

Against War and issue 2 Terrorism

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Anarchist writings on the war from struggle.ws

Introduction

This booklet is a follow on from *Against War and Terrorism* Issue 1 which was published as a PDF booklet in October 2001. In this second issue (March 2002) we go into greater depth over a range of issues. We consider a better understanding of these issues to be essential in building a global anarchist movement.

If you haven't already done so it would probably be a good idea to read issue one as it provides a lot of the background to the articles contained in this issue. Many of the articles here assume this level of background knowledge on areas such as Islam, anarchism and anti-imperialism which Issue 1 provided.

As with the previous issue these articles represent the views of the individual authors alone who are currently living in Europe, the USA and the 'Middle East'.

Below are the articles to be found in Issue 1 which can be read or downloaded from <http://struggle.ws/issues/war/pamOCT01.html>

The tragedy of Afghanistan

Introduction to the recent history of Afghanistan and social conditions there.

Capitalist Terror and Madness

Terror has a long history in the service of counter-revolution, and always works towards undermining the very foundations of a new, free, postcapitalist, society.

"Why do they hate us"?

A New York anarchist looks at the motives for the 9/11 attacks as they related to US foreign policy.

History of anarchist anti-imperialism

The anarchist movement has a long tradition of fighting imperialism. This reaches back into the 1860s, and continues to the present day.

Diversity in Islam for Absolute Beginners

Roughly 1 in 5 of the world's population is muslim. Yet what most westerners from christian backgrounds know about Islam can be written on the back of a small postage stamp

Commissars of the Free Press

Why don't we have a media which attempts to be unbiased and objective?

Building an antiwar movement

The key ingredients of success in building a successful anti-war movement are confidence in ordinary people's potential, solidarity with each other and a long-term view

The anarchist alternative

A successful anarchist revolution would result in society being organised by the free association and federation of workers.



Aftermath for Afghanistan

Since the 1970's Afghanistan has been shredded by bloody conflict between rival gangs of rulers and the regional and global imperialisms which subsidise them. The infrastructure of the society ruined, lives and bodies maimed, millions forced over the border into miserable refugee camps and hundreds of thousands of people cut down by hunger or high explosive.

The most surprising thing about the fall of the Taliban was the extent to which many people found it surprising. There was a close link between Taliban military successes and the considerable support they received from the ruling elite of Pakistan. Starved of that, even without American bombing they would have crumbled albeit somewhat later.

As it was no tin pot rag bag force could withstand the mailed fist of a superpower. There's nothing novel about that either, the machine guns and artillery of the late 19th. century empires rarely met defeat from the spears of the natives and this is just the modern day equivalent. (1)

One eyewitness relates "*Vast craters dotted their defensive lines, while the village of Karabah which housed their headquarters looked like it had been blow-torched from above. Mud buildings are flattened and trees reduced to eerie twisted stumps, the result of repeated B-52 strikes on one day, when I saw bombers come in every five minutes to blast the same area with their sticks of bombs.*" (2)

Imperialist Rivalry

Over the years the Afghan wars have been fuelled by the USSR on the one hand and the U.S.A. on the other and then with Iran, India and Russia backing up the Northern Alliance while Pakistan did the same for the Taliban. The conflicting interests of rival imperialisms are still at play in Afghanistan.

With marines on the ground and B52's in the sky the American influence is apparent and in a development without precedent the U.S. now has bases in what was formerly territory of the 'Soviet' Union, to the north of Afghanistan.

The new Afghan government consists of two halves, one the Northern Alliance, and the other the Rome group, which is to say formerly exiled monarchist figures close to Zahir Shah, the deposed King. The monarchist faction is dependant on U.S. support, as unlike any of the splinters forming the Northern Alliance, it doesn't have an Army and didn't play any real role in the overthrow of the Taliban. The King, despite, or perhaps because, he hasn't been involved in the country for thirty years, is a genuinely popular figure.

Of late the U.S. military have been openly supporting various sides in warlord disputes. Herat in the east is the fiefdom of Ismael Khan, a Mujaheddin warlord deposed by the Taliban and recently reinstalled with a considerable Iranian subsidy. Gulbuddin Hikmetyar another Mujaheddin warlord, who has been promising jihad on the infidels since the September is being kept on a leash in Iran itself. He has recently offered to leave Iran if that would

help ease tensions between it's government and that of the U.S., but given that his intended destination is Afghanistan perhaps the world could do without his help.

While the Hazari militias of the Hizb-i Wahdat have had a long relationship with Iran, this must be somewhat strained at the moment as allegations are surfacing that Khan is supply Iranian arms to General Dostum, their rival for control of Mazar-e-Sharif.

Recently allegations have surfaced that Khan's forces have been the victims of American cruise missile strikes and a lot of the American military effort in the country at the moment would seem to have more of a purpose if it's intent was reminding the various other factions what happens to people who displease the global cop. Furthermore there have been low level guerrilla attacks on American and British forces. Who is responsible for them? (this included attacks in Kabul – not a Taliban stronghold).

Whatever the case is there is certainly the potential for further conflict, not just because of imperialist rivalries but because: "*these sold-out warlords will have no scruples in once again putting themselves up for sale at a cheap price to old and new proxy-seeking powers, and consequently will once again invite the interference of their foreign masters if their sordid parochial and personal ambitions and interests are fundamentally compromised*" (3)

Under the Northern Alliance

At the moment 'Northern Alliance' rule is taking a form along similar lines to the situation between '92 and '96 – prior to the Taliban, when the country was last in the hands of the factions which now make up the Alliance. A pattern of endemic banditry, persecutions, and barons shaping up for turf wars. A change from one despotism to a hundred despotisms. But thus far with nothing like the extent of the bloody carnage inflicted in the four years of fighting before the rise of the monolithic and uncompromising Taliban forced the rival mini kingdoms to unite.

In other words with out the Taliban to unite them and the war to occupy them they seem to be returning to their old ways. They are particularly singling out as victims, Pashtuns, the ethnic group from which the Taliban come.

Barely one month after the establishment of the power sharing executive in an article headed "*We felt safer under the Taliban*" the *Hindustan Times* read "*Murders, robberies and hijackings in the capital, factional clashes in the north and south of the country, instability in Kandahar and banditry on roads linking main centres are beginning to erode the optimism that greeted the inau-*

guration of the interim administration on December 22." (5)

Something of an arms race is under way with rival forces drawing new recruits from desperate refugees. The principal infighting has been around Mazar-e-Sharif. A three way struggle with General Dostum, a former military commander of the pre-'92 "Soviet" backed regime in one corner, the Hizb-i Wahdat militia, formerly close to Iran in another and then supporters of the former President Rabbani, all jostling for control.

Refugee camps have been divided up along ethnic lines, with persecutions and expulsions of whoever is the minority. Similar squabbles over the division of the victor's spoils have taken place in other cities. So much has changed that merchants are even talking of a dramatic increase in the sale of burkas, the total veiling enforced not just by the Taliban's Saudi Arabian funded religious police but also by the dead weight of tradition.

From out side of the good versus evil view presented by the propaganda of the war party this is not surprising. Although they presented the downfall of the Taliban as a liberation, in reality the splinter groups making up the Northern Alliance were always much the same as the Taliban.

It must be remembered that the "warriors of God" began their rebellion in the 1970's, before the arrival of any Red Army tanks, over various un-Islamic activities such as women being without veil in public and education for girls. In 1990 representatives of all the main Mujaheddin factions (united!) issued a fatwa banning women and girls from an education, similar fatwas were issued enforcing the hijab or banning women from working by different elements of the movement then characterised as 'freedom fighters' by the governments of the West.

Even the Taliban's aversion to Buddha statues was no innovation – such artefacts had previously been blown up by Mujaheddin. They had fought bloody feuds for control of the heroin trade during the anti-Russian war, and when they finally overthrew the 'communists' they carved a bloody path of mass murder, rape and looting, turning the entire country into a shooting gallery. Destroying the secular urban society brick by brick.

Such is the heritage of most of the components of the Northern Alliance, the rest were the foot soldiers of the Kremlin backed puppet regime. A regime whose practises included burning alive entire villages. The Taliban did not land from outer space, but were sculpted from a stone which was one part age old authoritarian religious tradition and one part the arming of Islamist radicals with millions of dollars worth of weaponry by the U.S., Pakistan, etc., with the intent that they take over the country.

In short neither Islam nor Uncle Sam can wash their hands of the Taliban.

As the Revolutionary Association of Afghan Women put it: "In our opinion, the Taliban and other jihadi fundamentalist cliques of

Rabbani, Sayyaf, Masoud, Khalili, Hekmatyar and their like are brothers in arms. They are all of the same hue, because: All of them have a Klashnikov in one hand and the Quran in the other to kill, intimidate, detain and mutilate our people arbitrarily." (6)

The Victims

As no one is counting on the ground, even if such a thing were possible, estimates of civilian deaths vary widely. One *Washington Post* article, arguing that 'it was worth it' claimed that the figure could be in the 8,000 to 12,000 range. This figure does not include deaths caused by a disruption of food aid supplies. This was after some research done on the matter, by American academic Professor Marc W. Herold, established the estimate of 3,767 for the first two months of the bombing. (7) As he points out this represents in proportion to population the equivalent of 38,000 deaths in the United States. Since then the bombing has continued, despite the ousting from power of the Taliban.

The killings on S11 are held up as justification of the bombing of Afghanistan, a logic we can only agree with if we conclude the lives of Americans are of greater value than the lives of Afghans, or perhaps a two or three to one ratio of value. You cannot argue that one is right and the other is wrong, either it is wrong to slaughter people in the

'wrong place at the wrong time' in revenge for their rulers slaughtering other people in the 'wrong place at the wrong time' or it is not.

Rather than being a 'failed state' the situation in Afghanistan is the product of two decades of successful competition between states, a competition which continues in the region today. Rather than being a solution to any of these problems the Imperialist intervention is part of the problem.

For space reasons this article had to be heavily edited, the full version of the article is on the web at <http://struggle.ws/freearth.html>

Footnotes

(1) Of course the prospects of a guerrilla force, with outside support, would be different entirely. But this was not the case in this conflict and thus any analogies with say, Afghanistan in the 1980's would not be applicable.

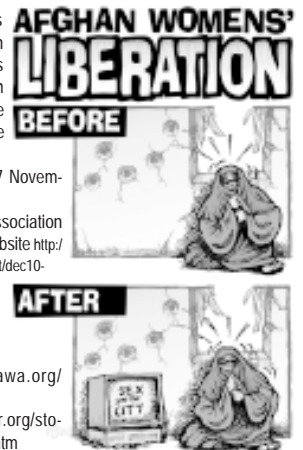
(2) The Spectator 17 November 2001.

(3) Revolutionary Association of Afghan Women website <http://rawa.fancymarketing.net/dec10-01e.htm>

(5) Hindustan Times, January 25, 2002

(6) <http://www.rawa.org/diffrence.htm>

(7) http://www.cursor.org/stories/civilian_deaths.htm



Empire in Central Asia

In the early 1990's the last 19th Century European empire crumbled. The longest lasting, although ironically originally one of the weakest. Just as other powers moved into the vacuum left by the relative weakening of the old West European ones, so too today this is happening with the decline of the Russian Empire.

The weakening of Russian power in what was it's southern colonial empire is opening up the way for other imperialisms. Central Asia and the Caucasus, or the Caspian Region as it is also known, is a largely forgotten corner of the world, but with all the ingredients of a new Middle East, it may not be for much longer. Imperialist competition in the region is centred around the exploitation of it's considerable resources of oil and gas, principally centred on the different costs and benefits accruing to different factions of the ruling class from various pipeline projects.

Firstly I'm going to look at those, before turning to look at the interests and goals of three different players in the carve up of Central Asia: Iran, the United States and Russia (others include Turkey, the E.U. and China but restrictions of time and space work against a full exploration).

Pipelines

The principal energy resources in the Caspian Region are to be found in Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan and Turkmenistan. All three states are essentially landlocked, the Caspian sea being an inland sea with no connection to the oceans. As a result, a major aspect of the international competition over

the exploitation of these resources is the struggle over which route to take to the sea and the global market. There are a number of options, each with their own advocates and each reflecting rival agendas.

The Northern Route (via Russia): The Northern route would consist of an upgrading of the existing Kazak and Russian pipeline systems, plus a new one linking Baku in Azerbaijan with the Russian port of Novorossisk on the Black Sea. Obviously this is the option favoured by the Russian rulers, as it maintains their dominance of Central Asia and provides a source of revenue to them.

The Southern Route (via Iran): From a purely practical point of view this is the most sensible option, with the shortest distance as it is able to plug into the Iranian pipeline system and it provides access to the growing South Asian market. Opposed by the United States, both because of that state's hostility to Iran and because it doesn't represent a diversification of energy sources - which is a U.S. goal we will be returning to. Nonetheless this is the only one of the new routes which is actually up and running.

The Eastern Route (via China): The longest and most expensive route but favoured by the Chinese government, and being developed by them, it also allows them to exploit the resources in their western provinces.

The Western Route (via Turkey): This is favoured by Turkey, the United States and Israel. There are three options here; firstly a pipeline to the port of Suspa in Georgia and then through the Bosphorus straits to Europe. The Turkish claim is that the straits will not be able to handle the increased amount of shipping and propose instead a pipeline from Azerbaijan to Ceyhan on Turkey's Mediterranean coast. The high costs of this proposal have promoted an alternative American plan to bypass the Bosphorus straits with a pipeline going through Bulgaria and Greece.

The South Eastern Route (via Afghanistan): This is the reason why in years past Taliban hierarchs popped up in Texas and other unlikely places. It has been argued that this proposal was a reason behind both Osama Bin Laden's war on the U.S. and the U.S. action in Afghanistan. With the fall of the Taliban this route has again entered the running. Note that it avoids Iran while delivering to the South Asian market, which is much more promising than the European one.

Readers, not even with long memories, will notice the amount of armed conflicts which have been found along these routes in recent years. Russia, China and Turkey have been engaged in suppressing revolt along their favoured routes, as well as of course the American intervention in Afghanistan, and the Afghan civil war prior to that.

The Afghan Pipeline

The Californian based UNOCAL energy corporation began its efforts to establish pipelines transporting oil and gas through Afghanistan in October 1995, the original idea was that of its Argentinean competitor Bidas. Lack of financing, the decline in world oil prices in 1998, the continuing civil strife in Afghanistan and the early phase of the U.S.-Bin Laden conflict, all these came together and blocked the Afghan pipeline project. However, the victory of American arms has changed the situation.

U.S. based business magazine *Forbes* reports that with "the collapse of the Taliban, oil executives are suddenly talking again about building it."

"It is absolutely essential that the U.S. make the pipeline the centerpiece of rebuilding Afghanistan," says S. Rob Sobhani, a professor of foreign relations at Georgetown University and the head of Caspian Energy Consulting.

