COMMUNALISM

A Social Ecology Journal

Migration:

Can we abolish the borders?

Town Meeting Democracy | Ethical Consumption | Nazism and Islamism

A common future

Nationalism is corrupting Africa, Asia, Oceania and the Americas. More than anywhere else it is corrupting Europe. Since the 1990s, right wing populists and radical nationalist parties have gained a solid foothold on the continent, polluting European countries with their simple but menacing solutions.

Nationalism constructs artificial borders between human beings on minimal, and often arbitrary, biological, linguistic and cultural differences. These artificial differences are eagerly exploited. By making immigrants and refugees the scapegoats of a growing social insecurity, nationalist parties nurture a dormant parochialism and xenophobia. According to their propaganda, the traditions and way of life of "real Hungarians" or "true Norwegians" are threatened by "foreign cultures." But the very idea that those living in any given country have so much more in common with themselves than with their neighbors and others living elsewhere in the world is ridiculous. The cultural division of human beings into different quasi-biological categories – where "we" are assumed to be fundamentally different from "the others" – is simply reactionary.

Nationalism is not only a right-wing phenomenon, but is advanced also by a "national Left." It is high time that we abandon the deceptive dogmas of "progressive nationalism" – it represents no bulwark against imperialism. Too often, the Left veils how the calls for social liberation are substituted by calls for national liberation, and how the empowerment of the people is substituted by the empowerment of a small and often tyrannical elite. This development is evident in Venezuela, where the president Hugo Chavez – presenting himself as the expression of the Venezuelan people – is concentrating ever-greater powers into his own hands.

It is now more important than ever to propose remedies against nationalism. First, we have to nurture the notion that we all belong to a common humanity. Second, we have to maintain that there are greater differences between the exploiters and the exploited, the powerful and the powerless, within the same country, than there are between "nations." Third, we must consistently fight the influence of nationalists, while not shirking from criticizing reactionary tendencies within immigrant milieus. Finally, we must seek out practical alternatives to nationalism, the nation-state and its borders. We think the essays we have collected in this issue give a decent overview of the challenges we face.

As the alternative to nationalism, we propose *communalism*: a humanist politics based on democratic participation and social equality. We need tangible alternatives to the nation-state and nationalism, and the very essence of communalism is to create *common* political arenas where people are included, not on the base of their nationality or "ethnicity," but as cosmopolitan *citizens*.

The real challenge is not how to protect "our culture" and "our borders," but rather how we can find new arenas for common education, socialization and enlightenment in order to develop our richest humanist traditions. Only through a generous democratic politics can we create a common future, and heal our world from this nationalist disease that dulls our minds, poisons our societies, and stunts our children.

Never doubt the ability of a small group of dedicated citizens to change the world. In fact, it is the only thing that ever has.

Margaret Mead (1901–1978)

Contents:

Photo: LAG Norge

COMMENT

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After Copenhagen

There are many ways to look at the result of COP15, the UN climate summit in Copenhagen that many hoped would lead to ambitious, international co-operative efforts to minimize global warming. A lot of people have pointed out the disconsolateness of a situation where the most powerful countries in the world fail to act. Others have also pointed out the importance of having a debate on how we ourselves in the climate movement manage to mobilize people for change.

In a highly readable reflection on Copenhagen, Tom Athanasiou from *Ecoequity* claims that "the northern climate movement" has "quite failed to explain the structure of the global climate justice problem to the broader population." Athanasiou is one of the people behind the concept of so-called greenhouse development rights – an attempt at analyzing the rights and obligations of people in "carbon-constrained world."

Working with this concept *Friends of the Earth Europe* found out that in total, the member states of the European Union are *indebted* to decrease their climate emissions by at least 40 percent in 2020 (compared to the level of emissions in 1990). Before 2050 emissions have to be reduced by 90 per cent or more. At the same time they should contribute about 150 to 450 billion Euros a year to sustainable development in so-called "developing" countries.

The overall analysis of Friends of the Earth is sound. In order to respect basic human rights, European societies are forced to make large changes, in their economies and their usage of resources and energy. These societies also need to provide the means that are needed, so people, who live in areas with low income and a with a scarcity of economic resources, can keep developing their societies without having to depend on fossil fuels.

Why has the climate movement been unable to win the support of the general public for this kind of change?

The perception of the climate challenge in rich countries has tended to become *individualized* and the need for genuinely popular mobilization on a grassroots and democratic level is often forgotten when individual consumption becomes the focal point of "climate action awareness." There is also a tendency to focus too much on what is done on a higher level, like the nation-state or international institutions. This turns climate activism into lobbyism, and the struggle for climate justice into a very non-inclusive project.

When climate issues becomes a question of either individual lifestyle or lobbying, climate justice – or the rights-and-duties-perspective – often get too weakly articulated. Often, it also implies a neglect of a participatory process to cope with climate change – that is, the equal right of everyone to participate in a democratic process regarding these issues. The climate movement is in other words reduced to a movement made for two sorts of specialists: Lifestyle activists and lobbyists.

Such a movement indeed has a hard time promoting justice of any sort.

A genuine and thoroughly reflected focus on justice, rights and duties can hopefully lead us onto a better track. How can we get people and communities actively involved in decision making processes regarding issues such as energy sources, technologies, transportation, construction, farming, consumption patterns, and so forth? This is the central issue for the climate justice movement, besides ensuing everyone's right to a supportive natural environment. Indeed, the former is a prerequisite for achieving the latter. In retrospect it is not hard to understand that the UN meeting in Copenhagen failed largely because the climate movement had not yet succeeded in creating the political forms and conditions for such participation.

Thus if we are to create a powerful movement for a just and ecologically sound transition in rich countries, we have to assume the responsibility of contributing to a participatory democracy where broad sectors of the population are included in taking care of a climate friendly social development – a responsibility that politicians or business leaders evidently do not want to assume the responsibility for today. Only in this way can we create the pressure that is needed to force the political establishment towards some substantial steps during the coming international summits. And only this way can we hope to further a popular movement for more far-reaching, systemic changes. ●

Moving Forward

Social ecology is a bold attempt to answer the crises of our time. With a new outlook as well as a new politics it seeks to regenerate society and its relationship to the natural world. However, the far-reaching ambitions of social ecology seldom correspond to the reality we face. As it is, we have no major parties or movements fighting for these ideas, and we have no significant media. Our ideas are not popular.

For many years now, the social ecology movement has consisted of scattered groups and individuals who adhere to these ideas in varying degrees. For the most part, however, we have not been able to implement them into a visible new political practice, and for this reason, activists attracted to social ecology do not easily see the practical application of these ideas in their communities and daily lives. Truth is, we have not had any international coordination or even a little sense of direction. Many who may have been attracted to our ideas have drifted elsewhere, into academia or into more established political folds.

This must change, but how? Advancing the theory is obviously both important and necessary, but we direly need a political practice. This will not only make it possible to spread the ideas more effectively, but will make these ideas visible and understandable.

In order to start moving forward, a movement must be *created*: We need a variety of stable organizations, movements and projects, and we need to coordinate our efforts. Assessing the situation in which we find ourselves, we need to move ahead step-by-step. Here are some suggestions as to how you can help.

First, we now need to actually reach out to all the individuals who are already attracted to our ideas. By getting an overview of the situation where you live, and by actively reaching out, you can make all the difference.

Second, we need to build local groups around these ideas. This can be anything from discussion clubs to political organizations. But we must eventually move from scattered individuals to stable social ecology groups, of one sort or another, if we are to explore and advance a new politics.

Third, we need to make use of larger movements and initiatives working along similar lines. Movements for grassroots democracy or radial ecology deserve our active support, and can provide us with a much-needed platform. In this area, all possibilities must be explored: Our groups must become integral parts of a broader radical movement.

Fourth, we must consolidate the international network of social ecologists. By meeting regionally, continentally, and globally, we can share experiences and ideas and strengthen the bonds between us. In all these areas, *Communalism* aim to help out. Our goal is not only to provide a sense of theoretical coherence and direction, but also to help bring together social ecologists from all over the world. Hopefully, our journal can provide some stability and support to your local efforts.

Our movement has been lingering for too long: Now is the time to reach out, to start groups, to initiate projects, and to create regional networks. Now is the time to move forward.

Consumed by ethics

Text: Mat Little

Denied any power politically and harnessed to an economic system that demands ever greater flexibility and marketability, Britons are turning to the idea that they can change the world through their wallets.

Possibly the only commodity Britons can't enjoy with clear conscience is their government's foreign policy. Everything else you can buy. In 2008 ethical consumerism in the UK was worth £36 billion, compared to £13.5 billion in 1999. The ethical market now tops total sales of cigarettes and alcohol. And British people aren't developing an aversion to beer.

BECOMING MAINSTREAM

The once marginal concerns of 1980s third world debt campaigners and environmentalists have flooded the mainstream. Sales of Fairtrade food are expected to break the £1bn barrier in 2010. The ethically attuned consumer can now purchase a house with a green mortgage, go to work in an environmentally-friendly car, wear humane make-up, score a goal with a Fair Trade football, and invest on the stock market in a way that won't contribute to human rights abuses. Anyone contemplating a murder can enjoy the peace of mind that comes with buying a lead-free bullet guaranteed not to damage the environment.

NO ECO-WARRIOR

One man who has both chronicled and influenced the astonishing growth of the ethical living movement in the UK is Leo Hickman. A journalist with left liberal daily newspaper the Guardian, he attempted to live ethically for a year, shunning supermarkets for locally produced organic food, switching his bank account to an ethical alternative, buying washable nappies and making his own household cleaning products. He recorded his experiences in a weekly diary. Such was the interest that he now writes a weekly column helping to resolve the ethical dilemmas of readers such as choosing between bottled or canned beer and whether playing golf can ever be justified. Hickman says that, like many of the new converts to ethical consumption, he had no previous deep ideological commitment to environmental or human rights issues.

"I'm certainly no eco-warrior, or someone who's been passionately campaigning on these issues for years and years. I was a regular Mr. Average working in London, trying to pay a mortgage, had young kids," he says. "And a lot of the interest is coming from people where the penny has dropped and they have moments of self-realisation – 'look at my lifestyle and how linked it is to climate change, how am I directly feeding this highly globalised system or market that we now live in. Am I completely content with that? Is there anything I can do? Am I completely locked into this system and completely passive and helpless or do I wield a lot of power?'"

"EFFECTS OF OUR LIFESTYLE"

So why this sudden spate of national introspection? Something has clearly happened in the UK, Hickman says, to produce feelings of fear and doubt that have prompted people to reassess their personal consumption habits. The Iraq war, the South Asian tsunami, Hurricane Katrina and rising oil prices, he believes, all combined to pierce the bubble of western inviolability from the world's problems. Moreover, floods and other forms of extreme weather in the UK have brought home, in stark fashion, the fact that global warming is no longer just a scientific theory. "In the west, we've got it pretty lucky, but we're also irresponsible," he says. "We're now beginning to see the effects of what our lifestyle is directly connected to."

Neal Lawson, chair of the centre left think tank Compass and author of the anti-consumerist manifesto *All Consuming* believes the recession has only strengthened the desire for an alternative to the credit-fuelled shopping mania behind a doubling of consumption in Britain between 1996 and

A journalist with left liberal daily newspaper the Guardian, Leo Hickman (left) attempted to live ethically for a year. Kate Sebag (right) from Herne Hill in London founded a Fairtrade company, Tropical Wholefoods, in 1990 to import dried fruit from Uganda. "When I was first involved in campaigning on third world debt you would always paint the big corporations as the evil guys," she says. Photo: Una Hamilton

2006. "Taking care about what you buy, and valuing it, tends to lead us to consume less and therefore spend less. So the downturn is not a moment to turn out backs on ethical consumption but to deepen our resolve to practice it more effectively," he writes.

CORPORATE TAKEOVER
And while the UK public has been asking itself some difficult questions, UK Plcs has been asking itself has it can adapt to the new mood. Overcoming a previous resistance, all the main supermarkets stock their own branded Fairtrade products, while the zeitgeist in advertising is to hammer home the natural origin of all products. Upmarket retailer Marks & Spencer, castigated in the mid-90s for selling products made by child labour, has recovered from the worst sales slump in its history with the aid of an advertising campaign that leads on the ethical nature of its products, from sustainably caught fish to

clothes made with Fairtrade cotton. Even the name of the advertising campaign – Look behind the Label – echoes NGO campaigns against sweatshops. According to the store's own survey of its customers, 97 per cent have "high expectations" of the company on social responsibility.

Hickman, like many in the ethical consumption movement, sceptically welcomes corporate moves to accommodate themselves to changing consumer demands. "I don't think you should shun all these companies and say that they are evil," he says. "If you can get into these companies and work with them and cajole them, that is arguably a more successful route. Otherwise you've got no chance of policing them."

VINDICATION AND RESERVE
For the originators of the Fairtrade movement, the recent mainstreaming of ethical consumption combines a sense of vindication

and reservation, like the mixed feelings of seeing a reassuringly alternative pop group reach top of the charts after years of defiantly going against the grain.

Kate Sebag from Herne Hill in London founded a Fairtrade company, Tropical Wholefoods, in 1990 to import dried fruit from Uganda. The company has experienced massive growth since the Millennium. It now has a turnover of £2 million, imports more than 200 tonnes of dried fruit a year and employs 35 workers in the UK. A former NGO worker, she recalls how the nature of the Fairtrade movement has changed.

"When I was first involved in campaigning on third world debt you would always paint the big corporations as the evil guys," she says. "But when Fairtrade movement and the mark took off in the '90s, they very much positioned themselves that they wanted to work with the supermarkets – to get Fairtrade products onto the shelves. They were a reformist movement

Overcoming a previous resistance, all the main supermarkets stock their own branded Fairtrade products, while the zeitgeist in advertising is to hammer home the natural origin of all products. Photo: Anders Braut Simonsen

rather than an oppositional one. That's a big change in tone. It's resulted in Fairtrade coffee from Nestle. In 1990, that would have been inconceivable."

DIVIDING THE MOVEMENT

The decision to work with the system, rather than against it has divided the movement. There were bitter arguments among UK NGOs when the Fairtrade Foundation decided to give a Nestle branded coffee the fairtrade mark. One campaigning group, Baby Milk Action, urged a consumer boycott. And supermarkets have also been permitted, to the consternation of many, to make as much profit as they like from their own fairtrade products.

On balance Sebag sees the virtue of reformism. "If you'd continued to work in an

oppositional niche, you wouldn't be able to improve many, many people's lives," she says. "You'd be a company like us, and while we are doing really good stuff, we are just a drop in the ocean. If you bring companies like Nestle in, you are going to be benefiting loads of farmers in countries like Ethiopia. It's a drag that they get some nice window dressing for their corporate image. But it's never simple."

Yet there is compelling evidence that while the corporate world may claim to have taken on board ethical practices, the very process of concentration and acquisition endemic to capitalism, is destroying the qualities that made "ethical" firms distinctive. Many of the pioneers of ethical business – such as Ben & Jerry's and The Body Shop – have moved from private to corporate ownership. A 2007 study by the UK

magazine *Ethical Consumer* found that in all cases their record on the environment, human rights, animal welfare and political engagement drastically worsened as a result. For example, The Body Shop, given an "ethiscore" of 11 out of 20 when owned by Anita Roddick, was judged to have dropped to 4.5 after the take-over by L'Oréal. Seeds of Change slumped from 15 to 3.5 in the magazine's ratings after being acquired by Mars.

The success of Fairtrade has also exposed contradictions within the ethical consumption movement, between its environmental and human rights wings. Many consumers choose to buy organic produce from local farmers, while Fairtrade, by its very nature, involves the chalking up of thousands of food miles, as developing country farmers reach First World

consumers. The two wings of the movement clashed in 2003 when the Soil Association, which awards the Organic food kitemark, gave some home-produced organic food the Fairtrade mark in an attempt to pressurise notoriously exploitative supermarkets into treating small UK farmers better. But the Fairtrade movement forced the Soil Association to withdraw the label, stubbornly insisting that the concept of "fair trade" could only be applied to the relationship between first world buyers and developing country producers.

CORRECT, BUT UNAMBITIOUS

Sebag sees ethical consumption as a morally correct but unambitious response to world poverty. "It really sticks in my throat when you read bits of publicity material, like 'shop the world out of poverty'", she says. "It's very apolitical. People think they can go and spend money and that will in some way change the world. There is no structural approach to why people are in poverty. Ironically, in a way, our company is very much part of that. It is good that people buy our products but it's terribly limited."

Neal Lawson agrees that ethical consumption only scratches the surface of the problems it is meant to confront. "What if people buy more ethically but consumer more so the net effect is that the seductive grip of consumption is tightened, and in the process we avoid the big issues of creating a different type of society, and the means to achieve it?" he asks in *All Consuming*.

Of course, many ethical consumers do not just buy products. They have also taken part in campaigns such as Make Poverty History, an NGO-organised year-long series of events to pressure the UK government to radically change its policies towards the developing world. But the collective expressions of the ethical generation also bear the characteristics of consumerism – fleeting, based on gestures (such as the wearing of a white wrist-band) and conceived around the notion that social change can be achieved without conflict through the reconciliation of diametrically opposed interests.

POLITICAL PASSIVITY

Indeed, the whole ethical consumption movement has grown in tandem with the malaise of political passivity in the UK. Political participation is at an all-time low, both at a local and national level. The head of the UK's electoral commission, the body charged with increasing public involvement in the parliamentary system, has warned of a fatal disengagement from politics. One ethical consumer, Vandana Sharma from Bristol, expresses the mood of withdrawal: "I don't really like to get involved in politics because it's too messy. There is so much going on that you can never really know what the truth is. There's so much propaganda around, everything is manipulated," she says.

Andrew Simms, policy director of the New Economics Foundation, compares trying influence the political process in the UK with "grappling with smoke." "Ethical consumption is an expression of the anodyne mush of our very centralised political debate," he says. "If you compare the level of political debate in this country now with Victorian times, if you look at the vigour and rigour and range of political positions available in general public political debate, it was a lot more dynamic." Denied any power politically and harnessed to an economic system that demands ever greater flexibility and marketability, Britons are turning to the only arena left where they can exercise a kind of sovereignty. To the personal, anonymous, conflict-free choice between products, an act that is undertaken alone and without repercussions.

"It is a way of voicing our dissent without anyone hearing," says Hickman.

"What it does show is that people want to do the right thing, they want to engage with the wider world, express differences and make a comment about the world they want to live in," says Simms.

"But if shopping is the only way there is of doing it then we've got a problem." ●

Ethical consumer, Vandana Sharma, 31, from Bristol

"I buy all my food from The Better Food Company, an organic supermarket, that sources a lot of its products from local farmers and diaries. It makes you feel a lot more wholesome and you actually do a lot of good. The lifestyle that we're living in, it's very difficult to be sound about what you are doing because there's so much badness going on around you. Anything that you can do that is within your capabilities, you might as well do.

I buy my clothes from People tree and Howies. They use organic cotton and its fairtrade. It's going to be value for money. In mainstream shops you'll pay £60 for a coat and walk out and having a million other people wearing the same thing. I know it's going to be good value. It's supporting villages in India. It's a nice design. You know that you're helping other people and not just helping another multi-national corporation.

It doesn't really bother me that organic and FT is more expensive. You know that it's going to be good and good quality, and it makes a positive impact.

It's not difficult, it's just a mindset. For me going into the City Centre on Saturday is difficult because the last thing I want to do is be surrounded by masses of people who have no idea about quality living. People say it's so expensive buying ethical products but it isn't. You know it's going to last a lot longer.

I don't think it's changing the world. I think it's nourishing what's around us."

It may be gratifying to assist people in a distant, impoverished community, but their future may be tragically limited if we do not fundamentally reshape our own way of life and our society.

Can we buy our way to an ecological society?

Text: Brian Tokar

Today we live in the most narrowly market-driven society the world has ever seen. Social movements in many countries are at a low ebb, and people's lives are utterly shaped by the norms of the commercial marketplace. This is especially true in North America, but its effects are increasingly felt in Europe as well. Advertising for consumer brands aims to reorient our personal aspirations and our fundamental sense of selfhood. We seem to live in a world where literally everything is for sale.

It is little surprise that, in such a world, people seek to express personal and political beliefs through decisions about what to buy. As we are made to feel utterly disempowered as citizens or community members, we logically gravitate toward "ethical shopping," whether in the form of fair trade, "green" products, cruelty-free labeling, or other similar efforts to shape purchasing decisions along more ethical lines. While these various product labels may offer useful information – and can meaningfully distinguish safer or more ethically sound choices – it is still important to ask the larger question, "Can we buy our way to a better world?"

FAIR TRADE

Ethical shopping has come a long way from Oxfam and others' early efforts to channel the proceeds of craft sales toward the original producers. The coffee cooperative Equal Exchange got its start importing Nicaraguan coffee to the US in the 1980s, in open defiance of the Reagan administration's prohibition on imports from the Sandinista regime. Ben & Jerry's ice cream won accolades for purchasing rainforest nuts from indigenous producers in South America and paying them a fairer price – until supply problems led them back to the ordinary commercial supply chain. In 1990, as American environmentalists were preparing to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the original Earth Day, "green consumerism" emerged as the most tangible expression of the view that individual lifestyle choices, rather than corporate practices, are the primary cause of our environmental problems. Today, we can find "fair trade" coffee at Starbucks or even McDonald's, buy organic cereals at WalMart, and even pay into a fund to offset the carbon emissions resulting from our air travel or excessive automobile use.

Several fair trade companies are trying hard to make a positive difference. Some work with communities in remote areas of the world to assure the ecological soundness of their production methods, and help organize worker cooperatives. For example Vermont-based ForesTrade imports coffee and spices from thousands of indigenous farmers in Indonesia and Guatemala, while working actively to encourage rainforest conservation, cooperative management and proper organic soil care. By assuring a fair price for quality organic and wildcrafted ingredients, they help people resist the pressure to destroy their environment and abandon traditional ways of life. They help balance the economic power of transnational timber interests by providing alternative, sustainable livelihoods from the intact rainforest.

THE UNFAIR MARKET

But how sustainable is a livelihood that still ultimately depends upon the whims of an international market for luxury goods? What happens, for example, when the price of vanilla beans begins to fall rapidly due to a glut of synthetic vanillin on the world market? Or a particular type of coffee is no longer fashionable in New York, Seattle, Paris or Sydney? Can the capitalist market, the source of so much oppression and upheaval, the nexus of competition and social dislocation, ultimately bring relief from its own excesses?

Perhaps the most insidious new form of "green" capitalism is the rapidly growing market in carbon offsets. US pressure on countries negotiating the Kyoto Protocol led

Several fair trade companies are trying hard to make a positive difference by working with communities to assure ecological production methods, and help organize cooperatives like this in Chiapas, Mexico. Photo: Latin-amerikagruppene i Norge.

to the establishment of carbon trading and offsets as the primary economic instruments to forestall catastrophic climate changes. For market fundamentalists, these are the carrots that accompany their aggressive lobbying campaigns against public policies to mandate cleaner technologies. Today, affluent US and European consumers are increasingly encouraged to pay someone to plant trees or build greener power plants, in the hope of compensating for their own extravagant lifestyles.

Many US utilities now levy a voluntary surcharge on their customers for power purchased from renewable resources, including solar installations and wind turbines. A UK company called Climate

Care has contracted with British Gas, British Airways, and many other companies to allow consumers to offset the climate consequences of their travel, gas, and electric use by supporting energy saving projects in the developing world. Several Native American tribes have even launched a US company that gives utility customers the opportunity to support biogas projects on various farms. On a global scale, countless numbers of often dubious projects are profiting from carbon credit schemes established under the Kyoto Protocol.

CONSUMERS OR CITIZENS?

At worst, these practices help people to assuage the guilt from their high-consumption

lifestyle while avoiding more serious measures to reduce their energy use. They contribute to activities that help the planet in small ways, while effectively cushioning public demands for more substantive changes in technology, working patterns and global economic structures. At best, they help individuals to do the right thing, but rely for their purported benefits on a vast, impersonal, and highly manipulable global market. By purchasing fair trade products or carbon offsets, we seek to accomplish in the wider world what we don't seem to be able to do at home: to live an ethical life with a minimum of destructive environmental and social impacts. We seek a personal, albeit ephemeral connection to values we can no longer recognize in our

own society. Whether we're purchasing food or craft items from more traditional peoples or seeking to ameliorate the environmental effects of our own consumption, we hope these exchanges will keep us in touch with social values that we can no longer practice in our daily lives.

In an essay published in the 1980s, the late social ecologist and philosopher Murray Bookchin contrasted the "gray amorality" of our present market-dominated society with the embodied ethics of an older, more village- or neighborhood-centered world. That world was still palpable when Bookchin was growing up in New York in the 1930s, a world of close communities and extended families, where "older members formed living recollections of a more caring pre-industrial society." Today, the market "has not only imperialized every aspect of conventional life, it has also dissolved the memory of the alternative lifeways that precede it."

Bookchin's essay on "Market Economy or Moral Economy?" was originally presented to a convention of organic farmers and gardeners in New England nearly a quarter century ago. Bookchin warned that the increasing commodification of organic products – along with the managerial ethic that was overtaking the once-vital US food cooperative movement – was threatening to eviscerate the underlying moral and ethical character of organic farming. He proposed an alternative "moral economy" to the impersonal market economy that voraciously rechannels new social and economic experiments into its competitive and essentially antisocial realm. A moral economy, for Bookchin, would reclaim traditional values of mutual aid and complementarity within a "social ecosystem" that transcends mere economic exchange and models a more holistic vision of human community. Economic experiments and redesigned towns and neighborhoods would serve as a kind of school, helping renew and reshape the ethical character of individuals and their communities. They would help people educate themselves for a fuller kind of citizenship, one where social power emanates from the community, not from alienated

At worst Fairtrade help people to assuage their guilt for workers in the "Third World" while avoiding more serious political measures. Photo: Camilla Mellemstrand/Utviklingsfondet

choices between competing brand names in the supermarket.

ECONOMIC POWER

Today, fair trade and its various offshoots fall far short of this promise. Further, any means of expressing our values merely through the marketplace evades the fundamental problem of who makes the decisions that shape our future. It can be quite gratifying to assist people in a distant, impoverished community, but their future may be tragically limited if we do not meaningfully reshape our own way of life and our society. We can try to make ethical choices, and spend our money where we can to help support those choices. But as long as corporations and financial speculators are able to move millions of dollars around the world instantaneously with virtually no constraints – and impede the structural changes needed to forestall an environmental

catastrophe – our personal choices will have little lasting effect. When we try to "vote with our dollars," we tend to forget that our dollars pale to insignificance compared to the brute economic power of the IMF's, Exxons and WalMarts of this world. Their power is only surmountable when we refuse to limit our role to that of consumers, assert our political power as citizens and community members, and begin to alter the often-hidden structures of global economic power.

For Bookchin, "a market economy and a moral economy raise fundamentally opposed notions of humanity's self-realization and sense of purpose." While we try to make personal economic decisions as ethically as possible, it is crucial that we participate actively in the renewal of our communities, and also participate in broader social movements seeking a more thorough transformation of global institutions. ●

Text: Ken Furan

There is no progressive nationalism

Many on the Left advance nationalism and the nation-state as a bulwark against imperialism. This is a dangerous fallacy.

The role of nationalism in the struggle for human development and liberation has always been a source of conflict on the Left. To the classical Left of the 19th and early 20th century, nationalism and borders were generally viewed as an artificial division of people that functioned as a lightning rod for the bourgeoisie – turning the struggle between the rich and the poor into a struggle between the oppressed.

THE SECOND WORLD WAR

After the Second World War, this changed drastically. Mainly as a result of massive state intervention in the economy, capitalism came out strengthened in the period after 1945 – putting into question the Marxist belief that the proletariat would be driven to an international revolution by the logic of capitalism. Simultaneously, it became increasingly obvious that the Soviet Union, which in the 1920s and 30s was regarded as

the "fatherland of Socialism" by many on the Left, had degenerated into a capitalist and totalitarian state.

Consequently, post-war Western radicals began to look to struggles in what they called "The Third World" for revolutionary forces. In the post-war era, the de-colonization process contributed to the spread of nationalism, and the fight against imperialist exploitation and plunder took the form of attempts to achieve independence from imperialist powers. On the Left – and especially within its Stalinist and Maoist excrescences – these struggles were understood as anti-imperialist, and "national liberation" began to be viewed as progressive. The highly statist and often authoritarian goals of these movements, however, were not taken into consideration.

MARXIST-LENINISM IN NORWAY

The radical wave of the 1960s, coming to Norway a few years later than the rest

of Europe, never found the libertarian and populist expressions that had been characteristic of the "New Left" in its early stages. To the contrary, the political radicalism that gained a foothold in Norway during the 1970s was immediately set in an extremely authoritarian direction. The spread of Marxist-Leninism in this era, which viewed the Chinese Cultural Revolution as the definitive model for modern revolutionaries, was in no respect a distinct Norwegian phenomenon, but they became disproportionally influential on the Left in this country.

The worldview of the Marxist-Leninist movement, first and foremost represented by the *Workers' Communist Party* (AKP-ML), was deeply infused by authoritarian traits from the beginning. It combined an uncritical devotion to "socialist" movements and regimes in the Third World – first Ho Chi Minh's Vietnam and Mao Zedong's China, and then Pol Pot's

Uncritical declarations of support to the "enemy of the enemy" contributes to legitimizing or defending reactionary forces around the world, like Hezbollah in Lebanon. Here from a manifestation in Stockholm. Photo: Robotpolisher

Cambodia and Enver Hoxha's Albania – with an equally boundless belief in the centralized Party as the guiding star of a future socialist upheaval.

THE "PRINCIPAL ENEMY"

The affection for these "socialist lighthouses" – in reality totalitarian states draped in a state sanctioned socialist rhetoric – found its equivalent in an uncritical attachment to notions such as "progressive nationalism" and "national liberation." Old Bolshevik dogmas were here coupled with new Maoist dogmas. According to Lenin, the struggles for national liberation in colonized countries were progressive by nature, because they undermined imperialism and international monopoly capital. Through Maoism, Lenin's theories took a new and peculiar form. According to Mao Zedong, a people always have the right to fight for independence with weapons in hand. The struggle against the imperialist powers would, according to Mao, give birth to socialist revolutions that would spread as "prairie fires" and swallow the capitalist world. An important idea in Maoism, taken up by AKP-ML, was to look for the "principal contradiction" and to find the "principal enemy." The enemy of the principal enemy should in turn be supported.

Therefore, during the Vietnam War, the *Viet Cong* – in fact, unadulterated Stalinists – came to be considered as the good guys.

Apparently, they did not care too much about what kind of "socialism" these independent nations would create once the dominant powers were driven out, or what kind of "liberation" the masses would really achieve within these new nations. By elevating the principle of "national sovereignty" and by looking to the "principal contradiction," the AKP-ML, as well as other leftists, evaded criticizing the totalitarian terror-regimes of the Third World. In turn, this lead to a relativization, and in the worst instances a defense of both state repression and genocide.

THE "NATIONAL LINE"

Besides the uncritical support to national liberation movements, another event would add to the stronghold of "the national appeal" in the worldview of the Norwegian Left. After 1971, the question of Norwegian membership in the European Economic Community (EEC), which today has become the European Union, was the most important issue on the political agenda. Initially, resistance to membership was framed as a blend of social and national demands.

However, the arguments of the Maoist movement became increasingly nationalist, and the defense of national sovereignty was coupled with a romanticization of "Norwegian culture" and specific "Norwegian values." The U.S. was considered the principal enemy – with West-Germany as its local deputy – and it was held that a membership in the community would make Norway into a dependent of West-Germany – something that resonated with the nationalist sentiments from the days when Norway was a dependent of Denmark.

A referendum was held in 1972 where a majority of the population of Norway voted no to membership in EEC, which only bolstered the nationalism of the Left. Enthusiasm for a supposedly authentic Norwegian language and the many local dialects flourished, and works of radical fiction increasingly picked up themes from the countryside. The leadership of the Maoist party at one point even decided that everyone should listen to folk music instead of "imperialist" rock.

SOVIET INVASION

From the mid-1970s, AKP-ML launched a campaign against soviet imperialism and it was claimed that the rivaling between Soviet Union and the USA would drag the world into a Third World War followed by an unavoidable battle for Europe. The threat of a soviet occupation as a consequence of the presumed war was also viewed as unavoidable. In the war, the Maoist party saw its last chance. The Party would be at the helm of the liberation struggle and lead the people to victory, and Norway would become a socialist state.

The AKP-ML, of course, never got its chance and the party slowly withered away. However, there has not been a confrontation with the "progressive nationalism" of the 1970s, and "the national line" continues to characterize left-wing thinking into the 21st century. No principled debate exists regarding the support to national liberation movements, why the social goals of these movements normally are channelized into authoritarian,

pro-state and even xenophobic movements, or on the excluding and particularistic essence of nationalism itself.

