

INTRANSIGENCE

A black and white photograph of an industrial landscape. On the left, a tall, dark chimney stands against a cloudy sky, emitting a plume of smoke. In the foreground, a road sign is positioned on the side of a road. The sign features a black arrow pointing to the right, with a white arrow pointing to the left. The background shows a line of trees and a fence under a cloudy sky.

ISSUE № 2 — JULY 2018

BASIC POSITIONS OF INTERNATIONALIST COMMUNISTS IN NORTH AMERICA

1

We denounce capitalism, whatever its apparent form of government, as a social system based on the exploitation of man by man.

2

We denounce the so-called “socialist” countries as brutal exploitative regimes to be overthrown by the working class.

3

We support communism as the only means capable of saving humanity from its extinction under capitalist barbarism.

4

We reject all interclassist struggles and ideologies as alien to the proletariat and contrary to its interests as the universal class.

5

We denounce labor unions and elections as instruments of economic exploitation and political subjugation to the capitalist system.

6

We affirm, in this moment, the total decadence of the capitalist system — its inability to contribute further towards social development — and the immediate need for a communist revolution on a global scale.

7

We advocate the establishment of a revolutionary party to function as the nerve center of the class.

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PUBLICATION OF INTERNATIONALIST COMMUNISTS IN NORTH AMERICA

Issue № 2 — July 2018

“THE WORKING CLASS HAS NO COUNTRY, AND NEITHER WILL THE INSTRUMENTS OF PRODUCTION ONCE EXPROPRIATED AND PLACED AT ITS SERVICE.”

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EDITORIAL

JULY 2018

At the time of writing, the working class pulsates to life faced with the brutality of capital. The various identity hustlers — who promote uniformly capitalist politics predicated on divisions of blood, culture, and fatherland — would have us believe that class antagonisms are no longer the driving force of society. Yet the bleak reality of the modern nation-state, as well as the sheer scale of repression that it is periodically compelled to unleash in order to defend the present order, with all of its myriad contradictions, suggests otherwise.

Earlier this year schoolteachers in West Virginia fired the opening salvo, signaling the resumption of class war. This set off a massive strike wave, in defiance of both the bosses and the unions. So far, the latter have done everything in their power to dissuade the teachers from this course of action, attempting to reroute their unrest to the safety of the ballot box, where it could be effectively neutralized. These unsanctioned (and by all accounts illegal) strikes have not only succeeded in paralyzing the school system at the state level; they have also provoked widespread anxiety in the ruling class and its political lackeys, who have grown unaccustomed to workers putting up a fight. The heroic struggle of the West Virginia schoolteachers has inspired their peers in Oklahoma, Arizona, Kentucky, and Colorado to follow their example, with others elsewhere in the US contemplating similar measures. The possibility of a national teachers' strike, perhaps joined by the many disaffected workers employed throughout the public sector, is being taken very seriously by the powers that be. In the state of Florida, for example, the teachers' union has advised its rank-and-file not to strike, making abundantly clear that it will not condone, much less support, militancy under any circumstance.

A similar process appears to be underway in Iran, France, Nicaragua, Puerto Rico, and Venezuela, where the situation for the working class has deteriorated considerably since the start of the economic crisis. The governments of the Right and the Left display the same disregard for our lives, which they see as expendable. Time and again, they shed the blood

of those workers who have demonstrated against the deterioration of their living conditions under capitalism. Deliverance from these situations will depend above all on the extent to which the working class is able to extricate itself from capital and assert its political independence. The working class must respond to the violence of the exploiting class, exercised openly or covertly, with their own self-organization for the revolutionary conquest of power.

The capitalist class sits atop a mountain of corpses. Syria continues to serve as a battleground for imperialist interests scrambling to gain a foothold in the region, as well as a potential site for the start of World War Three. Already the conflict has claimed the lives of nearly half a million people, the sacrificial lambs of rival imperialisms struggling to maintain profits at the expense of the global working class. It is this dynamic, embedded within capitalism, which propels hostilities between different nation-states. And this struggle for control of the planet has only intensified with the economic crisis, for which, it is crucial to note, they have no solution. Only one lesson can be gleaned from all this: **no faction of capital is progressive in the decadent phase of the system.** Those who look for a progressive actor in conflicts between the various factions of capital will be sorely disappointed. In place of this hedging, we affirm that the way to put an end to imperialist carnage is not to line up on one side of it, but to organize ourselves as a class and fight our exploiters everywhere, who are responsible for engineering it in the first place.

As we speak, Cuba, one of the few standing beacons of the Stalinist Left, is undergoing a profound crisis. No end to this crisis appears to be in sight. The present issue dives into the history and basic functioning of the Cuban economy, demonstrating its capitalist underpinnings. It further challenges the claim, made by both the ideologues of the regime and its critics on the Right, that what was established in Cuba bore any resemblance, even remotely, to socialism. Recent attempts to reform the country's economic model have stalled out, due to the inability of the private sector to absorb all those laid off by

the state. Meanwhile, a generational transfer of power is underway within the ruling circles. The new leaders face significant pressure, both from above and below, to restore dynamism to the Cuban economy within a global economy where opportunities for profitable investment are increasingly scarce.

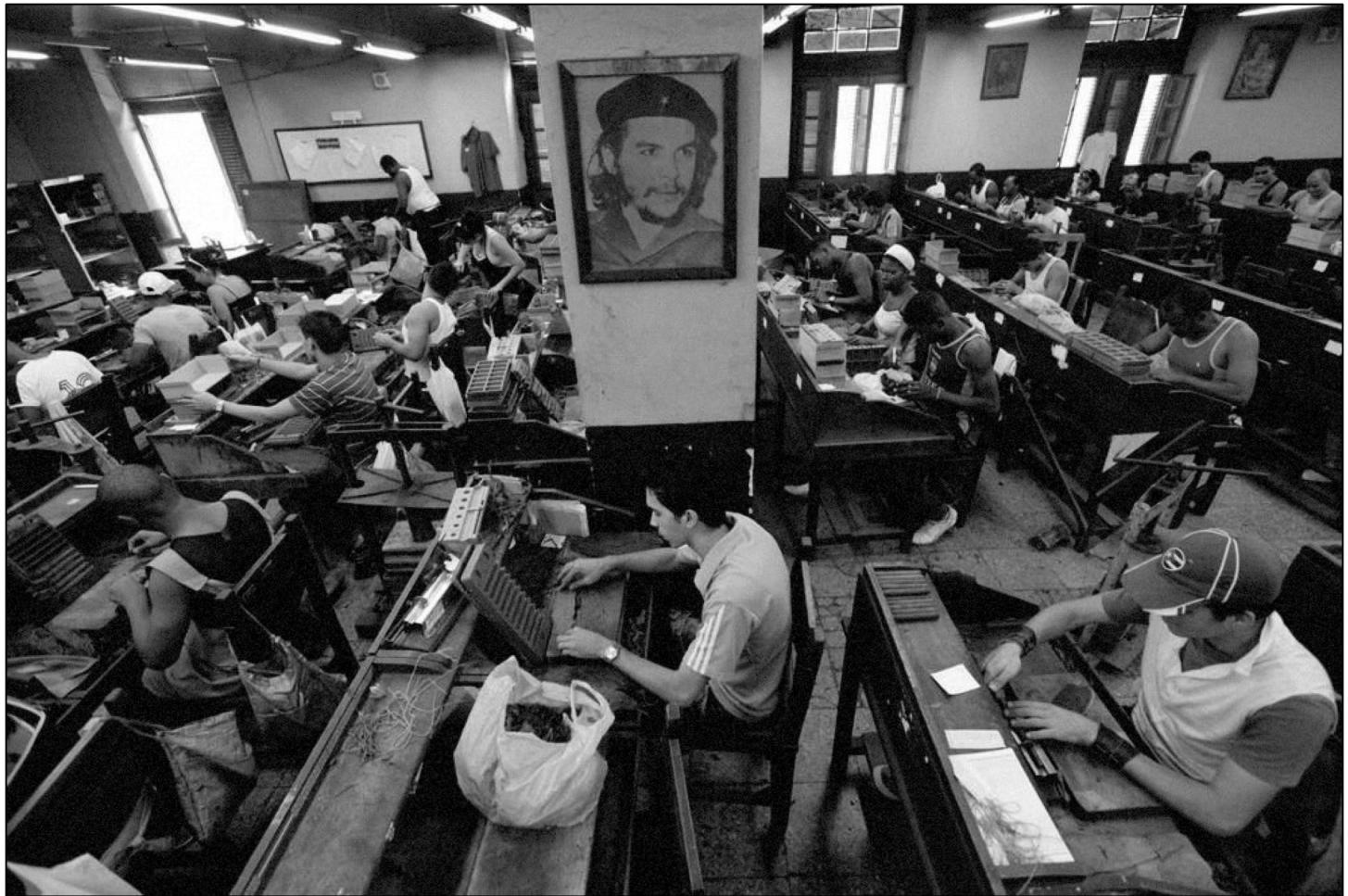
Simultaneously, the United States has been tending more and more towards militaristic enforcement of its exclusionary immigration policies, exploding under the Obama administration. In this issue, we look into the conditions of undocumented sweatshop workers in the Fashion District of Los Angeles, California as a case study to help us better understand the process of legal precaritization, as well as the many hurdles and difficulties involved with organizing workers who have no legal status.

With the election of Donald Trump to the presidency of the United States, after campaigning on a virulently racist, xenophobic platform, fringe elements of the far Right — neo-Nazi groups and adjacent formations, the KKK, the so-called “alt-right” — have doubtless been emboldened. Many on the Left warn of an impending fascist takeover, which supposedly can only be combated by a temporary alliance of the working class with the “progressive” wing of capital. This line of argument falls apart upon closer examination, however. Fascism, and dictatorship more generally, is an immunological response by capitalism to an existential threat, which can be internal or external in nature. Aligning with capitalism’s progressive wing to restore capitalist democracy achieves nothing, since democracy can be readily transformed into fascism as soon as necessary. In this issue, we include a newly-translated article from the Italian Communist Left on the role antifascism played in disarming workers ideologically, if not materially.

Finally, the IDF’s recent massacre of unarmed protesters along the Gaza border has reignited the debate over Israel and Palestine. While leftists rush to signal their support for Palestinian nationalism against the Zionist state, the current issue prefers to look at the deeper roots of the conflict. By ascertaining its relationship to the Jewish question and the national question — two questions which have long vexed Marxists — it becomes clear that each expresses a contradiction of capitalism. Jews in Eastern Europe, most of them workers sympathetic to socialist ideas, adopted various forms of nationalism before 1945. Zionism eventually won out, following the Nazi genocide, even earning the support of official communist parties as a “nationalism of the oppressed.” In light of Israel’s subsequent and ongoing atrocities against the Palestinians living in the occupied territories, however, it should perhaps be seen as Exhibit A in the case for why supporting any kind of nationalism is always a mistake, no matter how sympathetic. That includes, among others, Palestinian nationalism (but also Kurdish, Catalan, etc.). Resolution of the Jewish question, as well as the national question, can only come through the revolutionary overthrow of capital on a global level.

Internationalist Communists reject all cross-class coalitions and mobilizations, which subject the working class to the will of capitalists, preparing it to become cannon fodder for their wars. The goal of this publication, as stated in the inaugural issue, is to regroup those individuals within the class who defend, without any compromise or hesitation, these internationalist and revolutionary positions.

Intransigence



SUGARCANE STALINISM

STATE CAPITALISM AND DEVELOPMENT IN CUBA

Nations, as well as individuals, cannot escape the imperatives of capital accumulation without abolishing capital.

— Grandizo Munis, “For a Second Communist Manifesto”¹

The official narrative concerning the nature of the changes to the economy and broader society ushered in by the Cuban government after the so-called “revolution” of 1959 holds that the agrarian reform and subsequent statification of the economy — i.e., the transferal of ownership of the means of production from private capitalists to the state — set Cuba on the path to socialism. This was the viewpoint advanced by the French agronomist Rene Dumont, who served as an advisor to the freshly-minted “socialist” government on matters pertaining to economic development. Since then, other scholars on the Left have seriously studied the Cuban economy. Among those to do so from a critical lens, Samuel Farber stands out as the most intellectually rigorous and consistent. Though it is not

without its problems, his book about Cuban society after the triumph of the *barbudos* over the CIA-sponsored Batista dictatorship provides a rare window into the inner workings of the Stalinist system in its Cuban instantiation. Farber subscribes to the standard “bureaucratic collectivist” position, arguing that, while Cuba falls short of the benchmark for socialism due to the absence of meaningful control over production and distribution by the laboring masses, neither can it be considered capitalist, since the nationalization of the means of production supposedly precludes competition between enterprises. Instead, he says, what exists in Cuba is a qualitatively new kind of class society based on the autocratic rule of a parasitic bureaucracy embedded in the state apparatus, whose iron-tight grip

over both the economy and society at large frustrates any attempt by individual enterprises to pursue their particular economic interests.²

Though their conclusions are radically different, defenders of both “socialist” and “neither socialist, nor capitalist” (henceforth, neither-nor) theories about Cuba and other statified societies nevertheless coincide in the view that the nationalization of private enterprises constitutes a partial, or perhaps even wholesale, negation of capitalism and its laws of motion. This conception, whose unfortunate genealogy can be traced back to the “state-socialist” ideas of Ferdinand Lassalle and his followers in the First International, has no basis whatsoever in the theory of socialism elaborated by Marx and Engels. For the latter, state monopolies did not signify the negation of capitalist production relations but their accentuation.³ In fact, they insisted that the transition towards socialism would necessarily entail a progressive weakening, or “withering away,” of the state machinery. The remainder of this essay will attempt a critical analysis of the aforementioned theories employing an approach that is methodologically Marxist and forthright in its commitment to workers’ self-emancipation. It will argue, moreover, that “socialist” Cuba is really a society based on waged labor and capital accumulation. The defining characteristics of this society, to which we will assign the designation “state-capitalism,” are the hyper-concentration of capital and collective exercise of *de facto* control over the means of production by a state bourgeoisie.

As with so many of the New Left’s leading lights, it is not entirely clear what Dumont understood “socialism” to mean. If the *Monthly Review* crowd with which he associated is any indication, then we are safe in assuming that the state plays a central role in his conception. However, since he failed to leave behind so much as a brief outline or operational definition, we are left to decipher his views from a few scattered remarks in his account of the Cuban economy’s transformation along Soviet lines. For instance, he contrasts “socialist planning” with “the invisible hand of profit,” which allocates capital according to wherever the rate of profit is highest. By contrast, he says, a socialist economy will substitute the central planner’s will for the anarchic “law of the market place,” though he does not specify anywhere what the operation of such a law entails or how it is manifested concretely in social production.⁴ Instead, Dumont regales his readers with anecdote after tedious anecdote of him reproaching enterprise managers and state book-keepers for making plans in a completely *ad hoc* fashion and setting output targets

based on erroneous, or even fabricated, figures. All this, he explains to us, prevents a planned economy from operating smoothly.⁵ Regrettably, his inquiry into the failure of planning in Cuba both began and ended there. Farber shows a superior understanding of the true depth of the problem, identifying the inefficiency, mechanical breakdowns, and waste in the system as a logical consequence of the hierarchical organization of production. He correctly argues that the lack of genuine feedback, indispensable to economic planning under any system, and mediocre productivity (despite chronic overstaffing) result from inadequate to nonexistent material incentives and the transparent separation of the producers from the instruments of work.⁶

This explanation may appear counterintuitive upon first glance. After all, workers in the conventional capitalist countries are also dispossessed of any means of production. However, enterprise managers under the two systems have a different set of tools at their disposal to discipline their workers. Most notably, whereas workers in the conventional capitalist countries can be compelled on pain of joblessness to maintain a certain level of productivity, their counterparts in Cuba are generally protected from long-term unemployment by a provision in the country’s constitution establishing employment as a fundamental right of citizenship.⁷ As a result, enterprise managers are often forced to tolerate a certain degree of idleness, and even absenteeism, from their workers as a transactional cost for meeting the production quotas imposed on them by those higher up on the bureaucratic chain of command. Hence, to the extent that economic planning exists at all in Cuba, it has always functioned badly and in an inconsistent manner. In reality, revisions to the final output quotas occur so frequently and are so widespread across the various industries and enterprises that there effectively is no such thing as “the plan.” Guaranteed employment is often cited by those who defend a “socialist” or neither-nor perspective as airtight proof of the nonexistence of a labor market in Cuba. Indeed, some have even argued that since workers in these countries supposedly do not enjoy the double-freedom identified by Marx — i.e., the “freedom” to sell their labor-power to an employer and “freedom” from any means of production — there is not even a working class proper. Such an interpretation cannot be reconciled with the facts. Firstly, a worker in Cuba can have his or her employment terminated after repeated minor offenses, or as punishment for engaging in dissident activity.⁸ Although this is uncommon due to its inconvenience, since an in-

Government spending (% GDP)

Total government spending, including interest government expenditures, as share of national GDP



Source: IMF Fiscal Affairs Departmental Data, based on Mauro et al. (2015)

fraction of that magnitude shows up on one's work record, limiting future job possibilities.⁹ It is well-known, moreover, that the rate of annual labor turnover in state-capitalist countries such as Cuba is comparatively higher than that of the conventional capitalist countries.¹⁰ This suggests that labor-power can in fact be bought and sold in Cuba.

Conventional wisdom on the Left dictates that state planning interferes with the unconscious forces of the market that govern production under capitalism. The intellectual primogenitor of this idea is the Stalin-Keynesian Paul Sweezy. Though his conceptualization was not original, Sweezy was undoubtedly one of the first to systematize this sacrilege against Marxism and present it before an audience of self-styled radicals and intellectuals in the English-speaking world. His theory provides much of the conceptual framework that holds together "socialist" and neither-nor interpretations, so we will need to examine its basic assumptions. According to Sweezy, all that is needed to do away with the "law of value" — i.e., the social mecha-

nism that regulates the exchange of commodities under capitalism according to the average amount of time necessary to produce them — is that state planning supplant market forces as the principal means of mobilizing the factors of production.¹¹ The functioning of present-day capitalist society shows that this is a complete and utter falsehood. The law of value coexists alongside state planning nowadays in the form of import-substitution industrialization, investment incentives and subsidies to private businesses, the management of public utilities and major industries by the state, directive planning (see: French *dirigisme*), and control over the flow of money-capital through centralized banking. Third-world "developmentalist" states have employed many of these strategies to gain an advantage against their rivals on the world market by nurturing native industries until they are capable of competing globally.¹² The purpose of state planning is the same everywhere: it is about introducing a degree of regularity and uniformity into the economy, where it otherwise does not exist, to facilitate the fulfillment

of certain objectives and mitigate cyclical crises. For instance, the need to restore anemic profit rates in the conventional capitalist countries gave rise to an institutional arrangement known as the “mixed economy” whereby the state, employing a combination of economic “sticks” and “carrots,” fiscal stimuli, and even direct economic intervention, steers capital investment and production towards desired ends. In the United States, the country of laissez-faire capitalism *par excellence*, government spending as a percentage of GDP since 1970 has grown as high as 43%, while that figure has never fallen below 34% within that same period, indicating that at any given time the state controls between a third to two-fifths of the economy.¹³ Even though the US government does not tell businesses how much of what to produce, it is effectively engaged in a form of planning, in which certain forms of production receive preference over others, by redistributing money from the more profitable sectors of the economy to those that need it through taxation and deficit financing (i.e., deferred taxation). Thus, we see that, instead of mangling markets, state-planning has become indispensable for their preservation.

As a social entity, capital leads a twofold existence: a phenomenal existence as an array of independent economic units and an essential existence as total social capital, or the sum of capitals in their dynamic interrelations. Total social capital manifests itself exclusively through its individual fragments. However, these fragments are only independent from each other and total social capital in a relative sense, since their existence implies both.¹⁴ Let us imagine that capital is an electronic circuit, while the individual fragments are the nodes. The nodes are an integral part of the circuit: there is no circuit without them and vice-versa. Each node is a part of, and hence dependent on, the whole circuit. Now, the individual nodes can be spaced closer or further apart — or, in the case of capital, it can be more or less concentrated — but they cannot exist outside the circuit, outside the totality. Applying the same concept to waged labor yields important insights. Workers in a capitalist society are “free” with respect to the individual capitals to whom they sell their labor-power, while they are attached to total social capital as accessories. Indeed, the very presence of waged labor implies competition between enterprises because it presupposes economic units with enough autonomy to make independent decisions with regards to employment.¹⁵ The conferral of the means of production onto a single entity — referred to earlier as the “hyper-concentration” of capital — has not extinguished

competition within Cuba. It has merely changed the juridical-legal form of private property from individual (private) property to state property. The means of production are the class property of the state bourgeoisie and the non-property of workers. To explain this in terms of our electronic circuit metaphor: the nationalization of enterprises in Cuba has brought the individual nodes in the circuit — i.e., the fragments of total social capital — closer together, while the circuit as such remains intact. The detractors of state-capitalism theory and some proponents, such as the Cliffites, treat Cuba and other statified economies as a single productive unit.¹⁶ The “giant factory” thesis is seductive in large part because it makes an analysis of these societies more manageable by condensing many complex phenomena into a single object of study. This assumes a functional monolithism in which the constitutive elements of the social totality behave as parts of a harmonious, undifferentiated whole. A more exhaustive examination on our part will show that this assumption is completely unjustified.

Competition exists so long as total social production is functionally fragmented into a plurality of reciprocally autonomous and competing enterprises. Two criteria are necessary to demonstrate the relative organizational separation of enterprises, and it can only ever be relative. The first is the presence of a market for labor-power. The second is the exchange of products between enterprises in money-commodity form.¹⁷ It was established earlier that enterprises in Cuba are independent employers of labor. But they are also in competition with each other in the Marxian sense — i.e., they confront one another as buyers and sellers of commodities. We know that this is so because their products are exchanged for money instead of being directly appropriated and physically distributed. A report authored by the ECLAC (the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean — a regional subdivision of the UN) on the state of Cuba’s economy during the Special Period, before the market reforms of the late 90s, found that,

companies in the traditional sector sell at regulated prices, frequently receive preferential tax and tariff treatment, and acquire a large part of their inputs with subsidies, in order to cover the deficits that arise from selling at subsidized prices.

