacus, Leslie Solley, Percy Barstow and John Platts-Mills).

None of this is to belittle the importance of the issues over which Jeremy Corbyn has rebelled since becoming an MP in 1983. He has defied the Labour whips to oppose tighter restrictions on asylum seekers and civil liberties (including the introduction of ID cards and longer periods of detention without charge), British military intervention overseas (including in Iraq and Libya), renewal of Britain’s nuclear weapons system, the EU Lisbon Treaty with its unelected posts of EU President and High Representative for Foreign Affairs, nuclear energy subsidies, foundation hospitals, higher university tuition fees, the imposition of so-called ‘academy’ school status, austerity measures including benefit cuts, the centralisation of planning powers and the fire service, the part-privatisation of air traffic control and the relaxation of gambling laws.

Contrary to the PLP line, he has voted for inquiries into the Iraq War, full disclosure of MPs’ expenses, more grounds for recalling MPs, referendums on EU membership, Westminster control over EU decisions, greater devolution of powers to Scotland and Wales, extending the right to strike, compulsory equal pay audits, higher annual increases in the state retirement pension and wider freedom of information.

In all the anti-Corbyn coverage of his parliamentary voting record, his critics in the Labour Party and the anti-Labour press have invariably overlooked the following points:

Firstly, there were often multiple votes on different aspects of the same basic issue.

Secondly, between 1997 and 2015 he actually voted with the Labour whip in 85 per cent of divisions.

Thirdly, Labour subsequently abandoned or changed its position on a number of key issues, notably in relation to civil liberties, the Iraq War, an EU referendum, tuition fees and benefit cuts.

A fourth point could also be added: that Jeremy Corbyn’s stance on numerous occasions has been more in tune with public opinion than New Labour’s.

What SO Davies and Corbyn have in common is that, firstly, SO was frequently accused of being a ‘crypto-communist’ and a ‘fellow traveller’, while Jeremy has been widely denounced as a ‘communist’, a Stalinist and – spot the contradiction – a Trotskyist. Neither has been any of these things, although both have regarded communists as allies in the fight for a socialist society rather than as the enemy.

Both have also been the subject of vitriolic accusations



of naïve or malevolent disloyalty. This begs the question of ‘disloyalty to whom and to what?’

Disloyalty to their socialist principles? Not even their severest detractors accuse them of that. SO believed that capitalism had to be replaced by a socialist system of society. Jeremy believes the same and speaks, campaigns and votes accordingly.

Disloyalty to their constituents? The voters don’t appear to agree. Jeremy Corbyn has increased his share of the poll in Islington North from 40% to 60% over the past 32 years. SO secured more than half the votes, and almost twice as many as the official Labour candidate, when he retained his seat in 1970 at the age of 87. Like Jeremy, his election addresses spelt out where he stood, and everyone who voted for him knew what to expect.

Disloyalty to the Labour Party? SO devoted most of his long life to the party, encouraging people to vote for it, join it and – despite the many disappointments and (yes, he used the word) ‘betrayals’ by its leaders – stay in it. He was clear about the reasons why he would not join the Communist Party or stay in the ILP. Was he always ‘loyal’ to every conference policy or every sentence of every General Election manifesto? No, but neither were other Labour MPs or their leaders. The same could be said in every regard about Jeremy Corbyn today.

Disloyalty to the Labour Party leadership and the PLP? Undeniably yes, whenever it was felt that those MPs and leaders were pursuing policies contrary to the interests of their constituents, of workers and their families, entrenching capitalist exploitation, inequality and oppression rather than attacking them.

One of the stranger spectacles of the Labour leadership campaign was the attempt to recruit the ghosts of Keir Hardie and Aneurin Bevan to the anti-Corbyn camp. Mind you, there is nothing new about such shameless political grave-robbing. In recent decades, Lord Peter Mandelson, Tony Blair and David Miliband have claimed that Keir Hardie would have been happy with New Labour policies.

Presumably, they mean the same Keir Hardie who contrasted the money lavished on the monarchy – which he detested with a passion – to the pittances provided to the poor; the Hardie who called for cooperative social ownership of all the great industries and utilities and who died while vilified for his opposition to militarism and imperialist war.

On 4 August 2105, in an article in the *Guardian* attacking new CWU General Secretary Dave Ward’s support for Corbyn against the New Labour ‘virus’, ex-Cabinet Minister Alan Johnson conjured up the mythical Hardie. Referring to the formation of the Labour Representation Committee, the forerunner of the Labour Party, Johnson wrote:

“This was to be no debating society, no exclusive sect designed to make its members feel virtuous for being involved. Hardie was clear, Labour should ‘capture power, not destroy it’. He believed in achieving power through the ballot box, eschewing class warfare and the communist attachment to ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’. He forged a Labour Party rooted in the decency and moderation of working-class communities who wanted nothing to do with intolerant ideology.”¹

Let’s leave aside the childish dig about feeling virtuous; look how Hardie is being reduced to a decent, moderate,

anti-Marxist preacher of harmony between the classes! Unlike, we are meant to infer, that extremist, intolerant class warrior Jeremy Corbyn and his secret longing for a ‘dictatorship of the proletariat’.

Is this the same Keir Hardie who supported workers during the ferocious transport workers and miners’ strikes of 1911, 1912 and 1913; who condemned state violence in the sharpest terms; and whose newspaper articles in 1910, published as a pamphlet under the title *Karl Marx: The Man and His Message*, praised the 1848 Communist Manifesto as the “most fateful document ever written in the whole history of the working-class movement”, thanked Marx for his great discovery that history is the record of class struggles, and looked forward to the universal public ownership of economic property putting an end to capitalism?

It is true that Hardie decried those who elevate the class struggle into a “sectarian dogma under the name of the ‘class war.’”² He may have gone too far in gentrifying Marx and diluting his revolutionary strategy, but he certainly was not condemning Marxism as an ‘intolerant ideology’.

Like Corbyn today, Hardie accepted that the struggle between the two great classes exists and must be won by the working class. Also, like Corbyn, and like Marx’s closest collaborator Frederick Engels, Hardie believed that the popular franchise must be fully utilised because revolutionary change would not be brought about by “small conscious minorities at the head of unconscious masses”.

Alan Johnson contrasted Corbyn’s “cheerful disloyalty” to a procession of Labour leaders to the “loyalty and discipline of the rest of us that created the NHS, the Open University and all the other achievements” of previous Labour governments.”

Well, as the first leader (the chairman) of the Labour Party, Hardie could only be disloyal to himself – although he wasn’t. But, after standing down in 1908, he criticised his parliamentary colleagues and their new leaders – Arthur Henderson, George Barnes and then Ramsay MacDonald – on numerous occasions and on many of the biggest issues of the day. They accepted Lloyd George’s National Insurance Bill with its high contributions from low-paid workers. They failed to campaign vigorously for votes for women and would not condemn the brutal treatment of imprisoned suffragettes. They wouldn’t join Hardie and left-wing socialists outside the Labour Party to fight for the right to work or a full wage if unemployed. They certainly wouldn’t join him when he refused to sing *God Save the King* at public events.

And, of course, while Barnes and Henderson joined the Imperial War Cabinet in 1914, Hardie campaigned against the great imperialist slaughter of the First World War until his premature death 100 years ago in September 2015.

Twelve days after Johnson’s broadside, failed former Labour leader Gordon Brown launched his own, more dishonestly covert assault on Corbyn’s leadership credentials. He told his hand-picked audience:

“Keir Hardie ... persuaded people to form the Labour Party because he saw the futility of simply protesting as a pressure group and the limitations of being just a debating society or campaigning organisation. He wanted people on the left to stop talking just to themselves and start talking to the people of the country.”³

Brown’s subliminal message is the same as Johnson’s: Hardie was a real leader, not content with futile protest and

talking only to like-minded socialists – unlike that Jeremy Corbyn who is interested only in futile protest and talking to himself and his like-minded coterie.

Can this be the same Keir Hardie who spoke at a thousand and more strike rallies and demonstrations, and who took his protests onto the floor of the House of Commons and was ejected for his trouble? Likewise, Jeremy Corbyn takes every conceivable opportunity to speak to people wherever they gather to protest or engage in political discussion.