FROM ANTI-CAPITALISM TO ANTI-WAR

The growing radicalism in the wake of the "Battle of Seattle" has not managed to exorcize nationalism from left-wing circles – neither on the established Left nor among new activists. A widespread misconception among many "globalization critics" is that the nation-state has been weakened by the global economy, and that it should be rebuilt as a bulwark against capitalism.

Since 9/11, the burgeoning anti-capitalist movements have moved in a highly disturbing direction. As a result of the US-led wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, a large part of the energy on the Left has been directed towards exposing the assaults and dirty foreign policy ambitions of the elites in the USA. The move from "anti-capitalism" to "anti-war" has been welcomed by many on the Left, and they claim that the connection between capitalism, militarism and imperialism is apparent to young activists.

Unfortunately, another thing has happened that normally occurs when war and peace is on the agenda: The tendency of forming a block politics based on the classical Maoist conception of fighting the principal enemy. One of the main reasons for the degeneration of the libertarian and populist impulses of the New Left in the 1960s and 70s were the changing political circumstances and especially the outbreak of the Vietnam War. Justified resistance to U.S. militarism, today, has its counterpart in uncritical declarations of support to the "enemy of the enemy." This contributes to legitimizing, or in the worst cases defending, the reactionary forces around the world – like Hezbollah, Hamas, and other Islamic resistance movements in the Middle East – or a disregard of authoritarian developments in countries like Venezuela.

A LIBERTARIAN AND HUMANISTIC LEFT

Of course, this is not about denying the right of a suppressed people to establish its
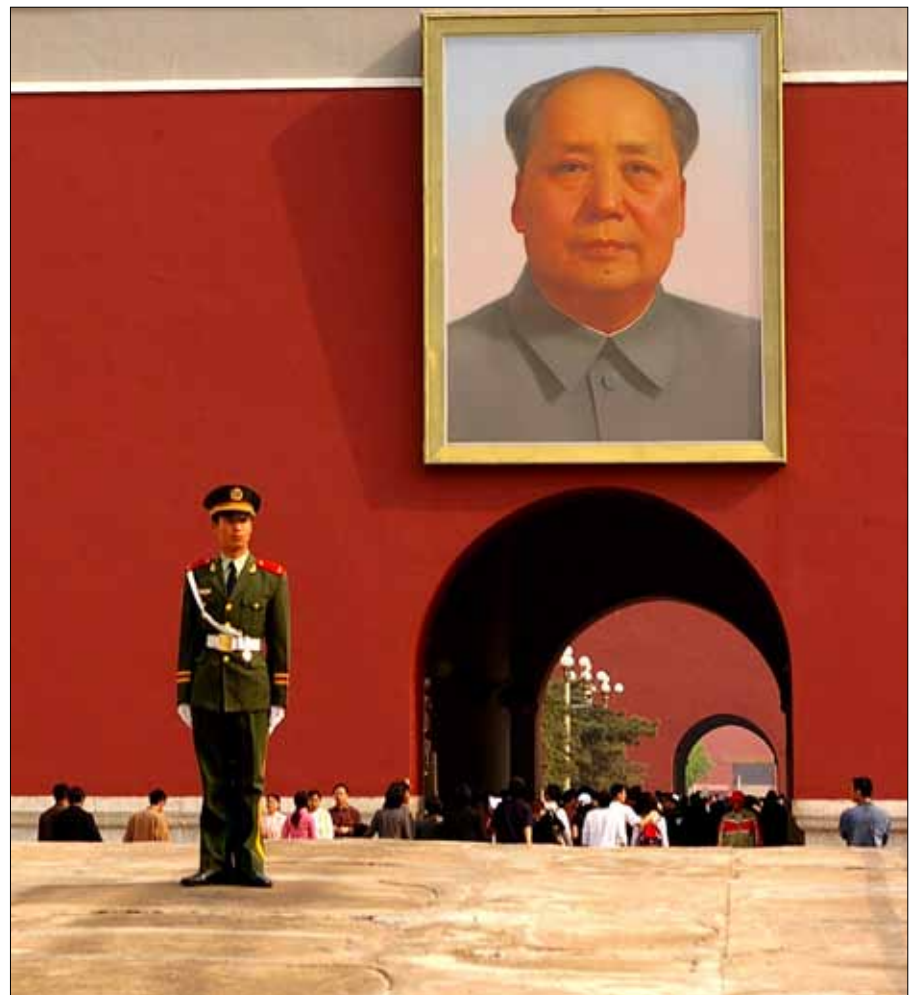
According to Mao, the enemy of the principal enemy should be supported. Photo: Chishiki Lauren.

independence; neither is it about dismissing the need to combat imperialist aggresion and exploitation. But resisting one oppressor is not the same as supporting movements that seek to oppress its own people. The enemy of my enemy is not my friend.

So how should left-wing radicals relate to nationalism and the nation-state? Can nationalism be a progressive force?

If we are to recreate a modern Left, and give it a libertarian and humanistic shape, we need to provide fresh answers these questions. Maoist influence on the Left has been disastrous: The Norwegian Left has for many years chosen a pro-nationalist line, where uncritical support to national liberation movements has been cast with absurd notions of a progressive Norwegian nationalism.

We need to get out of the current deadlock, marked by Leninist dogmatism, pro-state elitism and a narrow-minded particularism. For too long the exclusionary nature of nationalism – which with its mere existence tends to defend the worst illnesses our societies; statism, xenophobia, "ethnic" blood-baths, not to speak of elitism and militarism – has not been given sufficient attention.

Nationalism, in its essence, is a poison. It produces artificial borders between human beings on minimal, and often arbitrary, biological, linguistic and cultural differences, and it conceals hierarchical and class-based conflicts. There is no "benevolent" or "progressive nationalism." So let us search for answers elsewhere, and create a truly libertarian form of collectivism. ●

Strangers into Citizens

Text: Sveinung Legard

– It was the personal stories of migrants who have been living "undocumented" in the UK for ten or fifteen years that changed people´s minds on the immigration issue, says Julie Camacho, lead organizer from the London Citizens movement.

For the last 12 years, London Citizens have been working to empower the citizens of London through a range of social justice campaigns and assemblies that hold business leaders and politicians to account.

–What is London Citizens, and why was it formed?

– The London Citizens is one of the biggest civic alliances in England, consisting mainly of faith communities, but also schools, universities, charities and other small groups coming together to work on social justice issues. They have all have in common that they insist on the participation of ordinary citizens in public life.

The alliance was formed 12 years ago by a social worker, who was concerned that social workers never attempted to solve social problems. He got in touch with the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) in the U.S. where he was trained, and brought these practices of training citizens back to England. London Citizens started out in East London. They were working in an area that had been deteriorating for many years, and started with small issues such as manufacturers who were disposing of rubbish and toxics in their neighborhoods. Since then it has spread.

– How did you yourself personally get involved with London Citizens?

– I have a background in various organizations, and was working as a translator for a trade union who was recruiting migrant workers. I got interested in London Citizens because of the Living Wage campaign among the workers at the university I was attending. Unlike charities that often are based on handing benefits to victims of injustice, I saw that the victims themselves were agents for change.

– How is London Citizens organized?

– We are divided in three chapters, East, South and West London and currently trying to get established in North of London. We have common campaigns and work on issues in our own communities. Right now, in my area, we are doing a campaign to decimate the amount of rats which is something the members of the community themselves have identified as a problem.

– One of your methods is to engage citizens through what you call listening campaigns and accountability assemblies. Could you tell me more about this?

– Currently we are organizing accountability assemblies before the Parliamentary election in May, where we invite politicians in the boroughs to open meetings where they can meet citizens. We have already organized a series of listening campaigns, basically meetings and face-to-face conversations to discover what issues are important for people in the community. In my own area, street violence, road works, a living wage and the

London Citizens was the first organizer of a manifestation for the "regularization" of undocumented immigrants. In 2007 and 2009 more than 10.000 people showed up on Trafalgar Square to support the proposal of the London Citizens campaign. Photo: Chris Jepson

state of a local hospital were selected as the most important ones. We are now asking whether the political representatives would like to commit to this agenda.

We have done a similar thing on a national level related to the recession, where we conducted a listening campaign and came up with four point agenda. These included a 20 per cent interest cap on lending and an effort to increase the financial literacy among young kids, where students in school learn how to use their money, save and the like. It also included an ending of aggressive lending practices where banks call people at their home and offer them loans at very high interest rates, and also the living wage. We brought this to the parties by presenting the demands to them at an accountability assembly attended by more than three thousand citizens.

Through these accountability assemblies we provide the politicians with a political agenda that has come out of face-to-face conversations, and we are giving them a chance to hear what the citizens think. This is what the politicians should do themselves if they were accountable, but since politicians hardly are accountable anymore, we have to teach it to them.

– Can you give me an example of how the campaigns you are working with have originated – for example the Living Wage campaign that has become an hallmark of the London Citizens' movement, or the Strangers into Citizens campaign that you have been involved in?

– The Living Wage campaign started out with a parish priest who wanted to get in touch with the mothers in his community, but the problem was that they did not show up in church. So, he decided to seek the mothers himself and he soon found out that the reason that they hadn't shown up was that they didn't have time. They were working in sectors on low incomes and often had to work two or three jobs to make ends meet. The minimum wage didn't give a high enough salary for these women to be able to live from it. Hence, the Living Wage campaign was born. Since then, the campaign has won political support and today the Mayor of London has embraced it. There is a special unit in the city government regulating the living wage, and several companies throughout the city have adopted it.

The Strangers into Citizens campaign originated from the Living Wage campaign in the university sector, where we discovered that many of those working for low wages were in fact undocumented immigrants that were exploited because they didn't have any rights in the country. Muslims, Catholics and Evangelicals had undocumented immigrants in their congregations, and that many already personally knew people who had been staying

The Strangers into Citizens campaign originated from the Living Wage campaign in the university sector, where it was discovered that many of those working for low wages were in fact undocumented immigrants that were exploited because they didn't have any rights in the country.

in London on a so-called "irregular" basis. In schools students had suddenly seen empty chairs in their classrooms, and so on.

– You say that you decided to take on the issue although you knew that the Strangers into Citizens campaign would be very controversial. What do you mean by this?

– Undocumented immigrants have been portrayed in the media as dangerous – those who kill or rob you – as terrorists and similar things. Obviously, people have learned to hate migrants because of these stereotypes. At the same time, there is a huge economy that is dependent on this form of labor. That makes this issue very sensitive.

This campaign turned out more difficult than we initially thought, partly because of the fear of the citizens towards undocumented migrants. I had to interview so many people in this campaign, to show that these were not dangerous people, or that had traveled all this way just to live off benefits. As I said, many also had people in their schools, churches or mosques who were irregular immigrants, and I had to encourage them to speak about all the drama of their stories at meetings so that people would think differently of them. It was really the stories of people who have been living here for ten or fifteen years on an "irregular" basis that changed people´s minds on the immigration issue.

– The central demand of the Strangers into Citizens campaign is that people who have stayed in the UK for five years or more, should get a legal status. Why have you made this limit?

– The agenda of Strangers into Citizens was made through listening campaigns and a lot of discussion. We came up with a proposal that those who had been staying undocumented in the UK for five years or more, that had proven good citizens, paid taxes and spoke English, would be given a legal status in country. We estimate that this counts for around 500.000 people currently living and working in the UK.

Since we knew this campaign would create a lot of controversy, we decided create the easiest and most arguable proposal for politicians because we knew that nobody would support it if we asked for something like a general amnesty. The reason, therefore, for putting these limitations were pragmatic. Actually, it was undocumented immigrants themselves that insisted that the limit should be four years or more. One of the reasons was that they said it takes around four years to decide whether to stay in a new country or not. Many Brazilians for example are coming just for a few years to work and then return home. But the main reason was that they did not want an agenda that they knew wouldn't be adopted.

London Citizens is also a large alliance, where people have different opinions, and everything we do is a result of a compromise. Democracy is not always perfect, but it is probably the closest thing we can come to it.

– What kind of actions have you been doing as part of the campaign, and how successful has it been?

– Among other things we have arranged two huge manifestations in Trafalgar Square. In 2007 more than 12.000 people participated, and I was personally responsible for getting the *latinos* to come. In 2009 we were even more demonstrators. We also tried to get our proposal discussed in Parliament. To do this you need the signatures of at least hundred Members of Parliament. We managed to get 96 signatures, so unfortunately the proposal didn't get through.

There have been some small victories regarding the legalization of people that have been staying here for 10 to 15 years. This, however, has not been happening publicly since it is such a controversial issue. Just now, the general election campaign is underway and not a single journalist has had the courage to bring up the issue and it is not part of the political campaigns whatsoever.

I think it took a movement like London Citizens to bring up this issue in the UK, because there have been a lot of institutions like faith communities or schools who have been affected by this issue. It was not until London Citizens came that they got the courage to act on it.

– What is the politics of your movement?

– We teach people that they can do politics. By this we mean the Greek notion of politics that has to do with the affairs of the city. Although we are non-partisan we do politics every day, and by directly involving citizens we try to give power to our communities. We tell people that they are the bosses of the politicians and take them to assemblies where they get a chance to meet mayors and leaders of big business. London Citizens are the only ones who train people in leadership. This is not something you are taught in school or university, but we are teaching citizens that they have to be engaged, to stop being so passive, and we encourage people to do things collectively. ●

PAST PRESENT FUTURE

In 1889, the first congress of the Second International decided to call for international demonstrations on May 1st. The congress wanted to create an International Workers' Day to display strength and solidarity.

May 1st was chosen to commemorate the martyrs of the Haymarket Massacre in Chicago in 1886, where workers and police had violently clashed over demands for the eight-hour day. A general strike was called in response to the police gunning down four workers at the McCormick plant. In the following demonstration a bomb exploded, killing more than a dozen people, including police officers. In the highly politicized trials that followed, eight anarchists were found guilty of being social radicals; four of them was condemned to death and hanged.

For more than 120 years, May 1st has been the international day for protest, solidarity, and unity; massively mobilizing trade unions, radical groups, and Left parties. The celebrations, however, were not always without a bitter irony. For a few hectic years in Germany, Hitler managed to rename it the "Day of Work." In the United States, Eisenhower termed it the "Day of Loyalty" and the "Day of Law," also in an attempt to undermine its radical content. In Eastern Bloc countries, by contrast, the day was used to muster processions of loyalty to the brutal "socialist" oligarchies; often flashing the armed might of the regime.

Despite such cooptation and official pomp, as well as the general decline of the workers' movement, the essential lessons remain: Only through unity and solidarity can we build a strong movement for the working people. All rights we enjoy today have been borne by struggle.

One important slogan of the traditional workers' movement was "No Rights Without Duties, No Duties Without Rights." The profundity of this slogan seems lost to the radicals of our time. Not only does it radically undermine the privileged classes, it undermines the clientelism of the "welfare state": As such, it constitutes an important precondition for equal participation and equal rights.

May 1st remains an important day. Basic rights must be defended and fought for, for all members of our communities. As social ecologists, we are working to create a new, broad movement of workers demanding universal recognition as citizens and human beings. Indeed, we believe the future of the workers' movement is libertarian and municipalist: Channeled through our municipalities – and not through the nation-state – the unity of rights and duties forms the basis for social freedom. By creating true human communities and a new political sphere we are not only honoring past generations of radicals, but our own humanity.

Adam Krause
Author of *Art Must Be Destroyed*

MOVIE :

I would like to recommend Werner Herzog's *The Wild Blue Yonder* (2006), a film that defies easy classification. It is part documentary, as it incorporates footage from early experiments in flight, from space, and from deep sea dives beneath Antarctic ice, as well as interviews with scientists. It is also an entirely story bound film as these documentary elements are woven into a science fiction narrative told through a monologue by Brad Dourif as "the Alien."

This tension between truth and fantasy is brought to a poignant head when real scientists present their theories for escaping our solar system. The fictional Alien then shows that these ideas are unrealizable. He points out that if the fastest spaceship humans ever launched had left Earth 20,000 years ago on its way to the nearest star, it would have now completed a mere 15% of its 4.5 light year journey. With this simple fact, it is demonstrated that space does not present the potential for the preservation of human life. We either fix this planet or perish. *The Wild Blue Yonder*, by conflating fact and fiction, presents a sobering truth. If we are to survive, we will do so here or nowhere at all.

BY TERESA HAYTER
ILLUSTRATION BY TROND IVAR HANSEN

The Case Against Immigration Controls

If immigration controls serve no other purpose than to make many thousands of innocent people suffer, build an escalating apparatus of repression, undermine human rights, divide and weaken social struggles, and feed racism, they should go.

It is now considered axiomatic that states should have the right to stop people entering their territories, but it was not always so. It was not until the beginning of the twentieth century that immigration controls were introduced. Previously nation states had at times expelled people whom they considered undesirable, but they had not attempted to prevent immigration. Britain, for example, expelled all Jews in the thirteenth century, but it was not until 1905 that it adopted laws to keep them out in the first place.

Failure of the Declaration of Human Rights

The growth of the culture of human rights has so far failed to assert the right of people to chose where they wish to live, except within the states whose nationality they are born with, or have obtained. Thus the United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted in 1948, asserts in its Article 13-1 that "Everyone has the right to freedom of movement and residence within the borders of each state," which means the state in which they are officially allowed to reside. Therefore if, for example, people wish to leave an area of high unemployment and look for work where there is plenty of it, the authorities are not supposed to interfere with this wish provided it is within the boundaries of their "own" country. When, as in the Soviet Union and China, governments prevented their citizens from moving to particular areas within the country, this was considered an example of the repressive nature of these states, and widely condemned.

The Universal Declaration also states, under Article 13-2, that "Everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country." When the Soviet Union, East Germany and other states in eastern Europe prevented their citizens from leaving their countries, sometimes by arresting and even shooting them, and sometimes by building high fences and walls, perhaps reinforced with razor wire, this, again, was rightly considered shocking.

Less however is said about the walls, fences, razor wire, armed guards and other repressive devices which are supposed to stop people entering rather than leaving territories. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has nothing to say about the right of people, who are supposed to be free to leave their own countries, to enter another. In a period when the powers of nation states are being undermined by

the the forces of globalisation, states nevertheless cling tenaciously to one of their last prerogatives: the right to select which foreigners they will admit, and which they will try not to admit.

The Introduction of Immigration Controls

Historically states have needed immigration to expand their economies. In the early years of European empire, labour was obtained by varying degrees of force and compulsion. After the Second World War, in the period of reconstruction and boom, most European countries actively engaged in the recruitment of workers from abroad, first from other European countries and then from their former colonies, from North Africa, South Asia and the Caribbean, and from Turkey. But by the early 1970s, with recession and growing unemployment, the European countries which had previously imported labour had all set up controls to stop further migration for work. Legal immigration for employment largely ended. The apparatus of controls to stop people entering Europe and other rich areas without permission grew.

By the late 1990s some governments were also increasing their efforts to deport the people who had already come. In France, for example, people who had had more or less automatically renewable ten-year residence permits suddenly found that their permits were not renewed, or were given one-year permits, which meant they had either to go underground and work illegally, or leave the country in which they had lived for many years. They organised themselves as *Sans papiers* (undocumented people) to resist. In Britain, the government set targets for deportation, and began to increase random checks, arrests, detention and deportation of long-term British residents who had infringed some provision of the immigration laws. But as campaigners and visitors to Campsfield and other immigration prisons have discovered, in many cases those who were detained and deported had jobs, houses, wives and young children, and the latter might then lose their houses and become dependent on public funds for survival.

Undermining the Right to Asylum

One, at first legal, route for entry remained. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, in Article 14, stated that: "Everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution." But, after objections by the British, the declaration did not give them the unqualified right to receive asylum, only to seek it. It is left to the recipient states to decide who they will or will not grant refugee status to, rather than, as would be logical and as was the practise in the nineteenth century, leaving it up to refugees themselves to decide, as they are best qualified to do, whether they need to flee. On the whole, during the Cold War, when people did succeed in leaving the Soviet Union and other east European states, they were accepted in the states they went to. Similarly, after the Cuban revolution, Cubans were allowed into the United States (but Haitians were not).

The 1951 Geneva Convention on Refugees and its 1967 Protocol incorporated the right to asylum; they also gave it a restrictive definition. A refugee is defined as: "Any person who owing to well founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country." Some governments, including the German and French, have restricted this further, saying that persecution must be by state agents in order for the applicant to qualify for asylum. And over the years states have accepted declining proportions of the number of people who claim asylum, though the claims themselves differ little. They assert that this is because the "asylum seekers" are not really fleeing persecution but are merely seeking to improve their economic situation. They have started to attack them, in Britain for example, as "bogus," "abusive," and "illegal" (as if a person could be "illegal").

The authorities, rather than making it their task to examine fairly and objectively a person's case for asylum (which itself is likely to be impossible), take on an adversarial role: immigration service officials see their role as, like prosecution lawyers, to find inconsistencies or inaccuracies in the accounts given by refugees of their reasons for fleeing, which they then say undermine the credibility of their claims. In one case in Britain, for example, a Zairean asylum seeker said in one interview that there was no window in the cell in which he had been imprisoned, and in another that there was in fact a small grille above the door to the cell; this was given as grounds for refusing his claim.[1] In another case Home Office officials gave as grounds for refusal their (incorrect) assertion that escape across the Congo river was impossible because it was full of crocodiles.[2]

In a minority of cases these refusals are overturned at appeal. But the officials determining appeals are themselves appointed by the Home Office and are far from impartial. The process is arbitrary, a cruel farce. It is clearly influenced more by quotas and targets than by considerations of justice or truth. As a result governments turn down many asylum claims which nevertheless meet the criteria set by the international conventions to which they are signatories. They then claim, quite unjustifiably, that this is evidence that most asylum seekers are "bogus." Asylum seekers come overwhelmingly from areas in which there are wars and severe political persecution. A few of those who, with exceptional enterprise and courage, make it to Europe and other rich areas and claim asylum may do so in order to improve their financial situation. But the reality is that nearly all asylum seekers, whatever their reasons for migrating, are highly educated and are often dissident members of the elite. Many take a large drop in their standard of living, losing jobs, houses and land as well as their families.

Smuggling as Last Resort

Having progressively undermined the right to receive asylum, governments are now attempting to make it harder for people to

Historically states have needed immigration to expand their economies. In the early years of European empire, labour was obtained by varying degrees of force and compulsion. After the Second World War, in the period of reconstruction and boom, most European countries actively engaged in the recruitment of workers from abroad. But by the early 1970s, with recession and growing unemployment, the European countries which had previously imported labour had all set up controls to stop further migration for work. Legal immigration for employment largely ended. The apparatus of controls to stop people entering Europe and other rich areas without permission grew.

apply for it. They do this, above all, by imposing visa requirements on the nationals of what they call "refugee-producing" states, which of course means the states people are most likely to need to flee from. The requirement to obtain a visa means that refugees cannot travel legally to the country they wish to go to. Clearly they cannot apply for a passport to the authorities they are trying to escape from. Supposing they already have a passport, they could in theory go to a foreign embassy to apply for a visa, braving the security guards outside and the possibility they might be denounced by local employees inside. But if they then asked for a visa to apply for asylum, they would normally be quickly ejected; there is no such thing as a refugee visa. They could in theory apply for a visitor's or student's visa, but this would require documentary proofs and probably some funds, and would in any case constitute deception.

The usual course for refugees therefore became to buy false documents from agents. But this itself is becoming increasingly hard. Under various Carriers' Acts, airways, ferries and other transport operators are now required to ensure that the passengers they carry have documents, and are fined if they allow them to travel without them. Governments spend large amounts of money on technology to enable carriers to become better at detecting false documents, and sometimes post their own agents at foreign airports to assist in this process. If they succeed, they hand refugees back to the authorities they are fleeing from. Refugees are therefore forced to resort to even more dangerous, clandestine methods of travel. They usually have to pay large sums of money to agents, to enable them to flee in the holds of ships, in the backs or even in the tyre casings of lorries, underneath trains and even aeroplanes, in often overcrowded and leaky boats. In the process they endure great suffering. Many thousands die each year, of suffocation or drowning. Governments then announce that they will clamp down on the illegal smuggling networks, for whose existence they are entirely responsible, and have the gall to proclaim their concern over the cruelty of the agents and traffickers organising the refugees' escape.

Prisons for Refugees

The objective of governments is to reduce, by this and other means, the number of people seeking refuge in their countries. In Britain, for example, the Prime Minister Tony Blair set a target of halving the number of applications for asylum. This supposed that the applications were not related to the real needs of people to flee, but to the attractiveness of Britain as a place of refuge; the government said it was determined to take tough measures and not to be "a soft touch." The government met its goal, mainly because it had set the target in relation to the month in which applications peaked, and because this peak had itself been almost entirely the consequence of the number of Iraqis fleeing the threat of US-British invasion.[3]

But governments appear to continue to believe that the way to reduce the number of refugees is not to refrain from creating the conditions which people flee from, but to make conditions harsher in the countries they are trying to flee to. They lock refugees up

in prisons and detention centres, and they reduce them to destitution. Refugees are punished not for anything they have themselves done, but in the, probably largely mistaken, belief that their treatment will deter others who might follow in their footsteps. In the process governments flout a long list of human rights: the right not to be subjected to inhuman and degrading treatment, the right not to be arbitrarily arrested and imprisoned, the right to a fair trial by a properly constituted court, the right to family life, the right to work, among others. Amnesty International has said that Britain, for example, in its treatment of asylum seekers, violates article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights, article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the UN Body of Principles for the Protection of All persons under Any Form of Detention or Imprisonment, and virtually all of the guidelines on detention of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR).

Immigration prisons now exist in all of the rich, or "developed," countries to which refugees flee. The largest numbers in absolute terms are locked up in the USA. Australia, until recently, detained all those who applied for asylum. Britain was one of the first European countries to detain asylum seekers, and it remains the only west European country to do so without judicial supervision and without time limit. In theory the British government derives its right to detain asylum seekers and other migrants from its 1971 Immigration Act, which stated that they could be detained prior to removal. Although detention centres have been renamed removal centres, in practise only a small minority of those detained have had their cases finally dismissed and have removal directions. Some cannot be deported, for a variety of reasons, and therefore cannot legally be detained. Around ten per cent of those arriving at ports and claiming asylum, who are therefore not even technically "illegal immigrants," are detained. The process is arbitrary, and has to do with filling the available spaces in detention centres and prisons; the decisions are made by junior immigration officials, who have to give only general reasons, such as "we believe that the person is likely to abscond;" one of them, asked by the author what evidence he had for this belief, merely replied "we are not a court of law."

The numbers detained under immigration laws have increased from 250 at any one time to over 2,500 now. Some are detained in ordinary criminal prisons, subjected to prison procedures, sometimes locked in their cells for 23 hours a day, occasionally locked up with convicted prisoners. Others are detained in centres designated for immigration purposes, some of which were previously prisons and still have prison regimes, surrounded by high fences and razor wire. Most are run for profit by private security firms such as Group 4, whose guards, detainees tell us, are blatantly racist. Worse, the Labour government now imprisons children. This practise is not new, but previously the government admitted it was not legal, merely detaining thirteen-year-olds on the basis of travel documents which gave their age as thirty, and

refusing to believe evidence to the contrary. It now systematically imprisons whole families, including young children, babies and pregnant women, sometimes for months at a time.[4]

Denied Social Rights

To varying degrees and in different ways, most European countries now also deliberately reduce asylum seekers who are not locked up to destitution. In most countries they are not allowed to work. Increasingly they are denied access to minimal public support, including in some cases health services. In some countries, public financial support and accommodation is denied to those who have had their claims rejected but who may still be pursuing legal avenues to avoid deportation, or who cannot be deported (because they have no papers, because conditions in their countries are recognised to be unsafe, or because transport to their areas does not exist). In France public support, of a limited nature, is available only after a claim for asylum has been lodged, which may take months.

In Britain it is not available to those who are deemed not to have claimed asylum immediately on arrival (which in effect means that two-thirds of new asylum seekers are made destitute), and to so-called "failed asylum seekers." Although the courts have partially condemned this measure as inhuman and degrading treatment, and individuals can apply to have the decision reversed, many thousands of people, many of whom subsequently get refugee status, are currently living in various degrees of destitution with neither the right to work nor the right to receive any form of state support. The denial of public support to "failed asylum seekers" has now been extended to families; the intention (defeated after protests by social work trade unionists among others) was that this would mean that their children would be taken away from them and put into state "care." The support which is available to others has been progressively whittled away. Asylum seekers in Britain now receive some two-thirds of the sum considered to be the minimum subsistence level for the rest of the population. They are dispersed away from their communities, lawyers and sometimes families to one "no choice" offer of accommodation, often in sub-standard housing including condemned public housing estates, where they are isolated and vulnerable to racist attacks, to the extent that some of them fear to go out.

Increased Surveillance

Immigration controls thus give rise to some of the worst abuses of human rights in Western societies. Asylum seekers suffer mistreatment of a sort to which the rest of the population is not, so far, subjected. But the abuses threaten to spread to the rest of the population, and some have talked of a creeping "fascisisation" of European countries as a result of their increasingly desperate attempts to stop people entering Europe. Denial of benefits to certain categories of people could spread to the unemployed and

others considered undesirable. Police surveillance and random checks of immigration status can affect long-term residents who look "foreign." In Britain, where politicians and others pride themselves on the long tradition of absence of the obligation to carry identity papers, many immigrants nevertheless already find it prudent to carry their papers around with them. Asylum seekers have been issued with "smart cards" which carry their photograph, finger-prints, and a statement on whether or not they are allowed to work. And finally, the government has decided that identity cards themselves are to be introduced, and made obligatory at first for foreigners.

Especially since 11 September 2001, the issues of immigration and terrorism are becoming blurred. In Britain, under an Anti-Terrorism, Crime and Security Act, indefinite detention in high security prisons has been introduced for foreigners "suspected" of terrorism, some of whom are refugees and therefore cannot be deported; in an even harsher version of what asylum seekers already suffer, they are subjected to judicial procedures which are a mockery of justice, much of them held in private and in which neither the defendants nor their lawyers have the right to hear what they are being accused of. An earlier Act, introduced in 2000, made it a criminal offence to belong to or support certain "terrorist" organisations. This means for example that Kurdish refugees from Turkey have to choose whether they wish to be prosecuted if they say they are members of the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK), or fail to obtain refugee status if they do not. Their British supporters have also been prosecuted, and the act has been used against protestors against, among other things, the arms trade and against the invasion of Iraq.

Recruiting and Rejecting

Curiously, the escalation in the repressive apparatus of immigration controls, and the attempt to keep foreigners out, takes place at a time when European populations are declining, or forecast to decline. These declines, the ageing of the population, and the worsening ratios of working to non-working populations, are expected to cause serious economic and social problems in most European countries. The United Nations Population Division has estimated that to maintain existing ratios of young to old people, European countries would need extra immigration of several million people per year. Their governments usually accept that more, rather than less immigration is needed if their economies are to prosper. Most of them are now back in the business of recruiting foreign workers, especially skilled workers in trades such as computing and health services where there are obvious skills shortages, but also unskilled workers, mainly in sectors and jobs in which long-term residents are unavailable or unwilling to work and which cannot be transferred abroad, such as agriculture, catering, cleaning and some building work. In Britain the issue of work permits to employers, enabling them

to recruit workers from abroad for specific jobs, nearly doubled between 1998 and 2002. In Germany and elsewhere there are government programmes to recruit computer specialists.

It is at first hard to understand why governments are thus recruiting and encouraging foreign workers, and at the same time redoubling their efforts to keep foreigners out; for example they recruit nurses in Zimbabwe and the Philippines, and imprison nurses who come on their own initiative to seek asylum. The explanation appears to be that they want to control, or "manage," migration flows: to select desired migrants and reject others. But this too requires explanation. Some supporters of the free market argue, with a consistency which is absent elsewhere, that the movement of labour should be free in the same way as the movement of capital and goods is in theory supposed to be free. They do not agree that governments should determine the availability of labour to employers or attempt to set quotas according to some estimate of the needs of the economy, and believe recruitment decisions should be left to employers.

Insecurity and Exploitation

Some liberal economists also argue that, like free trade, the free movement of labour across borders as well as within countries would greatly increase prosperity; not only for the migrants themselves but also in the countries the workers migrate to and in those they migrate from, and in the world as a whole. Right-wing media such as the Wall Street Journal and the London Economist have long argued, to varying degrees, the case for the free movement of labour. Employers in the United States in particular have called for it, for the obvious reason that it would suit them to have easier access to the reserves of cheap labour that exist outside the rich countries. There is much evidence, now supported for example by recent research by the British Home Office, that immigrants make large contributions both to economic growth and to public finances, since they are mostly young, fit and educated at others' expense.[5] Most, if they are legally permitted to and sometimes if they are not, are willing to work for long hours and in poor conditions for jobs which do not require their qualifications. Even the eugenicist Oxford professor David Coleman, main researcher for the anti-immigration lobby Migration Watch, has to admit that immigration increases income per head for the native population; he merely argues that it doesn't do it as much as the government claims it does, and says the real problem is the threat to "social cohesion" and "British identity," whatever that may mean.