"The State Department thinks it's a great idea, too. Routing the gas through Iran would be avoided, and Central Asian republics wouldn't have to ship through Russian pipelines" (1)

Furthermore on the 9th of February the *Irish Times* carried an agency story outlin-

ing a pipeline co-operation deal between the Pakistani military dictatorship and the new Afghan government: "*Pakistani President, Gen Pervez Musharraf, and the Afghan interim leader, Mr Hamid Karzai, agreed yesterday that their two countries should develop "mutual brotherly relations" and cooperate "in all spheres of activity" - including a proposed gas pipeline from Central Asia to Pakistan via Afghanistan.*" (2)

God told me to do it - The Iranian Challenge

"Iran's interests are briefly to getting the Caspian and Central Asian oil to the Gulf and establish close political and economic ties with the region. First, Iran has a desperate need for foreign exchange and would benefit from oil and gas transit fees.

Second, with oil and gas transit, Iran would be in a better position to develop trade with the region. Central Asia could eventually become an important market for Iranian manufactured goods. In turn the combination of oil and gas transit and trade could establish Iran as regional power in Central Asia.

Third, with oil transiting from Central Asia to Iranian Gulf ports, Iran would strengthen its position in the Gulf, essentially in relation to Saudi-Arabia, potentially also in relation to Iraq. Emerging as a Central Asian power would also reinforce Iran's position in relation to the Gulf neighbours." (3)

American opposition to the Iranian route is based on a number of factors. Principally and most importantly; the Iranian revolution of 1979 was a challenge and remains such from the point of view that it is the so-called 'Threat of a Good Example'. What this means is essentially it is an ever present reminder that it is possible to break out of neo-colonial domination, or at least try to, such states must be isolated, obstructed, and attacked whenever possible. (4)

This is in the long term collective interests of the American ruling class for the simple reason that if it tolerated Iran, given the popular alienation from the ruling authorities in the Middle East, and given the region's long history of nationalist and quasi-nationalist revolt, it would only be an encouragement for others to follow the Iranian example. Such a course would, in the long run, be possibly fatal for the profits of the American banks and arms companies who do so much business with the Arab elite. Nationalist regimes would be more concerned with developing a native industrial base.

Also, in the particular case of the Middle East, loss of American influence would also mean a loss of some American influence over Japan and Europe (the places which actually are dependant on Middle Eastern oil - unlike the U.S.). Thus in the last twenty odd years Iran has been both directly attacked by the United States and as well as by Iraq with U.S. support.

The problem is that it is in the short term, individual interests of U.S. companies (not to mention French ones, Japanese etc..) to

trade with Iran and indeed use the opportunity offered by the Iranian route to export Central Asian energy resources to South Asia. Furthermore it is in the interests of the governments of the Central Asian republics to do so. The Iranian option simply makes the best economic sense, all the more so because it already exists. Unless an alternative is developed, market forces will compel companies to develop the resources of Central Asia via Iran. Thus it is imperative for the U.S. Government to facilitate an alternative pipeline to the Indian and Pakistani markets.

Fortunately for them they have just radically altered the political landscape of Afghanistan. For the civil war in Afghanistan was a major barrier to constructing the only possible pipeline which could deliver straight to the South Asian market while avoiding Iran.

However as we have seen, the potential for proxy war very much remains in Afghanistan, as does the potential for limited insurgency by Taliban remnants. The potential for the former is underscored by the opportunity presented to the rulers of Iran by the oil and gas of the Caspian region. Not to mention the threat presented to them by what would amount to, if reported American plans for Iraq go ahead and are successful, an American encirclement, with a client regime to the east in Afghanistan and to the west in Iraq.

So we have seen Iran exploiting the power vacuum in post-Taliban Afghanistan and possible American missile strikes on Iran's Afghan proxies. Expect in the very least to hear much more ranting like "The Axis of Evil" and "The Great Satan".

The Democracy of the Oil Barons - the American Expansion.

"when the Afghan conflict is over we will not leave Central Asia. We have long term plans and interests in this region." (5)

- U.S. Assistant Secretary of State, Elizabeth Jones.

The central objectives of American Imperialism in this region include:

- (1) Containment of Iran.
- (2) Detaching Central Asia and the Caucasus from Russian domination.
- (3) Opening up the area as a major supplier of oil and gas, - in order to diversify global energy production and thereby reduce the power of oil states.
- (4) To realise the commercial opportunities offered to American corporations.

The document "*U.S. Military Engagement with Transcaucasia and Central Asia*" outlines these goals and was published by the Strategic Studies Institute of the U.S. Army War College. Some extracts from it serve to illustrate the U.S. interests and activities in the area:

"The 1998 National Security Strategy states why this region is important to the United States. It has estimated reserves of 160 billion barrels of oil, comparably large natural gas reserves, and will play an increasingly important role in satisfying the world's

future energy demands.”

“U.S. officials publicly maintain that this region’s energy sources could be a back up to the unstable Persian Gulf and allow us and our allies to reduce our dependence on its energy supplies. In pursuit of this goal we have worked to establish governments with open markets, i.e., openness to U.S. firms (and not only those associated with energy) and democracy.

We have also moved to check any possibility of their one-sided military dependence upon Russia. The determination to prevent either Moscow or Tehran from dominating the area, either in energy, or through penetration and control of their defence structures goes back at least to 1994.”

A few pages later and the rhetoric of promoting democracy is admitted to be rhetoric: “In practise, energy and security have dominated the agenda as the means to achieve this broader Westernisation to the point that evidently little pressure is being directed towards democratisation of local governments.”

In fact foreign imperialism, be it Russian or American, is marching hand in hand with local despotism, as is always the case. The document then turns to the military aspects of these policies: “the oil producing states are now members of the PFP [Partnership for “Peace” - N.A.T.O. front organisation – FE], and Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, and Georgia overtly seek NATO’s direct participation in the area, the U.S. or Western contest with Russia and Iran has assumed a more openly military aspect.”

“This stimulates an equal and opposing reaction. Armenian officials proclaim the vital importance of joint exercises with Russia to defend Armenia’s security and talk of an ‘axis’ with Russia and Iran. Consequently and due to the spiralling strategic stakes in the Transcaspian, NATO’s collective engagement, as well as the specifically U.S. engagement, with the region is likely to grow.”

“In September 1995, U.S. experts on Central Asia met at NATO headquarters and cited the extensive U.S. interests in Caspian energy deposits as a reason why Washington might have to extend its Persian Gulf security guarantees to this region. (6)

U.S. involvement has only taken off since then. While U.S. officials intone visions of a win-win situation for everyone, where everyone has shared interests in developing these energy markets, they have really aimed to deny and break Russia’s monopoly over the energy producing states.”

“Russia could sabotage many if not all of the forthcoming energy projects by relatively simple and tested means and there is not much we could do absent a strong and lasting regional commitment. Therefore, for a win-win situation to come about, some external factor must be permanently engaged and willing to commit even military forces, if need be, to ensure stability and peace. (6)

This does not necessarily mean a unilateral commitment, but more likely a multilateral one, e.g., under the U.N.’s auspices but actually under U.S. leadership. Without such a permanent presence, and it is highly unlikely that the United States can afford or will choose to make such a presence felt, other than through economic investment, Russia will be able to exclude all other rivals and regain hegemony over the area.”(7)

Well that was published in June 2000, a year and a half later and the United States does have military bases in Central Asia, and has just moved into Georgia in the Caucasus - also on a potential pipeline route (The Western, via Turkey one). September 11th has spectacularly increased the potency of the American military by effectively defusing the American public’s long standing opposition to foreign military adventures.

Yes the last two decades has seen lots of those, but always in forms calculated to minimise a public opinion backlash at home. Some examples, covert action (Nicaragua), military support to proxies (El Salvador, Columbia), overwhelming force in ideal territory (Iraq), air war (Serbia) or simply actions against opponents without the slightest chance of putting up effective resistance (Granada). We should not doubt that American militarism has moved up a gear or two.

A House Divided

These areas were incorporated into the Russian Empire in the 19th Century, with the intent of protecting trade routes and using them as a bargaining chip with the British Empire. Under both Tsarism and Bolshevism a classically colonial pattern of development was put into place. While Azerbaijan was an oil producer (9) the Central Asian republics were generally under a mono-culture/cash crop system of cotton production, and in both cases had unequal trade relations with the metropolis. The exception is the northern part of Kazakhstan, adjoining Russia, which was industrialised, with a workforce largely of Slavic origins.

This colonial dependence persisted following the break up of the “Soviet” Union, while Kazakhstan’s trade with Russia accounts for 42.5% of the G.D.P. of that country – trade with Kazakhstan is a mere 1.7% of that of Russia. Kazakhstan is actually dependant on Russia for it’s energy supplies, as all the infrastructure was developed in the “Soviet” period running north-south, rather than west-east from Kazakhstan’s oil fields to it’s urban centres. (10)

The fact that exports must go through Russia provides a further stranglehold. As with economy so with security and a number of these states - Armenia and Tajikistan in particular, have been forced to lean on Russia for military support, for the lack of an alternative power.

However Kremlin influence is not what it once was, due to the Russian economic situation, and because of, the, generally speaking, post-independence eagerness for real

independence on the part of local elites. There is insufficient capital in Russia for investments in and loans to the new States on a level with that of outside interests. Thus there are now American, Chinese, Turkish, South Korean, European, Iranian interests in the region. The arrival of multinational corporations is actually to the Russian benefit as these provide the investments necessary to develop the exploitation of resources, which can then provide revenues to the Russian “elite” due to their control of the export routes. Plus that control can be used as leverage for Russian companies to muscle their way into the energy consortiums developing the region.

Since the U.S. turned against the Taliban there has been a community of interest between the two powers in regard to the destruction of the Taliban. The Russian establishment has long feared the ‘Talibanisation’ of Central Asia as it’s border with Kazakhstan is porous, there are considerable ethnic Russian populations in these states, as well as Muslim minorities in Russia itself.

Nevertheless Putin’s U.S. friendly policy is not without it’s detractors in Moscow. On February 21st a group of former military chieftains, including a former defence minister, launched a literary attack on the Russian president, claiming that: “With your blessing, the United States has received military bases in Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyz Stan, and, maybe, Kazakhstan.

“In the long run, these bases are for dealing a strike against Russia, not Bin Laden... We would not be surprised if tomorrow they call you the best American, European or NATO official.” (11)

Since the break up of the “Soviet” Union there have been a number of Russian military interventions in the region. The Russian army has popped up in Georgia and Armenia and still has a presence in Tajikistan, but have been removed from Turkmenistan and Kyrgyz Stan. Furthermore in the early 1990’s Russia backed Armenia in it’s dispute with Turkish backed



Azerbaijan. Not to forget the long running conflict in Chechnya (it self on the Russian favoured pipeline route from Azerbaijan).

The American military presence is something of a new development. The interests of the Russian 'elite' in the area are in maintaining it's influence over economic development, so it can have it's cut. Along with this, in the future Russian energy needs are likely to expand and so the Caspian region, as it stands now, could provide a cheap source.

They have formed a body for maintaining co-operative relations with China, which like the U.S. is a new player in the region, called the Shanghai Co-Operation Council and have forged a relationship with Iran, particularly in regard to disputes over territorial rights in the Caspian sea, the Armenian-Azerbaijan conflict, and in supporting the Northern Alliance against the Taliban. This has lead "*Some observers to warn*" of a "*growing similarity of interests among Russia, Iran and China in countering the West and attempting to increase their own influence*".(12)

Those are the words of a briefing paper produced by American civil servants for Congressmen. However the Russian establishment is divided. According to New Delhi based research group the Institute for Defence Study and Analysis: "*It is believed that a difference of opinion exists in present day Russia regarding its future course in response to the US geo-political challenge. The "imperialists" and the "traditionalists" would like Russia to dig in its heels in defence of its historical positions in the region.*

The "pragmatists" or the "realists", who include Russia's major oil and gas companies, would like to adjust to the changing geo-political realities in return for a share in the region's lucrative oil and gas deals. It appears that the country's policy-making establishment, in the pursuit of perceived national interests, is constantly synthesising the differing views among the Russian political class and strategic community.

Despite its current weakness, Russia still has the requisite force projection capability in the region. Moreover, the proposed pipeline by-passing Russia is likely to pass through conflict-ridden areas in the former Soviet republics where Russia has established itself in the role of a peace-keeper.

There are also reports that Russia has of late stepped up support to the Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) which is behind the Kurdish insurgency in eastern Turkey from where the proposed Baku-Ceyhan pipeline would pass. Russian geo-politicians feels that as a consequence of its victory in the Cold War, the USA has driven to the minimum Russian influence in the Baltic and Black Seas.

It has forced Russia out of the zone of the warm seas—the Indian Ocean—with the loss of Central Asia and Transcaucasus. Making use of the CARs [Central Asian Republics] desire to assert their independence from Moscow, it is seeking to irrevocably change the geo-political equations in the re-

gion. It seems to them that Russia can protect its vital interests in Central Asia in partnership with Iran and China against Western machinations and designs." (13)

Conclusion

Just as within Afghanistan rival warlords compete for control over road tolls, smuggling, and heroin production, so to on a world level is the same process at work, on a larger scale. State power is the representative of economic power, and rival states carve up resources and markets in perpetual competition, in doing so representing the long term collective interests of their national ruling class (rather than short term interests of individual corporations).

While the buying of influence and individuals moving from political office to the corporate boardroom (and back again) may show us aspects of this process at work it is not it's source. Rather the source is the division of society into classes, with a ruling class based on control over production. The state is the mechanism by which the ruling class advances it's interests both at home and overseas. At home against it's subjects, overseas against rival rulers.

It has been amply shown how imperialist competition fuelled the Northern Alliance-Taliban war, and this is true of the earlier Afghan conflicts also (14). The Afghanistan situation then is not one of a "failed state" but one of successful states (Russia, Iran, Pakistan, the United States) and rather being an aberration is the by-product of the

competition between hierarchies intrinsic to the world capitalist system.

(1)<http://www.forbes.com/global/2002/0204/020.html>

(2) 'Irish Times' 09/02/02

(3) 'Oil in the Caspian Region and Central Asia - the Political Risk of the Great Game Continued' By Øystein Noreng <http://www.caucasus.dk/publication8.htm>

(4) This phrase Threat of a Good Example was coined in the 80s to describe the Sandinista Government in Nicaragua. I do not use it as a gesture of "anti-imperialist" support to the murderous (and Imperialist) regime in Iran, but rather in recognition that it's existence as a state born from the downfall of a American backed government is an example to people who would like to do the same to other American clients in the region and expel Western influence altogether. I think this is the case irrespective of sectarian disputes within Islam and that it shapes the American Imperialist attitude to Iran.

(5) Quoted in The Guardian 12/02/02

(6) "Persian Gulf security guarantees" would presumably, given the situation in the Persian Gulf, involve a great deal of American military intervention and a permanent military presence plus an attempt to exclude/contain all other powers.

(7) 'U.S. Military Engagement with Transcaucasia and Central Asia'

<http://carlisle-www.army.mil/usassi/ssipubs/pubs2000/milengag/milengag.htm>

(8) Azerbaijan's oil fields were the ultimate goal of 'Operation Blau' the 1942 German offensive on the Eastern Front (i.e. the offensive which was met by the Russian counter-attack and encirclement of the Sixth Army at Stalingrad).

