Walking on two legs: Israel, Palestine and the Middle East from a *Matzpen* perspective

An interview with Moshé Machover

Thomas Willis and Richard Rubin

Moshé Machover was a founder of the Israeli Socialist Organisation in 1962, better known by the title of its journal, Matzpen (meaning "Compass" in Hebrew). The journal became known for its anti-Zionism and anti-nationalism from a Marxist perspective. Machover was interviewed on 17 September 2015 by Platypus members Thomas Willis and Richard Rubin. What follows is an edited transcript of their discussion, focusing on its potential lessons learned for the present.

Thomas Willis: What early political experiences brought you to leftism? What led you to join the Communist Party?

Moshé Machover: My trajectory was similar to many who got to the Communist Party or the Marxist revolutionary left, which was through left-wing Zionism. I was a member of *Hashomer Hatza'ir* ("The Youth Guard", a socialist Zionist youth organisation). Abram Leon and Ernest Mandel went through a similar route. I was born in Palestine, in Tel Aviv in 1936. Both my parents came from a bourgeois background in Russia. However, my father had fought in the Red Army in the Civil War. For a young Jewish person in Russia, it was a no-brainer what side you were on. I know he held a lifelong admiration for his commander-in-chief, Leon Trotsky. He left Russia in the early 1920s and died when I was eight years old. When I was born my family was not particularly left-wing, rather bourgeois, fairly right-wing. At the age of twelve, when I joined *Hashomer Hatza'ir* for a few years, I was exposed to Marxism. This organization was a very strange combination of incompatible elements: Zionism and Marxism. You got indoctrinated in both but there was no integration between these two.

Richard Rubin: What about the Marxist Zionist, Ber Borochov (1881-1917)?

MM: Ah! Ber Borochov was not a part of the *Hashomer Hatza'ir* ideology. It is a good question, because reading Borochov was a transitional phase in my political development. *Hashomer Hatza'ir* (HH) advocated "constructivism," encouraging their supporters to found *kibbutzim* (in other words, to participate in colonizing Palestine, and later on Israel, through agricultural settlements, constructing a Zionist economy). In contrast, Borochov attempted to deduce Zionism from Marxist principles. He thought that the Jewish working class would gravitate by objective causes to Palestine (he had a complicated way of trying to prove this). He said the Jewish bourgeoisie would also gravitate to Palestine, construct an economy, and that the workers whom he tried to influence would engage in class struggle. In one respect his ideology was superior: He tried to make an organic connection between Zionism and Marxism, what in HH were two incompatible parts.

RR: So you were still in HH during the 1948 War of Independence, the Nakba?

MM: I joined during it, in 1948, when I was twelve. I and two comrades were expelled for trying to advocate Borochovist ideas. We joined the Communist Youth in late 1952, or early 1953, before Stalin's death.

RR: At that time the Israeli Communist Party (known as Maki) was very Stalinist. There would have been support for Stalinism even in HH.

MM: That is correct. The Marxist component of HH was very Stalinized at the time. It was a combination of Stalinized Marxism and Zionism. When we joined the Communist Youth, we shed our Zionism, to some extent. In 1952, the Communist Party's opposition to Zionism was not really thoroughgoing. It was a patriotic party. Stalin supported Israel during 1948. Maki's representative signed the Israeli Declaration of Independence—a Zionist document. By 1950, Stalin changed his position. He realized he had blundered, even from his own position, never mind from any position you or I could support. At the time he thought it clever to support the Israeli side in order to rid the Middle East of British imperialism—that this would facilitate some kind of greater influence for the USSR in the region. He realized soon after that he was greatly mistaken.

RR: What effect did world events like the Slánský trial in 1953 (where members of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia were accused by the party of spreading "Trotskyite-Zionist" propaganda for the Yugoslav leader Josip Broz Tito) and then the events of 1956 have on you and your milieu?

MM: These are different things. We were in denial of the Slánský trial, and other similar trials and tried to accept them for the time being. 1956 was a contradictory year with two almost simultaneous events. The Hungarian uprising was in part an uprising of the Hungarian workers, which was brutally repressed by the USSR. Simultaneously, there was the Suez war against Egypt. In both Maki followed the USSR, as Communist parties everywhere slavishly did at the time. We were disturbed by the Hungarian events. On the other hand we supported the party position on Suez. By 1956, I was a student and had joined the Jerusalem branch of the Communist Party, not just the youth section. I was closely associated with a friend and comrade, the late Akiva Orr. He was a seaman in the Israeli merchant navy who decided to study in the university. We were students together, members together in the Communist Party branch, and were thinking together.

TW: You wrote a book together in 1961.

MM: Yes, *Peace, Peace, and there is no Peace*. At the time we were in transition from the Communist Party, further to the left. Our politics developed as we worked on this book. We started from positions identical to the Communist Party on the 1956 Suez war, writing to defend the position of the Communist Party. However, we ended up in a more critical mode. It was a stage in our more thoroughgoing critique of Zionism.

RR: Did you encounter any Trotskyists? There was a small Trotskyist movement in the 1930s and 1940s. Were there any of them around?

MM: No, that was before our time; in the 1950s we did not encounter Trotskyists. We knew a couple of people who were reputed to be Trotskyists, but it didn't register much. But, by the time our book came out, we had read Trotskyist literature. There are excellent translations into Hebrew of *My Life*, and of *The History of the Russian Revolution*.

TW: So by then you had read both of those?

MM: Yes, we had read both. I can't tell you that we had read it before 1956, but certainly in the late 1950s, early 1960s.

TW: What were the arguments and differences that led to your expulsion from the Communist Party in 1962? What did it mean to say, as you and your comrades did in "The Class Nature of Israeli Society" that Maki had, "abandoned the theory and practice of revolution a long time ago"? In 1962 you also, with Akiva Orr, formed your organisation around *Matzpen*. How was this an attempt to do something different?

MM: The Hungarian uprising in 1956 sowed the seeds of a critical attitude. Also in 1956, the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was seminal. Suddenly, Stalin, previously idolized as the "Sun of the Peoples" by the Communist movement worldwide, was being denounced. It was disturbing how quickly the Communist Party switched. The bureaucrats and opportunists in the party switched the most easily. Some comrades found it more difficult; they retained admiration of Stalin longer. For an honest person, it was more difficult to make a sudden switch.

Then came two crucial events in 1958: the revolution in Iraq and the Cuban revolution. We reflected on the attitude of the Communist movement, led by the USSR, in both. In the Iraq revolution, which overthrew the monarchy, the Communist Party emerged as the strongest, best-organized force. Iraq had one of the two massive Communist parties in the Third World, the other was in Indonesia. (These, aside from China, which, pre-1960 Sino-Soviet split, was within the Communist Bloc). In Iraq, we witnessed how the USSR tried to restrain the Iraqi Communist Party from challenging 'Abd al-Karim Qasim's regime, (following his coup d'etat on 14 July 1958). Instead they tried to force the Communist Party to support this regime, as it was considered neutral with respect to the USSR—in other words, "Don't upset the applecart".

In Cuba, we witnessed how the Communist Party was initially unsupportive of Castro's rebels. They delayed

"Walking" continues on page 2

80

www.platypus1917.org

"The statements, opinions, and ideas conveyed in this program do not necessarily express the position of the University of Illinois at Chicago."

The Platypus Affiliated Society
The University of Illinois at Chicago
New York University
The New School
School of the Art Institute of Chicago Student Government
Loyola University of Chicago
Dalhousie Student Union

PROOF EDITOR
Thomas Willis

DESIGNER
Daniel Rudin

WEB EDITOR
Lukas Wurzinger

DISTRIBUTION MANAGER
Louis Sterrett

Statement of purpose

Taking stock of the universe of positions and goals that constitutes leftist politics today, we are left with the disquieting suspicion that a deep commonality underlies the apparent variety: What exists today is built upon the desiccated remains of what was once possible.

In order to make sense of the present, we find it necessary to disentangle the vast accumulation of positions on the Left and to evaluate their saliency for the possible reconstitution of emancipatory politics in the present. Doing this implies a reconsideration of what is meant by the Left.

Our task begins from what we see as the general disenchantment with the present state of progressive politics. We feel that this disenchantment cannot be cast off by sheer will, by simply "carrying on the fight," but must be addressed and itself made an object of critique. Thus we begin with what immediately confronts us.

The *Platypus Review* is motivated by its sense that the Left is disoriented. We seek to be a forum among a variety of tendencies and approaches on the Left—not out of a concern with inclusion for its own sake, but rather to provoke disagreement and to open shared goals as sites of contestation. In this way, the recriminations and accusations arising from political disputes of the past may be harnessed to the project of clarifying the object of leftist critique.