There is one possible economic rationale for immigration controls, which is that their existence makes immigrant workers precarious, and therefore more exploitable and "flexible," as the official euphemism has it. Most western economies, and especially the United States, are highly dependent on super-exploited immigrant workers, many millions of whom have no legal immigration status. None of the rich industrial countries of the West have signed up to

the United Nations' International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, whose intention is to guarantee some minimum protections for migrant workers, including the prevention of inhumane working and living conditions, equal access to social services and the right to participate in trade unions, so as to ensure that migrants have equality of treatment and the same working conditions as the nationals of the countries they are working in.

Governments' attitude to illegal working appears to be entirely negative and punitive, designed only to detect and repress it. In most cases the proposals for more government-permitted immigration are that the new workers will be admitted on short-term contracts, tied to particular employers and jobs (in Britain and some other European countries this represents a radical departure from previous labour-importing policies). Whether they are working "illegally" or on legal, but temporary, contracts, the workers are extremely vulnerable. They can be employed in exploitative conditions, at the mercy of employers, and denied basic employment rights. If they make an attempt to improve their situation, for example by joining a trade union, or to obtain redress against employers who fail to pay them the agreed amount (or at all), sexually harass them or in other ways mistreat them, they can be sacked.

In the case of the so-called "legal" workers, this will mean leaving the country or going underground. Even if they have been working entirely "legally" for many years in professional jobs, they are easy to get rid of: For example in Oxford large numbers of Filipina nurses have had their contracts suddenly, after many years, terminated, as a result, their union representatives say, of an increased supply of "local" nurses. Contract workers in the BMW Cowley factory, now an increasing proportion of the workforce and also increasingly migrants, were sacked with no notice and no redundancy payments in 2009. So-called "illegal" workers are of course in an even worse situation; the police and immigration authorities may be called in, quite often by their employers, and they may then be detained and deported. In Britain New Labour has created the new "serious criminal offence" of having false papers; those caught receive a one-year prison sentence, followed by deportation and/or an indefinite period in immigration detention.[6]

Left-Wing Support of Migration Controls

We are told (for example by Polly Toynbee in *The Guardian)* that immigration may benefit the rich, who get cheap nannies and nice restaurants, but damages the interests of the working class, whose wages and conditions the immigrants may undercut. Trade unions themselves have a shameful history of calling for immigration controls, especially at the end of the nineteenth century. Others, such as left-wing alliance Respect in Britain, have an even more shameful record of refusing to call for the abolition of immigration controls on the grounds that this might "put people off" (i.e. the white working class?). However trade unions and their members, even in the United States and Britain, are increasingly coming round to the view that the way to protect their interests is not to call for more controls, but equal rights for all workers. In the recent round of unofficial strikes in Britain, the media gleefully printed pictures of workers holding up banners saying "British jobs for British workers," but they failed to report that many of the activists were completely opposed to such xenophobia, and in particular attempts by the British National Party (BNP) to infiltrate the strikes. One worker, who was reported in media as saying that "they could not work alongside" the foreign workers, actually was complaining about the employers' policy of keeping them apart, so that they could not organize together to demand the respect of local agreements on wages and conditions.

Immigration controls are used, quite deliberately, by governments and employers to divide and weaken the working class, and to help to create scapegoats to distract attention from their own failure to permit decent wages, employment and housing, and to facilitate the current massive increases in inequality and brazen wealth of the elite. In France the *Sans papiers* argue that other workers should support them not as any form of charity, but in their own interests. They say that the precariousness created by immigration controls is a deliberate policy of neo-liberal governments, designed to ensure that immigrants provide a model of flexibilisation and "precarisation" which can be spread throughout the sectors in which they work and eventually to the economy as a whole.

But it is not clear that the policy benefits the economy, and employers, as much as allowing free entry to workers from abroad would. It also does not adequately explain why governments are apparently so anxious to crack down on "illegal" immigrants, who are the ultimately exploitable workforce, and "illegal" working, and to increase the rate of deportations and deter asylum seekers. The explanation is almost certainly that governments' attempts to prevent the entry of asylum seekers and other clandestine migrants have more to do with electoral than with economic considerations. Governments claim that the way to defeat the growth of the far right in Europe is to adopt their policies. They apparently believe they must demonstrate that they are being "tough": that they are adopting progressively more vicious measures to deter asylum seekers and others who might come into the country (to do the dirty and dangerous jobs which employers cannot find locals to do), and that they are doing their utmost to keep them out, or to evict them if they nevertheless succeed in getting past immigration controls.

Appeasing the Racists

Ultimately, the inescapable conclusion is that immigration controls, and government repression of migrants and refugees, are explicable only by racism, or at least by attempts to appease the racists. Immigration controls certainly have their origins in racism. In Britain for example they were first introduced in 1905 as a result of agitation by racist and extreme right-wing organisations, at this time against Jewish refugees.[7] Similarly, when controls were introduced in 1962 to stop immigration, this time, for the first time, from the former British empire, their introduction again followed agitation by racist and neo-fascist organisations. Up to 1962, all mainstream politicians had proclaimed that the principle of free movement within the former British empire would never be abandoned. Government reports had found no reason for immigration controls other than the supposed "non-assimilability" of the new immigrants. The covert aim of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act was to stop "coloured" immigration; since the economy still required an expanding labour supply, the legislation was framed so as to exclude Irish workers from controls and, it was hoped, let in white British subjects from the "old" Commonwealth while excluding black ones from the "new" Commonwealth.[8]

Politicians constantly reiterate that the way to deal with racism is to demonstrate to the racists that their concerns are being met. However, immigration controls do not appease the racists – they merely legitimate racism. And they also embolden the racists to demand more. When politicians lament the recent increase in racism, they fail to acknowledge that it is precisely their own actions, including their constant complaints about the supposed "abuses" committed by "bogus" asylum seekers, that explain the rise

in racism after a period when it had been in decline. Their actions and their words feed the parts of the media whose political agenda it has long been to stir up racism; these media use information, and phrases, which are often clearly derived from government sources. Governments only very rarely attempt to counter the lies propagated by the media and others, or give information which might correct the distortions and misinformation.

As a consequence, people believe, for example, that the number of immigrants and asylum seekers is far higher than it actually is. They fail to realise that asylum seekers, who have become the new object of race hate campaigns and violence, actually constitute an insignificant proportion both of the total number of refugees in the world as a whole, and of the number of other people entering Europe. In Britain in 2002, for example, the peak year for asylum seekers arriving in Britain, there were 100 times more visitors, 18 times more returning British citizens, 4 times more new foreign students, and 3 times more foreigners given official permission to work. Since then the number of asylum seekers has declined; the government boasts that it is because of its "stronger borders," but it is mainly because of a decline in the number of Iraqi refugees, and perhaps also because many people have decided it is better to go underground than risk getting locked up for being a refugee. It remains hard to understand why governments appear so concerned to reduce the numbers of asylum seekers, rather than of anybody else, unless their purpose is simply to appease the racists and in this way, they hope, win votes.

Equal Rights – Everywhere!

Immigration controls are inherently racist. Any scheme which tried to make them "fair" or non-racist must fail. Even if they did not discriminate, as they now do, against black people, east European Roma, the poor and anybody else who are subject to the current manifestations of prejudice, they would still discriminate against foreigners and outsiders in general. Those who demand tougher controls talk about "our" culture, whatever that may be, being swamped. Every country in the world, except perhaps in East Africa where human beings may have first evolved, is the product of successive waves of immigration. There are few places where there is any such thing as a pure, "native" culture. European culture, for example, if such a thing exists, is arguably under much greater threat from the influence of the United States, whose citizens have little difficulty in entering Europe, and from its own home-grown consumer excesses, than it is from people who might come from anywhere else. Moreover "non-racist" immigration controls, even if these were conceptually possible, would be pointless, since racism is the main reason for their existence. On the contrary, one of the very best ways to undermine the arguments of the racists would be to abolish immigration controls.

For the abolition of immigration controls to make sense, those who migrate must have the same rights as the residents of the places they migrate to. Immigrants need to have not only the right to work,

It should be an elementary principle that human beings have the right to decide freely for themselves where they wish to live and work. Having made that decision, they should not be condemned to be second-class citizens and to virtual enslavement in exploitative conditions, divided from the rest of the population.

but all the gains for the working class that exist in the countries they migrate to, including protection against unfair dismissal, the right to join and organise in trade unions, the right to leave their job and look for another one, the right to receive unemployment and sickness benefits and holiday pay, in the same way as everybody else. They should have full public rights, and they should of course have full access to social provision, including health provision and education for their children.

Immigrant workers do not usually take the jobs that might otherwise be available to existing residents and immigration does not usually lead to any worsening of wages and conditions in the countries they go to (on the contrary there is much evidence that it increases prosperity for all by enabling economies to expand and industries to survive). Nevertheless if there was any threat to the wages and conditions of the existing workforce, it would come from the fact that migrants, if they have no or few rights, can be forced to work in bad conditions and for low wages and cannot fight for improvements without risking deportation. They can come to constitute an enslaved underclass, which employers may hope not only to exploit directly, but to use as a means of weakening the position of all workers. The way to prevent any possibility of this happening is for trade unions, and all of us, to argue for full citizenship rights for all workers and residents, regardless of their nationality or how long they have lived in the country. This was more or less the situation, before 1962, of citizens of the UK and colonies who migrated to Britain; it accounts for their political strength, their militancy in their workplaces and their higher than average trade union membership. It is, with limitations, the situation of citizens of the European Union who migrate from one EU country to another. It is also of course the situation of United States citizens who migrate between states in the US federation. And it is the situation of people who migrate from one local authority to another within states, and receive the level of public services prevalent in the area they move to.

Free Migration is Possible

There are many who say that the abolition of immigration controls is politically impossible in a world in which there are severe international inequalities. But the argument that, without controls, there would be "floods" of migrants who would overwhelm the rich countries some of them go to is little more than scaremongering. The fact that there are huge international inequalities in material wealth does not mean that, as neo-classical economists might predict, there would be mass movements of people throughout the world until material conditions and wages equalised. It is true that if there were no controls there would probably be more migration, since the dangers and cost of migrating would be less; how much more is impossible to estimate. Immigration controls, however much money is poured into them and however much the abuses of human rights involved in their enforcement escalate, do not

work well; if for example, after years of expensive and painful legal processes, asylum seekers finally have their application refused, governments often find it impossible to deport them; and with each new, and more vicious, advance in the apparatus of repression, people are forced to find new, braver and more ingenious ways of circumventing it. It might be better if more people migrated to countries where there are more jobs, wealth and available land.

But most people require powerful reasons to migrate; in normal circumstances they are reluctant to leave their countries, families and cultures. When free movement was allowed in the European Union, some feared there would be mass migration from the poorer to the richer areas; the migration did not happen, to the chagrin of the proponents of flexible labour markets. The great desire of many who do migrate is to return to their own countries, when they have saved enough money, or if conditions there improve. Immigration controls mean that they are less likely to do so, because they cannot contemplate the struggle of crossing borders again if they find they need to.

In addition, when people migrate from choice, they normally do so because there are jobs to migrate to. For example, when subjects of the former British empire were allowed to enter, settle and work in Britain without immigration controls, and had the same rights as British subjects born in Britain, as was the case until 1962, migration correlated almost exactly with employment opportunities; when job vacancies increased, more people came from South Asia and the Caribbean, and when they declined, fewer did so. Especially for the migrants from South Asia, the pattern was that families sent their young men to do a stint in hard jobs in the factories of northern Britain and then return, perhaps to be replaced by a younger member of the family. When the threat of immigration controls became real, there was for the first time a surge in immigration which did not correlate with job opportunities, to beat the ban; well over half the Indians and about three-quarters of the Pakistanis who arrived in Britain before controls did so in the 18-month period preceding their introduction; after controls were introduced, immigrants could no longer come and go, and were forced to bring their families and settle in Britain; by 1967 90 per cent of all Commonwealth immigrants were "dependants." Similarly, there is evidence that the harder the US government makes it to brave the razor wire and other obstacles to cross the border into the USA, the more Mexican immigrants find themselves forced to make the hard decision to settle in the USA, and give up hopes of return. Finally, if people are extremely poor, they cannot raise the money to migrate, except perhaps to neighbouring countries or into cities; this will, sadly, be the case for the vast majority of so-called "climate refugees." And people do not or cannot undertake the risks and expense and painful separations of migration, in order to live in squalor off public funds.

It is of course the case that too many people are forced to flee, if they have the means to do so. People should be free to migrate

if they wish to, but they should not be forced to migrate. Supposing the governments of the rich countries were in reality concerned by the problem of forced migration, there would be more humane, and probably more sustainable and effective, ways to reduce it than by casting around for yet more brutal ways of enforcing immigration controls. Governments themselves often bear direct responsibility, and are nearly always partly responsible, for creating the conditions from which people flee. There is much that they could do, and above all not do: they could refrain from supporting and arming repressive regimes or the opposition to more progressive regimes; they could, as a minimum, not supply weapons to the participants in wars and civil conflicts; and they could cease to invade other countries. They could refrain from exploiting the peoples and resources of Third World countries; thus, for example, the conflict in East Congo, in which millions have died, and which has forced many thousands to migrate if they can, was fed by the rapacity of western corporations, which arm and finance the militias who supply them with the resources they want, especially coltrane. When the West's corporations or its agencies the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund engage in projects which displace people or pollute their land, or impose policies which impoverish them and create unemployment, people who are made destitute or landless are unlikely themselves to have the resources to migrate, but the situation may feed war, conflict and repression which force those who can to migrate.[9]

The increases in asylum seekers in Britain, for example, in the last few years were overwhelmingly from four countries bombed and/or invaded by the West: Somalia, former Yugoslavia, Afghanistan and Iraq. In particular, while there was a steady trickle of refugees from Iraq under the Saddam regime and in the years of economic sanctions, there was a surge in numbers in response to the threat of US/British invasion. Others, for example from Angola, Mozambique, Chile, have fled from proxy forces of the West, which systematically attempts to destroy any government which might be attracted to socialism, or just carry out reforms, such as land reform, nationalisation, or any redistribution of wealth from the rich, foreign or local. The destruction of the Soviet Union and the triumphalism and excesses of neo-liberalism in the USSR and East European countries have created more refugees, some of them, for example, medical professionals who are no longer being paid.

It should be an elementary principle that human beings have the right to decide freely for themselves where they wish to live and work. Having made that decision, they should not be condemned to be second-class citizens and to virtual enslavement in exploitative conditions, divided from the rest of the population. They should have exactly the same rights as all other residents of the place they have chosen to live in. Immigration controls serve no purpose other than to make many thousands of innocent people suffer, build an escalating apparatus of repression, undermine the human rights of all of us, divide and weaken the working class, and feed racism. They should go – like slavery, apartheid, and other horrors in their time. ●

NOTES

1 Asylum Aid, *Adding Insult to Injury: Experiences of Zairean Refugees in England* (London: Asylum Aid, 1995).

2 Ibid.

3 Most of the figures in this article are taken from the British Home Office, *Statistical Bulletins*.

4 See for example Bail for Immigration Detainees, *Pregnant Asylum Seekers and Their Babies in Detention* (London: The Maternity Alliance, Bail for Immigration Detainees and London Detainee Support Group, 2003) as well as many other sources.

5 Ceri Gott et al. (London: Home Office Research Directorate, 2001 and 2002).

6 See for example campaigns by No Borders groups, especially in London, and by CAIC (Campaign Against Immigration Controls) and No One Is Illegal. See also Hsiao-Hung Pai, *Chinese Whispers: The True Story Behind Britain's Hidden Army of Labour* (London: Penguin, 2008); Rahila Gupta, *Enslaved: The New British Slavery* (London: Portobello Books, 2007). Gupta, after interviewing a number of migrant workers, concludes that the one thing that would free them from effective slavery would be the removal of the threat of deportation, in other words "open borders."

7 See for example Steve Cohen, *Standing on the Shoulders of Fascism: From Immigration Controls to the Strong State (*Stoke on Trent: Trentham Books, 2006)

8 I. R. G. Spencer, *British Immigration Policy Since 1939: The Making of Multi-Racial Britain* (London: Routledge, 1997).

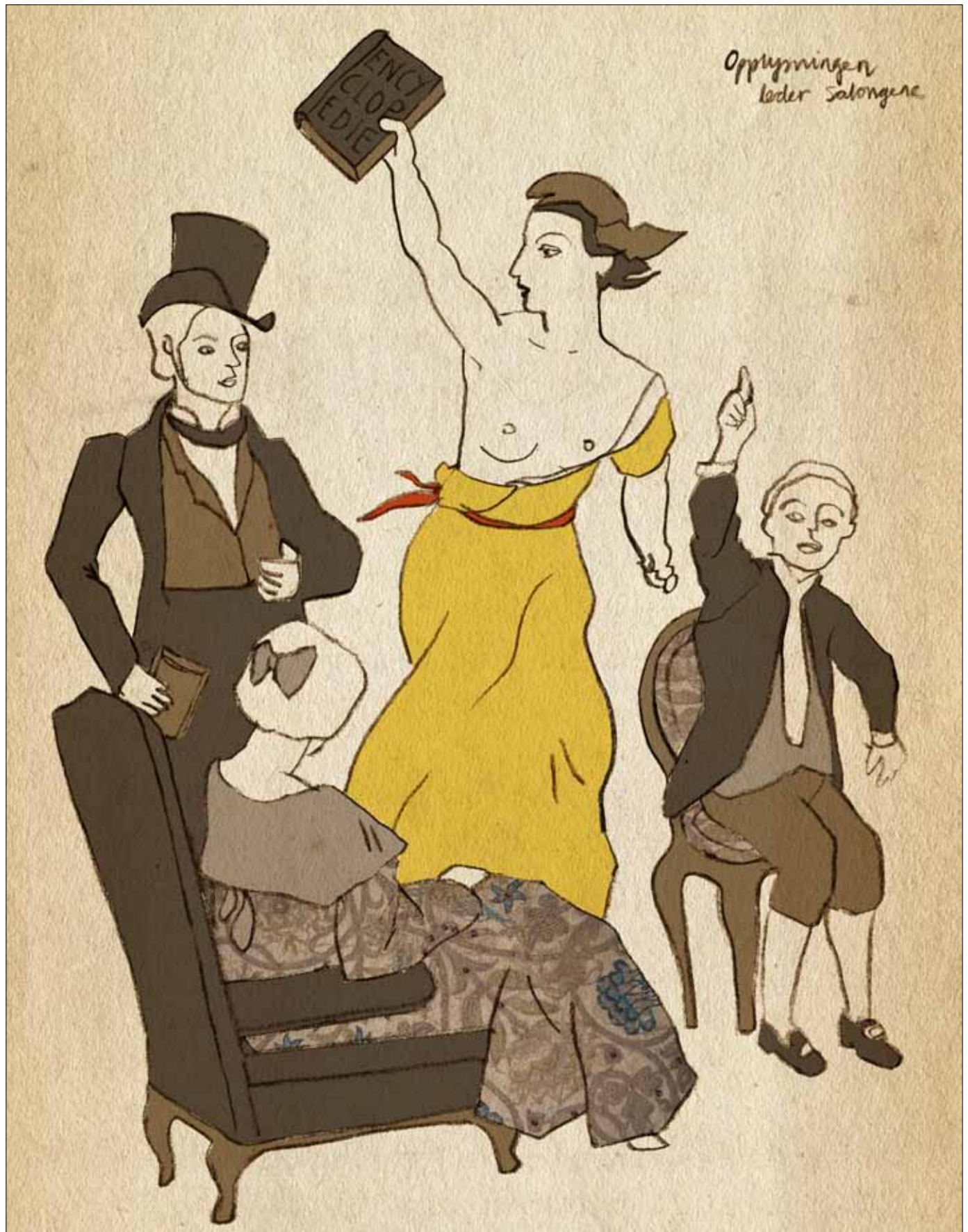9 See for example Teresa Hayter, *The Creation of World Poverty* (London: Pluto Press, 1992).

ILLUSTRATION BY MARIA ASTRUP

Tolerance, Progress, and the Legacy of the Enlightenment

BY ATLE HESMYR

Tolerance and reason are under attack. At the same time, the notion of progress is called into question.

It is timely to look back and see what we can learn from the experiences of the Enlightenment.

Looking back along the lines of European history, one may often come to pose the question whether the developments that have occurred involved a real and substantial progress for humanity. High cultures like ancient Athens, with their direct and participatory democracy and exquisite civic virtue among their citizens, were superseded by the brutal and restraining social structures and mentality of feudalism. Self-governed and egalitarian city confederacies have been replaced by centralized State-power and swollen, faceless bureaucracies.

In today's situation, with tendencies such as a blossoming new religiosity, religious fundamentalism and intolerance, and global ecological systems completely out of order, it is becoming increasingly popular to question the very concept of progress itself. On the contrary, in the 18th century, where the foundations was laid down for modernity in Western history, the importance of religious tolerance and belief in progress ranked high on the agenda.

Religious Conflict and Debate

After the Thirty Years' War came to a conclusion with The Peace of Westphalia in 1648, religious issues ceased to be a source of conflict between European states. Ever since the Reformation, the conflict between the Catholic orthodoxy and the new credo – which resulted from Martin Luther's theses at the beginning of the 16th century – had made a strong mark on European countries, in feuds between them as well as within each respective country. Strong dissenter movements had been a rich source of social unrest and even revolution; more specifically, in England during the 1640s, the political end result was the establishment of republican rule under Oliver Cromwell's leadership.

In England they experienced then another revolution – the so-called "Glorious Revolution" in 1688, and the year after that, drew up their "Toleration Act." The English authorities sought to put an end to the internal social conflicts spurred by diverging religious views by proclaiming religious tolerance. Philosophers like John Locke (1632–1704) in England and Voltaire (1694–1778) in France were strong and central voices on behalf of the new attitude towards religion. They addressed the authorities' traditional desire and ability to enforce a unitary and conformist religious creed on every citizen, and argued for individual choice along rational and conscientious lines as far as religious faith was concerned. From such a stance, the road would prove short to a materialistic and largely atheistic outlook, as John Herman Randall has shown in his *The Making of the Modern Mind.*

It has been contended from several sides, among them Johann Pezzl, that religious issues were a central theme in the Enlightenment era as well, equalling their position in the previous centuries. In view of this, it follows that the problems relating to tolerance and its limits, as well as censorship, would also attract veritable attention. The growing *materialism,* and to a large extent *atheism*, expounded by philosophers like La Mettrie (1709–51) and D'Holbach (1723–89) was largely posed against a religious stance, and it grew out of the preceding and parallel deistic movement, such as favoured by Newton (1642–1727) a few decades earlier. In her recent work, *The Enlightenment*, Dorinda Outram quoted historian Peter Gray's view that the Enlightenment represents "the growth of modern heathendom." During this era, though, the tendency was to relax focus on religious issues in favour of ever more rationalistic views, such as manifested in the French *Encyclopédie*, which was published in several volumes between 1751 and 1772.

From the religious debates the issue of tolerance raised its head, and it was – as argued by Outram – an originally religious idea. The regimes actually in power throughout Europe in the seventeenth century, with their absolutist rule, had been ideologically founded on the idea that the regent was god's substitute on Earth, surrounded by the clergy and its religious orthodoxy. The dissenter movements, which had haunted protestant as well as Catholic countries for several centuries, had even threatened secular monarchical rule over the people. Hence the authorities persecuted these movements with every means at their disposal. In time, though, it was generally understood that these internal religious and political conflicts proved counter-productive for the respective country's economy. Holland was an obvious example: It was probably mainly because of this internal tranquillity between citizens of various religious beliefs that the Dutch economy prospered to the extent where it became the leading one in 17th century Europe. People of diverging religious views were united in their urge for prosperity and economic progress, which resulted in a tremendous economic growth and may well have been considered as an example to follow by England when the "Toleration Act" was declared in this country in 1689.

John Locke's *Essay on Toleration* was written in defence of the "Toleration Act," and was followed up by a corresponding work written by Voltaire in France, where the principle of tolerance faired worse in the hands of the authorities. This led Voltaire as well as Montesquieu (1689–1755) to embrace the English constitution as a kind of ideal to live up to for other countries as far as government, tolerance and freedom of expression were concerned. Pierre Bayle (1647–1706) argued that there is no truth sure enough to validate persecution, and in his *Philosophical Comments* (1686) refused to bow to any other criteria of truth than reason. As early as the 1640's, John Milton had argued vehemently for freedom of conscience and expression.

Philosophes and *Salons*

In France, Diderot (1713–84), the co-editor of the *Encyclopédie*, as well as Voltaire, were imprisoned several times in the infamous Bastille-tower for their writings – a fact that illustrated the far more barren soil in that country (compared to its neighbour across the channel) as far as freedom of expression was concerned. In Prussia, on the other hand, Frederick "the Great" introduced a high degree of religious tolerance, as contrasted to Maria Theresa's Austrian/Hungarian empire. As noted by John Herman Randall, "the Enlightenment was ready to tolerate religious dissent, but not political, and to this day governments have drawn the line at this point."[1]

Diderot, who in his *Philosophical Thoughts* (written in the 1740s) contended that scepticism was the first step towards truth, witnessed this book being burned by the authorities. In this work he also denies the revelations and the miracles of the Church, although he retains his faith in Catholicism. It was only at a later stage that he moves towards deism and materialism, and thus regards his life as the "wandering of a sceptic."[2] In the subsequent decades, Diderot argues in favour of so-called "natural religion" and contends that all of the world religions are but results of this kind of religion. He even defends materialism and atheism, which as mentioned above caused his imprisonment in 1749. In commenting on his own persecution, the government's intolerance and censorship generally he uttered that "happy is the age when the rulers of the world acknowledge that their security consists in governing enlightened people." Diderot attacked prejudices of every kind and regarded them as the "cause of every war."

For his early writings, Voltaire was imprisoned for 11 months in the Bastille. Like Kant a few decades later on, he was a spokesman for free thinking and admired England for her religious freedom, tolerance of a diversity of ideas, embrace of scientific research, relative freedom of the press and the respect for literary men and women. [3] Voltaire also admired Frederick "the Great" – who was his host during longer stays in Prussia, and who himself was a literary man and wanted to be reckoned among the *philosophes* – for his support to art and science, his lacking servility towards religious dogmas, tolerance towards every kind of religious beliefs and so on.

In Prussia, under the regency of Frederick "the Great," emphasis was placed upon the socially useful, that is to say a utilitarian approach to philosophy and science, in the vein that Jeremy Bentham (1748–1832) was to articulate later on. Meanwhile, Roger Williams in England expressed the view that the state is a purely secular power and should have no judicial power over any religious faith or congregation. This view would become prevalent within the rationalistic clergy in the 18th century, with its focus on Christian morality as the most essential content of the biblical scripts, before this attitude again came under attack from new pietistic tendencies towards the end of the century.

In several European countries throughout the 18th century – with England as an important exception – a strict and complex censorship was upheld in regards to the written word, although the grip was loosened to a certain extent towards the end of the century. The French *Encyclopédie*, edited by d'Alembert (1717–83) and Diderot, was also among the victims of this censorship in its earlier publication stages. The authorities held the opinion that the public should be protected against "harmful ideas." After 1750, authors were to a lesser and lesser degree victims of censorship, but this did not prevent Diderot and others from expressing their social, religious and political views in the form of the novel instead of the explicit non-fictional pamphlets as it is natural in the western world today. As for Diderot and his colleagues, it would seem appropriate to compare their situation with that of Russia in the 19th century, when prominent authors like Tolstoy and Turgenev, faced with the czarist censorship, found it necessary to camouflage their political and social views in novels. As an illustration of the lessening of the censorship in France towards the final decades of the 18th century, the French monarchy in 1787 issued decrees which allowed limited tolerance and somewhat better conditions for Protestants in that country.

Rousseau (1712–78) was probably the most complex and contradictory among the Enlightenment's *philosophes*. He remained faithful towards his religiosity and believed in a god of love and beauty, and in his very special way paved the way for tolerance – even as he suffered condemnation in Catholic France as well as in Geneva and thus came to find himself stuck between a rock and a hard place.

The editors of the *Encyclopédie* cooperated closely on the publication of this work until 1759, when the whole work was examined by a nine censors' investigation. Following this process, d'Alembert chose to resign from the struggle for freedom of expression and handed this task over to Diderot. The *Encyclopédie* was thoroughly marked by a sceptical, rational and scientific outlook; in its protracted publishing process Diderot befriended Rousseau for a while, but the two philosophers were to later sharply disagree, as Rousseau's anti-civilization stance became more and more manifest. All of the aforementioned philosophers belonged to the cosmopolitan "Republic of Letters," a kind of authors' community across nationalities, even though Paris was

The seventeenth century European regimes, with their absolutist rule, had been ideologically founded on the idea that the regent was god's substitute on Earth, surrounded by the clergy and its religious orthodoxy. The dissenter movements, which haunted protestant as well as Catholic countries for several centuries, had even treathened secular monarchical power over the people. The authorities persecuted these movements with every means at their disposal.

their recognized centre. With his slogan "Ecrasez l'infame," Voltaire came to defend the case against intolerance most vehemently and argued for the so-called "natural religion" and "natural morality." His work under the same title also represented a critique of organized religion, and he contended that the religious aspects of life belonged to the private sphere. He was a strong supporter of the cause that aimed to separate church and state; hence his views are highly relevant for the ongoing debate with respect to state churches as they exist to this very day, and which still infuriates so many humanists in various countries.

One of the obvious preconditions for the debates between the Enlightenment philosophers, the clergy and the authorities in general that could reach out and spur interest among the 18th century *public*, was the great number of *salons*, or discussion forums, which were established throughout France – and particularly in Paris. It was more often than not women who took the initiatives in establishing these forums in their own homes and in this way got involved in the public debates as well. The *salons* hosted many *philosophes*, that is to say, people who met any subject with a critical and investigative mind. In fact, among these were women themselves, such as Emilie du Chatelet, who translated the works of Newton and wrote her own scientific essays. These *philosophes* wrote generally for the public and were, apart for the better known philosophers, also represented by a large number of lesser known writers and journalists, who benefited from the fact that an ever increasing number of the French public had become literate citizens. From the outset the *salons* had been directed towards the nobility, but during the process the new middle classes – including the artisans – were welcomed in their discussions. Among the social classes, the peasantry was almost singularly absent from them and thus lagged behind in the general intellectual development and continued to cling to more archaic and conservative attitudes towards social and political issues, religion and morality. However, by and large the *public sphere* generated by the *salons* was a crucial element in regards to the spread of new ideas and insights which had originated with the philosophical orientation of the 18th century; they represented something quite innovative and modern in European society. In the Renaissance, on the other hand, various social strata were largely isolated from the learned circles of society, which consequently prohibited them from acquiring an understanding of new scientific and philosophical ideas. Many of the 18th century *salons* even survived after the ill-fated French Revolution, and women like Sophie Condorcet – the widow of the philosopher – maintained her *salon* after her husband's death and strived to reach out to the public with the liberal and radical ideas inherited from a century of Enlightenment.

Censorship and Tolerance

Regarding the authorities' position in the various European countries, they disagreed overwhelmingly with respect to how far tolerance

The *public sphere* generated by the *salons* was a crucial element in regards to the spread of new ideas and insights which had originated with the philosophical orientation of the eighteenth century; they represented something quite innovative and modern in European society. Many of the 18th century *salons* even survived after the ill-fated French Revolution, and strived to reach out to the public with the liberal and radical ideas inherited from a century of Enlightenment.

should be allowed and accordingly on the extent of censorship in the public sphere. As already mentioned, England was among the most liberal countries in these respects and allowed for a high degree of freedom of expression, followed by Prussia under Frederick "the Great." France retained a middle position and tried to balance between the respect for the new ideas of its own famous thinkers on the one hand, and its basis in orthodox Catholicism on the other. The Austrian/Hungarian empire under Maria Theresa rejected the idea of religious tolerance altogether, with this stance only moderated when Joseph II ascended the throne, giving way to carefully administered principles of tolerance. As for Scandinavia, the case is illustrated by the fate of cabinet minister Struensee, who was sentenced to death primarily for two reasons. Apart from the fact that he had insulted the monarchy by becoming the queen's lover after the King suffered from mental illness, in 1770–72 he also introduced progressive liberal reforms and abolished censorship – reforms that affronted the ruling elites in the Danish kingdom. To what extent his execution was a result of insulting the King or due to these liberal reforms is an open question; nevertheless, it illustrates the heated debates that occurred all over Europe with respect to the Enlightenment philosophers' struggle for freedom of speech and a liberal society. The ideas manifested in this struggle were to prove quite irresistible for governments throughout Europe in the long run, and they tried one after the other to incorporate the new ideas in their own state policies, especially in regards to the rationalization and efficiency of state administrations and economic life. In this period – in the latter half of the 18th century – they abandoned the old mercantilist economics which had dominated the scene for a century or two, and moved in a liberalistic direction, following the ideas of the so-called Physiocrats, Quesnay (1694–1774) and Turgot (1727–81), and finally the liberal economics of Adam Smith as expressed in his famous work, *The Wealth of Nations*, published in 1776.