The report continues: “the producer of tradable goods operates in international or domestic markets and has no obligation to purchase inputs in the domestic market.”¹⁸ In other words, Cuban enterprises produce goods that they then sell on domestic and/or foreign

markets; they purchase inputs of raw materials, as well as intermediate, or semi-finished, goods from each other and from foreign companies; and finally, their transactions, whether scriptural or cash, are exchange transactions in which money functions as both a measure of value and medium of circulation. It may be argued that these transactions are mere formalities because the state owns all the means of production. Another way in which this thesis can be restated is that, even though the process which we have just described has the form of commodity exchange, its content is different, because the legal framework of statified property prevents enterprises within Cuba from behaving autonomously. Yet this begs the question of why the products of human labor would have to be exchanged — or appear to be exchanged — for money in the first place. The answer, of course, is that the government depends on the profitability of the economy as a whole, therefore it obliges enterprises to be responsible for their own finances, which turns them into independent units with competing economic interests. Adherents of “socialist” and neither-nor theories also deny that competition exists within Cuba because the state allows unprofitable enterprises to continue operating. While it is commonplace for states to prop up native firms — even whole industries — by absorbing their losses, nothing about this arrangement is incompatible with the existence of competition and commodity exchange. The idealized version of capitalism as a purely free market with only minimal government interference, which these people use as a standard for comparison, exists nowhere but in textbooks. It also runs counter to the experience of capitalism over the last century and a half, which is replete with examples of the state tampering with the “normal” operation of markets. In fact, what is most unusual about the variety of capitalism which has been established in Cuba is that losses and profits all ultimately revert to the state, where the balance is then redistributed among the different branches. In the process, many non-viable sectors and firms are artificially kept afloat. However, central planners can only tolerate insolvency to a limited degree. They do not have free reign to reapportion money as they choose, at least not forever, since this would reduce the total amount of money available for capital formation and undermine Cuba’s competitiveness on the world market. The same is true of commodity prices in Cuba, as these must mirror global commodity prices or else lose Cuban state money if they stray too far or for too long. In short, the very same mechanisms that mobilize

labor and capital according to the requirements of valorization in conventional capitalist countries also make their appearance under state-capitalism, albeit in a highly distorted form. Instead of eliminating these mechanisms altogether, competition forces the state to introduce its own in order to attempt to do consciously (and less efficiently) what the market does unconsciously.¹⁹

The accumulation of capital, or enlarged reproduction of the physical means of production, is the sole objective of production in capitalism. This is because, as Marx explained,

the development of capitalist production makes it constantly necessary to keep increasing the amount of the capital laid out in a given industrial undertaking... it compels [the capitalist] to keep constantly extending his capital, in order to preserve it, but extend it he cannot, except by means of progressive accumulation.²⁰

In *Capital*, Marx laid out the formula of capitalist reproduction as follows: **c + v + s**, where **c** represents constant capital or the physical capital stock, **v** is variable capital or wages, and **s** is surplus-value or profit.²¹ The mass of surplus-value can itself be divided up into two parts, one designated for capitalist consumption and another which is earmarked for accumulation. Let us refer to these as **k** (capitalist consumption fund) and **a** (accumulation fund) respectively, such that the mass of surplus-value **S = k + a**. Under capitalism, the growth of **c** depends directly on the amount of **a**, with **v** not increasing except inasmuch as it is necessary to employ additional labor-power in order to set an enlarged mass of capital, **c**, in motion. By contrast, in a socialist society, the growth of **c** would depend entirely on the needs of **v**, the physical reproduction requirements of the population, while **S** and its components **k** and **a** would be available to whomever needed them in the form of additional products ready for consumption.²² In Cuba, as in all the other state capitalist countries, any increase in the labor fund that sustains the whole working class, **v**, is directly contingent upon the expansion of **c**, the mass of the means of production, and the accumulation fund, **a**, which feeds its growth.²³ The nationalization of industries does not abolish capital, or its accumulation. Rather, it accelerates what are already innate tendencies of the capital accumulation process: 1) the concentration of capital, what Marx called “expropriation of many capitalists by few”; and 2) the “socialization” of production, or the tendency for the various branches of industry to become dependent upon one another.²⁴ Both serve to

increase the productivity of labor — i.e., the rate at which surplus-value is pumped out of the working class — by raising the organic composition of capital (ratio of **c** to **v**). The nationalization of industries achieves this by concentrating capital in enterprises that are larger and more efficient due to the economies of scale, which reduce the cost of production per unit as industrial output expands. On the other hand, the socialization of production harmonizes the different branches of industry, minimizing “bottlenecks,” or imbalances in output along each “link” in the production chain. In summation, the goal of production in Cuba is still the accumulation of capital out of profits. The legal monopoly exercised by the Cuban state over the instruments of labor has not changed the social organization of production because, “right can never be higher than the economic structure of society.”²⁵

The leaders of the government that came to power in 1959 were optimistic, at least early on, that Cuba would be able to break free of its reliance on sugar and diversify its economy. They turned Marx on his head, arguing that it was necessary for the construction of socialism to develop Cuba’s economic base — i.e., to accumulate capital at an accelerated rate by subjecting workers to an intensified exploitation. The US economic blockade against Cuba created a shortage of basic consumer goods and spare parts for existing machinery, most of which came from America. Since there was no alternative source of spare parts, the new government turned to the other great imperialist power, the Soviet Union, for economic assistance, which it readily provided. The Soviets sent machines to Cuba, but industrialization soon ran up against some problems of a technical nature: the “intermediate technology” produced in the USSR and its buffer states was very clunky and inefficient, as well as incompatible with much of the existing equipment on the island. Cuba would eventually have to import newer machines from Western Europe or Japan. However, these could only be bought with dollars, and the quickest and most reliable way to obtain dollars was to export sugar. Moreover, despite receiving significant aid from the Soviets, Cuba still needed to pay for the massive import bill it had racked up. This, too, it could do only by selling sugar.²⁶ The same process that had led the Cuban state to “double-down,” so to speak, on sugar production as its primary source of revenue in previous years culminated towards the end of the 1960s with the campaign to harvest ten million tons of sugar. The Soviets provided Cuba with a guaranteed market for all its sugar production, just as the United States

had done up until 1960, the year that the economic blockade went into effect, under the terms of the Reciprocity Treaty of 1902.²⁷ Because Cuba is a single-export economy, it has always depended on an imperialist sponsor with a much larger economy to absorb its output. The US had filled that role prior to 1960, and now the Soviet Union would do so. In both instances, the political price paid by Cuba was onerous. The US had demanded a naval base on sovereign Cuban territory and the right to intervene militarily to defend its business interests, while the Soviets demanded that Cuba serve as its proxy in armed conflicts all over the world. In 1966, Cuba negotiated a lucrative trade agreement with the Soviet Union to sell five million tons of sugar at above-market prices in the years 1968-1969 but total output fell short of the mark, averaging just 3.7 million tons in each year. Undeterred by this failure and determined as ever to transform Cuba into an industrial powerhouse, the new rulers set their sights on an even more ambitious goal, conceived as a cure-all for the country’s economic woes: Cuba would defy the laws of nature and economics by tripling its output within the space of a single year, with a ten-million-ton sugar harvest. The Soviets would buy the agreed-upon five million tons at the price point stipulated by their trade agreement with Cuba, and another two million would be sold on the world market at the average going rate, while the remaining three million would be sold to consumers and companies in domestic markets. The Cuban state, aided in great part by the Party and its trade union appendages, launched a military-style campaign mobilizing the entire country to secure the production target. Their efforts ultimately proved unsuccessful, and the disorganization that the campaign caused in the other sectors of the economy have had lasting effects from which, it can be argued, Cuba still has not recovered. In the end, all plans to industrialize Cuba at breakneck speed, as Stalin did with Russia in the first two five-year plans, were short-circuited by the economic realities of the period after the 1959 coup. Cuba ceased to be a sugar plantation for the United States but became one for the Soviets.²⁸

The agrarian reforms have been touted as a centerpiece of the “socialist” project in Cuba. However, they actually served as a form of capitalist primitive accumulation, transforming the peasantry into a class of agricultural waged laborers. The parallels between this process and so-called “socialist primitive accumulation” in Stalin’s Russia, which was to lead to the travesty of “socialist commodity production,” are noteworthy.



Photo: Castro addresses a crowd on the push for ten million tons of sugar

The state-owned farms created in Cuba by merging the segmentary landholdings of poor and middling peasants, or by breaking up the large estates, operate as commercial farms. Those who toil in these glorified capitalist enterprises, cynically baptized “people’s farms” (*granjas del pueblo*), receive their “wage” packet as a minuscule fraction of the total crop yield, **v**, which is barely adequate to keep them alive, while the state sells the excess product, **s**, in domestic markets for a profit.²⁹ The top-down management structure of these enterprises, rooted in statified property, and the resulting lack of control over the distribution of the output is acknowledged by the Cuban state to be a major disincentive to productivity, yet it could not be otherwise.³⁰ Any measure of authentic control over the economy exercised by the producers themselves threatens not only the rate of capital accumulation but also the functional integrity of the Cuban political system, which is based on an all-pervading militarism, and therefore it cannot be tolerated. Private farmers are incorporated into the nexus of value-production as small-holders with usufructory (rather than ownership) rights to the land. In practice, however, they do

not freely dispose of the product of their labor, but must sell it to the state through its distribution centers (*Centros de Acopio*) at fixed prices, engaging in what amounts to piece-work.³¹ Unusual though it may seem, their predicament typifies that of the Cuban worker: subjected to a ruthless exploitation, which knows no limits, not even those of human physiology; completely immobilized and deprived of all autonomy by an omnipresent state machinery; supervised at all times by the police, the CDRs (*Comités de Defensa de la Revolución*), and in the workplace by the unions, who also play an organizing function within Cuban capitalism; without the right to organize or express themselves; at the mercy of the whims of the state bourgeoisie; etc. In no other country is the working class as dominated as in Cuba, something that the Cuban government unambiguously promotes as a major selling point to its prospective partners in joint ventures. A study by the Brookings Institution, a capitalist think-tank, remarked that although, “[t]he Confederation of Cuban Workers and Communist Party cells are embedded within firms ... these organizations generally align with the production goals of the firm and its associated state agencies,”

and therefore, “[m]anagement need not worry about militant strikes or work stoppages.”³² The profoundly reactionary nature of the unions derives from the role that they play within capitalism as regulators of the purchase and sale of labor-power. They are interested in maintaining the system of waged labor because their existence depends on it. This has allowed them to become integrated into the capitalist state as its auxiliary organs, a process that reaches its highest expression in state-capitalist countries such as Cuba.³³ But unlike in other capitalist countries, Cuban unions do not even pretend to represent workers, or to negotiate with employers on their behalf. They are state organs tasked with imposing labor discipline and increasing productivity.³⁴

All the measures undertaken by the Cuban government since 1959, and approvingly cited by the state bourgeoisie and its partisans, both internal and external, as concrete evidence of its “revolutionary” and “working-class” character, were completely self-serving and implemented in order to shore up capitalism on the island. Perhaps the best example, though, and the one that best illustrates this point, is the Cuban state’s successful campaign to eradicate illiteracy in the countryside. This is one of the enduring legacies of Cuban state-capitalism and something to which the government has resorted time after time to justify its own existence from a moral standpoint. Cuba, they say, was a backward country with an underdeveloped economy, trapped in a parasitic relationship with its neighbor to the north — the revolution has given it its independence and made it the envy of all Latin America! What these people do not see, or do not want to see, is that all the achievements of the supposed “revolution” were categorically capitalist measures. Their purpose was never to improve the living conditions of the Cuban worker, but to enlarge the Cuban capital, achieving a greater rate of exploitation (ratio of **s** to **v**) through better utilization of the existing technology. After relations between the US and Cuba took a turn for the worse, and Cuba aligned itself with the Soviet Union, the country experienced a hemorrhaging of the same skilled workers that it would need to industrialize the economy. Shipments of machinery and raw materials from the Soviet Union, which were quite generous, were literally piling up on the docks, since Cuba had neither the personnel to operate them nor buildings in which to store them.³⁵ In order to industrialize and keep abreast of competitors, Cuba would have to convert its illiterate rural population into a workforce capable of generating surplus-value for

the state. Although the attempt to industrialize Cuba stumbled against insurmountable barriers, a highly-skilled workforce was left over as a byproduct of this aborted process. In recent years, human capital exports have become the country’s primary source of income — replacing sugar production, which collapsed after the fall of the Soviet Union due to the loss of a guaranteed market — with tourism and remittances from abroad as second and third respectively. Brazil, for example, pays the Cuban state \$4,000 per month for each doctor sent over on an “internationalist mission.” However, these doctors only earn an average of \$400 each month in wages.³⁶ The difference is appropriated by the government as surplus-value to pay for military spending and the luxury consumption of the ruling class or is otherwise reinvested in profitable business ventures, many of them in partnership with foreign capitalists. Even the country’s “socialist” health care system, held up by many as its crowning achievement, serves the accumulative needs of Cuban capital. From the point of view of capital, a state-run health care system is preferable to a private or multi-payer system, such as exists in the US, because it allows the whole capitalist class to pool money for the cost of reproducing the workforce, which also includes health care, instead of having to bear that cost individually. Furthermore, since it allows workers to see doctors more frequently, and in addition gives them access to preventive care, it also reduces said costs in the long-term, not to mention the work hours squandered due to illness.³⁷ In short, it is about molding the worker according to the requirements of enlarged reproduction and minimizing the cost of his or her needs to yield more surplus-value.

The capitalist economy, whether private or state, demands endless economic growth, which, however, can only be obtained through an increase in the rate of exploitation or a reduction in working-class consumption. The state bourgeoisie in Cuba has tried both strategies, with disastrous results for workers, who have seen their living standards absolutely devastated over the past six decades. Right-wing dissidents and leftist activists, both on the island and abroad, have put forward a number of solutions, some more worthy of discussion than others, but all of them suffer from the same defect: they do not in any way question the material bases of capitalist society. The general consensus on the Right is that the command apparatus should be dismantled in favor of a free-market system and state property auctioned off to companies or private individuals. However, there is much less agree-



Photo: Scene from the *maleconazo* (1994), an uprising against austerity during the Special Period

ment about how quickly to proceed with denationalization (the experiences of Russia and the countries in the former the Soviet Bloc, one assumes, have served as cautionary stories against the dangers of “reckless privatization”) and which social programs will ultimately be spared the chopping block. Proposals on the Left are much more varied, ranging from Yugoslav-style “self-management,” in which worker-operated enterprises compete within a fairly deregulated market economy, to a “democratized” state-capitalism.³⁸ In fact, one of the most frequent criticisms of Castro-Stalinism from the Left is that it unjustly excludes all but a handful of people from decision-making. In other words, it is authoritarian and undemocratic. Yet this simply mistakes symptoms for the disease. The rigidly hierarchical character of the Cuban economy is a side effect of statified property. Its transformation into individual private property or decentralization through legalistic means would not alter its content in the slightest. All that would change is the particular *institutional form* of capitalism. In reality, all of the proposed solutions amount to little more than superficial modifications to the current system, while its essential pillars, waged labor and capital accumulation, remain firmly in place. It is revealing that all of the factors cited as reasons for pursuing such changes — for example, improving the quality of feedback, eliminating waste, in-

creasing productivity, streamlining enterprises, etc. — derive from the structural imperative to enlarge the national capital. At bottom, the Left-Right dualism represents nothing more than competing alternatives for managing capitalism. The working class must reject this paradigm in its entirety, putting the immediate abolition of waged labor and commodity exchange on the agenda, first on a national, then on an international, scale. This requires that the exploited in Cuba and all other countries organize as a class to overthrow the capitalist state, doing away with this repressive machinery once and for all, and simultaneously establish their own power structure based on the workers’ councils: committees of democratically-elected and instantly revocable delegates. These organs will be responsible for expropriating capital, carrying out economic planning, and overseeing the extension of the “socialized” — or strictly use-value producing — sector of the economy to all productive activities. These are the tasks ahead, and in Cuba, as everywhere else, it is only the working class which can carry them to completion. The suppression of the capitalist system, whatever its disguise, is the indispensable condition for the full emancipation of humankind and its rebirth as an authentic community.

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Notes

¹ Grandizo Munis, "Pro Segundo Manifiesto Comunista," in *Teoría y Práctica de la Lucha de Clases*, 13.

² Samuel Farber, *Cuba Since the Revolution of 1959* (Chicago: Haymarket, 2011), 18-19.

³ Frederick Engels, *Socialism: Scientific and Utopian* (New York City: Cosimo Inc., 2008), 67.

⁴ Rene Dumont, *Cuba: Socialism and Development* (New York City: Grove Press, 1970), 110.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 111-113.

⁶ Farber, *op. cit.*, 55-56.

⁷ *Constitución de la República de Cuba*. Capítulo VII – Derechos, Deberes y Garantías Fundamentales, artículo 45.

⁸ *Código de Trabajo de Cuba*. Capítulo VI – Disciplina Laboral, sección III, artículos 158-159.

⁹ *Ibid.*, Capítulo II – Contrato de Trabajo, sección XII, artículo 61.

¹⁰ Nancy A. Quiñones Chang, "Cuba's Insertion in the International Economy Since 1990," in *Cuban Economists on the Cuban Economy*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013), 91.

¹¹ Paul Sweezy, *The Theory of Capitalist Development* (New York City: Monthly Review Press, 1942), 52-54.

¹² Ha-Joon Chang, *Bad Samaritans: The Myth of Free Trade and the Secret History of Capitalism* (New York City: Bloomsbury Press, 2008), 14-15.

¹³ OECD, *General Government Spending: Total, % of GDP, 1970-2014*.

¹⁴ Karl Marx, *Capital* vol. 2 (London: Penguin Classics, 1990), 427.

¹⁵ Paresh Chattopadhyay, *The Marxian Concept of Capital and the Soviet Experience* (Westport: Praeger Publishers, 1994), 18-20.

¹⁶ Peter Binns & Mike Gonzales, "Cuba, Castro and Socialism," in *International Socialism*, Spring, 1980.

¹⁷ Chattopadhyay, *op. cit.*, 54-55.

¹⁸ CEPAL, *La Economía Cubana: Reformas Estructurales y Desempeño en los Noventa*, 2nd ed. (Mexico City: Economic Culture Fund, 2000), 205-206.

¹⁹ Adam Buick & John Crump, *State Capitalism: The Wages System under New Management* (New York City: St. Martin's Press, 1986), 80-93.

²⁰ Karl Marx, *Capital* vol. 1 (London: Penguin Classics, 1990), 739.

²¹ To be clear, surplus-value and profit are not synonymous. However, surplus-value is the source of profit, and for our purposes they fill the same role. Therefore, we can speak of them interchangeably.

²² Grandizo Munis, "Partido-Estado, Stalinismo, Revolución," in *Revolución y Contrarrevolución en Rusia*, 78-80.

²³ This is only meant to be illustrative, as the law of value will not operate under socialism and exchange-value will not exist at all.

²⁴ Marx, *ibid.*, 929-930.

²⁵ Karl Marx, *Critique of the Gotha Program* (Rockville: Wildside Press, 2008), 26.

²⁶ Richard Gott, *Cuba: A New History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), 186-188.

²⁷ United States Tariff Commission, *The Effects of the Cuban Reciprocity Treaty of 1902* (Washington: US Govt. Printing Office, 1929), 66-67.

²⁸ Gott, *op. cit.*, 240-243.

²⁹ These were renamed *Unidades Básicas de Producción Cooperativa* (Basic Units of Cooperative Production) following some restructuring of productive capital assets within the agricultural sector in 1993. However, their internal organization and basic manner of operation remained unchanged.

³⁰ Dumont, *op. cit.*, 51-52.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 80-85.

³² Richard E. Feinberg, *The New Cuban Economy: What Roles for Foreign Investment?* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 2012), 58.

³³ Grandizo Munis, "Los Sindicatos Contra la Revolución," in *Internacionalismo, Sindicatos, Organización de Clase*, 85-86.

³⁴ Farber, *op. cit.*, 138-139.

³⁵ Dumont, *op. cit.*, 77.

³⁶ Martin Carnoy, "Reuters, December 24, 2014.

³⁷ For a more in-depth analysis of the US health care system, see Red Hugh's article "*Capital's Health Dilemma*" in the first issue of *Intransigence*:

³⁸ Pedro Campos Santos, "Cuba Necesita un Socialismo Participativo y Democrático. Propuestas Programáticas," *Cubaencuentro*, August 24, 2008.



ROSA LUXEMBURG AGAINST FEMINISM

Feminism appeared throughout Europe in the late 1890s as “suffragism.” The suffragettes defended the extension of the right to vote for women under restricted suffrage, that is, the right of women of the propertied classes to participate in the political leadership of the established state and society. In their struggle to make an entry-point into the management of businesses and the government for petit bourgeois and upper-class women, the suffragettes soon tried to win over working women, much greater in number and above all much more organized. The feminists proposed an inter-classist front of “women,” whose objective would be to obtain female bourgeois deputies within the system of restricted suffrage. They promised to represent the “common interests of women” that supposedly unite female workers with those bourgeois women of radical English liberalism.

The left wing of the Second International, with Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin at the head, was radically opposed. A year before the formation of the first suffragist group in England, Zetkin had presented in

Gotha, the true founding congress of the German Socialist Party, a report on “The question of women and the tasks of social democracy,” which was unanimously approved. Since then, the German Socialists had dedicated themselves to organizing and training thousands of working-class women, promoting mass mobilizations for universal suffrage for both sexes. From the Stuttgart Congress of the International, the Left, with Zetkin and Luxemburg at the helm, took the fight to a global level. Not against the supposed sexism of party leaders, but against concessions to feminism by some parties, like the Belgian, which had approved at one of its congresses supporting the extension of restricted suffrage to the women of the upper classes:

The Congress of the Second International held in Stuttgart committed the social democratic parties of all countries to initiate the struggle for universal female suffrage as an essential and indispensable part of the general struggle of the proletariat for the right to vote and for power, in contrast with feminist aspirations.

— Clara Zetkin

Rosa Luxemburg and the left wing of the International against feminism

The ideological struggle became increasingly intense as time wore on. In her correspondence, Rosa Luxemburg shares her intimate rejection of the “moral and spiritual” argument of feminism and the invocations of “the development of one’s own personality” when what feminists were really demanding was equality between the men and women of the social layers that were in power within that very same power. She was clear that “women” are not a historical subject above or outside social classes and that is why she profoundly rejected the struggle for a so-called “right of women” that would benefit female workers, separated from the evolution of the workers’ movement in general and the fight against capitalism.

For Luxemburg, feminists were trying to use workers’ rejection of the issue of women’s oppression as a way to derail the struggle and consolidate a system whose historically progressive phase was ending, in the same way that nationalism manipulated resistance to cultural-national oppression:

The duty of mobilizing against and combating national oppression, which corresponds to the class party of the proletariat, does not find its foundation in any particular “right of nations,” nor does the political and social equality of the sexes emanate from any “right of women” to which the movement for the emancipation of bourgeois women refers. These duties can only be deduced from a generalized opposition to the class system, to all forms of social inequality, and to all power of domination. In a word, they are deduced from the fundamental principle of socialism.

—Rosa Luxemburg, “The National Question and Autonomy” (1906)

In *Die Gleichheit*, the newspaper edited by Zetkin, she made it clear that the power of the women who benefitted from restricted suffrage is born out of their social position in the bourgeoisie and the petit bourgeoisie and that the legal reform of the right to vote they proposed would strengthen that power; however, working women could only be affirmed through labor struggles hand in hand with their male class comrades:

Those who defend the rights of bourgeois women want to acquire political rights in order to participate in political life. Proletarian women can only follow the path of labor struggles, the opposite of setting foot in real power through basically legal statutes.

That is why she denounced any organization “of women” and every “front of women’s organizations,”

because she realized that organizing in a deceitful inter-classist space only served to increase the power of the petit bourgeois (and, as we shall see, nationalist) social layers that supported feminism and dividing the working-class movement.

March 8th against feminism

Luxemburg is so clear that the organization of groups made up exclusively of women should not open the door to class collaborationism nor to the separation of the class that when Clara Zetkin invites her to the first congress of socialist women, she mocks in a letter to Luisa Kautsky: “Are we feminists now?” she writes. But Luxemburg knew that if Clara Zetkin organized groups of socialist women, it was for the same reason that the Second International created youth groups: to reach the working class as a whole and not only the workers who were concentrated in large workplaces. Although in Germany at the time there were many women in the factories, most working-class women were engaged in non-industrial work, raising their own children, and industries based on domestic work.

There is only one movement, a single organization of communist women — formerly socialist — within the communist party together with communist men. The goals of communist men are also our goals, our tasks.

— Clara Zetkin

The creation of March 8th as a day of struggle in 1910 under the name of “Day of International Solidarity Among Proletarian Women,” a proposal by Zetkin, is a part of that. It is about affirming the socialist and working-class character of the movement for truly universal suffrage, that is, including the acquisition of the right to vote for women. That is to say, the creation of March 8th was part of the struggle of the women of the Left of the Second International for the democratic rights of all workers and against the feminist idea of the “union of women” — “against which I have fought my entire life,” Rosa Luxemburg would write.

The moment of truth

The moment of truth that would demonstrate the context and the reason for the struggle of the Left of the Second International against feminism came with the first world war.

The suffragettes literally “demanded” governments to incorporate women into the war effort and the capitalist bloodbath. In return, the British government granted the vote to eight million women from the wealthiest families in 1918, still far from universal suf-



Photo: Rosa Luxemburg and Clara Zetkin in 1911

frage. This is what the press now celebrates as “conquest of the right to vote by women,” forgetting to mention that these women were few.

By contrast, Zetkin and the organizations of working-class women convened the first international conference against the war in the middle of the most savage repression of internationalists by all governments. It was the first political act organized by a group of the Second International against the war at a time when Luxemburg, Rühle, and Liebknecht were all in prison.

[We must] lead proletarians to liberate themselves from nationalism and the socialist parties to recover their freedom for the class struggle. The end of the war can only be achieved by the clear and unbreakable will of the popular masses of the bellig-

erent countries. In favor of action, the Conference makes an appeal to socialist women and socialist parties of all countries: War against war!

— Declaration of the International Conference of Socialist Women Against the War

The demonstration of March 8th in Petrograd — which, as was traditional, was organized by groups of working-class socialist women, mobilizing workers regardless of their sex and making demands for the class as a whole — became the trigger of the Russian Revolution.

Nuevo Curso (Spain)



Photo: Protest after the Triangle Shirtwaist fire (April 5, 1911)

GARMENT WORKERS

YESTERDAY, TODAY, AND TOMORROW

Buses headed for the center of the Fashion District of Los Angeles pull up to a corner not far from the Pico Metro Station. The DASH F bus is built to handle twenty seated passengers, and perhaps an additional fifteen standing. By the first few stops in South Central Los Angeles, though, the buses are filled with as many as sixty people on their way to work. Eventually the bus driver stops taking new passengers. As we pass nearby Los Angeles Street and Santee Alley, they begin to get off the bus and enter non-descript buildings. These three- to four-story unmarked industrial buildings appear to be home to dozens or more workers. While workers enter the building from the inbound bus, other visibly tired workers, mostly young women, lean against the bus signpost heading back to South Central. Their shifts have just ended.

Today there is little research into what working conditions are like for sweatshop garment workers in the United States. Indeed, most people are unaware such an industry exists in the United States, or if they do, they think it must be a rare. Meanwhile, a seemingly unlimited supply of fresh fashion pours from LA's Fashion District into the department stores and fashion retailers. At locations like the California Market Center, young fashion designers sweat under bright lights and the critical eyes of wholesale clients who may be interested in their latest handmade piece. The successful designer's garments are approved for purchase and must be ready to order as quickly as possible. The garment must be manufactured in multiple sizes, and in enough quantities to stock several retailers' displays. How do retail wholesale purchasers manage to find the latest fashion, and procure sizeable orders in the same week? The only means by which this is possible is through the laborers working in the shadows of the Fashion District.