(9) Abridged History of Central Asia by William M. Brinton

http://www.asian-history.com/the_frame.html

(10) Quoted in 'The Guardian' 22/02/02

(11) 'CRS Issue Brief for Congress: Central Asia's New States and Implications for U.S. Interests' <http://cnie.org/NLE/CRSreports/international/inter-26.cfm>

(12) 'Russian Policy Towards Central Asia, part 2'

<http://www.idsa-india.org/an-feb-9-9.html>

(13) See the Human Rights Watch report 'Afghanistan The Crisis of Impunity' for the Northern Alliance-Taliban war - <http://www.hrw.org/reports/2001/afghan2/> or 'Silent Soldier: The Man behind the Afghan Jihad' for the Pakistani involvement in the 'Soviet'-Islamist conflict of the 1980's - <http://www.afghanbooks.com/silentsoldier/english/02.htm>

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Civil Liberties and Civil Rights in Time of War in the United States

It was going to be different this time, they said. Unlike other U.S. wars, there would not be any mass denials of free speech nor would any national minorities be singled out for discrimination. (I am using civil liberties to mean free speech and association and civil rights to mean the rights of national or ethnic populations.) The errors of other wars would not be repeated. And it is in times of war and trouble that society most needs open discussion and democratic decision-making. But the bourgeois politicians did not keep these libertarian promises. They never have.

In World War I, it was made illegal to discourage young men from joining the military, and this was interpreted as any public opposition to the war. About 2000 people were prosecuted The Socialist Party leader, Eugene V. Debs, was arrested and jailed for ten years for giving a speech. During the war there was a hysterical attitude toward all things German (sauerkraut was renamed Liberty Cabbage). German immigrants were attacked and prosecuted. So were radicals, especially the IWW. After the war, there was a wave of repression, including the (Attorney General) Palmer Red Raids. 3,000 supposedly subversive immigrants were rounded up, suspected of being anarchists or communists. 300 of them were deported, including the anarchists Emma Goldman and Alexander Berkman, who

were shipped to Russia. The Italian immigrant anarchists, Sacco and Vanzetti, were judicially murdered in this period

In the Second World War, the most famous violation of civil rights was the rounding up of 120,000 Japanese-Americans and incarcerating them in camps for four years. Two thirds of them were U.S. citizens. This was in response to popular hysteria and done with the support of California Attorney General Earl Warren, later the famous liberal Supreme Court judge. A generation later, the U.S. government officially apologized. It is also coming out now that there was a certain amount of government persecution of U.S. German immigrants. Of course, the racial segregation and oppression of African Americans, in the military and in industry, cannot be regarded as new, war

time, acts since they were the continuation of practices from before the war

There was little violation of civil liberties during this war, mainly due to support of the war by almost all the Left (although 6,000 conscientious objectors were sent to prison). As the government began getting ready for the war, it passed the Smith Act, which forbade anyone from "advocating the overthrow of the government by force or violence". On the eve of the war, this was used to jail the leadership of the U.S. Trotskyists. Perhaps the worse form of oppression during the war was not directly by the government but by the capitalists and their bureaucratic agents in the unions, namely the No Strike pledge. No matter how bad things became on the shop floor or in terms of income - and no matter how much business profited from the war - the workers were not allowed to strike about it. Local strikes were fought against, not only by the companies, but also by the unions and (especially) by Communist Party members, who put victory for the Soviet Union above all else.

World War II was followed by the long Cold War, which included two significant Hot Wars, the Korean War and the Vietnamese War, as well as numerous smaller military events, such as the overthrow of the Arbenz government in Guatemala, the Cuban invasion, the Dominican invasion, the Berlin blockade, the Quemoy and Matsu incident, the Cuban missile crisis, the contra war in Nicaragua, and so on.

In the fifties the nation was gripped in an anti-Communist frenzy. Tenth rate politicians got their moment in the sun by howling about the enemy within, especially Joseph McCarthy as well as the congressmen on the House Un-American Activities Committee, and a lot of local little McCarthies and little HUACs. Communist Party members, ex-members, and people who never had had anything to do with the Communist Party, lost their jobs, were fired from government employment, were driven from universities, from the entertainment industry, and from all sorts of less glamorous occupations. The Taft-Hartley Act denied recognition to unions unless their leaders took oaths that they were neither Communists nor Communist sympathizers; this way the unions were purged of Communist Party members. The leaders of the CP were jailed (under the same Smith Act which they had applauded when earlier used against the Trotskyists). The Left in general, which had been dominated by the Communists in the thirties, was now virtually driven underground.

In the sixties (which really goes from the late fifties to the early seventies), the balance of forces changed. A new Left (or New Left) appeared, less willing to be terrorized, with more popular support

from sectors of society. The New Left was driven by the issues of Black freedom and opposition to the war in Vietnam. The government did not cease to try to suppress dissent. Fighting against the Black liberation movement, along with the local racist resistance were also techniques of Cold War Communist-baiting and FBI spying, infiltration, and intimidation.

J. Edgar Hoover bugged Martin Luther King, Jr., with the permission of the Kennedys, and sent King anonymous notes encouraging him to commit suicide. King was assassinated, as was Malcolm X. Different wings of the Black Power movement were infiltrated and encouraged to engage in armed conflicts. The Black Panther Party was destroyed in a hail of police bullets. The antiwar movement was also investigated and threatened by all sorts of government repression. Individuals were spied on and wiretapped. Organizations were infiltrated. Dirty tricks were used to get people to suspect each other.

This pattern of repression reached its manic height under President Richard Nixon. Not only did he spy on Black people or the Left (which the system expects) but he had the nerve to use dirty tricks on the establishment. He had his "enemies list" of prominent people whom he used the tax department to investigate, and he sent spies into the Democratic Party headquarters. These were methods which were only supposed to be used against the Left and were therefore seen as shocking and unforgivable. Nixon was forced to resign in disgrace.

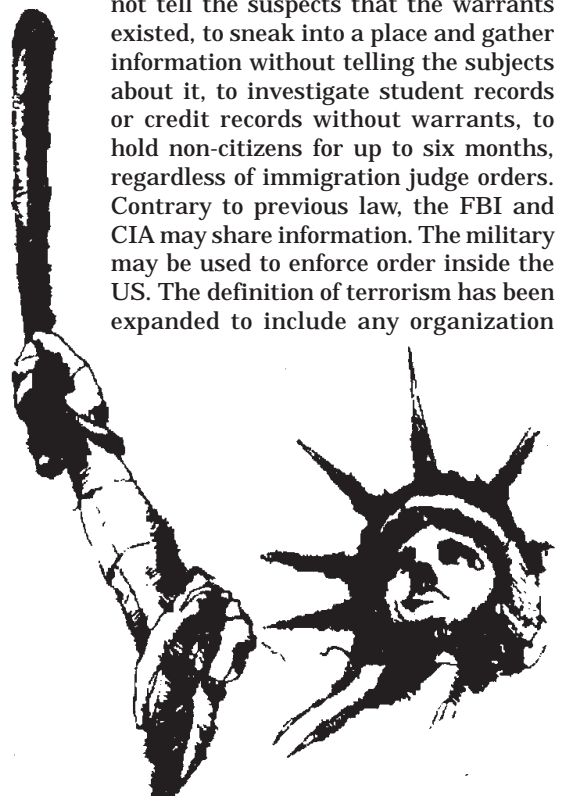
But this time it was supposed to be different. This 'War Against Terrorism' would not be marred by attacks on civil liberties, although security would be a natural concern. Especially there would be no attack on any nationalities. After all, it was only recently that "racial profiling" of Blacks or Hispanics by police was declared politically unacceptable.

Immediately after September 11, there was a nationalist frenzy from below against Arabs and Muslims. People were very frightened by this major attack on U.S. soil and wanted to lash out at someone. In Detroit, young white men gathered every evening in front of a mosque, waving the U.S. flag, and chanting "USA, USA!" Nationally there were attacks on Arab Americans, Muslims, and even Sikhs (whose men wear turbans but are neither Arabs nor Muslims). Several murders were reported. Pilots and passengers on airplanes refused to fly with Arab-looking passengers. The establishment clamped down on

this. The president announced that Islam was a religion of peace and met with Muslim imams and Sikh leaders. Memorial gatherings made a point of having imams and Sikh leaders. Anti-Arab and anti-Muslim lynchings were declared violations of U.S. "brotherhood from sea to shining sea," as the song puts it. After all, the U.S. rulers had declared that what the terrorists hated was 'our' democracy and freedom. More importantly, racist behavior made it difficult for the U.S. imperialist government to build an international coalition with Arab and Muslim governments against Afghanistan. Much to the disgust of the Israeli regime, it was denied increased aid against the Palestinians (for the moment). The U.S. state declared that the war was not against Islam but against terrorism.

But in fact the state committed itself to a policy of profiling and discriminating against Muslims and Arabs - from above. Over a thousand Middle Eastern men were rounded up and imprisoned, some held for weeks without contact with their families or lawyers - on the excuse, if one was given, of investigations into their visas. (This even included a small number of Jewish college students from Israel!) Five thousand Middle Eastern men were "encouraged" to meet with the FBI for interviews. Not one of these people investigated was found to be connected with terrorism, although a number were charged with overstaying their visas!

Attacks on civil liberties were quick to follow. A law was soon passed, with the initials USA PATRIOT Act. It gave federal and other police things they had been wanting for years: more money for new technology, the right to get warrants but not tell the suspects that the warrants existed, to sneak into a place and gather information without telling the subjects about it, to investigate student records or credit records without warrants, to hold non-citizens for up to six months, regardless of immigration judge orders. Contrary to previous law, the FBI and CIA may share information. The military may be used to enforce order inside the US. The definition of terrorism has been expanded to include any organization



labeled terrorist by the administration.

These egregious violations of liberty were then expanded by administrative fiat, without consultation with congress. The police were allowed to overhear lawyer-client conversations in prisons for non-citizens. Military tribunals were given the right to try non-citizens, on US soil or overseas, without lawyers, without even the standards of military justice, and able to put subjects to death. After the sixties, the Justice Department had stated rules that the FBI was not allowed to investigate political or religious organizations just because of political dissent; these rules have now been cancelled. The captured al-Qaeda prisoners were declared beyond the protections of the Geneva Conventions. New controls were put on scientific research. Most of this is supported by most U.S. people, out of nationalist feeling or out of a natural hope that the government can keep them from being blown up or poisoned. But there is an increasing number of people calling for the protection of historical freedoms.

These liberties have been called "*bourgeois democratic*" by the Marxists. The original meaning of this term is that these are the rights promised by the capitalist class in its great democratic revolutions: the English Revolution (of Cromwell and the Levelers), the U.S. Revolution of 1776, the French Revolution, and the South American Revolutions (of Boliver and many others). The program of bourgeois democracy states that "*all men [sic] are created equal,*" calling for "*liberty, fraternity, equality.*" It implies that all people are politically equal and are able to buy and sell equally (with no distinction but the quantity of money they have). This was a deal made by the rising bourgeois class: let us rule economically and we will give the people these democratic rights. (Later Marxists used the concept of bourgeois democratic rights as an excuse for rejecting democracy.)

But the bourgeoisie never carried out its promises, or did so only under never ending pressure from below. The English and French Revolutions ended in the dictatorships of Cromwell and Napoleon. The U.S. Revolution was made by Southern slave-owners in coalition with Northern merchants and was meant to expand the land taken from the Native Americans. Nobody considered women as citizens, until generations had passed and women engaged in mass struggle.

Overall, greater democratic rights were only won by popular struggle. But whenever the popular struggles became too threatening, and the capitalists felt they could not afford to expand freedom, then the capitalist canceled the democratic rights, if they could get away with it. For example, in Europe in the thirties, there

was a great deal of turmoil caused by working class struggles. The capitalist ruling class dealt with this by finally organizing mass fascist movements, overthrowing the bourgeois democratic states, establishing dictatorships, and smashing the workers' unions and parties. When the Left was thoroughly smashed and order restored, capitalist political democracy was restored. The exact same pattern appeared in Chile in the seventies.

Of course, in a war there are bound to be certain limitations. No one expects a community at war to allow the enemy to set up recruiting stations. But limitations on civil liberties have always gone way beyond this. And there has never been reason for gross violations of the rights of whole groups. Real democracy and freedom are not things to be granted only when times are tranquil. It is especially in times of trouble and war that people need to be able to speak their minds, freely associate, and democratically work out solutions for social problems.

The capitalist class and its state cannot

be depended on to maintain its promise of democratic liberties and rights, in war or in peace. It never has and it never will. Only revolutionary anarchists are consistent, thorough-going, defenders of popular liberties. Anarchists defend them and work to expand them, to push them to the limit, until they break the bounds of authoritarian society, the state, and the capitalist economy. The anarchist goal is full freedom, popular participation, and directly democratic control-from-below of all society institutions.

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Enduring war and popular mobilisation

Many activists seem to think nationalism always defeats movements from below. At the first waving of the flag, apparently, the left scuttles for cover; as soon as bombs fell in Afghanistan, the movement against capitalist globalisation was hopeless.

Historically, though, the reality is different. Most of the revolutionary waves of the 20th century have been associated with major wars: the period 1916 - 1923 which saw revolutions in Russia and Ireland, as well as failed attempts in Italy, Hungary, Germany and elsewhere; the European Resistance movements of the mid-1940s which defeated fascism in Yugoslavia and had to be put down by Allied troops in Greece; and the movements of 1968, fuelled by opposition to imperial war in Vietnam.

Patriotism is certainly 'the last refuge of the scoundrel'. It is not surprising that the Bush administration should have clutched at the events of September 11th: in the face of recession, a growing anti-capitalist alliance at home and the legacy of the Florida count, dead Afghanis mean strong poll ratings. Anarchists will not be surprised that the 'middle-of-the-road left' has rolled over and lined up behind the flag in the name of the nation.

But long wars are dangerous for states. The problem with mobilising people - interrupting their everyday routines and giving them a part to play on a world stage - is that they soon start to set their own goals. The First World War was brought to an end in a European wave of mutinies and desertions which led to revolution in Russia and Germany and the end of four empires. The Resistance movements supported by the Allies had a distressing tendency to set their own agendas, to which European welfare states are an indirect response. The long war in Vietnam (1945 - 1975) inspired re-

sistance movements around the world, produced draft-dodging and 'fragging' in the US Army and an international network of movements.

What are the implications of this analysis for the peace movement and the 'movement of movements' against global capitalism? Firstly, we should hold our nerve. 'Enduring war' has not sent us home - it produced an anti-war movement which has been faster to develop and more international than any peace movement since the 1980s. Governments want us to believe that we can do nothing; we shouldn't agree.

Secondly, we should organise seriously. We are promised a series of wars, to carry on past this generation, against one enemy after another, mobilising the American population (though it isn't clear what this will mean). In this situation, popular resistance will grow over time, and we should think in terms of fostering this process.