No matter; Gordon Brown then called in aid some other great leaders such as Nelson Mandela. Wasn't he a bit of protestor, too? I think he even did a few days in prison for it. Surely, he should have been more practical, working to change the apartheid system from the inside, perhaps by helping to govern a Bantustan.

Then Brown came to “one of our great leaders, Aneurin Bevan” – who didn't opt for purity and impotence, Brown informs us (unlike you-know-who). Bevan was a builder, not just a dreamer. He wanted Labour to take power in order to put principles into practice.

But, and this is my point, did that mean that Bevan didn't engage in protest, or that his protests were futile? Did it mean that Bevan wasn't a rebel and that, instead, the foremost creator of the NHS was one of Alan Johnson's “disciplined loyalists”?

Look at the historical record! Nye Bevan defied the anti-communist bans and proscriptions to demonstrate against unemployment and the Means Test and to campaign for a ‘United Front’ against fascism. Transport workers' leader Ernie Bevin led the chorus accusing him of ‘disloyalty’. It was later, after returning from Spain, that Bevan was expelled from the party for calling for a ‘Popular Front’.

During the Second World War, he was the unofficial leader of the Opposition in the House of Commons. Whether as an MP or the editor of *Tribune*, he mercilessly flayed Labour coalition ministers such as Bevin and Herbert Morrison, opposing government bans on the *Daily Worker* and unofficial strikes, demanding equal pay for women teachers, deploring the use of British military force against the Communist Party-led national liberation movement in Greece and condemning Prime Minister Churchill's entire war strategy.

Coming close to re-expulsion on several occasions, Bevan defied the Labour whips over reforms to Workmen's Compensation and the Means Test. He berated the celebrated 1944 White Paper on full employment as “shallow, empty and superficial” because it accepted the capitalist ownership of economic property. He criticised Clement Attlee's excessive loyalty to Churchill, together with the Labour leader's failure to extract more progressive social and industrial policies from him. And he defied the Labour Party conference to insist that Labour should scrap the electoral truce once the war ended.

What's more, Bevan never made any secret of his republicanism. He refused to wear formal attire at Buckingham Palace because, he said, his constituents hadn't sent him to London to “dress up”. And his penalty for 15 years of disloyalty and rebellion? He was elected to Labour's National Executive Committee by the 1944 party conference.

Bevan didn't abandon his socialist principles in order to get elected, or to serve in the 1945 Labour government as Minister for Health and Housing. As the Cabinet papers

show, he continued fighting inside the government against its more generous compromises with the rich and big business; he opposed its embrace of the Cold War and NATO, without ever placing himself in the same pro-Soviet camp as SO Davies. And, when Britain's rearmament budget for the Korean War threatened to undermine the principles of the NHS that he had pioneered through Parliament, he resigned from the Cabinet along with another rebel – future prime minister Harold Wilson.

Space doesn't permit me to refer to all the protests and rebellions launched subsequently by the ‘Bevanites’ in the first half of the 1950s. After their leader had opposed Churchill's readiness to commit Britain to nuclear suicide, Attlee personally moved the motion to withdraw the whip, although in the end Bevan's outright expulsion from the party was avoided.

One problem was Bevan's utter contempt for PLP meetings, where the right-wing majority showed more passion for punishing socialists than for challenging capitalism. He made clear that he was accountable to the electors of Ebbw Vale, who had elected him as a socialist, not to Labour leaders, nor to the PLP (which he summed up as “rotten through and through; corrupt; full of patronage, and seeking after patronage; unprincipled”). In 1959, two years before his death, Aneurin Bevan was elected unopposed as Deputy Leader of the Labour Party.

So there is nothing new about socialists protesting and rebelling and then becoming leaders. Furthermore, they have also shown that they can make practical leaders.

Keir Hardie helped found and build the Labour Party and launch left-wing newspapers, including the *Merthyr Pioneer*. He proposed practical measures to assist the poor, the sick and the unemployed.

As Dowlais Miners' Agent and Vice-President of the South Wales Miners Federation, SO Davies organised and helped lead the South Wales miners to many victories, big and small. As a councillor, alderman and MP, he campaigned to save the very existence of Merthyr Tydfil during the Great Depression, secured vital factories and jobs during and after the war, chaired the Welsh Parliamentary Party and put forward practical policies for a Welsh Parliament – decades before his time – and fairer compensation for pneumoconiosis victims.

Aneurin Bevan's achievements speak for themselves: in local government, in the massive post-war council house-building programme and in people's abiding commitment to the NHS.

We shall see whether Jeremy Corbyn can – with enough support – overcome the substantial pro-big business, anti-socialist elements in Labour's ranks to turn his principles into policies that can win the election of a left government in Britain, and then put them into practice. There is a challenge for all of us to meet.

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Mao Zedong: On Contradiction

by Martin Jenkins

In his article *Turning Hegel from his Head onto his Feet* (*Communist Review* 74), Hans Heinz Holz portrayed Lenin's materialist inversion of Hegel's idealist dialectics. In what follows, I will describe another take on the materialist dialectics offered by Mao Zedong in his essay *On Contradiction*.¹ I do this not as an advocate of Maoism but as making a contribution to the debate concerning Marxist materialist dialectics.

MAO ZEDONG SOUGHT to address the 'dogmatist' thinking he believed was influencing theoreticians within the Communist Party of China in the 1930s. This influence, he maintained, had facilitated strategic errors in the Party's activities. He attributed such thinking to the school of philosophy around Abram Deborin in the Soviet Union. John Rees describes this school's understanding and advocacy of dialectics thus:

"Their understanding of the dialectic was composed of a fixed litany of formulations drained of content and unamenable to challenge by mere facts".²

The dialectics of the Deborin school was an abstractly schematic, rather *a priori* espousal of dialectics applied 'top-down', irrespective of context. Mao composed *On Contradiction* in response to this approach, departing significantly from it by dealing with real, concrete situations. For theory cannot unilaterally prescribe what course of action is to be undertaken regardless of real, concrete circumstances; it must consider and respond to them – both must interact with each other. His articulation of materialist dialectics is characterised by: the recognition of the *unity of opposites*; the *universality of contradiction*; the *specific characteristics relating to particular contradictions* which must be recognised and examined empirically; the existence of *principal and subordinate contradictions*; and the principal and subordinate aspects of a given contradiction. I will now examine each of these categories.

Unity of opposites

Mao states there are two world outlooks: the metaphysical one and materialist dialectics. The former maintains generally that true reality is fixed and immutable; the latter that reality is a process of change. The process of change is motivated by contradiction arising from the unity of opposites. Mao cites Lenin's observations and remarks, from his studies of Hegel's dialectics. Lenin noted that:

"In brief, dialectics can be defined as the doctrine of the unity of opposites. This grasps the kernel of dialectics but it requires explanations and development."³

Dialectics is the recognition and examination of contradiction, of the unity of opposites as the essence of phenomena. So according to Mao's understanding of

dialectics, in order to understand the development of a thing, both its internal contradiction and its external relations with other things are to be analysed. In other words:

- The fundamental cause of the developmental process of a thing is internal, a self-movement following on from its inherent contradiction, from its unity of opposites.
- Secondary causes are to be identified insofar as they affect the internal contradiction and the effect of it on them.

Internal contradictions can be discerned in nature and in human society. Mao writes:

“This dialectical world outlook teaches us primarily how to observe and analyse the movement of opposites in different things and, on the basis of such analyses, to indicate the methods of resolving contradictions. It is therefore most important for us to understand the law of contradiction in things in a concrete way.”⁴

Analyses of real, concrete phenomena will identify the specific contradictions at work in them and their particular characteristics. So, at a suitable temperature, writes Mao, an egg changes into a chicken, whereas no stone can turn into a chicken: each has a different basis. Internal contradictions, although providing their own dynamic, can also be influenced by external factors. Thus the October Revolution of 1917 had an effect upon the inner contradictions of China and other nations. It is through the internal contradictions that external factors exert influence.