Textiles have long been known as an industry with brutal working conditions. In terms of raw material production, textiles historically began as cotton planted and harvested by slaves in the colonial period until the industrial revolution. The history of textile manufacturing is the history of capitalist development itself, and the history of the development of this lucrative market is the history of slavery from point of purchase in Africa, to their destination on cotton plantations in the South. By 1834, textile spinning mills

littered the Northeast of the United States, employing mostly women and their daughters to operate dangerous, yet delicate, machinery that was often too small for grown men's hands to operate. The workers in these mill operations were quick to conflict with their employers, jumpstarting the earliest labor movements in the history of the United States. 1834 and 1836 were marked by mass strikes in Lowell, Massachusetts, where textile laborers decided to take action against a series of wage cuts.¹ The textile industry, though roiled with frequent labor action, remained a job only for the lowest paid wage workers in the most deplorable conditions throughout the nineteenth century. By 1911 the garment workers, still fighting for basic safety conditions and livable wages, witnessed a lock-in and the death of 134 women and girls during a fire that temporarily turned public attention to the plight of sweatshop garment workers. In 1912, the famous Lawrence Strike garnered further attention. The Industrial Workers of the World (IWW) sought to organize laborers who were otherwise ignored by trade unions of the time due to their status as recent immigrants. Conditions in the 1912 Lawrence textile mills are described as no less deplorable than in 1836, with women living on \$9 a week, and industrial accidents being so widespread that many garment workers were lucky to see their twenty-fifth birthday.² And then, exactly one century after the first strikes in Lowell, a nationwide general strike in solidarity with the West Coast Longshoremen swept garment factories on the East Coast. On September 1934, in Saylesville, Rhode Island, the National Guard was called in to stop as many as 4,000 workers from storming the mills.³ With a century of labor struggle in the textile mills over basic safety and wage concerns, it seemed no reconciliation was in sight. It appeared that clothing must be made cheaply, with little regard to safety, or it will not be made for profit at all.

From old letters or grainy photographs, the textile workers' struggle appears distant. However, in the nearly nine decades since the last major battle between textile workers and the state and capitalist class, the production and shipment of garments has been completely transformed. But their conditions of production have changed very little. Americans buying

clothing today can read the tags of garments to see where much of the cheapest manufacturing labor has been exported in order to maintain profit margins. Thailand, Bangladesh, Malaysia, and other countries in South Asia produce a great quantity of cheap garments that fill stocks in department stores in Illinois, Texas, and California. The textile mills of the Northeast have been since retrofitted into high-end condominium spaces for young professionals, with the façades of these mills regarded as critical components of the region's "historical significance." Even as workers saw their jobs evaporate into thin air in these regions, textile manufacturers took to the South to find cheap labor. This lasted only as long as costs could permit, and even many of the textile operations of the South have been moved overseas. However, the trend of "fast fashion" has since prevailed. As not every consumer is satisfied buying the cheap and out of season products that appear in Walmarts across the nation, many require clothes to be cheap enough to be purchased seasonally to stay in style.

"Fast fashion" is the term coined to describe the mass production of designer clothing of relatively low physical quality, but of higher value due to the high turnover of fashion trends. These clothes are largely produced outside of the United States, but their initial production guarantees garment labor required in the United States. This is because the rapidly-decaying value of a product from design, to wholesale purchase, to retail floor dictates that overseas production keeps the commodity from reaching the market in time. For this reason Los Angeles, the capital of fashion consciousness, has been home to decades of sweatshop labor practices that mimic both the conditions of workers in countries like Bangladesh and those of US mill workers near the turn of the twentieth century.

A major scandal erupted after the discovery of a large sweatshop operation in the city of El Monte, CA in 1995.⁴ Seventy-two Thai women were "recruited" for work in the United States. These workers were brought to the United States with a debt that they could not realistically repay, and were required to work up to 22 hours in a single day at under \$2 per hour to repay the massive loan. The discovery of this operation sent shockwaves through the community. Although the women involved in this specific incident were not deported, the failure of both media coverage and non-profit activism regarding this single case cannot go unnoticed. Outrage at this heinous case of

labor trafficking and exploitation did not manifest as a movement to investigate further cases of exploitation. Yet the likelihood that this was the only operation of its kind providing textiles for major department stores and designer retail stores alike was low. Even in the initial investigation following the discovery of the El Monte operation, large sums of money and paperwork dating back several years indicated that a firm could operate illegally under conditions like these with little or no suspicion. Gone are the days when the textile barons boldly display their names on the factory façade. Contemporary sweatshops are relegated to the shadows, and even investigation into these practices can put the workers at great risk of either deportation or violent retaliation from their traffickers. The 1995 El Monte case is remembered by many locals in Southern California. Although, many view it as an unusual case, as if this is no longer the primary means by which many retailers get their products to market faster than the competition. This is obviously far from the truth. The US Department of Labor began investigations of sweatshop labor in garment production in 2016, only to uncover that the practice is alive and well in the twenty-first century. Labor practices throughout the Los Angeles area include conditions not unlike those found elsewhere in the world, with long hours and pay well below the minimum wage. These practices, as it turns out, are not anomalous — they are in fact the norm.

Communists must consider the links between the struggle of migrant laborers working outside the protections of Federal and state laws in the United States and struggles taking place around the world. The Dhaka fire in 2012, just over a century after the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory Fire, point to the failure of capitalism to provide for more than mere subsistence level wages in one of its oldest and most developed markets. While many are aware that these conditions continue to exist in deeply impoverished countries, the myth persists that workers in the United States are protected from such "excesses." Rather than viewing this as a problem of uneven development, Marxists should consider instead that this is a problem related to the falling rate of profit. Markets with razor-thin margins due to the centralization and scale of their production in developed capitalism, still require manual labor at points of production that no technological advances have been able to automate. The only solution the capitalist class has found to make these essential commodities is to search for



Photo: Women protesting after the fire at the Tazreen Fashion factory in Dhaka (2012)

creative ways to bring the cost of production down to its bare minimum. By circumventing legal structures, and taking advantage of relative economic underdevelopment throughout the world, capitalists have resorted to the employment of workers who enjoy no legal protections, are desperate to survive, and whose wages could simply go no lower if they are expected to show up to work the next day.

Labor unions — which have worked doubly to protect only workers with legal status, as well as shield the state from any direct confrontation with the working class — offer no solution to those workers who must live with no paper trail if they want to remain safe from deportation. For those workers whose labor provides the clothing on our backs or the food on our tables, the choice is state violence or violence directly inflicted on them by the bosses, who could retaliate by simply threatening to cut them off from work, leaving them to survive with no documentation. As labor unions decline in significance and membership in the United States, the question arises as to what “legal” and “protected” work will look like

in the coming decades. With a continual market push to reduce costs and an increasing demand on the worker to pay for basic necessities, such as food and housing, labor unions, which have long since sold the strike option to the highest bidder, will not give even “legal” workers recourse in an economy that has an expected loss in accumulated worker wealth for the first time in generations. Perhaps the future could be just as bleak for the retail and food-service workers responsible for handling the products manufactured or grown by their undocumented peers. For communists, the task ahead will be to identify the most important struggles for the undocumented workers that fill these hidden factories. While there will likely be other non-communist organizations also involved in these struggles, it is important to put forward a communist political program in any discussion with workers in the midst of organizing for better working conditions. Struggles like these create opportunities for communists to forge meaningful bonds with the rest of the working class, provide crucial aid, and promote any activity that falls outside of the bounda-

ries of what the unions are willing or able to do. All workers, particularly those who enjoy few legal protections, stand to benefit from wresting control over their own struggles and working conditions from the bosses and the union bureaucracy. It is also important to note that labor unions have largely written off garment workers, many of whom are undocumented. Sometimes the unions even try to prevent them from organizing, for legal reasons. The difficulty involved in organizing among workers who fear the personal retaliation of their bosses or deportation cannot be overstated.

Anybody who is willing to fight in this vulnerable situation must feel that they are not under immediate threat of displacement. This poses a challenge to communists who are aware of the unmistakable proletarian character of these workers, but who understand that the struggle for minimal protections puts them at great risk. Communists should prioritize safety and discretion. Assisting workers in getting legal or

financial aid amid struggle may be necessary. In the worst-case scenario, workers could face deportation, in which case access to legal counsel may be inadequate, and safe harbor may be the last resort. The standard practice of discussing theory and action should not be ignored, however. As hidden as the garment workers appear to be, only noticeable to those paying attention while riding the buses into and out of the Fashion District, for example, they are part of a larger community of proletarians eking out an existence on the sidelines of American capitalism. Regardless of the potential legal risks imposed on them by the state, the greatest risk comes to the industry that would come to a halt without them. The garment workers, like all workers, have leverage against capital in that they will always be more indispensable to production than the capitalists who exploit them.

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Notes

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² C.P. Neill. *Report on Strike of Textile Workers in Lawrence, Mass. in 1912*. (Washington Govt. Printing Office. Washington, D.C.: 1912).

³ B. Plain. "Labor Day and the Saylesville Massacre." *RI Future*. (September 7, 2015).

⁴ G. White. "Workers Held in Near-Slavery, Officials Say." *Los Angeles Times*. (August 3, 1995).

FASCISM? DEMOCRACY? COMMUNISM

The central question confronting the workers' movement nowadays is its attitude towards democracy, or more precisely, the need to defend (or not) the democratic institutions threatened by fascism, at the same time as the latter proceeds to destroy the proletarian organizations. The simplest solution to this question — as to others — is not the clearest, since it in no way corresponds to the reality of the class struggle. Though it may seem paradoxical at first glance, the workers' movement will only succeed in actually preserving its organizations from the assault of reaction on the condition that they maintain their fighting positions intact, not tie them to the fate of democracy, and fight the battle against the fascist offensive, at the same time as it carries forward the struggle against the democratic state. In effect, once the communion between the workers' movement and democratic institutions is established, the political condition for the complete ruin of the working class is given, since the democratic state finds in the contribution of the working masses, not a possibility of life or of persistence, but the necessary condition to become an authoritarian regime, or the signal of its disappearance with the aim of ceding its place to the new fascist organization.

If one considers the current situation regardless of its connection with the situations that preceded it and which will come after it, if one considers the current position of the political parties without linking them to the role they have played in the past and that which they will play in the future, the immediate circumstances and the current political forces of the general historical context are displaced, which allows reality to be easily presented thusly: fascism goes on the attack, the proletariat is completely interested in defending its freedoms, and for this reason it is necessary to establish a defensive front of threatened democratic institutions. Painted with a revolutionary tinge, this position is presented under the varnish of a pretended revolutionary strategy, while also being fundamentally "Marxist." From here, the problem is presented thusly: there is an incompatibility between the bourgeoisie and democracy, consequently, the interest of the proletariat to defend the freedoms that the latter grants to it naturally prevails over its specifically revolutionary interests and the struggle for the defense of democratic institutions thus becomes an anticapitalist struggle!

At the base of these propositions there is an evident confusion between democracy, democratic institutions, democratic liberties, and working-class positions that are erroneously called "workers' freedoms." We will observe both from the theoretical point of view, and from the historical point of view, that there is an irreducible and irreconcilable opposition between democracy and working-class positions. The ideological movement that has accompanied the ascent and victory of capitalism is situated and expressed, from an economic and political point of view, on the basis of the dissolution of the interests and particular demands of individuals, communities and especially of classes, within society. Here the equality of the components would be possible precisely because individuals entrust their fate and custody to the state organisms that represent the interests of the community. It is useful to point out that liberal and democratic theory supposes the dissolution of groups, of categories made up of "citizens," which would be interested in spontaneously ceding a part of their freedom to receive the safeguarding of their economic and social position in compensation. This relinquishment would be made for the benefit of an organism capable of regulating and directing the whole of the community. And while the bourgeois constitutions proclaim the "rights of man" and also contain the affirmation of "freedom of assembly and of the press," they do not recognize class groupings in any way. These "rights" are considered exclusively as attributions granted to "man," to the "citizen," or to the "people," who must make use of them to grant the organisms of the state or government access to the individual. The necessary condition for the functioning of the democratic regime resides, then, not in the recognition of groups, their interests, or their rights, but in the foundation of the indispensable organism to guide the collectivity, which must transmit to the state the defense of the interests of each unit that constitutes it.

Democracy is only a means for preventing "citizens" from resorting to organs other than those governed and controlled by the state. It could be objected that freedom of assembly, press, and organization lose all their meaning from the moment it becomes impossible to obtain, through them, a given concession. Here we enter the terrain in which Marxist critique shows

how, behind the democratic and liberal mask, class oppression is actually hidden, and that Marx so rightly affirmed that the synonym of “Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity” is “infantry, cavalry, artillery.” On the contrary, today it is not so much a matter of demonstrating the inconsistency of the supposedly egalitarian basis of democracy, but of exposing how they intend to tie the expansion of workers’ organizations with the defense of the latter.

Now, as we have explained, the condition of life of the democratic regime consists precisely in curtailing the power of some groups in particular in the name of the interests of individuals, as well as society. The establishment of a workers’ organization directly involves an attack on the theory of democracy and for this reason it is characteristic to note that, in the current period of degeneration of Marxist thought, the overlap of the two Internationals (that of the traitors and that of the future traitors) occurs precisely on the basis of the defense of democracy, from which would derive the possibility of existence, and even development, of workers’ organizations.

From a historical point of view, the contradiction between “democracy” and workers’ organizations manifests itself in a bloody way.

English capitalism was founded in the seventeenth century, but it was much later that Chartists snatched the right of the working class to organize by force of struggle. In all countries, the workers would obtain this conquest only on the basis of strong movements that were continually subjected to the bloody repression of democratic states. It is quite accurate that before the war, and more specifically until the first years of our century, mass movements aimed at establishing independent organisms of the working class were led by socialist parties towards the conquest of rights that would grant workers access to government or state functions. Certainly, this question was hotly debated within the labor movement; its most conclusive expression is found above all in the reformist theory which, under the banner of the gradual penetration of the proletariat into the enemy’s fortress, actually allowed the latter — and 1914 represents the conclusion of this balance sheet of Marxist revision and treason — to corrupt and submit to their own interests the whole of the working class.

In the struggle against what is habitually derided as “Bordigism,” it is often argued, for reasons of controversy (which are generally the reasons of entanglement and confusion), that this or that movement had as its objective the conquest of universal suffrage, or this or

that democratic demand. This way of interpreting history is very similar to that which consists in explaining events, not by determining their cause as a function of the antagonistic classes and the specific interests that they really put forward, but simply basing themselves on the initials inscribed on the flags that waved above the masses in movement. This interpretation, which on the other hand has only a purely acrobatic value in which the pretentious people who populate the labor movement are pleased, vanishes immediately if the problem is posed in realistic terms. In effect, working class movements cannot be understood except in the course of their ascent towards the liberation of the proletariat. If, on the contrary, we place them on the opposite path, which would lead the workers to conquer the right of access to governmental or state functions, we would place ourselves directly on the same path that led to the betrayal of the working class.

In any case, the movements that had as their objective the conquest of the right to vote could carry out this fight and in an enduring fashion, because in the end, far from dismantling the democratic system, they did nothing but introduce the workers’ movement itself into its very game. The miserable deeds of the workers who rose to government posts are well known: the Eborts, Scheidemanns, Hendersons, etc., clearly demonstrated what the democratic mechanism is and the capacity it has to unleash the most ruthless counter-revolutionary repression. What concerns the class positions conquered by the workers is completely different. Here no compatibility with the democratic state is possible; on the contrary, the irreconcilable opposition that reflects the antagonism of classes is accentuated, sharpened, and amplified, and workers’ victory will be achieved thanks to the policy of the counterrevolutionary leaders.

The latter distort the effort made by the workers to create their class organizations, which can only be the fruit of a merciless struggle against the democratic state. Proletarian triumph is only possible in this direction. When the working masses are seduced by the politics of the opportunist leaders, they end up being dragged into the democratic swamp. There they are not more than a simple pawn of a mechanism that becomes so much more democratic as it manages to annul all the class formations that represent an obstacle to its functioning.

The democratic State that operates this mechanism will make it work “equally” only on the condition of having before it, not antagonistic economic categories grouped in different organisms, but “citizens” equal

to each other, who recognize themselves as being of similar social position, to traverse together the multiple paths they have access to upon exercise of the democratic power.

To critique the democratic principle with the aim of demonstrating that electoral equality is nothing more than a fiction that obscures the chasms separating classes in bourgeois society exceeds the framework of this article. What interests us here is to be able to show that there is an irreconcilable opposition between the democratic system and working-class positions. Every time the workers have been able to impose — through heroic struggles and sacrificing their own lives — their class demands on capitalism, they have dealt a serious blow to democracy, a blow of the kind only capitalism necessitates. On the contrary, the proletariat finds the reason for its historic mission by denouncing the lie of the democratic principle in its own nature and in the need to suppress the differences of classes and the classes themselves. At the end of the path traveled by the proletariat through the class struggle, there is no regime of pure democracy because the principle on which communist society will be based is that of the non-existence of a state power directing society, while democracy is absolutely inspired by it. In its most liberal expression, it continually strives to exclude the exploited who dare to defend their interests with the help of their organizations instead of remaining submissive to the democratic institutions created with the sole aim of maintaining class exploitation.

Having placed the problem of democracy in its normal framework — we do not really see how else it would be possible for Marxists to do it — it is possible to understand events in Italy and in Germany, as well as the situations currently experienced by the proletariat in different countries, and in particular in France. At first glance, the dilemma in which they situate these events consists of the opposition “fascism/democracy,” or, to use common terms, “fascism/antifascism.”

These “Marxist” strategists will say, to top it all, that the antithesis continues to be the existence of two fundamentally opposed classes, but that the proletariat has the advantage of taking advantage of the opportunity offered to it and of presenting itself as the main figure in the defense of democracy and in the antifascist struggle. We have already highlighted the confusion between democracy and workers’ positions that is the basis of this policy.

Now we need to explain why the front for the defense of democracy in Italy — as in Germany — did

not represent, ultimately, more than a necessary condition for the victory of fascism. For what is improperly called the “fascist coup d'état” is only, in the end, a transfer of power, more or less pacific, from a democratic government to the new fascist government. In Italy, a government made up of the representatives of democratic antifascism gives way to a ministry led by the fascists, which will have an assured majority in this antifascist and democratic parliament, when, however, the fascists had no more than a parliamentary group of forty representatives out of five hundred deputies. In Germany, the antifascist Von Schleicher gives way to Hitler, called, on the other hand, by another antifascist, Hindenburg, the chosen of the democratic and social-democratic forces. In Italy and Germany, in the epoch of the transformation of capitalist society into fascism, democracy does not immediately retire from the political scene, but maintains a political position of the first order: in effect, if it remains in government, it is not with aim of representing within it a rallying point to prevent the situations to which a fascist victory will lead, but to allow the triumph of Mussolini and Hitler. In Italy, moreover, after the march on Rome, and for several months, on top of that, a coalition government was formed of which the fascists were a part in collaboration with the Christian Democrats, and even Mussolini renounced the idea of having representatives of social democracy in the leadership of trade-union organizations.

Current events in France, where the fascist perspective does not represent the only capitalist solution to the situation, and where the “pact of action” between socialists and centrists has made the working class the main element in the defense of democracy, will end up clarifying the theoretical controversy in which our fraction stands against the other organizations that claim to be for the working class. For the necessary condition for the defeat of fascism, and which supposedly consists in the regrouping of the parties that act within the working class in a united front raising the flag for the defense of democracy, this condition that did not exist either in Italy or in Germany, it is completely fulfilled in France. Now, in our opinion, the fact that the French proletariat has been derailed from its class terrain and spurred on as it has been, by centrists and socialists, on the road that today immobilizes it and tomorrow will deliver to it capitalism, foreshadows the undoubted victory of the enemy, in the double sense of being forced to resort to fascism, or to a transformation of the current state into a state in which the government will gradually absorb



Photo: Hindenburg-Hitler campaign poster in Potsdam (1933)

the fundamental legislative functions and where workers' organizations must give up their independence and allow state control in exchange for their "ascension" to the category of collateral consultative institutions.

When it is said that the current situation no longer allows capitalism to maintain a form of social organization analogous or identical to that existing in the ascending historical period of the bourgeoisie, it does not do more than confirm an evident and indisputable truth. But it is also a verification of facts that is not specific to the question of democracy, but is general and applies equally to the economic situation and all other social, political, cultural, etc., manifestations. This serves to prove that today is not yesterday, that there are currently social phenomena that did not appear in any way in the past. We would not highlight this banal statement if it were not for the political conclusions, which are strange at the very least, that it entails: social

classes are no longer recognized by the mode of production they establish, but by the form of political and social organization with which they endow themselves. Capital is thus a democratic class necessarily opposed to fascism, which is a resurrection of feudal oligarchies. Otherwise capitalism can no longer be capitalism, from the moment it stops being democratic, and the problem consists in murdering the fascist demon using capitalism itself. Or, since capitalism today is interested in abandoning democracy, we only have to put it on the ropes by taking up the texts of the constitution and the laws, and we would thus break the transformation of capitalism to fascism and open the way that leads to proletarian victory.

Ultimately, the fascist offensive would temporarily force us to place our revolutionary program under quarantine in order to defend the endangered democratic institutions, and then resume the comprehensive

fight against this very democracy that, thanks to this interruption, would have allowed us to set a trap against capitalism. Once the danger was eliminated, democracy could be crucified again.

The simple enunciation of the political conclusions derived from the verification of the difference between two capitalist epochs — the ascending and the descending — allows us to see the state of decomposition and corruption of the parties and groups that claim to be on the side of the proletariat in the current period.

The two historical periods considered separately can differ, and really do differ, but to reach the conclusion that there is an incompatibility between capitalism and democracy, or between capitalism and fascism, we should consider democracy and fascism not so much as social forms of organization, but of classes or it would be necessary to admit that from now on the theory of the class struggle is no longer true and that we are witnessing a battle that will pit democracy against capitalism, or fascism against the proletariat.

But the events in Italy and Germany are there to show us that fascism is nothing more than the instrument of bloody repression against the proletariat, at the service of capitalism, which sees Mussolini proclaim the sanctity of private property on the rubble of the class institutions that the workers had founded to direct their struggle against the bourgeois appropriation of the product of their work.

But the theory of the class struggle is verified, once again, in the cruel experiences of Italy and Germany. The appearance of the fascist movement does not at all modify the antithesis of capitalism/proletariat, replacing it either by capitalism/democracy or fascism/proletariat. In the evolution of decadent capitalism, there comes a time when the latter is forced to undertake another path different from that which it had traveled in its ascending phase.

Before it could fight its mortal enemy the proletariat, presenting its perspective as that of a progressive majority with the same fate until it achieved its liberation and, with this aim, it opened the doors of the democratic institutions by accepting so-called workers' representatives, who became agents of the bourgeoisie in the measure that they came to chain the workers' organizations in the framework of the democratic State. Today — after the war of 1914 and the Russian revolution — the problem for capitalism is to disperse, with violence and repression, any proletarian focus that may be related to the class movement. At bottom, the explanation of the difference in attitude be-

tween the Italian and German proletariat in the face of the fascist offensive, the heroic resistance of the former to defend the last brick of the workers' institutions and the collapse of the latter as soon as the Hitler-Papen-Hindenburg government was formed, depends solely on the fact that in Italy the proletariat founded — aided by our current — the organism that could lead to victory, while in Germany the Communist Party, broken by the base in Halle by merging with the leftwing independents, experienced a series of stages in the course of the multiple convulsions of the left and extreme left, which mark successive steps forward in the corruption and decomposition of a party of the German proletariat that in 1919 and 1920 had written pages of glory and heroism.

Even if capitalism goes on the offensive against democratic institutions and the organizations that claim to support them, even if it assassinates political personalities belonging to democratic parties of the army or the Nazi Party itself (like June 30 in Germany), this does not mean that there should be as many antitheses as there may be oppositions (fascism/military, fascism/Christianity, fascism/democracy). These facts only prove the extreme complexity of the current situation, its spasmodic nature, and do not threaten in any way the theory of class struggle. The Marxist doctrine does not present the struggle of proletariat/bourgeoisie in capitalist society as a mechanical conflict, to the point that any social manifestation could and should be linked to one or the other end of the dilemma. Apart from the antithesis of bourgeoisie/proletariat, the only motor of present-day history, Marx demonstrated the foundations and the very contradictory course of capitalism, to such an extent that capitalism cannot exist in harmony, even after the proletariat has ceased to exist (as is the case in the current situation as a result of the action of centrism and social-democratic betrayals) as a class that tries to break the capitalist order and establish the new society. At the present time, capitalism may have temporarily amputated the only progressive force of society, the proletariat, but, both in the economic and in the political sphere, the contradictory foundations of its regime do not cease to determine the irreconcilable opposition of the monopolies, of States, the political forces that act in the interest of the conservation of their society, in particular the contrast between fascism and democracy.