We need to keep on the streets and keep up criticism of the war, but without burning out. This war gives us a chance to build good links internationally, across ethnic barriers, and with other movements (anti-racist, solidarity, human rights). Above all, we need sustainable campaigning geared to helping ordinary people to start taking action - and to encourage them to go further!

Laurence Cox (Dublin) has been involved in social movements for nearly 20 years, including opposing the Falklands War, the nuclear arms race and the second Gulf War. He's an academic specialist in social movements research, currently studying working-class community politics in Ireland.

Israel / Palestine is not a nice place to live in - it is a war zone

Israel / Palestine is not a nice place to live in - it is a war zone. It developed gradually as a Zionist project supported by the Western empires for more than 120 years. It belongs to the family of settler colonialist projects which tried to build new European-like nations in colonies. In the case of Israel this involved the immigration of Jews from all over the world, mainly from the less developed countries, and the expulsion of the indigenous Palestinians.

In spite of the efforts of the Zionist establishment with imperialist support there are still more Palestinians in the region after all these years than the 5 million Jews. Due to the agreements at the end of 1948 war Israel could not get rid of all the Palestinians living in the territories occupied in that war and it had even less success in the territories occupied in the 1967 war. About one million Palestinians live as second class Israeli citizens. Another one and a half million live in the tiny Gaza strip occupied in 1967; About two million more live on the West side of the Jordan, also occupied in 1967; More than two millions are on the East side of the Jordan (in the kingdom of Jordan); and more than half a million live in the refugees camps of Lebanon and Syria.

Till this day the majority of Israeli's remain Zionists and dream of the big Israel. Some of them dream of the biblical borders including the East side of the Jordan and Golan heights... The majority of them dream 'only' of the territory west of the Jordan... of course without the Palestinians. Before the peace agreement with Egypt most of them added the Sinai peninsula to their Zionist dream. Reluctantly however, the majority may agree with a 'painful compromise' including equality for the Palestinian citizens of Israel, but it does not yet include the return to the 1967 borders, and the taking of responsibility for the creation of the refugee problem (mainly in the 1948 war). Nor does it include agreement that the Palestinian state be entirely sovereign and independent of any Israeli authority.

The Oslo agreement was an effort of the Israeli Zionist establishment to bribe the national leadership of the Palestinian refugees who were exiled from the occupied territories. One aim, the secondary one was obvious - so they would stop the armed struggle against Israel. The second one, the essential one was the expectation that in return for giving them the right to return and a kind of autonomous rule for them and the elite of the Palestinians in the occupied region they were supposed to extinguish the flames of uprising within the parts of Palestine occupied in 1967.

The background of increased resistance by the Palestinians and the global increase in fundamentalist Islam has also made the imperialist powers uneasy. The Oslo agree-

ment was intended to make the Palestinian state a neo- colony of the Israeli capitalists - both a source of low wages workers and a captive market. It was supposed to enable the settlers to continue with their projects in parts of the occupied territories.

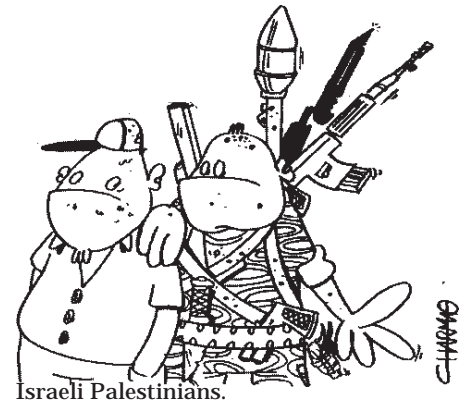
However, in the Oslo agreement Israel promised more than they intended to fulfill, and immediately they started to apply economic pressure and the suppression of freedom of movement, in order to prepare to obtain additional concessions from the Palestinians in any final settlement.

The refusal of the Israelis to fulfill the agreement according to timetable and the exposure of Israel's conditions on the final settlement of conflict removed the possibility of the Palestinian elite surviving such an agreement so the second Intifada started in October 2000. All through the last 16 months, Israel has increased the pressure on the Palestinians of the occupied territories, and on their elite. However, it seems that the Israeli elite have started to realize that they cannot force the Palestinians to accept the settlement as they planned due to military and political circumstances, and that the long term preservation of the status quo is also out of the question due to two main processes

The ability of the present Israeli elite to continue the pressure is hampered the most by growing internal pressures. These have resulted recently in a sharp increase in opposition to the war.

The first factor is the split within the elite between the older Zionist establishment and the emerging capitalist section who suffer from the decline of the economy due to the war. The tourism industry has collapsed. The markets for local products are constricted both within Israel, in the occupied territories and in the markets of the neighboring Arab countries; 'The peace bonus' for the Israeli capitalists is in the process of slowly vanishing. The commercial contacts of exporters suffer because buyers do not dare to come to the region. The increased suppression of the Palestinians has decreased their availability as cheap workers.

The second more threatening factor is the growing dissatisfaction of the working class. The unemployment rate among the Jews, and even more so among Israeli Palestinians, has risen over the last few years due to neoliberalization and globalization (lowering tariffs, "export of work intensive industry", up to 10% of working people formally employed as manpower companies,) accompanied by huge number of "guest workers" (brought to appease the Israeli capitalists). The contribution of the uprising of the Palestinians to the economic hardship is clear for all to see - including the drastic climb of unemployment - over 10% among the Jews and nearing 20% among



Israeli Palestinians.

Against the back ground of the general recession in the capitalist world system, and the local aggravation, the increased use of terror and guerilla tactics by the Palestinian resistance has made the life of many unendurable. The fact that in spite of the harsh Israeli retaliations the uprising continues, makes people start to doubt the government in all spheres.

The pluralistic nature of the Jewish citizens of Israel can be seen in the following example: The collapse of the Oslo agreement due to the failed Israeli efforts to blackmail the Palestinian leadership into further concessions they could not impose on their people, resulted in the second Intifada. This uprising of the Palestinians added to the world economic crisis and influenced Israelies in very serious ways. On top of this you can add the failure of Sharon to force the Palestinians into submission, even using the harshist measures possible, which only resulted in an increased level of terrorist acts and guerilla struggle. When it was made clear he intended to continue the ugly efforts to force the Palestinians to submission, but with out probable success and resulting in harsh retaliations from the Palestinians, the fermenting discontent started to soar.

The latest expression of this discontent is the petition of reservist commanders of elite units. They declared that they will refuse to serve in the occupied regions of the 1967 war. This petition during the last first weeks of February rose from 50 to 250 signatories. It is explained by them declaring that the continuation of the occupation is a war crime they refuse to participate in.

The terrorist acts of Israel in January 2002 are on the background of relatively lower intensity of Palestinian activity. During the time they occurred the media was full of predictions of provocation from Sharon based on his behavior in the previous months. The attacks were supposed to prevent peace talks with the Palestinians, and they succeeded... As a result people who only suspected it and people who knew but needed a clear proof started the beginning of revolt. It was expressed clearly in the more pro capitalist media, which reported more, and more on Israeli war crimes. It was highlighted when in the main respected capitalist daily and weekend supplements there appeared calls for resisting service involving war crimes.

This call to resist military service was not the first. Nor was it the first to appear as

an ad in the respected dailys but it was unique in two ways: First, it was signed by combat commander reservists who are the backbone of Israeli power. The second, one third of the costly ad was paid by the most prominent heart surgeon in Israel. In addition, public polls revealed 15% to 32% public support for the commanders who published the original petition. (The difference in support is due to the measure and kind of support described in the polling question.)

In the first two Saturdays of February we even had big demonstrations of a few thousand participants supporting the petitionaries and calling for an immediate end to the occupation.

However, the interests of the Israeli capitalists, and the Israeli workers to put an end to the continued conflict (because of its cost) are not big enough to overcome the interests of those who refuse any compromise with the Palestinians, and those who gamble that the increased pressure will yield a better settlement. People continue to ask when and what will be the end of the conflict between the Zionist settler colonialist project in the region, and the local Arab people - mainly the Palestinians.

The old secular nationalist Palestinian solution offered, was that only one secular state with equal rights for all citizens and with the right of return to all refugees of 1948 and 1967 wars of Zionist occupation will resolve the conflict.

The old Israeli libertarian communists (Jews and Palestinians) solution (since 1962) was that only social revolution in the whole 'Middle East' region which will respect the self determination of the working people of Jewish origin, can recruit them to the side of revolution, put an end to the Zionist settler expansionism, and resolve the conflict between the Jewish citizens of Israel and the Palestinians.

But the developments of the last years of struggle point towards the possibility for a capitalist peace. This was both enabled by change in the power balance of the region of the last 10 years or so, - the collapse of the USSR and the absorption of the region into global capitalism. (More so for Israeli capitalism, but also that of the emerging capitalism of Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and even Syria.) The capitalist peace is conditioned on the completion of that shift of the power in the region to the modern capitalist elites in both the Israel and its neighbors.

One dominant factor is the increase of the relative power of the classic capitalist class of Israel - who in all the years profited by exploiting the labour of the Palestinians. All through the years (since the beginning of the Zionist project) the Palestinian workers could be hired for about 1/2 to 1/3 of the wages of organized Jewish workers. All these years the capitalist class preferred to exploit them rather than expelling them as the zealous Zionists wanted. The privatization of the previously held industry and services according to the neo-liberal recipe contributed immensely to the diminishing power of the old elite, the settler colonialist

bureaucracy and the capitalist interests local and abroad cooperating with it.

The other factor is the increased militancy of the Israel working people and their wish for a comfortable life at the level of the European working class. The more the number of second and third generation descendants of the original immigrants rise the less and less the working people are motivated by nationalist false consciousness/ideology and the more possible seems a compromise with the Palestinians, Especially as the Israeli working class are now suffering the consequences of neo-liberalism which has resulted in high unemployment, less secure employment, and a halt to the previous continuous increases in living standards.

The third is the actual absorption of a significant part of the Palestinian refugees into the capitalist system and the promises of further absorption if the conflict will be resolved. Both for the uprooted peasants and the working people who are no longer forced to be in idle in refugee camps, and the Palestinian capitalist class. Now, they may have the option of exchanging their nationalist Dreams for the option of living in a relatively modern capitalist state.

The decrease in power of these interested in the continuation of the conflict; the increase of the capitalist interests who want to ex-

ploit the Palestinians and the workers of neighboring countries, the interests of the European countries in decreasing the appeal of fundamentalist Islam trends; and the decrease of the willingness of Israeli workers to be used as canon fodder point to a new optimism. It seems that like in other countries the most despised settler colonialist system will be replaced by a still despised, but less so, modern capitalist system.

One can see the growing awareness in Israeli society that the Israeli Palestinians cannot be kept much longer as second class citizens and that the efforts to subdue the Palestinians into submission to a Bantustan solution under Israeli rule have no chance to succeed. And most of all we can see the growing awareness that the continuation of the conflict is costing too high a price.

It might be that the latest Israeli attacks are the last throw of the dice both initiating a harsh Palestinian response and mounting Israeli internal opposition. If the Israeli side will consent to let the Palestinian capitalists manage their own independent state in the 1967 borders with minimal adjustments the Palestinian elite may be able to solve the refugee problem with the economic support of the rich countries.

Ilan Shalif is an Israeli anarchist who has been active for many years in "persistent and principled opposition to Zionism".

Declaration - May 2001 (unofficial text of small libertarian communist group in Israel)

The occupation continues, the occupation will continue, is there any solution? [excerpts]

The truth is now there for all to see: there is no peace agreement between Zionist Israel and the Palestinian Arab people, and there will never be. Zionist Israel is a state which adheres to discrimination between its Jewish citizens (and actually all the Jews of the world), and the rest of its citizens.

Zionist Israel is a state that stubbornly refuses to mend, even in minor steps, wrong doings it inflicted on the Palestinians. It not only refuses to dismantle the settlers' colonies and to allow the return of any number of the refugees, it even refuses for more than 40 years to let the evacuees of the villages Iris and Burma return from neighboring places despite the Supreme Court verdict.

Every agreement achieved in the short run between Israel and the Palestinians will express the present power balance between an occupying force and the occupied, between the oppressor and the oppressed between the strong and the weak between the masters and the enslaved. In other words, every agreement that will be achieved in the near future will be based on the trampling of the Palestinians as a people and as individuals.

The solutions suggested for the present are based on "compromise" between two sides that are not equal. The formula for a "Palestinian state besides the Israeli state" is in the present conditions a big fraud. Even if Israel will agree in the near future to the establishment of such a state ruled by the PLO, it will necessarily be like a Bantustan in the time of Apartheid in South Africa: A state divided into at least two parts, with no real army, with only partial control of its borders, ground and water; A state inflicted with high unemployment, flooded by hundreds of thousands of returning refugees, while a very high percent of its population will be dependant on the Israeli economy.

A "state" like this will not only be a

Bantustan, but also a social and political ticking time bomb and for sure it would be not any kind of solution.

This is the reason we do not find any value in searching for or offering any solution for the present or the near future. However, there is a strong reason to put forward principled demands worth fighting/struggling for:

1) Immediate and unconditional withdrawal of the Israeli army from ALL the territories occupied in 1967 war.

2) Recognition of the right of the Palestinian people for self-determination.

3) Cancellation of all the discriminatory rules that Israel has and replace them with fully equal rights for all those who live in Israel.

4) Recognition of the right of the Palestinians ("refugees") to return to their homeland.

All the solutions offered by the Israeli and Palestinian "left" based on equality are impossible to achieve in the near future (if at all): "two states for two nations", "state of all its citizens", "bi-national state", "secular and democratic state"... Are they worthy to fight for in the long run?

All these "solutions" take for granted the hierarchical structure of the state and not contesting the capitalist system. Within the capitalist system these reformists solutions are impossible to achieve and are not even worth dreaming of.

Only a social revolution of all the region (as part of change in the social order of all the world) which will abolish the capitalist exploitation and the hierarchical structure of the states and other oppressing and discriminating mechanisms - will put end to the conflict ignited in the region by the super power states and the Zionist project they nourished.

Such a solution is both worth fighting for and dreaming of.

2002 Preface to 'Why the Reversion to Islamic Archaism?'

The modern schizophrenia of Islamic integralism

"The true prophet, therefore, is not merely an inspired man who has the unusual powers of performing miracles. He is primarily a statesman and a legislator."

Ibn Khaldun (1332-1406), "the Machiavelli of Islam"

"Experience has shown, however, that powerful, countervailing cultural forces operate: the audio-visual media emit hedonistic messages which undermine the notion "Islam is the solution." The consumer culture's attraction, the lure of "Made in USA" sneakers and movies, bewitches many amongst the shabab (youth) upon whom the elderly leaders had pinned their hopes. More dismaying yet, are the local knockoffs, such as the North African hybrid of Arabic and rock music, dubbed Rai. Increasingly, Islamist voices can be heard asking, "Perhaps all we can wage is a rearguard battle. Isn't it likely that our present achievements are doomed to death by attrition?"