Universality of contradiction

Contradiction is not an anomaly, a departure from a society of natural order, of processes in equilibrium. Contradiction is normal and it is everywhere: it is a precisely the unity of opposites, where each side intermediates with or interpenetrates the other. Mao quotes Frederick Engels citing contradiction being present in the developmental processes of nature. For:

“a being is at each moment itself and yet something else. Life is therefore also a contradiction which is present in things and processes themselves and which constantly originates and resolves itself; and as soon as the contradiction ceases, life too comes to an end and death steps in.”⁵

In war, for example, the movements of offence and defence, advance and retreat, victory and defeat are contradictions; they are a unity of interpenetrating opposites where one side cannot exist without the other. So Mao concludes that

“Contradiction is universal and absolute, it is present in the process of the development of all things and permeates every process from beginning to end.”

When one process ends, a new one with new contradictions emerges:

“The old unity with its constituent opposites yields to a new unity with its constituent opposites, whereupon a new process emerges to replace the old. The old process ends and a new one begins. The new process contains new contradictions and begins its own history of the development of contradictions.”⁶

Particularity of contradiction

Phenomena in nature and society are varied. As such, they have their own specific character or essence which must be taken into consideration when analysing the contradiction. Unlike the blind schematism of the Deborin school which was indifferent to context, the particularity of a contradiction must be recognised:

“Where our dogmatists [*ie* the followers of the Deborin school –*MJ*] err on this question is that, on the one hand, they do not understand that we have to study the particularity of contradiction and know the particular essence of individual things and that on the other hand, they do not understand that, after knowing the common essence of things, we must go further and study the concrete things that have not yet been thoroughly studied or have only just emerged.”⁷

Study of the particularity of contradiction in particular phenomena does not remain isolated from others; it is to be connected on the universal level to other existing contradictions. Interconnections and influences can therefore be highlighted. Thus a level of universal generality can be discerned. This does not detract however, from the particular dynamic specific to each contradiction. Each particular dynamic can reveal a qualitatively different contradiction which will require qualitatively different responses and resolutions:

“The relationship between the universality and particularity of contradiction is the relationship between the general character and the individual character of contradiction. By the former we mean that contradiction exists in and runs through all processes from beginning to end; motion, things, processes, thinking – all are contradictions. ... But this general character is contained in every individual character, without individual character there can be no general character. If all individual character were removed, what general character would remain?”⁸

To elaborate this, Mao cites Stalin’s *The Foundations of Leninism*. Here, Stalin notes the many particular contradictions in which Leninism arose, the contradictions of capitalism which reached culmination under imperialism, how these particular contradictions made proletarian revolution possible, why Russia became favourable to revolution, why it was possible for the Russian working class to become the vanguard of the international working class.

“Thus Stalin analysed the universality of contradiction in imperialism, showing why Leninism is the Marxism in the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution and at the same time, analysed the particularity of Tsarist imperialism within this general contradiction, showing why Russia became the birthplace of the theory and tactics of proletarian revolution and how the universality of contradiction is contained in this particularity.”⁸

Each contradiction, each of its aspects, has therefore, its own particular nature, context, and characteristics. These must be recognised and examined as they are, and in relation to society as a whole.

Two aspects of a contradiction

As a unity of opposites, each contradiction has two poles, sides or aspects. Each specific aspect should be analysed, what concrete forms it and the other displays, the actualities of the interdependence of each with the other and vice versa and what concrete methods are employed in the struggle of each with each. So at one time, one pole or aspect of the contradiction can dominate whilst the other is subordinate. This can be reversed and, at another time, both can achieve a state of equilibrium. Hence Mao writes that, in a capitalist society, capitalism has ceased to be the subordinate aspect in its contradiction with feudalism, becoming instead the dominant force. Accordingly, the nature of society has changed from being feudal to capitalist. The relation between the two aspects of a contradiction is determined by concrete factors.

“In battle, one army is victorious and the other is defeated; both the victory and the defeat are determined by internal causes. The one is victorious either because it is strong or because of its competent generalship, the other is vanquished either because it is weak or because of incompetent generalship; it is through internal causes that external causes become operative.”⁹

This point is further enforced when Mao attacks the “mechanistic materialism” which prioritises one aspect of a contradiction over the other, namely the productive forces over the productive relations, or the economic base over the superstructure. Although Mao doesn’t mention it, this approach characterised the Marxism of the Second International resulting in ‘economism’ proffered in lieu of dialectical materialism:

“True the productive forces, practice and the economic base generally play the principal and decisive role; whoever denies this is not a materialist. But it must also be admitted that in certain conditions, such aspects as the relations of production, theory and the superstructure in turn manifest themselves as the principal and decisive role.”¹⁰

In certain times, the “creation and advocacy of revolutionary theory”¹⁰ can play the decisive and principal role, as recognised by Lenin when he remarked that “Without revolutionary theory there can be no revolutionary movement.”¹¹ The creation of an effective guiding line, method, plan or policy, the quality and nature of communist leadership, the level of class consciousness may at times be the principal, decisive aspect of a contradiction. It can make all the difference in a situation. So the “the reaction of mental on material things, of social consciousness on social being and of the superstructure on the material base”¹⁰ may be the principal aspect of a contradiction. Hence the importance of active intervention is emphasised.

An analysis of both aspects of a contradiction is required to conclude on the nature of their interdependence. ‘One-sided’ subjectivist thinking does not appreciate the value of this interdependence, neglecting the fluid and concrete interaction of both sides of the contradiction upon each other. Failure to recognise this larger picture of the interpenetration of the two aspects can lead to political mistakes.

“To be one-sided means not to look at problems all-sidedly, for example, to understand only China and not Japan, only the Communist Party and not the Kuomintang, only the

proletariat and not the bourgeoisie, only the peasants but not the landlords, only the favourable conditions but not the difficult ones, only the past but not the future, only individual parts but not the whole, only the defects but not the achievements, only the plaintiff’s case but not the defendant’s, only secret revolutionary work but not open revolutionary work and so on.”¹²

Principal and non-principal contradictions

As well as the principal contradiction, Mao states that there can be numerous subordinate or major and minor contradictions which are determined or influenced by it. These are also what were earlier identified as particular contradictions. Presumably, as there are major and minor contradictions, they must display varying degrees of intensity and therefore relevance, differing in the length of their existence as they can be resolved and replaced by others. These too play an important part as ‘stages’ in the process of the existing principal contradiction.

Mao provides the example of the principal contradiction between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat. Upon this there arose contradictions between monopoly and non-monopoly capital, the intensification of the contradiction between colonial powers and their colonies, the contradiction between capitalist countries in uneven development emerging in the guise of imperialism. These Mao takes to be stages of the principal contradiction. Regarding China he writes of the process of the anti-imperialist, democratic revolution underpinned by the principal contradiction between the forces of feudalism, imperialism and the democratic forces of the working class, the peasantry. In its course from 1911 to 1937, the revolution had passed from bourgeois to proletarian leadership, the latter making possible a revolution against feudalism and imperialism and hence of passing from bourgeois democracy to socialist revolution.

“The fundamental contradiction in the process of the development of a thing and the essence of the process determined by this fundamental contradiction will not disappear until the process is completed; but in a lengthy process the conditions usually differ at each stage. The reason is that, although the nature of the fundamental contradiction in the process of the thing and the essence of that process remain unchanged, the fundamental contradiction becomes more and more intensified as it passes from one stage to another in the lengthy process. In addition, among the numerous major and minor contradictions which are determined or influenced by the fundamental contradiction, some become intensified, some are temporarily or partially resolved and some new ones emerge; hence the process is marked by stages.”¹³

This process had passed through numerous other particular stages over twenty years, which Mao cites:

- 1 The failure of the Revolution of 1911 and the establishment of the regime of Northern warlords.
- 2 The formation of the first National United Front of the Communist Party with the Kuomintang and the revolution of 1924-7.
- 3 The break up of the United Front and the desertion of the bourgeois Kuomintang to counter-revolution.
- 4 Wars between the new warlords and the commencement of the ‘Agrarian Revolutionary War’ by the Communist Party.
- 5 The establishment of a second National United Front of

the Communist Party with the Kuomintang and the war of resistance against Japan.