Basically, the dichotomy of war/revolution means that once the establishment of a new society has been discarded as a solution to the current situation, an era of social tranquility will not appear at all, but the entire

capitalist society (including the workers) will walk towards catastrophe, a result of the contradictions inherent in this society. The problem to solve is not to attribute to the proletariat as many political attitudes as there are oppositions in the situation, linking it to such a monopoly, such a state, to such a political force, against those who oppose it, but to maintain the independence of the organization of the proletariat in struggle against all economic and political expressions of the class enemy in the world.

The transformation of capitalist society into fascism, the opposition and conflict between the factors of both regimes, must in no way alter the specific physiognomy of the proletariat. As we have pointed out on several occasions, the proletarian programmatic foundations today must be the same that Lenin published, with his work as a fraction, before the war and against opportunists of all stripes. Against the democratic State, the working class must maintain a position of struggle for its destruction and must not enter it in order to conquer positions that allow for the gradual construction of a socialist society; the revisionists who defended this position, turned the proletariat into a victim of the contradictions of the capitalist world, into cannon fodder, in 1914. Today, when situations force capitalism to proceed towards an organic transformation of its power, of the State, the problem remains the same, that is, the destruction and introduction of the proletariat into the enemy state to safeguard its democratic institutions, which places the working class at the mercy of capitalism; and where the latter must not resort to fascism, it once more makes it a victim of interimperialist conflicts and the new war.

The Marxist dichotomy of proletariat/capitalism does not mean that communists in every situation must raise the question of revolution, but that in any circumstance the proletariat must be grouped around its class positions. The question of the insurrection may arise when the historical conditions for the revolutionary struggle exist, and in the other situations it will be obligated to promote a more limited program of demands, but always on a class basis. The question of power arises only in its integral form and if the historical premises necessary for setting in motion the insurrection are missing, this question does not arise. The slogans to be put forward, then, will correspond to the elementary demands that concern the living conditions of the workers from the point of view of the defense of wages, proletarian institutions, and conquered positions (right of organization, of the press, of assembly, of demonstration, etc.).

The fascist offensive finds its *raison d'être* in an economic situation that precludes any possibility of error, and that assumes that capitalism must annihilate all the workers' organizations. In this moment, the defense of the demands of the working class directly threatens the capitalist regime, and the outbreak of defensive strikes can only be situated in the course of the communist revolution. In such a situation — as we have already said — the democratic and social-democratic parties and organizations play a leading role, but in favor of capitalism and against the proletariat, in the line that leads to fascist victory and not in the line that leads to the defense or to the triumph of the proletariat. The latter will be mobilized in the defense of democracy so that it does not fight for partial demands. The German Social Democrats call on the workers to abandon the defense of their class interests so as to not threaten the "lesser evil" government of Brüning; Bauer has done the same for Dollfuss between March 1933 and February 1934; the "Pact of Action" between socialists and centrists in France is realized because it contains (a clause inspired by Zyromski's principles) the fight for democratic freedoms, excluding strikes for economic demands.

Trotsky dedicated a chapter of his documents on the German revolution to demonstrate that the general strike has ceased to be the weapon of defense of the working class. The struggle for democracy is a powerful distraction maneuver to separate workers from their class terrain and attach them to the contradictory movements of the state in its metamorphosis from democracy to fascist state. The dichotomy fascism/antifascism thus acts in the exclusive interest of the enemy; antifascism and democracy drug the workers so that the fascists can skewer them; they daze the proletarians so that they cannot see their own class terrain. These are the central positions that the proletarians of Italy and Germany have traced with their blood. World capitalism can prepare the world war because the workers of other countries do not take inspiration from these programmatic ideas. Our fraction, inspired by these programmatic principles, continues its fight for the Italian revolution, for the international revolution.

Ottorino Perrone
(December 1934)



HOUSING CRISIS IN THE US

From June 1872 to February 1873, Engels authored a series of articles under the title *The Housing Question*. He asserted:

It is not the solution of the housing question which simultaneously solves the social question, but rather the solution of the social question, the abolition of the capitalist mode of production, which makes the solution of the housing question possible.¹

Since Engels recorded these lines, capitalism has shown again and again that it cannot adequately provide housing for the great masses of the proletariat. Indeed, the greatest periods of building housing for the working class only occurred under conditions of direct or indirect state intervention in an environment of the expansion of an ascendant phase of capitalist accumulation. Only a communist society could begin to address such a basic human need as housing.

The industrial reserve army of labor, excluded from the labor process, is also excluded from housing. Beyond that, costs of housing worldwide routinely

outstretch the ability of employed workers to pay. The global recession of 2007 began in California where the overhang of bad mortgage debt destabilized the entire global banking system. Finance capital depends on vast quantities of wealth being tied up for the long-term in real estate. In the US, this crisis came with an increase of tent cities and roving mobile home camps that despite the capitalist celebration of recovery, have not gone away. For workers, an already bad housing situation became a disaster as rents continued to sky rocket for a supply of housing that is neither growing nor getting any newer. From 2005 to 2017, the average age of housing increased from 31 to 37 years, reflecting the lack of home-building during the Great Recession. Indeed, much of the actual housing supply that workers rely on in most urban areas is considerably older than 37 years.² Choking off the supply of available housing is good for the continued accumulation of capital. An enormous population of migrant homeless has come into being as the result of local political

bosses pushing their homeless population onto other communities who are also trying to criminalize the homeless.

The UN Special Rapporteur, Philip Alston, in his report to the UN Office of the High Commissioner paid particular attention to the housing crisis in California, noting that the homeless have been effectively criminalized due to the system of anti-vagrancy laws.³ Skyrocketing real estate prices and finance capital are recreating the conditions that led to the subprime mortgage crisis. The most visible effect of this is the increasing numbers of homeless and the growth of tent cities almost ten years after the outbreak of the most recent crisis.⁴ One longitudinal study of homelessness in Birmingham, Alabama from 2010 found that most homeless men earned an average of ninety dollars a week for doing about thirty hours' worth of work.⁵ Much of the data available on homelessness in the US is antiquated, dating back to the "Great Recession" 2010 or earlier and does not reflect a situation that has been steadily worsening for decades.

Capitalist social cleansing in the cities has increasingly pushed out the working-class populations. One of the most iconic tent camps in the US is Los Angeles' Skid Row. There are hundreds of such places across the US and across the world. Cities will do homeless sweeps of downtown areas shortly before big events, so that nobody of class social importance can see the problem under their noses. The legal assault on the homeless has increased the numbers of migrant home-

less as local authorities gentrify their cities. California is the most extreme example in the US of concentrated wealth of the capitalist center surrounded by tent cities. While the inhabitants of such camps are not "without skills" the capitalist class has every reason to drive down the costs of those skills.

Many schemes have been attempted to address the problem within the system. One being the building of micro-houses in various cities in the US. In Japan, lockable sleeping pods have been employed in an attempt to address the problem of homelessness. In the US, homeless shelters have increased steadily in size and numbers since the 1980s. These have only served as repositories for the homeless.

Radical reformist approaches such as cooperative housing, rent control, squatting to own or rent striking are very appealing and such struggles day-to-day are often necessary but it is still reformist and it doesn't begin to address the problem. Ultimately, any reformist approach can only attempt to make the conditions of life under capitalism slightly more bearable for a few. Like all the other necessities of life such as food, drink, medicine, or clothing, housing remains a commodity to be bought and sold. Reforms can only show the limits of what can be achieved within capitalism but it is the task of revolutionaries to organize for the overthrow of the capitalist system with all misery that it generates.

ASm — Internationalist Workers' Group (US)

Notes

¹ Engels, Friedrich. *The Housing Question*. (International Publishers. New York, NY: 1935).

On its own admission, therefore, the bourgeois solution of the housing question has come to grief — it has come to grief owing to the antithesis of town and country. And with this we have arrived at the kernel of the problem. The housing question can only be solved when society has been sufficiently transformed for a start to be made towards abolishing the antithesis between town and country, which has been brought to an extreme point by present-day capitalist society. Far from being able to abolish this antithesis, capitalist society on the contrary is compelled to intensify it day by day. On the other hand, the first modern utopian socialists, Owen and Fourier, already correctly recognized this. In their model plans the antithesis between town and country no longer exists. Consequently, there takes place exactly the contrary of that which Herr Sax contends; it is not the solution of the housing question which simultaneously solves the social question, but only by the solution of the social question, that is, by the abolition of the capitalist mode of production, is the solution of the housing question made possible. To want to solve the housing question while at the same time desiring to maintain the modern big cities is an absurdity. The modern big cities, however, will be abolished on-

ly by the abolition of the capitalist mode of production, and when this is once on the way then there will be quite other thing to do than supplying each worker with a little house for his own possession.

In the beginning, however, each social revolution will have to take things as it finds them and do its best to get rid of the most crying evils with the means at its disposal. And we have already seen that the housing shortage can be remedied immediately by expropriating a part of the luxury dwellings belonging to the propertied classes and by quartering workers in the remaining part."

² Na Zhao. "The Aging Housing Stock. National Association of Home Builders." *Eye on Housing*. (January 2017).

³ Philip Alston. "Statement on Visit to the USA." UNOHCHR. (December 2017).

⁴ Gee, Alastair. "America's Homeless Population Rises for the First Time Since the Great Recession." *Guardian*. (December 2017).

⁵ Wasserman, J. A., & Clair, J. M. *At Home on The Street*. Lyne Rienner Publishers, Inc. 2010.

NOTES

ON THE TRANSITION TO COMMUNISM

Communist treatments of the transition between capitalist society and communism are not as numerous as one might perhaps imagine. Despite the importance of the subject, it seems many theoreticians are content to repeat or elaborate on the scarce few lines that Marx or Lenin have devoted to the subject. (Communication theory, in some of its forms at least, stands as an exception to this general trend. Yet, despite our sympathy with their general standpoint, we cannot avoid the impression that the communizers intend to do away with capitalism by shouting slogans at it.) And often, those treatments that exist are quite unconvincing. First of all, because many of them involve a very “thin” conception of communism (or socialism), as in the famous Leninist dictum that socialism is state capitalism made to serve the entire people. (Of course, we are never told how capitalism, of any sort, can serve “the people,” and who “the people” might be.) In general, this thin conception of communism is most readily apparent in Stalinist and Trotskyist texts, but the “ultraleft” is not exempt from it, as witnessed by the GIK conception of communism in its “Fundamental Principles...,” a communism where autonomous workplaces calculate “the labor-time absorbed in each product” so that each worker may have “their” share. *Salva nos, Domine!*

The other problem, shared by most of the texts in question, is an odd inability to take capitalism seriously. Capitalism is portrayed as impotent and incoherent, a pale shadow which can coexist with incipient socialism and slowly give way to it, and whose parts can be isolated and instrumentalized by the transitional, or even the communist society. The classical expression of this is the belief that statification of the capitalist economy is equal to movement toward communism, and that in the communist society instruments remarkably similar to money — whether called labor notes, certificates, or something else is irrelevant — will operate.

Modern capitalism, however, is unlike prior modes of production in that it comprises a total system: i.e., a whole whose general character and laws of motion imbue every part with nothing accidental or extraneous. From wage labor to parliamentary politics, every aspect of capitalist society is capitalist, and remains such when it is translated into an ambiguous situation. This, as well

as the immense pressures of near-universal support for capitalism and the sheer social inertia acting in its favor, means that any ambiguous or transitional situation will eventually be resolved in a capitalist manner. One might without much exaggeration question if it is possible to exit a total system (and let us note that collapse is not a possibility short of the extinction of the species; modes of production do not collapse into nothing, but rather are replaced by other arrangements of productive activity). The only remaining hope for the species is thus that a consciously-inflicted, sufficiently severe and rapid blow struck against exchange society would be capable of doing just that.

If this turns out not to be the case, the best human society can hope for is that some kind reformist might contrive to make euthanasia available on the cheap. For it is important to emphasize, against those who would have the revolution be a remote dream, that industrial society in its current form is nearing an end one way or another. Already it is impossible to stop anthropogenic climate change. Perhaps a communist society would be able to mitigate some of its effects by instituting a rapid slowdown of production, but not capitalism. Until then, capitalist society will continue to overproduce from the standpoint of markets and the planetary environment. Therefore, the choice is socialism (a return to a barbarism of sorts) or extinction.

But the aforementioned blow — the revolution or general insurrection against value and property — must then induce as complete a break as possible with capitalist forms of society. In those territories isolated from the rest of the globe, there can be no question of anything short of immediately imposing communism. Such areas no longer exist, though, apart from North Sentinel Island and a few patches of the Amazon which have as of yet not received the blessings of modern civilization. Everywhere else, crucial production processes, including the ones that are necessary for the provision of food, shelter, medicine, and infrastructure, require inputs that come from outside of the area in question. In all but the most exceptional circumstances, these inputs will have to be traded for.

There are two possibilities for a communist dictatorship trading on the world market. The first we may

broadly term an extractive approach, and involves the sale of existing objects and more abstract goods. Anticipating the second half of this text slightly, it is clear that the revolution would imply immediate abolition of most forms of property. Yet a certain distinction between the objects and territories under the control of communist dictatorship and any outside this control would remain, as well as certain rules for usufructory use. A sale, then, would in this case mean the alienation of certain objects in exchange for (foreign) currency. Depending on the area in question, there might well be lots of objects that could be alienated in this manner with little trouble, for example luxury items of the former bourgeoisie and all associated strata (this would also remove objects which have no function other than signaling social status from the community), expensive cultural objects, intellectual property, money, and savings accounts. The communist dictatorship will do things states today cannot dream of doing, because it cannot, and indeed must not, operate as a "legitimate" state.

Such an approach can only last a definite amount of time, to be sure. Yet, even if it just endures for a very short period, it provides the society in transition with a highly beneficial discontinuity in production for sale. And because this is the sole alternative, a transitional society will sooner or later have to resort to it. To most this is of course old news, since it is one of the simplest (and therefore most cogent) arguments against "socialism in one country." That said, we acknowledge that this line of argument is often taken much too far. It follows from the interdependence of various areas of the globe via a world market that, even in the revolutionary area under communist dictatorship, some production for sale must exist. It does not at all follow from this, however, that one hundred percent of production must be for sale, or that internal markets still need to exist.

In fact, apart from this production for sale, there is no reason why production and distribution should not, immediately, be organized so that a scientific social plan based on human need regulates both. Then, instead of a mostly exchange economy giving way, through some ill-defined process, to the planned system of provisioning that characterizes communism, the general structure of the communist system of provisioning will already be in place, albeit deformed by the necessity of participating in the world market. Needless to say, these distortions will not be insignificant. But as the revolutionary zone expands and brings more resources under its direct administrative control they will become less significant, until they cease to exist altogether with the fall of the last holdouts of capitalism.

Now, let us change track here slightly and consider the experience of the individual member of the society in transition — a person who perhaps labors but is no longer a worker or proletarian. One of two things will be true: either the choice of whether to labor and, if so, in what capacity, will be a personal prerogative, or else individuals will have to fulfill a labor obligation, imposed as much as possible on all available members of society equally. In the latter case, compulsion will be open and direct. We know that, even in communist circles, there is a tendency to prefer the indirect compulsion of the market — the vaunted "incentives" of bourgeois economics. Yet this indicative of nothing but the continued influence of market ideology. Direct, open compulsion is of course far from pleasant, but it is a sharp pain that disappears quickly. Market compulsion and competition on the other hand represent constant psychological and organic stress. It stands to reason that the only incentives during the transitional phase will be incentives for market fetishists to emigrate.

Members of the society in transition will have access to goods regardless whether or how much they labor. The suggestions in the *Gothakritik* must be rejected. First of all because a system of labor vouchers, where goods are received in proportion to the time spent laboring, would not lead to any development of the productive forces, only Stakhanovism. Second, because there is no need to further develop the productive forces, at least in the metropolitan regions where revolution will most likely to break out. For the principle of distribution, we see nothing else as adequate except the classic "to each according to his needs."

Of course, the society in transition will not be able to fulfill every errant desire on the part of its members (neither will communist society), and at first it will not be possible to fulfill every genuine need either, particularly when the necessity of winding down production is taken into account. But it will be possible, at any rate, to prioritize the most pressing needs first, and to organize a system of rationing which would allocate to everyone necessary goods, based on culture or circumstances of life (as such, it will not allocate cow's milk to the Chinese, or *casu marzu* to the sane), so that the elderly and those with compromised immune systems will receive priority treatment when it comes to the administration of flu vaccines, the physical laborer will receive priority in the allocation of calories (compared with the clerical laborer), and so on. These goods would of course be given out for personal use, but would not become the possessions of those who are using them. Nor would it be possible to accumulate them.

Basing distribution on need will, we think, also help solve the problem of the social position of technicians, specialists, and whatnot. In the immediate aftermath of revolution, not everyone will be able to perform tasks associated with management and planning. After a time this may be remedied by an extensive and sustained skill transfer program. Yet the immediate danger remains of a stratum of specialists setting itself up as a privileged caste. But that possibility is considerably less likely if this new caste bases its privilege not on the premise that it deserves more (since the nexus between allocation and compensation is broken), but that it *needs* more.

At first, it will be possible to meet some of these needs from the preexisting mass of goods under the direct control of the communist dictatorship. Following the insurrection, redistribution will undoubtedly be an important mechanism. In time, however, it will become necessary to produce more vital goods. Production will be planned, in mostly material terms — the production of so many tons of wheat necessitates the production of so many tons of fertilizer, water, and so on — by a “central” organ of society, that is, one whose full range of competence coincides with the entire territory under the communist dictatorship. (In the case that there are several disconnected territories under this dictatorship, such that communication and movement of goods between them are difficult, there would then presumably be multiple dictatorships and multiple organs that carry out directive planning, though these would not take the antiquated form of the nation-states, and would strive to merge as soon as circumstances permit.) Organs of lesser scope, whether sectoral or local, could not take into account the interdependence of modern industrial production, and their separate existence would lead to forms of exchange and enterprise independence reappearing. There would of course be other organs of the dictatorship, as well as less permanent groups, but this exceeds the scope of the current text.

Labor-time, to the extent that it would figure at all into planning calculations, would simply be one of many inputs considered, and administrative organs would not aim to minimize labor-time expenditure, as is so often proposed, because the resulting laws of motion would then be essentially the same as the laws of motion that govern capitalism. Besides, it is not probable that labor will be scarce, even in the period of transition, since not only would many jobs become superfluous, from maids and nannies to cashiers and finance ministers, but with the end of market discipline, labor will itself become an expression of the human personality, the prime “need” for the new man.

Finally, we can briefly sketch how trade between a communist dictatorship and a world market will occur. Production of trade goods would proceed along roughly the same lines as production of other goods, even if these are only necessary because of the realities of the world market. Since the revolutionary zone presumably would have no currency of its own, either because such currency was never necessary to begin with, or because the short time in which currency is issued will be hyperinflationary to pay whatever debts might hinder access to the world market, it would set its prices in whichever “foreign” currency proves most convenient. And to an extent it could set those prices at will, administratively, since there would be no costs of production. We are talking, then, of goods which have a price, but not value in the full sense since no abstract labor is embodied in them. This will enable the revolutionary dictatorship to consistently undercut other sellers. Contracts drawn up will not be for single purchases, we imagine, since these are more affected by the anarchy of the market. Rather, the revolutionary dictatorship and the buyers or sellers with whom it engages with would conclude a contract for continuing provision of goods at fixed prices, for at least one planning cycle. Then it will be possible for the planning organs to take the quantity of the trade goods to be produced as fixed and proceed with calculating the total quantity of producer goods, raw materials, and necessary labor accordingly. Nonetheless, all these plans will at least in part be monetary and in that regard will not be communist.

But this production of trade goods — and here we apologize if we are belaboring the point — no matter how significant its impact on the overall system, will be a minor sector of a much broader communal, planned network of provisioning, an irritant of sorts, even if it is necessary in the short term. As soon as the opportunity presents itself, the organism will expel the irritant. The revolutionary zone thus expands strategically, targeting crucial resources. Elsewhere other uprisings over time will break out. New areas can then join the communist dictatorship. Whatever trade-good production remains will be purposefully wound down as the dictatorship, in an increasingly better negotiating position, thus imposes harsher and harsher terms of exchange. Finally, with the end of the last vestiges of the world market, the need for any production for exchange passes, and the first directive plan is drawn up in exclusively material terms. After a short period of transition, human society enters integral communism.

Kontra Klasa (Croatia)



Photo: May Day parade in Tel Aviv, featuring the profiles of Lenin and Stalin (1947)

ZIONISM AND MARXISM

NATIONALISM, INTERNATIONALISM, AND HISTORY

Few topics attract such controversy as contemporary Israel. No other ethnoreligious conflict polarizes political opinion so completely, nor commands the same level of international interest, as that between the self-styled Jewish state and the large population of stateless Arabs which it continues to displace. In recent years, turmoil elsewhere throughout the Middle East almost eclipsed the decades-old dispute. But the massacre of unarmed protestors¹ by IDF snipers along the Gaza border over the past few months, callously euphemized as “clashes” or “confrontations” in the Western press,² has sparked outrage around the world.

Outrage seldom leads to insight, though, much less effective action. This is not to deny that Israel’s policies are outrageous, of course, since they undoubtedly are. Rather, it is simply to acknowledge that indignation is not enough to adequately grasp a problem — let alone arrive at a satisfactory solution. A more dispassionate approach is thus needed. Leon Trotsky liked to invoke Spinoza’s dictum, explaining that his objective was “not to deride, bewail, or detest human actions, but instead to understand them.”³ Here the materialist method of Marx proves well suited to the task, insofar as it allows human actions to be viewed in their concrete historical development, unclouded by moral prejudice or maudlin sentimentality.

While not quite neutral Weberian *Wertfreiheit*, this should at least prevent snap judgments and one-sided denunciations. Zionism is a particularly germane object of analysis, moreover, for it singlehandedly throws into relief a pair of questions which have long preoccupied Marxists: 1) the “Jewish question” and 2) the “national question.” Jewish nationalism, not just Zionism but also its Bundist nemesis, can then be related to the trend of Marxian internationalism in the workers’ movement of Eastern Europe. From there, the history of the present strife between Jews and Arabs in the Middle East may be broken into three consecutive phases. Starting with the *Yishuv* or Jewish settlement in post-Ottoman Palestine under British colonial rule, through the foundation of modern Israel in 1948, up to its eventual emergence as a regional superpower in 1967, the article will move in chronological order.

In what follows, then, the argument is divided into two main sections, each divided into three subsections, with a conclusion at the end.

I. Questions Jewish and national

A. Marxism and the Jewish question

1492 marks a watershed in the prehistory of capitalist society, and is relevant to this investigation for a couple of reasons. First of all, because it was when Columbus stumbled upon the Americas, hoping to find a shorter sea route to India. Second, because the joint monarchs Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabella I of Castile issued the Granada Edict on March 31 that same year, mandating the Jews’ expulsion from Spain. What Marx in *Capital* dubbed “primitive accumulation” involved not just racialized chattel slavery across the Atlantic and indiscriminate slaughter of indigenous peoples, but also the mass exodus of Spanish Jews.⁴ Loren Goldner has highlighted the significance of the “blood purity” laws instituted thereafter to later ideas about race, although for the time these “remained enmeshed with medieval conceptions.”⁵ Despite not being identical to capitalism proper — the specific relations of which took root in the soil of British agriculture — primitive accumulation nevertheless represented a necessary precondition for its materialization.

The so-called “Jewish question” first began to take shape during the period of bourgeois revolution. Jews flocked to Amsterdam following the 1572-1585 Dutch Revolt, where they were at last permitted to exercise their religion from 1622 on. Many resettled in England at the invitation of Oliver Cromwell circa 1653. Finally, French Jews were granted citizenship and full equality under the law by the official decree of September 27, 1791. Stanislas Marie Adélaïde, Comte de Clermont-Tonnerre, offered the universalist doctrine: “Everything for the Jews as citizens, but nothing as a nation!”⁶ (Less than three years later, 16 Pluviôse Year II [February 4, 1794], France would extend similar rights to its black populace by abolishing “slavery among the negroes in all our colonies.”)⁷ Certain provisions were rolled back by Napoleon, but for the most part the Jews benefited immensely from his conquests. Restoration after 1815 meant going back to pre-1789 strictures for all unconverted Jews, but legal emancipation gradually spread in most states over the course of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century. Wherever the *ancien régime* fell, Jewish communities in Europe won gains hitherto unknown in the diaspora.