Emmanuel Sivanin in "Why radical muslims aren't taking over governments"

About the life in Islamic cities between the 11th and 15th century, we find the following passage in Albert Houranis *A History of the Arab Peoples*: "Those who were openly active were women of poor families. To the extent to which a family was wealthy, powerful and respected, it would seclude its women, in a special part of the home, the harim, and beneath the veil when they ventured from the house into the streets of public places. An Egyptian jurist of the Maliki school, Ibn al-Hajj (b. 1336), said that women should not go out to buy things in the market, because they might be led into improper acts if they sat with shopkeepers: 'some of the pious elders (may God be pleased with them) have said that a woman should leave her house on three occasions only: when she is conducted to the house of her bridegroom, on the deaths of her parents, and when she goes to her own grave'"

Not everybody was as 'pious'. Hence, Philip K Hitti could write about an earlier period, in his *History of the Arab's*: "Alcoholic drinks were often indulged in both in company and in private. ... prohibition, one of the distinctive features of Islam religion, did no more prohibit than did the eighteenth century amendment to the constitution of the United States: Even caliphs, vizirs, princes and judges paid no heed to religious injunction." Today, many a pilgrim on his return from Mecca, and after having engaged in such heavy spiritual work as throwing stones on a sculpture symbolising Satan in the town of Mina, pays Dubai a visit to satisfy worldly desires for whisky, and other more modern symbols of the rule of you know whom. But then, was not the messenger of Allah also a merchant and the founder of a trading empire?

But "For example, in May 1942, shayks from [Jam'iyyat] al-Gharra' and [Jam'iyyat] al-Hidaya [al-Islamiyya] led large protests demonstrations in Damascus denouncing the women who exposed their faces in public, promenaded on the arms of their hus-

bands, and went to cinemas," (Philip S. Khoury: *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism 1920-1945*, I.B. Tauris, London 1987).

Another, if smaller, historical leap. In 1967, in Ba'thist Syria, there appeared an article in the *Jais al Shab* (the People's Army) entitled "The means of Creating the New Arab Man" containing the passage: "God, religion, feudalism, capitalism and colonialism, and all the values that prevailed under the old society are no more than mummies in the museum of history, and absolute belief in man's ability should be treated as the only new value." Demonstrations followed and were brutally crushed, but the author of the offending article was sentenced to life imprisonment as well, and in the next three years the government built more mosques than had been done in the last thirty. 6 years later, the code word used in the October 1973 war against the Zionist state of Israel was "Badr," a direct reference to the battle that had established the supremacy of the prophet Muhammad over the unbelievers. Assad also referred to the war as a jihad against "the enemies of Islam" and the Syrian forces as the "soldiers of Allah". And in 1975, Sylvia G. Haim could write in the preface to a new edition of her *Arab Nationalism: An Anthology*: "Public prayer has become part of the appeal of today's socialist leaders in Libya, in Egypt, and in Syria.... Islam it is claimed is the font of all praiseworthy theories."

In a collection of essays by Mu'ammad al-Qadhafi and his nearest comrades-in-power from 1973, Ibrahim al-Bishari writes: "The idea of *jihad* has a material and moral character; this is jihad by means of the word. Jihad with the Sword, for the sake of God, using every method, must govern our relations with the outside world in order to spread our message. Islam lays it down that war is to cease by means of armistice (hudna), or mutual promises (muwa'ada), and it is to cease only for a limited period

fixed in advance, but when the Muslims are again powerful, war must be declared and waged." This is nothing but orthodox Islam.

To understand the ideology of Islam it is critical to understand that the prophet-merchant Muhammad was beyond anything else the founding father of worldly empires.

* * *

"Why the reversion to Islamic archaism?" was first published two decades ago as part of two issues of *Khamsin: Journal of Revolutionary Socialists of the Middle East* addressing "Politics of Religion of the Middle East". Lafif Lakhdar had in Lebanon previously published political critiques of religion, and co-written twenty-four theses on Black September (the crushing of the Palestinian resistance movement in Jordan by the armed forces of the King in 1970) with Mustpha Khayati, the Tunisian author of situationist texts such as the *Class struggles in Algeria*, as well as the pamphlet *On the Poverty of Student of Life*, which gained fame during May 68 in France.

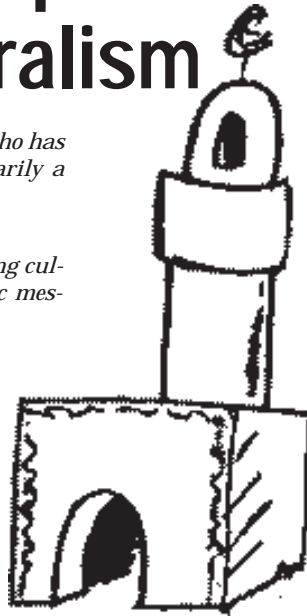
Published in 1981, Lakhdar's essay is obviously not up to date, which does not mean it has become less relevant, and not only in the 'Islamic World,' which was never quite a world apart. Also for many living where capitalist social relations first developed in full scale, the question of why the reversion to Islamic archaism has become much closer on the background of different but interconnected phenomena. Call it 'globalisation,' immigration or September 11; 'neo-liberalism,' war, poverty, stupefaction or alienation; racism, 'codes of honour,' secularisation, commercialisation and women's emancipation. For sure an old world is breaking down and a new one has little idea were it's going, or has not yet been born.

Lafif Lakdar ends his story within the first period of Khomeinism in Iran, which connects us in time to the beginning of the last Afghan wars, as well as the Iran-Iraq war of 1980-88. A war between the most contemptible product of the preceding nationalism of the Arab Renaissance party and a reborn religious nationalism (where in the words of Lakhdar, Islam could "congratulate itself on having caught up, five centuries too late, with the Europe of the Inquisition") – both mystifying more or less the same, glorious pasts. What can you expect from 'liberation movements' that cannot help but constantly refer with wounded pride to imperial pasts? Empires have never had much to do with freedom from oppres-

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sion and exploitation. Too much history is the tragedy of the day. It contains no past nor future that anyone would want to live, except maybe great men of power. Pax-Americana and pax-Islamica never differed much. It is the old history of exploitation, oppression and slavery.

The particular class composition of much of the historical core areas of Islamic dominance, partially as a product of indigenous history, partially of colonialism and the impact of global capitalism, has tended to make the position of the social strata traditionally most inclined to fascistoid ideologies strong, and the working class weak. The attraction to figures as Musa Nili and Hayder (the Brave), better known as Mussolini and Hitler, was not only due to the establishment of a settler colonialist state called Israel. To this, the line of home-gown butcher-saviours have been too long, and the continued influence of honour and shame and 'manly values,' and the celebration of submission, too strong. But there is nothing pre-determined about this. It is a product of oppression both by the word and by the sword. And, it must be added, we are most of the time talking about a minority, if a powerful and vocal one, dominating a 'silent majority' living their lives as best as they can. Islam foremost enslaves Muslims. And it is precisely the authoritarian, semi-secular regimes that has made the continuation of this state of affairs possible.

The failure of pan-Arab nationalism to deliver what it promised, which was not much to wish for in the first place, whether as Nasserism or Ba'thism, is an important element in Lakdar historical exposure. Surprising to many is no doubt Lakhdar's description of how Saudi Arabia with its petro-dollars was once seen by many as yet another saviour challenging 'the West' – if hardly capitalism. This was also the time that the sponsoring by Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates of madrasas, mosques, and other religious institutions around the world, really took off – to counter the growing influence of Iranian Khomeinism. We see the beginning of what might be called a true globalisation of Islamic integralism, where also parts of the world that earlier had been little exposed to this kind of fanatic breed of dogmatism, though nominally Muslim, were drawn into the circle. It should be remembered that this also meant a confrontation with the traditionally strong pagan influences in popular Islam, in particular in the countryside. The state ideology of pure, dogmatic Islam of the Sharia, of worldly Sunni jurisprudence, takes center place. Islam is in a paradoxical way the most secular religion there is (sharing many common traits in particular with Judaism and the Bible of the Old Testament in this respect), and its more popular and elitist spiritual elements are precisely those the Islamic integralist want to cleanse it off, so that nothing is left but Law. That this, in this day and age, cannot even create Order but only bloody chaos, in minds as well as in daily reality, is yet another paradox.

With its emphasis on root-learning and indoctrination from early age, the importance of "schooling" for building a global Islamist infrastructure cannot be underestimated. It is amazing that in the beginning of a new millennium, two-thirds of all Saudi PhDs are in 'Islamic Studies.' So what shall these students do when they finish, to say nothing of their poorer brethren elsewhere? Also more traditional campuses has for long been a prioritised battle-ground for Islamists. "A study of 1,384 Syrian fundamentalist imprisoned between 1976 and 1981," writes Dilip Hiro, "showed 27.7 per cent to be college or university students and 13.3 per cent professionals, the corresponding figures for the Egyptian being 40 per cent and 6 per cent." (*Islamic Fundamentalism*, Paladin Grafton Books, 1988.) Many become state bureaucrats, teachers – and unemployed. Hamas, a Palestinian offspring of the Muslim Brotherhood, for long was a non-combative faction within the Palestine resistance movement, and used the time to conquer much of the means of education. Or to refer to Bassam Tibi: "In line with the historical described legacy, the Islamist of our time put the goal of taking over the institu-



tions of education at the top of their agenda. In Algeria, for instance, the educational politics of 'Arabisation' preceded the rise of political Islam. In similar vein, the Turkish fundamentalists pursue the politics of cultural Islamisation as their priority." Audio-tapes, and to a lesser degree, video-tapes have also for long been a popular way of spreading the message, "from the Kalashnikov to the tape-recorder," as the saying goes.

As always the position of women became the main battleground between **strong secularising forces** – a critical aspect that must not be overlooked – and the refuge of outmost reaction. "By accepting to live in bondage to this Divine Law, man learns to be free," in the words of a former Minister of Law and Religious Affairs in Pakistan, A.K. Brohi, which reminds one of something a certain Trotsky once said about slavery and 'socialism' not being necessarily opposed, as well as the Leviathan of the English 17th century philosopher, Thomas Hobbes.

To dwell deeper into this material, concrete studies of the societies and histories Islamic integralism operate within and global socio-

economical forces, are needed. Cultural ones not excluded. This would also reveal the forces struggling against a return to old and new life-denying ideologies, whether of the 'East' or 'West'. The question of the emancipation of women remains central, and is also what is gonna makes this edifice crumble in its foundation. There is a certain truth in the words of the Moroccan Fatima Mernissi: "The Muslim system is not so much opposed to women as to the heterosexual unit. What is feared is the growth of the involvement between a man and a woman into an all-encompassing love, satisfying the sexual, emotional and intellectual needs of both partners. Such an involvement constitutes a direct threat to the man's allegiance to Allah, which should be the unconditional investment of all man's energies, thought and feelings in his God." Or should we say to very worldly rulers. This hardly captures everything there is to say about that topic. But it expresses something about that males are also oppressed by this ideology, and why secularising forces will succeed, maybe in a strange alliance with more spiritual, heterodox and pagan undercurrents within Islamic cultural traditions, as well as for sure, purely metaphorical, opportunistic and privatised interpretations of the "words of Allah," as has become a norm within most of what remains of what was once Christianity. It took hundreds of years to significantly weaken this once so strong and oppressive force. The last thing needed is a replacement.

An interesting phenomenon was captured by Jeremy Seabrook in an article in *The Guardian* (December 20, 2001) with the telling title: "The making of a fanatic: Young men with broken dreams of a business career are turning to fundamentalism". He writes:

"You see them everywhere on the streets of Dhaka, Jakarta, Karachi, the boys with their qualifications: a Master's in personnel, a diploma in management, a degree in marketing. You meet them on the battered buses, in the dusty parks, in the flyblown eating-houses, clutching copies of their "biodata" in plastic folders. They are on their way from house to house, giving tuition to the children of the middle class. These are the representatives of the pinched under-employment of a generation raised on the promise that if only they study business, they will be sure of a managerial job, big money, a security greater even than that guaranteed by government service.

Business culture has seized the imagination of the young all over the world. It has brought new hope to a generation whose educational aspirations have been transformed by its revelations of wealth-creation. They carry textbooks, published in the US, pages of which they learn by rote. Many are from poor families, from small towns and distant villages, who have sold precious land or gone into bottomless debt for the sake of a better life for their children. For them, to study in the capital enhances prestige - distance from the homeplace, it seems, adds value, no matter how academically thin the object of study, no matter how shaky the in-

stitution.”

Unlike what is the case of fairy tails, this new chimera seldom has a happy ending. But that the people referred to were caught in the Islamist net first after having sought a future within the latest craze of hyper-modern corruption, tells us much about the future of Islamic integralism. It has nothing to offer other than what is contained in the last phrase of the watchword of the Muslim Brethren, namely “*Death for the Glory of Allah is our greatest ambition*”. And unlike what a western media, deceived by Islamic propaganda and its own stupefaction wants us to believe, human beings of flesh and blood grown up with an

Islamic faith, fear death no less, and wants no less to live than the rest of us. Therefore, Islamic integralism will fade away and give room for those who seek life and a world no longer dominated by exploitative and oppressive social forces. The future lies closer to the music of Rai and the rebellious youth of Kabyle, than it does to the caves of Afghanistan.

Islamic integralists are fighting a war they cannot win in the long run. The last desperate battles before being overtaken by the realities, for better and worse, of the modern world. Overtaken by emancipatory forces on one side and commodification on the other. Lafif Lakhdar was essentially

right in stating: “*Contrary to what Islamic propaganda claims, and many western leftists believe, today’s Iran does not represent the reinvigoration of Islam but its swansong, except that it lacks any beauty.*” What remains to be answered is how long this death-dance will take, how much pain it will give birth to, and how much, and for how long, it can hold back the emergence of conditions needed for a libertarian class struggle to gain strength. The question of why it emerged in the first place, it would take volumes to adequately answer.

Written by Harald Beyer-Arnesen, born and living in Oslo, Norway. Anarco-syndicalist and anarchist communist.

Why the Reversion to Islamic Archaism?

In order to gain a critical understanding of the persistence of Islamic archaism and all its paraphernalia, one must approach it through the logic of its own history, as well as that of the Arabo-Muslim bourgeoisie of the 19th and 20th centuries, which is radically different from the process of European history and from the residual folkloric Christianity of the present-day West.

Islamic integralism – not a Reformation

Let me explain: some orientalist, such as the American Richard Michel, see in the activist Islamic movements a potential for reforming Islam. In other words, a way of rationalising it, thus bringing it closer to western liberalism. Such writers have clearly succumbed to the comic temptation of analogy and to the lazy facility of repetition. For, if one sets up a parallel between the contemporary Islamic Brotherhoods and the European Reformation, one is just making a mockery of concrete history.

Seen historically, the Reformation is an integral part of the making of the modern world, of the birth of nations and their languages from the ruins of the Holy Roman Empire and its celestial counterpart - the Church. This process led, through a long route of development, to the explosion of the third estate - a fact of decisive importance, without parallel in the modern history of Islam - an explosion which brought forth the French Revolution and hence modern nations and classes.