So certain contradictions had intensified, such as the Agrarian Revolutionary War, the Japanese invasion; whilst others had been resolved – the destruction of the Northern warlords by the Communist Party. However, underneath these contradictions there remained the principal contradiction: the anti-imperialist struggle. Here we reach a significant point in Mao's espousal of dialectics: the principal contradiction can be pushed into the background, as it were, whilst another, once subordinate, contradiction can come into the foreground, becoming itself the principal contradiction.

Principal contradiction can become secondary

Although many contradictions can be present in a thing, we always have a principal contradiction “whose existence and development determine or influence the existence and development of the other contradictions.”¹⁴ In capitalist society, the principal contradiction is between capital and the proletariat. Mao cites the example of China to demonstrate what can be a complex scenario:

“When imperialism launches a war of aggression against such a country, all its various classes, except for some traitors, can temporarily unite in a national war against imperialism. At such a time, the contradiction between imperialism and the country becomes the principal contradiction, while all the contradictions among the various classes within the country (including what was the principal contradiction between the feudal system and the great masses of the people) are temporarily relegated to a secondary and subordinate position.”¹⁵

Thus the principal contradiction can become a secondary one and vice versa – a change determined “by the extent of the increase or decrease in the force of each aspect in its struggle against the other in the course of the development of a thing.”¹⁶ So not only do we have a principal contradiction which affects and is affected by, in varying degrees, non-principal contradictions; the principal contradiction itself can be replaced by what was previously a non-principal contradiction. Similarly, as we have seen above, this pattern occurs in the two aspects of a contradiction where one can be dominant and the other subordinate – a relation that can be subject to reversal, or, both existing in a state of equilibrium. In short, Mao establishes that a reversal of dominance and subordination is possible in a contradiction, or in the relation between a principal contradiction and its subordinates.

Conclusion

Firstly, Mao's exposition of dialectics moves significantly away from the simple dualism of a single contradiction to that of a complexity of contradictions. This is not a nebulous plurality as there is a principal contradiction underpinning all others. In addition to the principal contradiction, there are major and minor non-principal contradictions which affect and are in turn affected by the principal one. In other words, there is a hierarchy of contradictions.

Secondly, the principal can in turn be replaced by a non-principal contradiction. This reversal is also observed in the two aspects of a single contradiction itself. Thus, as noted above, to understand the development of a thing, both its internal dynamic and *its relations with other contradictions are to be analysed*. That is, non-principal contradictions are to be

analysed in connection with the principal one and vice versa. This is significantly distinct from what Louis Althusser would term Hegelian-influenced Marxism, which holds the principal contradiction as invariably being that between the economic base of productive forces and the social relations, even if this is articulated in instances of the superstructure. As we have seen, the structure of Mao's dialectics allows the locus of the principal contradiction to change temporarily, becoming the struggle against Japanese imperialism. His dialectics can perhaps also account for communist-led liberation movements in Europe during and at the end of World War Two, anti-imperialist movements in Vietnam, Cuba and so on. Here, struggles against imperialism, led by Communists, had arguably become the principal contradiction, as opposed to the pure contradiction between capital and proletariat.

Finally, it is notable that Mao does not invoke two of the three laws of dialectics identified by Engels – namely the change from quantity into quality and the negation of the negation.¹⁷ (Interestingly Stalin in his *Historical and Dialectical Materialism* did not mention the negation of the negation despite citing quantity into quality and the interpenetration of opposites.¹⁸) The one law that certainly is observable with Mao is the interpenetration of opposites (unity of opposites) or contradiction. This is evident in the essay as explicated in the universality of contradiction, the two aspects of a contradiction, the relation between the principal and subordinate contradictions and the displacement of the principal aspect/contradiction by that which was previously subordinate. Indeed Mao reportedly said that he recognised only the unity of opposites as the single law of dialectics.¹⁹ So it can be said that, for Mao, Marxist dialectics is the unity and play of opposites, their play in the unity of the social totality and the hierarchy of contradictions constituting that play.

Louis Althusser sought to identify the authentic structures of a distinctly Marxist dialectics departing from any residues of Hegelianism. He argued that Marx had not only inverted dialectics, “turning it right side up” from idealism to materialism, but importantly had also dispensed with idealist structures such as the negation of the negation, which were relevant only to issues in Hegel's absolute idealism.²⁰ This made for a distinct *Marxist materialist dialectics*. Accordingly, Althusser favourably cited Mao's *On Contradiction* (along with many of Marx and Lenin's texts) as making a significant contribution to, and utilising perhaps inadvertently, a distinctly Marxist dialectics. Many Marxists however profoundly disagree.

Notes and References

- 1 Mao Zedong. *On Contradiction*, in *Selected Works*, Lawrence & Wishart, London, 1954, Vol 2, pp 13-56 (NB in later editions the essay was to be included in Vol 1); online at https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-1/mswv1_17.htm. [Note that here and in successive end-notes from this source, the translation is the online version –Ed.] See also Mao's *On the Correct Handling of Contradictions Among the People*, online at https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-5/mswv5_58.htm; this elaborates upon and provides practical examples of themes raised in *On Contradiction*.
- 2 J Rees, *The Algebra of Revolution: The Dialectic and the Classical Marxist Tradition*, Routledge, 1998, p 195.
- 3 V I Lenin, *Conspectus of Hegel's 'Science of Logic': 'Doctrine of the Concept, Section III: The Idea'*, in *Collected Works (LCW)*, Vol 38, p 223; online at <https://www.marxists.org/archive/lenin/works/1914/cons-logic/ch03.htm>.
- 4 Mao, *On Contradiction*, *op cit*, p 18.

- 5 *Ibid*, p 19, and F Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, Wellred Publications, 2007, Part 1, Ch 12, p 133.
- 6 Mao, *On Contradiction, op cit*, p 21
- 7 *Ibid*, p 24.
- 8 *Ibid*, p 34
- 9 *Ibid*, p 17.
- 10 *Ibid*, p 41
- 11 V I Lenin, *What Is to Be Done?*, in *LCW*, Moscow, 1961, Vol 5, p 369.
- 12 Mao, *On Contradiction, op cit* pp 26-7.
- 13 *Ibid*, p 28.
- 14 *Ibid*, p 35.
- 15 *Ibid*, p 36.
- 16 *Ibid*, p 38.
- 17 “It is therefore, from the history of nature and human society that the laws of dialectics are abstracted. For they are nothing but the most general laws of these two aspects of historical development, as well as of thought itself. And indeed they can be reduced in the main to three. The law of the transformation of quantity into quality and vice versa. The law of the interpenetration of opposites. The law of the negation of the negation.” F Engels. *Dialectics of Nature*. Wellred Books, 2006, p 63.
- 18 J Stalin, *Dialectical and Historical Materialism*, in *Leninism*, Lawrence & Wishart, 1940, pp 591-618; online at <https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/stalin/works/1938/09.htm>
- 19 “Engels talked about the three categories, but as for me I don’t believe in two of those categories. (The unity of opposites is the most basic law, the transformation of quality and quantity into one another is the unity of the opposites quality and quantity, and the negation of the negation does not exist at all.) ... There is no such thing as the negation of the negation.” Mao Zedong, *Talk On Questions Of Philosophy*, 18 August 1964, in *Selected Works*, Vol 9, and online at https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/mao/selected-works/volume-9/mswv9_27.htm.
- 20 “Let us say, to end this over-extended textual exposition, that if the Marxist dialectic is ‘in principle’ the opposite of the Hegelian dialectic, if it is rational and not mystical-mystified-mystificatory, this radical distinction must be manifest in its essence, that is, in its characteristic determinations and structures. To be clear, this means the basic structures of the Hegelian dialectic such as negation, the negation of the negation, the identity of opposites, ‘supersession’, the transformation of quantity into quality, contradiction etc *have for Marx (insofar as he takes them over, and he takes over by no means all of them) a structure different from the structure they have for Hegel.*” L Althusser, *Contradiction and Overdetermination* (1962), in *For Marx*, Verso, 2005, pp 93-4. See also: *On the Materialist Dialectic*, in *For Marx, op cit*, p 161, and *Reading Capital*, Verso (Radical Thinkers Series), 2009.

