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INCONVENIENT TRUTHS ABOUT ZIONISM

JACQUES HERSH

Capitalism in Wonderland

RICHARD YORK, BRETT CLARK & JOHN BELLAMY FOSTER

Poetry & the Politics of Poetry

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Notes from the Editors

This issue of *Monthly Review* marks the sixtieth anniversary of the magazine. We are reprinting here Albert Einstein's classic article "Why Socialism?," written for volume 1, no. 1, of *Monthly Review* (May 1949). On Thursday, September 17, we will meet together at the Ethical Culture Society in Manhattan to celebrate and to promote a global socialism for the twenty-first century. We invite all our subscribers and friends.

Looking back over the history of *Monthly Review* we are struck by the historical congruence between the long-term critique of capitalism developed in these pages over the decades and the actual course of events. This is true with respect to all three major areas of crisis of the capitalist world system: economy, ecology, and empire.

With respect to the economy, the work of longtime MR editors Paul Sweezy and Harry Magdoff began to focus on the creation of the dollar standard while it was coming into being at the start of the 1970s (with the demise of the old dollar-gold standard). From that time forward they identified the U.S. external balance of

(continued on inside back cover)

Capitalism in Wonderland

RICHARD YORK, BRETT CLARK, AND JOHN BELLAMY FOSTER

In a recent essay, "Economics Needs a Scientific Revolution," in one of the leading scientific journals, *Nature*, physicist Jean-Philippe Bouchaud, a researcher for an investment management company, asked rhetorically, "What is the flagship achievement of economics?" Bouchaud's answer: "Only its recurrent inability to predict and avert crises."[1] Although his discussion is focused on the current worldwide financial crisis, his comment applies equally well to mainstream economic approaches to the environment—where, for example, ancient forests are seen as non-performing assets to be liquidated, and clean air and water are luxury goods for the affluent to purchase at their discretion. The field of economics in the United States has long been dominated by thinkers who unquestioningly accept the capitalist status quo and, accordingly, value the natural world only in terms of how much short-term profit can be generated by its exploitation. As a result, the inability of received economics to cope with or even perceive the global ecological crisis is alarming in its scope and implications.

Bouchaud penetratingly observes, "The supposed omniscience and perfect efficacy of a free market stems from economic work done in the 1950s and 1960s, which with hindsight looks more like propaganda against communism than plausible science." The capitalist ideology that undergirds economics in the United States has led the profession to be detached from reality, rendering it incapable of understanding many of the crises the world faces. Mainstream economics' obsession with the endless growth of GDP—a measure of "value added," not of human well-being or the intrinsic

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worth of ecosystems and other species—and its failure to recognize the fundamental ecological underpinnings of the economy, has led to more than simply an inability to perceive the deterioration of the global environment. In fact, the problem goes much deeper. Orthodox economics, like the capitalist system that it serves, leads to an "*Après moi le déluge!*" philosophy that is anything but sustainable in orientation. As Naomi Klein has said, there is something perversely "natural" about *Disaster Capitalism*.[2]

Economists in Wonderland

The inherent incapacity of orthodox or neoclassical economics to take ecological and social costs into account was perhaps best exemplified in the United States by the work of Julian Simon. In articles and exchanges in *Science* and *Social Science Quarterly* and in his book *The Ultimate Resource* published at the beginning of the 1980s, he insisted that there were no serious environmental problems, that there were no environmental constraints on economic or population growth, and that there would never be long-term resource shortages. For example, he infamously claimed that copper (an element) could be made from other metals and that only the mass of the universe, not that of the earth, put a theoretical limit on how much copper could be produced. The free market if left unfettered, he contended, would ensure continuous progress into the distant future. These and other dubious assertions led ecologist Paul Ehrlich to refer to Simon as "an economist in Wonderland."[3]

Apologists for capitalism continue to occupy Wonderland, because it is only in Wonderland that environmental problems either do not really exist or can be solved by capitalism, which can also improve the quality of life for the mass of humanity. Bjørn Lomborg, a Danish statistician and political scientist (now an adjunct professor at the Copenhagen Business School), picked up Simon's torch, publishing his salvo aimed at environmentalism, *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, in 2001. Lomborg argued, for example, that attempting to prevent climate change would cost more and cause more harm than letting it happen. Lomborg's book was immediately praised to the skies by the mass media, which was looking for a new anti-environmental crusader. Soon after the publication of *The Skeptical Environmentalist*, environmental scientists documented the countless flaws (not all of them inadvertent) in Lomborg's

reasoning and evidence. *Scientific American* devoted part of an issue to four articles by leading scientists sharply criticizing Lomborg. As a result of its serious flaws, the book was rejected by the scientific community. Yet, despite the adamant rejection of *The Skeptical Environmentalist* by natural scientists, all of this seemed only to add to Lomborg's celebrity within the corporate media system. *The Economist* touted the book and its conclusions, proclaiming it to be "one of the most valuable books on public policy," having dispelled the notion of "looming environmental disaster" and "the conviction that capitalism is self-destructive."[4] *Time* magazine in 2004 designated Lomborg as one of the 100 most influential people in the world; while in 2008, Britain's *Guardian* newspaper labeled him as one of the "50 people who could save the planet."

In 2003 Lomborg organized what he called the "Copenhagen Consensus" to rank the world's leading problems. This was carried out through the writing of a number of reports on various global priorities by a group of hand-picked, mainly economic authorities, and then the subsequent ranking of these problems by eight "experts"—all economists, since economists were declared to be the only experts on "economic prioritization," i.e., decisions on where to put society's resources. The eight Copenhagen Consensus economists not surprisingly all ranked climate change at or near the bottom of the world's agenda, backing up Lomborg's position.[5]

Lomborg's 2007 book *Cool It: The Skeptical Environmentalist's Guide to Global Warming* was an extended attack on the Kyoto Protocol and all attempts to carry out substantial cuts in greenhouse gas emissions. For Lomborg the essential point was that, "all major peer-reviewed economic models agree that little emissions reduction is justified." He relied particularly on the work of Yale economist William Nordhaus, a leading economic contributor to the discussion of global warming, who has opposed any drastic reductions in greenhouse gases, arguing instead for a slow process of emissions reduction, on the grounds that it would be more economically justifiable.[6]

Economists versus Natural Scientists

Needless to say, establishment economists, virtually by definition, tend to be environmental skeptics. Yet they have an outsized influence on climate policy as representatives of the dominant end of capitalist society, before which all other ends are subordinated.

(Social scientists other than economists either side with the latter in accepting accumulation as the appropriate goal of society or are largely excluded from the debate.) In sharp contrast, natural and physical scientists are increasingly concerned about the degradation of the planetary environment, but have less direct influence on social policy responses.

Mainstream economists are trained in the promotion of private profits as the singular "bottom line" of society, even at the expense of larger issues of human welfare and the environment. The market rules over all, even nature. For Milton Freedom the environment was not a problem since the answer was simple and straightforward. As he put it: "ecological values can find their natural space in the market, like any other consumer demand."[7]

Natural scientists, as distinct from economists, however, typically root their investigations in a materialist conception of nature and are engaged in the study at some level of the natural world, the conditions of which they are much more disposed to take seriously. They are thus much less inclined to underrate environmental problems.

The conflict between economists and natural scientists on global warming came out in the open as a result of an article by Nordhaus that appeared in the leading natural science journal, *Science*, in 1993. Nordhaus projected that the loss to gross world output in 2100 due to continuation of global warming trends would be insignificant (about 1 percent of GDP in 2100). His conclusion clearly conflicted with the results of natural science since these same business-as-usual trends could lead, according to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) scenarios at the time, to as much as a 5.8°C (10.4°F) increase in average global temperature, which for scientists was nothing less than catastrophic for civilization and life itself. Nordhaus had concluded in his article that attempts at emissions stabilization would be worse than inaction. This led to a number of strong replies by noted natural scientists (in letters to *Science*), who viewed Nordhaus's analysis as patently absurd.

Nordhaus subsequently defended his views by surveying a number of influential economists and scientists, asking them for their best guesstimates, publishing his results in the *American Scientist* in 1994. The economists he chose to survey agreed with him that climate change would have little effect on the economy. Yet, the

natural scientists saw the consequences as potentially catastrophic. One physical scientist responded by claiming that there was a 10 percent chance under present trends of the complete destruction of civilization—similar views would likely be even more common today. Nordhaus observed that those who knew most about the economy were optimistic. Stephen Schneider, a Stanford biologist and climate scientist (and a leading critic of both Lomborg and Nordhaus), retorted that those who knew most about the environment were worried. As Schneider summed up the debate in 1997 in his *Laboratory Earth*: "Most conventional economists...thought even this gargantuan climate change [a rise in average global temperature of 6°C]—equivalent to the scale of change from an ice age to an interglacial epoch in a hundred years, rather than thousands of years—would have only a few percent impact on the world economy. In essence, they accept the paradigm that society is almost independent of nature."[8]

Orthodox economists, it is true, often project economic costs of global warming in 2100 to be only a few percentage points and therefore hardly significant, even at levels of climate change that would endanger most of the "higher" species on the planet and human civilization itself, costing hundreds of millions, if not billions, of human lives.

The failure of economic models to count the human and ecological costs of climate change should not surprise us. Bourgeois economics has a carefully cultivated insensitivity to human tragedy (not to mention natural catastrophe) that has become almost the definition of "man's inhumanity to man." Thomas Schelling, a recipient of the Bank of Sweden's Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, and one of Lomborg's eight experts in the Copenhagen Consensus, is known for arguing that since the effects of climate change will fall disproportionately on the poorer nations of the global South, it is questionable how much in the way of resources the rich nations of the global North should devote to the mitigation of climate trends. (Schelling in his Copenhagen Consensus evaluation ranked climate change at the very bottom of world priorities.)[9] Here one can't help but be reminded of Hudson Institute planners, who in the process of proposing a major dam on the Amazon in the early 1970s contended in effect—as one critic put it at the time—that "if the flooding drowns a few tribes who were not evacuated because they were supposed to be on higher ground, or wipes out a few forest species, who

cares?"[10] Similarly, while chief economist of the World Bank, Lawrence Summers, now Obama's top economic advisor, wrote an internal World Bank memo in which he stated: "the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest-wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that." He justified this by arguing: "The measurement of the costs of health-impairing pollution depends on the foregone earnings from increased morbidity and mortality. From this point of view a given amount of health-impairing pollution should be done in the country with the lowest cost, which will be the country of the lowest wages."[11]

Discounting the Future

Nordhaus—who ranks as one of the most influential mainstream economists on global warming today and is a cut above figures like Simon and Lomborg—has proposed, in his 2008 book *A Question of Balance: Weighing the Options on Global Warming Policies*, a go-it-slow strategy on combating greenhouse emissions.[12] Nordhaus demonstrates here that despite impressive credentials he remains hobbled by the same ideology that has crippled other mainstream economists. In essence this comes down to the belief that capitalism offers the most efficient response to questions of resource use, and indeed a sufficient answer to the world's problems.

A Question of Balance presents a fairly standard economic argument about how to address global climate change, although it is backed by Nordhaus's own distinctive analyses using sophisticated modeling techniques. He acknowledges that global climate change is a real problem, and is human generated, arguing that it is necessary slowly to move away from carbon-emitting energy sources. Nevertheless, the central failures of his approach are that it assigns value to the natural environment and human well-being using standard economic measures that are fundamentally inadequate for this purpose, and that it fails properly to incorporate the possibility that an ecological collapse could utterly undermine the economy, and indeed the world as we know it. These failures, which are those of mainstream economics, are clearly apparent in his approach to discounting for purposes of estimating how much effort should be put into reducing carbon emissions. Roughly speaking, Nordhaus argues we should only invest a modest amount of effort in reducing carbon emissions in the short term and slowly increase this over time, because he favors a high discount rate.

The issue of discounting may seem esoteric to most people, but not to economists, and deserves some examination. Discounting is fundamentally about how we value the future relative to the present—insofar as it makes any sense at all to attach numbers to such valuations. The "discount rate" can be thought of as operating in inverse relation to compound interest. While "compounding measures how much present-day investments will be worth in the future, discounting measures how much future benefits are worth today."[13] Estimation of the discount rate is based on two moral issues. First, there is the issue of how we value the welfare of future generations relative to present ones (the time discount rate). As Nordhaus states, "A zero discount rate means that all generations into the indefinite future are treated the same; a positive discount rate means that the welfare of future generations is reduced or 'discounted' compared with nearer generations." A catastrophe affecting humanity fifty years from now, given a discount rate of 10 percent, would have a "present value" less than 1 percent of its future cost. Second, there is the issue of how wealthy future generations will be relative to present ones and whether it is appropriate to shift costs from the present to the future. If we assume a high rate of economic growth into the indefinite future, we are more likely to avoid investing in addressing problems now, because we assume that future generations will be wealthier than we are and can better afford to address these problems, even if the problems become substantially worse.[14]

The difficulty of the discount rate, as environmental economist Frank Ackerman has written, is that, "it is indeed a choice; the appropriate discount rate for public policy decisions spanning many generations cannot be deduced from private market decisions today, or from economic theory. A lower discount rate places a greater importance on future lives and conditions of life. To many, it seems ethically necessary to have a discount rate at or close to zero, in order to respect our descendants and create a sustainable future."[15] Indeed, the very notion of sustainability is about maintaining the environment *for future generations.*

Economic growth theorist Roy Harrod argued in the 1940s that discounting the future based on a "pure time preference" (the myopic preference for consumption today apart from all other considerations) was a "polite expression for rapacity." A high discount rate tends to encourage spending on policies/projects with short-

term benefits and long-term costs as opposed to ones with high up-front costs and long paybacks. It therefore encourages "wait-and-see" and "go-it-slow" approaches to impending catastrophes, such as climate change, rather than engaging in strong preventive action.[16]

Nordhaus, like most mainstream economists, through his support of a high discount rate, places a low value on the welfare of future generations relative to present ones, and assumes, despite considerable uncertainty in this regard, that future generations will be much wealthier than present ones. This leads him to argue against large immediate investments in curtailing climate change. He advocates putting a tax on carbon of $30 to $50 per ton and increasing this to about $85 by mid-century. Taxing carbon at $30 a ton would increase the price of gasoline by a mere seven cents a gallon, which gives one a sense of the low level of importance Nordhaus places on curtailing climate change as well as the future of humanity and the environment. Nordhaus has tripled his estimate of the loss to global economic output due to climate change in 2100, moving from his earlier estimate of almost 1 percent to nearly 3 percent in his latest study.[17] Still, such losses are deemed insignificant, given a high discount rate, in comparison to the costs that would be incurred in any attempt to curtail drastically climate change today, leading Nordhaus to advocate a weak-kneed response.