The Islamic movements are located in a completely different historical context. To conflate this context with that of the Reformation is to misunderstand the origins and development of the current movement of Islamic integralism, as well as its historical antecedent - the pan-Islamic movement of the 19th century.

Pan-Islamism took form under the political direction of the Ottoman sultan himself and the ideological direction of al-Afghani and ‘Abduh. Its aim was to defend the caliphate (the empire) which was slowly but surely breaking up as a result of the combined thrusts of European economic and ideological penetration, and of the nationalist demands of the Balkan peoples, especially the Serbs and the Bulgars who were struggling for emancipation both from

the domination of the Ottoman rulers and from the religious domination of the ecumenical patriarchate who still hankered after the idea of a grand new empire with Greece at its centre. Blinded by their pro-Ottoman prejudices, the believers in pan-Islamism did not realise that times had changed and that the era of modern nation-states had succeeded that of the empires of former times. True to itself, pan-Islamism was keenly opposed to the secular and liberal anti-Ottoman tendency of the Arab Christians - Shibli Shumayyil, the Darwinist, was one of their leading spokesmen – during the last quarter of the 19th century. This latter tendency considered the only answer to European penetration and Ottoman despotism to be the complete adoption of the European model of civilisation as well as the separation of the Arab provinces from the empire and hence the formation of a modern nation.

Pan-Islamism countered these liberal demands with its famous old rubbish about the need for a just despot modelled on the second caliph, ‘Umar, who would impose on his subjects a bovine discipline for fifteen years before guiding them step by step to the age of reason. To the idea of the formation of a secular Arab nation comprising Muslims, Christians and Jews, pan-Islamism replied with the Muslim nation in the Koranic meaning of the term - that is a community of believers. They even thought that they could stop the Arabo-Muslim provinces of the empire from breaking away by unifying Sunni Islam through the merging of its four rites.

This response to the challenge of European modernism was not only anachronistic - it was also uncertain. The leading spokesman of pan-Islamism, al-Afghani, vacillated from one position to another. This high priest of pan-Islamism sometimes opted for pan-Arabism which implied the break up of the

empire; a staunch pro-Ottoman, he at times advocated the Arabisation of the empire, which would mean that the Turks, the dominant element in the empire, would be in an inferior position; a militant opponent of socialism, as a theory imported from Europe, he at times predicted the universal victory of socialism; an ideologist of Islamic fundamentalism, he at times (probably under the influence of Free-Masonry, of which he was a member) advocated the merging of the three monotheistic religions in a new synthesis which would be superior to each of them. This idea was openly heretical. His disciple ‘Abduh, after having taken part in the ‘Urabi uprising (1881 - an anti-British and anti-authoritarian revolt, violently condemned by the sultan) later recanted.

This confusion and incoherence of pan-Islamism are closely linked to the decline of the Arab-Muslim world since the second half of the thirteenth century, and to its having been conquered, for the first time in its history, by bourgeois Europe.

In the last analysis the followers of pan-Islamism reflected the feelings of the big pro-Ottoman land-owners. These landowners owed their position to the first attempt at privatisation of the crown domanial estates, which was carried out in the semi-modern, semi-oriental state of Muhammad ‘Ali. They were aware of the threat which European influence presented to their interests. Besides, British domination was to encourage, at their expense, the growth of a new rural class based on small and medium land-owners. It is this very class which constituted the core of the modern Arab bourgeoisie.

The pan-Islamism of the 19th century, known as *al-Nahda* (Awakening), is in no way comparable to the Reformation and still less to the Renaissance, which was a return to the pre-Christian values of pagan Graeco-Roman civilisation. Even the Counter-Reformation was a progressive movement in comparison with contemporary Muslim integralism. The latter began in 1928, that

Lafif Lakhdar (1981)

is after the first world war, which marks the beginning of the decline of the capitalist mode of production, whose crisis since then has been permanent. Henceforth all variants of the bourgeoisie are regressive. Besides, one cannot, without making a fool of oneself, identify the path of the history of the Arabo-Islamic world with that of modern Europe. The dynamics are quite different.

An impassioned criticism of the religious illusion; successive revolutions - commercial, cultural, scientific, philosophic, bourgeois, industrial - and finally the creation of the nation-state; this sums up the essence of Europe's history since the Renaissance.

The Copernican earthquake, the heresies, the Enlightenment, 1792, 1848, 1871, 1917 were so many mortal blows to religion and to mystical obscurantism. Priests had already become a species doomed to extinction and Christianity is a shadow of its former self thanks to the anti-Christian currents which the French Revolution brought forth. From the fury of the direct democracy of the Revolution, year 11 to Freud, who demonstrated that the mechanisms and pulsations of the unconscious owe nothing to a Great Supervisor, religious indifference bordering on atheism became internalised in the collective unconscious of the greatest number. Whereas in the Islamic world the mosque still wishes to dominate everything, in the West television every evening plays admirably the roles of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit and thus turns church, family, and soon school, into as many anachronisms. (Footnote 1)

God having been put to death by the bourgeois revolution, and the church having become marginalised, the nation-state appears upon the altar at which all citizens, irrespective of racial and religious origin, take communion.

Within this profoundly profane Europe the nation-state imposed itself through the dual process of assimilation of the bourgeoisies and of ethnic or religious minority groups, and the marginalisation of national and religious particularisms. It was that outcome of the bourgeois revolution which cut the umbilical cord linking the modern bourgeoisie to its medieval ancestors.

Bourgeoisie without bourgeois revolution

In the Arabo-Muslim world this process has not taken place and the nation-state did not see the light of dawn. The modern Arab state - an abortion of the project for a state which Napoleon attempted to implement in Egypt, which was taken over by Muhammad 'Ali and which still survives today with a modernistic facade and caliphate foundations - has not succeeded in rising to the rank of the nation-state. It has remained a confessional state, subject to the following cycle: composition, decomposition, recomposition. It has in the main remained inveterately despotic and denominational. Religion, in this case Islam, plays the role of a catalyst for the

collective memory of the *umma*, the Koranic nation, undifferentiated and cemented by divine law. As the bourgeois *patrie* has not been created, the wars that the Arabo-Muslim bourgeoisie has been fighting from one decade to the next are not patriotic wars but jihads.

For lack of a bourgeois revolution, the Arab state, although bourgeois in its social and anti-proletarian role, has not been able to attain its true development into a self-sufficient modern state which does not need to lean on the crutches of Islam. Its denominational character, since Islam is proclaimed the state religion, prevents it to date from creating a true national cohesion. This could only be carried out in a non-denominational state which would result from a fusion and recasting of all the present components of its national bourgeoisie. Since they have not succeeded in this respect, each Arab state is a mosaic of particularisms of all sorts whose creeds, ethnic loyalties, dialects and mental outlooks are different and contradictory. Syria, Iraq and Lebanon are dramatic examples of this. This explains why at times of crisis regional, tribal, ethnic or confessional bonds often blunt the edge of social interests and the horizontal division of Arabo-Islamic society, which is unconsciously experienced as a juxtaposition of clannish partisanships (*asabiyat*) rather than as a society of open class struggle.

The fact that there is still no secular dimension within the Arab state means that the Christians and the Jews, not to mention the free thinkers, are still subject in effect to a status of *dhimmi* (tributary) as they were fourteen centuries ago.

The secularisation of the Arabo-Muslim state, so bitterly opposed both by the pan-Islamism of the 19th century and by present-day Islamic integralism, was never insisted on by any party or Arabo-Muslim thinker. True, al-Kawakibi recommended the union of Christian and Muslim Arabs - but within the framework of the sacrosanct Islamic caliphate whose caliph must be a Qurayshi (Arab from Muhammad's tribe). Similarly, the Arab uprising of 1916-1919, which was supported by Great Britain, only attacked the Ottoman order to appeal to "*all true Muslims to overthrow the atheist government which had dethroned the sultan and confiscated his property*". (Footnote 2) Even the Egyptian National Party which considered itself to be Jacobin was fiercely anti-secular. They attacked Qasim Amin for having recommended a measure of emancipation for Muslim women within the confines of a slightly re-interpreted Islam. Their leader Mustafa Kamit jumped for joy when a law court annulled the marriage of a Muslim lady with a Copt journalist. Worse still, the party's paper, *al-Mu'ayyed* made a concerted attack on the Copts for not having converted to Islam.

The present leaders of the Arab bourgeoisie are in this respect faithful to their predecessors. Qadafi has recently stated that "*Arab nationalism is part of Islam ...*

It is not normal that there be in the Arab homeland an Arab who is not a Muslim. The Christian Arab has no right to belong to the Arab nation, whose religion is not his own." (Footnote 3) Just as the fully fledged subject in Medieval Europe was a Christian the true "citizen" in the Arab world is a Muslim.

Qadafi says out loud what his Arabo-Muslim colleagues whisper to each other. King Faisal told Sadat when the latter had come to tell him of his decision (along with Syria) to open hostilities against Israel in 1973: "*It would be catastrophic to declare war together with a Syria governed by the Ba'athists and the 'Alawis* [a sect of Shi'i Islam]. *To ally with Ba'athists is to risk disaster. But with 'Alawis especially, it would be tantamount to courting a double disaster.*" (Footnote 4) This morbid confessionalism is explained by the conditions which gave rise to the Arabo-Muslim bourgeoisie and by its vital need to resort to Islam for its survival. This bourgeoisie emerged not in a revolution but as the result of a lame compromise with its colonialist opposite number; for it was born from agriculture and not from industry. Finally it is a late arrival on the scene, a class whose birth, after the first world war, coincided with the beginning of the decline of the bourgeoisie on a world level. In order to remain in command when faced with the challenge of the 'people', it could only rely (apart from the armed forces) on Allah and Islam as the principal mystification of the toiling masses, since it had not succeeded, due to its immense economic backwardness, in setting up the modern mystifications inherent in political and trade union pluralism. Its incapacity to create a prosperous economy capable of satisfying the quantitative demands of the proletariat left only Islam as an ideological weapon for paralyzing the social dynamics, blocking the intellect of the masses, maintaining the sub-animal status of women and mystifying the class struggle. The struggle between the oppressors and the oppressed degenerated - often through the efforts of the political and religious establishments - into a sterile confrontation between Muslims and non-Muslims, Sunnis and Shi'is. In short, Islam, as its etymological meaning indicates, was able to force its subjects into submission.

Being decadent from birth, the Arab bourgeoisie was incapable of creating either its own market or its own national unity. Hence its allegiance to the imperialisms of today and to the Ottoman empire of former times. 'Urabi, in the midst of the war against the British expeditionary force, refused to publish and to refute his excommunication as an *'asiy* (rebel) by the Ottoman sultan - this excommunication was obtained moreover thanks to the promises and threats of the British. When the Khedive and the British spread it about in the Egyptian army the latter became demoralised. The soldiers of the first national Egyptian uprising no longer wished to die as rebels rather than as martyrs bearing the blessing of a Turkish sultan. More than forty years later, Sa'd Zaghul - the father of secular Egyptian

nationalism refused to support the abolition of the Ottoman empire by the Turks themselves, "because," he said, "the multitude is very sensitive to this subject". Muhammad Farid, leader of the Egyptian National Party, went even further when he wrote that "The Muslims of Egypt owe it to themselves to link themselves forever to Turkey, which is the capital of the Islamic caliphate, without the slightest consideration for their history in Egypt or elsewhere." We find in the words of an Egyptian Jacobin the fundamental thesis of the pan-Islamism of Afghani: "The nationality of Muslims is only their religion".

From failed pan-Islamism to ineffectual modernism

Although the ideological demarcations between the discourse and the confessional practices of the Arab-Muslim bourgeoisie on the one hand and pan-Islamic fundamentalism on the other are tangled, a new fact did emerge - the defeat of pan-Islamism. In 1919, Islam appears to be the loser. The 'Home of Islam', apart from North Yemen, Afghanistan and what was to become Saudi Arabia, was totally under European domination. The recipe of the pan-Islamists - an Islam reunified and purified by a return to the sources and thus able to defy the European challenge - turned out to be ineffectual. Its original contradiction, between the need to accede to power and therefore to modernism, and the tendency to regress to a primitive Islam full of taboos, incompatible with the demands of power and modernity, became flagrant. This contradiction in fact expresses the historical impossibility of the realisation of this double aim. In the epoch of permanent crisis, it was impossible for the Islamic bourgeoisie to catch up with advanced capitalism; and at a time when the world market was being unified under the dictatorship of mass consumption, it was impracticable to return to a pure and undiluted, austere and inward-looking Islam.

The abolition of the Islamic caliphate by Ataturk in 1924 and the separation of the Arab provinces from Turkey meant that pan-Islamism, whose centre was the Ottoman empire, became meaningless. By setting up, thirty-three years after Jules Ferry, republican schools which were compulsory and non-denominational and opting for the European model of life, Ataturk rehabilitated the tendency of Shibli Shumayyil, the rival of pan-Islamism. Moreover, this was to be the tendency of the new westernised Arab-Muslim intelligentsia which began to emerge between the two world wars. Traditionalist Islamic discourse was no longer a central theme. Their leading spokesman, Taha Husain, even went as far as to mock the rhetoric of the Koran which was unanimously considered as the one and only divine miracle to authenticate the message of Muhammad. He crossed swords with the traditionalists whose writings were nothing more than nauseating lamentations about the Judaeo-Christian "plot" to undermine

Islam. Taha Husain was condemned even by the most enlightened leaders of the Arab bourgeoisie. He and his fellow-thinkers were more representative of their Parisian teachers than of their own feeble-minded bourgeoisie which did not put up with the slightest criticism.

The intelligentsia of the period between the two world wars was in advance of the bourgeoisie, but behind the times - and failed in its absurd attempt to reconcile fundamentalist authenticity with commercial modernism, the specificity of traditionalism with the uniformisation which the world market imposed. In short, they wanted to identify with the bourgeoisie, and to be themselves at one and the same time. Drawing their own conclusion from their failure almost all the modernist intellectuals recanted before the end of the 1940s and tuned into the religious stupidity of the bourgeoisie, which had in the main remained prisoner of the bric-à-brac of 'Abduh's pan-Islamism, but within the confines of an Islam which had definitively broken up.

In the meantime in Egypt - epicentre of the Arabo-Muslim world, and the model for its evolution - the liberal bourgeoisie under the leadership of the Wafd, a bi-denominational and therefore implicitly secular party, also failed in its task of modernising the economy. The other bourgeoisies came to the same impasse. When the failure of the liberal faction of the bourgeoisie was complete, the statist faction took over: 1952 in Egypt, 1954 in Syria, 1958 in Iraq and finally the civilian Neo-Destour in Tunisia, 1956.