Letter to the editor

Bourgeois trends in the labour movement

from Lars Ulrik Thomsen

The interview with Hanz Heinz Holz (HHH) in *CR77* is very interesting. Here light is thrown on essential questions for the communist movement.

But unfortunately there is also a tendency to simplify the debate on philosophical matters. For example, the headline says “Revisionists are always Kantians”, but this is a mistake. Bourgeois ideology uses a wide variety of philosophical trends against Marxism. It is not very critical in its choice, as long as the direction is ‘right’.

Elsewhere in the interview (p 24) HHH says, “Neokantianism has also died out”, and Arnold Schötzel responds, “Certainly it has died out as a significant stream.” I am well aware of the different conditions in each country. In Denmark Neokantianism is still prominent in our cultural life, as well as in politics. The main trends among the leftist parties (including the ‘New Left’) are influenced by Neokantianism. They reject materialism and replace it with an indistinct altruism or humanistic view. This trend has been very influential in Denmark both in the 20th century and the 21st.¹

Another statement in the interview concerns the philosophical level in the Soviet Union, before and after the 20th Congress of the CPSU. There is something missing, because the epistemology is not connected with real life. Where were the deficiencies in the Soviet economy and its political life? This debate is totally absent in the interview. Also the suppression of the young generation of philosophers in the 1960s and 70s is absent, among them Evald V Ilyenkov. He and others fought the vulgar materialism that had developed in academic circles in the Soviet Union, but they were defeated, because they ‘deviated’ from the party line.

This is of vital importance to know, because it helps us to look for the sources of a renewal of Marxism. These critical points shouldn’t overshadow the highly interesting interview and the philosophy of HHH in general.

Editor’s comment:

The statement “Revisionists are always Kantians” is curious, especially given that HHH, in a previous article in this journal,² said that “The various forms of revisionism ... have always been based on changing the theoretical weight elements of Marxist analysis.” He went on to argue that “general polemics against revisionism ... remain too general” and that “revisionisms must be refuted from case to case.”

HHH is not here to answer, but I suspect that the “indistinct altruism or humanistic view” which Lars Ulrik cites is precisely what HHH had in mind in the quotation in question. Around the turn of the 19th century, the significant revisionist trend led by Eduard Bernstein in the German Social-Democratic Party sought to import Kant’s ethics – “the highest good as a social duty” – into Marxism.³ Reformism, abandonment of the class struggle, economism and subjectivism all flow from this sort of approach.

In the same previous *CR* article, HHH discussed “the deficiencies in the Soviet economy and its political life” after the 20th Congress, pointing to the existence of a bureaucracy and the “setting free of bourgeois life expectations” which led to neglect of the class question, underestimation of the relative strength of capitalism and “atrophy of theory and research in social sciences”.

Notes and References

- 1 The Neokantian trend is connected with the French author Henri Barbusse who, together with others, created the international intellectual movement Clarté in 1919 –*LUT*.
- 2 H H Holz, *The Revisionist Turning-Point*, in *CR52*, Spring 2009, pp 38-41 –*Ed*.
- 3 See H van der Linden, *Kantian Ethics and Socialism*, Hackett Publishing Company, Indianapolis, 1988 –*Ed*.

Nordahl Grieg's commitment to peace

by Lars Ulrik Thomsen

Recent developments should be the beginning of a renaissance for Nordahl Grieg authorship. His efforts for peace and freedom stand as a shining example. Ever since my youth the Norwegian journalist, poet, novelist and dramatist Nordahl Grieg (1902-43) has played a significant role for me.



IT BEGAN WHEN I read his novel *Forever Young the World Must Be*¹, written from first-hand experience of the Soviet Union, where he had lived in 1932-4, and of Spain, which he had visited as a war correspondent in 1937. Central to the book is the young Englishman Leonard Ashley's meeting with the Soviet state, reflected through his experiences in Moscow, and his youthful sympathy for socialism, but also his difficulty in overcoming bourgeois prejudices.

Grieg is scarcely known outside the Nordic countries, but he was listed in the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* as one of the most important Scandinavian writers of all time. He was a committed anti-fascist and communist, although – in order better to serve the communist idea – he was by agreement never a member of the Communist Party of Norway (NKP). Following his return from Moscow, he became chair of the Norwegian Friends of the Soviet Union. His actress wife Gerd was the daughter of NKP chairman and MP Adam Egede Nissen and Grieg was close to many active communists.²

He was a universal man who mastered many genres. After sailing to Australia and back as an ordinary seaman in 1921, he published his first collection of poems, *Around the Cape of Good Hope*, and his first novel, *The Ship Goes On*, which aroused attention and some controversy, because of his realistic descriptions of the hardships and temptations of a sailor's life.³

From 1925 Grieg travelled as a journalist for the Oslo evening newspaper *Oslo Aftenavis*.⁴ His *Græske breve (Greek Letters)* (1926) expresses his youthful joy of experiencing the world. Unfortunately not yet translated into English, the *Letters* transport the reader to the ancient people, their struggle for independence and their creative power of art, philosophy and drama. Here is an excerpt from *Lykken (Happiness)*:

“One day, a marvellous day, has passed. We came down from the temple at Bassae, which is at four thousand feet, high up in Arcadia

And now it is evening. A violet twilight runs down the green mountain, a spark projecting up there, the evening star, which poor Sappho sang about two-and-a-half-thousand years ago: the evening star, which brings everything together as the bright morning has spread, you bring the lamb, you bring the goat, you bring the child to her mother”⁵



▲ Norwegian Pilots in the Shetland Islands in 1942. Above and second from right is Nordahl Grieg. The flag in the background was a Norwegian flag painted on metal sheet, and it became famous because Grieg mentioned it in a radio broadcast to Norway.

Grieg had really drunk of the spring *Kastaliavi*⁶ - the source of the Muses!

From 1927, after travelling to China, to report on the Civil War there for the Norwegian press, Grieg increasingly turned his attention to drama. His most outstanding success was the play *Our Power and Our Glory* (1935), dealing with the Norwegian shipping situation towards the end of the First World War. He vividly contrasted the fate of the seamen, exposed to German submarine attacks, with the luxurious life of the profiteering shipowners.⁷

A major theme of Grieg's plays is the conflict between humanitarian objectives and the supremacy of force in the world, so that its use cannot be discarded without disaster.⁸ In arguably his best play, *The Defeat* (1936), inspired by the Spanish Civil War and dealing with the Paris Commune of 1871, he attacked the pacifist humanism of the Western world. The proletarian Varlin, one of the leaders of the Commune, says:

“This is peace. ... It's not something you own, it's something you have to conquer. ... It's always threatened; every day you must guard it from harm by vindicating human dignity. ... Peace must be the most unresting thing in the world.”⁹

In 1940, having served in the Norwegian Army in the campaign against the Nazi German invasion, Grieg escaped to Britain on the same ship as the Norwegian royal family and the national gold reserves. Thereafter, he put himself in the service of the resistance by writing patriotic war poems which were broadcast in his own voice from London, dropped in leaflet form in Norway or otherwise secretly distributed. Through this he became a national hero. But he also wanted to be where the fighting was. He died on 2 December 1943 when the Australian bomber on which he was serving as a reporter was shot down over Berlin. In 1945 his war-time poems were published in Norway in *Friheten* (*Freedom*) and *Flagget* (*The Flag*).

Recently, I had a pleasant surprise on reading the manuscript of Grieg's screenplay *Større kriger* (*Greater Wars*)¹⁰, written during his exile in London. It concerns a meteorologist who refuses to make an independent assessment of fascism in Germany. The script works strongly to this day, especially the poignant scenes when Norway is attacked. Grieg's moral is that, if you do not take action against war and fascism, then suddenly one day it will be knocking on your own front door. The manuscript deserves to be filmed, because the problem Grieg describes is still topical. Too many people turn their backs on reality and escape into their own little world.

July 2016 will see the fifth anniversary of the terrorist attack against the Norwegian labour movement youth organisation by Anders Behring Breivik. As in the 1930s, capitalism is in deep crisis, and one of the consequences is a growth in extreme right-wing and fascist forces throughout Europe. This fact has not appeared in the public debate on the terrorist attack, since politicians and the media have preferred to present it as the actions of a single, insane person. We can only understand the Oslo atrocity by drawing a parallel with the 1930s crisis-ridden capitalism which, of course, led to the Second World War.