Nordhaus is particularly interested in countering the arguments presented in *The Economics of Climate Change* (commonly known as *The Stern Review*), the report written by Nicholas Stern (former chief economist of the World Bank) for the British government, which advocates immediate and substantial investments aimed at reducing carbon emissions. Stern, deviating from the practice of most orthodox economists, uses a low discount rate, arguing that it is morally inexcusable to place low value on the welfare of future generations and to impose the costs of the problems we generate on our descendants. Nordhaus discounts the future at roughly 6 percent a year; Stern by 1.4 percent. This means that for Stern having a trillion dollars a century from now is worth $247 billion today, while for Nordhaus it is only worth $2.5 billion.[18] Due to this, Stern advocates imposing a tax on carbon of greater than $300 per ton and increasing it to nearly $1,000 before the end of the century.[19] Lomborg in the *Wall Street Journal* characterized the *Stern Review*

as "fear-mongering," and referred to it in *Cool It!* as a "radical report," comparing it unfavorably to Nordhaus's work.[20]

The Unworldly Economists

It is important to recognize that the difference displayed here between Nordhaus and Stern is fundamentally a moral, not a technical, one. Where they primarily differ is not on their views of the science behind climate change but on their value assumptions about the propriety of shifting burdens to future generations. This lays bare the ideology embedded in orthodox neoclassical economics, a field which regularly presents itself as using objective, even naturalistic, methods for modeling the economy. However, past all of the equations and technical jargon, the dominant economic paradigm is built on a value system that prizes capital accumulation in the short-term, while de-valuing everything else in the present *and everything altogether in the future*.

Some of the same blinders are in fact common in varying degrees to both Nordhaus and Stern. Nordhaus proposes what he calls an "optimal path" in economic terms aimed at slowing down the growth of carbon emissions. In his "climate policy ramp" emissions reductions would start slow and get bigger later, but would nonetheless lead eventually (in the next century) to an atmospheric carbon concentration of nearly 700 parts per million (ppm). This would present the possibility of global average temperature increases approaching 6°C (10.8°F) above preindustrial levels—a level that Mark Lynas in his *Six Degrees* compares to the sixth circle of hell in Dante's *Inferno*.[21]

Indeed, with a level of carbon concentration much less than this, 500 ppm (associated with global warming on the order of 3.5°C or 6.3°F), the effects both on the world's biological diversity and on human beings themselves would be disastrous. "A conservative estimate for the number of species that would be exterminated (committed to extinction)" at this level, according to James Hansen, director of NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies, "is one million." Moreover, rising sea levels, the melting of glaciers, and other effects could drastically affect hundreds of millions, conceivably even billions, of people. Hansen, the world's most famous climatologist, argues that in order to avoid catastrophic change it is necessary to *reduce* atmospheric carbon to a level of 350 ppm.[22]

Yet, the *Stern Review* itself, despite being designated as a "radical" and "fear-mongering" report by Lomborg, targets an atmospheric carbon concentration stabilization level of 480 ppm (550 ppm in carbon equivalent), which—if never reaching Nordhaus's near 700 ppm peak (over 900 ppm carbon equivalent)—is sure to be disastrous, if the analysis of Hansen and most other leading climatologists is to be believed.[23] Why such a high atmospheric carbon target?

The answer is provided explicitly by the *Stern Review* itself, which argues that past experience shows that anything more than a 1 percent average annual cut in carbon emissions in industrial countries would have a significant negative effect on economic growth. Or as the *Stern Review* itself puts it, "it is difficult to secure emission cuts faster than about 1 percent a year except in instances of recession."[24] So the atmospheric carbon target is determined not according to what is necessary to sustain the global environment, protect species, and ensure the sustainability of human civilization, but by what is required to keep the capitalist economy itself alive.

The starting point that led to Summers's conclusion in his 1992 World Bank memo is in fact the same that underlies the analyses of both Nordhaus and Stern. Namely, human life in effect is worth only what each person contributes to the economy as measured in monetary terms. So, if global warming increases mortality in Bangladesh, which it appears likely that it will, this is only reflected in economic models to the extent that the deaths of Bengalis hurt the economy. Since Bangladesh is very poor, economic models of the type Nordhaus and Stern use would not estimate it to be worthwhile to prevent deaths there since these losses would show up as miniscule in the measurements. Nordhaus, according to his discount analysis, would go a step beyond Stern and place an even slighter value on the lives of people if they are lost several decades in the future. This economic ideology, of course, extends beyond just human life, such that all of the millions of species on earth are valued only to the extent they contribute to GDP. Thus, ethical concerns about the intrinsic value of human life and of the lives of other creatures are completely invisible in standard economic models. Increasing human mortality and accelerating the rate of extinctions are to most economists only problems if they undermine the "bottom line." In other respects they are invisible: as is the natural world as a whole.

From any kind of rational perspective, i.e., one not dominated exclusively by the narrow economic goal of capital accumulation, such views would seem to be entirely irrational, if not pathological. In order to highlight the peculiar mindset at work it is useful to quote a passage from Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass:*

> "The prettiest are always further!" [Alice] said at last, with a sigh at the obstinacy of the rushes in growing so far off, as, with flushed cheeks and dripping hair and hands, she scrambled back into her place, and began to arrange her new-found treasures.
>
> What mattered it to her just then that the rushes had begun to fade, and to lose all their scent and beauty, from the very moment that she picked them? Even real scented rushes, you know, last only a very little while—and these, being dream-rushes, melted away almost like snow, as they lay in heaps at her feet—but Alice hardly noticed this, there were so many other curious things to think about.[25]

A society that values above all else the acquisition of abstract value-added, and in the prospect lays waste to nature, in an endless quest for further accumulation, is ultimately an irrational society. What matters to it what it leaves wasted at its feet, as it turns elsewhere in its endless pursuit of more?

Mainstream economics, ironically, has never been a materialist science. There is no materialist conception of nature in what Joseph Schumpeter called its "preanalytic vision."[26] It exists in almost complete ignorance of physics (constantly contravening the second law of thermodynamics), and of the degradation of the biosphere. It sees the world simply in terms of an endless, enlarging "circular flow" of economic relations.

The ecological blinders of neoclassical economics, which excludes the planet itself from its vision, are well illustrated by a debate that took place within the World Bank, related by ecological economist Herman Daly. As Daly tells the story, in 1992 (when Summers was chief economist of the World Bank and Daly worked for the Bank) the annual *World Development Report* was to focus on the theme *Development and the Environment:*

> An early draft contained a diagram entitled "The Relationship Between the Economy and the Environment." It consisted of a square labeled "economy," with an arrow coming in labeled "inputs" and an arrow going out labeled "outputs"—nothing more. I suggested that the picture failed to show the environment, and that it would

> be good to have a large box containing the one depicted, to represent the environment. Then the relation between the environment and the economy would be clear—specifically, that the economy is a subsystem of the environment both as a source of raw material inputs and as a "sink" for waste outputs.
>
> The next draft included the same diagram and text, but with an unlabeled box drawn around the economy like a picture frame. I commented that the larger box had to be labeled "environment" or else it was merely decorative, and that the text had to explain that the economy is related to the environment as a subsystem within the larger ecosystem and is dependent on it in the ways previously stated. The next draft omitted the diagram altogether.[27]

To be sure, not all economics is as resolutely unworldly as this. Nicholas Georgescu-Roegen, an economist critical of the anti-ecological orientation of economics—and the founder of the heterodox tradition known as ecological economics, which builds into its preanalytic vision the notion that the economy is in fact materially limited by physics and ecology—explained that the drive for continuous social wealth and economic profit increased the ecological demands placed on nature, expanding the scale of environmental degradation. He highlighted the error of pretending that the economy could be separated from ecology. Others, like Herman Daly, and Paul Burkett in the Marxist tradition, have pushed forward this notion of ecological economics.[28] Yet, these ecological economists remain on the margins, excluded from major policy decisions and academic influence.

The Juggernaut of Capital

Mainstream economists see themselves as engaged in the science of economic growth. Nevertheless, the assumption of endless economic growth, as if this were the purpose of society and the way of meeting human needs, seems naïve at best. As Daly says, "an ever growing economy is biophysically impossible."[29] The Wonderland nature of such an assumption is particularly obvious in light of the fact that the very underpinning of the economy, the natural environment itself, is being compromised.

Marx did not miss the importance of this social-ecological relationship. He pointed out that humans are dependent upon nature, given that it provides the energy and materials that make life possible. While capitalists focused on exchange value and short-term

gains, Marx explained that the earth is the ultimate source of all material wealth, and that it needed to be sustained for "successive generations." The "conquest of nature" through the endless pursuit of capital, which necessitated the constant exploitation of nature, disrupted natural cycles and processes, undermining ecosystems and causing a metabolic rift. Engels warned that such human actions left a particular "stamp...upon the earth" and could cause unforeseen changes in the natural conditions that exact the "revenge" of nature.[30]

Today carbon dioxide is being added to the atmosphere at an accelerating rate, much faster than natural systems can absorb it. Between 2000 and 2006, according to Josep G. Canadell and his colleagues, in their article in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, the emissions growth rate increased as the global economy grew and became even more carbon intensive, meaning that societies emitted more carbon per unit of economic activity at the beginning of the new millennium than they did in the past. At the same time, the capacity of natural sinks to absorb carbon dioxide has declined, given environmental degradation such as deforestation. This contributed to a more dramatic upswing in carbon accumulation in the atmosphere than was anticipated.[31] The juggernaut of capital overexploits both the resource taps and waste sinks of the environment, undermining their ability to operate and provide natural services that enhance human life.

There are many good reasons to think that the patterns and processes which held for the past one hundred years—e.g., economic growth—may not hold for the next one hundred, a point on which the present economic crisis should perhaps focus our attention. Justifying shifting costs from the present to the future based on the assumption that future generations will be richer than present ones is highly dubious. In relation to the economy as well as the ecology the future is highly uncertain, though current trends clearly point to disaster. If global climate change, not to mention the many other interconnected environmental problems we face, has some of the more catastrophic effects that scientists predict, economic growth may not only be hampered, but the entire economy may be undermined, not to mention the conditions of nature on which we depend. Therefore, future generations may be much poorer than present ones and even less able to afford to fix the problems we are currently creating.

In addition, the growth mania of neoclassical economists focuses on the kinds of things, mainly private goods reflecting individual interests, which comprise GDP, while collective goods and the global commons are devalued in comparison. It therefore encourages an economic bubble approach to the world's resources that from a deeper and longer perspective cannot be maintained.

For all of these reasons, the current economic order tends to mismeasure the earth and human welfare. Capitalism, in many respects, has become a failed system in terms of the ecology, economy, and world stability. It can hardly be said to deliver the goods in any substantive sense, and yet in its process of unrestrained acquisition it is undermining the long-term prospects of humanity and the earth.[32]

If we cannot rely on orthodox economists to avert crises in financial markets, an area that is supposedly at the core of their expertise, why should we rely on them to avert ecological crises, the understanding of which requires knowledge of the natural environment that is not typically covered in their training? Nor is such an awareness compatible with the capitalist outlook that is embedded in received economics. Ehrlich has noted that, "Most economists are utterly ignorant of the constraints placed upon the economic system by physical and biological factors," and they fail to "recognize that the economic system is completely and irretrievably embedded in the environment," rather than the other way around. Due to these problems, he has stated pointedly that, "it seems fair to say that most ecologists see the growth-oriented economic system and the economists who promote that system as the gravest threat faced by humanity today." Furthermore, "the dissociation of economics from environmental realities can be seen in the notion that the market mechanism completely eliminates the need for concern about diminishing resources in the long run."[33]

Plan B: The Technological Wonderland

The demonstrated failure of received economics to offer a solution to the environmental problem compatible with a capitalist economy has recently resulted in a Plan B to save the system through the proliferation of technological silver bullets for carrying out a "green revolution," without altering the social and economic relations of the system. Often this is presented in terms of an "investment strategy" geared to new Schumpeterian epoch-making

innovations of an environmental nature that will somehow save the day for both the economy and ecology, while restoring U.S. empire. Orthodox economists assume that the resource problems of today will force prices up tomorrow and that these higher prices will force the creation of new technology. The new army of environmental technocrats claims that the new innovations that will solve all problems are simply there waiting to be developed—if only a market is created, usually with the help of the state. Such views have been promoted in the last couple of years by figures like Thomas Friedman, Newt Gingrich, Fred Krupp of the Environmental Defense Fund, and Ted Nordhaus and Michael Shellenberger of the Breakthrough Institute. Krupp and Miriam Horn present this as a question of a competitive race between nations to be first in the green technologies and markets that will save the world. "The question," they write, "is no longer just how to avert the catastrophic impacts of climate change, but which nations will produce—and export—the green technologies of the twenty-first century."[34] These analyses tend to be big on the wonders of technology and the market, while setting aside issues of physics, ecology, the contradictions of accumulation, and social relations. They assume that it mostly comes down to energy efficiency (and other technical fixes) without understanding that in a capitalist system, growth of efficiency normally leads to an increase in scale of the economy (and further rifts in ecological systems) that more than negates any ecological gains made (a problem known as the Jevons Paradox).[35]

Like the establishment economists, with whom they are allied, the technocrats promise to solve all problems while keeping the social relations intact. The most ambitious schemes involve massive geoengineering proposals to combat climate change, usually aimed at enhancing the earth's albedo (reflectivity). These entail schemes like using high-flying aircraft, naval guns, or giant balloons to launch reflective materials (sulfate aerosols or aluminum oxide dust) into the upper stratosphere to reflect back the rays of the sun. There are even proposals to create "designer particles" that will be "self-levitating" and "self-orienting" and will migrate to the atmosphere above the poles to provide "sunshades" for the Polar Regions.[36] Such technocrats live in a Wonderland where technology solves all problems, and where the *Sorcerer's Apprentice* has never been heard of. All of this is designed to extend the conquest of the earth rather than to make peace with the planet.

Ecological Revolution

If there was a definite beginning to the modern ecological revolution, this can be traced back to Rachel's Carson's *Silent Spring*. In attempting to counter what she called the "sterile preoccupation with things that are artificial, the alienation from the sources of our strength," that has come to characterize the capitalist Wonderland, Carson insisted that it was necessary to cultivate a renewed *Sense of Wonder* toward the world and living beings. Yet, it was not enough, as she was to demonstrate through her actions, merely to *contemplate* life. It was necessary also to *sustain* it, which meant actively opposing the "gods of profit and production"—and their faithful messengers, the dominant economists of our time.

Notes

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6. Bjørn Lomborg, *Cool It: The Skeptical Environmentalist's Guide to Global Warming* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2007), 37. See also Frank Ackerman, "Hot, It's Not: Reflections on *Cool It*, by Bjørn Lomborg," *Climatic Change* 89 (2008), 435-46.
7. Milton Friedman in Carla Ravaioli, *Economists and the Environment* (London; Zed Press, 1995), 32, 64-65.
8. Stephen H. Schneider, *Laboratory Earth* (New York: Basic Books, 1997), 129-35; William D. Nordhaus, "An Optimal Transition Path for Controlling Greenhouse Gases," *Science* 258 (November 20, 1992): 1318; Stephen Schneider, "Pondering Greenhouse Policy," *Science* 259 (March 5, 1993): 1381. The discussion here borrows from the introduction to John Bellamy Foster, *The Ecological Revolution* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2009), 24-25.
9. Thomas C. Schelling, "The Greenhouse Effect," *The Concise Encyclopedia of Economics*, http://www.econlib.org/library/Enc1/GreenhouseEffect.html; Schelling in Lomborg, *Global Crises, Global Solutions*, 630. Schelling is often "credited" with having been the leading "strategist" of the Vietnam War.