Towards the end of the 18th century, women finally tended to become more visible in the public debates. In the early 1790s, Olympes de Gouges in France and Mary Wollstonecraft in England wrote their works on women's rights, with Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* being the most well known in posterity. In this work Wollstonecraft criticizes the ill-founded exclusion of one half of humanity from political life, and contends convincingly that it is due to the uneven socialization processes of young men and women that the latter were excluded from participating – as England lacked the great extent of the *salons* in France – in the public sphere, which was a foundation of life as political beings. Wollstonecraft could point to the fact that women who had managed to break these barriers were not lagging behind men in any way with respect to their grasp of fundamental social, religious, scientific and political issues. She also undertook a journey to Scandinavia where she "discovered" a society where women had acquired a fairly advanced social position compared to many other European countries (including her home country).

Mary Wollstonecraft lived in a reciprocally stimulating relationship with the political philosopher William Godwin, who produced such classic works in European radical thought as *The Enquirer* (on libertarian pedagogy) and An *Enquiry concerning Political Justice.* The issue of women's role in society received – on a par with the slavery issue – wide attention during the Enlightenment debates, where, at times, philosophers such as Voltaire and Rousseau were at loggerheads. The latter represented a more traditional view of a women's role; indeed, he expressed the view that a women's place was in the family home – as mothers, nurses and lovers – and he strongly disliked their part in the lively discussions conducted in the *salons*.

G. W. F. Hegel (1770–1831) considered the Enlightenment to be a continuation of the Reformation in the 16th century, with their respective focuses on the critically minded individual and secularization processes. For Hegel – and many others – the issue at stake was how far tolerance was to be allowed: he expressed his worries that the spiritual aspects of human life would be lost in this process. Thomas Paine (1737–1809) put it this way in the introduction to his work, *The Age of Reason*: "Every man [has the right] to his opinion, however different that opinion might be to mine. He who denies to another this right, makes a slave of himself to his present opinion, because he precludes himself the right of changing it."[5]

In summary, there is every reason to contend that the issue of tolerance pervaded 18th century society at all levels, from the royalty to the artisans and peasantry – and even the slaves at the bottom of the social hierarchy. The issue forced its way into the public debates as a result of the great scientific discoveries which had been made in the previous century, and the new ideas represented an irresistible wave for the search of knowledge and insight. They were to a certain extent more powerful than a massive and armed force of rebellious social elements, and in time constituted a decisive precondition for The Great French Revolution to occur in the way that it did, with its emphasis on written constitutions side-by-side with the more traditional and violent revolutionary ingredients. Frederick Copleston described the Enlightenment's destructive criticism of religion, and to some extent of social and political affairs, for its negative side, while the "positive aspect consisted in the attempt to understand the world and especially man himself in his psychological, moral and social life."[6]

The Idea of Progress

The belief in progress was also clearly expressed among the *philosophes* of the Enlightenment, even to a certain extent by the most critical of civilization, Rousseau, in a certain way which will be commented on below. In general, the philosophers of the 18th century strongly believed in progress, influenced as they were by Newton and Locke and the previous century's scientific achievements. They wanted to expand humanity's insight from

the natural sciences to men and women's social, political and moral life, focussing on the observation of data, actual social phenomena and developmental traits. For instance, the co-editors of the *Encyclopédie*, d'Alembert and Diderot, held that "progress could pretty well be taken for granted, in the sense that intellectual enlightenment would bring with it social and moral progress."[7] As they appear in the *Encyclopédie,* the ideas of the Enlightenment are in several ways very complex and partly inconsistent. Anything else would have appeared strange when one takes into account the many diverse authors who contributed to its volumes over the years. What the majority among them held in common, however – with an obvious exception in Rousseau's writings – was a general belief in progress, reason, science and civilization. According to Randall, reason and science paved the way for a "veritable millennium" where Locke, Helvetius (1715–1771) and Bentham prepared the ground for adherence to the idea of human perfectibility.[8] It remained a strong belief that the whole of humanity would take part in the same progress.

As indicated above, the general background for this strong belief in progress was the scientific and intellectual revolution which occurred in the 17th century, when Bacon, Descartes, Bayle, Spinoza, and above all Locke and Newton paved the way for a new and modern insight into the physical laws of nature, humanity's ability to achieve knowledge of these, as well as social and moral issues. In time, one had come to the conclusion that the conditions of humanity did improve over time – at least this was the opinion held among the so-called "moderns" in their dispute with their intellectual opponents, the "ancients," who clung to the traditional view that the ideals of the Ancient world could never be surpassed.

After 1700, the idea of progress became more and more explicit, and the monarchies of Europe were to various degrees compelled to incorporate this view in their respective hegemony, the result being the so-called "enlightened absolutism." Until then, state power had to a large extent been founded on the conception of the monarch as a kind of "substitute for god" on Earth, and their orientation had been of a religious and retrospective character. During the 18th century these governments were forced to acknowledge and make use of the new ideas which inundated Western society, and thinkers like Voltaire and Diderot became welcome guests at the various courts of Europe, more precisely in Prussia and Russia. It was the state that was considered as the main agent of progress, and a well ordered government was considered the best guarantee for social welfare. However, it was *universalism* – not nationalism – which dominated the public debates. The emphasis was put on the unity of humanity and toned down, or sought to explain away, differences between various peoples and nationalities, though in time France would prove to be the main centre of the Enlightenment.

Many people around 1700 adhered to the "moderns." At this stage, witchcraft had faded away and everything supernatural was relegated to a diffuse role. People no longer feared god or the devil. Rather, god became a kind of "first cause" of the universe, and this universe was then discovered by reason, through the empirical research conducted in natural science. Symptomatically, the watchmaker became a symbol of the deity. Ernst Cassirer has contended that this age of knowledge, of humanity's own activity, intellectual self-investigation and foresight, represents the proper function and task of thought. In his classical work on the Enlightenment, Cassirer contends further that "maybe no other century was so thoroughly pervaded by the idea of intellectual progress as the century of the Enlightenment."[9]

However, the elevation of reason was confronted with ardent opponents during the 18th century. Edward Gibbon's critical evaluation of Christianity in his *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, aroused strong reactions among the clergy as well as lay people. In time, counter-tendencies and movements like Methodism in England, Jansenism in the Latin countries, and pietism in Prussia and Scandinavia appeared on the social scene. Debates raged on god's place in the world, and many people adhered to the so-called deism, according to which the deity was understood as a kind of "omnipotent intelligence," and the primary task of science was to reveal the laws of nature created by this watchmaker-kind-of-god.

The clerical reaction, however, was not strong enough to subdue the veritable flood of philosophical and scientific literature published during the 18th century. Many people eventually adhered to the view that religion was an identified enemy of progress. This "faith in progress" was a quite innovative tendency and differed diametrically from the traditional belief in a so-called "lost, golden Age," as for instance the Renaissance had presented the Ancient world as an ideal which, in the best of cases, only could be copied. In the midst of this struggle for progress toiled the contributors to the French *Encyclopédie* – and the very *raison d'etre* for its publication was exactly the notion of humanity's potential for making social, economical and cultural progress. One of its editors, Diderot, was a declared enemy of tradition, and his project included visiting the artisans' workshops and acquired first-hand insight into their production techniques, which he then scrupulously presented in his articles. Thus, according to Edouard Herriot's biography, Diderot in this way "accumulated a profound understanding of the role of industrial technology in modern society and in a future society."[10] His co-editor followed suit to conclude that close to no-one knows the names of these benefactors of humanity (the inventors), while almost no-one is ignorant of its spoilers, i.e. the conquerors. Accordingly, the importance of the artisans' labour in contributing to the welfare of society, in general, was aggrandized to an unprecedented extent: they were honoured in a way that goes a long way to explain their prominent position in the French revolutionary events in the early 1790's, especially in Paris which had already been a centre of progressive, enlightened ideas about political structure and economic productivity. Diderot drew substantial inspiration from Francis Bacon's works in the late 16th

and early 17th century, and put forward a kind of premature Taylorism, i.e. the division of labour and industrialism as means to make human production more rational and efficient. According to Palmer, Colton and Kramer's massive introduction to world history the *Encyclopédie* represented an important contribution to the notion of social progress, albeit with such diverse contributors as Voltaire, Montesquieu, Rousseau, d'Alembert, Buffon (1707-88), Turgot and Quesnay taking the lead.[11] Even many people belonging to the clergy and the nobility bought and read this comprehensive work, despite the authorities' suppression in the early stages of its publication.

In regards to views concerning social life and its political institutions, many *philosophes* elevated the English constitution as an example to be followed by other European states. Montesquieu, for example, envisaged that the French state may move *forward* in the direction staked out by the English, and in his major work (which, in his own words, "nearly killed" him), *The Spirit of the Laws*, he elaborated extensively on the preconditions for freedom under republican, monarchical and despotic rule respectively. His preferences tended towards the former. Voltaire, on the contrary, could hardly be termed a democrat as he was much more concerned with freedom of expression for people like himself than of political freedom for the public in general. Rousseau, who as a consequence of his critique of civilization came to be fairly isolated in these disputes, may still be regarded as a kind of radical democrat – as far as he envisaged a kind of progressive, direct democracy. In a passage in *The Social Contract* he argues that sovereignty cannot be represented as any way similar to processes that we encounter in modern conceptions of "representative" democracy and the election of professional politicians who are beyond recall and independent of bounded mandates from the "electorate."[12] More precisely in relation to the public, such ideas also came to the fore during certain phases of The Great French Revolution, in which direct democratic assemblies were developed at the grassroots level of the Parisian sections in 1792. However, the majority among the philosophers of the Enlightenment were closest to Voltaire's position, and were prepared to sacrifice political freedom in favour of intellectual freedom.

The so-called *Physiocrats*, among them Turgot and Quesnay, eventually entered the political scene with their new economic theories and reform efforts. Turgot, who was also a positivist philosopher and contributor to the *Encyclopédie*, contended that humanity – as distinguished from other animals – has a capacity to achieve *progress* through its history, in the sense that one generation's achievements is widened and deepened by the next one's, and that this progress is going through three stages; the religious, the metaphysical and the scientific, with profound impacts on social and economical life. A decade or so before the Revolution, Turgot was engaged at Court with the primary task of sorting out the French state's finances following the crises which haunted the country in the wake of the immense war costs during the Seven Years' War of 1756–63 and the American War of Independence. His reforms, however, were far too drastic under France's circumstances. The price of grains swelled dramatically as a

The clerical reaction was not strong enough to subdue the veritable flood of philosophical and scientific literature published during the eighteenth century. Many people eventually adhered to the view that religion was an identified enemy of progress.

NOTES

1 J.H. Randall, *The Making of the Modern Mind; A Survey of the Intellectual Background of the Present Age* (1926; New York: Columbia University Press, 1977), p. 9.

2 Edouard Herriot, *Diderot* (Copenhagen: Martins Forlag, 1951), p. 9.

3 Palmer, Colton & Kramer, *A History of the Modern World* (1950; New York: McGraw-Hill, 2007), p. 305.

4 Dorinda Outram, *The Enlightenment* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 114.

5 Thomas Paine, *The Age of Reason* (1896; New York: Dover Publications, 2004), p. vii.

6 Frederick Copleston, *A History of Philosophy* (New York: Doubleday Publications, 1950), vol. 6, pp. 2–3.

7 ibid., p.47.

8 Randall, *Making of the Modern Mind*, p. 381.

9 Ernst Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment* (1951; New York: Princeton University Press, 1968), p. 5.

10 Herriot, *Diderot*, p. 16.

11 Palmer, Colton & Kramer, p. 302.

12 J. J. Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (1761; New York: Modern Library, 1950), p. 94.

13 Randall, *Making of the Modern Mind*, p. 382.

14 Murray Bookchin, *Re-Enchanting Humanity; A Defence of the Human Spirit Against Anti-Humanism, misanthropy, mysticism and primitivism* (London: Cassell, 1995), p. 149.

result of the reforms impacts, and he was dismissed from his post to concentrate only on his studies and writings.

Condorcet (1743–94), who delivered the great testament of the Enlightenment, *On the perfectibility of the Human Mind*, took an active part in the Great Revolution and penned his famous work while hiding from the guillotine. According to Randall, Condorcet "embodied the very soul of the The French Revolution."[13] Under the culminating "Terror" he eventually took his own life to avoid the disgrace of an execution, and until the end clung to the notion that humanity strives indefatigably towards the ideal.

Amongst the objections raised in our own days against the ideals of the Enlightenment, one may mention that human beings were largely reduced to some kind of machines, that spiritual and religious aspects of life were subdued, and that a new kind of repression was the end result of this process. As one of the strongest voices in defence of the ideals of the Enlightenment and the related social struggles, Murray Bookchin (1921–2006) pointed to the immense social inequalities that riddled 18th century society, the recurrent famines that struck France in this Age, and the horrible conditions of the small farmers and the working classes caused by a stern material scarcity. In this context he acclaimed the fact that the philosophers of the Enlightenment "enthusiastically embraced scientific and technological progress with their potential for enhancing human freedom and personal dignity."[14]

The Future of Enlightenment

Last year, the UN reported that 1 billion people around the world are starving on a daily basis, and it would not seem far-fetched that the above mentioned defence of the ideals and achievements of the Enlightenment remain highly relevant for ethically oriented people around the world – not only in the Western world but also at a global level. Vast cultural areas in the East are still awaiting their own Enlightenment Era – it is yet in its starting blocks in some places, and always confronted with harsh repression from the theocratic authorities in the respective countries. A socially emancipating process in these areas necessarily will have to be fought for and conducted by intellectuals as well as the broad populace inhabiting them. The project of forcing "democracy" upon these countries by the use of Western armies seems to only slow down any democratizing process because the local and regional repressive powers strengthen their grip on the inhabitants as they are threatened by a common foreign enemy represented by the NATO forces.

As regards the West (however narrow or broadly we define it), it is clear that we have a rich history and ideals to live up to. Those of the Ancient world belong to these, accompanied by the ideals of the Enlightenment. In the face of the extraordinary challenges that will confront humanity in this century, we will be completely lost if we fail to observe and continue the enlightening spirit of the 18th century. The tradition of understanding ecological phenomena

dates back to this Age, and ecological issues were discussed in the *Encyclopédie* side by side with political, social and religious issues. As argued by Kant, among others, an enlightened public is the very precondition of a democracy which is something far more than a barren word – indeed, a word which is frequently used without any attempt to give it some meaningful content or libertarian substance. A future ecological society is also dependent upon an enlightened public who ideally achieves institutional rights to participate directly in political life through local public assemblies in possession of final decision making authority – in co-operation with their confederated neighbours. In other words, a sovereignty "which cannot be represented" in any way but instead manifests its palpability through confederal ties – directly democratic local assemblies and their recallable and clearly mandated delegates in assemblies at confederal levels – by integrating local communities and regions in ecologically balanced systems with a social and cultural life based on the ideals of mutual aid and complementary relationships, where power remains in the hands of the ordinary citizens as a whole. Such a development would obviously involve a considerable expansion of Enlightenment ideals – which will only fit in well with the very spirit of the Enlightenment.

As clearly revealed during the past decades, the dominating powers – the oligarchic political assemblies and multinationals' managing boards – are all too strongly profiting by a continuation of the present anti-ecological way of "development" (making a mockery of the word), and their hegemony rests on the fact that most people do not know what is actually going on at the highest political levels and in the lobbying traffic intimately connected with it. This oligarchic system is *inherently* anti-ecological and repressive: capitalism has existed as such since its ascent over 200 years ago. Today, instead of ecologically and ethically oriented citizens in charge, big business and technocratic elites are ruling the social scene.

So, even if it is not possible to detect smooth and linear progress in the history of humanity, it would be completely foolish to ignore the immense potential encompassed in humanity's insight into the processes of nature and our own social and psychological conditions – insights which have accumulated over long periods of time. It is hard to envisage that the tension between this potential on the one hand and the present realities tainted by anti-ecological and dehumanizing trends on the other can go on endlessly. For social ecologists the task is clear: to contribute to the materialization of this potential based on direct action at the local level, in combination with regional and global networks and co-ordinated political campaigns. The dismal alternative is that such a faith in potentially substantive, democratic and ecological progress is quelled by the "realpolitik" of the ruling elites, which will prove fatal to the possibilities for future generations to repair the social and ecological diseases that haunt humanity, and subvert their ability to create a rational and libertarian society. ●

Anti-Semitism based on the notion of a Jewish world conspiracy is not rooted in Islamic tradition but, rather, in European ideological models. Its main early promoters in the Arab world were supported financially and ideologically by agencies of the German National Socialist government.[1]

National Socialism and Anti-Semitism in the Arab World

BY MATTHIAS KÜNTZEL

ILLUSTRATION BY RUNE BORVIK

"Listen!" says a rabbi to a young Jew. "We have received an order from above. We need the blood of a Christian child for the unleavened bread for the Passover feast." In the following shot, a terrified youngster is seized from the neighborhood. Then the camera zooms in on the child for a close-up of his throat being cut. The blood spurts from the wound and pours into a metal basin.

The Al-Manar satellite channel that broadcast this episode is run by the Islamist Hizbollah ("Party of God"). The scene is part of a twenty-nine-part series entitled Al-Shatat ("Diaspora"), produced by Al-Manar with Syrian government backing and broadcast for the first time during Ramadan in 2003. Episode by episode, the series peddles the fantasy of the Jewish world conspiracy: Jews have brought death and destruction upon humanity, Jews unleashed both world wars, Jews discovered chemical weapons and destroyed Hiroshima and Nagasaki with nuclear bombs.

With a permanent staff of three hundred, this channel has the greatest reach in the Arab-Islamic world after al-Jazeera. Ten million people a day tune in to the round-the-clock broadcasts from Beirut. Al-Manar ("the Beacon") is the first and to date only

satellite channel that, not even pretending to objectivity, sees itself as the global voice of Islamism. Its popularity is due to its countless video clips, which use inspiring graphics and uplifting music to promote suicide bombing. Al-Manar not only pushes for terrorist acts against Israel but inspires, justifies, and acclaims them.[2]

Yet three months after the broadcast of the Al-Shatat series, the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), a think tank with close ties to the German Social Democratic Party (SPD), and the Hizbollah's "research department" organized a joint conference in Beirut titled "The Islamic World and Europe: From Dialogue to Agreement." Just as remarkable as the cooperation between an institution of a German party of government and an Islamist terror organization was the conference agenda, which included an item on "occupation and resistance" but nothing on Al-Manar's anti-Semitic agitation.[3]

This casual attitude toward Islamist Jew-hatred is typical of the discourse in Europe. Whereas the right-wing anti-Semitism of politicians like Le Pen in France or of German MP Martin Hohmann provokes public indignation, when Muslims express exactly the same anti-Semitism it is often ignored or played down as an alleged reaction to the Middle East conflict. This silence over Islamist anti-Semitism persists alongside an accompanying silence over its roots in National Socialism, as the example of the Zeesen transmitter confirms.

In Zeesen, a town with some four thousand inhabitants to the south of Berlin, once stood one of the world's most powerful shortwave transmitters. From 1939 onward, it broadcast its daily Arabic-language program. Of all the foreign-language services, the Oriental Service had "absolute priority. It reached out to Arabs, Turks, Persians, and Indians and had an eighty-strong staff, including freelance announcers and translators."[4] Between 1939 and 1945, at a time when, in the Arab world, listening to the radio took place primarily in public squares or bazaars and coffee houses, no other station was more popular than the Zeesen service, which skillfully mingled anti-Semitic propaganda with quotations from the Koran and Arabic music. The Allies in the Second World War were presented as lackeys of the Jews and the notion of the "United Jewish Nations" drummed into the audience. At the same time, the Jews were attacked as the worst enemies of Islam. "The Jew since the time of Mohammed has never been a friend of the Muslim, the Jew is the enemy and it pleases Allah to kill him."[5] Today, this same message is being put out on satellite by Hizbollah's Al-Manar TV channel. So what are the historical connections between the shortwave transmitter in Zeesen and the Beirut satellite channel?

National-Socialist Propaganda

A highlight of Radio Zeesen's output was the demand for jihad by the most popular figure in the Arab-Islamic world of the time, the Mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin el-Husseini (1895-1974). From 1941 onward he lived in Berlin, supervising Arabic radio broadcasting

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out of Zeesen, Athens, and Rome.[6] Nobody promoted hatred of Jews among Muslims more effectively than the Mufti. The European responsibility for this is clear: el-Husseini had after all been appointed to and promoted in office by European powers. It was the British who, having first sentenced him to ten years in jail for anti-Jewish incitement in 1920, then amnestied him in 1921 and made him Mufti against the will of the majority of Palestinians. It was the Germans who paid him for his services between 1937 and 1945. And it was the French who in 1946, when the Mufti was being pursued internationally as a war criminal, helped him escape to Egypt and continue his activities.[7]

Nobody had a greater influence on the early history of the Middle East conflict than the Mufti, who as president of the Supreme Muslim Council was not only the supreme religious authority but also the central figure in Palestinian nationalism. In the 1930s, there were countless Arab nationalists who viewed Germany as an ally against the British without concerning themselves with the nature of the Hitler regime. Things were different where the Mufti was concerned: he knew what the regime was about and was attracted to it for that very reason.

As early as spring 1933, he assured the German consul in Jerusalem that "the Muslims inside and outside Palestine welcome the new regime of Germany and hope for the extension of the fascist, anti-democratic governmental system to other countries."[8] The youth organization of the party established by the Mufti operated for a time under the name Nazi Scouts and adopted Hitler Youth-style shorts and leather belts. During the 1936-1939 Palestinian revolt, the swastika was used as a mark of identity: Arabic leaflets and graffiti were liberally decorated with it, Arab children welcomed each other with the Hitler salute, and vast numbers of German flags and pictures of Hitler were displayed even at celebrations of Mohammed's birthday. Anyone obliged to travel through areas involved in the Palestinian revolt would attach a swastika to their vehicle to ward off attacks by Arab snipers.[9]

However, until the summer of 1937, this support was awkward for the German government. Berlin politely but firmly rejected the Arab officers of cooperation. While, on the one hand, Hitler had already stated his belief in the "racial inferiority" of the Arabs in Mein Kampf and contemptuously rejected their "Holy War,"[10] on the other, the Auswärtige Amt (German Foreign Office) was extremely anxious not to jeopardize British appeasement of Berlin prematurely by activities in the Middle East, especially since the Mediterranean fell within the sphere of responsibility of Germany's Italian ally.

Berlin revised this approach for the first time in June 1937. The trigger was the proposal from the British Peel Commission for the division of the Palestine Mandate territory into a smaller Jewish and a larger Muslim-Arab state. The formation of a Jewish state "is not in Germany's interest," was the instant response

NOTES

1 This article first appeared in *Jewish Political Studies Review*, Spring 2005. It was translated by Colin Meade. Republished with permission.

2 See Avi Jorisch, "Al-Manar: Hizbollah TV," *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter 2004. See also Lisbeth Rausing, "Frequenzen des Hasses. Wie die Hisbollah ihre Mordpropaganda nach Europe trägt," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (*FAZ*), Vol. 13, March 2004 (German).

3 Along with the FES and the Hizbollah Consultative Centre for Studies and Documentation, the Deutsche Orient-Institut Beirut and the University of Birminham's Centre for the Study of Islam were also involved in organizing the conference, held on 17-19 February 2004. See the FES's press release of 23 February 2004.

4 Werner Schwipps, "Wortschlacht im äther," in DeutscheWelle, ed., *Wortschlacht im Äther: Der deutsche Auslandsrundfunk im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Haude & Spensersche Verlagsbuchhandlung,1971), p. 58 (German).

5 Seth Arsenian, "Wartime Propaganda in the Middle East," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 2, No. 4 (1948): 421; Robert Melka, *The Axis and the Arab Middle East 1930-1945*, thesis, University of Minnesota, University Micro- films, Inc., Ann Arbor, MI, 1966, pp. 47; Heinz Tillmann, *Deutschlands Araberpolitik im Zweiten Weltkrieg* (East Berlin: Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1965), pp. 83 (German). According to Arsenian and Melka, Arabic broadcasting from Zeesen began in 1938.

6 Nicholas Bethell, *Das Palästina-Dreieck: Juden und Araber im Kampf um das britische Mandat 1935 bis 1948* (Frankfurt am Main: Propyläen-Verlag, 1979), p. 240 (German). According to Bethell, El-Husseini was the "Leiter" ("Director") of this station, while according to Hurewitz the Mufti was a director of the "Arab Bureau" in Berlin, which was responsible for preparing and transmitting the Arabic broadcasts, under the supervision of Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry. See J. C. Hurewitz, *The Struggle for Palestine* (New York: Norton, 1951), p. 154.

7 Klaus Gensicke, *Der Mufti von Jerusalem: Amin el-Husseini und die Nationalsozialisten* (Frankfurt am Main: Verlag Peter Lang, 1988), pp. 251 (German).

8 Yehoshua Porath, *The Palestinian Arab National Movement: From Riots to Rebellion*, Vol. 2, 1929-1939 (London, 1977), p. 76.

9 Ralf Balke, *Die Landesgruppe der NSDAP in Palästina*, thesis, Universität-Gesamthochschule Essen, 1997, pp. 214, 216 (German); Tillmann, *Deutschlands Araberpolitik*, p. 78 (German); Francis R. Nicosia, *The Third Reich and the Palestine Question* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1975), p. 98. See also Iwo Jordan, *Araberaufstand: Erlebnisse und Dokumente aus Palästina* (Vienna-Leipzig, 1943), pp. 3, 97 (German). Jordan reprints an example of an Arab-Palestinian leaflet with swastikas.

10 Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Munich: Verlag Franz Eher Nachfolger, GmbH, 1934), p. 747 (German).

Racialist anti-Semitism and the fantasy of the Jewish world conspiracy were of European origin and foreign to the original Islamic view of the Jews. In Islam it was not the Jews who murdered the Prophet, but the Prophet who murdered the Jews: in the years between 623 and 627 Mohammed enslaved, expelled, or killed all the Jewish tribes of Medina. As a result, the characteristic features of Christian anti-Semitism did not arise in the Muslim world. "There were no fears of Jewish conspiracy and domination, no charges of diabolic evil. Jews were not accused of poisoning wells or spreading the plague." This cultural inheritance made the idea that the Jews of all people could represent a permanent danger for the Muslims and the world seem absurd. This insane idea had therefore to be hammered into the Arab- Islamic world all the more forcefully. The conflict over immigration and land ownership in Palestine was not the reason, merely an opportunity, for its spread.

of Foreign Minister Konstantin von Neurath, since such a state "would create an additional position of power under international law for international Jewry. Germany therefore has an interest in strengthening the Arab world as a counterweight against such a possible increase in power for world Jewry."[11]

Strengthening the Arabs against the Jews – it is true that Berlin initially pursued this new course surreptitiously, lest it alienate London. Nevertheless, the scale of the operations now set in motion was impressive. Students from Arab countries received German scholarships, firms took on Arab apprentices, and Arab party leaders were invited to the Nuremberg party rallies and military chiefs to Wehrmacht maneuvers. An "Arab Club" was established in Berlin as the center for Palestine-related agitation and Arabic-language broadcasting.[12]

Under the direction of the German Propaganda Ministry, the Deutsche Nachrichtenbüro (German News Agency – DNB), whose regional headquarters in Jerusalem had set up an Arab service in 1936, stepped up its work. The head of DNB-Jerusalem, Dr. Franz Reichert, who had excellent links not only with the Mufti but also with the Arabic press, bribed journalists and brought dissident newspapers back on board with lucrative advertising orders.

In September 1937, two members of the Jewish Department of the SS' secret service (Sicherheitsdienst – SD), one of them Adolf Eichmann, carried out an exploratory mission in the Middle East lasting several weeks. Extended visits by the leader of Hitler Youth, Baldur von Schirach, and the head of the Abwehr (counterintelligence service), Wilhelm Canaris, followed. Finally, in April 1939 the head of the Foreign Office's Oriental Department, Otto von Hentig, also spent time in Palestine and Egypt. This activism was not without results: von Schirach donated the money for the establishment of an "Arab Club" in Damascus in which German officials trained recruits for the Mufti's insurgents and Canaris covered the region with a spy network.[13]

The most effective tool, however, was the Arabic-language broadcasting out of Zeesen, "our long-range gun in the ether" as Goebbels dubbed it. It began regular service on 25 April 1939, transmitting daily at 17.45 hours Berlin time.[14] It ridiculed any Arab wishing to negotiate with the Zionists. "The Berlin radio announcer, for instance, used regularly to refer to the Amir Abdallah as 'Rabbi Abdallah,'" reported Nevill Barbour, later a BBC reporter. "It was therefore not easy to counter Nazi propaganda on the subject of the Jewish National Home in Palestine."[15] But Radio Zeesen was also hard to combat because it had no scruples about mobilizing anti-Western antipathies: with its pro-Arab shift, Berlin had discovered the antimodernist potential of Islam.

The Mufti's Anti-Semitism

It was not only Heinrich Himmler who waxed lyrical about the "ideological closeness" of National Socialism and Islam, coining the concept of Muselgermanen ("Muslimo-Germans").[16] Haj

Amin el-Husseini, too, referred to the parallels between Muslim and German ideals, identifying the following points of contact: (1) monotheism – unity of leadership; (2) the ordering power – obedience and discipline; (3) the struggle and the honor of falling in battle; (4) community; (5) family and offspring; (6) glorification of work and creativity; and (7) attitude toward the Jews – "in the struggle against Jewry, Islam and National Socialism come very close to one another."[17]

However, precisely this last point was by no means self-evident. Racialist anti-Semitism and the fantasy of the Jewish world conspiracy were of European origin and foreign to the original Islamic view of the Jews. Only in the Christ legend did the Jews appear as a deadly and powerful force who allegedly went so far as to kill God's only son.

Islam was quite a different story. Here it was not the Jews who murdered the Prophet, but the Prophet who murdered the Jews: in the years between 623 and 627 Mohammed enslaved, expelled, or killed all the Jewish tribes of Medina. As a result, the characteristic features of Christian anti-Semitism did not arise in the Muslim world. "There were no fears of Jewish conspiracy and domination, no charges of diabolic evil. Jews were not accused of poisoning wells or spreading the plague."[18] Instead, the Jews were treated with contempt or condescending tolerance. This cultural inheritance made the idea that the Jews of all people could represent a permanent danger for the Muslims and the world seem absurd.

This insane idea had therefore to be hammered into the Arab-Islamic world all the more forcefully. The conflict over immigration and land ownership in Palestine was not the reason, merely an opportunity, for its spread. Thus, for example, the pamphlet on "Islam and Jewry" distributed by the Germans to Muslim members of the "Handzar" Bosnian SS division talked about an "ancient enmity," while Radio Zeesen evoked in ever-new variations the theme of the "eternal enemy, the Jew." A speech given by the Mufti in November 1943 is typical:

This people has been the enemy of the Arabs and Islam since it came into being. The Holy Koran expressed this old enmity in the following words: "you will find that the most hostilely-disposed toward the believers are the Jews." They tried to poison the praiseworthy Prophet, put up resistance to him, were filled with hostility to him and plotted against him. This was the case over 1300 years ago. Since then, they have never ceased to hatch plots against the Arabs and Mohammedans.[19]

Thus was an eternal threat to all Muslims concocted from Mohammed's defeated contemporaries.

For the Mufti, the reference back to the seventh century fit the bill for a second reason: his hatred of the Jews was a declaration of war on the "invasion of liberal ideas" into the world of Islam. Since the start of the 20th century, Egypt had been opening up to the outside world; in the 1920s Turkey replaced the Caliphate with the Atatürkist model; and Reza Khan, too, was promoting the

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11 Tillmann, *Deutschlands Araberpolitik*, p. 66. Italy did not seem reliable enough for the anti-Jewish project. In the last analysis, according to the German Foreign Ministry, Italy's rejection of the Peel Plan was motivated "less by antisemitic animosity than by fear that Britain might make the foundation of a Jewish state in Palestine the basis of its Mediterranean policy." See Melka, *The Axis*, pp. 70.

12 Melka, *The Axis*, p. 53.

13 Hurewitz, *Struggle for Palestine*, p. 87; Balke, *Die Landesgruppe*, p. 204; Melka, *The Axis*, pp. 48.; Michael Cohen, *Retreat from the Mandate* (New York: Holmes & Meier, 1978), p. 58; Lukasz Hirszowicz, *The Third Reich and the Arab East* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 54.

14 Information from Gerhard Damm, Zeesen. According to Arsenian and Melka, Zeesen's Arabic service in fact began broadcasting at the start of 1938.

15 Nevill Barbour, "Broadcasting to the Arab World: Arabic Transmissions from the BBC and Other Non-Arab Stations," *Middle East Journal*, Vol. 5, Winter 1951, p. 65. Emir Abdallah, the ruler of Transjordan, was murdered in 1951 by one of the Mufti's thugs for trying to reach an understanding with Israel.