Until 1848, conversion was nevertheless required for any Jew wanting to participate in modern political life.⁸ (Marx's friend, the poet Heinrich Heine, famously quipped that baptism was his "admission ticket" [*Entrée-billet*] to European culture).⁹ Already by the early 1840s, however, astute commentators discerned that the Jewish question was not religious but secular in essence.¹⁰ For Marx, it was merely a symptom of a much larger question: namely, the "social question" posed by industrial capitalism and its concomitant proletarianization of society. He saw the Jew as a cipher for capital, representative of the money-economy par excellence, untied to any land.¹¹ This was more due to "the real position of the Jews in civil society today" than cultural differences of diet, costume, or confession.¹² Since they found themselves in this predicament wherever these productive relations prevailed, the only answer was to overthrow the entire existing order. Or, as Marx put it, "emancipation of the Jews into humanity... [should] not be conceived as a special task for the Jews, but as a general practical task of abolishing the inhumanity of present-day society."¹³

In the second half of the nineteenth century, however, alongside numerous improvements to the Jewish lot, popular antipathy steadily gathered force in Western Europe.¹⁴ Even Enlightenment philosophers such as Kant and Fichte, both ardent supporters of the French Revolution, described the Jews as "vampires of society" [*Vampyre der Gesellschaft*] or else a sort of "state within the state" [*Staat im Staat*].¹⁵ Now with the unification of Germany in 1871, and with the advent of the Third Republic in France shortly thereafter, civic and romantic nationalism gave way to "biological" racism inspired by Arthur de Gobineau and groups such as Wilhelm Marr's Antisemitic League.¹⁶ German and French Jews, by then largely assimilated, were disturbed by what they saw as a medieval throwback or sudden recrudescence of by-gone hatreds.¹⁷ Put differently, they failed to recognize its truly unprecedented character. When Engels tried to address the problem of rising antisemitism in 1890, he likewise dismissed it as "the reaction of moribund feudal strata against modern bourgeois society." Antisemitism's existence in a region, he added, "is proof there is not yet enough capital there."¹⁸

Lenin followed Engels closely in this regard,¹⁹ insisting that antisemitism was anachronistic (a "residue" or "survival" of serfdom) or bound to soon die out ("this ignorance is passing away, as people's eyes are opening up").²⁰ Trotsky was convinced that Jews would sooner or later be absorbed by their respective host nations, integrated into the wider population seamlessly. By the

1930s, though, this no longer seemed a likely prospect. "Earlier in life," he admitted in a 1937 interview with the *Jewish Daily Forward*, "I leaned toward the view that Jews around the world would assimilate into the cultures they lived among, and the Jewish question would thereby disappear in a quasi-automatic fashion. Historical development over the last quarter of a century has not confirmed this perspective. Decaying capitalism has everywhere exacerbated nationalism, a part of which is antisemitism, so that the question looms largest in the most developed capitalist state in Europe, Germany."²¹ One of Trotsky's followers, the Belgian revolutionary Abram Leon, claimed "the decay of capitalism renders the Jewish question insoluble within its purview."²² Just two years after this line was written, Leon was sent to the ovens at Auschwitz.

Following revelations of the Judeocide, intellectuals revisited the question.²³ Besides Trotsky, none of them had foreseen "the physical extermination of the Jews."²⁴ Many Marxists found it difficult to account for the catastrophe that had befallen European Jewry within the framework of traditional histomat. Some, like the critical theorists Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, now came to see antisemitism as an effect of modern bourgeois relations, rather than a precapitalist holdover: "As bearers of this new mode of life from country to country, Jews earned the resentment of those who suffered under that system."²⁵ The late Moishe Postone explained in a 2010 conversation that in the antisemitic worldview, "the abstract domination of capital is personified as the Jews."²⁶ In a less academic vein, others have reached the same conclusion, noting the pervasive tendency to "personalize capital" across the political spectrum.²⁷ Resolving the Jewish question is therefore bound up with the social question as a whole, still others point out, as "the perpetuation of antisemitism goes 'hand-in-glove' with the continuation of capitalist methods of production."²⁸

Zionism promised respite for the Jews, a return to the ancestral homeland, somewhere they could finally live without fear of persecution.²⁹ Nationhood cannot deliver on this promise, though: at best, it just kicks the can down the road; at worst, it complicates their plight further.³⁰ "Under conditions of US imperial decline, the ruling class might use antisemitism to save themselves, thus fulfilling Rosa Luxemburg's prophecy that Zionism only provides the chance for a concentrated pogrom," warns Hillel Ticktin.³¹ Here the national question enters in. But the *Nationalitätenfrage* is not strictly coextensive with the *Judenfrage*, despite their shared timeframe, so it must be treated separately.

B. Marxism and the national question

German rabble-rousers in the past were kept apart by the tiny states in which they lived. It was clear to conspirators that no effective blow could be struck under these circumstances... Now some draw the correct conclusion, from a revolutionary angle, and direct their eyes to the union of Germany. This evil idea must be conquered.

— Klemens von Metternich, 1819

Various dates have been proposed for the origin of the “nation-form,” its appearance as a distinct unit of ethnic, linguistic, and cultural affiliation.³² Bordiga held the Hellenic city-states, the Macedonian Empire, and Imperial Rome to be ancient equivalents of the modern nation, drawing upon Engels’ *Origin of the Family, Private Property, and the State* (1884), though there are doubtless limits to this analogy. Kingdoms and principalities throughout Europe under feudalism were by contrast subnational, based on personal bonds of lordship, vasalage, and enfeoffment. These were held together by oaths of fealty, hierarchical obligations to those further up the chain. Christendom during this period was supranational, linked by a common ritual stretching over many lands under the Latin tongue.³³ It was the decline of dynastic realms and centralized religious authorities, along with the rise of print media, that lent nationalism such appeal as an alternative source of solidarity. Older loyalties were thus slowly supplanted by these newer “imagined communities.”³⁴

Nations in the narrow sense of the word entailed unitary domestic markets, removal of feudal privileges, and standardized grammatical conventions — in short, the consolidation of bourgeois rule. According to Bordiga’s timeline, at least, this occurred sometime during the eighteenth century.³⁵ Eric Hobsbawm, the Marxist historian, suggested 1780 as the definitive turning-point, around the time that French republicans eschewed the *États généraux* (which privileged the clergy and nobility) in favor of the *Assemblée nationale* (representing “the whole people”).³⁶ Patriotic symbols came to predominate, as national flags replaced papal insignias and heraldic coats of arms. Hobsbawm underscored the radical novelty of the nationalist idea, tracing its subsequent trajectory over the nineteenth century. 1848 may have seemed like the dawn of an international revolution to Marx and Engels, but it was popularly remembered as the “Springtime of Nations” [*Printemps des peuples*], or the awakening of “smaller nationalities.” Forty years on, with the founding of the Second International, debates about the national question acquired a special urgency among socialist parties.³⁷

Sadly for their immediate disciples, neither Marx nor Engels ever elaborated a systematic response to this issue. Marx had mostly stressed the proletariat’s intrinsic internationalism. “While the bourgeoisie of each nation retains national interests, modern industry has created a class which in all nations has the same interest and for which nationality is already dead,” he jotted in an 1845 manuscript.³⁸ Engels had reasoned similarly in an article published the year before: “The proletarians of every country have one and the same interest, one and the same enemy, and one and the same struggle. By their nature, they are free from national narrowness; their disposition is essentially humanitarian, anti-nationalist... Only proletarians can destroy nationality.”³⁹ In their co-authored 1847 *Manifesto*, Marx and Engels once again reiterated that “modern industrial labor, modern subjection to capital, the same in England as in France, in America as in Germany, has stripped the proletarian of every trace of ‘national’ character.”⁴⁰ A few pages later, their well-known retort: “Communists are reproached for desiring to abolish nationality, but the working class has no country to begin with.”⁴¹

Poland and Ireland would seem notable exceptions to this rule, seeing as Marx and Engels gave priority to national struggles in those countries. Yet their rationale for doing so was highly specific in each case: in the case of Polish independence,⁴² it was intended to disrupt the reactionary bloc of Prussia, Austria, and above all Russia; in the case of Irish independence, it was intended to loosen England’s stranglehold over the rest of the globe. Russia and England had been bastions of counterrevolution throughout the nineteenth century, outposts of stability while Europe elsewhere descended into chaos. Franz Mehring, one of Marx’s first biographers, wrote: “Just as Marx regarded the Polish question as a lever for overthrowing Russian dominance, so he regarded the Irish question as a lever for overthrowing English world dominance.”⁴³ Hence for Marx and Engels, the rallying-cry “Long live Poland!” meant no more than “Death to the Holy Alliance!”⁴⁴ Similarly, they believed that liberating Ireland would open the floodgates of popular unrest in England.⁴⁵ Everywhere their stance on particular national questions was subordinated to the question of international revolution.

Generalizing from these examples is tricky, though, especially given Marx and Engels’ deprecatory attitude toward the aspirations of Southern Slavs,⁴⁶ “nonhistoric peoples” [*geschichtslosen Völker*]⁴⁷ whose independence would supposedly strengthen tsarist Russia.⁴⁸ Nevertheless, the Marxists of the Second International undertook to rearrange these scattered statements, bestow-

ing upon them greater coherence than they originally possessed. As the Social-Democratic movement grew, tensions arose between workers from different ethnic and religious backgrounds. It should come as no surprise, then, that the national question was posed most acutely in vast multinational states such as the Russian, Ottoman, and Austro-Hungarian Empires. The theories that came out of the debates around the turn of the century were of uneven quality, but can be divided into three major strands: 1) those of Renner, Bauer, and the Austromarxists; 2) those of Luxemburg, Pannekoek, and Trotsky before October 1917; and 3) those of Lenin, Stalin, and the Bolsheviks.⁴⁹ Rosa Luxemburg's pointed criticisms of national self-determination will be bracketed for now.

Karl Renner's brief 1899 pamphlet *State and Nation* portrayed the issue of multiple nationalities coexisting within a single state as a purely administrative concern, to be addressed by "canton councils," governing bodies that would handle education and cultural affairs.⁵⁰ Otto Bauer's treatise on *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy* (1908) featured a far more impressive theoretical apparatus, of a neo-Kantian cast, providing much richer descriptions of national character and related phenomena. But its prescriptions were practically indistinguishable from Renner's. "Each nation ought to independently satisfy its own cultural needs," he argued, "while the state limits itself to protecting those interests that are a matter of indifference."⁵¹ But such proposals had very little application outside of Austria-Hungary, observed Pannekoek.⁵² He accused Bauer of pandering to cheap patriotic sentiment, of trying to "win over the working class to socialism by acting more nationalistic than the capitalists." Pannekoek, whose views more or less paralleled those of Luxemburg, derided this tactic as "national opportunism."⁵³ Lenin was evidently quite impressed with this formulation, citing it in a 1914 talk next to the underlined comment: "Bauer's basic error is his refined nationalism."⁵⁴

When it came to his own theorization of national questions, Lenin exhibited the same basic ambivalence as Marx: on the one hand, unswerving internationalism; on the other, qualified endorsement of movements for national liberation. "Marxism cannot be reconciled with nationalism," he declared late in 1913, "whether of the 'most just,' 'purest,' most refined and civilized brand. In place of all forms of nationalism, Marxism advances internationalism — i.e., the amalgamation of all nations in a higher unity."⁵⁵ And again a few months later: "Class-conscious workers fight against every kind of nationalism, both the crude, violent Black Hundred nationalism,

and the 'refined' nationalism that preaches splitting up the workers' cause according to their nationality."⁵⁶ Still, Lenin endorsed the right to national self-determination insofar as it might destabilize the international capitalist order, with revolt in the colonial periphery triggering a revolution in the metropolitan core. "The dialectics of history are such that the smaller nations, so powerless as an independent factor in the global struggle against imperialism, can still play a part as one of the ferments or bacilli which prepares the *real* anti-imperialist power, the international socialist proletariat, to burst onto the scene," he contended.⁵⁷

Luxemburg disagreed with this gamble, which she felt made for strange bedfellows — "alliances with any Tom, Dick, and Harry [mit Krethi und Plethi]"⁵⁸ — and which she suspected would not lead to communism. For better or worse, the sordid history of national liberation fronts in the twentieth century seems to have vindicated her on this score. Yet Lenin's contention did not seem so farfetched at the time. Paul Mattick would later remark in 1959 that "the postwar renaissance of nationalism contradicts both Lenin and Luxemburg on the 'national question,' since the era of anticolonial uprisings is still not over, but these no longer serve world-revolutionary ends."⁵⁹ Either way, the national question converges at this point with the Jewish question on the subject of Jewish nationalism.

C. Jewish nationalism and European socialism

Between 1881 and 1945 or so, the spirit of nationalism gained ground amongst Jews living in Eastern Europe. Unlike their cousins in the West, who were fairly well-integrated but numerically fewer, they had been fenced off into a contiguous urban ghetto known as the Pale of Settlement. Almost a world unto itself, it contained all the socioeconomic strata found in more developed nations: "a financial bourgeoisie as elsewhere, but without much influence; below that a middling bourgeoisie, intellectual and commercial; and finally the vast Jewish proletariat."⁶⁰ Nationalist ideology, which had followed Bonaparte across the Elbe in 1812, began to seize the consciousness of the Pale's five million Yiddish-speaking inhabitants as Russia approached the *fin-de-siècle*. The proximate cause for this newfound sense of ethnic solidarity was the wave of pogroms that broke out following the assassination of Tsar Aleksandr II.⁶¹ Intermittent anti-Jewish riots would continue over the next four decades, reaching a crescendo around 1902-1903. The government response to the pogroms could range anywhere from passive indifference to active incitement as the years wore on.⁶²

East European Jewry during this period was also favorably disposed to socialist ideas. Of course, the most significant segment of this population was the seething mass of socialistically-inclined workers. So there was a great deal of overlap and crosspollination between Jewish nationalism and Marxian internationalism across the region. Historians hold that these ideological tendencies, which pulled in opposite directions and yet were held simultaneously by many working-class Jews, sprang from the same source: the breakneck pace of industrial modernization.⁶³ Modern capitalist production corroded the foundations of traditional life in the Pale, which cleared the way for cultural renewal.⁶⁴ Rudiments of organized labor soon arose, or were imported from the West, as contact was made with mainstream Social-Democracy. Jewish proletarians adopted its party and trade union structure, learning the latest slogans and rhetoric from their Western comrades. When nationalist ideas began to permeate these milieux during the 1890s, however, they were met with harsh rebuke by internationalists in the socialist movement (many of them Jews), who saw such ideas as divisive.⁶⁵

Despite the steady barrage of criticism, rival strains of nationalism kept up their pursuit of Jewish workers, recruiting from one another's ranks. Two strains stood out: Bundism and socialist Zionism.⁶⁶ Bundism was the worldview of the General Union of Yiddish Workers in Lithuania, Poland, and Russia, otherwise known as the Bund. Initially it promoted legal equality for Jews across borders, but later championed "national-cultural autonomy" à la Bauer. From the outset, Bundists considered themselves part of the Russian Social-Democratic Labor Party, but their relationship was always fraught.⁶⁷ Labor Zionism was the worldview of the "Workers of Zion," otherwise known as Poale Zion. Poale Zion consistently advocated full political sovereignty for Jews within fixed geographic borders. Although it worked alongside other socialists, Poale Zion was its own party.⁶⁸

Zionism originated with Theodor Herzl as a nation-building initiative in 1896, but its *longue durée* stretches back further. Moses Hess, widely seen as a precursor to Herzl, announced his "solution to the Jewish problem" as early as 1862, whereby the Jews would repatriate to Palestine.⁶⁹ He had been a mentor to Marx, Engels, and other Young Hegelians two decades earlier; Alexander Ruge nicknamed him "the communist rabbi."⁷⁰ Engels fucked Hess' wife in September 1846, causing them to fall out.⁷¹ Jean Longuet, Marx's French grandson, voiced his support for the Zionist enterprise in 1918,⁷² praising Lenin and Woodrow Wilson for their spirited defense of nations' "right to self-determination."⁷³ Borochov, the

progenitor of Marxist Zionism, attended one of Lenin's Belgian lectures shortly before the Great War, lingering afterward to pick his brain on the Jewish and national questions.⁷⁴ Unsurprisingly, the Bolshevik leader thought Borokhov was confused. David Ben-Gurion, who took over the centrist faction of Poale Zion after Borokhov's death up to his tenure as Prime Minister of Israel, reportedly told Isaac Deutscher in 1958 that "there was one man who could have saved the whole world, but alas, he missed his opportunity: Lenin."⁷⁵ (Allegedly Ben-Gurion boasted of having read all forty Russian volumes of Lenin's work).⁷⁶

At least in Eastern Europe, formal Bundist organizations preceded their Zionist counterparts by almost a decade.⁷⁷ Whereas the Bund formed in October 1897, just a couple months after the inaugural World Zionist Congress convened in Basel, Poale Zion only formed in March 1906. Vladimir Medem, a prominent spokesman for the former, proclaimed that the Jews were a nation unto themselves, but preferred institutional to territorial autonomy.⁷⁸ Confronting Trotsky at the 1903 meeting of the RSDLP, Medem asked him whether he was a Jew or a Russian. "I'm a Marxist," Trotsky immediately shot back.⁷⁹ Medem was friendly with many Zionists in Swiss exile, but distrusted Herzl and was underwhelmed by Weizmann's oratorical abilities.⁸⁰ Still, he got along with them far better than with his socialist contemporaries. For instance, Medem despised Lenin, calling him "a born dictator," while Trotsky was "Lenin's cudgel" and Luxemburg was a spiteful bitch.⁸¹ Like Poale Zion, the Bund was unsure if it should align with the fragments of the Second International or join the Comintern after 1918. The majority of Bundists chose the first option, slouching toward reformism in the interwar period.⁸² Oddly, the proletarian Zionists proved far more radical during this stretch of time.

Poale Zion's tempestuous growth after the revolution of 1905 caught nearly everyone off guard, not least of all the Bundists.⁸³ By contrast with their competitors, Borokhovites were adamant in their insistence on "territorialism" — the notion that Jews required a physical homeland in which they could be sovereign. In an early programmatic piece, "The National Question and Class Struggle," Borokhov emphasized that "the fundamental prerequisite of production is the territory."⁸⁴ For members of Poale Zion, the only reason Palestine appeared a viable location was the spontaneous Jewish migration to the area from 1896 to 1906. "Our Zionism is not a matter of principle," read their charter, "because it has nothing to do with old traditions."⁸⁵ Eretz Israel eventually became more to its platform.⁸⁶ Joseph Roth, the

Austrian-Jewish author, thus related in one of his more journalistic pieces:

The only consciously proletarian East European Jew is the Jewish worker. He tends to espouse socialism of various hues, and is thereby less of a Jew than his bourgeois or semiproletarian coreligionists. Less of a Jew, even if he is a Jewish nationalist and Zionist. But the most nationalistic Jewish socialist is the Poale Zionist, who aspires toward a socialist state in Palestine. Many Jewish workers belong to the socialist or communist parties of the countries where they live, making them Polish, Russian, or Romanian socialists. Social issues invariably take precedence over national ones. “National self-determination” is an intellectual luxury for a group that has nothing more serious to worry about... Yet if any nation is justified in seeing the “national question” as essential to its survival, it is surely the Jews... forced to become a “nation” by the nationalism of others.⁸⁷

Zionism differed very little in this respect from diasporic nationalisms at the time. WEB Du Bois, the father of pan-Africanism, speculated that “the African movement means to black Americans what the Zionist movement must mean to Jews.”⁸⁸ Regardless, Borochov barely lived to see the revolutions of 1917. After he succumbed to pneumonia in December, the bulk of Poale Zion signed up with the communists.

In recent years, Bundism has been made the object of a curious nostalgia. Leftists, who are always eager to signal support for the nationalist strivings of historically oppressed peoples, want a form of Jewish nationalism without either the body count or strategic US backing of Zionism. The Bund seems to represent a “path not taken,” a readymade alternative to the present (albeit one lost to time, which perhaps just enhances its allure). Samuel Farber thus wistfully recounts “Lessons of the Bund,” extolling its doctrine of *doikayt*. “Hereness,” as it roughly translates, maintained that the right place for Jews was where they already lived.⁸⁹ “Bundists believed in fighting where Jews were, not escaping to colonize someone else’s land,” another writes, accentuating their difference from the Zionists.⁹⁰ Marxists a hundred years ago, who regularly encountered both, did not find them so dissimilar. Georgii Plekhanov joked that the Bundists were “Zionists suffering from seasickness [сионисты, боящиеся морской качки].”⁹¹ Plekhanov’s protégé, Lenin, undoubtedly concurred with this judgment, repeatedly blasting their motion to segregate schools and workers’ clubs by nationality.⁹² Very few sober and evenhanded retrospectives have been written on the Bund; most of them fall prey to romanticization. Quixotic nationalism offers an easy escape.⁹³

Obviously, this brief sketch does not exhaust either Bundism or Zionism. Kombundists, who received their orders from Moscow, formed a sizable minority within the Bund. Zionism also included more moderate representatives like Weizmann, to say nothing of hardliners such as Jabotinsky. Weizmann was likewise familiar with “Plekhanov and the arrogant Trotsky” from Switzerland, and was once mistaken for Lenin in Capri.⁹⁴ Jabotinsky came across Borochov in 1913, and was upbraided for “militant Hebraism.”⁹⁵ Anyway, both Bundists and Zionists — not to mention Jewish communists! — fought bravely against Nazism: Bernard Goldstein and Marek Edelman belonged to the Bund; Simcha Rotem, Yitzhak Zuckerman, and Emanuel Ringelblum to left Poale Zion. It is frivolous to tally casualties of each group, especially when the real point is that Bundism and socialist Zionism were both nationalist deviations from revolutionary Marxism. Today they are relevant only as past instances of community self-defense (somewhat akin to the Black Panther Party in 1960s America).⁹⁶

II. Arabs and Jews in Palestine

A. Palestine in the shadow of imperialism and fascism

The geopolitical landscape of the contemporary Middle East is incomprehensible without knowing the last hundred years of imperialist maneuvers. Early in the twentieth century, most of the region was still ruled by the Ottomans, although the French and British had made substantial inroads. World war hastened the sultanate’s downfall, leading to the establishment of a “mandate” system, in which France and Britain would oversee the territories relinquished. Problematically, however, both powers had previously given guarantees to the subject peoples then under Istanbul’s thumb. Hoping to weaken their wartime foe, a series of negotiations were rapidly conducted: first, the McMahon-Hussein correspondence of 1915-1916; next, the Sykes-Picot agreement of 1916; last, the Balfour declaration of 1917.⁹⁷ Virtually all of the persistent ethnoreligious conflicts that one hears about in the region to this day — between Jews and Arabs in Israel/Palestine, Sunnis and Shi’ites in Yemen and Iraq, Christians and Muslims in Lebanon, Kurds and Persians-Turks-Arabs in Kurdistan/Iran-Turkey-Syria-Iraq — can be traced back to how the Middle East was carved up around 1920.

Balfour’s statement approving “a national home for the Jewish people” effectively rescinded all the promises made previously to the Arabs. Mutual mistrust soon set in between these two communities, as ethnic hostilities

spilled out onto the streets. Settlers continued to pour in to the *Yishuv* from Europe and America, undeterred by news of violence. Jews from *Hashomer Hatzair* ("Young Watchmen") began emigrating en masse in 1919-1920, bringing a collectivist ethos from Galicia.⁹⁸ "Zionism may well have started as a bourgeois movement, but its only guarantors are young *Poale Zion* proletarians," reflected the antiwar author Arnold Zweig in 1920. "For all that is built, worked for, and created in Palestine is done by those molded by this character."⁹⁹ On May Day 1921, the newly-formed Palestinian Communist Party (PKP) sought to capitalize on the rapid influx of wage-laborers to the region:

The Jewish worker has not come to persecute you, but live with you, and is ready to fight on your side against the capitalist enemy, be it Jew, Arab, or British. If capitalists incite you against the Jewish worker, it is in order to protect themselves from you... You cannot fall into this trap; the Jewish worker, soldier of the revolution, has come to offer you his hand as a comrade in resisting British, Jewish, and Arab capitalists. We call on you to fight against the rich who are selling their land and their country to foreigners. Down with British and French bayonets; down with Arab and foreign capitalists!¹⁰⁰

With the defeat of the proletarian revolution by 1923, or its containment to Russia, the internationalist spirit of these lines ebbed away. Beginning already in 1924-1925, the overwhelmingly Jewish PKP pivoted away from the emphasis on combined class struggle towards uncritical embrace of anticolonial Arab nationalism. *Poale Zion*'s Palestine branch meanwhile remained a multitudinous organization until the end of the twenties, despite splits in the movement elsewhere. Yet its reformist majority followed an increasingly exclusivist line, before breaking off to become Mapai in 1930.¹⁰¹ *Kibbutzim* sometimes hired Arab farmhands, but prohibited their membership. Non-Jews were not allowed in the General Federation of Hebrew Workers, or *Histadrut*, either.¹⁰² *Hashomer Hatzair* was the only labor Zionist group that put forth any effort to cultivate relations with its Arab neighbors. Until it dissolved into Mapam in 1947, it was alone in pushing for a binational state.