The struggle for peace permeates Grieg's literary and poetic work. Therefore, it is natural that his 1936 poem inspired by the Spanish Civil War, *Kringsatt affiender*

(*Surrounded by Enemies*),¹¹ which was set to music in 1952 by Danish composer Otto Mortensen, has been sung at the many commemorations of the victims of the Oslo terrorist attack. The poem's message is one of creating peace by creating human dignity.

The fight for peace and justice gains more and more importance in our time, not just in one country but as a global commitment. We can now see that the US-led 'War on Terror' is a pretext for reintroducing a modern version of colonialism, which can hardly be separated from the supposed ethos of the medieval crusades. It is fought under the guise of a war for human rights and democracy, for 'humanitarian intervention', and for preventing terrorist attacks.

The setbacks for the labour movement and other democratic forces after 1989 have affected many people and their belief in socialism. Here, and in the fight against war and the right-wing turn, Nordahl Grieg's writings are a great encouragement – a force to maintain faith in the future and social progress.

In the poem *Den menneskelige natur* (*Human Nature*) there is a clear appeal to us:

But you who live, must watch
The peace we glimpsed
In the neighbouring closet of death
Be above all not weary –
As people become after wars –
When turbid and greediness arises
Accompanied by despondency,
The warm putrefied mire
Saved by a hundred generations
Where the mind can creep to rest
And he that we killed can arise.¹²

We must above all not be weary, but continue to put present-day phenomena and events into a social framework. This applies wherever democratic, social and other human rights are overridden.

Grieg's war-time poem *The Best* was published in July 1943 in the Danish illegal paper *Vestjyden*:

The Best

Death can flame like a cornfield;
Clearer than once we spy
Each life in that glowing anguish;
They are the best who die.

The string and the single-hearted,
Who willed and dared the most, –
Calmly they took their parting,
Each in his turn was lost.

The world is ruled by the living.
Never can be suppressed
The competent, indispensable
Host of the second-best.

The best are murdered in prisons,
Swept off by bullets and seas;
Not in their hands our future;
To die is enough for these.

So we build them shrines of our weakness,

The sense of our emptiness;
But this is to fail our greatest,
Betray them with vain distress.

They would live in our faith and courage;
They would not be mourned as dead;
Still flows in hearts of the fearless
The blood that the fallen shed.

To each of us here that knew them
More wealth than was theirs descends;
For children had these for fathers,
And men have had these for friends.

Increasing the life they yielded,
Their ghosts in new men survive.
Upon their graves shall be written –
For ever the best shall live.¹³

The poem is a tribute to the many who sacrificed their lives in the resistance fight in WWII, but also a wake-up call to us – the descendants – about the need to continue the struggle for peace, freedom and equality. Like his idols Keats, Shelley and Byron,¹⁴ Nordahl Grieg died young, but his name lives on through his books and poems as a living testimony to the struggle for peace.



Bibliography

Only a few of Grieg's works have been published in English, and most are now out of print. His war poems, *All That Is Mine Demand*, were published by Hodder & Stoughton in 1944; *The Defeat* is in *Masterpieces of the Modern Scandinavian Theatre*, Collier Books, New York, 1967, pp 311-397; *Our Power and Our Glory* appeared in *Five Modern Scandinavian Plays*, Twayne – The American Scandinavian Foundation, 1971, pp 299-362; and the sea poems, *Around the Cape of Good Hope*, were published in 1979 by Nordic Books.

Notes and References

1 N Grieg, *Ung må verden endnu være*, Gyldendal, Norwegian

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- 2 Personal correspondence from Runa Evensen, chair of the NKP.
- 3 G M Gathorne-Hardy, *Nordahl Grieg 1902-1943*, in *War Poems* by Nordahl Grieg: All That Is Mine Demand, Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1944, p 10. Gathorne-Hardy knew Grieg and translated the poems.
- 4 See Grieg, *Johan Nordahl Brun*, at <http://www.leksikon.org/art.php?>
- 5 Translated by LUT from N Grieg, *Langveisfra: Græske breve, Kinesiske dager, Spansk sommer (Scenes from Afar: Greek Letters, Chinese Days, Spanish Summer)*, Gyldendal, Oslo, 1964.
- 6 The spring emerging beside the seat of the Delphic oracle.
- 7 H Beyer, *Citizen of the World*, in *Masterpieces of the Modern Scandinavian Theatre*, R W Corrigan, ed, Collier Books, New York, 1967, p 309.
- 8 Gathorne-Hardy, *op cit*, p 11.
- 9 N Grieg, *The Defeat*, Act 2, Scene 1, in *Masterpieces of the Modern Scandinavian Theatre*, *op cit*, p 343. However, Bertolt Brecht considered the play as "astonishingly bad", leading him to write *The Days of the Commune*, in which he "cut out the petty-bourgeois nonsense" (*Letter to Helene Weigel*, 25/26 February 1949, quoted in *Brecht Collected Plays 8*, Methuen, London, 2003, pp 225-6). Brecht's Varlin, unlike Grieg's character, comes over to recognising the need for revolutionary terror.
- 10 A draft for two screenplays found in Oslo in 1989; Gyldendal Norwegian Publisher, 1989.
- 11 See https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Til_Ungdommen.
- 12 Translated by LUT from the original Norwegian. Grieg's complete text can be found online at <http://www.bokselskap.no/boker/haabet/den-menneskeligenatur>.
- 13 *War Poems by Nordahl Grieg*, *op cit*, pp 45-6. *Vestjyden (The West Jutlander)* was an illegal paper printed by the Danish Communist Party in Esbjerg during the war. The poem was printed in several illegal papers and had a great influence on the morale of the Danish resistance movement. The reference is from *Vestjyden*, July 1943.
- 14 *De unge døde (The Young Dead)*, an essay collection on Byron, Shelley and Keats, Gyldendal Norwegian Publisher, Oslo, 1932

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SOURWOOD

Selected by Mike Quille

The same chain of mountains encompass us all

WARS RAGE IN the Middle East. The US and its allies pursue their policies of economic and military aggression, regime change, and the deliberate fomenting of chaos, instability and hardship.

Refugees, asylum seekers and economic migrants are forced to flee, towards the richer countries of Europe, whose wealth has been built on the imperialist exploitation of the rest of the world. There they are met by steel fences, police with dogs, endless paperwork, squabbling politicians and suspicious populations. Random atrocities are committed against civilians, on the ground and in the air, in Paris, Damascus, Jerusalem and Beirut.

That is the world in which we are living, and it is a world familiar to two poets whose work I want to present to you, Choman Hardi and Amir Darwish.

Choman Hardi

Born in 1974, Hardi is a Kurdish poet, painter and translator who was brought up in Iran and Iraq. She moved to Britain in 1993, where she studied philosophy and psychology at the universities of Oxford, UCL, and Kent. She began writing poetry in Kurdish, but has written more in English recently.

The Kurdish people, spread across a number of countries, have historically been stateless victims of local and foreign powers. They are divided by borders, in a similar way to the Palestinians in Jordan, Lebanon, and Israel.

When Choman was five, her family crossed the border into Kurdistan, their so-called 'homeland'. But their persecution didn't end, and they had to move again in 1993, to Britain. Here is a classic poem of hers, about division, borders and conflict.

At the Border, 1979

"It is your last check-in point in this country!"

We grabbed a drink –
soon everything would taste different.

The land under our feet continued
divided by a thick iron chain.

My sister put her leg across it.
"Look over here," she said to us,
"my right leg is in this country
and my left leg in the other."

The border guards told her off.

My mother informed me: We are going home.

She said that the roads are much cleaner
the landscape is more beautiful

and people are much kinder.

Dozens of families waited in the rain.
"I can inhale home," somebody said.

Now our mothers were crying. I was five years old
standing by the check-in point
comparing both sides of the border.

The autumn soil continued on the other side
with the same colour, the same texture.
It rained on both sides of the chain.

We waited while our papers were checked,
our faces thoroughly inspected.
Then the chain was removed to let us through.
A man bent down and kissed his muddy homeland.