16 Gensicke, *Der Mufti*, p. 171.

17 Speech by the Mufti to the imams of the Bosnian SS Division, cited in Gensicke, ibid., p. 207.

18 See Bernard Lewis, *Semites and Anti-Semites* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1986), p. 122.

19 This speech of the Mufti's on the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration is reprinted in Gerhard Höpp, ed., *Mufti-Papiere: Briefe, Memoranden, Reden und Aufrufe Amin al-Husainis aus dem Exil, 1940-1945* (Berlin: Klaus Schwarz Verlag, 2001), pp. 192 (German). The quotation from the Koran is from the 82nd verse of the fifth Sura. The pamphlet "Islam and Judentum" can be found in Thomas Casagrande, *Die Volksdeutsche SS-Division "Prinz Eugen"* (Frankfurt am Main: Campus Verlag, 2003), p. 333 (German).
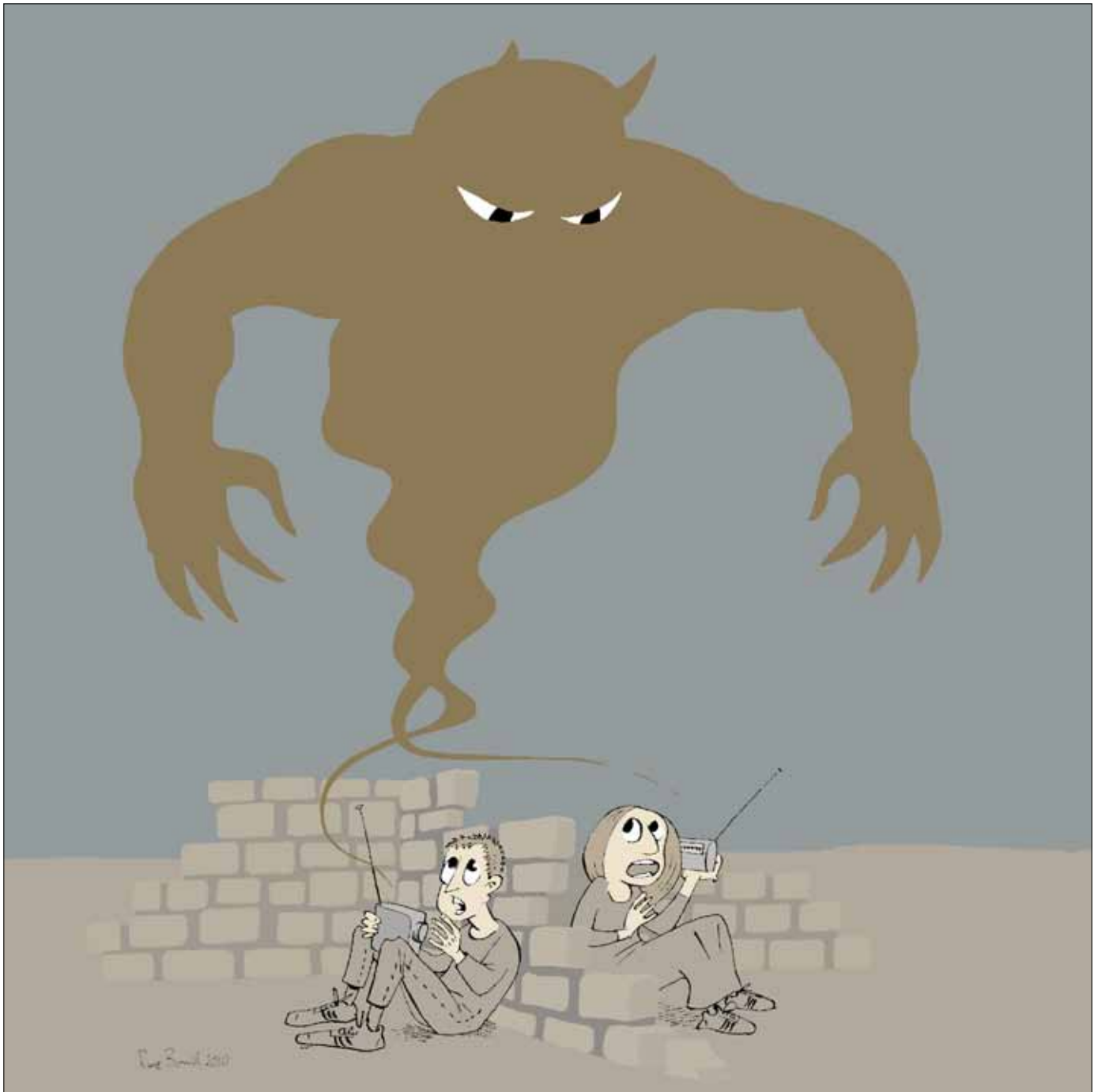
secularization of Iran. The Mufti made not the slightest concession to this reformist trend in his sphere of control. He saw Jerusalem as the crystallization point for the "rebirth of Islam" and Palestine as the center from whence resistance to the Jews and the modern world was destined to emanate. Speaking at a religious conference in 1935, the Mufti complained: "The cinema, the theatre and some shameless magazines enter our houses and courtyards like adders, where they kill morality and demolish the foundation of society."

The Jews were blamed for this alleged corruption of moral values, as demonstrated by another statement of Haj Amin el-Husseini: "They [the Jews] have also spread here their customs and usages which are opposed to our religion and to our whole way of life. The Jewish girls who run around in shorts demoralise our youth by their mere presence."[20]

El-Husseini tirelessly used his office to Islamize anti-Zionism and provide a religious rationale for hatred of Jews. Anyone who

failed to accept his guidelines would be denounced by name in the mosque during Friday prayers, excluded from the rites of marriage and burial, or physically threatened. The Mufti implemented this policy along with his most prominent Palestinian ally of the time, the Islamic fundamentalist Izz al-Din al-Qassam, whose name is borne by Hamas's suicide-bombing units. Al-Qassam was the first sheikh of modern times who, in 1931 in the Haifa region, set up a movement that united the ideology of a devout return to the original Islam of the seventh century with the practice of militant jihad against the infidels.[21]

The unrest that began in 1936 and that has gone down in history as the "Arab revolt" was the initial testing ground for the emergent Islamist ideology. Here for the first time terrorist methods were employed that would later be inculcated among Muslims in Algeria, Afghanistan, and Iran.

Nucleus of Islamism

The "Arab revolt," which continued in stages until the start of the Second World War, began in April 1936 as a wave of strikes against Jewish immigration and British rule.[22] The second phase developed in autumn 1937 after the publication of the Peel Plan on the partition of Palestine. At this point, German foreign policy intervened decisively. "The Mufti himself said that it was at that time only because of German money that it had been possible to carry through the uprising in Palestine. From the outset he made major financial demands that the Nazis in very large measure met."[23]

From now on, the character of the unrest was determined by the Mufti and the supporters of Sheikh al-Qassam. In the zones "liberated" from the Jews and British, new dress codes and shari'a law were brutally enforced and numerous "un-Islamic" deviationists liquidated. A German biographer of the Mufti reported admiringly in 1943 on the shooting of Palestinian Arabs who resisted the pressure to submit by refusing to wear the kaffiyeh.[24] No less draconian were the means used to force Arab Christian women and all other women to wear the veil.

Along with the Jews and the British, Palestinians who sought compromises with Zionism and the Mandatory power and supported the Peel Plan were also targeted. "Sellers of land to the Jews, holders of moderate political views and those whose nationalism was generally suspected," recounts Porath:

> were not always immediately murdered; sometimes they were kidnapped and taken to the mountainous areas under rebel control. There they were thrown into pits infested with snakes and scorpions. After spending a few days there, the victims, if still alive, were brought before one of the rebel courts and usually sentenced to death, or, as a special dispensation, to severe flogging. The terror was so strong that no one, including ulama and priests, dared to perform the proper burial services.[25]

Through the German Zeesen broadcasts, the Allies in the Second World War were presented as lackeys of the Jews. At the same time, Jews were attacked as the worst enemies of Islam.

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20 Uri M. Kupferschmidt, *The Supreme Muslim Council: Islam under the British Mandate for Palestine* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1987), pp. 249, 252.

21 On Izz al-Din al-Qassam, see Porath, *Palestinian Arab National Movement*, pp. 133. In November 1935, al-Qassam became the first victim of the death cult he promoted when he was killed in a skirmish with the British, and has since been revered as a martyr.

22 Davis Thomas Schiller, *Palästinenser zwischen Terrorismus und Diplomatie* (Munich: Bernard & Graefe Verlag, 1982), p. 123. (German).

23 According to Klaus Gensicke in his important study, *Der Mufti*, pp. 233. The most detailed accounts of the uprising are to be found in Schiller, *Palästinenser*, and Porath, *Palestinian Arab National Movement*.

24 Kurt Fischer-Weth, *Amin el-Husseini: Grossmufti von Palästina* (Berlin: Walter Titz Verlag, 1943), p. 83. How the kaffiyah, which was permanently worn by Arafat, could become the badge of identity of today's "progressives" deserves a study of its own.

25 Porath, *Palestinian Arab National Movement*, p. 250.

The unrest culminated in autumn 1938. El-Husseini now had some ten thousand fighters – including three thousand professional soldiers – at his disposal. The most important commands were in the hands of the "Qassamites," while the Mufti directed the revolt from Beirut.[26] Dr. Reichert from the Intelligence Bureau had several meetings with representatives of the insurgents and repeatedly emphasized that "on the basis of the Third Reich's undertakings to Haj Amin el-Husseini the Arab nationalists will soon have sufficient financial resources for the continuation of their rebellion."[27]

Why did the National Socialists want to prolong the unrest? The most important reason was expressed by Alfred Rosenberg, head of the Nazi Party's foreign policy department. "The longer the fire continues to burn in Palestine," he prophesied in December 1938, "the stronger becomes the resistance to the Jewish regime of violence in all the Arab states and beyond that in the other Muslim countries too."[28] These words were borne out. It was, for example, the fighting in Palestine that first turned the core organization of Islamism, the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood, founded in 1928, into the influential organization from whose ranks not only Hamas but also Osama bin Laden's World Islamic Front for Jihad against Jews and Crusaders would later issue. Whereas in 1936 the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood had a mere eight hundred members, by 1938 it already had 200,000. In the intervening period it had undertaken only one campaign: the mobilization behind the Mufti-led revolt in Palestine.[29]

The Anti-Semitism of the Muslim Brotherhood

Before 1936, there could be no talk of anti-Semitism in Egypt. Jews were well regarded by the population and were influential in economic and political life. The anti-Jewish pamphlets that the NSDAP's local group in Cairo attempted to disseminate fell on deaf ears. In a letter to Berlin in 1933, the group asserted that further leaflets and pamphlets would be of no avail and that instead attention should be turned to where "real conflicts of interests between Arabs and Jews exist; Palestine. The conflict between Arabs and Jews there must be transplanted into Egypt."[30]

Three years later, that is what happened. In May 1936, immediately after the start of the Palestinian revolt, the Muslim Brotherhood called for a boycott of all Jewish businesses in Egypt. In mosques and factories, the rumor was spread that the Jews and British were destroying the holy places of Jerusalem. Further false reports of hundreds of killed Arab women and children circulated.

After the publication of the Peel Plan, the anti-Jewish agitation was stepped up. Cries of "Down with the Jews!" and "Jews out of Egypt and Palestine!" rang out in violent student demonstrations in Cairo, Alexandria, and Tanta. A column titled "The Menace of the Jews of Egypt" was introduced in the Brotherhood's magazine, Al-Nadhir. In it were published the names and addresses of Jewish business proprietors and owners of allegedly Jewish newspapers from across the world, and all evils – from communism to brothels – were attributed to the "Jewish threat." In September 1938, the Brotherhood

The unrest that began in 1936 and that has gone down in history as the "Arab revolt" was the initial testing ground for the emergent Islamist ideology. Here for the first time terrorist methods were employed that would later be inculcated among Muslims in Algeria, Afghanistan, and Iran.

launched a call for people to wear and consume only goods produced in Islamic countries and in all parts of Egypt to prepare to embark on a jihad to defend the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem.[31]

Giselher Wirsing, a prominent journalist of the Third Reich, enthusiastically reported on the shockwaves that the "political earthquake center" in Palestine had created in Egypt. Wirsing, a member of the SS, noted with satisfaction "a marked return to the religious traditions of Islam" and "a fierce hostility to Western liberalism … Recent developments in Egypt … show how strongly this theocracy is able to revive itself after the first onrush of liberalism." Theocracy instead of democracy, Salafism instead of liberalism: this SS man takes a clear line.[32]

Priority was now given to supporting the burgeoning Islamist movement in Egypt with German funds. As Brynjar Lia recounts in his monograph on the Muslim Brotherhood:

> Documents seized in the flat of Wilhelm Stellbogen, the Director of the German News Agency (Deutsches Nachrichtenbüro) affiliated to the German Legation in Cairo, show that prior to October 1939 the Muslim Brothers received subsidies from his organisation. Stellbogen was instrumental in transferring these funds to the Brothers, which were considerably larger than the subsidies offered to other anti-British activists. These transfers appear to have been coordinated by Haj Amin el-Husseini and some of his Palestinian contacts in Cairo.[33]

The contributions enabled the Muslim Brotherhood to set up a printing plant with twenty-four employees and use the most up-to-date propaganda methods. For example, an eighty-page pamphlet called "Fire and Destruction in Palestine," with fifty photos of alleged acts of violence and torture, was produced and several tens of thousands of copies distributed among the populace.

The Muslim Brotherhood also, of course, enjoyed the assistance of German officers in constructing their military organization and cooperated with Rommel's army in the Second World War. But they never admired Hitler. For Hassan al-Banna, the founder and leader of the Muslim Brotherhood, there was no question of accepting a non-Muslim leader. "When they did express admiration of certain aspects of National Socialism or Fascism, it was usually in the context of demonstrating that the Europeans had implemented some of 'the principles of Islam,' such as a modest dress code, encouragement of early marriage, a strong patriotism and a military jihad spirit."[34]

Thus did the years 1936-1939 shape Islamism as a new and independent, anti-Semitic and antimodern mass movement. Until 1936 the moderate Arab forces, which welcomed or at least tolerated Zionism, had in no way been marginalized. This changed after the National Socialists threw their weight behind the Islamists. They successfully spurred on the unrest in Palestine and so contributed to spreading the idea that the Jews were the

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26 Ibid. , p. 183. After the failed British attempt to arrest el-Husseini in July 1937, he fled in October to Beirut from where, with a few hundred acolytes who had come with him, he continued to direct the uprising. See Melka, *The Axis*, pp. 106.; Cohen, *Retreat*, p. 59.

27 Again in May 1939 British officials reported that "DNB agents are currently undertaking an intensive propaganda campaign in Palestine for a resumption of the rebellion in alliance with the Husseini circle." DNB agents had stated "that huge sums of money were available to ensure that the rebellion continued and that machine guns have been brought into the country for the rebellion." Balke, *Die Landesgruppe*, pp. 205, 207.

28 Alfred Rosenberg, "Die Judenfrage im Weltkampf," in Alfred Rosenberg, *Tradition und Gegenwart: Reden und Aufsätze 1936-1940, Blut und Ehre, IV. Band* (Munich: Zentralverlag der NSDAP, 1943), p. 208 (German).

29 Abd Al-Fattah Muhammad El-Awaisi, *The Muslim Brotherhood and the Palestinian Question 1928-1947* (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 1998), p. 98. For the links between the Islamism of the 1930s and that of the present day, see Matthias Küntzel, *Djihad und Judenhass* (Freiburg: ca ira-Verlag, 2002); published in English as *Jihad and Jew-hatred: Islamism, Nazism, and the Roots of 9/11* (New York: Telos Press, 2007).

30 Gudrun Krämer, *Minderheit, Millet, Nation? Die Juden in Agypten 1914-1952* (Wiesbaden: Verlag Otto Harrassowitz, 1982), p. 278 (German). Since 1926, Alfred Hess, brother of Hitler's deputy-to-be, had been building up the NSDAP group in Egypt. See Küntzel, *Djihad und Judenhass*, pp. 26.

31 Krämer, *Minderheit*, pp. 290.; El-Awaisi, *Muslim Brotherhood*, pp. 39, 70, 92; Porath, *Palestinian Arab National Movement*, p. 199. On the resistance that this campaign at first encountered even in clerical circles, see Küntzel, *Djihad und Judenhass*, pp. 30.

32 GiselherWirsing, *Engländer, Juden, Araber, in Palästina*, 5th rev. ed. (Leipzig: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1942), pp. 136 (German). Wirsing visited Egypt and Palestine in 1936 and 1939 on behalf of the SS. See Otto Köhler, *Unheimliche Publizisten* (Munich: Droemersche Verlagsanstalt Th. Knaur Nachf., 1995), pp. 290 (German). Salafism (as-salaf as-salih means "the pious forefathers") is the term used for the ideal of a return to the early Islam of the seventh century advocated by figures such as Hassan al-Banna and Izz al-Din al-Qassam.

33 Brynjar Lia, *The Society of the Muslim Brothers in Egypt* (Reading: Ithaca Press, 1988), p. 175. The British secret service officer Seth Arsenian confirms this information: "Nazi agents also paid subversive groups, such as … the Ikhwan al-Muslimun in Egypt, to run propaganda against the British in Palestine" (Ikhwan al-Muslimun: Arab term for the Muslim Brothers). See Arsenian, "Wartime Propaganda," p. 425.

34 Lia, *Society of the Muslim Brothers*, pp. 80, 180. The issue of the reciprocal contacts between Nazis and Muslim Brothers in the Second World War lies outside the scope of this article. On this matter, see, inter alia, John W. Eppler, *Rommel ruft Cairo* (Gütersloh: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1959), p. 165 (German).

enemy to Egypt. The Islamist mass mobilization was financially and ideologically supported by Radio Zeesen and other means of propaganda. This was one of the reasons that it was the Islamism and anti-Semitism of Hassan al-Banna rather than the enlightened modernism of Kemal Atatürk that gained general acceptance in the Arab part of the Islamic world.[35]

The Zeesen shortwave transmitter appears in retrospect to have been the interface that transferred the anti-Semitic ideology to the Arab world and linked early Arab Islamism with late National Socialism. Although Radio Zeesen ceased operation in April 1945, it was only after that date that its frequencies of hate really began to reverberate in the Arab world.

Brother Hitler

The eighth of May, 1945, was followed by a twofold division of the world. The one division between politico-economic systems is known as the Cold War. The second cleavage, merely covered over by the Cold War, has to do with the persistence of National Socialist modes of thought. In her report on the trial of Adolf Eichmann in 1961, Hannah Arendt cast her gaze into this abyss: "the newspapers in Damascus and Beirut, in Cairo and Jordan did not conceal either their sympathy for Eichmann nor their regret that he 'did not finish the job'; a radio broadcast from Cairo on the opening day of the trial even included a little sideswipe at the Germans, reproaching them for the fact that "in the last war, no German plane had ever flown over and bombed a Jewish settlement."[36] The same regret and heartfelt wish to see all Jews finally annihilated was expressed in April 2002 by a columnist in the second largest, state-controlled Egyptian daily Al-Akhbar.

> The entire matter [the Holocaust], as many French and British scientists and researchers have proven, is nothing more than a huge Israeli plot aimed at extorting the German government in particular and the European countries in general. But I, personally and in light of this imaginary tale, complain to Hitler, even saying to him from the bottom of my heart, "If only you had done it, brother, if only it had really happened, so that the world could sigh in relief [without] their evil and sin."[37]

The logic is clear: the Jew is the source of evil in the world that must be destroyed. Israel therefore deserves to be erased from the map. And the Shoah is therefore no crime, but a failed attempt for which a more successful reprise is desired. Demonization of the Jews, legitimization of the Holocaust, and the liquidation of Israel; three sides of an ideological triangle that cannot exist if any one of the sides is missing. But why did this monstrous ideology find its most fertile place of exile in the Arab world after 1945?

Here the Mufti comes back into the picture. Openly and knowing about Auschwitz, he had advocated the Shoah. "Germany," he declared in 1943, has "decided to find a final solution to the Jewish

menace, which will end this misfortune in the world."[38] Nevertheless, the Mufti's reputation remained intact after 1945. He was, to be sure, personally responsible both for the atrocities committed by the Muslim SS division in Bosnia and for the deaths of thousands of Jewish children in the Holocaust.[39] However, in order not to fall out with the Arab world, the United States and Britain refrained from prosecuting him, while France, in whose custody the Mufti had been since 1945, let him escape. When on 10 June 1946 the headlines of the world press announced the Mufti's "flight" from France, "the Arab quarters of Jerusalem and all the Arab towns and villages were garlanded and beflagged, and the great man's portrait was to be seen everywhere."[40] While amnestying the Mufti, the Allies also rehabilitated his anti-Semitism. Even more: the Arabs saw in the Mufti's impunity "not only a weakness of the Europeans, but also absolution for past and future occurrences," commented Simon Wiesenthal in 1947. Now the pro-Nazi past began to become "a source of pride, not shame."[41]

The opposed views of the Holocaust first clashed in November 1947 at the UN General Assembly. On one side were those who considered the Shoah a fact and a catastrophe and were consequently in favor of the partition of Palestine and the founding of Israel.[42] On the other were those who saw in the UN resolution a further example of the "Jewish world conspiracy." Among the latter was the founder of the Muslim Brotherhood, Hassan Al-Banna, who "considered the whole United Nations intervention to be an international plot carried out by the Americans, the Russians and the British, under the influence of Zionism," while Haj Amin el-Husseini, back in his role as spokesman for the Palestinians, believed that, instead of Palestine being divided into states, "the Arabs" should "together attack the Jews and destroy them as soon as the British forces have been withdrawn" from Palestine.[43]

No Arab head of state had the courage to contradict the popular Palestinian leader. And so the cynicism of the West, which left the Mufti undisturbed in 1946, and the opportunism of the Arabs paved the way to one of the most fateful turning points of the 20th century: as Israel was founded on 14 May 1948, the armies of Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Syria, and Lebanon invaded. The general-secretary of the Arab League, Abd al-Rahman Azzam, who had previously stated privately that he considered the partition of Palestine the only rational solution, now stood shoulder to shoulder with the Mufti; "this war," he declared on the day of the Arab attack, "will be a war of destruction."[44] The new state, to be sure, emerged victorious from this war, at a cost of six thousand Israeli lives. Anti-Semitism, however, took on a new dimension. Gamal Abdul Nasser, whose 1952 putsch was a consequence of the Arab defeat, disseminated the central text of European anti-Semitism, the Protocols of the Elders of Zion, in the Arab world. Moreover, Nasser employed many of the National Socialist war criminals who had evaded justice by fleeing to Egypt in their former sphere of expertise – anti-Jewish propaganda.[45]

After Nasser's military campaign against Israel also failed miserably in the Six-Day War of 1967, the previously incited hate against Jews was radicalized in an Islamist direction. Nasser's anti-Jewish propaganda was still accompanied by a fondness for life's pleasures. Now anti-Semitism was mixed with the Islamists' hatred for sensuality and joy in life and – in taking up the jihad launched thirty years previously in Palestine – popularized as religious resistance against all "corrupters of the world." Now it was "discovered" that not only was everything Jewish evil, but everything evil was Jewish. Thus, the most important manifesto of Islamist anti-Semitism, the essay "Our Struggle with the Jews" by the Muslim Brother Sayyid Qutb – distributed in millions of copies throughout the Islamic world with Saudi Arabian help – declares, with allusions to Karl Marx, Sigmund Freud, and Emile Durkheim, that the Jews are responsible for the worldwide moral and sexual decline: "Behind the doctrine of atheistic materialism was a Jew; behind the doctrine of animalistic sexuality was a Jew; and behind the destruction of the family and the shattering of sacred relationships in society was a Jew."[46] Now Palestine was declared sacred Islamic territory (Dar al-Islam), where Jews should not be allowed to govern even a single village, and Israel's destruction a religious duty. Intellectual devastation now spread unimpeded: Jews started to be denigrated by reference to verses in the Koran as "pigs" and "apes," and the claim that the consumption of non-Jewish blood was a religious rite for Jews was offered up as a scientific discovery.[47] The greatest victims of the Islamist turn were the Muslims themselves. The "struggle against depravity" means the suppression of one's own sensual needs and the return to "sacred social bonds" entails the subjugation of women.

A further escalation took place in 1982 when Hizbollah began systematically to employ people as bombs. The hatred of Jews was now greater than the fear of death. The ideology of destruction turned into the practice of ripping any Jew to pieces. Whenever the possibility of a peaceful solution appeared on the horizon, it would be drowned in the blood of suicidal mass murders. The first major series of suicide bombings began in Palestine in 1993-1994, at precisely the moment when the Oslo peace process was under way. It was resumed in October 2000 after Israel withdrew from Lebanon and had made its most far-reaching concessions yet to the Palestinian side at Camp David.[48]

Islamists and Europeans

From Zeesen to Beirut: the international media campaign against the Jews, which began sixty years ago with a "long-range gun in the ether," is now being pursued in the form of instruction in close combat by satellite. The bloodier the massacres in Israel and Palestine, the higher the viewing figures for Al-Manar and the more successful the anti- Semitic mobilization in the Arab-Islamic world, in turn ensuring a further rise in the death toll in

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35 On the moderate tendencies, see Küntzel, *Djihad und Judenhass*, pp. 15, 24, 41, 54. That Islamist antimodernism is not automatically associated with the identity-based "The Jews are our misfortune" fantasy is shown by the example of the Islamist movement formed at the same time in Southeast Asia. The force behind this movement, Ala Maududi, was certainly antiliberal and antifeminist, but he did not adopt anti-Jewish conspiracy theories. See Martin Riexinger, "Allahs Kader," *taz-Magazin*, 24 January 2004 (German).

36 Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem* (Munich: Piper Verlag, 1986), p. 81 (German).

37 Cited in *Middle East Research Institute* (MEMRI), report no. 375, 3 May 2002. On Holocaust denial as a component of average Arab consciousness, see Küntzel, *Djihad und Judenhass*, pp. 51, 116.

38 Speech on the anniversary of the Balfour Declaration, 2 November 1943, cited in Höpp, *Mufti-Papiere*, p. 197.

39 In 1943, the Mufti successfully prevented the implementation of a decision by the governments of Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary, which at that time wished to allow several thousand Jewish children to emigrate to Israel. Instead of this, urged the Mufti, they should be "sent where they will be under closer control, for example to Poland." See Höpp, *Mufti-Papiere*, p. 164. 40. Daphne Trevor, *Under the White Paper* (Jerusalem: Jerusalem Press, 1948), pp. 206. See also Gensicke, *Der Mufti*, pp. 251; Küntzel, *Djihad und Judenhass*, pp. 48, 146.

41 According to Lewis, *Semites*, p. 160, and Simon Wiesenthal, *Grossmufti: Der Grossagent der Achse* (Vienna: Reid Verlag, 1947), p. 2 (German). 42. On 29 November 1947 the UN General Assembly decided to divide Palestine into a Jewish state (56% of the Mandate territory with 500,000 Jews and 500,000 Arab inhabitants) and an Arab state (43% of the territory with 750,000 Arabs and 10,000 Jews) and place Jerusalem under international control.

43 El-Awaisi, *Muslim Brotherhood*, p. 195; Bethell, *Das Palästina*, p. 381.

44 Küntzel, *Jihad and Jew-Hatred*, p. 46. In 1948, after el-Husseini had been appointed chairman of the Muslim Brothers in Palestine and the deputy of Hassan al-Banna, The Magazine of the Year wrote, "..about one in every ten Arabs is a follower of the Mufti, and … it is unwise to criticize Haj Amin in public." See Gensicke, *Der Mufti*, p. 143. This was also the view of the Egyptian premier, Sidqi Pasha, who had initially supported the Partition Plan. This instrumental reason, which today seems to us like a relic of a distant past, was documented in 1947 by the responsible representative of the Jewish Agency for the Arab world, Eliyahu Sasson: "According to Sasson's report, the prime minister repeatedly stressed that he is a businessman. He is neither pro-Jewish nor pro-Arab. He looks out for the welfare of Egypt. If that dictates Jewish-Arab understanding, so be it." Cited in Michael Doran, *Pan-Arabism before Nasser* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 99.

45 Küntzel, *Djihad und Judenhass*, pp. 70.

46 Qutb's text was written in 1950, but could not gain acceptance in the period of Nasser's bloody suppression of the Muslim Brotherhood, to which Qutb himself fell victim by hanging. See Ronald L. Nettler, "Past Trials and Present Tribulations: A Muslim Fundamentalist Speaks on the Jews," in Michael Curtis, ed., *Antisemitism in the Contemporary World* (London: Westview Press, 1986), pp. 99.

After Nasser's military campaign against Israel failed miserably in the Six-Day War of 1967, the previously incited hate against Jews was radicalized in an Islamist direction. Nasser's anti-Jewish propaganda was still accompanied by a fondness for life's pleasures. Now anti-Semitism was mixed with the Islamists' hatred for sensuality and joy in life and – in taking up the jihad launched thirty years previously in Palestine – popularized as religious resistance against all "corrupters of the world." Now it was "discovered" that not only was everything Jewish evil, but everything evil was Jewish. The most important manifesto of Islamist anti-Semitism, the essay "Our Struggle with the Jews" by the Muslim Brother Sayyid Qutb, declares that the Jews are responsible for the worldwide moral and sexual decline.

the Middle East conflict. This escalation strategy is not a response to any specific Israeli policy. Whatever the Israeli government does is subordinated to a mindset that seeks to destroy the Israeli state as the representative of evil.

The "evil," though, is the Jew himself. In September 2001, the legend that following a warning by the Mossad four thousand Jews had not shown up for work at the World Trade Centre on 11 September – a legend invented by Hizbollah and broadcast by Al-Manar – spread like wildfire. This "I-hate-you" virus was proliferated a millionfold by Internet and satellite across the world. What sort of image of "Jews" does it convey? First of all, it assumes that the Mossad is prepared to wade in blood so as to harm the Arabs. Second, it implies that every Jew outside Israel obeys orders from Tel Aviv. Third, it projects Hizbollah's own destructive urges onto the victims: the Jews in New York had, allegedly, cold-bloodedly delivered up thousands of their non-Jewish colleagues to death. Goebbels's dictum that a lie only has to be big enough to be believed was here faithfully followed. Its global spread and acceptance in itself marks a watershed: overnight the fabricated story of a worldwide Jewish conspiracy was popularized as the central interpretative framework for an event of worldwide significance. If today there are "more anti-Semites and more anti-Semitism in the world than ever" as Alain Finkielkraut asserts, then this is due in some measure to Al-Manar.[49]

In Europe this channel, whose costs are covered by, among other things, advertising the German chocolate Milka, the Finnish Smeds cheese, the Austrian Red Bull drink, and the French Gauloises cigarettes, is broadcast by the Eutelsat satellite firm via its Hotbird 4 satellite.[50] The French newspaper *Libération* estimates that 2.6 million households in France alone can receive the channel, which since 9/11 has also gained growing popularity in Germany's Arab neighborhoods. At least in France the broadcast of the twenty-nine part series Al-Shatat sparked immediate protests. Prime Minister Raffarin, having been shown excerpts from the series, is pressing for changes in the media laws in order to block the channel's broadcasts.[51] There is no whiff of any such steps in Germany. As in February 2004 the president of Eutelsat was meeting representatives of the French monitoring agencies to discuss measures to control Al-Manar, in Beirut the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung was sitting down with the people behind the channel – not, however, in order to dissociate themselves from it, but to "facilitate change through rapprochement," as the FES wrote in a press release. "We are hoping that they will come to a certain understanding, and that they will form a sort of permanent committee to sustain such dialogue among the Islamists and Europeans," declared an FES representative in the run-up to the conference.[52]

From Zeesen to Beirut: why did the anti-Semitic holy warriors in 2002 decide to approach Germany in particular with their conference proposal? The answer is no secret. Udo Steinbach,

head of the Deutsche Orient-Institut in Hamburg, quite openly enthused about the "lingering effects of the sympathy traditionally evinced for Germany in the whole region."[53] The ideological basis for this sympathy was decisively strengthened by Radio Zeesen and the Mufti's pro-German orientation. Is German foreign policy today picking up the threads of this "sympathy"? Foreign Office officials evade giving a clear answer to this question. Instead, the virulent pro-Nazi sentiment is purposefully ignored and the continuation of a Nazi-like anti-Semitism has met with inexcusable nonchalance.

In Beirut, it was not German neo-Nazis who met Hizbollah and its deputy general-secretary, Sheikh Naeem Qasim, but Social Democrats, that is, declared opponents of fascism.[54] However, even to mention Hizbollah's Nazi-like anti-Semitism would have removed the basis for this meeting. So instead the conference tested the waters of "change through rapprochement" around topics where residual German and Arab traditions can be drawn on in equal measure, such as "Neocolonialism or 'Benevolent Hegemony'?," "Occupation and Resistance," and "Self-Determination and Independence in a Globalized World."

Some justification was needed after the Beirut conference to bridge the gulf between subjective good intentions and the objective validation of Hizbollah's terror. This justification was "Israel." Participants in the conference tried to make both themselves and critics of the conference believe that Hizbollah was just reacting to Israel's policies.[55] Certainly, the policies of the Israeli government – like those of any other government – may give rise to anger and criticism. But no Israeli policy, however deserving of criticism it may be, makes plausible the anti-Semites' tenets that Washington is ruled by Jerusalem and that the Passover meal is prepared with the blood of murdered children.