Revisionism, an irredentist current within Zionism, began to amass adherents after the bloodshed of 1929. Named for its demand that the mandatory borders be revised to encompass "greater Israel" [*Eretz Yisrael Ha-shlema*], the chief proponent of this view was Vladimir Jabotinsky. Encouraging his ultranationalist countrymen to march on sites sacred to both Muslims and Jews, in a carefully calculated provocation, he managed to goad Arabs into brutally attacking the protesters. Antisemitic

incidents took place across the country, with full-fledged pogroms occurring in Hebron and Safed. Fatalities were about equal, as the British colonial military suppressed the riots and the Jewish paramilitary Haganah [Defense] exacted reprisals.¹⁰³ Jabotinsky's position was buttressed by fears of a forthcoming Arab backlash, which he used to portray Weizmann as weak (forcing him to resign as president of the Zionist Organization). When mounting tensions again led to war in 1936, Jabotinsky took it as an occasion to crack down on the Marxists and various other "traitors" to the Israeli nation. Opposition within the *Yishuv* was intolerable to an authoritarian personality such as Jabotinsky.¹⁰⁴

Indeed, in his blistering 1937 polemic against "The Brownshirts of Zionism," the council communist Abner Barnatan did not hesitate to call Jabotinsky a "fascist."¹⁰⁵ (This was not such an uncommon comparison in those days; Ben-Gurion would call Jabotinsky "Vladimir Hitler" to his face). Barnatan had just narrowly avoided capture at the hands of the Nazis, and was staying in Tel Aviv as the Great Revolt began. Jabotinsky's revisionist maxim, "Judea will be reborn in fire and blood," had a distinctly Bismarckian ring to it, and he openly admired Mussolini. Hence Barnatan was hardly the only observer to notice the similarities; Albert Einstein wrote an open letter to the *New York Times* in 1948, taking aim at the terrorist disciple of Jabotinsky, Irgun's Menachem Begin. "Lately Begin speaks of freedom, democracy, anti-imperialism," wrote Einstein, "but not that long ago he preached the fascist doctrine of the state..."¹⁰⁶ Within three decades, however, Begin was Israel's prime minister. Primo Levi, who was quite far from an anti-Zionist (he saw Israel as a "lifeboat" for the Jews),¹⁰⁷ added his voice to a chorus charging Begin with fascism in 1982.¹⁰⁸ Comparisons of Zionism with Nazism — i.e., the unimaginative "Zionazi" refrain — are usually gratuitous and distracting, as even Finkelstein concedes,¹⁰⁹ but in this case a rather specific analogy is being drawn.

Extremists also triumphed on the Arab side during this time, as moderates were executed in 1939 at the behest of the Grand Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husseini.¹¹⁰ A strident nationalist, Husseini extended his support to Hitler and Mussolini, writing that "the Arabs are the natural friends of Germany, because they have the same enemies: the British, the Jews, and the communists."¹¹¹ Such rhetoric was disturbing to Jewish refugees from Europe, who traveled to Palestine in hopes of escaping antisemitism. Gershom Scholem lamented in one of his last notes to Benjamin that "Nazi propaganda has more of an effect among the Arabs than is usually admitted, and that is a bitter pill to swallow."¹¹² On the

whole, Zionists tend to conflate Christian/“Occidental” with Muslim/“Oriental” antisemitism, ignoring the latter’s clear derivation from the former in order to construct a unitary “Islamofascist” adversary.¹¹³ Derivative or not, though, anti-Jewish hatred is no less potent transposed into another environment, and should not be excused by Israel’s chauvinistic treatment of the Arabs. Hamas’ notorious 1988 charter shows how easily these tropes can flourish outside Europe.¹¹⁴

Mandate Palestine lasted a mere twenty-eight years. From the start, the thin strip of land proved to be more trouble than it was worth. Britain sought to rid itself as swiftly as possible of this artifact of interimperialist war. Throughout the its brief existence, the national struggle of Jews and Arabs was waged against the backdrop of a fascist counterrevolution in Europe. Leaving aside the scandalous deals that both Arab nationalists and Zionists tried to make with the Nazi government,¹¹⁵ the memory of imperialism and fascism would haunt their subsequent political destinies. Colonialism receded from the capitalist periphery, and dictatorship from the capitalist core, but each informed a postwar movement which strove for self-determination within the same territory.¹¹⁶ Perhaps for this very reason, the Palestinian case epitomizes the insoluble contradictions of capitalism past its expiration date, and society’s inability to resolve any of its burning “questions” so long as it persists.

B. Israel, or the antinomies of self-determination

A post published in *Mosaic* last November asked, “Who saved Israel in 1947?” Its author immediately responded that it was Stalin as much as Truman: “Not only did the Soviet Union under Stalin vote for partition, it was also the first country to recognize Israel *de jure*, barely three days after independence. Well before the United States, it spoke in favor of the Jewish state.”¹¹⁷ Few remember these facts nowadays, though, in light of the countries’ poor diplomatic rapport after 1950 or so. Sometime in the mid-fifties, the USSR instead threw its weight behind Nasser, Egypt, and Arab socialism, all sworn enemies of Israel. Given such a stark reversal, one wonders why the Soviets had ever supported the young Hebrew nation. But the rationale given at the time was straightforward: “the right of nations to self-determination.” Underlying this stated rationale, of course, was an ulterior motive that was no less obvious: “the search for anti-Western partners in the Middle East.”¹¹⁸

Once news of the European Judeocide had spread, world leaders felt obliged to address the question of a Jewish homeland. Zionism, which never before enjoyed the support of even the majority of Jews, now suddenly

felt a surge of popularity. Even the Soviets, who refused to humor Zionist proposals as long as the Comintern still existed (it was disbanded in 1943), started to entertain the possibility of partition. The USSR’s representative to the United Nations, Andrei Gromyko, thus introduced the proposal on May 14, 1947. “No Western state has so far been able to ensure the elemental rights of the Jewish people,” Gromyko explained. “It would be unjust to deny the Jews their right to establish an independent state, particularly in view of all they endured during the war.”¹¹⁹ Months of debate ensued, but when the plenary reconvened on November 26, Gromyko repeated that “the decision to partition Palestine is in keeping with the principle of ‘the national self-determination of peoples.’ Study of the Palestinian question suggests that Jews and Arabs there do not want to live together.”¹²⁰ Just three days later the decision passed.

Communist support for Jewish self-determination in the region did not end at that, of course. With war on the horizon, CPUSA members rallied to the defense of the fledgling nation. Roughly ten thousand communists took to the streets of New York City, chanting “Arm the Haganah!” or “Save the Jewish State!” Bands played the *Hakitzah*, Israel’s national anthem, and others waved the blue and white *Magen David* flag (patterned after that of the Warsaw Ghetto).¹²¹ Driven out by bombing campaigns perpetrated by Irgun and the Stern gang, the British imposed a stiff embargo prohibiting arms sales to the Israeli military. Feeling pressure from its closest ally, the US vacillated. However, Stalin instead picked up the slack, selling Ehud Avriel surplus firearms and munitions through Czechoslovakia — 10,000 Mauser P-18 rifles; 4,500 ZB-37 heavy machine guns; 3,000,000 rounds of 7.92 mm. bullets.¹²² Pilots received training at airfields in České Budějovice and Hradec Králové, where they flew nine retrofitted Messerschmitt-109s.¹²³ Units comprised of Czechoslovak volunteers went to serve in Palestine, apparently inspired by the International Brigades during the Spanish Civil War.¹²⁴

Israel won its war of independence by March 1949, thanks largely to the assistance of the USSR. Arabs living in the region experienced Israel’s victory as an unmitigated catastrophe, or *Nakba*. Over six thousand Israeli Jewish soldiers and civilians were killed, versus about ten thousand Palestinian Arab soldiers and civilians (plus five thousand more soldiers in the Pan-Arab expeditionary force).¹²⁵ Yet the overall cost for longtime inhabitants of the territory was far greater than such figures indicate. More than 700,000 refugees were left by the so-called “population transfer.” Some of them left as part of the temporary evacuation order put out by Arab leaders,

whereas others were forcibly evicted, but none were permitted to return once armistice took effect. Villages were emptied, and neighborhoods cleared. “Genocide” would not accurately characterize the events of 1948, as the anti-Zionist historian Ilan Pappé makes clear, but this scarcely diminishes the horror: “Ethnic cleansing is not genocide... It does, however, carry with it atrocious acts of butchery and death... Thousands of Palestinians were savagely killed by Israeli troops of all backgrounds, ages, and ranks.”¹²⁶

Not long after the Palestinian *Nakba* came the expulsion of Jews from Arab and Muslim countries. Jewish communities which had existed there peacefully for hundreds of years vanished almost overnight. Pogroms broke out in Damascus, Algiers, Tripoli, Tunis, Baghdad, Cairo. Where they had been citizens — in Libya, Algeria, Lebanon, Iraq — Jews found themselves denaturalized, stripped of rights, subject to exorbitant taxes and fines, their property forfeited or confiscated. 800,000 Mizrahi and Sephardi fled between 1948 and 1972. Retaliatory or not, the banishment of this population turned out to be a massive blunder. Far from undermining the “Zionist entity,” Israel was vastly strengthened in the process, since most of the Jews thus banished made their way to Tel Aviv and Haifa.¹²⁷ At the same time realignment was taking place as Israel’s allegiances shifted westward, first to France and then the United States. Understandably, Stalin felt betrayed, and lashed out against anyone suspected of harboring Zionist sympathies.¹²⁸ Communists of Jewish descent were rounded up and put on a show trial, most memorably Rudolf Slánský and eleven other “Zio-Trotskyite” saboteurs in the Czech party hanged in 1952. Even today Jewish communists are often accused of being soft on Israel, despite opposing it like any other bourgeois state.¹²⁹

However, some Marxists continued to defend Israel after 1948 by invoking the principle of nations’ “right to self-determination.” One noteworthy example was Hal Draper, not a Stalinist by any means, who nevertheless condemned those who had invaded Israel — “some of the most backward kingships and dynasts of the world, semifeudal oppressors of the Arab people...” For what was their goal in all this? “This reactionary invasion was launched with but one end in view,” Draper elaborated, “precisely to deprive the Israeli people of their right to self-determination.”¹³⁰ Raya Dunayevskaya reaffirmed in 1978 that “the first Arab war against the state of Israel was anything but revolutionary, for the unifying cement of the feudal Arab states was opposition to Israel, which does not suffice to make kings and emirs ‘revolutionaries’.”¹³¹ During the 1960s, she felt that progressive Arab

nationalisms had at last crystallized, although “Ba’ath and Fatah have their origins in fascism.”¹³² Yet Dunayevskaya upheld Israel’s autonomy: “Israel has just as much right a to exist as any country, and on matters other than self-determination, Marxist-Humanists do not take sides.”¹³³ Many pro-Israel leftists were also outspoken supporters of anticolonial movements, like the French philosopher Jean-Paul Sartre, a major voice for Algerian liberation in the 1960s. Sartre earlier welcomed the arrival of Israel, writing in 1949 that while he “always hoped the Jewish problem could be resolved within a human community unrestricted by boundaries... no developing society can skip the stage of national independence, so must be glad Israel has come into the world.”¹³⁴

But it remains unclear why Stalin, or indeed anyone influenced by the Leninist doctrine of a national right to self-determination, would choose to back the tiny Jewish protectorate in Palestine and not the Arab masses who surrounded it. Lenin’s own misgivings about nationalism in the region are instructive in this regard. He explicitly stressed “the need to combat pan-Islamism and similar trends that strive to combine the liberation movement against European and American imperialism with efforts to strengthen the positions of the mullahs and khans.”¹³⁵ In 1932, Trotsky consulted a certain “comrade Nathan” of Left Poale Zion, concerning the matter of Palestinian liberation:

On the question of the events in Palestine, I am right now only gathering material. In particular, I await the arrival of a Marxist from Palestine. Comrade Nathan of Poale Zion is sending me much that is valuable... I find [Nathan’s] letters very interesting, because they give me a far better sense of the Palestinian situation. This presents me an opportunity to express a more concrete opinion on the 1929 riots and make out to what degree and in what proportions Arab national liberation (i.e., anti-imperialist) movements are tied to reactionary Muslims and antisemitic pogromists. All these elements were present.¹³⁶

Most Trotskyists today would be embarrassed to learn their founder attempted to enlist a group like Poale Zion to the Left Opposition.¹³⁷ Trotsky was no Zionist, to be sure.¹³⁸ Still, his latter-day followers could use a reminder about the reservations he had backing national liberation fronts freighted with reactionary components. Only the most debased Trotskyist sects lend “critical but unconditional support” to Islamist groups like Hamas,¹³⁹ while Stalinist remnants like the PFLP poll at around 3% in the occupied territories. Even selecting among these meager options leaves the bankrupt ideology of national liberation intact, while a century of dead-end struggles should cast doubt on the entire premise.

Algeria's independence from French colonialism was not so dissimilar from Israel's independence from British colonialism. It led to the 1963 Nationality Code, which granted citizenship only to Muslims, or rather individuals whose fathers or paternal grandfathers were Muslim, by *jus sanguinis*.¹⁴⁰ Quite clearly, this bears close similarity to Israeli laws granting automatic citizenship to anyone who has at least one Jewish grandparent. Before France's exit, almost 140,000 Jews lived in Algeria. Fewer than fifty live there today. Israel's inveterate violence toward Arabs in the region has likewise led to widespread displacement of a long-established group. Reforms typically associated with bourgeois revolutions were reversed in both cases: the old secular *Code Civil* was replaced with Islam as the state religion in Algeria; Britain's modified millet system, inherited from the Ottomans, was replaced with a state-run rabbinate in Israel. Such examples are never strictly isomorphic, but both illustrate the serious shortcomings of national liberation ideology.

Historian Arno Mayer asserts that "once Lenin and Wilson, grand ecumenical adversaries, had universalized the Western idea of territorially-bounded national self-determination, there was no keeping it out of the Middle East."¹⁴¹ Aspirations to autonomy set Arabs and Jews in Palestine on a "collision course" in the wake of Britain's withdrawal. Despite the extraordinary circumstances of its inception, "[t]he contested and bloody birth of Israel was like the foundation of practically any nation-state."¹⁴² Wars of colonial independence after 1945 were often accompanied by ethnoreligious strife. For example, the liberation of India from British rule in 1947 also led to a partition, dividing Hindus and Muslims. Over one million people died, and some fifteen million were uprooted.¹⁴³ EMS Namboodiripad, one of the Marxist-Leninists who championed national independence in these years, later reflected: "Not only was the country partitioned, but the division between the two religious communities ended in some of the worst carnage in human history."¹⁴⁴ Pakistan was of course able to found a state, something Palestine has so far been denied. Violence lies at the root of every modern state, however.

C. 1967 to the present

To bring things up to date, a number of phenomena will have to be compressed in this last subsection: the 1967 Six-Day War, the 1973 Yom Kippur War, two intifadas, and the Israeli-Egyptian blockade of Gaza that has lasted twelve years now. Given certain limitations of space, the treatment each receives here will be greatly abbreviated. But it goes without saying that these are complex issues, about which more could be said.

1967 was an obvious milestone in the history of the conflict. First of all, because Israel's decisive military win secured its status as a regional superpower. Second, on account of the way the map was redrawn following the ceasefire. Prewar paranoia turned to postwar euphoria, as the IDF made short work of the Arab armies up and down the Sinai Peninsula. Annexations and occupations soon followed: East Jerusalem, Golan Heights, Gaza, the West Bank. The Israelis "thought they had won," Segev notes ironically in his chronicle of the war.¹⁴⁵ Deutscher drew quite different conclusions in a dialogue published shortly thereafter: "None of the problems that confront Israel or the Arab states have been solved. On the contrary, the all-too-easy triumph of Israeli arms has simply aggravated the old issues while creating new (and more dangerous) ones. Israel's security has not been increased, as it is today more vulnerable than it was before June 5, 1967."¹⁴⁶ Reading these lines fifty years later, seeing the garrison state Israel has become, it is difficult to disagree with Deutscher's appraisal. Upon reexamination, Segev concludes much the same.¹⁴⁷

Yom Kippur 1973 was not so one-sided. At least in the beginning, the Egyptian and Syrian forces caught the Israeli army off-guard. The IDF regained its footing after the first week, and inflicted three times as many fatalities as it suffered. In spite of the sudden turnaround, Israel's supreme self-assurance was deeply wounded, while the prestige of its enemies (Sadat, Assad) soared. However, this did little to change the situation of Palestinian refugees, which was miserable as ever.¹⁴⁸ When Sadat visited Israel on 19 November 1977, and met again with Begin at Camp David the following September, the Palestinians were left out of the peace negotiations: "Egypt got back the Sinai Peninsula, to the very last inch of it, at the cost of leaving the occupied territories under Israel's absolute control."¹⁴⁹ Mubarak took over after Sadat's assassination three years later, but the bilateral agreement held. Civil war meanwhile raged in Lebanon, with Israel backing the Maronite Christian Phalange against Arafat's PLO militias in Beirut. Having secured its southern border with Egypt, over 100,000 Israeli troops were deployed to Galilee in 1982 with the intent of crushing the Palestinian fedayeen. Begin's ploy backfired, though: the IDF failed to get rid of Fatah, committing dozens of war crimes in its two-year Lebanese expedition.¹⁵⁰

One unforeseen consequence of Israel's incursion to the north was the creation of the Shi'ite fundamentalist group Hezbollah, which was backed by theocrats in Iran. Yet this was part of a broader shift across the region, as secular Arab nationalism was now swapped for religious Islamic fundamentalism — i.e., "a phenomenon which is

modern, not traditional, and capitalist, not feudal,” but is for that reason all the more reactionary.¹⁵¹ Discontents continued to pile up in Gaza and the West Bank, where the stabbing of an Israeli businessman, followed by a car accident that claimed seventeen Palestinian lives one day later, resulted in general revolt throughout the occupied territories.¹⁵² Initially, the December 1987 revolt had all the familiar markings of class struggle, the self-activity of the Palestinian working class. Soon Israel brought in the hamstrung PLO, which for years it had tried to destroy, to manage the spontaneous uprising (which took Arafat, then in Tunisian exile, by complete surprise), but by that time it was too late: the Intifada was on. “Virtually every day in the first few weeks of the uprising was a general strike,” Andrew Rigby recalls.¹⁵³ Now a Sunni equivalent of Hezbollah emerged.

Fatah formally recognized Israel’s right to exist near the end of 1988, but Israel stayed coy about engaging in talks until 1993.¹⁵⁴ It was during this interim that Hamas threw down the gauntlet against Fatah for leadership of the Palestinian resistance. The Marxist journal *Aufheben* vividly depicts the early days of the Hamas-Fatah rivalry in a 2002 piece:

A bitter turf war took hold over who was top guard dog on the Palestinian streets. Nationalist gangs were already in rehearsal for their future role as guardians of bourgeois law, order, and property relations. With the intifada steadily exhausting itself, the proletariat in the Occupied Territories was decimated by factional infighting and so-called “collaborator killings,” as more Palestinians were killed by other Palestinians than by Israeli forces in spring of 1990. Many “collaborators” were looters or class struggle militants. Others were part of fairly new groups, Hamas and Islamic Jihad... which wished to undermine the PLO but not replace them. Hamas’ more-militant-than-thou competition with Fatah was aimed at guaranteeing themselves a role in the character of the future Palestinian state... as they rejected the very idea of a secular bourgeois state. For Hamas, a Palestinian state by definition had to be a Muslim state. Islamism is a modernist political movement, which nevertheless harkens back to pre-capitalist forms. Thus, like fascism, it can position itself against both communism and capitalism (its political opposition to capitalism is in reality moral opposition to “usury”). Like antisemitism and anti-Americanism, it is a form of pseudo-anticapitalism.¹⁵⁵

By 1993 the First Intifada wound down. Saddam Hussein of Iraq, seen by many Palestinians as the last great hope of the Arab world, was isolated after his disastrous war with the Gulf states. Palestine could no longer count on his support. Yitzhak Rabin swept back Labor into power in Israel after a decade of Likud.

All this led toward the meeting of Arafat and Rabin, ratifying the Oslo Accords. Their historic handshake on the White House lawn inaugurated the interminable “peace process” of the nineties. Oslo also set up a semi-autonomous statelet in Gaza and the West Bank under the Palestinian Authority. Despite no major concessions being granted, many were optimistic for the first time in ages. Rabin’s assassination in 1995 at the hands of a religious Jewish extremist came as a shock to everyone, but Peres promised to press on with the deal. Eleven suicide bombings were carried out over the next couple years, though, mostly targeting buses and marketplaces. Hamas and Islamic Jihad claimed responsibility for the attacks.¹⁵⁶ Jewish terrorists had also carried out sporadic killings, of course, most famously Baruch Goldstein in 1994,¹⁵⁷ but the systematic wave of bombings leading up to the 1996 elections pushed Israeli politics sharply rightward. Likud prevailed over Labor, ushering world-class shitstain Bibi Netanyahu into office. Netanyahu’s double-dealings and bad faith buried the peace process over the next three years, until a corruption scandal temporarily torpedoed his career in 1999. What little was left of Oslo fell apart with Arafat in 2000.¹⁵⁸

It was Ariel Sharon, another inveterate Israeli hawk, who set off the Second Intifada. Provocation was surely the aim of Sharon’s “impious pilgrimage” to the Temple Mount, site of the Al-Aqsa Mosque, the fateful morning of September 28, 2000.¹⁵⁹ Riots broke out immediately, as Palestinian Jerusalemites hurled stones at worshipers visiting the Western Wall. Police fired rubber bullets at the protestors, but shortly switched over to live ammo. Four Palestinians were killed, with roughly two hundred wounded. Soon the news spread and crowds across the occupied territories took to the streets. Hundreds were murdered by IDF soldiers during the next two months, and thousands more wounded or imprisoned. A couple off-duty Israeli reservists in Ramallah were captured and then lynched — dragged from their cells, disemboweled, bodies set ablaze — in a widely-televised incident. Using overwhelming firepower and force, the IDF responded with its usual heavy-handedness. Martyrdom became the default *modus operandi*, not only for Hamas and Islamic Jihad, but also the secular Al-Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades and even the nominally Marxist PFLP. Civilians in Israel were targeted by a string of suicide attacks, nearly thirty a year between 2001 and 2005.¹⁶⁰

Just over 3,000 Palestinians died during the uprising, versus just over 1,000 Israelis. The Second Intifada drew to a close in mid-2005. No sooner had hostilities ended than the IDF disengaged from Gaza. Vacated settlements and abandoned Israeli infrastructure were subsequently

disassembled and scrapped for pieces. Elections in Gaza brought Hamas to power in 2006, prompting a bloody civil war within the Palestinian Authority. Fatah retained its hold on the West Bank and East Jerusalem, but ceded Gaza to the Islamists. Governing forced Hamas to finally “go legit,” renouncing bus bombings in favor of mortars and rockets. Because Hamas refused to recognize Israel, a stifling economic blockade was imposed on Gaza that remains in place to this day. Periodic attacks on Tel Aviv and Beersheba resulted in predictably disproportionate Israeli counterattacks, in the form of airstrikes and even ground invasions (such as Operation Cast Lead in 2009 and Operation Protective Edge in 2014). While the IDF claims to exclusively go after terrorists, ordinary Gazans bear the brunt of these assaults. In this respect, at least, the latest bloodshed along the border is emblematic of the entire post-2006 era.

III. Results and prospects

Israel plays an outsized role in the imagination of both its apologists and detractors. For the former, who more or less parrot *hasbara* talking-points, Israel is almost uniquely benevolent. One hears all the usual ideological nonsense: Israel is “a light unto the nations,”¹⁶¹ the IDF is “the most moral army in the world,”¹⁶² its government is “the only democracy in the Middle East.”¹⁶³ But for the latter, who simply recite BDS press-releases, Israel is almost uniquely malevolent. Here the hyperbole is inverted: Israel is “the Zionist entity,” the IDF is “guilty of incremental genocide in Gaza,”¹⁶⁴ its government is “a settler-colonial apartheid state.”¹⁶⁵ Apologists often complain that Israel is unfairly scrutinized, that every action is put under a microscope. Detractors counter that this focus is deserved, in light of the “special relationship” Israel cultivates with the United States.¹⁶⁶ Lenin’s metaphor of “bending the stick” in one direction, so as to straighten out a crooked narrative,¹⁶⁷ comes to mind. Each side claims to be merely correcting widespread media misinformation, with all the resultant confirmation biases.