The *Platypus Review* hopes to create and sustain a space for interrogating and clarifying positions and orientations currently represented on the Left, a space in which questions may be raised and discussions pursued that would not otherwise take place. As long as submissions exhibit a genuine commitment to this project, all kinds of content will be considered for publication.

Submission guidelines
Articles will typically range in length from 750–4,500 words, but longer pieces will be considered. Please send article submissions and inquiries about this project to: *review_editor@platypus1917.org*. All submissions should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

The *Platypus Review* is funded by:
The University of Chicago Student Government

Staff

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF
Laurie Rojas

EDITORS
Spencer A. Leonard
Chris Mansour
Lucy Parker
Edward Remus
Josh Rome
Sunit Singh
Nathan L. Smith
James Vaughn

COPY EDITORS
Jacob Cayia
Atiya Khan
Houston Small
Emmanuel Tellez

Issue #80 / October 2015

The **Platypus Review**

Issue #80 | October 2015

1 Walking on two legs: Israel, Palestine and the Middle East from a *Matzpen* perspective

Walking, continued from page 2

MM: Yes, Jabra had been a member early on in the Trotskyist movement in Palestine. You can read about it in Tony Cliff's biography by Ian Birchall. He is mentioned as an early member. There was a trio: him, Yigael Gluckstein (better known as Tony Cliff), and Gabriel Baer, who later became a professor of Middle Eastern economy—an Orientalist in the better sense of the word, not in the Edward Said dismissive sense. Jabra was the youngest of the three.

TW: What influenced the development of *Matzpen*'s particular understanding of Zionism? Were you aware of and influenced by contemporary theories and arguments concerning racism and nationalism in the New Left internationally?

MM: In retrospect, the formation of *Matzpen* was part of a world phenomenon. If you look at the early 1960s, there was a reformation of a sort of new radical left. It happened in Japan, in Britain, in the United States, maybe a bit later. We were part of this general phenomenon, without realizing it. We were not really influenced by other sections of this new world movement, or its analysis of racism. Putting racism in the center is not the right way to look at it. Obviously there was racism involved. It was evident. But from our point of view, it was part of the superstructure. What concerned us was what was the real structure of the place we were living. We realized, especially learning from Jabra Nicola, that we were dealing with a conflict of colonization. To be precise: I'm not saying it was a colonial conflict, but a conflict of colonization.

Colonialism is a world phenomenon, a world structure. Let me explain via the history of the U.S.: Colonial times stopped with American independence, it was no longer a colony. But colonization, of what became the U.S., went on apace during the 19th century. What took place after American independence was a process of colonization. Israel was fundamentally structurally different from Algeria or South Africa, where the settlers built a colony on indigenous labor; that was an exploitative colonization. Algeria was a case of colonialism. South Africa was not a colony by the 1960s, it was also under a conflict of colonization—but different than in Israel. What we were confronted with in Israel-Palestine was in this respect more like North America.

RR: It seems that Zionism is unique in the history of colonization. Colonization that exploits indigenous populations is motivated by material concerns, whereas Zionism seems motivated by ideological concerns. But though Zionism was colonial oppression of Palestinians, to many Jews it seemed a movement of national liberation. I'm curious coming from a left-Zionist background and then moving to the Communist party, how you understood that.

MM: I wouldn't say it was completely ideological. There was a material incentive. The incentive was not of big Jewish capitalists, who kept away from Zionism, or at least didn't merge with Zionism proper. It was a primarily petit-bourgeois movement of Jews, basically from Eastern Europe, who had lost the economic basis of their existence and experienced persecution as a minority in non-Jewish societies. This led to a huge emigration of Jews from Eastern Europe, mostly to North America, some to Palestine. It was reasonable to imagine that if they emigrated to North America, they would end up better off. Quite a few were motivated by the wish to create their own society, to solve the economic problem as well as achieve a feeling of nationhood, by forming a Jewish state. That accounts for Zionism: It is not a capitalist bourgeois movement, but is more typically a petit-bourgeois movement of *déclassé* Jewish masses in Eastern Europe. However, in the early 20th century, the Jews of Eastern Europe, before they were exterminated by the Nazis, had their own language, their own culture, and were concentrated in certain areas. In some parts of the Russian empire, they formed the majority of the population. If you look at a town like Pinsk, it was 70% Jewish, and the little *shtetls* around it were 100% Jewish. So it was like a nationality. The majority of people there didn't go for Zionism. They were either non-political and went to America, or others were organized by the Bund, a socialist and originally Marxist movement, who didn't go for Zionism, but wanted national autonomy within those areas.

RR: So did *Matzpen* consider Israeli Jews a nationality?

MM: We were actually confronted with an unmistakeable reality that the settler community of Jewish origin in Palestine, and later Israel, formed a new nationality. That happens everywhere where settlers base their economy not on exploiting the native population, but excluding them. When we grew up, in reference to this new entity, Zionist ideology did not allow it to be called a separate nation. Zionist ideology held that the Jews all over the world were already a nation, but the new entity's special character was linguistically recognized as the Hebrew people. If you look at the English translation of the Israeli declaration of independence of 1948, you find no mention of it because it is a false translation. In the Hebrew original, "Hebrew community" is mentioned three times, and the third time it is called "the Hebrew people," as distinct from "the Jewish people." When they talk about the Jews all over the world, they say the Jewish people. But when they talk about the settlers in Palestine, they say "the Hebrew *Yishuv*."

TW: *Matzpen*'s analysis of Zionism is of a particular form of settler colonialism. But there was also the strategic assessment that combating the ideology of Zionism in the Israeli working class as first priority: you couldn't have a possible revolutionary movement in Israel without breaking Israeli Jewish workers from it. How was your analysis part of a political project, and how did you try to accomplish its goals?

MM: This is the greatest problem that any revolutionary group in Israel faces. How to combine the struggle for socialism with the struggle against Zionism. Your description, which is taken from an old piece called "The Class Nature of Israeli Society," requires modification.[1] Israel has undergone enormous transformation from the time that was written. A few years ago I published a collection of essays ranging from the 1960s to present times, titled *Israelis and Palestinians*.[2] Very little of what I have written over these years requires any serious updating. Things, depressingly, haven't changed much. But the one piece that is completely out-of-date is "The Class Nature of Israeli Society," which was the most popular and most reproduced of my pieces. The economic structure of Israel has changed, since the 1980s, from being one of the most egalitarian capitalist countries, to being one of the least egalitarian, probably second only to the US. The Israeli Hebrew working class was subsidized by the state when we wrote that article. Since then, you have neoliberalism galore. You can see the effects with big demonstrations in the summer of 2011—the biggest ever. So there is a change in this respect.

TW: I meant at that time. How did *Matzpen* consider its project strategically?

MM: We were trying, to use the Chinese expression, to "walk on two legs." That wasn't always easy. When *Matzpen* was founded, being involved in working class struggle was the major aspect of our activity. We tried to involve ourselves in unofficial mass organization of workers in Action Committees. This was a way of workers getting round the oppressive role of the official trade unions under the Zionist Histadrut, which then was a kind of combination of employer and trade union. It was difficult because of the Histradut's tight grip, for example, it provided health services in the absence of any other national health insurance. There were grassroots wishes to form independent trade unions. We tried to float the idea at the time. More recently they have been formed. But really after 1967, we engaged in trying to educate people about Zionism, including agitation through mini-demonstrations (dispersing before we got caught) and holding private meetings held in members' homes, to which supporters and contacts were invited (this kind of political meeting is quite common in Israel, in all parts of the political spectrum).

RR: There seems to have been a shift in the ideology of anti-Zionism. There's hardly any talk about class struggle, but many more people talking about "one state" solutions—even liberals. Can you talk about the relationship of anti-Zionism and Marxism, and whether you saw an inherent connection. But also to go back to the historical question, how did 1967 and 1973 affect *Matzpen*?

MM: In terms of our analytical and programmatic view, very little. By 1967, we were ready with an analysis that we continued to have throughout. 1967 changed reality in a major way for the whole Middle East.

RR: In 1967 and 1973, did you have a "revolutionary defeatist" position (in the Leninist conception, where workers would gain more from their own nation's defeats, by "turning the imperialist war into a civil war" towards international revolution), or did you support the Arab side?