Anyone, however, who believes in presenting Israel as the scapegoat for Islamist violence is not only diverting attention from the goals of Islamism and its National Socialist heritage, but is also, by adhering to a new "the Jew is guilty" model, reconnecting with the ancient forms of European anti-Semitism.

The Jew is the evil of the world, declares the Islamist station today, in unison with the earlier one based in Zeesen. One cannot get away with fuzzy answers to the question of whether Germany and Europe, in their foreign policies, want to play along with this tradition or to break with it. The absence of clarity is the beginning of complicity, wrote the historian Omer Bartov. Or in the words of Leon Poliakov, "anyone who does not denounce anti-Semitism in its primitive and elementary form, and does not do so precisely because it is primitive and elementary, will have to face the question as to whether he is not thereby sending out a sign of secret approval to anti-Semites all over the world."[56] ●

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47 This claim is found, for example, in the standard work on The People of Israel in the Koran and the Sunna by the most famous Sunni spiritual authority of today and Grand Imam of the Al-Azhar University in Cairo, Mohammed Tantawi, which he presented as a doctoral thesis and was published in 1968–69. See Wolfgang Driesch, *Islam, Judentum und Israel* (Hamburg: Deutsches Orient-Institut, Mitteilungen 66, 2003), pp. 53, 74. The most recent edition of this bestseller appeared in 1997.

48 Joseph Croitoru, *Der Märtyrer als Waffe* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2003), p. 130, pp. 165 (German).

49 "Antisemitismus in Wandel. Ein Gespräch mit Alain Finkielkraut," *FAZ*, Vol. 12, November 2003 (German).

50 In contrast to their European competitors, U.S. firms such as Pepsi, Coke, and Western Union ceased their involvement with Al-Manar following protests. See Jorisch, "Al-Manar."

51 Rausing, "Frequenzen des Hasses," p. 50.

52 Christian Henderson, "Conference Aims to Take Heads out of the Sand," *Daily Star*, 18 February 2004; Markus Bickel, "Reden und lassen reden," *taz*, 24 February 2004. The German government was involved in the planning and evaluation of this conference, as is clear from a letter sent by Chancellor Schröder's senior foreign policy adviser, Bernd Mützelburg, to the Simon Wiesenthal Center in Paris on 6 April 2004. The aim of the conference, according to Mützelburg, was "to test the capacity of political Islam for dialogue." However, the German government had come to the conclusion that in Beirut they had not yet reached their goal of "contributing to an honest and critical dialogue with members of political Islam" (Simon Wiesenthal Center press release, 14 April 2004).

53 Udo Steinbach, "Der Nahe Osten in der deutschen Aussenpolitik," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B 12/98, p. 27 (German).

54 Among the participants in the conference were Social Democratic MP Christoph Zöpel (between 1999 and 2002 a minister of state in the Foreign Office and currently spokesperson for the SPD's Middle East Dialogue Parliamentary Group), Michael Lüders and Helga Baumgarten (Middle East experts), Volker Perthes (from the Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik think tank), AndräGärber (Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung), Manfred Kropp (Deutsches Orient- Institut Beirut), and Friedemann Büttner (FU Berlin).

55 "In the Israeli-occupied territories," declared the most prominent of the German participants, Christoph Zöbel, "force is used on a daily basis," as a result of which Hizbollah also thinks in terms of "changing the situation through the use of force." See "Die Hisbollah ist eine Kraft unter vielen," interview with Christoph Zöbel in *JungleWorld*, 25 February 2004 (German). On the relationship between Islamic anti-Semitism and Israeli policy, see Matthias Küntzel, "The Roots of Delusion," on the website www.matthiaskuentzel.de.

56 Leon Poliakov, *Vom Antizionismus zum Anti-Semitismus* (Freiburg: ca ira- Verlag, 1992), p. 104 (German).

The Potentials and Pitfalls of Town Meeting Advocacy

Many communities in New England have a tradition of town meeting, dating back to the American Revolution. In recent years, activists have brought campaigns to these institutions on a range of issues, including nuclear energy, climate policies, civil liberties, U.S. wars, and genetic engineering. What have been the strengths and weaknesses of this strategy? And what can communalists around the world learn from this form of local organizing?

BY BEN GROSSCUP
ILLUSTRATIONS BY BEVERLY NAIDUS

Just as there is a difference between efforts aimed merely at reforming society and efforts that aim for revolutionary transformation, there is also a difference between speaking out against the abuses of the current social order and building the political power of people to uproot the pillars of this one. The aim of communalists is not only to "give voice" to marginalized peoples, ideas and political alternatives, but also to build political institutions that directly empower people to define and adopt policies guiding public matters of everyday life.

Searching for ways to practice this kind of politics, I have devoted a substantial effort to a variety of campaigns that I collectively refer to as *town meeting advocacy*. A town meeting advocacy campaign is one in which a committed group of citizens within a town uses the town meeting process to make a non-binding political statement (called a resolution) regarding a substantive and controversial political issue. This form of activism is related to a form of local government only existing in certain parts of the U.S. However, examining the potentials and pitfalls of town meeting advocacy can help inform the ongoing efforts of communalists around the world to root our political struggle in municipal institutions.

New England Town Meetings

Town meeting advocacy plays out within the venue of town meeting government, which remains the official municipal governance structure for a large number of municipalities in New England – especially Vermont, Massachusetts, Maine, and New Hampshire. In Massachusetts, there are 302 municipalities governed by town meeting and in Vermont, there are 246. Town meeting is a face-to-face form of government that is potentially more open to public participation than federal and state representative bodies and city councils, which like the rest of the United States, are the typical governance structure for large cities in New England. The historical origins of town meeting lie in the forms of self-governance set up by early Puritan settlers in New England before the American Revolution.[1]

Vestiges of the remarkably directly democratic political practices of these early American towns are retained – albeit in an attenuated form – in many New England towns today. In most towns governed by town meeting, anyone who is registered to vote there can still freely attend the town meeting, speak on matters pertaining to the meeting's agenda (called the 'warrant'), and make proposals (called 'articles') to be debated and acted upon. The procedures to do these things are often relatively simple. Depending on the regulations of the specific town, putting an article on the warrant is often as simple as collecting a set number of petition signatures. Once a group forms with an intention to put a resolution article before the town, passage can be relatively easy if political sentiments in the town are sympathetic to the petitioner's aims.

The use of town meeting to make statements of political opinion on a range of controversial issues dates back to pre-revolutionary times.[2] During the 1980s, the anti-nuclear movement's Nuclear Freeze Campaign used town meeting advocacy to promote its aim of ending nuclear weapons. In the early 2000s, there was a renewal of interest in some parts of New England using the town meeting advocacy strategy to mobilize opposition to genetically engineered crops, attacks against civil liberties,[3] the military occupation of Iraq, federal inaction on the climate crisis, and the continued operation of nuclear power plants.

Campaigning against GE crops

My own experience working on these campaigns has included working with two different organizations seeking to raise awareness of the dangers of genetically engineered crops as a way of building an oppositional movement to their continued use and proliferation. GE crops are an ecological threat in part because they are designed to further necessitate the use of toxic chemicals in agriculture. The most common trait of commercialized GE crops is resistance to the herbicide, glyphosate, making the chemical and the GE seed two parts of a single package. A multiplicity of studies demonstrates the toxicity of numerous GE crops, and many studies showing the opposite have been exposed for their methodological

flaws and ideological biases towards the biotechnology industry.[4] Moreover, compelling science strongly suggests that the method of genetic engineering is inherently disruptive to the genetic function of plants.[5] The global distribution of these crops poses serious ecological threats to the genetic integrity of biological organisms and health threats to human beings and animals. GE crops are also tied to the legal and political threats of global seed conglomerates, like Monsanto, that use their legal patent rights on the novel genetic alterations of these crops to sue farmers that do not sign the companies' license agreements.[6] Such suits have played an enormous role in expanding the power of these companies at the expense independent family farmers.

As part of the Institute for Social Ecology in Vermont, I worked with local activists in several towns in 2002 and 2003 to help them bring resolutions against agricultural genetic engineering to their town meetings – we called it *The Town to Town Campaign on Genetic Engineering*. The demands we made included: 1) mandatory labeling of all GE foods by manufacturers; 2) strict liability protection to strengthen farmers' legal rights when dealing with biotechnology corporations; and 3) a moratorium on further growing of GE crops until independent scientific evidence proves them to be safe, and they can be demonstrated not to harm family farms.

In January 2006, I began working as an organizer for the Northeast Organic Farming Association/ Massachusetts Chapter, which had decided to adopt the model of organizing in Vermont where by 2005, 85 different towns and cities had passed resolutions against genetic engineering. For two consecutive years (2006 and 2007), I organized activists concerned about genetic engineering who were willing to speak publicly in favor of anti-GE resolutions at their town meetings. During those 2 years, I worked with people in 18 different towns – mostly in Western Massachusetts – that successfully passed resolutions opposing GE crops, bringing the total number of municipalities in Massachusetts that have taken such measures to 30.[7]

Democratic Yearnings in an Undemocratic Society

So what are the potentials and pitfalls of this organizing strategy? I believe we can begin to understand this through what I see as an uneven tension between yearning and reality that is inherent to town meeting advocacy campaigns. On the one hand, activists doing this work celebrate town meeting resolutions as the expression of participatory democracy, but, on the other hand, the town meetings have extremely limited powers on issues of importance for the everyday life of people in this region of the U.S.

In the first moment – that of yearning – town meeting government is a relatively accessible sphere of public discourse where it is possible for matters of local and global import to be debated, voted, and acted upon through a participatory process. Although town meetings have relatively little power and narrow jurisdictions, at their best, non-binding resolutions enable a form of speech and education that is unique for its ties to an actual governing institution. More importantly, political action of this kind highlights the civic and humanistic identities of a democratic citizenry, in a way that can countervail rampant and corrosive trends toward isolated consumer identities.

One cultural factor that nourishes this moment of democratic yearning, is that many people throughout New England still revere town meeting as a site for the democratic practice of regular people. Notwithstanding town meetings' limited jurisdictions and oftentimes low levels of participation, town meeting advocacy has lent moral authority and institutional legitimacy to public dissent because of the generally favorable impressions people have of the institutional venue in which it is carried out.

In the second moment – that of the realities of our undemocratic society – town meeting advocacy can also be seen as a dead end for a radical agenda. Passing a town meeting resolution is regarded, with some justification, as institutionally irrelevant to the decision making processes that really determine crucial matters like war, civil liberties, food safety, and agricultural and energy policy. Indeed, the relative ease with which town meetings can express opinions on these matters is matched only by the ease with which these measures can be ignored by the state and corporations, where power in its present institutionalized form – not just its potential form – largely resides.

As governing institutions, town meetings primarily administer policies on taxes, education, land-use, and infrastructure that come from the centralized state. The political domination of the municipality by the state narrowly contains virtually every decision that that the former makes, no matter what articles local citizens put on their local warrant. A common argument I have heard people make against non-binding town meeting resolutions, for example, is that they distract from the immediate (and often perfunctory) business that town meeting is required to do by law.

That is also why town meeting advocacy takes place on the periphery of the town meeting itself. At least in recent history – town meeting advocacy campaigns are almost always initiated by social movement organizations, rather than by the many committees and boards of town meeting government which are more concerned with generating articles such as zoning changes and budgets. Although the structure of town meeting *allows* for internal town meeting advocacy, getting people engaged at their town meetings on specific issues on a large scale usually requires the coordination and support that only a state-wide organization or coalition can provide. One reason for this is that support for taking a stand on issues that challenge the State or corporations – or that simply addresses controversial matters outside of strictly local politics – is notably lacking within most local governments since they are not independent entities. Another reason is that statewide advocacy organizations may be the only available way to meet people's need for support from others when doing political action. The need for statewide political organization on the basis of individual issues, is a sign that town meeting resolutions

expresses the political aims of those organizations more than the self-directed will of the town meeting itself.

The tension between yearning and reality is also a source of confusion and contention among those involved in town meeting advocacy campaigns. The primary aim of these campaigns is normally to petition state and federal governments with *symbolic* political demands, as was the case in both of the campaigns against genetic engineering in Vermont and Massachusetts. Many of the activists involved failed to distinguish between speaking out against genetic engineering, and doing something about the powerlessness of town meetings to stop the proliferation of GE crops. It impressed me, for example, how frequently new and inexperienced participants in the town meeting advocacy campaigns, would initially make the assumption that we were campaigning to directly ban the growing of GE crops in a town. I understood this common first reaction as an encouraging sign that people who understand the threats posed by GE crops are looking for concrete steps to stop them. Paradoxically, the campaigns were not prepared to make demands that could give town meetings legislative powers on such issues. The majority of anti-GMO organizations in our coalition, moreover, did not want to make such a demand based on the belief that the state was the rightful actor in containing the threat of GE crops. Those of us connected to the Institute for Social Ecology, on the other hand, viewed the state not only as captured by the biotech industry, but also as a main instigator of the modern biotechnology era.[8] We were trying to open up the possibility of pushing for a local ban out of the understanding that we couldn't wait for the state to do it for us, but we recognized that most of the communities we were working with were politically unprepared to successfully enforce and defend such a local decision.

Much like new recruits to town meeting advocacy campaigns against GE crops, many opponents of the resolutions incorrectly assumed that activists were promoting a local ban on GE crops. One indication that our dreams of enforceable GE-free zones developing all over our region would face an uphill struggle, was when anti-GE allies sought to diffuse the disapproval of local opponents by arguing that a local resolution would only make a request to political representatives and that would not have any concrete impact on farmers. This unwillingness of my own allies to take risks in exercising what little power they actually do have was circumscribed by their assumption that the state's legislative process is the only legitimate and effective way to make change on the issue of genetic engineering. Instead of taking action to directly bring into being the world we want to live in, we were contenting ourselves with the utterance of requests for distant superiors to do it for us.

Pitfalls of Petitioning the State

Grassroots social movement organizations regularly petition higher – and increasingly out-of-reach – levels of government such as state and federal governments for change. Whether or not individuals in these

We must not pretend that mechanisms for enacting change exist where they do not. Once people are aware of their real disempowerment, they can claim a new type of power that they have never even tasted before: **The power to make binding decisions on public matters that affect everyday life.**

> **One lesson that organizers are teaching to other activists in town meeting advocacy campaigns, insofar as they primarily focus on petitioning, is that although the state is failing on certain issues it can be reformed through pressure. The oftentimes crucially missing lesson from this organizing process is that there are deeply ingrained economic, ideological, and political reasons for why the state is not responding to people's needs – and why political action by the people that is independent of the state is needed in order to address common problems.**

movements believe in it, the notion that the state is susceptible to such petitioning is implicit in the strategy behind such efforts. One lesson that organizers are teaching to other activists in town meeting advocacy campaigns, insofar as they primarily focus on petitioning, is that although the state is failing on certain issues it can be reformed through pressure. The oftentimes crucially missing lesson from this organizing process is that there are deeply ingrained economic, ideological, and political reasons for why the state is not responding to people's needs – and why political action by the people that is independent of the state is needed in order to address common problems.

By arguing that we are merely calling for change at "higher" levels of government "where the decisions really get made," activists avoid important and contentious conflicts over who gets to make decisions and who doesn't. A representative government, at best, promises to consider the desires of the people when candidates plan their next electoral campaign, but the system never promises substantial political empowerment for the people to have a direct say in policy. By arguing that critics should not oppose a new initiative because the proposed resolution will have no concrete impact on anybody, we become complicit in maintaining the political disempowerment to which we have become so woefully accustomed.

Although the Institute for Social Ecology galvanized the state-wide coalition that carried out the *Town to Town*-campaign in Vermont in 2002 and 2003, it was the only organization in the coalition that publicly argued that town meeting resolutions could mean something more than merely a request for legislation. Other coalition members – organizations working with environmental and consumer protections, and small farmer rights – approached these efforts primarily as a way to petition the Vermont State Legislature. They participated in the town meeting campaign only insofar as they saw it leading to statewide legislation in Vermont regulating GE crops. Thus, it was not surprising that the organizers who held this position would come to prioritize legislative advocacy and lobbying over grassroots organizing once the town meeting advocacy campaign was seen to have served its purpose of making community level political action open the debate at the state legislative level.

Following the approach of petitioning higher levels of government has achieved some partial successes. In Vermont, the advocacy of town meetings strengthened the position of coalition members who were working to enact statewide legislative changes. It was due in large part to the 85 towns in Vermont that passed resolutions against genetic engineering that in May 2006, the Vermont House and Senate passed unprecedented legislation permitting farmers to sue GE crop developers under private nuisance law. Supporters of the bill (including myself) were seeking to institute legal protections for farmers from companies like Monsanto that have sued farmers in some parts of the country for patent infringement when the companies' genetically engineered DNA shows up in the fields of farmers who have not paid the licensing fee. We also sought economic protections for organic and non-GMO farmers. Farmers in Vermont who grew GE crops showed

up in large numbers at the Vermont statehouse during key votes to voice their opposition to the bill. They said that Monsanto had told them that if the bill were to pass, Monsanto would stop selling GE crops to them. The Vermont governor eventually vetoed the bill. Then, left without a credible legislative strategy, the coalition that had formed four years beforehand around this campaign fell apart, leaving activists to join other causes.

In one sense, by petitioning higher levels of government as institutions, Vermont town meetings spurred legislative debate and action that would not have otherwise occurred. Meanwhile, local town meeting governments transformed themselves into lively venues for discussing important issues that would otherwise be seen as outside of their purview – at least for a brief time. The experience was meaningful for its educational value – both about the specific issue of genetic engineering and about the function of local governance. In another sense, the choices of the majority of coalition members in the Vermont *Town to Town*-campaign to use town meeting advocacy *primarily* as a method to strengthen narrow strategies of petitioning the state helped stagnate their efforts: When the legislative effort fell

apart, activists had not been taught through the organizing process on how to act independently to attain their goals.

When the town meetings engaged in petitioning higher levels of government, they took on the function of intermediary between the people and their supposed political representatives – a function that was already satisfied by endless websites and e-mail lists with contact information for elected officials. Indeed, insofar as proponents viewed resolutions entirely within the framework of petitioning the state, a reasonable argument made by local critics of the resolution campaigns was that since town meetings are capable of managing their narrow purview with considerable democracy, they should not have to consider matters outside that purview, when petitioning can also be done in other ways.

Despite the limitations of the resolutions and the apparent reasonableness of certain procedural objections to them, there is a substantive difference between an individual letter and a town meeting resolution, which I think makes the latter worthwhile. A letter expresses only the resolve of an individual, whereas a resolution can involve the deliberations and debate of all the town meeting participants. Town

meetings define a public sphere in the communities that have them, which is not reducible simply to the particular social, economic, and political interest groups that have influence in a community. Their resolutions are qualitatively different than, for instance, those of a membership organization rallying around a particular issue, because they have been adopted through a public process in which any registered voter in the town has a right to participate. Still, when faced with the criticism that town meeting advocacy campaigns push agendas that are peripheral to the governing institution itself, the best reply starts with acknowledging the actual limitations of the current strategy. The next step is to argue for transforming the strategy so that it integrates the aim of expanding the power and jurisdiction of local town governance so that symbolic advocacy statements have a way of becoming actual policies.

When the state is so irresponsible and unresponsive to popular demands, we are right to respond with the urgency of the causes we champion, and we are right to stress the need to act with whatever means are available and consistent with our principles. But if the strategy of those doing municipal political action is limited to getting more town meetings to debate more single-issue advisory resolutions, we will have missed an opportunity to open new spaces for the radical potentials of town meeting advocacy to be realized. We must find paths to the next logical step: opening up municipal governmental institutions in ways that enable new modes of political action through which people can exercise enlightened reason to solve the problems that we face. Through institutional venues such as this, there lie unexplored opportunities to undermine regressive state policies, and to provide alternatives.

The Potentials of a Communalist Program

The transformation of town meeting advocacy to an effort for more radical change would begin by recognizing our common condition of substantial political disempowerment. We must not pretend that mechanisms for enacting change exist where, in fact, they do not. For instance, a campaign will fail if it simply tells town meeting members to vote to do things that they do not have the power to do yet. Once people are aware of their real disempowerment, if they are sufficiently unhappy with it, they can become prepared to claim a type of power that they have never even tasted before: The power to make binding decisions on public matters that affect everyday life. To actualize this vision, we need to identify existing mechanisms of power within town government that lie under-utilized, create them where they do not yet exist, and then exercise them to the maximum extent possible. The challenge for communalists in general, is to foster strategies of participation in local municipal institutions that expand their capacity to realize concrete changes on particular issues – thereby opening up those institutions as venues of struggle for more radical transformations of society.

The framework of a maximum, minimum, and transitional program provides a way to think through the potentials that

lie in the town meeting advocacy campaigns that have begun in New England. As a revolutionary political theory and practice, Communalism seeks to build a program through these three phases that achieves concrete political objectives that genuinely improve people's everyday lives while opening up even wider horizons of social transformation[9]. This framework is a way of thinking beyond the narrow political options that are most easily presented to activists: Advocacy for reforms that lack a plan for deeper social change, and moral protest against the outrages that surround us. This is a framework that seeks to stimulate the revolutionary imagination so that movements may one day be able to organize to transform the fundamental structures of our existing society. I would argue that key to what distinguishes Communalism, is that the specific kinds of action undertaken by a communalist movement flow out of a logic that starts with a maximum vision.[10]

A maximum vision concerns what kind of world we ought to live in. For politics to be grounded in an ethical framework rather than grounded in the immediate reality before us, the question of how our society, its institutions, and its practices should be comes before the question of what is already possible. What makes a maximum vision more than an abstraction are the concrete minimum and transitional programs for bringing that vision, or at least aspects of it, into reality. Minimum demands mobilize people around questions of immediate concern in ways that make it possible for them to imagine and fight for transitional demands. Transitional demands, as they are realized, create new kinds of institutions in society that contest the power of state and corporate entities. A transitional program puts into place the new structures that enable revolutionary transformation to occur. Without a maximum vision that expands people's imagination beyond the dreary reality before us, a minimum program will likely wander into mere reform of the existing social order.

A maximum vision that would deepen the meaning of municipal advocacy against GE, for instance, would involve a reciprocal food economy. Instead of a faceless market controlled by heartless corporations that drive down commodity prices for their own private profit, communities would directly and reliably support agricultural labor and value farming for its contributions to ecological and human health rather than merely for its "efficiency." Moreover, the food economy would be structured to assure that the needs of members of a community (as well as troubled communities elsewhere) would be met in a way respectful of people's dignity. Such a maximum demand stated in the realm of food would beg the question of why not make the rest of the economy a reciprocal one as well – a world in which the production and distribution of goods is done, not for profit, but for the benefit of all and for the healthy longevity of the ecosystems we depend upon.

A minimum program's aims are short-term, readily achievable, and generally won within the existing mechanisms of political

power. It must be stated that the political struggle in town meeting advocacy has generally not been part of a revolutionary program. Resolutions can be important achievements when connected to broader demands, but they are largely educational and symbolic and not about reclaiming political power. What distinguishes an initiative as part of a minimum program is that it takes back some measure of power by which policies are actually determined and enacted, even though such demands would appear as reforms and not as an immediate break with the entire social order.

On the issue of genetic engineering, in the context of New England, an example of a minimum program would be, for example, to mandate that on all land that is owned by the town for farmland conservation, the use of GE crops would be prohibited. Another demand would be to ensure provision of GE-free lunches to kids at public institutions such as the local schools. Such demands could easily be paired with efforts to get schools to change their menu away from the cheap highly-processed foods offered in most public school lunch programs towards fresh and healthier foods that have been grown locally. Such a decision would affirm the right and duty of the town meeting to make ethical decisions about matters that affect public life. Minimum demands do not have to immediately create structural change in order to achieve their purpose, but they do have to be consistent with a future in which structural changes are achieved, and they have to mark a meaningful improvement in people's lives. In these two examples, for instance, the focus is on local public institutions in which regular citizens at town meeting ostensibly already have the power to change the priorities.

Such is not the case with private landowners carrying on legal activities such as planting GE crops. As I argued above, there is no potential for movement development by explaining to concerned farmers who currently plant GE crops that the non-binding nature of these resolutions will not immediately affect them. But as part of a minimum program, we can imagine a process of community discussion that seeks out the involvement of the farmers themselves, in which a variety of measures could be taken by municipal movements to carry out their determination to eliminate GE crops from their environs. Through a process of directly democratic deliberation, communities would begin to consider a range of specific economic factors affecting farms including development pressures and commodity prices. Assuming that the preservation of arable land is important in itself, communities would need to consider the realities of how farm enterprises can be economically viable. They would also have to consider technical questions such as how to maintain a functioning farm economy with ecological practices that do not involve GE crops or toxic chemicals. Movements could press for local governing institutions to create new departments of ecological agriculture that would be charged with administrative activities aimed at facilitating practical and ecological alternatives to GE crops and chemical agriculture.

People must first come to believe that they have the right to self-govern. Then they see the tension between their aspirations and what they are allowed to do.

NOTES

1   Murray Bookchin, *The Third Revolution: Popular Movements in the Revolutionary Era*, (New York: Cassell 1996), p.151.

2   Ibid., p.152.

3   One of the most galvanizing events in recent U.S. history for town meeting advocacy to protect civil liberties was the passage of the USA PATRIOT Act, a massive piece of legislation passed shortly after September 11, 2001. The law abrogated nearly all of the constitutional rights enumerated in the U.S. Bill of Rights in the name of protecting the country from terrorism. Hundreds of non-binding resolutions all over the United States were passed at the local level, calling for restoration of constitutional rights.

4   Jeffrey Smith, *Genetic Roulette: The Documented Health Risks of Genetically Engineered Foods*, (Fairfield, IA: YesBooks 2007).

5   Allison Wilson et al., *Genome Scrambling – Myth or Reality: Transformation-Induced Mutations in Transgenic Crop Plants* (Brighton, UK: EcoNexus, 2004).

6   *Monsanto vs. U.S. Farmers*, (Washington, DC: Center for Food Safety 2005).

7   Ben Grosscup, *Mass Movement: Genetic Engineering becomes question of Democracy at Massachusetts Town Meetings*, (Cambridge, MA: Gene Watch, 2007).

8   For a discussion of how the U.S. government invested massively in biotechnology during the 1970s as a strategy for opening new markets to U.S. corporations, see Chaia Heller, "McDonald's, MTV and Monsanto: Resisting Biotechnology in the Age of Informational Capital," In *Redesigning Life?,* Brian Tokar ed., (New York: Zed Books, 2001).

9   Eirik Eiglad, "Libertarian Municipalism and the Radical Program," *Communalism*, Issue 7, October 2005.

10 For an excellent discussion of how the politics of social ecology flow dialectically out of a logic, see Chaia Heller, "Illustrative Opposition: Drawing the Revolutionary out of the Ecological" in *Ecology of Everyday Life: Re-thinking the Desire for Nature*, (Black Rose Books: Montreal, 1999), pp.149-171.

11 Eirik Eiglad, "Bases for Communalist Programs," *Communalism*, Issue 6, March 2003.

12 For the ordinance see http://www.celdf.org/BarnsteadAntiCorporateWaterWithdrawal/tabid/132/Default.aspx.

13 For more info on this national trend, see http://environmentalcommons.org/seedlawbackgrounder.html.

A minimum program should also illustrate the state's failure to live up to its promise of protecting the public – a function that is incipient but unfulfilled in a symbolic resolution's demand for policy changes. For instance, the case must be made explicitly that the reason why a community would consider banning GE foods from the meals it serves its children is not simply because of some whimsical preference of the community, but rather because the federal government is so controlled by the biotechnology industry that it has failed to protect the public from a truly dangerous technology. Having large numbers of people visibly demanding local control over such matters, even of a minimum sort, would create a greater sense of political pressure on the state than would polite petitioning, if those demands were recognizably fueled by popular anger at the state for failing to protect public health and safety.

The true depth of the state's failure is not implicit in a measure that merely calls on the state to reform itself, but becomes apparent when expectations of political freedom are raised beyond the dead ends of cynicism and resignation. People must first come to believe that they have the right to self-govern; then the tension between their aspirations and what is allowed to them within the existing system can begin to illustrate the need to transcend the state. Raising expectations involves people being willing to make their town governments do things they do not normally do – like stepping outside municipal governments' primarily administrative function to enacting bylaws or ordinances that reflect the community's ever widening desire for political freedom. In a minimum program, it is possible to creatively work within the established parameters of town meeting government so that boundaries of power are being challenged even as the existing law is being followed. The crucial goal of this stage of organizing is to open up a space in which the citizenry of a municipality can consider and openly debate specific measures that begin to address concrete problems facing their community. These small steps toward saner community policies, moreover, can provide a training ground in which people practice an enlightened public life: one that seeks out the betterment of the common good.

In the longer run, stopping the spread of GE crops (and war, governmental corruption, rampant pollution, etc.) would be best served by structural changes leading to greater empowerment of directly democratic municipal governments. A transitional program is one that could bring about the changes in political structure needed for an ecological and socially just society. Such changes would be made at the expense of the power of the state.[11] The crucial structural change needed is to empower municipal governments and to substantially re-distribute that power within the town in a directly democratic way. To imagine what a transitional program could look like with respect to GE Crops, towns could organize themselves to be GE-free zones by enacting and enforcing bylaws prohibiting the use of GE crops in the town.

One town in Maine has earnestly attempted to do this. In March of 2006, the citizens of Montville voted to amend their town plan to prohibit growing of GE crops. This was the first such municipal action to carry the force of law in any New England town, and it has yet to be tried more widely in New England. There is, however, one recent example in Barnstead, NH where the town made it illegal for corporations to privatize the town's water supply and nullified the rights of corporate personhood.[12] Although the citizens of Montville were just doing what made sense to them after having considered competing arguments at town meeting, and although they did not think of their actions as a "transitional program," their decision and follow-through demonstrates one way a political struggle could be waged. It also demonstrates that at least in some parts of the United States, there are places where people believe in their own right of self-governance. Following many other states, lawmakers in Maine are already trying to enact preemption legislation that would prevent towns from legally enacting such laws.[13] We have yet to see what grassroots movements will do to protect and win back the right of self-governance in the face of these assaults.

A transitional program, fully developed, is not tied singly to any one single issue. Rather it is tied to a programmatic set of actions designed to take power away from the state and vest that power in new free institutions. As a part of a transitional program, we can imagine the flourishing of new kinds of institutions at the local level that coordinate some of the complex features of a local agricultural economy including the use of land, the provision of agricultural equipment, the sharing of seeds, the distribution of soil amendments, the management of organic wastes flows, and the training of people to work with the soil. Such institutions concerned with food would be accountable to the community as a whole. Like some already existing cooperatives, they'd be a countervailing force to the profit imperatives of the corporations that fulfill many of the functions of our food economy. Unlike most existing cooperatives, institutions like this would consciously integrate their activities into a broader process of revolutionary transformation and struggle.

Transcending Liberal Community Organizing

Town meeting advocacy efforts have not yet been able to effectively mobilize much support for a revolutionary political program, but they have pointed attention to local municipal institutions where such programs could be tested. The story of town meeting advocacy shows that narrowing the scope of municipal activism to petitioning the state misses an opportunity to organize people in ways that prepare them for self-governance in directly democratic municipal institutions. Once a town meeting's instrumental purpose of affecting the internal machinations of statecraft is achieved, the people who once ran the local committees of the town meeting advocacy campaign are demobilized from community organizing and remobilized as political actors that are intelligible to politicians: lobbyists, interest groups, and disaggregated individual voters. When the re-organized campaign sees its chances of

Ozone Mountain, 1999

legislative victory dim, it loses a reason to persist, because people can't see how continued participation would lead to realizing any of the goals that first thrust them into action.

The assumption that the only meaningful change is that which goes through the official order of the state is the pitfall of liberal ideology to which town meeting advocacy, as I have seen it practiced, has mostly succumbed. Transcending the limitations of this organizing model depends in large part on imagination to think beyond the terms of liberal statecraft. Indeed, it takes imagination to entertain the possibility that dedicated municipal organizing could transform local governing institutions, which primarily administer state policy, into the very instruments by which political struggle can be waged against the state.

To transcend the liberal ideology that has so circumscribed our community organizing, it is not sufficient to replace it with a radical utopian ideology or to simply underscore the necessity of doing so. Still, the work of envisioning a maximum vision that dramatically contrasts with our realities is an indispensable guidepost for how our political work proceeds, and we desperately need organizing

strategies that can fundamentally challenge capital and the state. But for such visions and strategic outlooks to meaningfully affect how people live right now, the organizer must identify those aspects of already existing reality that can be broadened to reveal new openings for struggle. The challenge for organizers is to truthfully examine the context in which we work, and to craft minimum demands and programs that address meaningful and concrete problems of everyday life in ways that expand people's horizons for yet more substantive forms of freedom. An aspect of this context is the feeling of real powerlessness, and that feeling must be addressed directly. A minimum program is important partly for it's ability to achieve gains in ways that reveal to the protagonists of struggle what real power – embedded in an ethics of non-hierarchy – tastes like.