10. Gordon Rattray Taylor, *The Doomsday Book* (Greenwich, CT: Fawcett Publications, 1970), 32-33.
11. After the memo was leaked Summers claimed that he was being "ironic" but the fact that his position conformed to both mainstream economic analysis and other statements that he had argued explicitly and publicly belied that claim. See Summers's memo and its critique in John Bellamy Foster, *Ecology Against Capitalism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2002), 60-68.
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23. IPCC, *Summary for Policymakers* in *Climate Change 2007*, 15; Dietz and Stern, "On the Timing," 139; Stern, *The Economics of Climate Change*, 16. Rather than using atmospheric carbon dioxide concentration, like Hansen and Nordhaus, the *Stern Review* focuses on carbon dioxide equivalent concentration, which includes the six Kyoto greenhouse gases (carbon dioxide, methane, nitrous oxide, hydrofluorocarbons, perfluorocarbons, and sulfur hexafluoride) all expressed in terms of the equivalent amount of carbon dioxide. For the sake of consistency, we present here the carbon dioxide concentration and then in parentheses the corresponding carbon dioxide equivalent concentration.
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26. Joseph A. Schumpeter, *A History of Economic Analysis* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1951), 41-42.
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28. In addition to Daly's book cited above see Paul A. Burkett, *Marxism and Ecological Economics* (Boston: Brill, 2006).
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MONTHLY REVIEW *Fifty Years Ago*

Ideology, as Marx and Engels originally used the term, is a false consciousness based on an interpretation of realty in terms of the special experience and particular interests of a dominant class. When it is in the ascendant, even an exploiting class may be able to see reality non-ideologically, that is to say, with sufficient clarity and objectivity to be able to understand what types of action are capable of promoting its true long-term interests. But the thought processes of a declining class inevitably become more and more ideological. Class interests and human interests become increasingly divorced; action to promote the one becomes less and less compatible with action to promote the other. In these circumstances, it becomes the function of ideology to disguise or hide the contradiction, and in so doing it perverts and distorts reality—eventually to the point where *any* form of rational action becomes impossible. This is the essential truth which is so concisely and brilliantly summed up in the Greek aphorism: *Whom the Gods would destroy they first made mad.*

—Leo Huberman and Paul M. Sweezy, "Whom the Gods Would Destroy," *Monthly Review*, May 1959.

Inconvenient Truths about 'Real Existing' Zionism

JACQUES HERSH

The celebrations on the occasion of the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel brought forth mixed feelings for those of us who survived the Holocaust. The reason for this ambivalence is that, while the survivors of the Nazi genocide celebrated the creation of a Jewish state in 1948, few were aware at the time of the human costs and injustices that had been, were being, and would be perpetrated against Palestinian Arabs in our name. The slogan "Never Again," which was the dominating thought in the Jewish psyche in those years, was mostly concerned with the fate of European Jews.

This notwithstanding, some survivors found it difficult to comprehend why, after the industrialized and scientific massacre of millions of Jews, as well as that of other ethnic groups and nationalities, together with the persistent anti-Semitism in both postwar Europe and America, the big powers were now willing to accede to the project of a Jewish homeland. Was this change of heart purely a function of guilt over the treatment of European Jews or was there some "intelligent design" involving the mapping of a future international political architecture which the new state formation would help bring about?

Indeed, with the creation of Israel a shift in the political culture of Jews, gentiles, and Arabs was seemingly taking place. In retrospect, this transmutation would prove to be of great significance for the shape of the world to come. The full scope of this historical phenomenon was not realized at the time. It was only after the end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union that the contours of the new international order could be discerned. The world had certainly not arrived at an end point as suggested by

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Francis Fukuyama's thesis on "the end of history." Instead a new confrontational formation was proposed by the British-Israeli Islam expert, Bernard Lewis, and later propagated by the American political scientist, Samuel Huntington. In essence, the thesis of the "Clash of Civilizations" placed a new paradigm of international politics on the agenda that was readily adopted by neoconservatives in the United States and the Likud Party in Israel. Theoretically and ideologically the thesis drew a fault line between the "West and the rest"! In this projection, the West is considered to be the repository of Judeo-Christian civilization and thus includes the Jewish state.

During the Cold War era, Israel had moved from its initial position of neutrality between the two superpowers at the time of its establishment, to become a Western bastion in the Middle East. In this context it is often forgotten that the Soviet Union accorded diplomatic recognition to the new state within minutes of its proclamation of statehood —with little consideration of the consequences for the Communist Parties in the Arab world! The support of the Soviet Union for the emerging state, which had taken the form of military assistance to the Zionist liberation struggle, was based on the rationale that this would weaken British imperialism in the region. This assumption proved to be correct, but with greater acumen it could have been foreseen that the United States would replace Great Britain and become the principal player in the region as well as the main ally of Israel.

The U.S.-Israeli relationship has become so closely knit since the 1960s that U.S. academics have begun to debate whether it is the Israeli lobby in Washington that determines American policy in the Middle East at the expense of U.S. national interests.[1] Since 9/11, this alliance has grown even stronger. Allegiance to the state of Israel has become a criterion of political correctness with candidates to the White House debating which would best protect Israeli interests. In his commemoration address to the Knesset on May 15, 2008, President Bush declared that the United States was proud to be the "closest ally and best friend in the world" of a nation that was a "homeland for the chosen people" that "had worked tirelessly for peace and...fought valiantly for freedom."[2]

Concerning the Palestinians, who were commemorating the Nakba (catastrophe)—when 700,000 of their forefathers had fled or been expelled from their homes because of the military violence

which accompanied the Israeli declaration of independence—the president had "encouraging" words. When Israel would celebrate its 120 anniversary, he envisioned that the Palestinians would have the "homeland they have long dreamed of and deserved—a democratic state that is governed by law." By 2068, the president prophesized, the Middle East would consist of "free and independent societies" and Hamas, Hezbollah, and al-Qaeda would have been defeated. In other words, six decades more would be needed before "mission accomplished" could be declared—complete acceptance by the Muslim-Arab world of a U.S.-Israeli imposed regional order. Even compared to members of the Bush administration who believed that they could create their own reality, this prediction seems delusional!

Besides the futuristic assumptions concerning the evolution of Middle East politics, this prognostication is based on the supposition that the countries of the region will accept such a geopolitical regimen and that U.S. and Israeli political aims will remain fixed on this objective regardless of the costs involved. The crisis of hegemony the United States is currently undergoing cannot but affect the future possibilities of imposing a "Pox Americana" on the world. Nor is there any guarantee that the contradictions of Israeli society will not influence the politics of the state or that the allegiance of Diaspora Jewry to the long-term objectives of Zionism will retain the same viability. After all, the first sixty years of the existence of Israel have not, even according to present-day proponents of Zionism, fulfilled its promises of greater security for Jews in general. This, in spite of the fact that the state of Israel has an arsenal of two hundred nuclear bombs, one of the strongest and most modern military machines in the Middle East, one of the most developed economies in the world, and last but not least an alliance with the world's number one military superpower. Despite the fact that Islamophobia has replaced the virus of Judeophobia in the West, Diaspora Jews feel unease at the prospects of identifying with a state that violates the human rights of another people and serves the interests of U.S. imperialism worldwide.

The existential purpose of Israel has come into question for many Israelis as well as for an increasing number of Diaspora Jews. The concept of a "national home of the Jews" is losing its appeal. According to Tony Karon, "the simple fact is that almost two-thirds of us have chosen freely to live elsewhere, and have no intention of

ever settling in Israel." It is somewhat paradoxical that 750,000 Israelis live in the United States or other European countries and that it is the norm today, for Israeli citizens who can, to acquire a foreign passport. One of Karon's conclusions that is relevant to the analysis of the Middle East *problematique*, and in direct contradiction to Bush's prognosis, is that "Israel may be an intractable historical fact, but the Zionist ideology that spurred its creation and shaped its identity and sense of national purpose has collapsed—not under the pressure from without, but having rotted from within. It is Jews, not Jihadists, that have consigned Zionism to the dustbin of history."[3] Will the Jewish question again reassert itself after the second failure in modern times to find a "final solution" to it?

To understand what has happened, it may be useful to go back to the roots of Zionism and to include the forces external to the movement that influenced the evolution of Jewish politics. Awareness of the past is of importance to any analysis of the present as well as projections of the future. The collective Jewish memory has been tainted by the Zionist discourse. In this regard, taking the Holocaust as the point of reference for the rich experience of the Jewish people is not nearly sufficient. It should be made clear at the outset that Zionism was only one attempt among others, in modern times, to resolve the Jewish condition caused by their specific situation in the European context. The endeavor to unify the different elements of Jewry behind the Zionist project was a wager undertaken at the end of the nineteenth century that didn't come to fruition until after the Holocaust. Secular nationalism among Jewish populations of Europe appeared parallel to the rise of nationalist ideologies on the continent after the 1840s. But the ideas of the movement began to receive the support of a Jewish base only as a result of the rise of anti-Semitism after 1881. Although the poor and discriminated-against Jewish populations of Eastern Europe were the most receptive to the message of a new life in Palestine, the majority nevertheless tried to emigrate to Western Europe, the Americas, and Australia.

The sociological composition in the gestation of the Zionist movement was characterized by a high variation: religious Jews, non-religious Jews identifying nevertheless with Jewish tradition, and assimilated Jews without interest in Judaism or Jadishness, but nevertheless considered to be Jews by gentiles. The common

denominator, apart from their ancestry, was the way they all were viewed by the others: i.e., anti-Semitism. European Jews were dispersed and belonged (unevenly) to certain social layers in some places and to different ones in others. Some were more integrated while others were less integrated. Some shared a cultural particularism, for example the Yiddish-speakers of Eastern Europe, and just as important, Jews in Europe were divided by many ideological currents.[4] The bonds of Jewish commonality were rather limited to their immediate surrounding and situation.

Jewish nationalism recruited its rank-and-file supporters from the poor and persecuted Jews of Eastern Europe. In this respect it is useful to recall that the assimilated Jews in Western Europe were less than eager to see immigration of East European Jews to their countries. This was due to the disdain felt by the Western Jewish bourgeoisie for these poorly qualified workers as well as apprehension that such influxes would strengthen latent anti-Semitism.[5]

Under these conditions, it was almost natural that the leadership of the Zionist movement tended to be middle-class intellectuals in Eastern and Central Europe who sought support from the Jewish *grande bourgeoisie* in the West which, according to Maxime Rodinson, was "only too happy to divert from Western Europe and America, a wave of lower-class immigrants whose alien ethnic characteristics and revolutionary tendencies endangered their own chances of assimilation."[6]

In the formative years of Zionism, the Jewish political left was split between proponents and opponents of Jewish nationalism. Both tendencies applied a class framework to give legitimacy to their positions.[7] In the context of the debates, the left Zionists put emphasis on the strength of the Jewish proletarian element and socialist ideology in the Zionist movement, suggesting that under certain circumstances their ideal-type state formation could contribute to the anti-imperialist struggle on a world scale. As far as the anti-Zionist left was concerned, they (as well as some rightist opponents of Zionism) emphasized the bourgeois and capitalist leadership of the movement as well as its imperialist ties.

The different currents that contributed to the emergence of Zionism make it difficult to consider the movement merely as the product of a specific class of Jews. Its relationship to Judaism was just as complicated. Zionism attempted to instrumentalize religion to serve its political purpose. It wanted to keep intact the social

function of Judaism in order to unify the Jewish people, while at the same time eliminating its mystical content. Among the secular currents favoring an ingathering of the Jews there were projects for a homeland elsewhere than in Palestine. Theodor Herzl, the author of *Der Judenstaat* (*The Jews' State* is a better translation than *The Jewish State*) had himself voiced interest in a Jewish entity in Argentina or in Africa. Orthodox religious Jews were wary of the paradoxes contained in the Zionist project, which on the one hand, aimed at maintaining the religious identity, while on the other hand, threatening its existence by replacing the constant Jewish messianism with the foreign doctrine of Jewish nationalism. As formulated by Yakov M. Rabkin, the dilemma was that "while (Zionism) claimed to be a force for modernization against the dead weight of tradition and history, it idealized the biblical past, manipulated the traditional symbols of religion and proposed to transmute into reality the millennia-long dreams of the Jews. But above all, Zionism put forward a new definition of what it means to be Jewish."[8]

Although the Zionist movement encompassed diverse political and social trends—from the working classes of Eastern Europe and Russia to the assimilated middle class and professionals in Western countries—the project would not have been able to coalesce without the efforts of assimilated Jewish elements in the West who sought the support of various European and American imperialist powers. In this connection, the postulate of political Zionism that revolved around the incompatibility of Jews, especially those from East Europe, and Christian peoples. It projected emigration to an extra-European territory in order to establish a nation in the Western mold. As Nathan Weinstock noted: "Such an ideology could only appear during the epoch of *imperialism* and is to be situated in the continuation of the European colonial expansion" (original emphasis).[9]

Leading Zionists of those days were more than aware that their movement did not operate in a geopolitical vacuum or in a global cultural environment. Of the divisions within the movement then, such as between secularism and religion, and working-class ideology and capitalist liberalism, it is the dissonance between the Occidental and Oriental identification of the Jewish people that persists in modern Israeli society. While the cultural Zionist, Martin Buber, considered Jews in Palestine as belonging to the realm of Oriental cultures and emphasized Jewish historical ties to the

Orient because of religious and cultural traditions, Theodor Herzl, in contrast, adhered to a Eurocentric conceptualization of the identity of Jewry. In this perspective, only Ashkenazi Jews mattered! The pivotal point in Herzl's view on the Jewish condition in the European context and worldview of a Jewish entity in the era of imperialism was based on the assumption that while anti-Semitism could not be defeated in Christian society, the Jewish state could nevertheless become part of this imperialist community! As a realist strategist, he realized that it was necessary to vet the interest of big powers for the project of a Jewish entity in Palestine. In his important document *Der Judenstaat* (1886), written before the fall of the Ottoman Empire, Herzl states clearly how a Jewish state would be to the advantage of the big power that promoted the Zionist cause: "If his Majesty the Sultan were to give us Palestine, we could undertake the responsibility of putting the finances of Turkey completely in order. To Europe we would represent a part of the barrier against Asia; we would serve as the outpost of civilization against barbarism. As a neutral state we would remain allied to all of Europe, which in turn would have to guarantee our existence."[10]