MM: The two are two separate questions. In 1956 during the Suez War, Israel was part of an imperialist collusion against Egypt. One wished for it to fail, one couldn't put it otherwise. At the time *Matzpen* didn't exist. The 1967 six-day war ended too quickly for us to call for revolutionary defeatism. To do this you would need a sturdy working-class organization, preferably on both sides, and to call for the soldiers to turn their guns and fight your own side. That wasn't part of reality. But what I can say is that as we viewed it then, still I view it now: The Israeli victory of 1967 was a catastrophic occurrence. There are reasons for it, but one could not be happy about it. We were devastated by it, but we didn't believe it would last very long.

We never called for two states, we didn't regard this as a solution, nor did we call for one state.[3] Our position was always to connect the solution of the Palestinian-Israeli question with a socialist transformation of the region. The problem is embedded in the region of the Arab east. It was a mistake to divorce the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the problem of colonization, and the solution to the problem from socialism in the region. We put forward such a position a couple of months before June 1967. This remained the position of *Matzpen* so long as it existed. There are still a few of us who are committed to this line.

TW: *Matzpen* suffered splits in 1970-1972 from a range of different perspectives. There were two sorts of Trotskyist splinters, *Ma'avak* were Maoists. But why couldn't *Matzpen* accommodate these varying factions? I remember hearing Akiva Orr speak about *Matzpen*, and saying, "We didn't care if you were Trotskyists or anarchists." The issue for him was anti-Zionism. But these different ideological tendencies came up in *Matzpen* and produced arguments that led to splits.

MM: I want to clarify what Akiva Orr said: The first part [that we didn't care if you were Trotskyist] is true, the second part [referring to anarchists] may reflect Akiva Orr's views at the time of speaking. Personally, I don't think we had any anarchists. How we would have related to them I'm not sure. Certainly, Orr defines the common ground in a negative sense: We were opposed to Zionism. What united us was Marxism and at the time most of us would have defined ourselves as Leninists. I no longer do, and certainly he didn't, he became a kind of anarchist later. But in the 1960s, *Matzpen* were Marxists of the "Leninist tradition." We could co-exist together, and we did for a while.

The double split in 1970 and the one in 1972 were motivated by different things. In 1970, two factions split in opposite directions, motivated by political sectarianism. The majority of *Matzpen* were not sectarian. We thought it was possible to co-exist, but some people thought otherwise. *Matzpen* was trying to "walk on two legs": trying to combine the class struggle and propaganda against Zionism. The balance was tricky. The *Ma'avak* group, who weren't really Maoist, though influenced by Maoism (like the Progressive Labor Party in the US), thought that our main job was to support the Palestinian struggle. They accentuated the role of Israel as a colonizing society.

The other side were influenced by a certain brand of Trotskyism, associated with the Worker's Revolutionary Party in Britain and the Lambertists in France. They thought that Israel should be treated like a "normal" capitalist country. You should relate to the working class as you would in France, or wherever. They were a small group, even relative to *Matzpen* itself. Their departure didn't immobilize *Matzpen* or hurt it in a way that the later split did. The 1972 split was not motivated by deep political differences. It was sectarian in a different sense of the term. By then, Jabra Nicola, the main Trotskyist figure in *Matzpen*, was living in London. He opposed the split but was powerless to prevent it. New recruits to Trotskyism, like Michel Warschawski, were pushed by the leadership in Europe to create a branch of the Mandelite Fourth International in Israel. For that, they would have to convert *Matzpen* into a branch. But they did not have a majority. So, they engineered the split. They were helped at the time by some of the other side, the majority of *Matzpen*, the founding generation let us say, who were attracted by more libertarian ideas, which are fairly hostile to Leninism.

From left to right: Moshé Machover, Akiva Orr and Dina Hecht, demonstrating in the 1960s. Still taken from Eran Torbiner's film about *Matzpen*.

RR: What was *Matzpen*'s relationship to the United Secretariat of the Fourth International [USec] at the time?

MM: We knew that some of our members were connected, we thought that was alright. Jabra Nicola, a veteran member of *Matzpen*, was a leader in the USec. He was their policy-maker on the Arab east, writing under the name of A. Said, or Abu Said. He never tried to hide this or impose it on others in *Matzpen*. He realized some of us were not keen to join this world organization. Our position was, "There is a tendency in *Matzpen* related to the USec, so as long as this is open and there is nothing under-handed, you're at liberty to associate with it but the rest of us don't want to join. We don't want *Matzpen* to be a section." As far as I know, under pressure from their European leadership, quite recklessly, they split. So *Matzpen* split into two more or less equal parts. We had one group that was doing well, but then it split into two groups, both of which were under the critical mass.

RR: How large was *Matzpen* in the late 1960s, early 1970s?

MM: A few dozen. I couldn't give you a number, but not more than fifty.

TW: Retrospectively, what was *Matzpen*'s historical significance? Did your work do anything to advance the possibility of socialist revolution in the Arab states and Israel? What lessons can be learned from your attempt to combat the ideology of Zionism in the Israeli Jewish working class?

MM: I think the influence of *Matzpen* has been enormous, especially relative to its small size. Today young people in Israel keep discovering the ideas of *Matzpen* and being astounded at things we wrote in 1967, for example calling for immediate withdrawal from the occupied territories. A document is in front of me here, hanging on my wall. We said, "Occupation leads to oppression, oppression leads to terror and counter-terror. We will become a nation of victims and murderers. We must get out of the occupied territories." This was published in *Haaretz* in 1967 as a paid advertisement. It wasn't officially by *Matzpen*, but many of us signed it. We sowed certain seeds that did not completely germinate, but we provided an analysis. I still stand by it, and a lot of people who are thinking along Marxist lines, not along nationalist lines, are persuaded by it. Our analysis stands, and our predictions stand. For example, in 1975, forty years ago, Emmanuel Farjoun and I published an analysis, and you can find a translation in my book from 2012.[4] We said that Israel is going to prevent the formation of a Palestinian state, a two state solution is not going to happen. We explained why. You read it now—it's correct.

As we said then, the Israeli-Palestinian issue can only be solved within the framework of regional revolution. The strategy for this is to form a regional organizational framework, with a component in Israel and a component in the Arab regions, that can work together to prepare this. But those who think the problem in Israel-Palestine can be solved in the near future are deluding themselves. The only social group that can overthrow Zionism is the Israeli working class. But they are not going to do it now because at present it has no interest in doing it, short of being part of the dominant class in the region. Exchanging its present position as an exploited class with national privileges to being part of a regional ruling class without national privileges, would be a good deal. Otherwise it will not overthrow Zionism. And if it will not overthrow Zionism, the problem cannot be solved.

TW: Many people have been influenced by the analysis that *Matzpen* gave, but is anyone carrying out that kind of political work, and is it possible under present circumstances?

MM: I think it is certainly necessary, but whether it is possible we can only find out by trying. So far we have failed. We need regional organization. Not a centralized one, but co-thinking components, with one component in Israel, to work on a long-term project of regional transformation that would also be able to solve the Palestinian problem.

RR: Do you think in retrospect that *Matzpen* was overly optimistic about the PLO?

MM: The Trotskyist group that split from us in 1972, the so-called "*Matzpen* (Marxist)" journal, they were overly optimistic. At one stage they defined themselves as part and parcel of the PLO. Our side never did. Incidentally, Jabra Nicola was scathing about people like Yasser Arafat. At that time I thought he was overdoing it. If we meet in heaven or in hell, he will tell me, "Arafat was going to betray the Palestinian revolution, and I knew exactly why." We called to recognize the PLO as the leaders of the Palestinian people, which was a fact. We had no illusions about their politics or their prospects. We were critical of them. We had more time for the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, the Hawatmeh group. But the PLO was such that our side of the 1972 split didn't have any illusions about it.

RR: Would you say that kind of left Palestinian nationalism has disintegrated? What do you see in Israel-Palestine that you would see as supportable?

MM: The Left has disintegrated within the Palestinian movement, related to the decline in the Arab left and beyond. In the short-term, I am very pessimistic. I maybe share with Gramsci, I have optimism of the will, but not optimism of the intellect. On the contrary, I seriously think we are facing a terrible danger. Analysis and evidence point to the possibility of major ethnic cleansing. If Israel prevents a two state solution, and they are definitely not in favor of a one state solution, what is the *tertium quid*—the way out? The solution is for it to engineer a solution of ethnic cleansing. There is evidence that this is a contingency plan. Certainly Benjamin Netanyahu is on record as recommending it many years ago, and he is still in that line. I think this is a very real danger, and we have to try to mobilize public opinion against it.

RR: What did you think of the tent protests in 2011, which though massive appeared rather apolitical?