It is very important to attempt what, in the idiom of modern pragmatism, is practical (i.e., possible), because we are interested in action in large part for its immediate results. But it is yet more important to adopt a political program that is capable of identifying minimum steps that once achieved, make doable what our smothered minds may not yet be able to imagine. ●

The proverb that power corrupts does not apply to direct democracy. It basically implies that power in the hands of a minority corrupts; as politicians tend to accumulate more powers in their own hands, ensure privileges for themselves once elected in government and to run away from their former ideals as the harsh realities of statecraft dawns upon them.

Is power something negative? Does it always have to corrupt?
And does "taking power" necessarily have to mean taking state power?
This critique of John Holloway shows that communalism and autonomism
provides two different answers to these questions.

Change the World by Taking Power

BY SVEINUNG LEGARD

PHOTOS BY JO STRAUBE

It is said that when hundreds of thousands of Argentineans marched in 2004 with lit candles to the Ministry of Justice after the kidnapping of Axel Blumberg, an engineer student at the University of Buenos Aires and the son of a millionaire textile merchant, the response of the autonomist movement was to call for *assembleas* (in English this means something like an open meeting or popular assembly) in order to address the issue of crime.

What exactly *assembleas* should do in this situation is unclear. The view in itself must have come about as pretty naïve after Blumberg was found brutally beaten and shot by his kidnappers. Even more disturbing, however, was that it came against the backdrop of a surge in kidnappings in the country after the economic meltdown in 2001. According to one report, the number of abductions increased fivefold between 2003 and 2005, up from more than 400 in 2003 alone.[1]

It might have been easy for many autonomists to dismiss the issue as an upper class phenomenon; that those marching for justice in the streets were rich people afraid of the poor taking their privileges away by kidnappings, burglaries and petty crimes. By

2004, however, kidnappings had become more commonplace. Not only would members of the upper class fear being abducted, but the fear spread to anyone who could be expected to pay a ransom.[2] The fright of "delinquency" is omnipresent in Latin-American countries, and the drug trade is haunting the slums and working class areas on the outskirts of Buenos Aires and other Argentinean cities. The State has been unable to solve this problem, and the police, with its strong ties to the mafias, is even complicit in the drugs and arms trade.

In 2001 and 2002, Argentina saw a large-scale popular rebellion which has been termed the first anti-capitalist uprising in the 21st Century. As the country plunged into an economic crisis, popular assemblies were formed in the city of Buenos Aires, factories were occupied and taken over by fired workers and the unions of the unemployed were virtually in control of large territories of the country. Many of these movements were deeply inspired by ideals of horizontalism, direct democracy and self-government: Ideals that resonated with the politics of the autonomists.

By the time of the Blumberg-case, however, the autonomist movement was decimated. Since the 2001 and 2002 manifestations

that lead to the downfall of five consecutive governments, autonomism in Argentina had been struck by a series of blows – the most important of which was the election of and popular support for, the Peronist president Nestor Kirchner. The saying that the autonomists could only call for *assembleas* in face of the widespread kidnappings and violent assaults might be interpreted as an irrelevant response to a socially isolated movement. However, it seems more symptomatic of its inability to deal with the concrete political issues that was a concern for large sections of the population.

As the autonomist theoretician Ezequiel Adamovsky, who also was an active member of popular assembly movement in Buenos Aires, asked lamentedly "why is it that, being the Left a better option for humankind, we almost never succeed in getting support of the people? Moreover, why is it that people often vote for obviously pro-capitalist options – sometimes even very Right-wing candidates – instead?" His answer was that the Right is able to respond to the problems that the libertarian Left is incapable of responding to, such as violence and power. "Leaving aside circumstantial factors, the perennial appeal of the Right lies in that it presents itself (and to some extent really is) a force of order."[3]

The failure of libertarian socialists to advance concrete proposals in times of social crisis that respond to the concrete worries of large sections of the population is not exclusively true for Argentina in 2001. It has been seen time and time again, lastly on Iceland where the libertarian Left was rendered completely irrelevant in the events that followed after the financial breakdown in 2008. This incapability might be attributed to a lack of politics on these specific issues, but I believe that the problem is even more fundamental than that. Libertarian socialists are, with their many aversions towards having or taking power, unable to formulate a positive politics on almost every important social issue of today. To the extent that libertarian socialists even formulate a politics, it is normally based on undermining, disrupting or destroying "power."

I, myself, identify as a libertarian socialist, and put myself in a radical tradition that is fundamentally different from the authoritarian socialists that came to power in Russia or Eastern Europe, or the parliamentary socialists (Social Democrats) that have been attempting to take power through general elections. I want a libertarian socialist society.

Therefore it may seem a bit odd that I chose to write an essay entitled "change the world by taking power." For is not power something we as left-libertarians are supposed to be against? Does not the word itself mean things like coercion, oppression, domination, command, exploitation and obedience? And didn't the "taking of power" by the Bolsheviks in Russia in 1917 or the establishment of the People's Republic in China in 1949, lead to all the subsequent horrors of the Communist tyrannies of the 20th Century? Is not power therefore something we should try to get rid of? Is not the free society all libertarian socialists yearn for, only attainable through destroying power – and not by taking it?

At least this is what many libertarian socialists believe. One of the foremost theoreticians of this idea today is John Holloway. In his book, *Change the World Without Taking Power,* Holloway argues that every socialist movement that ever tried to take power never managed to realize their visions of a communal, cooperative and free world. Instead, these movements betrayed their original ideals by integrating "the logic, habits and discourse of power into the very heart of the struggle against power."[4] What is the trajectory of Social Democracy and Communism, if nothing but the ultimate proof of the proverb that power always corrupts?

Holloway says, in a message that probably resonates with libertarian socialists around the world, the Left has shed its notion once and for all that it is necessary to "take power" in order to change society. In his own words:

[We], the insubordinate and non-subordinate who say No!, we who say Enough!, enough of your stupid power games, enough of your stupid exploitation, enough of your idiotic playing at soldiers and bosses; we who do not exploit and do not want to exploit, *we who do not have power and do not want to have power.*[5]

Taking State Power

Holloway's project in *Change the World* is commendable, as he starts out with a critique of the idea that we have to take *state power* in order to change society – an idea which has defined the major tendencies of the Left for more than a century.

Both reformist and revolutionary socialists have, according to Holloway, "failed completely to live up to the expectations of their enthusiastic supporters." Although the communists, once at the helm of government, may have increased levels of material security and reduced inequality, they "did little to create a self-determining society or to promote the reign of freedom which has always been central to the communist aspiration." Social democrats, on the other hand, have a record that in practice "has differed very little from overtly pro-capitalist governments" and "has abandoned any pretensions to be bearers of radical social reform."[6]

The failures of these movements stem from a failure of analysis, an incapability to understand that the state has never possessed as much power as assumed. The state is part of a capitalist web of relations, and the fundamental forces shaping capitalist society are out of reach of the rulers of the State. Still "the struggle," as Holloway calls it, is made instrumental to the aim of conquering political power and "those elements of struggle which do not contribute to the achievement of that aim are either given a secondary importance or must be suppressed altogether."[7]

The movements themselves are fashioned for taking state power – creating a bureaucratic professional apparatus, conceiving of social issues hierarchically, excluding important libratory struggles and becoming nationalist. The activists are "inducted into what it means to conquer state power: they are trained either as soldiers

or as bureaucrats, depending on how the conquest of state power is understood,"[8] the sad trajectory of it all being that the movements ends up reproducing what they set out to abolish in the first place.

Challenging and crucial as this analysis might be, Holloway makes a grand leap from denouncing the idea of taking state power to condemning power *as such*:

> Instead of the conquest of power being a step towards the abolition of power relations, the attempt to conquer power involves the extension of the field of power into the struggle against power. What starts as a scream against power, against the dehumanisation of people, against the treatment of humans as means rather than ends, becomes converted into the opposite, into the assumption of the logic, habits and discourse of power into the very heart of the struggle against power.[9]

But is power essentially something negative? Does it always have to corrupt? And does "taking power" necessarily have to mean taking *state power*? To see how John Holloway arrives at his conclusion we have to go through the basics of his theory.

Basic Holloway

In the beginning was "the scream," Holloway states, the negation of the immediate realities that confronts us in our very basic experience as living creatures. The scream is what makes us human and separates us from the animals. Since we do not just accept our surroundings like most other animals, but start changing them, we become *doers*. Doing goes beyond the existing state of affairs. It negates it and thus gives us the ability to project beyond the here and now. According to Holloway, doing – or quite "simply can-ness, capacity-to-do, the ability to do things" – constitutes the basic form of power.[10] Holloway calls this form of power a "power-to" or "power-to-do."

For Holloway, power-to is something inherently good. Not only does it realize our distinctively human abilities to project-beyond reality as we see it here and now, it is also "inherently plural, collective, choral, communal." Holloway uses himself as example:

> I sit at the computer and write this, apparently a lonely individual act, but my writing is part of a social process, a plaiting of my writing with the writing of others (those mentioned in the footnotes and a million others), and also with the doing of those who designed the computer, assembled it, packed it, transported it, those who installed the electricity in the house, those who generated the electricity, those who produced the food that gives me the energy to write, and so on, and so on. There is a community of doing, a collective of doers, a flow of doing through time and space.[11]

Now, the turning of power into something bad happens when somebody in some way starts to appropriate and control the doing of others:

Holloway has formulated a theory of the disruption of the powerful, not one of *empowerment* of the disempowered. By dismissing the very idea of taking power, Holloway has dismissed alternatives where people together hold power.

The Argentinean crisis in 2001 and the financial meltdown on Iceland in 2008 opened up a vast space normally shut for libertarian socialists. These were cracks in the capitalist system where the faith in the market and its financial institutions evaporated, and disillusionment with the nation-state and its "democracy" was widespread.

Doing-as-projection-beyond is broken when some people arrogate to themselves the projection-beyond (conception) of the doing and command others to execute what they have conceived. Doing is broken as the "powerful" separate the done from the doers and appropriate it to themselves. The social flow is broken as the "powerful" present themselves as the individual doers, while the rest simply disappear from sight.[12]

In this process, power-to is turned into what Holloway calls power-over, and these two become the opposites of a dichotomy. Whereas power-to is defined by a sort of liberating and harmonious social flow that *unites* the doing of each and everyone of us, power-over arises from the breaking up of the collective by a process of *separation*: "The exercise of power-over separates conception from realisation, done from doing, one person's doing from another's, subject from object. Those who exercise power-over are Separators, separating done from doing, doers from the means of doing."[13]

The separation of the done from the doers has always existed in some way or another, as the fundamental feature of all hitherto societies has been a division of the people into classes. But unlike pre-capitalist societies, the separation of doing and done has become the sole axis of domination under capitalism.

The exercise of power by the ones who have appropriated the doing of others – that is to say, the capitalists – is not based on brute

force, but rather on the fact that the individual workers have no other option than to work for someone in order to earn a living. "The doers have now won freedom from personal dependence on the rulers," writes Holloway, "but they are stilled held in a process of subordination by the fracturing of the collective flow of doing":

> Capital is not based on the ownership of people but on the ownership of the done and, on that basis, of the repeated buying of people's power-to-do. Since people are not owned, they can quite easily refuse to work for others without suffering any immediate punishment. The punishment comes rather in being cut off from the means of doing (and of survival).[14]

Organized violence, police, armies and prison guards are outsourced to another agent, the State, whose role is basically to ensure that the capitalist's property rights are kept intact. As Holloway emphatically puts it, "[if] domination always is a process of armed robbery, the peculiarity of capitalism is that the person with the arms stands apart from the person doing the robbery, merely supervising that the robbery conforms with the law."[15]

A Flawed Dichotomy

This idea that power as a phenomenon has two different forms – one that oppresses us and another one that sets us free – has strong roots in social theory. The distinction of power-to and power-over can probably be drawn back to the 17th century Dutch philosopher Benedict de Spinoza, who wrote of power as *potestas* (power-over) when an "individual is subject to the right of another, or dependent upon him, for as long as he is subject to the other's power," and *potentia* (power-to) when a person "is possessed of his own right, or free, in so far as he can repel all force, take what vengeance he pleases for harm done to him, and to speak generally, live as his own nature and judgment dictate."[16]

Even though Holloway does not share Spinoza's individualism regarding "power-to-do," he has driven a wedge in between *potentia* and *potestas*. Useful as the concepts of power-over and power-to might be when it comes to differentiate between exploitation and non-exploitation, it is not helpful in understanding how power actually works in society – and even less how it should be dealt with in a free society.

For what, after all, is *power-to*? For Holloway it is just an abstraction of the essence of doing something, and hardly a reality at all. Importantly, Holloway's concept does not describe or imply a way of *organizing society*, it is just a theoretical abstraction of an aspect of a social form of organization. As he explains in his book:

> Where is power-to, where is unalienated doing, where is the social flow of doing? Do they have any sort of existence separate from the forms in which they currently exist? Are they not mere ideas, or romantic echoes from an imagined Golden Age? They

are certainly not intended as a romantic harking back to a past age: whether there was ever a golden age of free doing (primitive communism) does not really matter to us now. ... There is no unalienated doing in the past, nor can it exist, hippie-like, in a present idyll: nevertheless, it exists, crucially, as present antagonism to its denial, as present projection-beyond-its-denial-to-a-different-world, as a presently existing not-yet.[17]

Here Holloway stops, but he should have walked all the way down that line. Why not ask the crucial question: Have societies solely based on power-to *ever* existed? I believe what he would find would be quite disconcerting. Collective forms of doing, or "social flows of doing," have always been organized in certain ways. Every social organization has its proper modes of production and its own institutions. Have not all tribal societies been organized around assemblies, councils of village elders or other forms of institutions? And have not some of these institutions been more powerful than others? A council of elders, for example, has had a greater say in he distribution of a scarce harvest than just one or two of the community's households. And the assembly has been more important in deciding whether the tribe should go to war or not, than just any peace-loving individual.

By saying that communities based on power-to never have existed in the past, I am not saying that they cannot exist in the future. I merely point out what Holloway failed to mention: That the social flow of doing always has been united in a particular institutional way, and that these institutions have been part of a structure that distributes power to certain individuals in a certain setting (being an elderly in the tribal community means nothing special if it were not for the council of elders). With this in mind, however, one may very well ask oneself whether a society solely based on power-to is at all possible.

A pure and power-free social flow of doing is an illusion. When I sit at the computer and write this, apparently a lonely individual act, my writing is clearly part of a social process, as Holloway correctly points out. But furthermore, I had to buy Holloway's book somewhere, and the ones who designed the computer, assembled it, packed it and transported it have all been *organized* in businesses where somebody took the *decision* of what should be produced and for whom.

It is in particular Holloway's avoidance of the question of who makes decisions in a certain society that makes his argument troubling. In today's society the decision makers are capital owners that have power over their workers. But let us face it, even in a considerably better world somebody would have to make decision regarding production and distribution, and they would rely on somebody listening to and executing these decisions. If Holloway did not involve himself only with an abstract discussion of power, he would have been forced to consider the various answers in the socialist tradition to where such *power* should be located.[18]

Proponents of workers councils think economic power should be placed in the hands of workers representatives, advocates of workers collectives believe that the individual work place should be the locus of decision-making, and Social Democrats put their faith in a strong national assembly to regulate the market economy.

Looking closer at real life experiences further reveals the blemish of the distinction between power-to and power-over. Take a look at the unemployed worker's movement in Argentina, where several communities of the so-called *piqueteros* – who blocked the main roads to Buenos Aires during the rebellion in 2001 and 2002 – have been organized in a libertarian way. With a strong emphasis on horizontalism and direct democracy, all decisions are made in assemblies where every member of the community is eligible to participate. Let us for the sake of the argument say that one of these communities discusses whether to receive unemployment benefits from the state or not. Some of the members believe that the community needs these benefits in order to survive, whereas others think that it will lead to an unhealthy dependency on the state and in turn undermine their struggle. Through a vote – or by arriving at a compromise (consensus) – the community ends up deciding that they should not accept the unemployment benefits.

This decision, however, is only relevant as long as the individual members of the community are willing to follow it. If a sizable portion of the community accepts state benefits anyway, it will undermine the power of the assembly. The intention of deliberating benefits and other issues in the assembly is to give everyone an equal share of the community's power, but they can only do so in a democratic fashion as long as the assembly has *power-over* the acts of its individual members. In our case this means that the members of the unemployed workers community are willing to accept the assembly decision, even though they disagree with it.

Power-to and power-over are inextricably intertwined. Human beings live in collectives, and they only have power-to-do things as long as they have organized their collectives so that someone (preferably everyone, organized through participatory institutions) has power-over what is going on in that collective. To assume the dissolution of power-over is simply to assume the dissolution of society. To desire the dissolution of power-over is to open for egoism and anomie, and to create a situation in which an individual might, as Spinoza wrote, "repel all force, take what vengeance he pleases for harm done to him."

Disruption or Empowerment?

Holloway's ideas seem reminiscent of Marxism because they are. His thoughts are in many ways repetitions of those of Karl Marx, although with a new coating. His theory of power-over in capitalism is basically a theory of exploitation and alienation. This makes him tricky to criticise. Anyone objecting to Holloway's theory is seemingly forced to challenge Marx's thesis that the riches of the powerful stem from their appropriation of the labour of others. Who can disagree that power in today's world significantly rests on control of capital?

But maybe Holloway should have just stuck to Marx, because a theory of exploitation is not the same thing as a general theory of power. If we were to follow Holloway's terminology, it would make it impossible for us to talk of power in any other way than in economic terms – as a relation between doers and Separators. This excludes power-relations in many other important areas of life. We cannot, for example, assess whether a father has power over his own kids, or if a university has power over its own students. It just does not fit in with the theory.

In order to arrive at a broader understanding of power, we can start by rephrasing what Holloway says about power-over in a more general way. Capitalists cannot use physical force in order to make us work for them, so why do they have power over the rest of us? It is because they have control of a resource in which we have an interest. They control the means of production (doing), and therefore the financial means to pay us a salary in order to work for them. This salary might mean the difference between survival and starvation in some places, or between a relatively comfortable lifestyle and social deprivation in another. Regardless, our very dependency on the salary forces us to subjugate ourselves to the demands of the ones in possession of capital.

This analysis can be applied to other areas as well. A university has power over its students because they control their graduation diplomas, which is an official recognition that might be traded in by the individual for a better paying job with (maybe) less monotonous work-tasks. Still, this does not account for all the different ways an individual or a group of individuals can hold power over others. A more general theory of power would have to account for all the material, physical and symbolic sources of power.

I would argue that power could be understood in quite simple terms. As Steven Lukes has written, "the power of the powerful consists in their being capable of and responsible for affecting (negatively or positively) the (subjective and/or objective) interests of others."[19] One of Holloway's reasons for protesting against such a definition of power is that he sees the outcome as nothing else but an endless struggle between rulers and subordinates – whereas his perspective explores the possibilities for liberation:

[The] focus on doing has led to an intimation of the vulnerability of power-over. The done depends on the doer, capital depends on labour. That is the crucial chink of light, the glimmer of hope, the turning-point in the argument. The realisation that the powerful depend on the 'powerless' transforms the scream of anger to a scream of hope, a confident scream of anti-power. This realisation takes us beyond the merely radical-democratic perspective of an endless struggle against power to a position from which we can

pose the issue of the vulnerability of capital and the real possibility of social transformation.[20]

Since the social transformation Holloway is talking about has to shake off its ambitions to take power, he has to look elsewhere, and what Holloway turns to instead is an "anti-politics" of "anti-power." This "anti-power" lies in "the dignity of everyday existence," in "the relations we form all the time, relations of love, friendship, comradeship, community, cooperation."[21]

From one perspective this certainly sounds sensible. The time and energy we spend on the people we love is often spent at the expense of the time and energy we use to be industrious labourers and mindless consumers. The comradeship, community and cooperative projects we value are radically at odds with the egoism and competitiveness of the market-place. Still, even the most cynical of speculators at the London Stock Exchange has a family she loves and wonderful friends in financial circles. Multinational corporations like Microsoft rely heavily on internal cooperation in order to succeed economically, and community organizations thrive in many of the most advanced capitalist countries. In fact, a recent OECD report showed that the Nordic countries – with low working hours (consequently more time for family and friends) and strong traditions for community participation – are among the most competitive of all capitalist countries.[22] As such Holloway's "anti-power" is more disruptive than subversive.

Holloway is aware of the co-opting abilities of capitalism and insists that for "the scream to grow in strength, there must be a recuperation of doing, a development of power-to. *That implies a re-taking of the means of doing.*"[23] But how is it possible to re-take the means of doing without taking power? Somebody has control over the material and financial resources today, and unless we get hold of these resources or otherwise undermine the grip that these resources have on society, it will be incredibly difficult to change the world.

These are significant shortcomings of Holloway's theory which *stops* him at seeing how seemingly powerlessness can sabotage, annoy and frustrate the powerful and limit their rule, but not on how they can change the world. He does not discuss, nor propose, a single way of actually changing society. By dismissing the whole idea of taking power, (remember the words "we who do not have power and do not want to have power") Holloway has dismissed alternatives where people together hold power. What Holloway has formulated is a theory of the disruption of the powerful – not of *empowerment* of the disempowered. He shares this in common with theoreticians of the autonomist movement in general.

Taking Power the Democratic Way

As I stated earlier, I share Holloway's dreams of a communal, cooperative and free world – a world in which people together control their "doing." I also identify with a specific strand of

NOTES

1 See Southamericano.com, "The kidnapping that (almost) changed Argentina." (Available at http://southamericano.com/article.aspx?idArticle=74; accessed 15.04.2010).

2 Elisabeth Love, "Kidnapping rife in crippled Argentina," *The Guardian*, August 29, 2002.

3 Ezequiel Adamovsky, "Why Do People Vote Right-Wing?," *Zspace*, March 16, 2006.

4 John Holloway, *Change the World Without Taking Power* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), p. 17.

5 Ibid., p. 203.

6 Ibid., p. 12.

7 Ibid., p. 16.

8 Ibid., p. 15.

9 Ibid., p. 17.

10 Ibid., p. 28.

11 Ibid., p. 26.

12 Ibid., pp. 28-29.

13 Ibid., p. 29.

14 Ibid., pp. 30, 32.

15 Ibid., p. 32.

16 Benedict de Spinoza, *Tractatus Politicus* in Benedict de Spinoza, *The Political Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1958 [1677]), p. 273.

17 Holloway, *Change the world*, p. 35.

18 It is worth noting that Holloway does not really discuss the concrete institutional forms of power-to in the revised edition of the book that was published in 2005, except stating that the "commune" or the "council" might be its organizational form.

19 Steven Lukes, *Power: A Radical View* (New York: Palgrave Macmillian, 2005, 2nd edition), p. 68.

20 Holloway, *Change the World*, p. 40.

21 Ibid., p. 158.

22 OECD Employment Outlook 2006, *Boosting Jobs and Incomes* (OECD 2006).

23 Holloway, *Change the world*, p. 203, my emphasis.

24 Murray Bookchin, "Anarchism and Power in the Spanish Revolution," *Communalism: International Journal for a Rational Society*, Issue 2 (November 2002).

25 Eirik Eiglad, "Theses on Power," *Communalism*, Issue 9 (April 2007).

libertarian socialism called communalism. So, in searching for an empowering alternative to Holloway's "anti-politics" of disruption, what is communalism's take on taking power?

First of all, communalism maintains that power in itself is not necessarily something negative. Communalism agrees with Holloway in that the power-structure of capitalism – in which those who control its most important asset, *capital*, are the ones who control the rest of us – is inherently exploitative and oppressive. But that is not the same as to say that power in itself is inherently bad. Power should be understood as a neutral phenomenon, which exists in any society, whether we like it or not. As Murray Bookchin has written:

> [Power] cannot be abolished – it is always a feature of social and political life. Power that is not in the hands of the masses must inevitably fall into the hands of their oppressors. There is no closet in which it can be tucked away, no bewitching ritual that can make it evaporate, no superhuman realm to which it can be dispatched – and no simplistic ideology that can make it disappear with moral and mystical incantations.[24]

Furthermore, we have to understand how power is always a mix in between "power-to" and "power-over." A communal, cooperative and free society will have to be based on institutions that distribute decision-making powers in a democratic way. Democracy, in turn, is based on the principle that the majority holds "power-over" the minority in decision-making processes. If not, democracy would ultimately break down. Just as the autonomist movement in Argentina of 2001 and 2002, we believe that these institutions have to be directly democratic assemblies. But such assemblies are essentially irrelevant if they do not have political *authority*, that is, if they do not have "power-over" other institutions such as schools, hospitals, industries and more.

In addition, such democratic institutions have to be in control of the use of violence in society. If there is anything the Argentinean experience shows us, it is how dangerous private organizations based on violence (e.g. mafias) are for libratory movements, as they often contest for power in the very same neighborhoods and regions as such movements do. This does not mean that a democratic polity directly could control the use of violence, such an idea is plainly absurd, but it rather has to have authority of the organizations that is established to ensure the safety of everyone. History is filled with examples of how this could be done democratically – through militias, people's jury's, elections of policing forces and more – but such examples are often left out of the purview of libertarians who naively reject the necessity of sometimes using physical force.

Such direct democratic power is fundamentally different from state power, because the latter is based on the decision-making powers of a minority. The proverb that power corrupts basically implies that power in the hands of a minority corrupts, as politicians tend to accumulate more powers in their own hands, ensure privileges for themselves once elected in government and to run away from their former ideals as the harsh realities of statecraft dawns upon them. Through assemblies and systems of confederation, power can be shared equally in between the citizens of society. Taking power for communalists, then, does not mean taking state power, but rather hollowing out the power of capital and existing state institutions through a *dual power* strategy. As Eirik Eiglad explains:

> New institutions must group themselves as an emerging dual power that is able to challenge, confront and ultimately replace existing institutions. Latent or simmering power struggles must give way for an explicit dual power struggle where two parallel systems contest for control over the destiny of society. In the end, the new constitution of power must assert itself, and at this moment the new system of government must replace the former.[25]

It is in such a strategy that Holloway and the tactics of autonomists comes in very handy. Holloway's strength, as already mentioned, is in showing how capitalists *depends* on the rest of us, and that we as ordinary workers potentially holds the power that others have attributed for themselves. We are the ones that grow the food, work the production lines and ensure in other ways that the whole economic system works smoothly – this gives us enormous latent powers. The weakness of Holloway and autonomism in general, however, is the inability to formulate a politics on how we can not only disrupt the powerful, but also create liberatory and democratic forms of power.

The Argentinean crisis in 2001 and the financial meltdown on Iceland in 2008 opened up a vast space normally shut for libertarian socialists. These were, as others have pointed out, cracks in the capitalist system where the faith in the market and the financial institutions withered away, and disillusionment with the state and parliamentary "democracy" was widespread. Libertarian socialists, however, have not been able to utilize this space. An underlying reason for this is the extensive aversion for "power" in left-libertarian milieus. If we are not able to develop a form of libertarian socialism that can give answers to issues such as the fear of violence and "crime" – answers that have to involve the use physical force and "power-over" – we will always be exiled to the fringes of the political scene. To these challenges, communalism, with its positive emphasis of democratic forms of authority and dual power, provides much better answers than Holloway's theory of obstruction. ●

BOOKS REVIEWED

Amartaya Sen's *Idea of Justice*
Slavoj Žižek's *First as Tragedy*

The Idea of Justice

Amartaya Sen
Belknap Press, 2009, 468 pages

Nobel laureate Amartaya Sen is known as the "Mother Theresa of Economics" for his work on human development theory. Sen's latest book, *The Idea of Justice*, is an attempt to explore a contemporarily neglected tradition in the pursuit of justice, namely that of comparative assessment (e.g. the theories of Smith, Condorcet, or Wollstonecraft). This pathway, less widespread in popularity than contractarian theories (e.g. those of Rousseau, Hobbes, or Rawls), is concerned with the advances and regresses of justice as they appear in real life, in contrast to conventional contractarian focuses on the creation of "perfectly just" institutions.

Identifying himself within the comparative tradition, Sen finds conceptions of "perfectly just" social relations not only alien to his view, but also fundamentally misguided. A realistic pursuit and assessment, based upon the actual lives people are able to lead, Sen argues, is the proper direction for an appropriate theory of justice. The fundamental difference between these two approaches is illustrated in an example of mountain elevations. We may certainly agree that Mount Everest is the tallest mountain in the world (read: a perfectly just society), but this "understanding is neither needed, nor particularly helpful, in comparing the peak heights of, say, Mount Kilimanjaro and Mount McKinley." The importance of a comparative approach, therefore, becomes apparent when we understand that formulations of perfectly just societies ignore the actual opportunities people are presented with in living just lives.

Sen places a strong focus on the role of reasoning and the need for objectivity in this developmental conception of justice. However, he peculiarly conceives reason and rationality, along with his idea of objectivity, in a troublingly subjective fashion. Rationality, Sen argues, is the ability of our values, choices, and behavior to sustain the subjection it must undergo in a "critical scrutiny." What is rational, moreover, is what we can accept only after having analyzed it in a "seriously undertaken critical scrutiny."

What this scrutiny may entail is no question for Sen to answer precisely because what is rational must survive an individual's *own* assessment. Neither the outlook of an altruist or an egoist ("no-nonsense maximize of self-interest") can be regarded as irrational, insofar as they have subjected their views to such a searching scrutiny, he argues. This highly *subjective* conception, however, is not without conditions. Sen is aware that people "are capable of much self-indulgence in [their] views and opinions of things," and thus demands the incorporation of outside "perspectives" when necessary.

Inclusiveness plays an important role in Sen's idea of impartiality. Impartiality is defined as the inclusion of a diversity of perspectives and voices. A theme throughout Sen's book is pluralism: different perspectives (e.g. utilitarian) may each have a certain justifiable claim to impartiality. For Sen, either one perspective is right and all others are not, or each perspective can possibly lay claim to a certain degree of objectivity.

Objectivity, similar to rationality, is defined in terms of sustainability: It is the argument's "ability to survive challenges from informed scrutiny coming from diverse quarters." Borrowing the term from John Rawls, whose ideas are analyzed in a sizeable portion of the book, this scrutiny from "diverse quarters" is called public reasoning. Nature, for social ecologists, is the matrix from which an objective ethics is derived: Our potentialities as human beings are the moral guidelines for creating a better society. In comparison, Sen's argument, that scrutinized ideas and opinions should form the basis of ethical objectivity, stands at odds with the philosophy of social ecology.

Public reasoning is the tissue of Sen's theory that connects the idea of justice and the practice of democracy: the assessment of justice is dependent upon public reasoning, and public reasoning, in turn, is dependent upon democracy. The actual domain of this public reasoning can be found in what Sen calls a "global democracy." What form this global democracy will take is left undeveloped by Sen: He doubts the plausibility of a global state, without arguing whether or not it should accommodate the global democracy.

In this recognition, he highlights the role *other institutions* (e.g. NGOs) can have in extending "the reach of global democracy." The discussion of democracy itself, both in a historical sense and in its relevance to Sen's theory of justice, is glaringly muddled. At one point, Sen seems to equate democracy, "in its elaborate institutional form," with republican statecraft. For Sen, democracy is adequately defined as "government by discussion."

Never directly addressed, his commentary on the role of the media in public reasoning, however, does suggests the means of participation for citizens in this "global democracy" by "discussion." The public sphere is not to be found in popular assemblies or town halls, but in one form of media or another: public discussions are to take place in the press. The voices of the "neglected and disadvantaged" also find their expression here. Democracy in Sen's theory is decidedly not the face-to-face debate and decision making by an active citizenry so desperately needed today.

Sen's commitment to the Enlightenment, redressing clearly "remediable injustices" and the creation of an inclusive society are certainly agreeable, but have not generated any new theoretical contributions. Overall, *The Idea of Justice* is a tedious book with few insights: The positive aspects of this book are seldom more than sentiments. A book could be written on the discrepancies between Sen's theory and social ecology.

Our movement fundamentally differs from the pursuit of justice: Our demand is not for equivalence, but for social freedom. If we formulate our demands for human emancipation along quantitative lines, we sacrifice our visionary goal of a free ecological society to the nearsighted and meaningless existence of bourgeois society.

– *Peter Munsterman*

First as Tragedy, Then as Farce
Slavoj Žižek
Verso, 2009, 168 pages

Stop apologising! says Slavoj Žižek. In a stern, "stop whimpering and pull yourself together" lecture to the Left, the Slovenian critical theorist proclaims the era of liberal-democrat moralistic blackmail over. No longer should the idea of communism be off limits. It's the other side's turn to apologise.

The role of the Left today, says Žižek, is merely to slightly get on the nerves of those in power. It convinces but still loses and is then especially good at explaining the reasons for its own failure. "In our societies, critical Leftists have hitherto only succeeded in soiling those in power, whereas the real point is to castrate them," as he delicately puts it.