The interesting paradox of this position, which gained prominence in the World Zionist Organization (WZO), was that it assumed that while Judeophobia could not be defeated in the Western world, these same powers could be mobilized to resolve their own internal Jewish problem by accepting the establishment of a homeland for Jews. As remarked by Lenni Brenner: "Accommodation to anti-Semitism—and pragmatic utilisation of it for the purpose of obtaining a Jewish state—became the central stratagems of the movement, and it remained loyal to its earliest conceptions down to and through the Holocaust."[11] Consequently, whereas a current of Zionism, represented by Martin Buber, had hoped that Jews would assimilate to their roots and become part of the Middle East, mainstream Zionism in contrast took a colonialist approach to the Arab population of Palestine. In the worldview of Theodor Herzl, the solution to the European Jewish question could only be realized by engaging the imperialist powers and presenting the Zionist project as being concordant with their interests. With what would later be called third world solidarity, Buber opposed the Eurocentrism of this approach, and his understanding of the *problematique* can be said to have been one of the first examples of deliberate ethnic identity politics.[12]

The emergence of Jewish nationalism was taking place during a dramatic period of European history. E. J. Hobsbawm characterized the evolution of capitalism during the nineteenth century as both *The Age of Revolution* and *The Age of Empire*. It was in this context of socio-political disruption accompanying the process of modernity that the Jewish populations were drawn into the whirlwind of European politics. Anti-Semitism was part of the general xenophobia that came to the fore during times of hardship. In countries like France and Germany where Jews accounted for a small proportion of the populations, anti-Semitism was directed at bankers, entrepreneurs, and others who the little folks identified with the ravages of capitalism. Hobsbawm notes that the antagonism towards Jews took on an additional dimension with the increase of xenophobia in the ideology of the nationalist right: "Anti-Semitism, the German socialist leader Bebel therefore felt, was 'the socialism of idiots.' Yet what strikes us about the rise of political anti-Semitism at the end of the century is not so much the equation 'Jew = capitalist,' which was not implausible in large parts of east/central Europe, but its association with *right-wing* nationalism."[13]

The twentieth century opened a window of opportunity for Zionism and the WZO's engagement with big powers gave it substantial influence toward the end of the inter-imperialist First World War. Although many Zionists had been pro-German, the organization had especially made lobbying efforts in Great Britain. While not directly related to these efforts, the course of the war and events in Russia, with the overthrow of the Czar, changed the fortunes of the Zionist project. Socialist forces among the Jewish working class of Russia and other European nations were sympathetically inclined toward the Soviet Revolution and a number of Jews came to play an influential role in the new regime. Seen from London, the WZO appeared as a useful tool in its diplomatic strategy to weaken the impact of the Soviet Revolution as well as, according to Lenni Brenner, in influencing U.S. Jews to pressure Washington to enter the war in Europe.[14]

The give-and-take relationship between the WZO and British imperialism resulted in the notorious Balfour Declaration. This took the form of a letter from Foreign Secretary Arthur James Balfour to his friend Lord Lionel Walter Rothschild. In this document, Balfour pledged that the British government would endeavor to facilitate the achievement of a "national home for the Jewish

people" with the convoluted addendum "that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country."[15]

The ambivalence in the document can be explained as the result of the insistence of the Jewish cabinet member, Edwin Montagu, who accused the government of anti-Semitism for implicitly turning British Jews into "aliens and foreigners." In fact, the Anglo-Jewish community was split at the time on the Zionist project. While the Samuels and the Rothschild's were in favor of British support for the creation of a Jewish homeland, the Cohen, Magnus, Montefiore, and Montagu families were against.

The argument of the assimilated opponents to the Zionist conceptualization of the Jewish condition was based on the assumption that assimilation was possible and Jews should strive for it. In May 1917, a committee published a letter in the *London Times*, in the name of leading Anglo-Jewish organizations, stating explicitly that the emancipated Jews had no separate national aspiration other than being British. Furthermore the committee considered that the establishment of a Jewish nationality in Palestine founded on the presupposition of Jewish homelessness "must have the effect of stamping the Jews as strangers in their native lands."

However, the dispute on this issue did not merely remain a matter between Zionist and non-Zionist factions within the British Jewish community. Had no other actors participated there is little question that the anti-Zionist Jews would have won. But as Chaim Bermant put it "there were the gentile Zionists to consider and they carried the day."[16]

Placating Zionist pressures however was not the primary concern of British imperialism at the time. The timing of the Balfour Declaration is interesting to the extent that it took place toward the end of the First World War and the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire. Britain at that moment was in the process of posturing itself and redefining with France the map of the Middle East. These two powers came to define the frontiers of Palestine. However, the British political elite had to reconcile its engagement in the establishment of a Jewish state with its awareness of the interests of the Arab national movement and thus not disappoint Arab expectations with regard to Palestine in the new geopolitics of the region.

But there was another important challenge facing British imperialism that affected its strategy toward Zionism during this period. In 1917 a major political transformation was taking place in Russia. The February Revolution had resulted in the abdication of Czar Nicholas II, the collapse of Imperial Russia, the popular demand for peace with Germany, and the end of the Romanov dynasty. The Provisional government under Alexander Kerensky was an alliance between liberal and socialist forces wanting to reform the system. Its failure, which led to the October Revolution, signified a change in Russia's socio-political structure and represented a menace to the world capitalist system. This at least was the perception in the political circles of London. The British political elite opposed the intention of the Bolsheviks to pull Russia out of the war, as this would have strengthened the Germans on the Western front. But more importantly there was a fear that a successful socialist revolution might spread across Europe due in part to the unpopularity of the inter-imperialist bloodbath. As a matter of fact, the First World War ended in 1918 in the shadow of the Russian Revolution. Peace, however, did not prevent an allied military intervention in the ensuing Russian civil war on the side of the Whites against the Reds. The coordinator of this effort was the young Winston S. Churchill, then-war secretary in the British government.[17]

It is in this context that the Balfour letter should be seen. The Jewish population in Europe was divided between different classes and different ideological affiliations and aspirations. But the attempt by Zionism to impose nationalist boundaries on Jewish identity was not readily accepted. The Yiddishe Arbeiter Bund, the most popular Jewish socialist party, was militantly anti-Zionist.[18] Generally, the Jewish working class was attracted to ideas of socialism and a number of Jews played an influential role in the Bolshevik Revolution. Under these conditions, British support for Zionism at that time could be interpreted as an attempt to weaken the Soviet experiment from the beginning by weaning Jews away from universalistic socialism. The projection of a "Judeo-Communist conspiracy" became the justifying element behind the British strategy as well as the later Nazi worldview. Both these positions were based on implicit political anti-Semitism and paradoxically not in opposition to the founding assumptions of Zionism!

In an interesting article published in the *Illustrated Sunday Herald* in 1920, Winston Churchill clarified the British strategy of helping

Zionism while raising the specter of Judeophobia. Under the title "Zionism versus Bolshevism—A Struggle for the Soul of the Jewish People," the piece distinguished between "Good and Bad Jews." The good Jews were the "'National' Jews" who were integrated in their country, while practicing the Jewish faith, such as was the case in Britain. The national Russian Jews who promoted the development of capitalism under the Czarist regime also belong to this category of "good Jews." Evil are the "International Jews" who belong to a sinister atheist confederacy and "have forsaken the faith of their forefathers, and divorced from their minds all spiritual hopes for the next world." According to Churchill, this current included Karl Marx, Leon Trotsky, Bela Kun, Rosa Luxemburg, and Emma Goldman. Some of these bad international Jews were said to have played an important part in the creation of Bolshevism and bringing about the Russian Revolution. Consequently, the significance of Zionism was to "foster and develop any strongly-marked Jewish movement which leads directly away from these fatal associations."

According to this way of thinking, Zionism thus offered a third political conception of the "Jewish race." In the words of Churchill: "In violent contrast to international communism, it presents to the Jew a national idea of a commanding character." Even though it could not accommodate the entire Jewish people, the creation of a Jewish State under the protection of the British crown would also be an event which would be beneficial and in harmony with "the truest interests of the British Empire."[19]

The anti-communism of Churchill and the instrumentalization of political Zionism in order to weaken the socialist appeal to Jews were not endeavors free of contradictions. On the Jewish question, Bolshevism at that time had been opposed to Zionism on the ideological front and to anti-Semitism on the political level. British imperialism, in contrast, was promoting Zionism to counter Bolshevism while supporting the elements of the White Guards in the Russian civil war who had a long tradition of anti-Semitism and pogroms. During the civil war, anti-Bolshevik forces killed at least 60,000 Jews.[20] Another difficulty for British imperialism in the Middle East was that it could not outright work for the emergence of a Jewish state without raising Arab opposition to the interests of the empire.

What this pro-Zionist discourse did, however, was to make anti-Semitism ideologically acceptable in societal and political

terms. More sophisticated than the "Protocols of the Elder of Zion," whose inspiration went back to the time of the French Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century when reactionary French circles alleged a Jewish hand in that historical event, Churchill nevertheless reiterated the canard of an international Jewish conspiracy. Such a myth had lived on in ninetèenth-century Europe, in countries such as Germany and Poland. The sophistication behind Churchill's approach was that his anti-Semitism was based on a class-based analysis of the Jewish question, i.e., the differentiation between the "good Jews" (assimilated capitalists and Zionists) and the "bad Jews" (socialists)!

Consequently, far from putting the genie of modern anti-Semitism back in the bottle, the phenomenon was now mobilized in the crusade against socialism and for the promotion of political Zionism. As far as the anti-Semitism of that period was concerned, it became based on a notion that the Jews had invented socialism and Bolshevism with the intention of assuming power over the helpless goyim! In the case of continental anti-Semitism, the postulate of a Jewish-socialist compact coexisted with the view that Jewish bankers controlled the world. While Churchill's position on the Jewish question was based on a class hatred of socialist Jews, the anti-Semitism of Adolf Hitler was more pathological. As he put it in an often quoted phrase from *Mein Kampf*: "If, with the aid of his Marxist creed, the Jew triumphs over the peoples of the world, then his crown will be the funeral wreath of humanity."

Despite the primordial anti-Semitism of Adolf Hitler and the project of the annihilation of European Jews, a less known facet of the Holocaust is that there was an implicit Nazi sympathy for the Zionist project and paradoxical agreement with the axiom of Zionism concerning the incompatibility of Jewishness and German citizenship. The slogan "Juden raus!" and "Kikes to Palestine!" which was in vogue in Europe at the time reinforced the Zionist message. Lenni Brenner in a chapter on the Nazi-Zionism relationship has a reference to a leading Nazi-politician in Bavaria who stated, "that the best solution to the Jewish question, for Jews and Gentiles alike, was the Palestinian National Home."[21] The original aim of Nazism had been to make Germany "Judenfrei" which became transposed to the whole of Europe. At first this did not entail the annihilation of the Jewish people. The Nazis had planned a project of a "Jewish principality" in central Poland as a kind of reservation

for German Jews. After the defeat of France, Adolf Eichmann worked a full year on a project for turning the French colony of Madagascar into a "Jewish principality" for Europe's Jews.[22]

In the newly emerging Soviet Union—with the highest concentration of Jews in the world at the time (five million)—the Jewish question required the immediate attention of the new regime because of the specific conditions of the Jews in Russia on the one hand and the pressures of Zionism on the other. In Czarist times, the former traditional economic activities of the majority of Jews had been concentrated in trade and small crafts. Politically, and unlike other minorities, the Jews had had no claim to a nationality. They were dispersed among national entities and spoke Yiddish. As a matter of doctrinal principle, the Soviet regime, from the very beginning, combated manifestations of anti-Semitism in a society contaminated with the virus, thus attracting Jewish intellectuals to the Communist Party. While the New Economic Policy was in force, following the hardships of foreign interventions and the economic policy of "war communism," the Jewish petite-bourgeoisie took advantage of the reappearance of a private sector and consolidated its economic position. This together with the use of Jews in the administration, however, refueled anti-Semitism among Russians of all nationalities.

The new regime found itself hemmed-in by the residual, and at times virulent, anti-Semitism of Russian society; the need to find a socio-economic and political solution to the situation of Jews; the need to develop distant and economically backward regions; the pressure of Zionism; and last but not least by its own theoretical understanding of the nationality question. In *Marxism and the National Question* (1913), Stalin, who after the revolution had become the People's Commissar for National Affairs, formulated the notion that in order to qualify as a nation, a national minority should be characterized by a specific culture, language, and a common territory. Of course the last characteristic didn't apply to the Jews of Russia as they were living dispersed throughout the land. Nevertheless, they were identified as a nationality. In order to develop regions of the Far East and to undercut the offensive of political Zionism for a homeland, a Soviet alternative to the Zionist project was launched in 1928, when Birobidzhan was set aside for Jewish colonization. In 1934, the autonomous region was proclaimed as a Jewish homeland with a bourgeoning Yiddish culture. As put by

Nathan Weinstock, this Palestine substitute was most probably meant to divert Soviet Jews from Palestine and from allegiance to political Zionism. But in fact raising the identity of Jews to the status of nationality, could not but be beneficial to the Zionist ideological construction and political project. Countering the dream of "Eretz Israel" with an "Ersatz Israel,"[23] although a defensive and pragmatic solution to the Russian Jewish question, meant in the last instance strengthening the ideological foundations of Jewish nationalism.