The same chain of mountains encompassed all of us.

Note how the poem does not follow an organised, repetitive poetic form. The stanzas are of different length: some lines are end-stopped by punctuation, or stopped within the middle by harsher sounds, whilst others flow more naturally. This expresses the main theme of the poem, that borders are arbitrary, cruel and meaningless, imposed by colonists and client dictators on human communities. In another poem, Hardi writes of

Sitting around an old table
they drew lines across the map
dividing the place
I would call my country.

We hear different voices in the poem, suggesting conflict and division, another kind of "border". The language is flat, simple and unromantic, the voice of a bored, tired child. Hardi is expressing brilliantly the core experience of being a child refugee: somewhere an adult might kiss on arrival is just a "muddy homeland" to her.

Note also the ambiguity in that last line, "The same chain of mountains encompassed all of us." On one level, this affirms our common humanity and the pointlessness of borders. On another level, the repeated "ai" sound again evokes tiredness and the vaguely imprisoning feel of the new environment. The refugees' problems are not necessarily over.

Next is another Hardi poem which also has borders in it, but borders of a very different kind.



Two Pages

1. Delivering a message

I was asleep in the middle of a pad
when he started writing on the first page.
The tip of his pen pressed down
forcing pale words into the pages below.
He wrote many versions that night
some very lengthy, others brief.
When my turn came he paused,
palmed his temples, squeezed his eyes,
made himself a calming tea.

She received me early one morning
in a rush, leaving her flat.
She ripped the envelope. Then, gradually,
her steps slowed down,
her fingers tightened around me.

2. Not delivering a message

All my life I waited for words –
a poem, a letter, a mathematical puzzle.

On March 16th 1988
thousands of us were taken on board –
you can't imagine our anticipation.
When they threw us out from high above
we were confused, lost in blankness.
All those clean white pages
parachuting into town

Puzzled faces looked up
expecting a message, but we were blank.

Two hours later they dropped the real thing.
We had been testing the wind direction.
Thousands of people were gassed that day.

What is happening in the poem? In the first part, it appears that a note is being written by a man to a woman, with some kind of distressing content. Is it a note of rejection, a record of betrayal, or another major disappointment of some kind? Is there not a strong hint of violence and violation in the language?

The second part records an act of chemical warfare, the poison-gas attack in Halabja in 1988 which killed five thousand people, and which remains the worst gas attack on a civilian population in history.

The remarkable, even jolting, feature of this poem for me is the nature and tone of the voice in each stanza. In both cases, it is a piece of paper which narrates the story, and this gives an eerie, surreal effect, bringing a certain distance and coolness to the stories which matches the cruelty of the man in the first stanza, and the aggression of the Iraqi pilots in the second.

In addition, the piece of paper takes on something of the character of the victim in each case. In the first stanza, “the tip of his pen pressed down/ forcing pale words into the pages below”, hints at male domination, perhaps even violence. In the second, the pieces of paper floating down to the “puzzled faces” are “confused, lost in blankness”: they are naive innocents, like the people about to be gassed.

Together these techniques work brilliantly and subtly to link oppressive relationships between men and women, and ethnic and class-based violence. What a powerful and memorable fusion of personal and political themes!



Amir Darwish

Another poet from the Middle East who addresses both personal and political themes in his poetry is Amir Darwish. Amir was born in Syria in 1979 (the same year as Choman Hardi crossed the border as a five year old) and came to Britain during the second Gulf War. His poetry has been published in the USA, Pakistan, Finland, Morocco and Mexico, and he is a graduate of Teesside University and the University of Durham.

In the words of Darwish's publisher:

“*Don't Forget the Couscous* is a book of poetry about exile and home. It is a love-song to the Arab world – Syria, Kurdistan, Morocco and Palestine. It is a memoir of the failed Arab Spring and the civil war that has turned Syria into a ‘fountain of blood’, as he puts it in one of the poems. It's a bitter account of the demonisation of Islam in the West, and the violent interference of the West in the Islamic world. It is about being a Muslim and not a terrorist.”

Here are some poems from the collection, showing Darwish's poetic skills as a light, musical lyricist; as an honest, informative and insightful political commentator; and as a skilled ironist and satirist, capable both of sharpness and warmth.

Sorry!

An apology from Muslims (or those perceived to be Muslims) to humanity

We are sorry for everything
That we have caused humanity to suffer from.
Sorry for algebra and the letter X.
Sorry for all the words we throw at you;
Amber, candy, chemistry, cotton, giraffe, hazard,
Jar, jasmine, jumper, lemon, lime, lilac,
Oranges, sofa, scarlet, spinach,
Talisman, tangerine, tariff, traffic, tulips,
Mattress (yes, mattress) and the massage you enjoy on it:
We are sorry for all of these.

Sorry that we replaced alcohol with coffee for
Enlightenment philosophers.
Speaking of hot drinks,
We are sorry for the cappuccino the Turks brought over.
Sorry for the black Arabian race horses,
For the clock,
Maths,
Parachutes.

Abdul in the US is sorry for what so and so did;
He does not know him but he is sorry anyway.
Sorry that we accompanied Columbus on his journey to
the States.
And sorry for the Arab man with him
Who was the first to touch the shore and shout "Honolulu"
And named the place after him.
Sorry for the architecture in Spain and the Al Hambra
palace there.

We apologise for churches in Seville
With their stars of David at the top that we built with
our hands.
We say sorry for every number you use in your daily life
from the 0 to the trillion.

Even Adnan the Yezidi (mistaken for a Muslim)
Is sorry for the actions of Abu whatever who beheads
people in Syria.
Sorry for the mercury chloride that heals wounds,
Please give us some –
Because the guilt of initiating all of the above
Gives us a wound as big as this earth.
Sorry for the guitar that was played by Moriscos in Spain
To ease their pain when they were kicked out of their
homes.

Sorry for the hookah as you suck on its lips
And gaze into the moon hearing the Arabian Nay.
Sorry for cryptanalysis and the ability to analyse
information systems,
To think what is the heart of the heart of the heart and
bring it to the world.

Sorry for painting Grenada white to evade social
hierarchy.
Sorry for the stories in The Arabian Nights.

Every time we see a star, we remember to be sorry for Astronomy,
We are sorry that Mo Farah claimed asylum here
And went to become the British champion of the world.
Sorry for non-representational art,
Pattern and surface decoration.
We are sorry for all the food we brought over:
From tuna to chicken tikka masala,
Hummus,
Falafel,
Apricot,

Doner kebab
Right up to the shawarma roll.
And don't forget the couscous.

If we forget to apologise for something, never mind,
We are sorry for it without even knowing it.
Most of all we are sorry for Rumi's love poems,
And we desperately echo one of them to you:

*Oh Beloved,
Take me.
Liberate my soul.
Fill me with your love and
Release me from the two worlds.
If I set my heart on anything but you
Let that fire burn me from inside.*

*Oh Beloved,
Take away what I want.
Take away what I do.
Take away what I need.
Take away everything
That takes me away from you.*

Please forgive us.
We are sorry and cannot be sorry enough today.

Palestine

Palestine is a rose that rose
To refresh the air as it enters the nose.

There must be a light at the end of this tunnel

There must be a light at the end of this tunnel
At a point where
So many eyes look into darkness
Cut through a bone and
Shine it.

There will be a creature there
A strange one
With no hands
No lips
No arms
No ears
No body
And only eyes
Eyes and soul.

That being will find a light from within you
And strike it out to the world.

Over there
In that place
The river of sadness dries
Melancholy waves hush and
The Sorrow garden
Reflects an Arabian desert moonlight
Shining the universe.

There
You sit with your hand back and forth
Playing the water of a Damascus fountain.

Interview

I interviewed Amir for the *Soul Food* column, about his past, his poetics and his politics. Amir asked me to make it clear to readers that he is not speaking on behalf of all poets, nor does he intend offer advice to others on what to think or write. His views are his and his alone.

Hi Amir! Can you tell us a bit about yourself to start with, please?