MM: On the contrary, the politics were very interesting. There were not only tents, but massive demonstrations, the most massive in Israeli history, about social and economic issues. They were apolitical in one sense: They consciously and deliberately excluded reference to the occupied territories. Matters of the occupation were taboo as far as their leaders were concerned. Yet at the same time, they were very supportive and expressed great solidarity with the contemporary movement of masses in the region, for example the Egyptian masses. One of the most popular slogans was "Tahrir Square is here!" Another very popular slogan was "Mubarak, Assad, Netanyahu." You cannot say this is apolitical. It shows considerable solidarity with the Egyptian and Syrian masses. This was before the struggle in Syria degenerated, when it was a progressive movement against Assad. There was even attempt to include Palestinian citizens of Israel. One of the cliches was, "here there are no Ashkenazi, Mizrahim, orthodox Jews": we are all in this together. That was a form of class solidarity. It didn't spill over to the occupied territories, but indicated that the way to the Palestinian problem goes through the region, not vice-versa. I hope you see what I mean. This was expressed immediately by the mood of the protestors.

TW: What prospect is there for a kind of political leadership that could organize those discontents to push against the possibility of ethnic cleansing, against more wars in the region, in a revolutionary direction, and not just to protest in public squares that eventually dissipate?

MM: There are two different issues. To prevent ethnic cleansing we have to mobilize public opinion. Only pressure from outside the region can help to stop this. You have to create a climate internationally in which this would be impossible. As to revolution, all I can say is that one has to try, try again, and keep trying, to form an organizational framework. So far we have not been successful. It is frustrating, but that's the way it is. If we cannot manage to form an organizational framework, a leadership, in the best sense of this much-abused word, the future is very grim. |**P**

1 Hanegbi, Machover and Orr, "The Class Nature of Israeli Society", *New Left Review* 65, Jan-Feb 1971. Reprinted in Machover, *Israelis and Palestinians*, (Chicago: Haymarket, 2012): 76-98.
2 Machover, *Israelis and Palestinians*, (Chicago: Haymarket, 2012).
3 Regarding Machover's opinion on the "one state" solution, he recommended his article "Belling the Cat", Weekly Worker, Issue 990, 12 Dec 2013, available online at <http://weeklyworker.co.uk/worker/990/palestineisrael-belling-the-cat/>.
4. Machover, (2012): 26-34.

Austerity begond growth and beyond confidence

Sascha Engel

SYRIZA MAY JUST HAVE BEEN SUFFERING FROM AN EARLY BIRTH: Everywhere, it seems, anti-austerity policies and politicians are on the rise. With Jeremy Corbyn, British Labour has decided upon a course radically dissimilar to its previous "me too" endorsement of austerity. Spain's Podemos, despite insistence that the country's situation is not Greece's, cannot escape comparisons with SYRIZA. Even in the United States, the rise of Bernie Sanders indicates that the word "socialist," if not socialist policy, is losing some of its spookiness.

If nothing else, resistance to austerity unites these movements. Yet, their arguments are unable to counter the powers that be, which—apart from the "argument" at gunpoint—have always insisted that austerity policies eventually restore growth. Each time the European Commission has "recommended" austerity measures to one of the European crisis countries, growth was posited as the ultimate goal. To achieve growth, countries are told to restore what ECB president Draghi has called a "confidence channel," by which cuts to social programs restore financial market confidence in the countries' ability to repay their debts.[1] Yet, Corbyn, Sanders, SYRIZA, and Podemos remain on the same terrain as their opponents: Assuming austerity has economic goals—accumulation, growth, debt resolution—they propose equitable tax reforms, hiring and pension schemes, and health care reform. These are certainly all laudable, yet arguing for them assumes one can have a debate with proponents of austerity on economic grounds.

Economists' arguments against austerity likewise criticize it on the grounds that it is an economic set of policies whose intended goal is the restoration of growth. Written at the height of the Eurozone crisis in 2012, Jay Shambaugh argued that austerity is self-defeating: "Attempts at fiscal austerity to relieve the problems due to sovereign stress are slowing growth. Yet without growth… the sovereign debt crisis will persist."[2] Prominent critic Mark Blyth has asserted that austerity reduces growth by cutting demand. According to him, austerity's attempt to achieve growth through cuts "rather spectacularly ignores the fact that for someone to be running an export surplus, someone else must be running a deficit… Someone has to spend so that there is demand for these exports."[3] These arguments—and others, famously by Joseph Stiglitz and Paul Krugman—have identified austerity as a macroeconomically irrational set of policies. Yet, they fail to draw the radical conclusion that the main argument for austerity is not economic at all but rather hearkens back to moralities of debt and credit: States and people have recklessly lived beyond their means and now have to face punishment.

Justly, from this perspective, the lenders or savers—the European Commission, the ECB, and the IMF—decide what is "sustainable" and "reasonable," as became evident in the 2015 standoff between Greece and the "Institutions." Austerity is a moral economy: It is based on the morality of those who prevail and who consequently decide who gets what and to what end. One must look beyond growth and confidence to this real economy of austerity: its entirely destructive project. To do this, one must at once proceed from a Marxist perspective and acknowledge it does not go far enough. Marxism is necessary to uncover the fact that austerity is not an economic but a political project. It is a project of violent rule rather than a growth-oriented set of policies, a form of violent antagonism, not a well-intentioned but unfortunately counterproductive economic program. It is necessary to go beyond the Marxist perspective after recognizing this, however, because austerity's merely destructive character goes beyond a bourgeois project in service of accumulation.

For Marxism, austerity is part of the ongoing capitalist crisis under the specific conditions of late capitalism.[4] It allows the triumphant restoration of capitalist accumulation, and, at the same time, it signals its ever-approaching demise. As Marx notes, a crisis is the inevitable result of the fact that, under capitalism, "commodity capital is inherently already money capital."[5] Thus commodities are subject to the expansions and contractions of monetary capital rather than vice versa. By the same token, "crisis" is a class project. An excess of commodity use-values in general easily goes hand in hand with a scarcity of access to those use-values for those who do not—or only to a limited extent—participate in the cycle of money capital.

This was particularly evident in the U.S. subprime crisis, where the expansion of money capital contained in the asset-form of real estate (rather than the commodity-form) allowed widespread access to the use-value contained in housing only on terms set by the mechanics of credit creation. The result was an accumulation by dispossession by which the U.S. financial system, recently bailed out, was able to seize houses and force populations into debt-based quasi-slavery. Likewise, the European banking system was able to penetrate the periphery to an unprecedented extent in the 2003–2007 credit boom—only to get bailed out and seize the states involved as collateral.

Austerity deepened and sustained this process. By recapitalizing the banking system whose circulation remains mostly intact and self-contained while simultaneously impoverishing the real economies subservient to it, it accelerates the reproduction of the conditions for subsequent crises. Austerity is not, as its Keynesian critics have it, a failed economic policy. Austerity measures prolong and accelerate the savage accumulation characteristic of "crisis" to reproduce the conditions of capitalism's continued survival. Its policies fit seamlessly into the pattern of capitalist accumulation by dispossession, such as "privatization of what were once considered common property resources (like water and education)…eminent domain… takeovers, mergers and the like that result in "asset stripping," and reneging on, say, pension and health care obligations through bankruptcy proceedings."[6]

Moreover, austerity policies do so by explicitly endorsing the very financialization that led to the crisis. Irish austerity, for example, consisted of an explicit continuation of Ireland's pre-crisis policies of trade openness, wage moderation, and a comparatively low level of social security. The only difference is that these measures were now implemented by decree and explicitly served financial interests. As Ireland's finance minister, Brian Lenihan, said in 2009: "We need to persuade the international markets that we are capable of taking the tough decisions now to get our house in order."[7]

Borrowing from David Harvey, austerity may thus be characterized as a "financial fix" analogous to the "geographical fix."[8] In Europe, austerity focuses exclusively on maintaining the functions of sovereign bonds on international balance sheets at the expense of other state functions—i.e., by enforcing, as the Commission calls it, debt service prioritization. It therefore in effect accelerates the financialization of European peripheral states and their social fabrics in service of capital markets. This is not to say that such prioritization, implicit or explicit, had not taken place previously. Austerity accelerates the development, however, putting financial interests squarely into the center of the European political economy at the expense of everyone else: "A horror show of decrepit political formations not seen since the interwar years has been exhumed from the crypt and installed across Europe: national governments, externally-imposed technocrats, even—in Greece—a troika-dictated regimen."[9]

Austerity is thus also intimately connected to the ongoing transformations of states in the context of late capitalism. In this regard, it is important to observe the differentiation of states in the Eurozone: debtors (Greece, first and foremost; Portugal and Ireland; Italy, Spain, and Cyprus) and creditors (Germany, first and foremost; France to a lesser extent; Austria and Finland; the Benelux countries). Both of these groups, in different ways, serve as transmission belts for the transformation of states into appendices of the European banking system. Debtor countries keep their national banking systems intact by bailing them out and by prioritizing debt servicing—which is to say by borrowing from the banking system at interest rates set by the banking system to recapitalize the banking system.