Comparisons, especially of the historical variety, are often misleading. Gaza since 2005 has occasionally been compared to Warsaw Ghetto, for instance, and attacks on Israel compared to the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising of 1943. While the IDF’s counterattacks have been savage, killing around 1,500 in 2009 and 2,300 in 2014, the Nazi response was of a wholly different order of magnitude. More than 300,000 Warsaw Jews were gassed and shot dead over a six-week span. South Africa under apartheid is another favorite historical comparison, with Israelis as the Afrikaner Boers and Palestinians as the native black population. The British-Israeli socialist Moshé Machover,

today a Labourite but formerly of Matzpen, argues that “analytically speaking, this label does not strictly apply to Zionist colonization. Using ‘apartheid’ as invective might be a satisfying way of venting one’s feelings, and perhaps can serve as effective propaganda shorthand, but people begin to believe Israel is another South Africa and thus can be dealt with in a similar way.”¹⁶⁸ Other longstanding anti-Zionists, like Chomsky, concur: “Within Israel itself, while there is severe discrimination, it does not compare with South African apartheid.”¹⁶⁹ If comparisons must be made, it is wiser to look for analogues which are closer, both in space and in time.

Viewed through the prism of the Middle East, Israel resembles many of its neighbors in terms of mistreating an ethnoreligious minority. Restricting oneself just to US allies, several names jump out as guilty of major human rights violations: Turkey, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia. Turkey, a NATO member and US ally that plays host to several of its nuclear missile silos, has killed more Kurds since 1978 (45,000 dead, just going by its own estimates) than Israel has killed Palestinians since 1948. Egypt is likewise a military dictatorship friendly with the US, and persecutes Coptic Christians on a regular basis. Saudi Arabia, another US ally, is currently maintaining the blockade of Yemen to its south that, with an estimated eight million at risk of starvation. “Paradoxically, Begin and Sharon are realizing an old Zionist dream,” Primo Levi commented in 1982, “turning Israel into a Middle Eastern country. But they are doing it in the worst possible way, adopting the demagogy, instability, and unreliability that marks out so many rulers in that area.”¹⁷⁰ Still, if Israel is no worse than other bourgeois states in this part of the world, it is certainly also no better.

“Every nationalism begins with a Mazzini,” remarked Rudolf Rocker in a 1927 letter to fellow anarchist Max Nettlau, “but in its shadow lurks a Mussolini.”¹⁷¹ Yet this warning has gone unheeded for a century. Picking and choosing between “good” and “bad” nationalisms today has become something of a sport on the Left, as leftists take sides in various ethnonational conflicts around the globe. A spectator sport, of course, since they have no influence whatsoever over the outcome, but a sport all the same. Usually they take the side of the underdog in any given conflagration, cheering on the “nationalism of the oppressed.” Lenin at the end of his life distinguished “the nationalism of an oppressor nation and that of an oppressed nation,”¹⁷² but he never called upon socialists to support either one. Nationalist symbols are flaunted, a country’s colors flown, even if the liberation fronts of old have long since lost their Marxist-Leninist tinge. Garçon Dupont remarks:

Class consciousness (the imperative to undo the class relation) and internationalism (antinationalism) are the hard-won response to competing parochialisms. The old political slogan of class-conscious internationalism (“no war but class war”) discloses the rallying cry for a “Free Palestine” as a retreat from the possibility of human community... Leftist support for reactionary nationalism on grounds of siding with the underdog is preposterous and repugnant: a wanton irrationality. Whomsoever brandishes the Palestinian flag sustains the category of *nationhood*. Yet left sentimentalism is also intelligible. Of more interest than ostensible pop-frontist rationalizations of “my enemy’s enemy” is the *how* of leftist support for nationalism, which appears in its protest against the demolition and bulldozing of what has been defeated... For the Left always seeks out ways of returning to historically-obsolete modes like religion, the nation-state, sentimentalized cultural specificity... And indeed, this search for ways back is the Left’s main ideological function. Historically, it has fallen to communists to refute this backward drifting of the Left (understood as opportunism and blatant racketeering). National liberation is untenable and in any event incompatible with the human community: no state, no religion, no class are invariable demands communism makes upon society. There cannot, and must never be a “free Palestine.”¹⁷³

Monsieur Dupont, the older brother, already castigated pro-Palestinian postures in his glorious 2009 diatribe on *Nihilist Communism*:

Self-determination is an anti-imperialist aspiration that hinges on the idea of one state being the proletariat of another — an assumption grounded in fetishizing victimization and studiously ignoring local tyranny (or explaining it as a natural response to global tyranny). Communists consider every form of nationalism and representative politics based on religion or ethnicity to be false, designed to obscure processes of capital accumulation being carried out by nascent bourgeois factions in the liberation movement... Ideologies of liberation are used to promote their economic self-interest and repress internal class struggle. Put simply, leaders of Hamas do not carry out suicide bombings themselves, and we see from the example of the IRA or ANC how mafia-style operations can hide behind revolutionary pretense until the appropriate moment for its butterfly-like emergence to respectable bourgeois status. The Israeli working class is as proletarian as the Palestinian working class, so there is obviously no side for revolutionary communists to take in this battle. If we were to encapsulate our position into a slogan it would read for the Palestinians: the struggle against Israel begins with the struggle against Palestine; and for the Israelis: the struggle against Palestine begins with the struggle against Israel.¹⁷⁴

Josh Moufawad-Paul, Maoist blogger extraordinaire, has thus written an angry review of Dupont’s book: “Nearly half of this is dedicated to defending Zionism and complaining about Palestinian self-determination while using half-assed and poorly thought-out pro-colonial and pro-imperialist logic. Anyone who thinks this garbage is useful is a Eurocentric chauvinist.”¹⁷⁵ (In fairness to Dupont, of course, his remarks on Palestine only take up about five of *Nihilist Communism*’s three hundred pages). Dupont replies obliquely: “Misapprehensions about the nature of its object have resulted in a malicious representation of our critique of leftist support for Palestinian nationalism as ‘pro-Zionism’.” Hence why, Dupont explains, “nihilist communism is only concerned with those contributory factors which situated Israel as the culmination of failed European national liberation projects; the function of the exceptionalist hatred directed towards Israel and forms taken by anticolonialists desiring to appease that hatred; the Left’s reference to Israel as embodiment of a Jewish archetype controlling the world.”¹⁷⁶

A similar point was made by Wolfgang Pohrt some thirty years ago, again with reference to Israel-Palestine. “Militant leftists do not see this idiotic conflict between two ethnic nationalisms as an occasion for helplessness or resignation,” observed Pohrt. “Rather, they welcome it as an opportunity for getting involved, fanatically taking sides, and diving into ‘national liberation struggles’ with the full force of conviction.”¹⁷⁷ Liberation is meaningless at a national level, unless tied to international revolution, since any new nation-state will be seamlessly absorbed into the global system of capital. By the way, this is what prevents national liberation fronts from ever mounting a serious threat to the capitalist order: national autonomy is forever subverted by the heteronomy of capital. Pohrt was therefore right to stress that “the national liberation struggle of the PLO does not aim to abolish exploitation or oppression, but instead seeks to obtain the conditions for their replication.” With Israel-Palestine, the problem is thus emphatically not that the conflict is lopsided, as if everything would be okay so long as the casualties were even on both sides — the problem is the national form of all the proposed “solutions.”

Kurdistan is instructive in this regard. Many socialists have felt impelled to offer solidarity and support for the besieged Kurdish fighters trapped in the Syrian warzone. Their national question goes back somewhat further,¹⁷⁸ to the disintegration of the Ottoman Empire and spoils of World War I. Gilles Dauvé summarizes the issue well in his 2016 piece on the “reality and rhetoric” of Rojava. “Some Kurds have been forced to act in the conditions they find, amidst an internationalized war unfavorable to

emancipation,” he dryly states. Nevertheless, despite his charitable introduction, Dauv   concludes that prospects for a social revolution there are slim. “Democratic confederalism” and related disavowals aside, any attempt to transition out of capitalism absent a coordinated, simultaneous seizure of power by the international working-class would take the form of a nation-state. It would be yet another misbegotten effort to build “socialism in one country.”¹⁷⁹ For as Marx always insisted, “the emancipation of labor is neither a local nor a national, but a social problem, embracing all countries where modern society exists, and depends for its solution on the concurrence, practical and theoretical, of the most advanced capitalist countries.”¹⁸⁰ Even Bordigist groups that stick to the old Leninist line on liberation movements reject its feasibility for Kurds and Palestinians.¹⁸¹

The Second International slogan about the “equality of nations,” taken up by Lenin,¹⁸² was one of its weaker innovations. Nowhere does this notion appear in Marx’s writings, and Luxemburg was right to reject it. “A ‘right of nations’ which is valid for all countries and all times is nothing more than a metaphysical clich   of the ‘rights of man’ type,” she wrote in 1908. “Dialectical materialism, the basis of scientific socialism, has broken once and for all with such ‘eternal’ formulae, as the historical dialectic shows there are no ‘eternal’ truths or intrinsic rights.”¹⁸³ Just as Marx criticized vague phrases about the “equality of classes” in the Lassallean *Gotha Program* of 1875,¹⁸⁴ so must Marxists today demonstrate that these theoretical ideals are practically unrealizable under capitalism. Engels explained in his *Anti-D  hring* (1877) that the demand for equality among the various classes of society has its sole rational content in abolishing class divisions *tout court*.¹⁸⁵ So the demand for equality among the various nations of the world has its sole rational content in abolishing national divisions *tout court*.

Zionism at one point appeared to be a “nationalism of the oppressed,” if only for a short time around 1948. Its main nationalist rival, Bundism, went up in smoke like ashes rising from the crematoria at Auschwitz. For most of its history, Zionism had been fairly marginal to Jewish politics. “Recall that the majority of East European Jews were opposed to Zionism until the outbreak of World War II,” Deutscher informed an audience in 1964. “The Zionists in our part of the world constituted a significant minority, but they never succeeded in winning over the majority of their coreligionists.”¹⁸⁶ Only in retrospect did the idea of a Jewish homeland in the Middle East take on an air of inevitability. Even then, “the triumph of Zionism did not flow from some sort of ontological necessity or implacable logic of history but was rather the avatar and

result of the most irrational phase of our era.”¹⁸⁷ Hersh Mendel, considered by Brossat and Klingberg “the very archetype of the Yiddishland revolutionary,”¹⁸⁸ followed this path: he was first a Bundist, then a Bolshevik, next a Left Oppositionist, finally a Zionist.¹⁸⁹

Deutscher, who had been Mendel’s comrade in the Trotskyist section of the interwar KPP, found it hard to sustain his own earlier opposition to Zionism after 1945. With a heavy heart, he confessed: “My anti-Zionism had been based on an historical confidence in the European labor movement, or more broadly European civilization, which proved to be unjustified. If I had urged European Jews to go to Palestine, instead of arguing against Zionism in the twenties and thirties, I might have helped save some of the lives that were later extinguished in Hitler’s gas chambers.”¹⁹⁰ Still, Deutscher hastened to clarify that this did not mean he had suddenly become a Zionist; it just meant no longer an anti-Zionist. And indeed, many communists have since criticized the narrowness of anti-Zionism in particular,¹⁹¹ and any politics which fixate on the prefix “anti-” in general.¹⁹² Like antifascism, deemed by Bordiga the worst product of fascism, anti-Zionism is the the worst product of Zionism, since it simply pits one part of bourgeois society against another instead of getting rid of the whole thing.¹⁹³

Regardless, this does not mean Zionism, fascism, or imperialism should not be opposed. Nationalist ideology must be fought wherever it rears its ugly head. Zionism, like every other form of nationalism, divides the workers from one another and their own objective class interest. Once in power, nationalists will turn on any leftists who were na  ve enough to make common cause with them, and suppress independent organizations of the working class. For workers, it does not matter whether they are exploited by foreign or domestic capitalists. Their enemy is international capitalism, which honors neither arbitrary border nor national division. Every particular oppression they experience — racial, sexual, national — is integral to the universal relation of wage-labor, and can only be effectively challenged by challenging the capitalist system as a whole. “Partial” struggles, as some have called them, are nonstarters because they cannot be knitted together into some sort of rainbow coalition.¹⁹⁴

As Trotsky wrote to Lazar Kling in 1932, “the Jewish question is international, and cannot be resolved through ‘socialism in a single country.’ Jewish workers know their fate is linked to that of the entire proletariat.”¹⁹⁵ Indeed, if communism promises anything, it is a future without homelands, a world in which people can live wherever they damn well please.

— Walt Auerbach

Notes

¹ Apologists for Israeli militarism will no doubt object that some of the protestors were actually armed, making them legitimate targets. Pebbles, slingshots, and so-called “arson kites” do not constitute a credible threat to Israeli civilians, however, hardly justifying the use of deadly or even crippling force.

² For example, Isabel Kershner and Iyad Abuheweila. *“Israeli Military Kills 15 Palestinians in Confrontations on Gaza Border.”* New York Times. March 30, 2018. Also Erin Cunningham and Hazem Balousha. *“Gaza Border Clashes Resume Between Palestinian Protesters and Israeli Forces.”* Washington Post. April 20, 2018.

³ Baruch Spinoza. “Political Treatise.” Translated by Samuel Shirley. *Complete Works.* (Hackett Publishers. Indianapolis, IN: 2002). Pg. 681. Leon Trotsky. *History of the Russian Revolution* [1928]. Translated by Max Eastman. (Haymarket Books. Chicago, IL: 2008). Pg. 353.

⁴ “The discovery of gold and silver in America, the extirpation, enslavement, and entombment in mines of the indigenous population of that continent, the beginnings of the conquest and plunder of India, the conversion of Africa into a preserve for the commercial hunting of blackskins, etc., all characterize the dawn of the era of capitalist production. These idyllic procedures are the chief moments of primitive accumulation.” Karl Marx. *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Volume 1* [1867]. Translated by Ben Fowkes. (Penguin Books. New York, NY: 1976). Pg. 915.

⁵ “We say ‘proto-racism’ because, even when a specific notion of ‘blood purity’ [*limpieza de sangre*], underwriting an idea of ‘purity of (Christian) caste’ [*lo castizo*] began to be implemented in Spain ca. 1450, its aim was still to distinguish Christians and Jews. Nevertheless, the Inquisition, which recognized *lo castizo* only for those who could prove they had no Jewish ancestry... for three generations, thereby anticipated the Nuremberg laws by nearly 500 years.” Loren Goldner. *“Race and the Enlightenment, Part 1: From Anti-Semitism to White Supremacy, 1492-1676.”* Race Traitor. (August 1997).

⁶ Léon Poliakov. *The History of Antisemitism, Volume 3: From Voltaire to Wagner* [1968]. Translated by Miriam Kochan. (University of Pennsylvania Press. Philadelphia, PA: 2003). Pg. 217.

⁷ Albert Soboul. *The French Revolution, 1787-1799: From the Storming of the Bastille to Napoleon* [1962]. Translated by Colin Jones and Alan Forrest. (Vintage Books. New York, NY: 1974). Pg. 11.

⁸ “The triumph of reaction on the continent under the Holy Alliance deprived Jews of most newly-won rights. For individual Jews baptism then became once again the passport to European civilization, until the ‘Spring of the Peoples’ of 1848 gave a strong new stimulus to Jewish emancipation, at least in western Europe.” Isaac Deutscher. *“Remnants of a Race”* [1946]. *The Non-Jewish Jew and Other Essays.* (Verso Books. New York, NY: 2017). Pg. 87.

⁹ Heinrich Heine. *Ludwig Börne: A Memorial* [1840]. Translated by Jeffrey L. Sammons. (Camden House. Rochester, NY: 2006). Pg. 21.

¹⁰ “The Jewish question is ultimately reduced to a secular conflict.” Karl Marx. *“On the Jewish Question”* [1843]. Translated by Clemens Dutt. *Collected Works, Volume 3.* (International Publishers. New York, NY: 1975). Pgs. 154-155.

¹¹ “The chimerical nationality of the Jew... is the nationality of the merchant, of the man of money in general.” *Ibid.*, pg. 172.

¹² Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. *The Holy Family, or Critique of Critical Criticism* [1845]. Translated by Richard Dixon and Clemens Dutt. *Collected Works, Volume 4.* (International Publishers. New York, NY: 1975). Pg. 108.

¹³ *Ibid.*, pgs. 109-110. Translated modified.

¹⁴ “Liberation of the pariahs [Jews] aroused not only complaints and recriminations, but also superstitious anxieties. If the despised class turned into an inferior race instead of disappearing once it had been suppressed by law, it did so because antisemitism had a psychosocial function to fulfill.” Poliakov, *The History of Antisemitism, Volume 3.* Pg. 460.

¹⁵ Johann Gottlieb Fichte. *„Beitrag zur Berichtigung der Urteile des Publikums über die französische Revolution, Erster Teil“* [1792]. *Ge-samtausgabe Band I,1.* (Friedrich Frommann Verlag. Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: 1965). Pg. 299.

¹⁶ Moshe Zimmermann. *Wilhelm Marr: The Patriarch of Antisemitism.* (Oxford University Press. New York, NY: 1986).

¹⁷ “Jews were puzzled by outbreaks of antisemitism; they regarded them as a mysterious atavism, a ghost from the Middle Ages which, with the spread of education, would gradually be laid to rest.” Walter Laqueur. *A History of Zionism: From the French Revolution to the State of Israel.* (Holt, Rinehart, & Winston. New York, NY: 1972). Pg. 9.

¹⁸ Friedrich Engels. *“On Antisemitism.”* Translated by John Peet. *Collected Works, Volume 27.* (International Publishers. New York, NY: 1990). Pg. 51. Translation modified.

¹⁹ Enzo Traverso. *The Marxists and the Jewish Question: The History of a Debate, 1843-1943* [1990]. Translated by Bernard Gibbons. (Humanities Press. Atlantic Highlands, NJ: 1994). Pg. 133.

²⁰ Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. *“Anti-Jewish Pogroms”* [1919]. Translated by George Hanna. *Collected Works, Volume 29.* (Progress Publishers. Moscow: 1965). Pg. 252. Translation modified.

²¹ Leon Trotsky. *“Interview with the Jewish Daily Forward.”* Translated by Marc Bedner. *Writings, 1936-1937.* (Pathfinder Press. New York, NY: 1978). Pg. 106.

²² Abram Leon. *The Jewish Question: A Marxist Interpretation* [1943]. Translated by D. Ferguson. (Pathfinder Press. New York, NY: 1970). Pg. 222.

²³ The term “Judeocide” is taken from Arno Mayer’s study of the Holocaust, adapted from Raul Hilberg’s “destruction of the European Jews.” Arno Mayer. *Why Did the Heavens Not Darken? The “Final Solution” in History.* (Pantheon Books. New York, NY: 1988).

²⁴ Leon Trotsky. *“Appeal to American Jews”* [1938] *On the Jewish Question.* (Pathfinder Press. New York, NY: 1970). Pg. 39.

²⁵ Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno. *The Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments* [1947]. Translated by Edmund Jephcott. (Stanford University Press. Stanford, CA: 2002). Pg. 143.

²⁶ “Antisemitism is thus a revolt against global capital, misrecognized as the Jews.” Moishe Postone. *“Zionism, Antisemitism, and the Left: An Interview with Martin Thomas.”* *Krisis: Kritik der Waren-gesellschaft.* (February 4, 2010).

²⁷ “Neither the Right nor the Left are able to comprehend capital for what it is: a social relation between classes... For them capital must be personified to make it more understandable; but in doing so, they obscure its essentially impersonal nature.” Amos. *“Labour, the Left, and the ‘Jewish Problem’.”* *International Communist Current.* (May 6, 2016).

²⁸ KT. *“Antisemitism: Rooting out Oppression, or Ruling Class Hypocrisy?”* *International Communist Tendency.* (April 2018).

²⁹ Jacob Blumenfeld. *“Negation of the Diaspora.”* *Brooklyn Rail.* (March 5, 2015).

³⁰ Rodinson maintained in his preface to Leon’s work that “[Israel] has not at all resolved the ‘Jewish problem,’ but even aggravated it

seriously." Maxime Rodinson. *Cult, Ghetto, and State: The Persistence of the Jewish Question* [1981]. Translated by John Rothschild. (Al Saqi Books. London: 1983). Pg. 111.

³¹ Hillel Ticktin. "Notes." *Critique: Journal of Socialist Theory*. (Volume XXXVII, № 2: May 2009). Pgs. 168-169.

³² Étienne Balibar. *"The Nation-Form: History and Ideology."* Translated by Immanuel Wallerstein and Chris Turner. Review. (Volume XIII, № 3: Summer 1990). Pgs. 329-361.

³³ "In the classical sense, the nation excluded the masses of slaves and included within these relations only free citizens; in the modern bourgeois sense, the nation includes all those who were born in it. In medieval times, the productive material base was not national but subnational... The linguistic, cultural, and ideological superstructure was not national because it was concentrated around the Roman Church." Amadeo Bordiga. *"Factors of Race and Nation in Marxist Theory"* [1953]. Translated by "Alias Recluse." Libcom. (January 1, 2014). Pgs. 96-99.

³⁴ Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. (Verso Books. New York, NY: 2006). Pg. 36.

³⁵ "Because of setbacks suffered in Italy, the capitalist revolution was postponed for a long time, but by the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries it was victorious in England, France, and then Central Europe." Bordiga, "Factors of Race and Nation in Marxist Theory." Pgs. 105-106.

³⁶ "Commoners need not assemble with the clergy or the nobility. Some say the Third Estate cannot convene the Estates-General by itself. Very well! It will form a *National Assembly*." Emmanuel Joseph Sieyès. "What is the Third Estate?" [1789]. *Political Writings*. Translated by Michael Sonenscher. (Hackett Publishing Company. Indianapolis, IN: 2003). Pgs. 147-148.

³⁷ "From the 1880s forward the 'national question' became a pressing concern for socialists." Eric Hobsbawm. *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Project, Myth, Reality*. (Cambridge University Press. New York, NY: 1992). Pgs. 43-44.

³⁸ Karl Marx. *The German Ideology* [1846]. Translated by Clemens Dutt. Collected Works, Volume 5. (International Publishers. New York, NY: 1975). Pgs. 73-74.

³⁹ Friedrich Engels. *"The Festival of Nations in London to Celebrate the Establishment of the French Republic, Sep. 22, 1792"* [1845]. Translated by Jack Cohen. Collected Works, Volume 6. (International Publishers. New York, NY: 1976). Pg. 6.

⁴⁰ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. *Manifesto of the Communist Party* [1847]. Translated by Samuel Moore. *Ibid.*, pg. 494.

⁴¹ "National differences and antagonisms between peoples are daily more and more vanishing." *Ibid.*, pgs. 502-503.

⁴² See David Riazanov. "Marx and Engels on the Polish Question" [1918]. Translated by Brian Pearce. *Marx and Anglo-Russian Relations and Other Writings*. (Francis Boutle Publishers. London: 2003). Pgs. 148-189.

⁴³ Franz Mehring. *Karl Marx: The Story of His Life* [1918]. Translated by Edward Fitzgerald. (University of Michigan Press. Ann Arbor, MI: 1962). Pg. 391.

⁴⁴ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. "On the Fiftieth Anniversary of the 1830 Polish Revolution" [1880]. Translated by Barrie Selman. Collected Works, Volume 24. (International Publishers. New York, NY: 1989). Pg. 344.

⁴⁵ "In England the antagonism [of English and Irish workers] is the dam holding back the flood of revolution." Karl Marx. "Speech at

the London Conference" [September 21, 1871]. Collected Works, Volume 22. (International Publishers. New York, NY: 1986). Pg. 620.

⁴⁶ David Riazanov. "Marx and Engels on the Balkan Question." *Op. cit.*, pgs. 190-204.

⁴⁷ See Roman Rosdolsky. *Engels and the "Non-Historic" Peoples: The National Question in the Revolution of 1848* [1948]. Translated by John-Paul Himka. (Critique Books. Glasgow: 1987).

⁴⁸ "Serbs, Bulgarians, and Slovenes we cannot support. Only when tsarism's collapse disentangles the national aspirations of these diminutive peoples from pan-Slav tendencies can we let them do as they please." Friedrich Engels. "Letter to Karl Kautsky" [February 7, 1882] Translated by Betty Ross. Collected Works, Volume 46. (International Publishers. New York, NY: 1992). Pg. 194.

⁴⁹ Michael Löwy. *"Marxism and the National Question."* New Left Review. (Volume I, № 96: March-April 1976).

⁵⁰ Karl Renner. *State and Nation* [1899]. Translated by Joseph O'Donnell. *National-Cultural Autonomy and Its Contemporary Critics*. (Routledge. New York, NY: 2005). Pg. 36.

⁵¹ Otto Bauer. *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy* [1907]. Translated by Joseph O'Donnell. (University of Minnesota Press. Minnesota, MN: 2000). Pg. 255.

⁵² "Bauer's doctrine could only have arisen in Austria." Anton Pannekoek. *Class Struggle and Nation* [1912].

⁵³ „Nationalen Opportunismus“. *Ibid.*

⁵⁴ Vladimir Lenin. *"Theses for a Lecture on the National Question"* [January 1914]. Translated by Yuri Sdobnikov. Collected Works, Volume 41. (Progress Publishers. Moscow: 1969). Pg. 315.

⁵⁵ Vladimir Lenin. *Critical Remarks on the National Question* [1913]. Translated by Bernard Isaacs and Joe Fineberg. Collected Works, Volume 20. (Progress Publishers. Moscow: 1964). Pg. 34.