I am a British/Syrian poet of Kurdish origin, born in Aleppo in 1979, and I came to Britain in 2003. I started writing at the age of 16 or 17. My poetry has now been published in the USA, Pakistan, Finland, Morocco and Mexico and in the anthology *Break-Out*. I recently completed an MA in International Studies at the University of Durham, and prior to that I gained a BA in history from Teesside University.

The book from which you've chosen the poems, *Don't Forget The Couscous*, is a collection about exile and home, love and loss. My next book, scheduled for publication in 2017, will be an autobiographical work, *From Aleppo Without Love*, touching on themes of pain and agony felt by myself and my sisters, Shaza, Rana and Layla.

Can you tell us something about your approach to writing, about why and how you write?

As a child and as a teenager, I experienced oppression both in the private and public spheres. I was both a subject and witness to violent acts for several years, and those memories have inspired my writing. My writing has become an outlet, to channel some awful experiences and redeem their pain.

Inspirational moments, for me, often arrive while on a journey. At stations and airports, poems are born, and then later on rise and mature, in quietness. The first stage of the process, the poem's conception, is more important than the second. I am constantly ready with pen, paper, phone and laptop, to put down words and thoughts when on the road. I am a writer who starts big and then goes small, small, small until the word is loud and clear. Nonetheless, the increase and decrease of thoughts is sometimes done as an experiment. Clarity, a sense of simplicity, and fluency are continuous aims.

How do you find living in Britain, on Teesside?

Living on Teesside gave me a good start on the poetry road here in England. The poetry scene is lively and dynamic, with new faces often coming to light – particularly through the MA Creative Writing course at Teesside University, led by two local poets, Andy Willoughby and Bob Beagrie.

I appreciate what Britain offers in terms of safety, shelter and an atmosphere to write fearlessly. These aspects are particularly relevant to *From Aleppo without Love*. Not many places on earth are available to write such work bravely and feel safe. Britain is one.

Can you give us your thoughts on the current refugee crisis, and the troubles in Syria and the Middle East?

A poet is not a politician, for sure, but more someone who can guide public opinion so that politicians are directed onto certain paths. When a poet tries to become a politician, there is a danger for him/her of restricting the imaginative self to intellectual certainties. Nothing kills creativity at the cradle more than adherence to one sole, specific view. As a poet, I try to stay free of specific political thought as much as possible, like a bird who visits nests but never resides forever in one of them. Not sure if I do that successfully! I do perhaps still exhibit partisan views – like everyone I have certain biases.

As for what goes on now in the region, I still feel traumatised by what went on, what goes on now and what might happen next. I don't have the ability to take up a pen and write properly on recent events. Maybe the next generation can. Possibly that is why some of my attempts to write poems about the refugee crisis are weak, powerless and tend to fail as poems. Humanity, and here I mean worldwide, not specific governments or locations, will need to examine itself after such a crisis. The current Syrian refugee crisis is the largest since WW2. Who would have thought the world would see such a massive refugee crisis?

What other poets do you admire, and would recommend to our readers?

Humanist poets in the Middle East are now necessary more than ever. The Syrian poet Adunis is a great example, tightly embracing the humanist ideal when the Arab Spring/revelation/uprising/unrest (or whatever you prefer to call it) started. For an intellectual from the region to hold such views is not an easy task. Adunis consistently provokes us away from the thought of taking sides, whether that's Arab nationalism or another system of thought. The Middle East needs more poets like Adunis and wise words like these:

“Do you remember how I followed that war? And how once I turned to time and said,
'If you had two ears to listen with
You too would have walked the universe, deluded and dishevelled,
no beginning to your end”

The second poet and writer who comes to mind instantly is Muhammed Shukri. Moroccan and of Berber origin, Shukri's writing breaks down social barriers that are put into place to hide the unknown. That 'unknown' is at the heart of what goes on now in the Middle East. Shukri speaks about Arab society with micro details. He does it with openness, frankness and insight into the 'how' and the 'why'. After all, rulers of the Middle East come from the region's social fabric, not from Mars.

For Shukri to give us such a detailed vision is a luxury. Unfortunately, he is yet to find adequate echo from other writers in the region, and yet to be given the status he deserves. That is possibly due to the culture of shame, which still shackles the process of liberation in the Arab world.

Thanks very much, Amir. With which poem from your collection would you like us to end the *Soul Food* column?

I would like your readers to read and enjoy *It's All About Love*. And thank you very much!

It's All About Love

Be grateful for everything written about love
From the first ink humanity slaughtered in Syria
To this very last exact word right now on this page:
LOVE.

Love is a misbaha:
Full of beads
Suddenly
Cut loose on the world
To drown lovers up to their ears
Leaving only the brain
To think of love.

Love like a red wall in the Al Hambra
Blushes when you enter.

It is an Andalusian hammam
A scar left for ever on the face of Granada.

Love is a palm tree in Fes
Taaaalllllll with a nest at its top
Grass on grass assembled by lovebirds.

Love is a poem you perfect for months
And like an ardent and sexually demanding young lover
Always wants more of you.

So follow the fine line of the curve
Then rest your head in deep sleep.

Love is a tear
About to explode
In the middle of an eye.

It's a Barkouk with wrinkles.
The squeeze let its remnants come out of the fist
The way runny butter does.

Love rises with every virgin who keeps herself intact only
for one.

Love is a pair of naked lovers in a pickle jar
Twisted on one another and promising to stay this way
forever.

And this life must go on to have more of love
Be in and out of it,
Fall for it,
Around it,
Because of it.

Finally
One refuses to call love it
Or he,
Or she,
Or they,
We,
Us,
Them,
Love is different.
It is a ferry crossing between lovers' eyes.
It's in trees,
Water,
Sky,
Rivers.

It's an ember as lovers embrace
By a fire in the Atlas mountains.

And as the story goes in *The Arabian Nights*:
*Love becomes a red rose that jumps into the Nazareth
palace
And gives it colour
While lovers sent to the moon kissing
Stay there forever.*

Love gives itself to everyone
Everywhere,
But since Eve's arrival

What it gave so far nothing but this

Love is a religion
So follow its scripture
Make love at certain times a day
On Friday,
Saturday,
Or Sunday,
Or even make your own new holy day and call it:
Loveday.

Love is a wave between Tangier and the sweetheart's
eyes
Daily it sails between the two.

Or maybe love is a stream of milk between a nipple
And the world to feed it tranquillity.

Love has one flavour
One colour
And no country.
Its inhabitants are everything that moves
including this pen as it writes.

It's even in the sand clock that appears in a pupil,
Dropping endlessly as you watch it nonstop.

Love is the three quarters of the earth
Which is water,
You swallow it all
And your stomach can contain more if that is what love
wants.

Love is a high mountain shadow
It appears and disappears on your lover's back nightly
As he rises up and down in the act of making love.

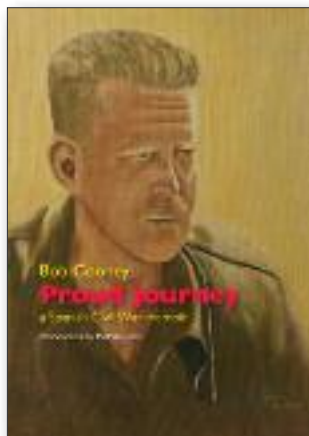
Love is pure and never mixes itself with hate,
Yet it is part of it
The way an oil-slick moves in the sea.

Love is beautiful
So beautiful
That when you see it
You fall into a love-coma.

Love is the best form of government that political philosophy can
offer
Where you have no duty but one:
To make love.

Acknowledgements

The poems are taken from *Life for Us*, by Choman Hardi, Bloodaxe Books, 2004 and *Don't Forget the Couscous*, by Amir Darwish, Smokestack Books, 2015. Thanks go to Choman, Amir and their publishers for permission to reproduce the poems.



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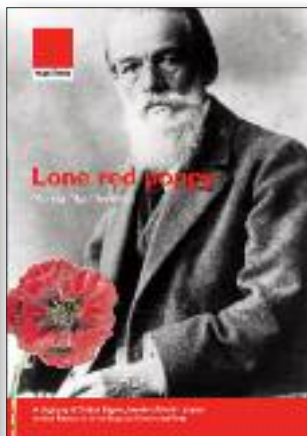
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