Much has been written about the lingering of anti-Semitism in Soviet society as well as in the internal political struggles of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, but Western Jewry has not been attentive to the fact that in the years 1935–43, it was "the Evil Empire" that came to give shelter to the majority of European Jews fleeing the Nazi genocide. While the United States and Britain allowed only 6.6 percent and 1.9 percent of Jewish immigrants respectively, 75.3 percent of the Jewish refugees from Europe, that is close to two million, found refuge in the Soviet Union.[24]

The task of Jewish nationalism as an ideological and political construction of Zionism implied the remolding of the psyche of European Jews into a (false?) consciousness of uniqueness. In doing so, the diversity of experiences of Jews in the Diaspora was considered to be of lesser importance than the resolution of the alleged permanency of Judeophobia which reached its apex in Europe with the Holocaust. Zionism was of course a European Jewish project that in order to achieve legitimacy had to be transposed to the situation of Jews with a different historical experience. Even in the Zionist state, the Ashkenazi dominance has been evident from the very beginning. As Ella Shohat put it: "Within Israel, and on the stage of world opinion, the hegemonic voice of Israel has almost invariably been that of European Jews, the Ashkenazim, while the Sephardi/Mizrahi (Oriental/Arab Jews) voice has been largely muffled or silenced."[25] It is worth recalling that although the situation of the Arab Jews was not idyllic, the Sephardim did, generally speaking, live comfortably within Arab-Muslim society. According to Ella Shohat during the formative year of political Zionism, Sephardi Jews were rather indifferent to it. In some cases, Arab-Jewish religious leaders denounced Zionism as they protested against the Balfour Declaration. In its early phases, the national Arab movement in Palestine and Syria carefully distinguished between the

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Zionist immigrants and the resident local native Jewish population (mostly Sepharadim) who lived peacefully with their neighbors.[26]

Amidst decolonization and an upsurge in national liberation struggles, the emergence in the Middle East of the new Euro-Israeli nation—whose political elite identified with the West—could not help but influence Arab politics. The anti-imperialist struggles in these countries was deflected in the direction of making politics a function of the relationship and antagonism toward Israel. As Paul Sweezy put it following the 1967 war between Israel and its Arab neighbors: "The upshot of concentrating the struggle against the local partner in the Israeli-imperialist alliance is thus the opposite of what is intended: it keeps the Arab world divided and weak, and it strengthens the grip of imperialism." He implicitly made the point that this was a trap the Arabs should avoid.[27] This reflection is interesting to the extent that it shows an understanding of the Israeli-Arab conflict that existed among progressive forces in the West at the time. The advice that Arab progressives should try to accentuate divisions in Israeli society by seeking common grounds with elements of the Israeli proletariat, comprising mostly Jews from Asia and Africa, assigned the onus of political maturity to the Arab side. Socialist Jews of the Diaspora held an even more accentuated one-sidedness. This is exemplified in a second editorial comment in the same issue of *Monthly Review*, when Leo Huberman went a step further in writing that: "Arab socialists should turn their sights on the real target—if they are to be part of a 'holy war' they should direct that war against enemy No. 1 which is not Israel but feudalism and imperialism."[28]

Not until decades following the Israeli army's pre-emptive war of 1967 did the Palestinian Nakba receive much attention or sympathy in the Western world. With the defeat of the Arab armies and the conquest of the West Bank and Gaza, the dominating political culture of Israel morphed into a kind of proto-fascism. Unnoticed at the time, a sense of invincibility came to permeate the ideological foundation of Israeli society and the pro-Zionist Diaspora translating into a political right turn within "real existing" Zionism. As noted by an Israeli academic: "With the blitz victory of 1967 and the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, the sudden expansion of Israel's borders gave rise to a more rapid erosion of the socialist and humanist values that had once been the hallmark of labor Zionism." In the euphoria there was little resistance to "the new,

dynamic Greater Israel movement, which sought to turn Israel's most recent conquest into an integral part of the country."[29] Empathy for the Palestinians among Israelis and Diaspora Jews was at a minimal level in this political climate.

This notwithstanding, a radical critique arose from within Israeli society. A group of intellectuals and academics began to reinterpret the birth of Israel by acknowledging the ethnic cleansing that had accompanied the imposition of the Jewish state over the Palestinian-Arab population. This brought to light the most unsavory aspect of Zionism—the original sin of Israel. These revisionist historians and critical sociologists encapsulated under the term "post-Zionism" questioned the dominant narratives concerning the state formation and challenged the accepted understanding of the origins of the Israeli-Arab conflict. In doing so the Zionist monopoly on historiography and ideological assumptions was disputed.[30] By rehabilitating the Palestinian identity as a people and as historical victims, "post-Zionism" made it possible to analyze Israeli strategy in terms of a "politicide" perpetrated on the Arab populations with the aim of dissolving the Palestinian people as "an economic, social and political entity."[31] The Zionist slogan of "a land without a people for a people without a land," which had reduced the Palestinian Arabs to a status of non-existence, was now proven to have been a myth, making the "moral myopia" of Zionism visible.[32] The Intifada in the occupied territories against the Israeli military forces made the presence of the Palestinian people more concrete.

Coping with the Jewish question in general and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in particular has been and still is a dilemma for progressive opinion in the West. While it is acknowledged that Arab politics and political culture were affected by the intrusion of a Jewish state in the area and its alliance with the United States, the same consideration was not given to the transformation of Jewish political culture, both in Israel and in the Diaspora, as a result of the creation of the Zionist state and its patron-client relationship to the United States. Pro-Israel Jews of all political stripes have been duped by the ideological discourse of Zionism, which has hailed the existence of the Jewish state as the guarantor of the security of Jews everywhere.

Having captured the "commanding heights" of morality by usurping the mantle of the victimhood of European Jewry, the

Zionist state, in a seldom-seen example of chutzpah, transformed the Holocaust experience into political capital. In this context it is interesting to note that the Holocaust did not become a universal point of reference in the Western worldview until after the decade of the 1960s. The reason for the time lag is related to the convergence of strategic and ideological currents in the postwar period. After the defeat of Nazi Germany, the antifascist coalition gave way to the Cold War between East and West. The German question played a central role in the establishment of the Western alliance system under the leadership of the United States. Under these conditions there was little interest on the part of the U.S. foreign policy establishment and indeed the U.S. government to alienate Germany by dwelling on the Nazi responsibility for the extermination of European Jews. In addition, looking closely at the Holocaust would have revealed the profiteering of U.S. industrialists in the arming of Hitler's war machine. As far as the American Jewish elite is concerned, it acquiesced to the public silence on this monstrous crime and accepted the U.S. policy of rearming a barely de-Nazified Germany. Motivated perhaps by the concern of not reactivating American anti-Semitism and putting their improved situation in jeopardy, U.S. Jewry followed an opportunistic strategy.[33]

In the case of Israel, the Shoah question reflected the complex relationship of Zionist ideology toward non-Israeli Jews. The extermination of European Jews legitimized the cause of Zionism, to the extent that the Holocaust confirmed that Jews could not survive and prosper in the Diaspora and that integration and assimilation in these nations was an illusion. At the same time, there was a widespread feeling among Israelis following the Second World War that European Jews had themselves to blame for their fate, because they had not resorted to armed resistance. In contrast, Israelis saw themselves as rejecting the past and creating a new kind of Jew, capable of defending his or her people and the Jewish state.[34] As the focus on the Holocaust evolved, it came to be seen as related to the transformation of the struggle for a secure Israel into one of an expanding and conquering state. The Shoah-paradigm became useful in reminding public opinion of the justification for the creation of the Jewish state and for the deflecting of criticism of Israeli policies, especially in the occupied territories of Palestine.

The Holocaust discourse, however, was more important in the Diaspora than in Israel itself and it introduced an element of

confusion within the ranks of progressive politics. The sixties had been a decade of youth activism in the West that had included some leading Jewish participants. Many active anti-imperialist Jews in the Diaspora were caught off-balance by the realization that Israel, as the embodiment of the victimhood of the Jewish people, could be capable of victimizing another people and of following a pro-U.S. imperialism foreign policy. In Churchill's terminology, the "bad Jews" (internationalist and anti-imperialist) had to be turned into the "good Jews" (pro-Zionist and well established in the West). Some of them became figureheads of neoconservatism!

The desperation with which the Holocaust paradigm is projected by modern Zionism and Western (especially U.S.) political establishments is not kosher. The attempt to pre-empt criticism of Israeli and U.S. policy and strategy in the Middle East will hardly be feasible in the longer run. Besides the dissidence toward the dominating ideology in Israel, the success of Zionism in the establishment of a modern Jewish capitalist state contains the seeds of its own societal "post-Zionism." From an initial projection of pioneering social-nationalism, Israeli society in recent years seems to be affected by an identity and material crisis accentuated by the implementation of neoliberalism. From having been originally one of the most egalitarian Western societies, Israeli society has since the 1980s become one of the most unequal. The poverty rate in Israel is one of the highest of advanced capitalist countries with approximately 22 percent of the population living below the poverty line.[35] The socio-economic prospects are bleak for a sizable number of Israelis and this seeping crisis translates into a crisis of identity for the Israeli-born generation who does not relate to Jewishness. "It is ideologically indifferent, secular, petit bourgeois in lifestyle and outlook, apathetic to world Jewry, and concerned with self-fulfillment only."[36]

The Israeli dissident politician, Avraham Burg, a former speaker of the Knesset, fears that the Zionist experiment will lead to a tragedy for the Jewish state. Without having become anti-Zionist, he nevertheless feels that the original principles of Zionism and the values of the declaration of independence have been betrayed and that Israel has been transformed into a colonial state led by a corrupt clique of outlaws. In an interview with the Israeli newspaper *Yediot Aharonot* in 2003, he foresees a bleak future for the

entire project of Zionism: "The end of Zionism is at our door...it is possible that a Jewish state will survive, but it will be another kind of state, ugly because of being foreign to our values."[37]

Notes

1. John J. Mearsheimer and Stephen M. Walt, *The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2007). The authors of the book had written an article on the same subject that could not find a U.S. publication willing to publish it. It was published in the *London Review of Books* 28, no. 26 (March 26, 2003) with the title "The Israel Lobby."
2. Donald Macintyre, "Bush hails Israelis as 'chosen people' but ignores Palestinians on 'catastrophe' day," *The Independent*, May 16, 2008.
3. Tony Karon, "Israel is 60, Zionism is Dead, What Now?" http://tonykaron.com/2008/05/08/Israel-is-alive-zionism-is-dead-what-now/.
4. See Maxime Rodinson, *Cult, Ghetto and State* (London: Al Saqi Books, 1983), 144.
5. See Nathan Weinstock, *Le pain de misère—Histoire du mouvement ouvrier juif en Europe*, Volume II *L'Europe centrale et occidentale jusqu'en 1914* (Paris: Editions La Découverte, 1984).
6. Rodinson, *Cult, Ghetto and State*, 145.
7. Rodinson ironizes over this type of analysis by writing that it was "in accordance with Marxist dogmatism," 144.
8. Yakov M. Rabkin, *A Threat from Within* (London: Zed Books, 2006), 22.
9. Nathan Weinstock, *Le zionisme contre Israel* (Paris: Francois Maspéro, 1969), 44.
10. Theodor Herzl, *The Jews' State* (Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson, 1997), 148–49.
11. Lenni Brenner, *Zionism in the Age of the Dictators* (Westport, CT: Lawrence Hill, 1983), 1.
12. For a discussion of the two approaches see: Nina Berman, "Thoughts on Zionism in the Context of German-Middle Eastern Relations," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 24 (2004): 133–44.
13. E. J. Hobsbawm, *The Age of Empire 1875–1914* (London: Abacus, 1995), 158–59.
14. Brenner, *Zionism*, 10. This opinion is interesting in the context of the present discussion concerning the power of the Israel lobby in Washington, which is alleged to determine U.S. policy in the Middle East (see footnote 1). I have no evidence to present to the contrary, but I very much doubt that Washington would have followed the advice of a Jewish organization to determine its policy and strategy. U.S. national interests were in my opinion the determining element behind the decision to enter the Second World War.
15. Walter Laqueur, *The Israel-Arab Reader* (Middlesex, England: Penguin Books, 1970), 36.
16. Chaim Bermant, *The Cousinhood* (London: Macmillan, 1971), 260.
17. The start of the Cold War can be dated to the events that took place at that time. See D. F. Fleming, *The Cold War and its Origins, 1917-1950*, vol. I (Garden City, NY: Double Day & Company, 1961).
18. Tony Karon, "Is a Jewish Glasnost Coming to America?" September 14, 2007, http://zmag.org/znet/viewArticle/14482.
19. Winston S. Churchill, *Zionism versus Bolshevism*, http://www.fpp.co.uk/bookchapters/WSC/WSCwrote1920.html.
20. Brenner, *Zionism*, 10.
21. Brenner, *Zionism*, chapter 7, p. 83.
22. Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust*, (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1989), 15–16.
23. Weinstock, *Le zionisme contre Israel*, 31.
24. Weinstock, *Le zionisme contre Israel*, 146
25. Ella Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel," in Adam Shatz, ed., *Prophets Outcast* (New York: Nation Books, 2004), 278.
26. Shohat, "Sephardim in Israel," 290.
27. Paul M. Sweezy, "Israel and Imperialism," *Monthly Review* (October 1967): 5.
28. Leo Huberman, "Israel Is Not the Main Enemy," *Monthly Review* (October 1967): 9.
29. Simha Flapan, "The Birthday of Israel and the Destruction of Palestine," in Shatz, ed., *Prophets Outcast*, 138.
30. Herbert C. Kelman, "Israel in Transition from Zionism to Post-Zionism," *The Annals of the American Academy* (January 1998): 47.
31. Baruch Kimmerling, "Politicide," *Manière de voir*, no. 98 (April–Mai 2008): 57–58.
32. I. F. Stone, "Holy War," in Schatz, ed., *Prophets Outcast*, see footnote 24.

33. Norman G. Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry* (London: Verso, 2000), 11–16.
34. Tony Judt, "Trop de Shoa, tue la Shoa," *Le Monde diplomatique*, June 2008.
35. "Hunger in Israel," http://www.edu-negev.gov.il/bs/b4i/hunger-in-israel-articles.htm.
36. Sammy Smooha, "The Implications of the Transition to Peace for Israeli Society" *The Annals* (January 1998): 33.
37. Quoted by Eric Rouleau, "L'autre judaisme d'Avraham Burg," *Le Monde diplomatique*, May 2008, 27.

The stimulus package includes billions for state and local law enforcement....it also includes $1 billion for buildings and facilities in the federal prison system, $400 million for FBI "construction," and $50 million for salaries and expenses at the U.S. Marshall's Service. There's also $150 million for something called the Office of the Federal Detention Trustee, "an organization that achieves efficiencies, effectiveness and operational synergies within the detention and incarceration community [sic!] by fostering interagency cooperation, mutual understanding, accountability and teamwork." At least *some* communities are thriving as a result of the prison boom.

—Chris Sturr, The Short Run, *Dollars & Sense*, March/April 2009.

Marxism, the United States, and the Twentieth Century

PAUL BUHLE

The previous century now seems to be drawing away from us at an increasing speed, especially in the global society's existing superabundance of communications. Readers of *Monthly Review* know that the basics have remained the same in the all too physical world of capitalism and neocolonialism, as much as they might have changed in terms of resistance and apparent alternatives. Still, as the graying of the 1960s generation continues, and the New Deal era draws ever further into a kind of archeology, a summing up of some points is useful and may even be fun.

My effort here runs parallel with nearly four decades of *Monthly Review*. The focus is personal as well: Marxist thought, the interpretation and guidance that Marxists provided and (at the local level) lived by, was my interest from the spring of 1964 when my first subscription began and when, by no coincidence, the antiwar movement began to reach my Midwest campus. (I could brag in 1966 that I read *every* Monthly Review Press book—there weren't all that many yet.) My sensibility grew as I published the magazine *Radical America* for Students for a Democratic Society, and deepened with the collapse of the New Left, as I plunged into oral histories of the left-wing octogenarians, and continued on with my interviews and studies of the Hollywood Reds who seemed to have shaped some important zones of popular culture. It reflected, as well, my own engagements with local left movements, labor support and education, third world support blending into solidarity with the new immigrant waves, and so on through the passage of time.

What may surprise today's younger readers of *Monthly Review* is that the dialogue about Marxism was so vital in the

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seemingly fallow years of the left in the early 1960s, with politics barely recovering from both the widespread repression and the despair at the revelations about the Soviet Union. Screenwriter Walter Bernstein remarked to me decades later that he and his friends, the "disorganized left," high-powered intellectuals scripting television and films that touched my generation, had stayed within the wider boundaries of the Popular Front even while leaving the Communist Party. What they saw now was not Russia but rather, a community of peoples struggling against colonialism and neocolonialism. (Judy Ruben, the wife of one of his close friends, Al Ruben, actually worked in the Monthly Review office.) Marxism supplied the intellectual energy and also a sort of collective personal glue. People from afar were "comrades" on contact and even without direct contact. Culturally as well as politically, it seemed a new world was opening.