Once in power, the modernist, authoritarian faction of the Arab bourgeoisie, with its belief in a planned economy, appeared to the old fashioned faction of the Muslim bourgeoisie as 'communist' in Egypt, Syria and Algeria and as 'westernised' in Tunisia. All the more so as the pro-Soviet tendencies of the former and the pro-western tendencies of the latter were obvious. In the Middle East the pan-Arab message checked the influence of pan-Islamism. Some agrarian reforms, while not greatly improving the situation of the fallahin, encroached upon the interest of the old

landed bourgeoisie, which in many cases included or had close ties with the clergy.

The Arab state, even under the modernists, remained true to form, hypocritical and bigoted; the speeches of people such as Bourguiba or Nasser were constantly interspersed with as many quotations from the Koran as they were with statistics. Nevertheless the reform projects were ill-suited to a profoundly traditionalist Islam. The 1962 Charter in Egypt prattled about scientific socialism, as did the Charters of Algeria and Syria in 1964. In Tunisia a code of personal law was introduced in 1957 which was ultra-modern and quite unique in the Muslim world. It forbade polygamy, which is permitted in the Koran. Divorce, reduced to a business transaction, was made symmetric, whereas Islam - the summit of male chauvinism - makes it the sole privilege of the husband. To get an idea of the Muslim clergy's hostility to measures of this type, recall that immediately upon achieving power, the Khomeinist government repealed the restrictions that the previous regime had imposed upon a husband's unilateral right to divorce his wife.

The ultimate in the relinquishing of Islamic dogmas was Bourguiba's abolition of the fast during the month of Ramadan in 1958 in an attempt to deal with the drastic fall in production caused by the fast.

As a result of the economic and legislative measures taken by the modernist bourgeoisie where in power, society began to break up and the family to fall apart. The rapid rise to riches of the new bourgeoisie, legendary for its corruption, favoured the emergence - in societies in which family or community solidarity was still a matter of honour - of an utilitarian outlook bent on money and success. In short, the old form of society was eroded and the traditional economy was destroyed without anything new taking their place. The failure of the modernisation of the economy was ubiquitous. To this economic failure, the modernising bourgeoisie added in 1967 the military defeat by Israel. The occupation of the whole of Jerusalem, the second most sacred place of Islam, afforded the bitterly persecuted Muslim Brotherhoods another

Information on the war

<http://www.indymedia.org>

Indymedia is a network of independent web sites on which anyone may add articles, photos or even audio and video for others to access.

<http://www.ainfos.ca>

An anarchist newservice that carries some anarchist anti-war news.

<http://struggle.ws/stopthewar.html>

A site maintained by the editor of this publication with dozens of links to background information on the war and anarchist analysis.

For news by email send an email to haltWAR-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

unhoped for argument to set the middle classes, the social mainstay of those in power, not only against Israel and the USSR but also against the Arab governments whose "lack of faith brought about the whole catastrophe". (Footnote 5)

Internal causes of Islamic integralism

The old liberal bourgeoisie of land-owners and compradors, seriously weakened and discredited by its own failure, could no longer claim to be able to replace the more modern statist bourgeoisie. Only the religious faction, who moreover had the advantage of never having directly exercised power, could do that. All the more so as they were alone in having dared to face those in authority even when the latter seemed to be at the height of their glory. The anguish evoked by the defeat, the permanent crisis of the regimes, which the consequences of the war only deepened, and finally the black sun of melancholy which hardly ever sets in this region, favoured birds who only fly in the twilight moments of history - the religious pulpitiereers. At the times when the air is filled with doubts and questions, they come forward to offer the afflicted masses their demagogic recipe - a return to Islamic archaism.

The fact that the Islamic integralists are the only mass opposition party in the Arab world is due not only to the successive failures of both the liberal and statist factions of the bourgeoisie. There are other reasons, both internal and external, which interact with each other. These deserve a closer look.

Christianity was first modernised to adapt it to the new Europe. Since the Renaissance it has been exposed to implacable criticism from Copernicus to Freud, not to mention heresies and revolutions. For lack of a powerful industrial Arab-Muslim bourgeoisie with its own intelligentsia, contemporary Islam has remained sheltered from any sort of subversive criticism. However, as much, if not more than other religions it is sensitive to any type of criticism be it social or scientific. For the Koran has its own bit to add to the biblical absurdities of Genesis. The earth is flat; the sun "goes down in a boiling spring near to a people"; the stars "of the neighbouring sky" are destined to be "thrown at demons"; "seven heavens and as many earths" were created by Allah. The Universe, it is true, is infinitely huge and poor Allah might well be unable to make head or tail of it. But when it comes to man - a minute being - there is less excuse. From among a myriad of examples: sperm, if we are to believe a verse in the Koran, is not secreted by the testicles but comes from somewhere "between the loins and the ribs". Woe betide the Creator who does not even know the anatomy of his own creatures.

Even well-informed Muslims do not yet know that Allah, who swore in the Koran "to always keep his word", did not keep his promise to keep the Koran intact. 'Uthman, the third caliph, when collating the Koran, put on one side the three other versions

brought by three distinguished Companions of Muhammad: Ubayy, Ibn Mas'ud and 'Ali who was to become the fourth caliph. Similarly they are not aware that their Koran was inspired not only by Allah but also by Satan: the "satanic verses", which for some time permitted the people to worship the idols of the Meccans in order to win them over.

The Arab intellectuals of today shun any criticism of Islam, of the most abominable of its dogmas, and even the translation or publication of books clarifying the genesis of Islam such as Maxime Rodinson's *Mohammed*. The main explanation for this is the fact that the Arab intelligentsia as a whole has made a compact with the left and right factions of the bourgeoisie - factions which differ from each other as much as Tweedledum from Tweedledee.

In the Arab world, those who think for themselves and are capable of elaborating a criticism of all the sacred or profane mystifications come up against the political and religious censorship of the present Arab state - a censorship which is infinitely worse than that of the caliphate state. The fact is that the best Arab poets and thinkers of the early centuries of Islam would not be able to exist in the present day Arab world - people like Abu Nuwas, who loved wine and goodlooking boys; al-Ma'arri, who was radically anti-religious; or even al-Jahiz with his free libertine style, who was nevertheless considered as one of the leading thinkers of the mu'tazilite school.

As proof, consider the tentacles of a censorship which has not even spared the translations of the works of antiquity and of modern times. In Ovid's *Metamorphoses* the chaos of the beginnings of the world has been transformed into a certain order of Allah. Plato's *Republic and Symposium* and the Greek tragedies and comedies are radically purged of any references to homosexuality or remarks which outrage conventional morality. In the *Divine Comedy*, Muhammad is no longer to be found in the eighth circle of the Inferno. In 1954, 'Abd al-Rahman Badwi collected and translated the articles of the Arab freethinkers of the Middle Ages, entitling the collection *Atheism and Islam*. The book was rapidly withdrawn from circulation, and nothing more was heard about it. In Syria, since 1971, censorship has been preventing the publication of the translation of Marx's *German Ideology*. My own writings, published in Lebanon before the 1973 war, are forbidden everywhere else. They sometimes manage to get through the *cordon sanitaire* which extends from the Gulf to the Atlantic, thanks to the practice of smuggling, not always for purely commercial aims.

This stupid and totalitarian censorship is part of an unspeakable generalised dictatorship. The Arab bourgeoisie's only means of mitigating the under-development in the techniques for lying in the mass media - its television is still not credible - are strong-arm methods from which the whole of society suffers. There is no legal

means of defending oneself. Even the few appearances of democracy left by the European colonisers such as the liberty of the press, the party system, the right to strike - are abolished in the name of sacrosanct economic development. While retaining a veneer of westernisation, the *dirigiste* Arab state has retrieved its memory of the caliphate.

In the Maghreb, the masses, given their desire for a Messiah and the demagoguery of the nationalist elites, imagined that independence would be a home-coming, a return to their traditional culture and to their community solidarity where "all Muslims are brothers". The nationalist elites, once in power, did not of course keep their promises. For them independence meant their own independence from the masses. Worse still, the post-colonial state behaved towards the latter with the same cruelty as the colonial state.

In this claustrophobic and decadent Arab society which had no perspective, the most ridiculous mysticisms could develop. The context, it is true, was ideal. A profound and generalised falsification of both social and inter-personal relations, the fatalism of Islam which, once internalized, prevents a person from being himself or herself, from thinking and acting as oneself from seeking the truth of one's own destiny in oneself and not in Allah.

The occupation by Israel of the Arab territories provided the integralists with an unhoped-for pretext: it could be interpreted as a "just punishment from Allah on all those who had abandoned his religion".

The integralist Muslim sects, haloed with their martyrs from 1954 to 1966, especially in Egypt, swarmed clandestinely. Worse still, they became credible. All the more so since they were favoured by the fact that the unspeakable authoritarianism of those in power left practically no means of expression or autonomous organisation. Only the mosques were protected from censorship. They became places where the masses whose ranks were broken by despotism reviewed a political-religious indoctrination.

Then came the October war with its parade of intense Islamic propaganda, and the oil boom which enabled Libya and especially Saudi Arabia to distribute their petrodollars to the integralist groups everywhere in order to undermine left-wing extremists, or pro-Soviet groups as in Syria. Even at the time when the modernist statist bourgeois faction was still credible, Saudi Arabia was used as the prototype by repressed or persecuted Islamic archaism; and its emergence following the October war on the ruins of Nasser's Egypt as the leader of the Arab world gave the Brotherhoods of Sunni Islam not only more subsidies, but the model of an Islam true to itself. The propaganda pounded out by western media - depicting Saudi Arabia as the new giant with the power of life and death over western civilisation - stimulated, in old and young alike, the nostalgic old desire for the return of Islam to its former strength.

External causes

These are the *internal* causes which favour a massive return to Islam. There are also external causes: the decline of the West, and its attempt to take advantage of the Islamic movements.

The decline of the West has become obvious. Its dying throes shake the economic, ethical and aesthetic order; its traditional ideologies 'socialist' as well as liberal - are dead. In short, it no longer presents even for itself a feasible project for civilisation. The Arab-Muslim intelligentsia, which had formerly earned its daily bread by circulating the latest cultural fashions of this same western civilisation, is now thrown back on its own resources and outdated values. As though by some magic power, it has now begun to rediscover the long-forgotten virtues of the celebrated Return to the Source advocated by the pan-Islamism of a bygone age. Thus Zaki Najib Mahmud, grown grey in the service of American positivism, realises at the end of his life that he had "*considerably underestimated*" *al-turath*, the Arab-Islamic heritage, which - if we are to believe him - is capable after all of rejuvenating good old Arab society! Others in turn have suddenly discovered, more than two generations after the Dadaists, the bankruptcy of 18th century rationalism which had promised to usher in the reign of reason in everyday life - a belated discovery of a bankruptcy which was already clearly visible in the debris of the First World Butchery. Yet others have discovered that the alcoholism, drug addiction and youth vandalism rampant in the West are all due to the decline of religious feelings, and they would like to protect their own society from these evils. In short, the fact that the Arab-Muslim intelligentsia as a whole, which only yesterday was looking to the West, is now withdrawing into itself is grist to the mill of Islamic integralism.

The monotheistic religions arose from the ashes of ancient civilisations. The present return to religious archaism (which, in varying degrees, is taking place all over the world) is nourished by the putrescence of 'our' civilisation, which constantly reminds man of death and makes the apocalypse a daily occurrence. Within one generation it has led to two world carnages which resulted in twenty and fifty million deaths and several hundred million wounded and permanently shocked. There is now talk of a third world war. Two great powers, the USA and the USSR, have at their disposal sufficient nuclear arms to destroy our planet five times over. In the industrialised societies people are dying of obesity. In the third world, fifty million human beings - of whom fifteen million are children - die from malnutrition every year. That is as many people die of malnutrition every year, as died in the second world war.

The West does not only encourage the return to Islamic archaism by its own decline, but even more by its intrigues. Both Europeans and Americans have long been forced to seek the help of Islam in the suppression of embryonic social struggles

in Muslim countries and in opposing their Soviet rival. Moreover, the latter used to try to exploit Nasser's pan-Arabism against the West.

M. Copland, the former chief of the CIA in the Middle East, revealed in his book *The Game of Nations* that as from the 1950s the CIA began to encourage the Muslim Brotherhood to counteract the communist influence in Egypt. This trend has become more pronounced since then.

We hear the same tune from Giscard d'Estaing, who confided to members of his cabinet before taking the plane for the Gulf in March 1980: "*To combat Communism we have to oppose it with another ideology. In the West, we have nothing. This is why we must support Islam.*" (Footnote 6) Brzezinski, the chief adviser to the White House, discovers in religious wars still other virtues: "*The religious troubles in the Middle East could arouse a common desire to find a definitive settlement between the Arabs and Israel.*" [Footnote 7] It is therefore clear that the coming to power of Khomeinism in Iran has in no way altered the West's determination to manipulate militant Islam. Future Islamic governments would be, especially at the outset, difficult clients, but clients all the same.

Restructuring the Arab world

The West's need to ally with Islam is considerably more compelling than the brevity of the declarations would lead us to believe. As in Latin America, the American bourgeoisie attempts to democratise as far as possible outdated dictatorships of the Iranian type within its sphere of influence in the Islamic world. In fact, the traditionalist caste-like dictatorships, the clannish patriarchal type of governments - as in Saudi Arabia, the Emirates in the Gulf, or elsewhere - which forbid any change in power, are incompatible with two major requirements: that of the new international division of labour and that of the remodelling of the map of the Arab-Muslim world.

The restructuring of the saturated world market, demanded by the new reorganisation of the international division of labour undertaken by the multinationals, requires in turn a restructuring of the political powers in the regions concerned, so that they can play their role there. The leading technology on which the development of the highly profitable economic sectors of the future depend, such as computers or micro-electronics, will be the monopoly of the West with the USA in the lead; the outdated or polluting industries (steel, naval construction), specialisation in certain types of agriculture and some sub-contracted industries, will be the lot of the third world. The possessors of the manna, in the form of petrodollars, will have to play the role of international bankers financing the projects evolved by western experts for the 'development' of certain underdeveloped countries. The implementation of this new international division of labour is dependent in the Arab-Muslim world on the

remodelling of its map.

The balance of power in this area between the Ottomans, British and Russians, which was upset by the consequences of the first world war, was restored by a new balance between British and French. These two divided between them the spoils of the defeated Ottoman Empire. In their turn, the consequences of the second world war meant the wane of British and French imperialism and the rise of American and Russian imperialism. In 1920 there was the Treaty of Sévres and in 1945 there was Yalta. But after the departure of the British and the French and their replacement by the Americans and the Russians there was no proper agreement to ratify the new *de facto* balance of power. The Arab-Muslim world has remained a shady area open to all rivalries. The intensification of the world crisis now demands a new imperialist distribution of the energy market (the USSR needs 18 per cent of the Middle East oil), access to raw materials and spheres of influence. In short, a new Yalta, or world settlement, is required for oil, since the alternative is open bargaining or open confrontation.

All the states, apart from Israel, and perhaps Egypt, will probably have to change their frontiers, their populations, their name and, naturally, their patrons.