Less well known is that the creditors are subject to the same dynamics and implement policies along the same axis—austerity benefits Germany, but it is not a German project. Wolfgang Schäuble's "black zero" fanaticism in Germany, for example, is vastly overestimated when assumed to be an autonomous German policy. All European countries have recapitalized their banking systems after 2008. Likewise, all European countries are embedded into the financial fix. In Germany's case, this has been profitable, as flights-to-safety from peripheral to core sovereign bonds have lowered its interest rates significantly during the so-called crisis (a condition which still persists). Austerity sustains a peripheral zone of raw capitalist accumulation in Europe characterized by unequal exchange with the capitalist core—a classic in capitalist peripheries.[10] In this case, the periphery supplies tourist destinations, cheaper labor, and a departure site for flights-to-safety exploiting the core–periphery differential. As a financial fix, austerity allows investors to profit from risk premiums peripheral governments have to pay to attract investments away from the "safety" of investing in the core; as a spatial fix, it allows for Germany and other creditors to sustain the conditions for accumulation of industrial and financial capital.

These elements of a Marxian interpretation, then, seem to give a well-rounded account of austerity. Austerity is a sustained and accelerated crisis as triumphant capitalism—not a response to crisis. It sustains and maintains the accumulation by dispossession characteristic of late capitalism. It is a part of the ongoing transformation of nation-states in the context of late capitalist debt relations. It also deepens the unequal exchange relations characteristic of core-periphery distinctions, bringing to Europe what other global regions had long suffered.

Yet, the Marxian interpretation does not account for a central characteristic of austerity that—while having the effect of accumulation by dispossession—primarily makes it a phenomenon *sui generis*. Beyond the role austerity policies play in sustained accumulation by dispossession, austerity is at its core a project of a different kind: a dynamic whose destructive effects go beyond its accumulative effects. The phenomena for which the Marxian analysis accounts are themselves subject to a continuous, endlessly destructive, *excessive* dynamic.

As is well known to mainstream economists, austerity presents an intersection of a procyclical macroeconomic dynamic with an escalating political dynamic: "from Argentina in 2001 to Greece in 2010–11, austerity measures have often created a wave of violent protests and massive civil unrest."[11] Simultaneous cuts in wages and social benefits result in a steep decline of effective demand. In turn, this reduces production and exacerbates unemployment—a development that feeds itself, especially when it coincides with a downturn in investment as "crisis'" reduces liquidity and raises interest rates. In turn, more social expenses would be necessary. But since these are cut as well, there are further increases in poverty, child poverty, health problems, mortality, crime rates, etc.—all of which reduce growth. Not surprisingly, debt reduction turns out to be nearly impossible in this environment. Mass protests, combined with a volatile political environment—a result of the protests on the one hand and creditors' demands on the other—invariably result in an authoritarianism where "all classes and parties [unite] in the party of Order against the proletarian class as the party of anarchy, of socialism, of communism."[12]

Yet, while previous forms of capitalism have resorted to fascist rule to preserve and restore accumulation, austerity does so to purely destructive ends. Its core dynamic continues through fascist and technocratic governments and yet is not identical to the restoration of class power. Austerity is not sufficiently explained either as fetish of deflationary stability as such (i.e., fascist political order + restored class power), or as Schumpeterian creative destruction as such (i.e., cutting towards growth in a leaner and meaner economy). Its core is an endless reinforcement of contraction *as such*.

The "economy" of austerity is an entirely destructive aneconomy. Here, the all-pervasive specter of hyperinflation engenders a deflation that is always excessive hyperdeflation, while consumption is forced to engage in a structurally endless attempt to reduce itself to zero. This attempt is asymptotic. Any spending reduction must be followed up by another—a movement whose stake is not a hypothetical state of non-consumption, but the movement of reducing consumption itself. Being virtuous is not the stoic morality of reducing consumption to zero, but the endless attempt to spend ever less. Likewise, there is no fetishization of monetary stability here, only the endless reduction of monetary circulation and its derivative, the endless reduction of fiscal expenses. This movement is likewise asymptotic: it does not aim to kill the state ("starve the beast"), but to reduce every expense even further.

As I wrote above, I do not mean to claim that austerity is a German project. However its genealogical origin is Germany's 1923 hyperinflation that gave rise to a dynamic resulting in austerity.[13] A moral overdetermination of thrift emerged in which all superfluous spending was morally pernicious and in which saving as such—privately and publicly—was a morally virtuous activity *in itself.* As social philosopher Walter Eucken stated in 1960, "making saving possible is better than charitable help or state subsidies," since people must be "capable of helping themselves if necessary."[14] In this perspective, *all* spending is potentially superfluous—i.e., potentially morally pernicious. This sentiment haunts Europe today in the form of the *Schwäbische Hausfrau* (Swabian housewife), "who knows how to live within her means."[15]

The—macroeconomically nonsensical—conflation of household spending and state spending at work here is no accident: it is at the heart of austerity's genealogy. The moral overdetermination of household thrift combines with an equal moral overdetermination of monetary stability. Inflation incites spending, and all spending is potentially irrational. A fortiori, then, hyperinflation incites it: "one frequently found image in accounts of the time [1923] is the figurative expression of the inflation as a *Hexentanz*, 'a witch dance,' or a *Hexensabbat*, a 'witches Sabbath.'"[16] Restoring stability—contracting the monetary supply—is thus not only identical to the restoration of purchasing power, but to civil society as a whole: one day shop fronts are empty and money is carried in wheelbarrows; the next day purchasing power reappears and windows are filled again.

Austerity is also the restoration of bourgeois morality *tout court*: "Inflations are one of the worst grievances from a social point of view since they deny humans the ability to provide for themselves and their loved ones."[17] Moreover, it is identical to the restoration of economic rationality itself: "The market economy constitutes a consumer-oriented, mathematically exact apparatus which builds incomes according to market requirements."[18] Economic rationality is thus pervaded by a *telos* of morality: Spending within one's means is morally righteous spending, which is to say spending only to the extent that it is not superfluous—i.e., ultimately, no spending at all. The private and public sentiments intersect here: All spending is inflationary spending, private and public, and it is best not to spend at all.

Thus, public deflation and private saving become goals in themselves. The European peripheries, and Greece in particular, have lived beyond their means, which is to say they have behaved amorally—they must be punished. Yet, the punishment can never end, since only saving one's money is virtuous, not the outcome of saving, i.e., money hoarded. Hardship itself, not accumulation is the goal: "We need to persuade the international markets that we are capable of taking the tough decisions now to get our house in order."[19] Proving this is an endless project: The witches of spending, of moral frivolity, are everywhere. To be sure, austerity *also* restores and maintains class power, but only as long as this restoration is contractive. The core of austerity is not bottom–top redistribution as such but the dynamic it engenders, where each contraction brings further contractions and each destructive act further destructive acts. Class warfare destroys to accumulate; austerity merely destroys.

It would be false to conclude that austerity is not a project of class restoration. On the contrary, the evidence clearly suggests that it is: redistribution of public and private resources from the laboring bottom to the rentier top and redistribution of capital within the Eurozone banking system from the periphery to the core. In this sense, austerity can very well be interpreted as a continuation of the authoritarian project of class restoration often called "neoliberalism." Yet, these accumulative effects are accidental. Austerity is fundamentally *not* in the interest of those imposing it. It reduces growth and effective demand, which hurts industrial capitalists;[20] it also causes financial instability, threatening portfolio allocations and returns, which hurts financial capitalists.[21] Austerity is certainly a successor to neoliberalism, but it has gotten out of the control even of those in whose interest it supposedly operates. At its core, austerity constitutes an endlessly destructive dynamic in which every social formation is an opportunity to be destroyed, not an opportunity to be used for class restoration. Austerity is not ultimately a class project, and it is not ultimately neoliberal. Rather, its core is an outgrowth of neoliberalism superseding it towards mere destruction.