The same sensibility applied, without any particular theory of organizational apparatus, across generations. Shortly after I began to read *Monthly Review*, the campus scholar who brought the very first antiwar activities into existence had been, fifteen years earlier, a young Communist intellectual "industrializing" a factory near Chicago. Now she was probably fearful that the shadow of the past might catch up with her as a young academic, but she was nevertheless determined to make a statement and to make things possible for us youngsters. I gave her the first Christmas gift subscription that I had given anyone in my life—to *Monthly Review*, naturally. We had reached out to each other. Multiply this hundreds or thousands of times, vary the details, and you can envision all sorts of rapprochements and discoveries, often with subtle hints from the older generation before some past connection with the "subversive" left was to be revealed.

There was also much going on from a more rarefied intellectual standpoint. For instance, the debate of "Marxism versus Existentialism" was enormously fruitful. Only dogmatists would claim absolutes for either side; the two schools despised the social relations of modern capitalism for somewhat disparate reasons, but with no less intensity. This particular philosophical discussion was to fade beneath the vast popularity of Herbert Marcuse (and to a lesser degree, the more difficult members of the Frankfurt School like Theodore Adorno, no radical but lucid in his analysis of social norms), and the revival of Phenomenology. The translation and

readings of the "Young Marx" seemed to bring it all to the surface, even when (or because) the interpretations of the significance were starkly different and sometimes bitterly opposed to each other. None of it was far from Marxism, as Marxism was steadily being reinterpreted.

And Marxism was definitely being reinterpreted. To my young eyes, *Monthly Review* was not only a venerable institution (I had only been five-years-old when it began!), but also a strikingly innovative youngster in a new way of Marxists seeing the world. Rosa Luxemburg apart, hardly anyone, not even Lenin, had seen imperialism as the salvation of capitalism, however temporary that might be. Paul Baran's *Political Economy of Growth* was one of the books of revelation that knocked me on the head at a young age: it was hard and took many readings but the points were finally clear. Capitalism was a truly global system, as Marx had begun to elucidate, and no liberal or conservative theory of third world "backwardness," whether based upon supposed particular histories or national psychologies, could explain why the West took the natural resources for its own purposes and left starvelings behind, to be ruled over and widely abused by the CIA's favorites.

It might well be asked why this conclusion seemed so novel as late as the 1960s. Part of the answer is that the old Marxism remained fairly fixed, a doctrine that sooner or later, as capitalism failed or perhaps under some other circumstance, the American industrial working class would make a revolution, and the thing to do was to join them, organize them, and pull them leftward. Not that Communists and their left-wing critics or competitors disbelieved in U.S. imperialism—that view was left to Reinhold Niebuhr and the other liberals of the day, many of them former socialists who had made a career choice—but it was always a side issue, inflected further by the argument of the proper revolutionary party in the particular country involved.

The New Left emerging in the mid-1960s, which came to consciousness in and around the civil rights movement and/or the ban-the-bomb phase, fixed at once upon the African-American poor and the progressive, mostly white, middle-class students in the North. Consequently, it found little in common with the older views and left parties. Moreover, sclerotic and just plain conservative-bureaucratic leadership dragged the AFL-CIO ever downward, with no real interest in the growing, and largely female, clerical workforce

and with the looming prospect of automation (no one yet talked of rust zones). No reform campaign seemed to make much of a dent, and a generation or two of industrial workers now looked increasingly toward retirement plans and health benefits. Indeed, the then-recent unionization of government workers was already the last successful major effort at spreading unionism, and it had the side effect of making the newly organized bodies rather scornful of the unemployed, and largely dependent upon political deals at every level. Notwithstanding the promising developments among hospital workers and the heartening efforts by and for agricultural workers, the only union representatives likely to be found at a campus rally far from New York were from the expelled unions, especially the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers. George Meany and his speechwriters demanded military-industrial jobs and as many wars as possible.

The problems of the older Marxism were evident, but the synthesis of anything like a new Marxism remained elusive. Harry Magdoff shed light on this in one of his luminous essays, observing that in the first half of the century (the half without MR, one might say), the eclipse of capitalism had been looked upon as a certainty, not only from the left but from many political standpoints. In the second half of the century, however, social contradictions continued to mount (including the danger of thermonuclear devastation) but the *certainty* of capitalist decline and collapse disappeared from view. (Magdoff later quipped to me that if capitalists were willing to risk nuclear war to preserve their power and profits, they would be willing to go over the edge of ecological devastation: it was their nature to do so.) Marxists faced a new situation with a successfully contained working class at the center of the empire.

Radical America rested much of its collective work on the thesis that the world revolution would continue but that at home, the working class was being transformed and the results of that transformation were definitely in the making. The industrial base was becoming more demographically black (a trend only arrested by factory shut-downs) as the office was becoming more demographically female. The two trends coincided in various sectors, including the post office. A synthesis to come would clarify the delays and deformations of the past radical movements. Or so we thought. As the New Left collapsed, it seemingly combined multiracial "power" movements, feminist, and gay liberation movements, and even the

counterculture into a rough perspective. In a way, we were only thirty years early, because the immigration law changes of 1965 would complete a transformation of the working class—but by that time, our human synthesis had been shattered and so much lost that the New Left vision of Marxism would need still more drastic revision. Only a neo-traditional Leninism, and the short-lived romantic urban guerilla phenomenon, offered other alternatives upholding a vision of a future socialism.

C. L. R. James, arguably the last of the great Pan-African figures, was a great convenience as an idol of *Radical America* in those years. He had written *The Black Jacobins* decades earlier, he was a Hegelian, not to mention sports historian and critic, his collapsed following had upheld visions of black power and women's power, and of the significance of wildcat strikes and other moves against existing bureaucratic union leaderships. He was also, in advancing old age, still hugely attractive as a public speaker and a persuasive personality at close range. We tended to hope that everything would work out, because the neatness of the Marxism was not matched by anything like tactical certainty. Having the proper view, we would see the situations as they arose and figure out what to do.

The optimism ebbed away by the Reagan years if not before. *Radical America* continued to uphold (until its demise in the early 1990s) something like the New Left or even Students for a Democratic Society version of Marxist ideas. By this time, deconstructionist adaptations of Marxism ruled in most higher zones of the academy, if rivaled in some places by the scholars of black studies, women's studies, development studies, and so on. The invention of new and esoteric languages seemed to coincide logically with the hopelessness of the political narrative in whatever version of Marxism dependent upon actual organizing and mobilization. The projects involving support for Sandinistas or for the rebel movements in El Salvador, not to mention the final decade of struggle against Apartheid South Africa, might as well have happened in a different galaxy from this campus crypto-Marxism where straightforward prose had become an enemy of progress.

Nonetheless, important scholarly work on empire, often produced by partisans of *Monthly Review*, continued to count. Great personalities—to mention only three, Noam Chomsky, Howard Zinn, and Edward Said—drove home the points in public forums of all kinds—and were often more influential outside, rather

than inside, the United States. With the later 1990s, a new kind of Marxist scholarship took form on the inner empire of media communications, and it was not by accident that Robert McChesney would title his later magnum opus *The Political Economy of Media*. The apple had truly not fallen far from the tree.

The newer waves of repression, the familiar but technologically improved horrors of war and occupation, likewise the crises of capitalism, were all ahead. None would be exactly unexpected and much all too familiar. But Marxism in the United States had not survived a deeply disappointing twentieth century for nothing.

By the dawn of the new century, to come back to the examples closest to myself, a considerable majority of the organizations and personalities of those explored in the *Encyclopedia of the American Left* were gone, and even the list of living authors had been thinned. The living memories of the 1930s and 40s, the Great Depression, the New Deal, the young CIO, the Popular Front, the fight against fascism, and the onset of the Cold War—all these were becoming more dim. Hardly anyone could remember that feeling of certainty that the days of capitalism were numbered.

And yet the ideas banned in the 1950s, amid resurgent consumer capitalism and FBI raids, had sprung up in new form to be popularized continually in a thousand ways, from music to comic books, in the face of a resurgent empire, a resurgent capital, and where vaunted tolerance always turns out to be limited. Of course, the ideas changed in the process. We are left with no certainties. The realities of a collapsing ecosystem are as fearful as the threats of nuclear war in the first decade of MR's existence. Still, there are lots of prospects in front of us and around the corner. Marxism, always unfinished, is going to be a big help in figuring out what they are and what to do about them.

Who's naïve?

MARGE PIERCY

A young woman said to me
you guys in the sixties were so
naïve. How could you ever believe
there would be a revolution?

Oh, child of the oughts, did you
ever believe Wall Street would
turn out to be a sham, stocks
made of piffle and hype?

Did you ever believe General
Motors would come to tax
payers cup in hand begging
not to go out of business?

Did you ever believe we would
go to war on a lie? That one
president could fuck up every
thing standing in just eight years?

That we would elect an African
American president? That in some
states, lesbians and gays could marry?
That greed might go out of style?

What I've learned on my hard
scrabble way is that nothing remains
but trouble and love and opportunity
we can make to change what needs it.

MARGE PIERCY is the author of *Pesach for the Rest of Us: Making the Passover Seder Your Own* (Schocken, 2007). Her most recent novel is *Sex Wars: A Novel of the Turbulent Post-Civil War Period* (New York: William Morrow, 2005) and her newest book of poetry is *The Crooked Inheritance* (Knopf, 2006).

Mao Zedong
Chinese, Communist, Poet

JONAH RASKIN

Mao Zedong, *The Poems of Mao Zedong*, translations, introductions, and notes by Willis Barnstone (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008); 168 pages; $24.95 hardcover, $15.95 paperback.

What are we to think of Chairman Mao? A man of immense contradictions—a nationalist, communist, revolutionary, warrior, as well as the author of *The Little Red Book*, and the leader for decades of the Peoples' Republic of China—he was also one of twentieth-century China's best poets. A new translation of his work provides an opportunity to evaluate him as a writer and as an artist. A reviewer in *The Washington Post* called Mao's poems "political documents," but added, "it is as literature that they should be considered." Separating the political from the literary, however, isn't possible. "We woke a million workers and peasants," Mao wrote in the "First Siege," and though all his lines aren't as explicit about the Chinese Revolution as it is, a great many of them are.

Born into a peasant family in 1893, Mao grew up loving the classics of Chinese literature and at times, he could be enlightened about culture. "Questions of right and wrong in the arts and sciences should be settled through free discussion in artistic and scientific circles," he wrote. "They should not be settled in summary fashion." Still, he often insisted that artists had to serve the class interests of peasants and proletarians, even as he created a cult of his own personality. American writers and artists played a decisive role in aggrandizing him and writing enthusiastically about the revolution he led. Edgar Snow, the Missouri-born reporter, gave him a big boost in *Red Star Over China* (1937) and in the 1960s Andy Warhol turned him into a global icon.

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Frederic Tuten wrote a brilliant Dadaesque novel, *The Adventures of Mao on the Long March*, published in 1971. John Updike reviewed it favorably in *The New Yorker*, and Susan Sontag called it "a violently hilarious book."

Perhaps all of us who were alive then helped to create the myth of Mao. Tuten certainly did. "I wrote *The Adventures of Mao* at a most political time," he explained. "China was near, its revolution still fresh and seemingly uncorrupted." Many of Tuten's contemporaries also saw the Chinese Revolution as something pure and incorruptible and often browbeat one another with quotations from *The Little Red Book*. I never went that far, though I caught the Mao bug, and joined the Cultural Revolution that spread from Beijing to Paris, and beyond. Finally, the Beatles interjected a necessary note of sanity. "If you go carrying pictures of Chairman Mao, you ain't going to make it with anyone anyhow," they sang in "Revolution." Oddly enough Mao made it big with President Richard M. Nixon, the arch anticommunist who visited China in 1972 and made a point of reciting Mao's poetry to Mao himself. Then, Nixon and Zhou Enlai discussed the meaning of the poems—as though they were two diligent students and Mao their master.

When Mao died in 1976 at the age of eighty-three, the world began a thoroughgoing reappraisal of his life. In book after book—compelling memoirs and comprehensive histories—the mighty Mao has been recast over the last thirty years and many who revered him now revile him. In his introduction to *The Poems of Mao Zedong* Willis Barnstone says very little or nothing about his politics, sticking mostly to literary matters. "He was a major poet, an original master," Barnstone says. Mao had a more modest view—perhaps falsely modest—of his poetry, which he dismissed as "scribbles." Nevertheless, he allowed them to be printed at the age of sixty-five. This edition is based on the edition published in Beijing in 1963.

Barnstone is the most fitting American to bring Mao's work to Americans now, and as China emerges as a real world power. A life long teacher, writer, poet, scholar of Borges and Sappho, and gifted translator, Barnstone has written insightfully about translating in *The Poetics of Translation*. He has a keen poetic imagination and he's an old China hand who lived in China during the Cultural Revolution—Zhou Enlai invited him. In the 1980s he taught literature in Beijing. Moreover, at eighty, he's old enough and wise enough—he's lived through wars and revolutions—to know that if we only read poets who were

perfect human beings we'd read precious few poets. No Ezra Pound and no T. S. Eliot, for example.

Thirty-six poems are here, some as brief as three lines, others much longer. About half the poems were written after Mao and the Communists came to power. All are in Chinese and English, and on matching pages. Barnstone includes examples of Mao's calligraphy, footnotes to each poem, and a note on translation: "Chinese poetry depends very much on images and images translate more readily and with less loss than other poetic devices." In a note on versification, he adds that Mao took his models mainly from the Tang (618–907) and Song (960–1127) poets, which shows how far back the poetry tradition goes in China, where writing poetry was expected of emperors.

A young reader coming upon this work for the first time might not connect Mao the poet to Mao the communist revolutionary. As Barnstone points out some of Mao's best poems are intensely personal, as in "The Gods" which is for his wife and his sister who were beheaded in 1930 by Mao's opponents—the Chinese Nationalists. The poem ends with a powerful image—"Tears fly down from a great upturned bowl of rice"—that exposes his vulnerability and the immensity of the loss, feelings he otherwise declined to make public. Still, even this intensely personal poem was inspired by political events. Many if not most of the poems in this volume are overtly political, even propagandistic, and it would be hard to read them and not think of war and revolution. "The Long March" begins "The Red Army is not afraid of hardship on the march," and seems to have been written to inspire the troops. "Militia Women" is directed at the "Daughters of China" and means to bring them into the revolution. "Tingzhou to Changsha" is covertly political; "soldiers of heaven" tie up and defeat "the whale" but that's pretty explicit symbolism.