But as a psychoanalyst like Žižek is doubtless aware, those who never look like winning may actually be far happier losing. Of at least playing a subordinate role, harrying the corporate and state powers, but never wishing to really upset the apple cart. As he says, whatever their labels, most people, (and most of the Left), today are Fukuyamean, "accepting liberal-democratic capitalism as the finally found formula of the best possible society, such that all one and do is to try and make it more just, more tolerant."

Then why seek an alternative to capitalism? Is this quest not, as Žižek asks, "an exemplary case of the narcissism of the lost cause"? His answer is that, at the point of the almost total ideological naturalisation of capitalism, when few even dare to think utopian thoughts, liberal capitalism is revealing itself to be the most utopian ideology of all. "While liberalism presents itself as anti-utopianism embodied, and the triumph of neo-liberalism as a sign that have left behind the utopian projects responsible for the totalitarian horrors of the twentieth century, it is now becoming clear that the true utopian epoch was that of the happy Clintonite '90s, with its belief that we had reached the 'end of history.'"

Global warming, the food crisis caused by the globalisation of agriculture and looming shortages in the water supply are all escalating problems caused by an ever-growing and commodifying world economic system. The standard forms of state intervention can't deal with them, says Žižek, and the likely future is a new era of apartheid in which a small part of the world has an abundance of food, water and energy and is shielded from a chaotic outside of starvation and permanent war.

Thus "communism is once again at the gates". Communism, to Žižek, is not an ideal but merely a rational response to the antagonisms generated by capitalism.

What exactly does Žižek mean by communism? It's not exactly easy to say. "The failure of communist state-party politics is above all and primarily the failure of anti-statal politics, of the endeavour to break out of the constraints of the state, to replace statal forms of organization with direct non-representative forms of self-organization," he says, rather absurdly.

So we can pin the blame for Stalinism on the direct democracy of the Petrograd Soviet then? He does produce a great critique of representative democracy. Ordinary citizens are like a king in a constitutional monarchy – their function is merely to sign off measures enacted by the executive – but the pretence must be maintained they really make the decisions. What Žižek proposes instead is making the state "work in non-statal mode", a "dictatorship of the proletariat", based on "new forms of popular participation". Despite Žižek's pledge to "begin from the beginning", this looks very much the familiar terrain of his undisguised Leninism. He also wants to have his cake and eat it. He defends bourgeois "formal" freedoms against the historic Marxist claim that they are mere illusions – but then advocates revolutionary terror. So we can look forward to a terror that respects civil liberties?

This "communism" is not inevitable. In fact, Žižek believes our most likely political future in the West is an authoritarian capitalism, prefigured by rulers like Berlusconi in Italy and Lee Quan Yew in Singapore. In a complete reversal of traditional Marxism, Žižek says the "train of history" is against the radical emancipatory left. The only hope is to interrupt the trajectory towards authoritarianism and ecological disaster at certain weak points or crises in the system.

We can no longer rely on the working class to be the bearer of this emancipatory project. In fact, Žižek categorises the working class or, more properly, "the people" into three sections, each with its own "way of life". Intellectual workers, characterised by "enlightened hedonism" and multiculturalism, the traditional working class, in hoc to populist or racist ideologies and illegals or the underclass, hostile to society as such. "The old cry, 'Proletarians, unite!' is more pertinent than ever," says Žižek. Yes, but under what kind of political programme or vision will they unite? Žižek doesn't say.

He does ponder why, in the US for example, farmers and blue collar workers become populist conservatives and "vote themselves into economic ruin". "It is clearly not good enough to claim that the primitive lower classes have been so brainwashed by the ideological apparatus that they are not or are no longer able to identify their true interests," he says. Indeed, but he offers no plausible explanation for why the chickens are walking freely into the slaughterhouse.

He does say that resistance against immigrants on part of local working classes in western countries is "not wholly unjustifiably" based on the perception of the immigrant as a new kind of strike breaker and ally of capital. "How to convince the workers opposing these immigrants that they are fighting the wrong battle, and how to propose a feasible form of alternative politics?" he then asks. Answers on a postcard please because no sooner than posing the 64 million dollar question, he wanders off onto another topic. In vain will you find substantial answers to the questions Žižek poses. He is a philosophical butterfly, fluttering between different subjects, without really settling on any.

It is strange that, after beginning the book with an exhortation to the Left to muster an "icy determination" to think, Žižek ends it with a plea to try and alter the path of historical development, to avert the coming catastrophe, out of *pure voluntarism* (another nod to Vladimir Ilyich Lenin) Don't think, just will! As this book demonstrates, objectively speaking, there is an overwhelming need for a revolutionary change of course. Why, subjectively speaking, enough people will devote themselves to the long and arduous task of making that change Žižek doesn't tell us.

– Mat Little

Why Social Ecology?

"Because it is the more radical of oppositional movements."

A Conversation with Jakob Zethelius on forestry and democracy

Jakob Zethelius is 28 years old. He lives in Gothenburg, studies ecology and nature conservation, and alters studies with work as a taxi driver. He is a social ecologist concerned with issues of forestry and democratic control.

Text: Eirik Eiglad

Photo: Sara Andersson

Becoming politically active when he went to gymnasium, Jakob first became involved in Fältbiologerna, a Swedish environmental youth organization. For the last five years his political involvement has primarily been in the communalist organization Demokratiskt Alternativ. Jakob has been involved in left-libertarian projects, in study groups, and more practically by working with a neighborhood-based democratization initiative in Gothenburg.

– How did you get introduced to social ecology?
– The first time I got in touch with these ideas was when I got hold of a pamphlet of Janet Biehl's Lisbon speech, which had been distributed at the protests against the European Union Summit in 2001.

I had chosen to get involved in the environmental movement partly because I found it hard to choose between anarchism and syndicalism on the one hand and socialism and Marxism on the other. Both had their strengths and weaknesses. In the environmental movement, however, I experienced a lack of ideological and political direction.

I was taken by surprise when I read the pamphlet: others shared my political views and had put them so well into writing.

– What in particular did you find interesting?
– Above all, what appealed to me was the way in which ecology, anti-capitalism and egalitarian ideas were brought together, and how an inspiring utopian vision was unified with a clear programmatic approach to social change.

In my opinion, social ecology gives us a well-articulated theoretical ground to understand society, historical development and human potentialities. Its theory about social hierarchies and their destructive impact seem particularly important. What makes this ideology unique, I think, is that it is clearly anti-authoritarian and anti-state while it insists on the need for social institutions, emphasizing that these must be primarily municipal.

Until now, I have been more interested in the political aspects of social ecology and less about the philosophical ones, as its politics have been more directly relevant for my activism. I think its programmatic politics for radical democratization is one of its great strengths.

– How, in your view, does social ecology relate to the broader radical movement? How does it relate to other political movements and tendencies fighting for democracy, ecology, humanism, and solidarity?
– First, I would like to say that because social ecology emphasizes social freedom and solidarity, and because it presents a critique

of hierarchies and of capitalism, it has a given place within the Left, if by Left we mean socialist in the broad sense. Here it is distinct from the authoritarian socialist alternatives as well as from various types of anarchism.

My experience, however, is that most oppositional movements are not presenting any ideological or political alternatives. To be sure, many social and ecological movements are fighting for a range of the same issues as social ecologists are, but with a limited focus. Remarkably, they often lack clear political demands, not to speak of political programs. Very few of these movements dare to formulate their long-term and utopian visions. By presenting a coherent politics and programmatic alternatives, social ecology is actually, in my view, the more radical of oppositional movements today.

– Radical, yes. But social ecology has not yet become a broad movement. How can we reach out to people? What lessons have you drawn from your experience as a social ecology activist?

– Through my years of activism, I think my most important experience is that we must have a good insight into the communities in which we are active. It is easy for activists to remain on the fringes of society. In order to create a broad movement, however, we must be serious about what we are doing, and we need to convey that to people.

Such an understanding must be used to formulate political programs describing social problems in a nuanced and principled fashion, where we take a stand for concrete and applicable solutions. These are lofty words, to be sure, but if we are to connect current political issues to our long-range demands, we need an in-depth knowledge of the various spheres of our society. If we are going to present appropriate policies regarding, say, forest use, than we must have an extensive knowledge of forestry.

– Please explain your interest for forestry.

– Well, I grew up in the Swedish region of Värmland, in a small town surrounded by forests. Ever since my childhood I have been much in the outdoors, to play and to work. I also take a great interest in hiking and cross-country skiing: I quite simply enjoy being in the forest.

In general, I think forests are exciting because they encompass so many aspects and complex connections. Through forestry we get building materials, as well as paper and firewood. Forest ecosystems make room for a great variety of different plants, fungi, and animals, and forests also have great recreational value for humans. I am interested in the conflicts related to human interaction with the forest, and of course, their possible solutions.

– How is the situation in Sweden? Who owns the forests?

– Forests are important in Sweden: nearly sixty percent of the land mass is covered by them. We do have deciduous forests in the south as well as mixed forests, but a full eighty percent of our forests consist of conifer trees, of which spruce is the most common, closely followed by pine. These form part of the taiga of the Northern hemisphere.

Individual private owners own about half of the forests, and private companies own a fourth, while the state owns something less than one-fifth. The rest is owned by the Swedish Church, municipalities and a variety of foundations and economic associations.

– And how are they generally managed?

– More or less all forests in Sweden are used by so-called age-class forestry or even aged timber management. Here the fields are partitioned into patches varying in size depending on the type of forest and ground conditions. In order to maximize production, this kind of forest management aims to keep a uniform age and size of all trees within each patch. After some 80 years the trees are considered mature and then the whole patch can be cut down. This is not really a particularly old age for these trees, but cutting and regeneration is more profitable for the owner then another hundred years of slow growth.

Since 1994, the law has been focused less on generating short-term profit. The Swedish Forestry Act states: "The forest is a national resource that shall be managed in such a way that it gives sustainable and good yields at the same time as biological diversity is maintained." Out of the productive Swedish forests, some 3–4% is formally protected by national parks and natural reserves. Individual forest owners voluntarily commit another 5% to protection. The greater bulk is concentrated in the sub alpine forests, partly because the mountain forests are ecologically important, and partly because of its poor profitability due to slow growth and difficult transportation conditions.

Besides protecting ecologically valuable areas, the law now prescribes a general obligation to take ecological concerns into forestry. This is about, for example, leaving a line of trees toward waterways and wetlands, encouraging deciduous trees, and letting a number of old trees stand until they die a natural death, as well as leaving standing and fallen dead trees. The obligation to regenerate cut forest areas has been legal prescription for more than 100 years.

– So, do you think the Swedish law is a useful instrument?

– With the Forest Act, Swedish forestry today looks like a sustainable exploitation of the forest. Reality, however, is different. About one-fourth of all forest cutting breaks the minimal demands of the law. There are also important loopholes in the law. In practice this never has any consequences. In Sweden we use to say that forestry is conditioned on "freedom under responsibility," but unfortunately this freedom is often abused.

This, however, is not the full extent of the problem. By use of age-class forestry, forests are deprived of many of its key ecological characteristics, which depend on variation in tree types, size and age. Other species in the forest also depend on the diversity. The various development stages, from germinating plants to old decomposing trunks, are the most important parts in the forest ecosystem, and it greatly affects its microclimates and its ability to contain water. In the last 60 years, we have had an intensive use of age class forestry. The consequences are that diverse and varied forests are transformed into conifer plantations – a catastrophe for biological diversity.

This biological impoverishment, I may add, is not unique to Sweden, but is unfortunately a general pattern in forestry in all different climate zones.

Today, the majority of people do not see any alternatives to prevailing social order. Our challenge is to present social ecology perspectives in a way that people can understand. If we can do this carefully and with inspiration I think the prospects for a new popular movement are very good.

Another serious problem is that demands for profit necessarily give a short-term perspective and have resulted in over-cropping. From the 1960s to the 1980s these involved clear-cutting of enormous areas, the largest of several thousand hectares. Today, the clear-cut areas are not so big, but instead they are far more frequent, dotting the landscape. In northern Sweden there are whole landscapes consisting of clear-cuts and young forest. Such forestry is not only causing ecological problems, but is becoming a concern for local inhabitants as well. Other ways of benefiting from nature – even economically, like, say, nature tourism, berry and mushroom foraging, and reindeer herding – becomes next to impossible. In the past decade, we have seen several cuttings met by heavy protests from local populations who have tried to save the last full-grown forest nearby. The protests have received media attention, but have seldom been successful. The high rate of cuttings has also led to a deficiency of mature forest in northern Sweden, which means that younger and younger forests are cut.

So, although it may be a useful instrument, I do not think that existing laws are sufficient to encourage viable forestry, in great part due to the strong pull of market forces.

– Why is it such a strong dichotomy between forestry and environmental protection?

– At least 20% of an original biotope must remain to not risk the survival of sensitive species. Out of the approximately 25,000 species in Swedish forests, 1875 are on the red list of endangered and vulnerable species. 92 species have recently disappeared. The decimation of species and their disappearance from the forest is for the most part caused by intensive forestry: by the disappearance of their biotopes by cutting, and through ditches, fertilizers, and mechanical damage caused by forest machinery.

We need this perspective to look at the conflict between forestry and ecology. This is not traditional conservationism and nature romanticism. Current forestry methods presuppose quite simply that large areas are to be withheld from production if the remaining values of the forest shall be sustained. This is not only about securing a biological diversity

The one-sided focus on conifer trees in forestry must be broken. Deciduous trees, such as birch, are valuable and gives room for larger biological diversity.

of species and life environments, but also about securing the so-called ecosystem services, its natural resources for other businesses, its recreational value, as well as its cultural-historical values.

– But how is the mismanagement of our forests contributing to the ecological crisis today?

– Viable forest ecosystems offer crucial services; they clean the air and water, uptake carbon dioxide, and protect against floods. Here we see a clear connection to other ecological issues. When a whole layer of trees is removed by cutting, large quantities of carbon dioxide stored in the ground is released. The forests' function as storage for carbon dioxide, often mentioned in the climate debate, is greatly reduced or annulled by clear-cutting. Furthermore, the use of heavy machinery reduces the grounds ability to bind heavy metals like mercury, especially if the ground is damaged with deep skid trails. Without sufficient protective ranges toward waterways and wetlands, this mercury comes into the water system.

– Ideally, how should our forests and natural resources be managed, and how does this contrast with current situation?

– A fundamental aim for us will be to place natural resources under democratic control and local administration. It makes absolutely no sense that this responsibility rests in just a few private hands, as are the case today. How to use and maintain natural resources is a concern for all citizens.

Guidelines for forestry must be deliberated in direct democratic processes. While it is important that every community and municipality administer their own forests, it is wise also to have some over-arching principled positions to be taken for larger regions or even globally in the future. But even this must happen in direct democratic processes, coordinated between all the involved communities.

– So what do you suggest would be a social-ecological approach to forestry?

– In an ecological society the active use of renewable natural resources will be the foundation for welfare. In forestry, there

has to be a long-term perspective as well as a landscape perspective, and all aspects of sustainable ecological use must be taken into consideration.

Although we need a variety of practical approaches depending on local conditions, I am quite convinced continuity forestry has an important role to play and I believe social ecologists must contribute to advance this.

– What is continuity forestry?

– Continuity forestry strives to increase the variation of the age of trees. Every twentieth year or so, the trees that have reached maturity are cut, and in these clearings space is given for a new generation of trees. With the right maintenance the forest produce materials as well as outdoor life, nature tourism, animal husbandry, and even encourages the biological diversity of the region. Forestry without clear-cutting is fully possible; some even argue that the long-term profitability is increased.

Continuity forestry is of course not the full solution and even these methods can be used to exploit the forest. Long-term planning is

necessary. Today's one-sided focus on conifer trees must also be broken into a multilayered forest where the combination of tree types will give room for a larger biological diversity that maintains the whole spectrum of ecosystem services, and becomes less sensitive to storms, fungi and insect attacks than the one-layered and intensively exploited spruce fields created by the Swedish forest industry.

Creative attempts are needed to develop a new approach to forestry. Here the municipalities, particularly the ones who own forests, have a big responsibility.

– Should social ecologists integrate alternative forms of forestry into their ecological vision?

– Yes, I definitely think so. But another important question is how the resources that are taken out of the forest are used. This too must be decided democratically and not dictated by profit motives. To the greatest extent possible, forest resources should be used locally and regionally and not be transported over long areas.

Therefore, social ecologists must work so that all links in the production chain are within a sensible distance, and that the municipalities undertake the responsibility for this. If forests are used, there should be a sawmill nearby. If there is a sawmill, there should be a workshop. Local development projects should use building materials from the local and regional chain of production. Municipal authorities must initiate and establish missing businesses in a local production chain.

– How do you suggest that we initiate the transition to an ecologically responsible management of natural resources, like our forests? To what extent is such a transition necessarily tied to a new political approach?

– Today's forestry is in many ways better than it was only 30 years ago, thanks to pressure from ecological movements, scientists, and the general public. Social ecologists can and should help uphold this pressure, but we must also demand more than most ecological movements are willing to. Astonishingly, the broader questions of power and control over natural resources are almost completely lacking from ecological movements. But for us, as

social ecologists, an obvious task is to combine the demands for an ecological reorientation of forestry to the broader demands for decentralization and democratization.

– So how can we initiate these changes?

– In practical terms, I see three possible ways of initiating these changes and I think that all three need to be implemented.

First, when municipalities own forests themselves they can start immediately to use participatory planning to formulate and decide the direction of the forest management. Detailed and general plans about forest use and community development should to the greatest extent possible be formulated by citizen participation.

Second, when forests are owned by the state or by larger forest companies, one or several areas within a municipality could be given high priority, simply because they are particularly valuable to the community. The municipality could take over the administration of the selected areas, without necessarily taking over ownership in the actual sense. Gradually, these demands could include additional areas, and increasingly these areas and their natural resources could be fully taken over by the municipality.

It is not impossible that the state should transfer some property to municipalities, if only pressure is significant. However, as long as the integrity of the state remains intact this will not concern larger areas. As long as property rights remain as they are today, the same goes for private companies. At this stage, I do not consider it important that municipalities take over control over all property or all natural resources, but to increase citizens' power over areas that they care about and that are ecologically important.

Third, we should extend the use of landscape planning. For a responsible management of forests, a regionally ecological perspective is fundamental to how we initiate a change in forestry. Extensive use of landscape planning will increase the value of regulated property and protected areas.

Demands to municipalize property will probably be resisted at this point; even if less

than 4% of the population own forest, it will be hard to muster public support for these demands today. Landscape planning, building upon consultations with property owners, could be a first step that will gain acceptance more easily. Successively, the process must also be opened up for more participation from the public, and our long-term aim is that the power over natural resources and how they are used are placed in the hands of citizens instead of property owners. And again, this must be tied in with a new municipalist politics and a programmatic approach to social change.

– How can we ensure that the communalist takeover of production and distribution will foster a responsible management of these resources?

– Well, of course there are no guarantees that the municipal and democratic control over natural resources will give a more responsible management. With local decision-making processes, however, I think the risk for over-exploitation is much smaller than in today's society, especially if our societies are guided by something other than profit. I think that civic participation and shared responsibility gives a better overview of the various ecological and social consequences of how we manage our common resources. We also have to actively propagate the knowledge and the appropriate methods to advance long-term resource management and a stable direct democracy.

– But, to sum up, what do you think are the prospects for social ecology and communalism?

– I think that the greatest potential is in our political ideas. If a communalist politics can make a breakthrough in a number of communities these could work as inspiring examples and create a broader interest for communalism as well as the other aspects of social ecology. Today, the majority of people do not see any alternatives to prevailing social order. The challenge for us – as social ecologists – is to present our perspectives, a political program and our utopian vision in a way that people can understand. If we can do this carefully and with inspiration I think the prospects for a new popular movement are very good. ●

To create and strengthen a social ecology movement in our own communities and regions, we need to look at a variety of examples of radical education and political organization. New communalist organizations need to be rooted in a broad social ecology movement.

In this issue we present De Fabel, an active anti-racist center located in Leiden, Holland. We think their experience is instructive.

The myth of the illegal

Text: Peter Munsterman

"It is important for the radical Left to organize resistance, especially where repression is strong. In the beginning of the 1990s, migration control became one of the major political issues in the Netherlands. The government started to actively illegalize and exclude whole categories of migrants and refugees," says Eric Krebbers of the anti-racist organization, *De Fabel van de illegaal* (The myth of illegality).

"The radical Left should in principle refuse to see migrants and refugees as objects that are to be controlled. They are fellow humans with as much a right to life and happiness as everyone else," Krebbers continues. "We can see that the main oppressions in society, like capitalism, patriarchy and racism are thoroughly intertwined. But the Left has traditionally left women and immigrants out of their struggles, so we are consciously trying to bring them in. A better world will be for all of us, or it won't be."

A FREE SOCIALIST AND FEMINIST SOCIETY
Based in the Leiden region of the Netherlands, De Fabel van de illegaal has continuously fought from the radical Left for over 20 years for the equal rights of migrants and refugees. De Fabel aims for the realization of "a free socialist and feminist society, without racism, nationalism or fascism." That goal, they argue, "can only be attained through a worldwide fundamental change in social and economic relations between all people. Therefore, international solidarity is a central concept in our struggle."

De Fabel concretizes this concept through their work with migrants and refugees in the fight for their rights.

RACISM AND CIVIC INTEGRATION
The politics and laws of the Netherlands on immigration and refuge are some of the most repressive in Europe. "Refugees and worker migrants are not welcome at all," says Krebbers. "The struggle between the Left and the Right seems to be completely forgotten by politicians and the media. All over the political spectrum people are now convinced that integration is now the most important political issue," he points out.

For the past two decades, the Dutch government has been passing laws requiring immigrants to successfully complete Dutch language and cultural tests costing hundreds of Euros, all before they can set foot in the Netherlands.

Many of these policies and laws are racist: Non-Western immigrants and refugees, for instance, are required to enroll in cultural courses costing thousands of Euros and are "obliged to successfully pass civic integration tests, no matter how long they have already lived in the Netherlands," Krebbers says. "To De Fabel, civic integration is not a neutral word, but a very ideological concept. It refers to the process by which the government wants to make the new and already present immigrants and refugees into law abiding and 'economically useful' citizens," Krebbers explains.

EXTREMELY PRECARIOUS WORK
One of the most severe immigration laws, the Linking Act, "links all state databases in order to exclude all undocumented people from all government services. In this way a class of people is created who have almost no rights at all." Undocumented immigrants and refugees are in effect made "illegal." They are easily exploited due to their status, because "there is a constant demand for workers who are

willing to take on extremely precarious work for far less than minimum wages," Krebbers says. "The biggest threat to the undocumented is isolation from the rest of society. It makes them even more vulnerable to all kinds of new repressive state policies."

"For De Fabel," Krebbers explains, "the struggle against migration control is part of a larger struggle against all population politics that modern states use to regulate the quantity and 'quality' of their populations to meet with the needs of businesses. People are being treated as objects which need to be optimized in order to create the best opportunities for capital to enlarge itself. People are not here for the economy, however, but the economy should be here for humanity. It's about determining our own lives together."

A POLITICAL SUPPORT GROUP

"A central issue in the politics of De Fabel is the interaction between theory and practice," Krebbers says. Over the past 20 years, De Fabel has organized hundreds of actions and demonstrations on issues facing the undocumented. Through their help desk, they find doctors, lawyers and other services for immigrants and refugees. De Fabel, however, is an explicitly political support group, not a social work organization.

"An alternative care system, created especially for illegalized people, is undesirable in a political sense," Krebbers says. "Such a system would create a form of apartheid, and that is exactly what the government wants," he continues. In addition to their help desk, De Fabel has published thousands of articles in their magazine of the same name, continually presenting new analyses, commentaries, critiques, and theoretical essays of ideas, policies and movements on a wide variety of subjects.

"We have tried to make the growing repression against refugees and immigrants in the Netherlands into a more central political issue. In that area we can at least

try to concretely influence policy, and do so together with immigrants and refugees themselves," Krebbers states.

NOT A REVOLUTIONARY SUBJECT

"In the past, radical Left groups have sometimes projected their own struggle for liberation and

Geert Wilders' party lead the assault on undocumented Dutch migrants and refugees. The absence of a united libertarian Left allows racist and xenophobic leaders to set the political agenda. Photo: zapdelight

their ideas of social change onto immigrants and refugees and their self-organizations. In this process, they have made themselves believe that these people were some sort of revolutionary subject," Krebbers says.

"That line of thinking is definitely flawed. The position of immigrants and refugees in society is usually even more powerless then that of most workers and that is even truer for the self-organizations of illegalized people. Their members usually only want one thing, and that is security in the form of a residency permit. In order to receive that, they have to be accepted by the government and that is

why their manifestations are usually not very bold," Krebbers elaborates.

"Nevertheless, the claims the undocumented put forward during their struggles for regularization can easily become more demanding and turn radically Left."

FAST DETERIORATING

The situation for migrants and refugees hasn't seen any improvements in the Netherlands. "Things have been deteriorating here for some 20 years now. The speed at which things are deteriorating is accelerating, with all of the political parties trying to look extra firm on migration and integration policy, due to the growing number of voters choosing the virulent right-wing populist Geert Wilders. He wants, for instance, to deport maybe thirty million Muslims from Europe, as he said on Danish television last year. And there are now laws in the making that say once someone has been illegal they can never become legal."

Wilders' party, *Partij voor de Vrijheid* (Party for Freedom), recently made significant gains in local elections. "Their plans are incredibly offensive to migrants, Muslims, and many others. They speak of shooting immigrant youths in the knees when they riot; deporting millions of Muslims and having women pay a thousand Euros in tax a year for wearing a head scarf, and so on," Krebbers explains.

BREAKING THROUGH

"In 2005 De Fabel began working together with a group of Turkish-Dutch Leftists called Aksi on forced integration," says Krebbers. "From that initiative, the brand new national organization Doorbraak (Breakthrough) was created. De Fabel is now bit by bit becoming part of that organization," he continues. "Doorbraak focuses on racism, migration control, workers struggles from below and other issues," but it is not simply De Fabel with another name, Krebbers explains. "People are coming in from different political traditions and that makes Doorbraak ideas broader and richer," Krebbers says. ●

NEW BOOK ON SOCIAL ECOLOGY

A Critical Assessment of Bookchin

Text: Camilla Svendsen Skriung
Photo: John Gregory

Andy Price is a Lecturer in Politics at Liverpool John Moores University. He has recently written a critical reassessment of the theory and practice of social ecology as formulated by Murray Bookchin. In June, his book is published by Communalism Press.

– Why have you written this book? What motivated you?

– The book is based on my doctoral thesis. I started to research the work of Murray Bookchin after I was introduced to Bookchin's work as an undergraduate and was immediately struck by the fact that there appeared to be "two Bookchins" emerging from the already exiting literature.

The first Bookchin seemed to me to be a radical and humanist thinker, one who had produced a rational ecological philosophy and a workable practical programme for social change. However, the second Bookchin appeared to be a dogmatic sectarian, someone intent on dominating the radical left for his own personal motivations.

Of course, on closer investigation, it became clear that this second Bookchin was a misrepresentation, a caricature of this important thinker based on a curious body of literature that emerged in the late 1980s. But unfortunately, I found that this Bookchin caricature was having a detrimental effect on Bookchin's contribution as a whole: the caricature was tainting his legacy. I therefore set out in the book to critically dismiss this caricature in order to afford Bookchin's contribution a full reassessment devoid of the problematic literature.

– Why is your book needed?

– Well, it is argued that once this recovery is complete, Bookchin's social ecology can be seen to be an important ecological philosophy and practical response to the social and ecological crises of our time.

We have to dismiss the caricature as many people still have this dual image of Bookchin: an image of Bookchin as an important thinker but one who is somehow fundamentally flawed. These flaws are almost entirely personal. Basically, my argument here is that this personal focus on Bookchin should be critically discounted and his work assessed on its own terms. Failure to do this will mean Bookchin's work will continue to be tainted by the personal criticisms of him.

– You have earlier written about this in the pages of our journal; What is new in the book?

– My article on "Deep Ecology, Misantrophy, and the Genesis of the Bookchin Caricature" is based on the opening section of the book. Here I establish exactly where this problematic literature emerged from. This forms only the initial stages of the book, as the majority of the book is directed to reassessing Bookchin's theory and philosophy itself. But again, this full reassessment is only possible after the caricature has been established and critically dismissed.

– Who is your audience?

– My audience, I hope, is not only those who are familiar with Bookchin and social ecology but also the general reader who are interested in reading about possible responses to the ecological crises of our time.

As such the book has been written in an open and accessible form as is possible.

The whole point of "recovering Bookchin" is, in short, to offer Bookchin's work to today's ecological movement. It is argued that Bookchin's contribution is perhaps the most coherent practical and theoretical response to the ecological crisis yet developed. ●

Heaven on Earth?

On January 2nd, an attacker broke into the home of Danish cartoonist Kurt Westergaard with an axe. Westergaard, famous for the controversial drawings of Muhammad with a bomb in his turban, has lived under the shadow of death threats ever since its publication; in February 2008, Danish intelligence also foiled a plot against his life. On March 9th, seven people were arrested on an alleged plot to assassinate another blasphemer, Lars Vilks, a Swedish artist whose "roundabout dog" gained him public disrepute.

It is important to note that these threats and attacks are not simply carried out by psychologically deranged individuals, but stem from seriously deranged politics: Ever since the fatwa against Salman Rushdie, writers or artists critical of Islam run the risk of facing the wrath of reactionary theocrats. To them, blasphemy is still a cardinal crime.

Astonishingly, the Left has often failed to take a clear stand against this, often in fear of encouraging "anti-Muslim hysteria." Responses have come reluctantly and with all kinds of reservations. This, I believe, is to do Muslims a great disservice.

Yes, it is certainly true that anti-Muslim sentiments are gaining ground in Europe, often taking the form of ugly racism and chauvinism. Right-wing luminaries like the Dutch politician Geert Wilders use every opportunity to have a go at immigrants and Islam, cynically exploiting widespread fears of "Islamization." This is deeply problematical. Any Left worthy of the name must fight these tendencies.

However, some important distinctions are easily lost in the debate. Let us briefly recapitulate some basic principles.

First of all, it is crucial that the Left never abandons the basic premises for free debate. We must stand up for freedom of expression, unconditionally and forcefully. Even if art and comments are provocative or even distasteful, they have a necessary place in an open society. By relativizing our hard-won freedoms, we risk losing them. Actually, whether we like it or not, unrestrained criticism is a *precondition* for an open society: Society is moved forward by argument. Only by maintaining freedom of expression can we continuously re-evaluate the foundations of our beliefs. Ironically, the open criticism of religion (and philosophy, for that matter) is a precondition for the tolerance of beliefs.

No religion exists in a cultural vacuum, and no religion can be exempt from social criticism. Fear of charges of anti-Semitism should not permit us to be silent on the reactionary policies and worldview of the late Meir Kahane and his Kach party. Neither will ridiculing the obscure Haredi sect Neturei Karta necessarily involve anti-Judaism. By the same token, various strands of Islam should be valued for their social and political content; this is *not* Islamophobic. In this respect, it is completely irrelevant whether we think liberal or fundamentalist Islam is "the real Islam": All religions are human-made and mirror social contexts.

Furthermore, we should never lose sight of what is really "offensive" and "insulting." As Maryam Namazie insisted, it is "the offended Islamists – from the Islamic Republic of Iran to Islamic Jihad to the Saudi government" who should apologize: "Not for their backward and medieval superstitions and religious mumbo jumbo but for their imposition of these beliefs in the form of states, Islamic laws and the

political Islamic movement." For Namazie, apologies for the "mass murder of countless human beings in Iran and the Middle East, and more recently in Europe, for veiling and sexual apartheid, for stoning, amputations, decapitations, Islamic terrorism," were of far greater importance. She is, of course, right.

The traditional Left triumphed human self-consciousness and fought hard to remove clerical powers, archaic traditions, and irrationality from social affairs. By challenging all established values they were "storming heaven."

Let us be frank here and acknowledge that criticizing Islamism is not Islamophobic, any more than criticism of Stalinism is anti-socialism. The failure to stand up for "bourgeois freedoms" – and to support Muslim dissidents – is an eerie reminder of how the Maoist and Stalinist legacy has poisoned the Left. Instead of keeping focus on human universalism and individuality, large sections of the Left have emphasized cultural difference and national independence, and subsequently lent uncritical support to all kinds of "anti-imperialist forces." As a result the Left of today finds itself disoriented and demoralized.

As a humanist, I certainly agree with Vladimir Nabokov that "no free man needs a god." But secularism is not about forcing people to be free from superstition; rather, it is to insist on a society where religion is removed from politics and made a matter of personal belief. In this sense, secularism is a precondition for a society where a multitude of believers and atheists can live side by side. No free society can have a god.

> *You shall know that no one is illegal. It is a contradiction in itself. People can be beautiful or even more beautiful. They may be just or unjust. But illegal? How can someone be illegal?"*

Elie Wiesel (1928–)

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