Anti-austerity projects such as SYRIZA and Podemos do not go far enough when they posit austerity as a struggle of peripheral against core capitalisms. Likewise, the Corbyns and Sanderses of the world fall short of recognizing the aneconomic, even anti-economic nature of austerity. At the same time, however, merely interpreting austerity as a class project falls short of its excessively destructive dynamic. Left-wing activists—from Sanders and Corbyn, to Tsipras, and beyond—should stop pretending austerity was an economic project and start acknowledging its war characteristics. The alternative to be put before the people under austerity is not a piecemeal alternative between progressive and regressive taxation; it is—and must be presented as—an alternative between an emancipated society and aneconomic destruction. It has always been known implicitly that capitalism is a war economy; yet, its generally accumulative nature has prevented that from being obvious. Now that it has turned inward and become purely destructive, it is perhaps time to respond to it in kind. Due to austerity's tendency to destroy all parts of the social fabric subjected to it, resurrecting strategies and tactics of the class struggle—Leninist, Maoist, Trotskyist, or non-denominational—may be possible now more than ever. To be sure, austerity is a destructive project whose scope goes beyond a class struggle, and it will not be possible to identify its opponents by more than merely by this opposition. By the same token, however, when austerity's destructive effects on ultimately all parts of society become obvious, social-revolutionary strategies and tactics may not even find much resistance any more. |**P**

---

1 Language to this end can be found in a series of documents published by the European Commission containing the "recommendations" for austerity policies necessary for bailout payments. For example, in the first program for Greece in 2010, the Commission noted: "The short-term programme objectives are to restore confidence and maintain financial stability. […] The medium-term programme objective is to improve competitiveness and alter the economy's structure towards a more investment- and export-led growth model." (European Commission, "The Economic Adjustment Programme for Greece." Occasional Papers No. 61) Similar language can be found in the "recommendations" for Portugal (2011), Ireland (2011), Greece again (2012), as well as G20 statements with regard to Spain (2012) and the Commission to Italy (2012). Greece's current third bailout package will likewise come with a report.

2 Jay Shambaugh, "The Euro's Three Crises," in *Brookings Papers on Economic Activity* 2012, no.1: 159.

3 Mark Blyth, *Austerity: The History of a Dangerous Idea* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), 140.

4 The term "late capitalism" was coined by Ernest Mandel in his 1978 *magnum opus* of the same name.

5 Karl Marx, *Capital, Vol. III* (London: Penguin Classics, 1991), 622.

6 David Harvey, *The Enigma of Capital* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 49.

7 Mairead Considine and Fiona Dukelow, "Ireland and the impact of the economic crisis: upholding the dominant policy paradigm," in *Social Policy in Challenging Times: Economic Crisis and Welfare Systems*, ed. Kevin Farnsworth and Zoe Irving (Bristol: Policy Press, 2011), 191.

8 Harvey, 140-184.

9 Joe Guinan, "Returns to Capital: Austerity and the Crisis of European Social Democracy," in The Good Society 22, no. 1 (2013): 46.

10 A classic described thoroughly by Emmanuel Arghiri, *Unequal Exchange* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1972).

11 Jacopo Ponticelli and Hans-Joachim Voth, "Austerity and Anarchy: Budget Cuts and Social Unrest in Europe, 1919-2009," in CEPR Discussion Paper No. 8513 2011: 2.

12 Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1978), 602.

13 In Europe, that is. In the United States, where a version of austerity prevails through other means—where it is a publicly supported, common-sense set of policies—one may speculate about origins stemming from Puritan denials of pleasure, through Western-state and Jacksonian sound money ideas, to Tea-Party hatred against poverty.

14 Author's translation from German: "Ermöglichung des Sparens ist besser als karitative Hile oder staatliche Subsidien," since people must be "in die Lage versetzt werden, sich notfalls aus eigener Kraft zu helfen." Walter Eucken, *Grundsätze der Wirtschaftspolitik* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck Publishers, 1960), 319.

15 Young, Brigitte and Willi Semmler: "The European Sovereign Debt Crisis: Is Germany to Blame?" *German Politics and Society*, vol. 97 no. 29 (2013), p. 7.

16 Widdig, Bernd. *Culture and Inflation in Weimar Germany*, 2001. University of California Press, p. 203.

17 Author's translation from German: "Inflationen sind vom sozialen Standpunkt eines der schwersten Übel, denn sie nehmen dem Menschen die Möglichkeit, für sich und die Seinen vorzusorgen." Eucken, 319.

18 Author's translation from German: "Die Marktwirtchaft bietet eine sich an den Konsumentenwünschen orientierende, rechenhaft exakt funtionierende Apparatur, die gemäß den Markterfordernissen Einkommen bildet." Müller-Armack, Alfred. "Stil und Ordnung der Sozialen Marktwirtschaft," in: Nils Goldschmidt and Michael Wohlgemuth (Eds.): *Grundtexte zur Freiburger Tradition der Ordnungsökonomik*, 1952. Mohr Siebeck Publishers, p. 460.

19 Considine and Dukelow, 191.

20 Shambaugh, 158-160.

21 Blyth, 3.

Trotsky and the Frankfurt School

Helmut Dahmer

Disrespect for a reality that demands adoration as if it were a god is the religion of those, who in today's Europe under the 'Iron Heel' risk their life in order to prepare a future better one.

Max Horkheimer, September 1939[1]

LOOKING THROUGH THE REGISTER of names in the writings and letters of the circle of friends around Max Horkheimer we find only rare references to Leon Trotsky. Theodor Adorno, for instance, who claims in his *Aesthetic Theory* (1969) that the ambitious art has been bourgeois art, remarks approvingly that Trotsky also had said in his book *Literature and Revolution* (1923/24) that (after the revolution) there would be no possibility for the development of any "proletarian" art, and that there would be produced a post-bourgeois art only in the future, after an international socialist society will have been established. Erich Fromm, who belonged to Horkheimer's Institute of Social Research until 1939, wrote a sympathetic, but unpublished review in 1958, when Trotsky's *Diary in Exile* (1935) was translated and published. Horkheimer also mentioned Trotsky (together with Lenin) in conversations with Adorno and other members of his circle concerning the Bolshevik Revolution, remarking that it had changed its character by answering white terror with red terror during the civil war. Horkheimer quoted Rosa Luxemburg's early criticism of the Bolshevik rule, praising Luxemburg as "one of the most important political figures of the 20th century." Walter Benjamin is the only member of Horkheimer's circle of social philosophers of whom we know that he not only read (in 1926) Trotsky's essay *Where is Britain Going?* but later, in 1932-33 and with great enthusiasm, Trotsky's most important books, *My Life* and *The History of the Russian Revolution*. "I think it is the most interesting book I have read in many years," he wrote to Adorno. We can find traces of this reading in Benjamin's notes on Blanqui (in his *Passagenwerk*) and in his famous "Theses on the Philosophy of History" from 1940.

Looking at Horkheimer's and Adorno's writings on fascism we find, in spite of many similarities of description and analysis, no indication that they had knowledge of Trotsky's commentaries concerning the agony of the Weimar Republic, the failure of the German Communist Party, and the rise of the fascist movement. Trotsky's theory of fascism is not even mentioned in Horkheimer's 1950 essay "The Lessons of Fascism."[2] The main contributions to a theory of fascism that were written and published by the scholars around Max Horkheimer were those of Franz Neumann and Adorno.[3] Neumann's pioneer work on the political economy of German fascism owes a lot to Trotsky's analyses, though it nowhere mentions him. The study of Adorno et al. gave the first descriptive analysis of the type of people that have a desire to give up their personal autonomy and to become blind followers of this or that charismatic false messiah.[4]

Trotsky had denounced Stalin as the "gravedigger of the revolution" as early as 1926. We cannot be sure if Horkheimer knew his fragmentary biography of Stalin published in 1941, the year after Trotsky was killed by the GPU-agent Ramón Mercader; but Horkheimer's reaction when he learned in early March 1953 that the tyrant of the Kremlin had died sounds like an echo of Trotsky's damnation of ("Cain") Stalin. Here is the report of Monika Plessner: "Horkheimer was in high spirits, jubilated, rubbed his hands in glee: 'The monster is dead. Call the students together. We have to do something immediately.'" Half an hour later the students were sent into the city of Frankfurt in order to ask passengers what their opinion was concerning the main news of the day. [5]

Much more important than these direct (or indirect) references to Trotsky and his writings is the political and cultural constellation: On the one side we find the tiny informal group of Marxist philosophers around Horkheimer driven into exile by the German fascists; on the other, the group of international revolutionaries around Trotsky—the so-called "Left Opposition," later known as the "Fourth International," organized in the form of a new party, one that the Stalinists hunted down from the Soviet Union to Turkey, then to France, from France to Norway, from Norway to Mexico. Between 1929 and 1942 both the Trotskyists and the Frankfurt School published their own journals, the *Zeitschrift für Sozialforschung* [*Journal for Social Research*] and the *Bylleten oppositzii* [*Bulletin of the Opposition*]. We could say that in different ways both journals met Hegel's demand to grasp the specific historical situation and to give it a theoretical reconstruction.[6] We don't know if Horkheimer and his friends took note of Trotsky's *Bulletin*, whose main articles were published simultaneously in German, French and English, but in July 1939 a review of Horkheimer's journal and its programme was published in *Unser Wort,* the journal of the German Trotskyist group (IKD) written by Trotsky's brilliant secretary Walter Held (Heinz Epe) whom the Stalinists killed three years later. Its title was "Kritische Theorie ohne politische Praxis?" ("Critical Theory without Political Practice?")