Mao enjoyed the beauty of nature all through the hardships of the Long March. War did not curtail his aesthetic appreciation of flowers, snow, horses, geese, sky, rivers, and the moon. The mountains are almost always pleasing to his eye as in "Snow," his most popular poem in which he writes, "Mountains dance like silver snakes." In "To Guo Moruo," the last poem in the volume, Mao seems to reflect on the vanity of the human will to conquer: "On our small planet/ a few houseflies bang on the walls. / They buzz, moan, moon, / and ants climb the locust tree/ and brag about / their vast dominion."

Unlike the poems of the Bosnian-Serb nationalist warlord Radovan Karadzic—who was recently captured and who will go on trial in The

Hague for crimes against humanity—Mao's poems do not reveal an obsession with violence. He did sometimes, however, romanticize weapons as in the image of a "forest of rifles." Karadzic's poems are obviously cultish and diabolical; "I am the deity of the dark cosmic space," he boasts. Mao's work reminds me of the poems that another Asian Communist leader, Hó Chi Minh, wrote while imprisoned in 1942, and that were published under the title *Prison Diary*. Ho disguised his revolutionary views lest his jailors confiscate his work and pile additional punishment on him. "When the prison doors are open, the real dragon will fly out," he wrote in what is his best-known and most frequently quoted line.

If I had to compare Mao to an American I'd say he was akin to Whitman, though I'd add that Whitman's lines are longer, that the rhythms feel different and the voices aren't the same. Like Walt, Mao sings a song of himself. There's an all-powerful "I" as well as an all-seeing eye, and the "I" can be wistful and sad as in "I see the passing, the dying of the vague dream." In "Swimming" Mao writes, "I taste a Wuchang fish in the surf/ and swim across the Yangzi River." He identifies himself with China in much the same way that Whitman identified himself with America, and that seems fitting because twentieth-century China was like nineteenth-century America: a country developing economically at a furious pace, with huge social dislocation, and the unleashing of immense creative as well as destructive forces, all of which were embodied in Mao himself.

In *Mao: The Unknown Story*, the authors Chang and Halliday describe Mao as a megalomaniac who destroyed much of the old China to create a new nation. Barnstone shows him as a poet who borrowed from and helped to preserve the old even as he aimed to overturn it and start anew. The Beatles rightly warned us in the 1960s against the hagiography of Mao, but I'd like to think that they'd want us to read him now. They might even wave Barnstone's compact, handsome volume above their heads. It's that good!

Slumlord Aesthetics and the Question of Indian Poverty

NANDINI CHANDRA

Danny Boyle's *Slumdog Millionaire* (based on Indian diplomat Vikas Swaroop's novel *Q & A*) takes the extremely potent idea of a Bombay slum boy tapping into his street knowledge to win a twenty-million-dollar reality quiz show, and turns it into a universal tale of love and human destiny. In the quiz, Jamal is unable to answer questions that test his nationalist knowledge but is surprisingly comfortable with those that mark his familiarity with international trivia. For instance, while he knows that Benjamin Franklin adorns the hundred dollar bill, he has no clue about who adorns the thousand rupee note. This is obviously meant to suggest the irrelevance of the nation to its most marginalized member, but less obviously, also indicates its redundancy under globalized neoliberalism.

The film has been on an award-winning roll, having won four Golden Globes, seven BAFTAs, and a few others besides the eight Oscars, something that surely adds to rather than subtracts from its imperial charm. According to critic David Gritten of the *Telegraph*, it is "the first film of the Obama era," by which he means that it shares an Obama-type idealism, which might, but in his view ought not to be, mistaken for naiveté, presumably in light of the current global crisis of capitalism. The film was shot in the Nehru Nagar slums near Dharavi ward in Mumbai, but aspires to a Dickensian portrayal, heralded by the centrality of the neo-gothic structure of the Victoria Terminus as the transformative point in the film. The sentimental but validating look at the lives of the poor thus arouses both your typical Bollywood feel-goodness and imperial nostalgia. Boyle had promised the studio bosses a film in English in tandem with the one-world logic, surely. Loveleen Tandan, the co-director, took her role as cover-up officer for cultural gaffes seriously enough to push for

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the little boys from the Nehru Nagar slum to speak Hindi rather than English. The film has sparked a fierce nationalist campaign among Britishers who feel that it could have only been made by a Briton. Hollywood wouldn't have touched a film using a Muslim lead with a barge pole.

In contrast, Indians cannot quite see it in nationalist terms. For one, Amitabh Bachchan's blog has officially announced and sanctioned the hurt pride of nationalist Indians occasioned by the film's exposure of its dirty underbelly. While one can have no sympathy with the chauvinist argument that non-Indians have no right to depict the seamier side of native life, the way this hyper-nationalist sentiment has been refracted in the international press says something about the film's motivations. For instance, most reports translate Bachchan's statement as the Indian peoples' inability to take a brutal look at themselves, assuming both that the so-called West has a direct line to the underclass, and that Mr. Bachchan is one of "the Indian people."

Given this intermeshing of an Indian and global context surrounding the film's production and reception, it becomes pertinent to frame the question of the specific nature of Indian poverty raised in the film. The film is hardly unique in addressing the spectacle of the Bombay poor, their dismal conditions of living and defecating, or their great disparity vis-à-vis the Indian rich. But what it does crystallize in very concrete terms is a general consensus achieved in recent years on the disengagement of labor from questions of poverty and wealth. Partha Chatterjee's recent and much talked about essay, "Democracy and Economic Transformation" (*Economic and Political Weekly*, April 19, 2008), mobilizes the concept of a "political society" to merge the realm of peasant detritus and urban poor with petty entrepreneurs as well as the more shadowy criminal class. His argument reads something like this: This informal and irregular community has not been and cannot be integrated into the corporate-style capitalist structures. While they lose out on the benefits of civil society, their only salvation lies in being appropriated by governmental structures and schemes. This translation of the poor's lack of proletarian consciousness as an automatic admission into political-governmental terms or shrouding them in a cloak of illegality begs several questions. The most important one being the question of capital accumulation by forcible dispossession, through the judicious use of that very government's repressive instruments

in the first place. Or the question of how to usefully channel this dispossessed labor surplus in a direction that will precipitate class struggle.

While the film in its neoliberal optimism contradicts this understanding of the poor, seeing them as immediately appropriable within the interstices of corporatized service industries, it participates in the denial of the potential usefulness of the work they do and its lack of reward. However, like Chatterjee, it also insists on placing them outside the purview of the juridical civil state, where law and order seem not to prevail in the same familiar way, thus surrounding their lives with a mystique that films like Boyle's can successfully unravel. Having been endowed with humanity and dignity, the poor cannot be seen through what is perceived as instrumental categories of labor or class anymore. They instead become denizens of a shadowy, illicit realm which can be made comprehensible only by integrating it within certain humanist tropes like love and freedom. It is remarkable that the topography of the places where the poor live is seen largely through aerial shots—mountains of garbage, huge green forests of wasteland, rivers of feces—and the little boys jumping back and forth through this panoramic natural landscape acquire the characteristic of blooming lotuses in mud. The distant shots have the advantage of lending perspective, especially as the boys return to the city as mature English-speaking individuals who know how to take care of themselves. The goo scene in the beginning and the scene where a massive bogeyman-type figure gouges out the eyes of little children with a spoon are tightly framed to render the horror of the other world, which may be packaged for a poverty tour (like the one where Shantaram took Angelina Jolie by the hand and led her through the giddy lanes of Dharavi). The slum, the common tank where the mother was felled by one swoop of the Hindu fundamentalist sword, the brothel, the child labor, the exploitative policemen, the curious school master in a dhoti, and the mafia bosses are all stops on this guided tour which is only superficially different from the commodification of poverty one finds on the sets of more popular Bollywood fare. In fact, the new Bollywood aesthetics find an echo here in its severe eschewal of the institutions of state and civil society. But while Bollywood is equally welcoming of foreign capital, a non-Bollywood production like *Slumdog* takes on more immediately imperialist overtones. This is because the impetus of its rhetoric of

good will and benevolence strives to conceal the conditions of its production, encapsulated by a patchy realism which seems to suggest that its real commitment is to the true heart of India, rather than a magical realist Bollywood imaginary which it uses merely as the scaffolding for its conventional plot.

The direct connectivity with an international public via tourism, call centers, media, and other service industry networks makes the proximity to foreign capital extremely clear. The absence of an organized labor force or any political platform makes it possible to render the terms offered by this capital free of any vested interest. For instance, the film is produced by Celador Films, the very company which originally created the "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" contest, an idea never once mocked throughout the film. In fact, reality television with big money in rewards encourages the contestants to alternatively think of themselves as obligated to the jury and managers on the one hand, and entitled to earn or deserve the disproportionately large sums of money on the other. At the same time, the ruthlessness with which the contestants are evicted draws brief attention to the bosses' less than benign status as business entrepreneurs, only to deflect it to a professional ethic, which seeks to dignify its lottery or gambling mode. Needless to say, there has been an unprecedented rise in singing, acting, and dancing schools since the growth of reality talent contests on Indian television, in turn inspired by the big money in the corporate-sponsored showbiz industry, which makes the aspirations of the contestants less illegitimate perhaps. The particular dynamics of reality television get enacted when little Jamal is being propped up to be a singer by the beggar kingpin Mamman, and the little fellow really thinks his time has come. In true reality television fashion, he demands a fifty rupee note from him before he sings his piece, announcing that he is after all a professional. Ironically, it is the time spent in this mini-ritual of television inspired professionalism that saves his eyes.

The extension of the professional ethic to these service sectors makes even the informal contractual labor conditions of *chaiwallahs*, tea vendors, seem like a welcome novelty. The hotel kitchen seems like a refuge of freedom for the canny child waiter, who gets plenty of time off even as Salim complains of the utopian life they left behind thieving tires in the by-lanes of Agra. The tourist industry seems like a utopia of cast-offs and gullible "whities" waiting to be

ripped off by these wily self-appointed guides. In short, the film tries to show that for those who can think on their feet, access to wealth is not a problem. Child labor is not really seen as exploitative, but as enabling the education of these young adults. In fact, hardly do we perceive their contribution in terms of real labor. They are seen as gaining from rather than giving to the system, sabotaging, picking up the leftovers, staying in empty hotel rooms, stealing from it. Their *labor* is forever in the background. What is in the foreground is the *readymade wealth* they are continually grabbing. Wealth is seen not as something created by labor but as already always there to be accessed—like the twenty million to be won for the answering of ten odd questions, a clear repudiation of the true dynamics of labor and class. Moreover, by making the state and civil society evaporate, the film is interested in showing that real harmony is ultimately produced by a direct interaction between capital and labor, in a context where capital will always be benefiting labor and not the other way round. This is probably an acknowledgement of the fact that under the present phase of free-market enterprise, the state has proven itself such a good accomplice of capital that it need not even be reckoned with. The police, initially evil, are eventually reconciled to the market's impartial dynamics when the inspector comes round to Jamal's story and escorts him to the media room.

The upper-class body language of its avowedly slum-dwelling protagonists is a serious lapse in realism. As is the characterization of Anil Kapoor, the superstar quiz master treating the slum dweller in such an exaggeratedly condescending fashion. While one does not necessarily doubt the potential arrogance of Bollywood superstars, the social skills they acquire over years of proximity to the laboring class in the industry belies the crudity of the superciliousness exhibited by Kapoor. The use of English could have been justified by a simple suggestion that the boys picked it up from the streets of Agra or even the call center. But what annoys most is the fact that while they make an attempt to imbue the film with a self-consciously heroic Muslim profile, they overwrite it with a totally Hindu concept of destiny. Ironically, even the credit song *jai-ho* (rights to which have now been acquired by the Congress Party as their election song) seems to suggest an orchestrated Hindu mass-pilgrimage to Vaishno-devi rather than the triumph of the Muslim underdog.

Why Socialism?

ALBERT EINSTEIN

Is it advisable for one who is not an expert on economic and social issues to express views on the subject of socialism? I believe for a number of reasons that it is.

Let us first consider the question from the point of view of scientific knowledge. It might appear that there are no essential methodological differences between astronomy and economics: scientists in both fields attempt to discover laws of general acceptability for a circumscribed group of phenomena in order to make the interconnection of these phenomena as clearly understandable as possible. But in reality such methodological differences do exist. The discovery of general laws in the field of economics is made difficult by the circumstance that observed economic phenomena are often affected by many factors which are very hard to evaluate separately. In addition, the experience which has accumulated since the beginning of the so-called civilized period of human history has—as is well known—been largely influenced and limited by causes which are by no means exclusively economic in nature. For example, most of the major states of history owed their existence to conquest. The conquering peoples established themselves, legally and economically, as the privileged class of the conquered country. They seized for themselves a monopoly of the land ownership and appointed a priesthood from among their own ranks. The priests, in control of education, made the class division of society into a permanent institution and created a system of values by which the people were thenceforth, to a large extent unconsciously, guided in their social behavior.

But historic tradition is, so to speak, of yesterday; nowhere have we really overcome what Thorstein Veblen called "the predatory phase" of human development. The observable economic facts belong to that phase and even such laws as we can derive from them

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are not applicable to other phases. Since the real purpose of socialism is precisely to overcome and advance beyond the predatory phase of human development, economic science in its present state can throw little light on the socialist society of the future.

Second, socialism is directed towards a social-ethical end. Science, however, cannot create ends and, even less, instill them in human beings; science, at most, can supply the means by which to attain certain ends. But the ends themselves are conceived by personalities with lofty ethical ideals and—if these ends are not stillborn, but vital and vigorous—are adopted and carried forward by those many human beings who, half unconsciously, determine the slow evolution of society.

For these reasons, we should be on our guard not to overestimate science and scientific methods when it is a question of human problems; and we should not assume that experts are the only ones who have a right to express themselves on questions affecting the organization of society.

Innumerable voices have been asserting for some time now that human society is passing through a crisis, that its stability has been gravely shattered. It is characteristic of such a situation that individuals feel indifferent or even hostile toward the group, small or large, to which they belong. In order to illustrate my meaning, let me record here a personal experience. I recently discussed with an intelligent and well-disposed man the threat of another war, which in my opinion would seriously endanger the existence of mankind, and I remarked that only a supra-national organization would offer protection from that danger. Thereupon my visitor, very calmly and coolly, said to me: "Why are you so deeply opposed to the disappearance of the human race?"

I am sure that as little as a century ago no one would have so lightly made a statement of this kind. It is the statement of a man who has striven in vain to attain an equilibrium within himself and has more or less lost hope of succeeding. It is the expression of a painful solitude and isolation from which so many people are suffering in these days. What is the cause? Is there a way out?

It is easy to raise such questions, but difficult to answer them with any degree of assurance. I must try, however, as best I can, although I am very conscious of the fact that our feelings and strivings are often contradictory and obscure and that they cannot be expressed in easy and simple formulas.