⁵⁶ Vladimir Lenin. *"Corrupting the Workers with Refined Nationalism"* [May 10, 1914]. *Ibid.*, pg. 289.

⁵⁷ Vladimir Lenin. "The Discussion on National Self-Determination Summed Up" [1913]. Translated by Yuri Sdobnikov. Collected Works, Volume 22. (Progress Publishers. Moscow: 1964). Pg. 357. Translation modified.

⁵⁸ Rosa Luxemburg. "Letter to Aleksandr Potresov.

⁵⁹ Paul Mattick. *"Nationalism and Socialism."* American Socialist. (Volume VI, № 9: September 1959). Pg. 17.

⁶⁰ Alain Brossat and Sylvia Klingberg. *Revolutionary Yiddishland: A History of Jewish Radicalism* [1983]. Translated by David Fernbach. (Verso Books. New York, NY: 2017). Pg. 1.

⁶¹ See Jonathan Frankel. *Prophecy and Politics: Socialism, Nationalism, and the Russian Jews, 1862-1917*. (Cambridge University Press. New York, NY: 1981). Pgs. 49-132.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pgs. 135-143.

⁶³ Yoav Peled. *Class and Ethnicity in the Pale: The Political Economy of Jewish Workers' Nationalism in Late Imperial Russia*. (Palgrave Macmillan. New York, NY: 1989). Pg. 16.

⁶⁴ "A process of social differentiation rapidly developed within the Jewish population... coinciding with its concentration in urban agglomerations from the *shtetl* to the big city." Brossat and Klingberg. *Revolutionary Yiddishland*. Pgs. 32-33.

⁶⁵ "For internationalists such as Trotsky, Zinoviev, Radek, and Rosa Luxemburg, the assimilation of the Jewish revolutionary to the concrete universal party anticipated the society for which they fought." *Ibid.*, pg. 17.

⁶⁶ See "Yiddishkeit or Zionism? The Judeo-Marxists" in Traverso, *The Marxists and the Jewish Question*. Pgs. 92-128.

⁶⁷ Brossat and Klingberg, *Revolutionary Yiddishland*. Pgs. 24-26.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pgs. 26-28.

⁶⁹ Moses Hess. *Rome and Jerusalem: A Study in Jewish Nationalism [1861]*. Translated by Meyer Waxman. (Bloch Publishing Company. New York, NY: 1918). Pgs. 140-141.

⁷⁰ Sidney Hook. *"Karl Marx and Moses Hess."* *New International*. (Volume I, № 5, December 1934). Pg. 140.

⁷¹ Friedrich Engels. "Letter to Karl Marx" [January 14, 1848]. Translated by Peter and Betty Ross. *Collected Works*, Volume 38. (International Publishers. New York, NY: 1982). Pg. 153.

⁷² "Marx's grandson Longuet, a leader of French socialism, declared in 1918 that a Jewish national home in Palestine deserved support from socialists." Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*. Pgs. 424-425.

⁷³ "Longuet thus passes on to the liberationist principle of the self-determination of nations, which was 'advanced by the Russian revolution but embraced by President Wilson'." Leon Trotsky. *"Jean Longuet"* [December 18, 1919]. Translated by John Wright and R. Chappell. *The First Five Years of the Communist International*, Volume 1. (Pathfinder Press. New York, NY: 1972) Pgs. 105-115.

⁷⁴ "Lenin laughed and told his interlocutor he was trying to be both 'here and there,' trying to sit on two chairs at once. The problem was that Borochov sat on neither of the two chairs, but rather the empty space between." Mitchell Cohen. "Ber Borochov and Socialist Zionism." Introduction to Ber Borochov. *Class Struggle and the Jewish Nation: Selected Essays in Marxist Zionism*. Translated by Moshe Cohen. (Transaction Books. New Brunswick, NJ: 1984). Pg. 1.

⁷⁵ One wonders if Ben-Gurion meant by this "a world where Israel would not have been necessary." Isaac Deutscher. "Israel's Spiritual Climate" [April-May 1954]. *The Non-Jewish Jew*. Pg. 98.

⁷⁶ "He told me that he had read all forty volumes of Lenin's writings!" Shimon Peres. *Ben-Gurion: A Political Life*. (Schocken Books. New York, NY: 2011). Pg. 39.

⁷⁷ For more on the Bundism, see "The Bund: Between Nation and Class" in Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*. Pgs. 171-257.

⁷⁸ Vladimir Medem. *Memoirs of a Jewish Socialist [1923]*. Translated by Samuel A. Portnoy. (KTAV Publishing House. New York, NY: 1979). Pgs. 233-234. He explicitly praises "the great fundamental works by Karl Renner and Otto Bauer" on pg. 263.

⁷⁹ Michael Löwy. *Redemption and Utopia: Jewish Libertarian Thought in Central Europe, A Study in Elective Affinity*. Translated by Hope Heaney. (Verso Books. New York, NY: 2017). Pg. 44.

⁸⁰ On Zionists in Bern, *op. cit.* pgs. 222-223. On Weizmann's lack-luster oratory, pgs. 261-262. On Herzl, pgs. 292-294.

⁸¹ On Lenin, *ibid.*, pgs. 227-229. On Trotsky as ленинская дубинка, pg. 419. On Luxemburg, pg. 429.

⁸² Brossat and Klingberg, *Revolutionary Yiddishland*. Pg. 53.

⁸³ For more on Poale Zion, see "Ber Borochov and Marxist Zionism" in Frankel, *Prophecy and Politics*. Pgs. 329-363.

⁸⁴ Ber Borochov. "The National Question and the Class Struggle [1905]. *Class Struggle and the Jewish Nation*. Pg. 59.

⁸⁵ Ber Borochov. "Our Platform" [1906]. *Ibid.*, pg. 100.

⁸⁶ Ber Borochov. "Eretz Israel in Our Program and Tactics" [1916]. *Ibid.*, pgs. 201-203.

⁸⁷ Joseph Roth. *The Wandering Jews* [1926]. Translated by Michael Hoffmann. (WW Norton & Co. New York, NY: 2001). Pgs. 51-52.

⁸⁸ WEB Du Bois. "Not Separatism." *The Crisis*. (Volume XVII, № 4: February 1919). Pg. 166.

⁸⁹ Samuel Farber. *"Lessons of the Bund."* *Jacobin Magazine*. (January 2017).

⁹⁰ Tony Greenstein. *"The Bund: The Mass Jewish Anti-Zionist Party in Poland."* AZVSAS. (December 4, 2012).

⁹¹ See also Trotsky's 1904 polemic, wherein he declared Bundism the rightful heir to Zionism. Леон Троцкий. *«Разложение Сионизма и его возможные преемники»*. *Искра*. (№ 56: 1 января 1904). Г. 2749.

⁹² Again, "Marxists resolutely oppose nationalism in all its forms." Vladimir Lenin. *"Once More on the Segregation of the Schools by Nationality."* Translated by George Hanna. *Collected Works*, Volume 19. (Progress Publishers. Moscow: 1963). Pg. 548.

⁹³ Nevertheless, a few do still exist. Guy Sabatier. *"The Case of the General Union of Jewish Workers in Russia, Poland, and Lithuania."* Translated by Juan Conatz. *Controverses, Cahier Thématique*. (№ 1: November 2011).

⁹⁴ Chaim Weizmann. *Trial and Error: An Autobiography*. (Harper & Brothers. New York, NY: 1949). Pgs. 50, 288.

⁹⁵ Ber Borochov. "Hebraismus Militans" [1913]. Translated by Mark W. Kiel. *Op. cit.*, pgs. 143-145.

⁹⁶ "A new task had been added to our previous ones: 'self-defense.' The slogan was issued and action taken to implement it. Our role as initiator and leader of self-defense strengthened the influence of our movement even more." Medem, *Memoirs*. Pgs. 267-268. Compare: "The first Jewish self-defense group was organized by Poale Zion two and a half years before the Jewish Socialist Bund in Hamel, September 1903." Ber Borochov. "Reminiscences on the Occasion of the Tenth Anniversary of Poale Zion, 1906-1916" [1916]. *Class Struggle and the Jewish Nation*. Pg. 184.

⁹⁷ Arno Mayer. *Plowshares into Swords: From Zionism to Israel*. (Verso Books. New York, NY: 2008). Pgs. 95-99.

⁹⁸ Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*. Pgs. 297-308.

⁹⁹ Arnold Zweig. *The Face of East European Jewry*. Translated by Noah Isenberg. (University of California Press. Los Angeles, CA: 2004). Pgs. 132-133.

¹⁰⁰ Palestinian Communist Party. "May Day Statement, 1921." *Documents of the Palestinian Arab Resistance, 1918-1939*.

¹⁰¹ Nava Et-Shalom and Matthew N. Lyons. *"Bring on the Bulldozers and Let's Plant Trees: The Story of Labor Zionism."* *Upping the Anti*. (Volume I, № 7: October 2008).

¹⁰² "Nobody fought Arab workers more vigorously than the Histadrut; nobody preached national, economic, and social segregation more determinedly." Zeev Sternhell. *The Founding Myths of Israel: Nationalism, Socialism, and the Making of the Jewish State* [1996]. Translated by David Maisel. (Princeton University Press. Princeton, NJ: 1998). Pg. 252.

¹⁰³ Because of his agitational role, Jabotinsky was banned from ever reentering mandate in 1930. Hillel Cohen. *Year Zero of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: 1929* [2013]. Translated by Haim Watzman. (Brandeis University Press. Waltham, MA: 2015). Pg. 221.

¹⁰⁴ See "In Blood and Fire: Jabotinsky and Revisionism." Laqueur, *A History of Zionism*. Pgs. 338-383.

¹⁰⁵ Abner Barnatan. *"The Brownshirts of Zionism."* *International Council Correspondence*. (Volume III, № 4: April 1937).

¹⁰⁶ Sidney Hook, Hannah Arendt, and twenty others also signed the letter. Albert Einstein. "Letter to the New York Times, 4 December 1948." *Writings on Politics*. (Princeton University Press. Princeton, NJ: 2007). Pgs. 350-351.

¹⁰⁷ Primo Levi. "Interview on the Birth of Israel." Translated by John Shepley. *Conversations with Fernando Camon*. (Marlboro Press. Marlboro, VT: 1989). Pg. 54.

¹⁰⁸ "For Begin, 'fascist' is a definition I can accept... Even he would not deny it... He was a student of Jabotinsky, who called himself a fascist, and was one of Mussolini's interlocutors." Primo Levi. "Begin Should Go: An Interview with Giampaolo Pansa." Translated by Robert Gordon. *The Voice of Memory, 1961-1987*. (The New Press. New York, NY: 2001). Pg. 282.

¹⁰⁹ "Today, the Nazi analogy is gratuitous and a distraction." Norman Finkelstein. *Interview with Jamie Stern-Weiner*. *Open Democracy*. (May 3, 2016). Of course, this has not prevented Finkelstein from making further use of the analogy.

¹¹⁰ Maxime Rodinson. *Israel and the Arabs*. Translated by Michael Perl. (Penguin Books. New York, NY: 1968). Pgs. 30-31.

¹¹¹ Quoted in Mayer, *Plowshares into Swords*. Pg. 169.

¹¹² Gershom Scholem. "Letter to Walter Benjamin" [December 15, 1939]. Translated by Gary Smith and Andre Lefevre. *Correspondence*. (Schocken Books. New York, NY: 1989). Pg. 261.

¹¹³ "Arab propaganda against Zionism frequently utilizes arguments and images borrowed from European antisemitism, which is deeply disagreeable, but does not justify identifying the two phenomena. European antisemitism, in the sense of hatred of Jews in their very essence, considering them possessed of a fundamentally malevolent nature, was not born of any actions or initiatives on the part of the Jews... Whatever its real motives, the reproaches it levelled were purely mythical or, if they referred to anything concrete, it was to phenomena and activities connected with the humiliating situation imposed on the Jews for more than a thousand years by European society. Prime responsibility lay with the latter. Arab anti-Zionism, on the contrary, even if it sometimes led to comprehensive hatred of Jews, originated in a concrete initiative taken by certain Jews, to the detriment of the Arabs, namely, the plan to transform an Arab land into a Jewish state." Rodinson, *Israel and the Arabs*. Pg. 324. A thoughtful study was written along these lines by Rodinson's student, Gilbert Achcar. *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives* [2009]. Translated by GM Goshgarian. (Picador. New York, NY: 2011).

¹¹⁴ Hamas. *"Charter of the Islamic Resistance Movement of Palestine"* [1989]. Translated by Mohammed Maqdsi. *Journal of Palestine Studies*. (Volume XXII, № 4: Summer 1993). Pgs. 122-134.

¹¹⁵ On deals Zionists tried to cut with the Nazis, see Yehuda Bauer. *Jews for Sale? Nazi-Jewish Negotiations, 1933-1945*. (Yale University Press. New Haven, CT: 1994). On deals Arab nationalists tried to cut with the Nazis, see Francis Nicosia. *Nazi Germany and the Arab World*. (Cambridge University Press. New York, NY: 2015).

¹¹⁶ Tom Segev. *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs Under the British Mandate* [1999]. Translated by Haim Watzman. (Henry Holt & Co. New York, NY: 2000). Pgs. 487-519.

¹¹⁷ Martin Kramer. *"Who Saved Israel in 1947?"* *Mosaic*. (November 16, 2017).

¹¹⁸ Arnold Kramer. *Forgotten Friendship: Israel and the Soviet Bloc, 1947-1953*. (University of Illinois Press. Chicago, IL: 1974). Pg. 52.

¹¹⁹ Andrei Gromyko. *"Speech on the Partition of Palestine, 14 May 1947."* 77th Plenary Meeting.

¹²⁰ Andrei Gromyko. *"Speech on Partitioning Palestine"* [November 26, 1947.] 125th Plenary Meeting.

¹²¹ Alexander Feinberg. "10,000 in Protest on Palestine." *New York Times*. (March 12, 1948). Pg. 8.

¹²² Krammer, *Forgotten Friendship*. Pgs. 60-61.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, pgs. 88-93.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, pgs. 107-122.

¹²⁵ Mayer, *Plowshares into Swords*. Pgs. 234-235.

¹²⁶ Ilan Pappé. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. (Oneworld. Oxford: 2007). Pg. 197.

¹²⁷ Memmi, a Tunisian Jew and associate of Fanon, wrote: "800,000 Jews have left the Arab countries. Three-fourths of them now live in Israel." Albert Memmi. *Jews and Arabs*. Translated by Eleanor Levieux. (J. Philip O'Hara. Chicago, IL: 1972). Pg. 110.

¹²⁸ Krammer, *Forgotten Friendship*. Pgs. 123-150.

¹²⁹ Footage of the Slánský trial was recently unearthed in Panenské Břežany. Roger Tait. *"Czechs Discover Hidden Film Record of Stalin's Antisemitic Show Trial."* *The Guardian*. (April 8, 2018).

¹³⁰ Hal Draper. *"How to Defend Israel: A Political Program for Israeli Socialists."* *The New International*. (Volume XIV, № 5: July 1948). Pg. 133.

¹³¹ Raya Dunayevskaya. "War, Peace, or Revolution? Shifting Alliances in the Middle East." *News & Letters*. (Volume XXIII, № 1: January-February 1978). Pg. 8.

¹³² *Ibid.*, pg. 9.

¹³³ Raya Dunayevskaya. "The Arab-Israeli Collision." *News & Letters*. (June 8, 1967).

¹³⁴ Quoted in Jonathan Judaken. *Sartre and the Jewish Question: Anti-Antisemitism and the Politics of the French Intellectual*. (University of Nebraska Press. Lincoln, NE: 2006). Pg. 188.

¹³⁵ Vladimir Lenin. *"Draft Theses on National and Colonial Questions for the Second Comintern Congress"* [June 5, 1920]. Translated by Julius Katzer. *Collected Works*, Volume 31. (Progress Publishers. Moscow: 1966). Pg. 149.

¹³⁶ Leon Trotsky, "Letter to Lazar Kling" [August 7, 1932]. Translated by Marilyn Vogt. *Writings, 1932*. (Pathfinder Press. New York, NY: 1973). Pg. 172.

¹³⁷ "I have forwarded to the Poale Zion group in Palestine a copy of all the newspaper issues which have reached me. One of their central committee members, who signs his name as 'Nathan,' is a serious comrade gravitating strongly toward the Left Opposition." Leon Trotsky. "Letter to Lazar Kling" [May 23, 1932]. *Ibid.*, pg. 170.

¹³⁸ "I am, of course, an opponent of Zionism and all other forms of self-isolation of the Jewish workers." Leon Trotsky. "Letter to Lazar Kling" [February 9, 1932]. *Ibid.*, pg. 169.

¹³⁹ Mostafa Omar. *"What Do Socialists Say About Hamas?"* *Socialist Worker*. (July 31, 2014).

¹⁴⁰ Gianluca Paolo Parolin. *Citizenship in the Arab World: Kin, Religion, and Nation-State*. (Amsterdam University Press. Amsterdam: 2009). Pg. 95.

¹⁴¹ Mayer, *Plowshares into Swords*. Pg. 110. See here also Hobsbawm: "Israeli and Palestinian nationalisms must be novel... since the very concept of territorial states of the currently-standard type in their region was barely thought of a century ago, and hardly became a serious prospect before the end of World War I." Eric Hobsbawm. "Inventing Traditions." *The Invention of Tradition*. (Cambridge University Press. New York, NY: 1983). Pgs. 13-14.

¹⁴² Mayer, *Plowshares into Swords*. Pg. 223.

¹⁴³ See the section on "Partition" in Perry Anderson. *The Indian Ideology*. (Verso Books. New York, NY: 2013). Pgs. 43-102.

¹⁴⁴ EMS Namboodripad. "Class Character of the Nationalist Movement." *History, Society, and Land Relations: Selected Essays*. (Leftword Books. New Delhi: 2010). Pg. 61.

¹⁴⁵ Tom Segev. *1967: Israel, the War, and the Year that Transformed the Middle East* [2005]. Translated by Jessica Cohen. (Henry Holt & Co. New York, NY: 2007). Pgs. 419-585.

¹⁴⁶ Isaac Deutscher. "The Arab-Israeli War, June 1967." *The Non-Jewish Jew*. Pg. 126.

¹⁴⁷ "Israel's only achievement was actually winning the war. Nothing was gained by occupying the territories captured in the war." Segev, 1967. Pgs. 15-16.

¹⁴⁸ Mayer, *Plowshares into Swords*. Pg. 276.

¹⁴⁹ Ilan Pappé. *The Forgotten Palestinians: A History of the Palestinians in Israel*. (Yale University Press. New Haven, CT: 2011). Pg. 168.

¹⁵⁰ Mayer, *Plowshares into Swords*. Pgs. 295-299.

¹⁵¹ Mac Intosh. *"Islamic Fundamentalism: Religious Fanaticism to Reinforce the State."* *Internationalist Perspective*. (№ 15: Winter 1989-1990).

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¹⁵³ Andrew Rigby. *Palestinian Intifada Revisited*. (Zed Books. London: 2015). Pg. 174.

¹⁵⁴ Gilbert Achcar. "Where Is the PLO Going? The Long March... Backwards" [1989]. *Eastern Cauldron: Islam, Afghanistan, Palestine, and Iraq in a Marxist Mirror*. Translated by Peter Drucker. (Monthly Review Press. New York, NY: 2003). Pg. 130.

¹⁵⁵ Aufheben. *"Behind the Twenty-First Century Intifada."* (№ 10: 2002).

¹⁵⁶ Gilles Kepel. *Beyond Terror and Martyrdom: The Future of the Middle East*. Translated by Pascale Ghazaleh. (Harvard University Press. Cambridge, MA: 2008). Pgs. 89-90.

¹⁵⁷ Mayer, *Plowshares into Swords*. Pgs. 345.

¹⁵⁸ Avi Shlaim. *"It's Now Clear that the Oslo Peace Accords Were Wrecked by Netanyahu's Bad Faith."* *The Guardian*. (September 12, 2013).

¹⁵⁹ Mayer, *Plowshares into Swords*. Pg. 394.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, pgs. 399-401.

¹⁶¹ David Ben-Gurion. *Memoirs*. (World Publishing Co. New York, NY: 1970). Pgs. 29, 181.

¹⁶² Barak Ravid. "The IDF Did Not Mean to Shoot at UN Facilities in Gaza." *Haaretz*. (May 5, 2009).

¹⁶³ Scott Taylor. *"Seventieth Anniversary of the State of Israel."* *Congressional Record*. (Vol. CLXIII, № 62: April 17, 2018).

¹⁶⁴ Ilan Pappé. *"A Brief History of Israel's Incremental Genocide. On Palestine*. (Haymarket Books. Chicago, IL: 2015). Pgs. 147-154.

¹⁶⁵ Pappé, *The Forgotten Palestinians*. Pg. 272.

¹⁶⁶ The remark about Israel's "special relationship" with the United States was originally made by President Kennedy, talking to Golda Meir in 1962. Rod Such. *"What's Behind the US Media's Special Relationship With Israel?"* *Electronic Intifada*. (June 3, 2016).

¹⁶⁷ «Согнули палку».

¹⁶⁸ Moshé Machover. *"Is it Apartheid?"* *Israelis and Palestinians: Conflict and Resolution*. (Haymarket Books. Chicago, IL: 2012). Pg. 272.

¹⁶⁹ Noam Chomsky. *"On Israel-Palestine and BDS."* *The Nation*. (July 22, 2014).

¹⁷⁰ Levi, "Begin Must Go." Pg. 281.

¹⁷¹ Quoted in Margaret Vallance. *"Rudolf Rocker: A Biographical Sketch."* *Journal of Contemporary History*. (Volume VIII, № 3: July 1973). Pgs. 89-90.

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¹⁷³ Garcon Dupont. *"Islands in a Sea of Land."* *Insipidities*. (July 26, 2014).

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¹⁷⁹ Gilles Dauvé and Troploin. *"Rojava: Reality and Rhetoric"* [February 2015]. *Libcom*. (May 17, 2016).

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¹⁸¹ "An end to Kurds' national oppression can come only with the destruction of capitalism." International Communist Party. *"The Kurdish Question."* *Internationalist Papers*. (Spring/Summer 1999). If this is true for Kurds, surely it is also true for Palestinians. "The cycle of purely national struggles in Palestine and the whole Middle East has revealed itself definitively bereft of historical prospects." International Communist Party. *"The Palestinian Question and the International Workers' Movement."* *Internationalist Papers*. (2001).

¹⁸² Lenin, *Critical Remarks on the National Question*. Pgs. 40-44.

¹⁸³ Rosa Luxemburg. *The National Question* [1908]. Translated by Horace Davis. (Monthly Review Press. New York, NY: 1976). Pgs. 110-111.

¹⁸⁴ "With the abolition of class distinctions, all social and political inequality arising from them will disappear of itself." Karl Marx. "Critique of the Gotha Program." Translated by Peter Ross and Betty Ross. *Collected Works, Volume 24*. (International Publishers. New York, NY: 1989). Pg. 92.

¹⁸⁵ "The demand for equality in the mouth of the proletariat has a double meaning... In both cases, the real content is the demand for the *abolition of classes*." Friedrich Engels. *Anti-Dühring*. Translated by Emile Burns. *Collected Works, Volume 25*. (International Publishers. New York, NY: 1987). Pg. 99.

¹⁸⁶ Isaac Deutscher. "The Russian Revolution and the Jewish Problem" [October 29, 1964]. *The Non-Jewish Jew*. Pg. 66.

¹⁸⁷ Brossat and Klingberg. *Revolutionary Yiddishland*. Pgs. 20-21.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, pg. 39.

¹⁸⁹ "When I met my old comrades again in 1946, they expressed their astonishment at the fact I had become a Zionist. I explained to them that even if I were not a Jew, it would've been my duty as a Marxist and international socialist to place myself under the banner of the struggle for Jewish national liberation." Hersh Mendel. *Memories of a Jewish Revolutionary* [1958]. Translated by Robert Michaels. (Pluto Press. London: 1989). Pg. 327.

¹⁹⁰ Deutscher, "Israel's Spiritual Climate." Pgs. 111-112.

¹⁹¹ Il Lato Cattivo. *"Letter on Anti-Zionism"* [2014]. Translated by Marco Schulz. (April 5, 2018).

¹⁹² Bernard Lyon. *"We Are Not 'Anti'."* Translated by Jake Bellone. (August 29, 2016).

¹⁹³ "Fascism and antifascism, Zionism and anti-Zionism: these are all varieties of bourgeois ideology which can oppose each other violently but also make shady deals among themselves." Amos, "Labour, the Left, and the 'Jewish Problem'."

¹⁹⁴ *"Partial" Struggles: A Reactionary Dead End.* *Platform of the International Communist Current*. (December 30, 2004).

¹⁹⁵ Леон Троцкий. *«Письмо Лазару Клингу»* [28 января 1934 г.]. Архив ЛД Троцкого, Том 7.

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