The conception of "political practice" as we find it in the letters and essays of Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse, and Adorno during the thirties was (more implicitly than explicitly) the same as that of the revolutionary Marxists Lenin, Trotsky, and Luxemburg. Yet, they were anxious to omit any public mention of Trotsky. After the Second World War Adorno and Horkheimer saw no possibility of any revolutionary practice, for they saw no revolutionary subject (class). With the notable exception of Marcuse, they didn't think that the German (and international) protest movement of the students had any chance to change capitalist society. Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, Walter Benjamin (and the philosophers and literary scholars around them like Günther Stern-Anders or Hans Mayer) were, like Trotsky and Rosa Luxemburg, what Isaac Deutscher termed "non-Jewish Jews" or what Sigmund Freud termed (in characterizing himself) "godless Jews." All of them were "outsiders," and all of them were persecuted as socialists and Jews, expelled from their countries and in danger of being killed. Belonging to the Jewish minorities of Russia or Germany, their sensitivity to social inequality and injustice was highly developed, and they were looking for a way out of the labyrinth of the existing class society. Assimilation within the Christian imperial states had failed. The exodus to Palestine in order to construct a Jewish national state by expelling the Palestinians looked like another dead end. So they adopted the Marxian theory of the origin, structure, and possible transcending of capitalist society. In this specific society the relationship of man to nature, himself, and his fellow-men is governed by constant calculations of the labor time necessary to produce and to reproduce goods and the normal capacity to work in form of commodities— in short, a market society. In this society the shrinking class of private owners of the means of production control the whole societal production. But increasing productivity of labor creates the possibility of a new society without classes and without a repressive state. Troubled by disastrous wars and crises the working class would eventually discover this hidden possibility, abolish private control over the economy, and transform society into a worldwide society of affluence and freedom.

The Marxists of the Horkheimer-circle were (like Freud) critics of the Hegelian idealism in succession of Ludwig Feuerbach. But they knew—like Marx himself—that the concepts of their sociological theory originally had been developed by Hegel. So we can say that they were Hegelian (or "Western") Marxists like Antonio Labriola, the Italian philosopher whose "non-orthodox" interpretation was decisive for Trotsky's understanding of Marx's critical theory.[7] They were convinced that, in order to understand and to criticize the actual form and functioning of society, it was not only necessary to analyze the economic development but to understand and to criticize the philosophical and artistic productions that were typical for the actual stage of societal evolution and that determined the consciousness of their contemporaries. In order to change society it was necessary to understand it in its totality. This orientation enabled the social philosophers around Horkheimer as well as Trotsky (and in contrast to the majority of the Marxists, who didn't understand that Marx had developed a criticism of society, not a "weltanschauung") to welcome Freud's new (therapeutic) psychology of the unconscious. They realized that the Viennese physician had developed a new criticism of psychological and cultural institutions, one that complemented their own sociological criticism. Horkheimer and Benjamin were Marxist historians (of philosophy or literature). Adorno updated and radicalized the criticism of idealistic philosophy (not only that of Hegel but also that of Edmund Husserl) and became classic and modern music and literature's most important Marxist interpreter. Trotsky the revolutionary was also a man of letters, and his very original interpretations of the literature of the 19th and the early 20th century written between 1900 and 1940 will be published soon in German in two large volumes.

There were two important points of difference between the theorists of the Frankfurt School and Trotsky. In the autumn of 1918, Rosa Luxemburg (in those days imprisoned in Breslau) had formulated a verdict against the Bolshevik attempt to save their revolution by reducing democracy and organizing a "red" terror against the counterrevolutionary "white" one. Horkheimer, like Adorno, had read the famous "anarchistic" pamphlet *State and Revolution* that Lenin, the later defender of revolutionary terror, had written during his Finnish refuge in the late summer of 1917. (In my opinion what we find in Lenin's writings vacillates, according to and changing with the political situations, between more centralistic and more "anarcho-syndicalistic" positions. The main thesis of *State and Revolution* is the necessity to demolish the repressive bourgeois state-apparatus and to transform it into a dying state, whose main task during a limited transformational period is the defence of the new, developing socialist system against inner and outer enemies). Maximilien Rubel was right when he characterized Karl Marx himself, the defender of the Paris Commune, as a "theoretician of Anarchism."[8] However, Horkheimer didn't realize that Trotsky—the same Trotsky who in 1920 justified the "red terror" under conditions of civil war and in 1921 took responsibility for the suppression of the Kronstadt uprising and eventually voted for the restriction of inner-party democracy—was, like Luxemburg, a champion of workers' democracy from *"Our Political Tasks"* written in 1904, to his early polemic against Lenin, his attack on the Stalinist faction in *The New Course* of 1923, and, ultimately, to the struggle against fascism and Stalinism in the thirties. In contrast to Trotsky, the Frankfurt School thought that he, by defending the Russian Revolution even under Stalinist rule, was fighting for a cause that was already lost by 1918 or, at the latest, 1921.

Parallel to Trotsky's desperate endeavours since the disaster of 1933 to create a new international party with a radically democratic inner regime, Horkheimer and Adorno, in resignation to the fact that the party had been destroyed (or had never existed at all), tried to organize themselves in New York as a kind of a two-person-party, as we can see in the transcripts of their discussions in 1939 and, later, in 1956. They even toyed with the idea of writing an updated version of the *Communist Manifesto* at the same time that Trotsky, living in exile in Coyoacan, did just that in a series of documents: *The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International* written in May 1938; *Marxism in Our Time* written in April 1939; *Manifesto of the Fourth International: Imperialist War and Proletarian Revolution* from May 1940). On the 25th of October 1939, three weeks after the beginning of the Second World War, the two philosophers discussed the draft of a new "Manifesto." Horkheimer drafted a "political programme," in part similar to, in part different from, Trotsky's political slogans for the time of war, "revolutionary defeatism" and revolutionary "defense of the Soviet Union":

> The German proletarians have the duty to overturn their government, and the French have the duty, to do the same with theirs, but the aims (of their uprisings) are different. The French are overturning their government in order to wage war with Germany, for the now existing French government is the secret ally of Germany. It's the task of all proletarians to abolish all the obstacles that are preventing a rational order of our world. The best way to do that is [now] the war against Germany. But if this slogan is reclaimed by the western countries it becomes a lie. Russia has to be put aside, till in the western countries rational relationships are established; then the better society could be realized in Russia, perhaps by force. These things are really very simple. It should be said: 'During the last twenty years people tried to convince you, that our social world is still not ripe for socialism. In 1918 you didn't want to believe that, and today it's even less true.' Now or in 100 years.[9]

17 years later, in Spring 1956, the two-man party organized a follow-up discussion, starting once more with the fantasy of updating the *Communist Manifesto*.