Man is, at one and the same time, a solitary being and a social being. As a solitary being, he attempts to protect his own existence and that of those who are closest to him, to satisfy his personal desires, and to develop his innate abilities. As a social being, he seeks to gain the recognition and affection of his fellow human beings, to share in their pleasures, to comfort them in their sorrows, and to improve their conditions of life. Only the existence of these varied, frequently conflicting, strivings accounts for the special character of a man, and their specific combination determines the extent to which an individual can achieve an inner equilibrium and can contribute to the well-being of society. It is quite possible that the relative strength of these two drives is, in the main, fixed by inheritance. But the personality that finally emerges is largely formed by the environment in which a man happens to find himself during his development, by the structure of the society in which he grows up, by the tradition of that society, and by its appraisal of particular types of behavior. The abstract concept "society" means to the individual human being the sum total of his direct and indirect relations to his contemporaries and to all the people of earlier generations. The individual is able to think, feel, strive, and work by himself; but he depends so much upon society—in his physical, intellectual, and emotional existence—that it is impossible to think of him, or to understand him, outside the framework of society. It is "society" which provides man with food, clothing, a home, the tools of work, language, the forms of thought, and most of the content of thought; his life is made possible through the labor and the accomplishments of the many millions past and present who are all hidden behind the small word "society."

It is evident, therefore, that the dependence of the individual upon society is a fact of nature which cannot be abolished—just as in the case of ants and bees. However, while the whole life process of ants and bees is fixed down to the smallest detail by rigid, hereditary instincts, the social pattern and interrelationships of human beings are very variable and susceptible to change. Memory, the capacity to make new combinations, the gift of oral communication have made possible developments among human being which are not dictated by biological necessities. Such developments manifest themselves in traditions, institutions, and organizations; in literature; in scientific and engineering accomplishments; in works of art. This explains how it happens that, in a

certain sense, man can influence his life through his own conduct, and that in this process conscious thinking and wanting can play a part.

Man acquires at birth, through heredity, a biological constitution which we must consider fixed and unalterable, including the natural urges which are characteristic of the human species. In addition, during his lifetime, he acquires a cultural constitution which he adopts from society through communication and through many other types of influences. It is this cultural constitution which, with the passage of time, is subject to change and which determines to a very large extent the relationship between the individual and society. Modern anthropology has taught us, through comparative investigation of so-called primitive cultures, that the social behavior of human beings may differ greatly, depending upon prevailing cultural patterns and the types of organization which predominate in society. It is on this that those who are striving to improve the lot of man may ground their hopes: human beings are not condemned, because of their biological constitution, to annihilate each other or to be at the mercy of a cruel, self-inflicted fate.

If we ask ourselves how the structure of society and the cultural attitude of man should be changed in order to make human life as satisfying as possible, we should constantly be conscious of the fact that there are certain conditions which we are unable to modify. As mentioned before, the biological nature of man is, for all practical purposes, not subject to change. Furthermore, technological and demographic developments of the last few centuries have created conditions which are here to stay. In relatively densely settled populations with the goods which are indispensable to their continued existence, an extreme division of labor and a highly-centralized productive apparatus are absolutely necessary. The time—which, looking back, seems so idyllic—is gone forever when individuals or relatively small groups could be completely self-sufficient. It is only a slight exaggeration to say that mankind constitutes even now a planetary community of production and consumption.

I have now reached the point where I may indicate briefly what to me constitutes the essence of the crisis of our time. It concerns the relationship of the individual to society. The individual has become more conscious than ever of his dependence upon society. But he does not experience this dependence as a positive asset, as

an organic tie, as a protective force, but rather as a threat to his natural rights, or even to his economic existence. Moreover, his position in society is such that the egotistical drives of his make-up are constantly being accentuated, while his social drives, which are by nature weaker, progressively deteriorate. All human beings, whatever their position in society, are suffering from this process of deterioration. Unknowingly prisoners of their own egotism, they feel insecure, lonely, and deprived of the naive, simple, and unsophisticated enjoyment of life. Man can find meaning in life, short and perilous as it is, only through devoting himself to society.

The economic anarchy of capitalist society as it exists today is, in my opinion, the real source of the evil. We see before us a huge community of producers the members of which are unceasingly striving to deprive each other of the fruits of their collective labor—not by force, but on the whole in faithful compliance with legally established rules. In this respect, it is important to realize that the means of production—that is to say, the entire productive capacity that is needed for producing consumer goods as well as additional capital goods—may legally be, and for the most part are, the private property of individuals.

For the sake of simplicity, in the discussion that follows I shall call "workers" all those who do not share in the ownership of the means of production—although this does not quite correspond to the customary use of the term. The owner of the means of production is in a position to purchase the labor power of the worker. By using the means of production, the worker produces new goods which become the property of the capitalist. The essential point about this process is the relation between what the worker produces and what he is paid, both measured in terms of real value. Insofar as the labor contract is "free," what the worker receives is determined not by the real value of the goods he produces, but by his minimum needs and by the capitalists' requirements for labor power in relation to the number of workers competing for jobs. It is important to understand that even in theory the payment of the worker is not determined by the value of his product.

Private capital tends to become concentrated in few hands, partly because of competition among the capitalists, and partly because technological development and the increasing division of labor encourage the formation of larger units of production at the expense of smaller ones. The result of these developments is an

oligarchy of private capital the enormous power of which cannot be effectively checked even by a democratically organized political society. This is true since the members of legislative bodies are selected by political parties, largely financed or otherwise influenced by private capitalists who, for all practical purposes, separate the electorate from the legislature. The consequence is that the representatives of the people do not in fact sufficiently protect the interests of the underprivileged sections of the population. Moreover, under existing conditions, private capitalists inevitably control, directly or indirectly, the main sources of information (press, radio, education). It is thus extremely difficult, and indeed in most cases quite impossible, for the individual citizen to come to objective conclusions and to make intelligent use of his political rights.

The situation prevailing in an economy based on the private ownership of capital is thus characterized by two main principles: first, means of production (capital) are privately owned and the owners dispose of them as they see fit; second, the labor contract is free. Of course, there is no such thing as a pure capitalist society in this sense. In particular, it should be noted that the workers, through long and bitter political struggles, have succeeded in securing a somewhat improved form of the "free labor contract" for certain categories of workers. But taken as a whole, the present day economy does not differ much from "pure" capitalism.

Production is carried on for profit, not for use. There is no provision that all those able and willing to work will always be in a position to find employment; an "army of unemployed" almost always exists. The worker is constantly in fear of losing his job. Since unemployed and poorly paid workers do not provide a profitable market, the production of consumers' goods is restricted, and great hardship is the consequence. Technological progress frequently results in more unemployment rather than in an easing of the burden of work for all. The profit motive, in conjunction with competition among capitalists, is responsible for an instability in the accumulation and utilization of capital which leads to increasingly severe depressions. Unlimited competition leads to a huge waste of labor, and to that crippling of the social consciousness of individuals which I mentioned before.

This crippling of individuals I consider the worst evil of capitalism. Our whole educational system suffers from this evil. An exaggerated competitive attitude is inculcated into the student,

who is trained to worship acquisitive success as a preparation for his future career.

I am convinced there is only one way to eliminate these grave evils, namely through the establishment of a socialist economy, accompanied by an educational system which would be oriented toward social goals. In such an economy, the means of production are owned by society itself and are utilized in a planned fashion. A planned economy, which adjusts production to the needs of the community, would distribute the work to be done among all those able to work and would guarantee a livelihood to every man, woman, and child. The education of the individual, in addition to promoting his own innate abilities, would attempt to develop in him a sense of responsibility for his fellow men in place of the glorification of power and success in our present society.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to remember that a planned economy is not yet socialism. A planned economy as such may be accompanied by the complete enslavement of the individual. The achievement of socialism requires the solution of some extremely difficult socio-political problems: how is it possible, in view of the far-reaching centralization of political and economic power, to prevent bureaucracy from becoming all-powerful and overweening? How can the rights of the individual be protected and therewith a democratic counterweight to the power of bureaucracy be assured?

Clarity about the aims and problems of socialism is of greatest significance in our age of transition. Since, under present circumstances, free and unhindered discussion of these problems has come under a powerful taboo, I consider the foundation of this magazine to be an important public service.

Prophets of the 'Permanent War Economy'

ERNEST HABERKERN

The Review of the Month entitled "The U.S. Imperial Triangle and Military Spending" by John Bellamy Foster, Hannah Holleman, and Robert W. McChesney (*Monthly Review* 60, no. 5 [October 2008]) carries on a valuable *MR* tradition. *Monthly Review* is one of the few voices on the left that has emphasized the necessity, from the point of view of capitalism, of this kind of military Keynesianism. Chalmers Johnson and Seymour Melman, who have written extensively on this issue, have tended to argue that other forms of government spending, a renewed New Deal, is possible.

There are a couple of caveats. While the authors do not confuse "Electric Charlie" and "Engine Charlie" as do so many, and they do know that Charles E. (Edward) Wilson did not use the term "Permanent War Economy," I think it is also necessary to recognize that he did not, in his speech to the Army Ordnance Association in January of 1944 (see *Army Ordnance* XXVI [March/April 1944]) argue for any form of military Keynesianism. He was solely concerned with making sure that the "military-industrial complex" (also not his word) that had been built up during the Second World War did not come unravelled after the war. Ironically, the Army Ordnance Association had been set up for this very purpose in the aftermath of the First World War. To some extent, Wilson's speech was a warning not to let this happen again. He was arguing not for military Keynesiansim but for gearing up for the war with the Soviet Union that most feared was coming.

The first author to use the term "Permanent War Economy," and to mean by that a form of military Keynesianism that was contemporary capitalism's only way out, a means of transferring wealth from the working classes to capital by means of government taxation, was Edward Sard. Using the pen name Walter J. Oakes he first proposed this argument in an article in the February 1944 issue of the *Politics*, a magazine edited by Dwight MacDonald.

Ernest Haberkern authored, in collaboration with Hal Draper, *Karl Marx's Theory of Revolution Volume V: War and Revolution* (Center for Socialist History, 2005), which is available from Monthly Review Press. He has recently edited a collection of Edward Sard's work to be published by the Center for Socialist History.

He followed up with a six-part series in the *New International* in 1951. During the 1950s he also wrote a series of articles on works by A. A. Berle, John Strachey, and others who still clung to the hope held out by Keynes.

Like Harry Magdoff, Paul Baran, and Paul Sweezy, Sard was one of the few who continued to argue that capitalism could only be saved, at least temporarily, by massive arms expenditures and an imperialist policy aimed at controlling the world's raw materials. In the 1950s and '60s, during the artificial prosperity induced by the Permanent War Economy, they were voices in the wilderness. Today, when we may be witnessing the end of the American Empire, they should be recognized as the prophets they were.

(*continued from inside back cover*)

Yet, in our view, this legacy was never to be viewed as the endpoint in the construction of a system. Rather it was a *starting point*—requiring for its completion continuing historical analysis, actions, and critique—in a collective attempt to *change* the world. If we often refer back to the MR tradition, it is in order to give credit where it is due, and more effectively to push the project of radical social transformation *forward*.

Needless to say, the economic analysis of monopoly capital (or as it now appears monopoly-finance capital) is at the core, but not the whole of the MR project. *Monthly Review* is also known globally for its critique of empire and, more recently, for its ecological critique. Unfortunately, space does not allow us to examine these other vital threads here. All three of these core problems are increasingly interrelated in today's historical moment, reflecting what can be seen as a total crisis of the system.

Moreover, these contradictions of the capitalist system are all deeply rooted in the manifold forms of oppression associated with class, nation, race, gender, sexual orientation, nature-exploitation, and other fundamental divisions. Exactly how all of these various forms of oppression fit together, we do not hesitate to admit, is not altogether clear to us, and has been the occasion of much disagreement on the left. But the reality that they do overlap, that this is related to the system, and that the way out lies in finding a common ground of resistance is not to be doubted. As always, MR is committed to the forging of this common ground for revolutionary change. Although MR's editors have invariably identified themselves as Marxists, the magazine has sought to be a place where other radical currents were also welcome: the one condition being a rock-bottom critique of the capitalist system from the standpoint of humanity (and the planet) as a whole. This broad, non-sectarian outlook has also characterized Monthly Review Press, and more recently MRzine.

We are eager to meet with those of you who can join us for our sixtieth anniversary celebration and public meeting in September (information to be provided). But we also would like to take this occasion to invite the vast majority of you here and around the world who will not be able to gather together with us in New York on this occasion, to join with us nonetheless in the critical struggles ahead. "Clarity about the aim and problems of socialism," Einstein wrote sixty years ago in the pages of *Monthly Review*, "is of greatest significance in our age of transition. I consider the foundation of this magazine to be an important public service." We believe that his words, and the role that they conferred on *Monthly Review* in particular, are even more important today, six decades later, than when they were first written.

These notes commemorating the sixtieth anniversary of *Monthly Review* would not be complete without also commemorating one of our oldest and most cherished subscribers, our friend Pete Seeger, now celebrating his ninetieth birthday. We are happy and proud to identify MR with all of the things that Pete has stood for in his life. May his banjo play forever!

(*continued from inside front cover*)

payments deficit with U.S. external military expenditures. The power of Washington to enforce the dollar standard allowed the United States to engage in massive imperial spending, flooding the world with dollars without the United States itself having to bear the consequences.

Similarly the growth of U.S. debt as a proportion of GDP was commented on from the early 1960s. In the 1970s this came to be identified as a marked trend extending beyond mere business cycle ups and downs. This was manifested, most spectacularly, in an explosive growth of the U.S. financial sector in relation to the underlying real economy. In the last two decades of the twentieth century Paul and Harry began to see the most visible economic phenomena of the day—notably financialization, "globalization," and the creation of a global reserve army (and excess productive capacity)—as manifestations of or attempts to offset the fundamental stagnation tendency first identified in the 1930s. Stagnation and financialization, they suggested, increasingly took the form of a "symbiotic embrace," with the root problem in the former.

As the twentieth century drew to a close, it seemed clear to them that financialization was not only failing to offset the slowdown of growth, but was itself tending towards what looked increasingly like a limit, with the hypertrophy of finance likely to lead to more and more devastating financial crises. Among Harry's favorite images in his last years was that it took dramatically larger and larger amounts of new debt to achieve the same degree of growth in the U.S. economy. Paul in his last years observed that he was comfortable with death, but regretted not getting to see how it all turned out. He would not have been surprised by what has, in fact, happened.

MR's editors were sure they had identified some basic explanatory relationships that were not apparent on the face of things. But they did not pretend (in line with the inflated pretensions that too often characterize intellectuals, on the left as well as the right) to have developed what amounted to a new system or model that covered most everything of importance. Rather Paul, in particular, insisted that the full analysis of these marked and interconnected processes in global capitalism—financialization, stagnant growth, concentration of key industry into a relative handful of multinational corporations, the shift in power from boardrooms to bankers—would have to be taken up by younger thinkers who would have the benefit of seeing these historical contradictions work themselves out.

In these pages, we have applied this intellectual legacy to events as they developed in the U.S. and global economies over the last several years. We think that any fair-minded observer would agree that this outlook has given us—and we trust our readers—a powerful tool to understand events as they have developed.

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