> Horkheimer: "Our question is: why should we write, since no [real socialist] party exists any more and since the revolution has become improbable? Our criticism has to demonstrate clearly, that nothing will be changed, if no one will struggle for change. [...] We should write in the manner of a possible opposition within the CP. But doesn't practical activity mean either reformism or quietism? [...] For us the real meaning of practice is, that the world has to be changed fundamentally."
>
> Adorno: "I have always tried to conceive a theory, that remains true to Marx, Engels and Lenin, but doesn't fall behind the most advanced culture."[10]

Like Trotsky, Horkheimer denounced the two competing internationals that existed in the time between the wars, the reform-oriented one of the social democrats and the Communist one dominated by the despot at the top of the post-revolutionary Russian bureaucracy. He saw both as worldwide mechanisms whose main function was "the paralyzation of spontaneity." Trotsky's small international party, some anarcho-syndicalist groups, some artists, and Horkheimer's circle formed a minority which realized in the thirties that a new world war was coming, that the Spanish civil war was its prelude, and that the extermination of every sort of internal opposition practiced by the two competing, man-eating totalitarian regimes was undertaken precisely in order perpetuate the era of exploitation only now with barbarian techniques of repression and mass-murder. These were hard-won insights. Their precarious situation, their political experience, and their theoretical background enabled them to look further and to grasp other possibilities of future development. This rational kind of clairvoyance was Adorno's as well as Trotsky's special gift. If we speak about the relationship between the German philosophers and the Russian revolutionary, what must be remarked upon is that on the eve of the Second World War they predicted what nobody dared to think, the possible extermination of the European Jews. On February 15, 1938 Adorno (situated in London) wrote to his friend Horkheimer: "There is scarcely any doubt, that the Jews, still living in Germany, will be exterminated; since as they have been expropriated, no country in the world will take them in."[11] Ten months later, on the 22th December 1938, Trotsky addressed the "progressive and clear-sighted elements of the Jewish people," exposing the danger of a holocaust and appealing to them to give financial support to the revolutionary antifascist groups as long as they still had the time to do that: "We have seen that Palestine is a tragic phantom, and Birobidjan is a bureaucratic farce... The Jews are expelled from more and more states and the number of countries that are able to take them in is diminishing. So the struggle becomes more and more violent. It is not difficult to imagine, what will be the fate of the Jews even at the beginning of the war to come. But also without war it is practically certain, that the next wave of the worldwide reaction will involve the physical annihilation of the Jews."[12] |**P**

1 Horkheimer, Max [1939]: "Die Juden und Europa" ["The Jews and Europe"] in Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften* [*Collected writings*], vol. 4, (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1988): 331.

2 Max Horkheimer, "The Lessons of Fascism," in Hadley Cantril (ed.), *Tensions that Cause Wars* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1950), 209-242.

3 Neumann, Franz L. [1942; 1944]: *Behemoth: The Structure and Practice of National Socialism 1933-1944* (New York: Octagon Books, 1963) and Adorno, Theodor W., *et al.*, *The Authoritarian Personality* (New York, London : Harper & Row, 1950).

4 Trotzki, Leo D., *Schriften über Deutschland* [*Writings on Germany*] *1929-1940*, vol. 1 & 2, ed. Helmut Dahmer (Frankfurt: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1971). Most of these writings are available in English in Leon Trotsky, *The Struggle Against Fascism in Germany* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1971).

5 Plessner, Monika, *Die Argonauten auf Long Island* [*The Argonauts at Long Island*.] (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1995): 66.

6 Hegel wrote in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right* [1820], "As far as the individual is concerned, each individual is in any case a *child of his time*; thus, philosophy, too, is *its own time comprehended in thoughts*."

7 The term "Western Marxism" by which I refer to Marxists such as Lukács, Korsch, Adorno, etc. is opposed to the Stalinist (or "Orthodox") conception of "dialectical and historical Marxism" and was introduced by Perry Anderson in his *Considerations on Western Marxism* (London: New Left Books, 1976).

8 Maximilien Rubel, "Marx, Theoretician of Anarchism," available online at https://www.marxists.org/archive/rubel/1973/marx-anarchism.htm.

9 Horkheimer, Max, and Theodor Adorno [25. 10. 1939], "Diskussionen über Sprache und Erkenntnis, Naturbeherrschung am Menschen, politische Aspekte des Marxismus" [Discussions on language and knowledge, technological domination of man, political aspects of Marxism], in Horkheimer, *Gesammelte Schriften* [*Collected writings*], vol. 12 (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1985): 513 f.

10 Horkheimer and Adorno, *Towards a New Manifesto* (London: Verso Books, 2011), 49, 61, 78, 103. Translation altered by the author.

11 Adorno and Horkheimer, *Briefwechsel* [*Correspondence*], vol. 2, (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 2004), S. 29.

12 Trotsky, L. D. [1938]: "Die Gefahr der Ausrottung des jüdischen Volkes." [The danger of the extermination of the Jewish people.] in Trotzki,*Sozialismus oder Barbarei!* [*Socialism or barbarism*.] (Vienna:Promedia, 2005):124

Walking, continued from page 1

in joining the bandwagon. Finally, Castro declared his revolution socialist, but the Communist Party of Cuba was initially quiescent.

RR: This was a time of huge transformation in Israeli society: massive Jewish immigration, the 1948 War of Independence, the creation of the state. Israel in the 1950s was a radically different place from Israel today. How did being in the Communist Party affect your perception of Israeli society?

MM: First of all there was the problem of the Palestinian Arab minority...

RR: Who were still under military rule.

MM: That's right, until 1966. The Communist Party actually fought for their rights. Its position on that issue was decent, and it got support in this part of the population.

RR: Would you characterize this as nationalist, or civil libertarian?

MM: Not nationalist. Civil libertarian, but further to the left. They supported the rights of Palestinian Arab workers. They also gave material aid, and that was very important in terms of gaining support for the Communist Party in that section of the population. They arranged for young people to get scholarships in the Soviet bloc, which was replicated in other countries. For a young Palestinian Arab in Israel, there were few avenues to get a university education, but there were opportunities to study in East Germany or the USSR. As far as the Jewish working class was concerned, the Communist Party's position was broadly social-democratic. However, I'm glad you ask, because they did not encourage any more militant activity among the population as a whole. In the summer of 1959 there was a largely forgotten episode of so-called "rioting" by Jewish immigrants from Arab countries, so-called *Mizrahim*, in Haifa, which was an upsurge of working-class discontents, of poor, hyper-exploited, urban immigrants. We were disturbed because instead of coming to support and try to guide them, the Communist Party joined the other Zionist parties in calling for quiet. Again, that led us to see that the Communist Party was not a revolutionary party, but an agency for the USSR. As yet, we still thought of the USSR as some kind of socialist state. But we believed the role of the Communist Party was primarily to work for socialism where you are, not to defend the big-power interests of the USSR. The conflict between these two priorities seemed to us completely wrong. We later developed a more thoroughgoing critique of the USSR.

TW: What actually led to your expulsion? Why were you formally expelled?

MM: The formal reason for expelling us was that we broke party rules by getting together with people across branches. It was forbidden to associate without explicit permission with members of other branches. Akiva and I were in Jerusalem, we had co-thinkers in Tel Aviv. We started a discussion group, with some party members and some in the periphery to discuss the party critically. We also demanded the party open up its archives, because we realized the history of the party and its various gyrations was something to study and to draw lessons from. This was refused. We also challenged the lack of democracy in the party. Although we tried to keep our discussion group quiet, some idiot journalist discovered us and wrote an article in Haaretz.

TW: So what went into the decision to go from a discussion group to forming an independent organization?

MM: We did not plan to form a new organization immediately, but our hand was forced. We and our friends thought, "So we're out of the party. What to do? We must found an organization, start publishing a paper".

TW: Was this around the time you encountered Jabra Nicola?

MM: We encountered Jabra Nicola in 1963, a few months after starting *Matzpen* in 1962. He came to us accompanied by some other comrades, Arabs and Jews. We had published our paper with a critical attitude towards official Communism. The perspective was not sophisticated, perhaps even occasionally naive, of trying to found something fresh with radical socialists and Marxists in Israel. This aroused Nicola's interest. We started discussions. Shortly after, he and a few others joined *Matzpen*. That was the first phase of growth.

RR: He had been a member of the Communist Party?

MM: Yes. They knew about his Trotskyism, he was assigned as editor of their literary magazine so that he could not address anything directly political. He was a self-taught man having left school aged eleven or twelve. His Hebrew was excellent, and his English too, as well as of course his Arabic.

RR: Around then, what was the ratio of Jews to Arabs in the Communist Party? How would you describe relations between them? Were there ethnic tensions?

MM: There may have been some bickering at the bureaucratic top, but as far as ordinary members I was not aware of any. Remember, we had very few possibilities of contact. Being in Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, there were no Arab members in our branches, at least initially. We tried to make contact. Once a year the party had a festival to commemorate the victory of the Red Army. Before our expulsion, we used this opportunity to try to sniff out co-thinkers in the Arab branches, but we didn't manage to discover any.

TW: So you had not been aware of the Revolutionary Communist League and the history of Palestinian Trotskyism in the 1930s and 1940s. Did Jabra Nicola make you aware of this history?

"Walking" continues on page 3