The map which will emerge from this new Yalta will probably be an outcome of the break-up of the present states into denominational mini-states, which may then be regrouped into federations or confederations. The keystone of this attempt to politically re-structure the Arab-Muslim area will be the rise of the new middle classes. Local technocracies have considerably developed due to the export of oil and to the spread of education. Their ambition is to participate in public affairs, hitherto monopolised by the tribal-dynastic castes. This participation, which implies a degree of modernisation of the states in question, is (if we are to believe the specialists of the multinationals and their computers) going to prevent both autonomous popular movements and possible pro-Soviet *coups d'état*, even in Saudi Arabia. But how can this be achieved? In Brzezinski's own words, by the manipulation of the "*existing forces*" with the aim of changing the out-dated socioeconomic *status quo*, before Moscow does so to its advantage.

Henceforth, it would be preferable not to risk military *coups d'état* except in cases of



extreme emergency. True, armies have for decades been the agents of change which the West has manipulated as it desired; but the situation has now changed. Thirty years ago, given the widespread weakness of all the social classes, they were the only organised force capable of disciplining the toiling masses which were too turbulent at the time. Then they failed in their task of modernising the economy. Worse still: a series of *coups d'état* - beginning with Egypt, then in Syria, Algeria, Libya and finally Ethiopia - had started off in Washington and ended up in Moscow.

When the tactic of the *coup d'état* had been exhausted, the West thought it had found a replacement in the religious movements. These movements were the mouthpiece of the urban and rural middle classes, and of the mystified sub-proletariat which crowded into the poverty belts surrounding the prodigal capitals. It is possible that the idea was not to give over all the power to the clergy but preferably to manipulate the religious and secular opposition as a whole to clear they way for the technocrats. Once the battle was won, the clergy would return to their flocks and would busy themselves with the management of their estates. (However, the example of Iran is not too encouraging ...) In short, the idea was to replace the anachronisms by modernist, liberal formations with a religious outlook or backing. *Modernist* means: capable of setting up an economy enmeshed, by the very constraints of the laws of the market, with that of the West. It also implies the ability to maintain an army efficiently equipped and trained, but closely linked to the western system of defense. There is also the need to look after the interests of the multinationals whose guardians they are to be. *Liberal* means: capable of exploiting to the utmost parliamentary mystification and political and trade-unionist pluralism in order to enlarge and consolidate the social basis of the regime. *Religious outlook or backing* means: the re-forging of the good old alliance between the sword and the Koran in order to check any rebirth of radical social movements, and if possible to destabilise the Muslim republics in the USSR. Translated into Koranic terms, this is what Carter wanted to see implemented in this area — “friendly governments, Islamic and liberal, who respect human rights”.

Given the explosive contradictions at work, the economic situation approaching bankruptcy almost everywhere, there is nothing to ensure that the will of the Master of the White House be done. Neither the crowned monarchy nor the jackbooted republic was able to extricate this part of the world from its chronic, general crisis. Will the turbanned republic be able to do so?

Nothing is less likely. The Islamic movements, given their composite social nature and especially their lack of an even remotely credible programme, are not capable of coming to power, or of staying there for any length of time.

The Muslim Brotherhood

The double failure of the first rising of the modern Egyptian bourgeoisie in 1919 which achieved neither independence nor a constitutional government; Ataturk's abolition of the Islamic caliphate in 1923; the rise of fascism in Italy which impressed the majority of the average traditionalist Muslim intelligentsia; the rise of stalinism in the USSR which attracted the attention of the left-wing Christian intellectuals, who were also fascinated by the impotent cult of power; finally the grimness of the inter-war period dominated by the general feeling of defeat of western civilisation with its basis in the cult of science and of reason - all these created an environment which favoured the irruption of the irrational into contemporary history.

In this setting, the Fraternity of Muslim Brethren was founded in Egypt in 1928, only a few months before the emergence of the crisis of 1929 which was to lead to the second world war. Their organisational model was based both on esoteric Muslim sects of the Middle Ages and on modern fascism. Article 2 of their statutes states that members must undertake “to submit to iron discipline and to carry out the orders of their superiors”. Their charismatic “Supreme Guide” is, like a caliph, beyond all questioning. As from their founding, the Brethren chose to collaborate with the regime in power. Thus they immediately came to terms with the “iron hand” government of Muhammad Mahmud, then with that of the dictator Isma'il Sidqi and even with the Suez Canal Company; the latter contributed £500 to their funds, in order to encourage them to dampen the ardour of the youth of the secular Wafd party, which at that time had broken with the British. (The Brethren were the only Egyptian group to have a newspaper.)

In fact, their nostalgic appeals for the restoration of the Golden Age of Islam, the crossed swords and the Koran which served them as emblems, symbolising to perfection the morbid ideal of the practice of death, attracted to their cause a whole part of the frustrated petty bourgeois youth, who were horribly repressed, a prey to all sorts of fears and hostile to any pleasurable activity. In short, the palace and the British used the Brethren as an anaesthetic.

During the second world war, despite their sympathy for the Axis, the Brethren supported the Allies, apparently for tactical reasons. In effect, they were able to use the mosques for their propaganda and to establish themselves especially in the schools and in the countryside.

As a result of their truly Machiavellian tactics, the Organisation of the Brethren became, in less than thirteen years, the most formidable mass party. In 1941, the Brethren allied with the Sa'dists, the party in power, which was close to the palace. As soon as the latter was ousted from the harem, they had not the slightest hesitation in joining forces with its rival and successor, the Wafd. When the Wafd was in turn eliminated from office, they allied once

again with the same Sa'dists who, it is true, allowed them to set up a paramilitary Organisation, *al-Jawwala*, with 20,000 members. Later they allied with the National Committee of Students and Workers, spear-headed by the communists. Not long after, they opposed the Committee by supporting the government of the famous Isma'il Sidqi, leader of the Sa'dists. But just before the elections, the latter broke his alliance with the Brotherhood, which by that time numbered half a million members and sympathisers. In December 1948, suspecting that the Brotherhood wished to take power, al-Naqrashi, the head of the government, outlawed the movement. Their response was immediate. Al-Naqrashi was assassinated by a medical student, a member of the movement. For a whole year, the authorities manoeuvred Hasan al-Banna', the Supreme Guide of the Brethren, from one compromise to another, until he disowned his own followers by publicly declaring that “they are not brethren and even less Muslims”. He was finally killed in 1949. His successor, the magistrate Hasan al-Hudaibi, allied the Brotherhood once again with the palace, and was even solemnly received by King Faruq, who stated in his presence and with his agreement: “Since the British will soon leave Egypt, our only enemy now is communism”. But when Faruq was ousted by Nasser in 1952, the Brethren supported the latter with the same fervour. However, the honeymoon did not last long. When Nasser decided to limit landed property holdings to 200 acres, the Brethren suggested the figure of 500 and demanded at the same time that the new government undertake to re-Islamise society and the state. In 1954 they attempted to assassinate the Ra'is. Their Brotherhood was disbanded. In 1959, it was clandestinely re-formed, and once again decapitated in 1965. Sadat, himself a former member of the Brotherhood, allowed them to reappear in 1972 and to publish a journal, *al-Da'wa* (the Sermon). Similarly, the Muslim International founded by al-Banna' in the 1930s was reconstituted in Cairo. Through it, Egypt, amongst others, gave aid to the armed vanguard, the Mujahidin, who are at present fighting the Syrian regime.

In the writings of the Brethren, any social programme is conspicuous by its absence. Al-Banna' justified his refusal to outline a programme by his desire to “avoid the possibility of a great schism between the various Muslim rites and confessions”. When one fine day the leaders of the paramilitary Organisation of the Brotherhood informed him that they were in a position to take power, he challenged them to submit to him within a week an Islamic radio programme for the first week of the *coup d'état* - a task which they were incapable of fulfilling.

After the death of the leader, it fell to Muhammad al-Ghazaii, an ideologist of the Brotherhood, to risk undertaking the project. In his book *Islam and the Economic Orders* he devotes a whole chapter to the “intermediate economic order” of Islam.

After dismissing "that Jew, Marx" with a few words, he reveals to us the secret of the Islamic economic order, "alone capable of saving humanity". What is it? "It is the economic order", he writes, "which was implemented in Fascist Italy, in Nazi Germany, and which is still in force in Britain, thanks to state control of the big firms and to the state holding over 50 per cent of the shares in these firms". (Footnote 8) Clearly, "the Islamic economy" is simply state control and militarisation of the economy, as practised since the first world war. Rather more subtly, Sayyid Qutb, another of the Brotherhood's thinkers, does not have faith in any programme. In 1964, one year before his execution by Nasser, he published his swan-song whose title sounds as a call for the re-Islamisation by the sword of an apostate society: *The Jahiliya of the 20th Century (Jahiliyat al-qarn al-ishrin)*. *The Jahiliya*, the period of pre-Islamic paganism, is usually depicted as "inadmissible permissive", full of *joie de vivre* and with no ethic other than love, wine and hunting. And Qutb says: "Give us power and you shall see; we shall obliterate all trace of this paganism".

In other countries, other Islamic organisations proved equally incapable of elaborating a programme for their Islamic state. In 1972, when the government of the United Arab Emirates invited Hasan al-Turabi, the Supreme Guide of the Brethren in the Sudan, to write an Islamic Constitution, his reply was at first negative - "This is a difficult task", he said. But they would not take no for an answer, and with the help of petrodollars he managed to do it. This was the constitution which allowed Shaikh Zaid Ibn Sultan to be the absolute boss of Abu Dhabi.

Even the Syrian Muslim Brethren have not been able to overthrow a hard-pressed minority regime with which they had been openly at war, despite massive aid from Jordan, Saudi Arabia and elsewhere - mainly because they are incapable of producing a programme likely to attract the other forces hostile to the regime.

In my opinion, this is an open admission of the historic impossibility of the implementation for any length of time of an Islamic society in a world which commodity production and its consequences have unified and predisposed to an alternative order, where the return to religion has no place.

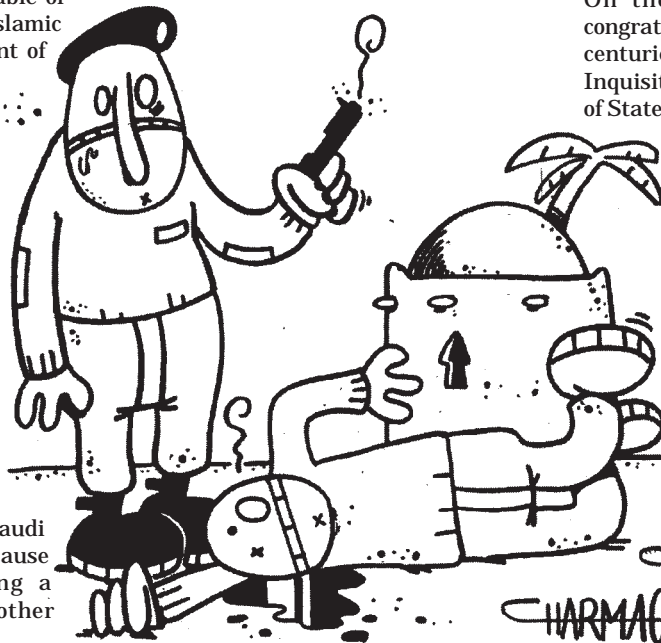
Return to what?

Given their inability to address the downtrodden masses with a programme that makes any sense, the integralists - consummate demagogues that they are - have opted for the facile slogan of return to primitive Islam, the Islam of the four *al-Rashidun*, the "rightly guided" early caliphs, who supposedly differed from all their successors in their strict respect for the Koran and their adherence to the procedure of consulting the communal

council of believers. Al-Afghani even speaks of a return to the era of the libertine caliph, Harun al-Rashid, when Islam more than in any other period - played the role of a mere state ideology. It is therefore a question of a return to the imperial power of Islam but not to the Islam which respects its dogmas.

It will be obvious that the Koran, the transhistorical constitution of the Islamic *Umma*, has never been entirely respected, even by the four caliphs. Muhammad never hesitated for a moment to cut out verses which the evolution of his sermons, or the demands of his alliances had rendered anachronistic. Thus the well-known Meccan verse in favour of the *mustad'afin* (the downtrodden) was replaced by another favouring those with property: "We have, said Allah, favoured some and not others as far as riches are concerned". Muhammad however had a water-tight alibi - did he not claim to be in touch with Allah himself, whose acts are unscrutable?

The period of the four caliphs was in no way the 'Golden Age' which contemporary legend depicts. There were cruel struggles for power. Of the four "rightly guided" caliphs, only Abu Bakr died a natural death - and his caliphate was exceptionally short. The



three others were assassinated: 'Umar by a Persian slave; 'Uthman at the hands of one of Abu Bakr's own sons, 'Abd al-Rahman; and 'Ali by Muslims just as pious as himself. Less than 37 years after the founding by Muhammad of the first Arab-Muslim state at Medina, the Community of Believers, whom he had always instructed to remain united in the faith and in the law, in one monolithic block, split into two groups, which were mortal enemies.

Since the caliphate of Mu'awiya, the fifth caliph, and the consolidation of the conquering Arabo-Muslims as a ruling class, the Koran has been continually trampled underfoot by the caliphs of Islam, who only used it as a sort of philosophy of history, a state ideology, to justify the redistribution of power and of goods.

The Shi'ites do not demand a return to the times of the four caliphs. Abu Bakr, 'Umar and 'Uthman are described as "usurpers". Indeed, 'Ali was reluctant to swear allegiance to them, and disapproved of their rule. And if 'Uthman beat him in the bid for power, it was effectively because he refused to follow the example of Abu Bakr and 'Umar. The insurgents who assassinated 'Uthman were moreover in league with him.

Iran

A return to 'Ali's caliphate - from first to last a period of open civil war - would mean a return to one of the most troubled times of the whole history of Islam. In this respect, Iran has succeeded.

Some Islamic ideologists consider that in Khomeini's Iran, Islam has gone beyond the confines of Wahhabi reformism, with its pan-Islamism and its creed of the Jihad, and has entered upon its ultimate evolution: the revolutionary stage. Intellectually incapable of understanding their own period, they do not realise that Khomeinism, in a period when the revolution can only be social, contains absolutely no project which is in any way progressive.

On the contrary, in Iran Islam can congratulate itself on having caught up, five centuries too late, with the Europe of the Inquisition. Recently, Bani Sadr, the Head of State, wondered in his *Inqilab Islami*: "Is it true that an Inquisition-like tribunal has been set up in the university?". But the Holy Inquisition was set up throughout the country at the outset under the crosier of that blood-thirsty psychopath, Ayatollah Khalkhali.

This inquisition is not the work of the Islamic Republican Party alone, but of all those in power. They are incapable of dealing with the crisis, and can only resort to appeals for austerity and the practice of violent repression. The Iranian working class lost more than 70,000 members in the struggle to get rid of the Shah. Their only reward is a medieval religious dictatorship plus the horrors of inflation (70 per cent), of unemployment (4 million unemployed), and the humiliation of public whipping for the simple act of drinking beer, or because a woman bathed on a beach reserved for men. The two million drug addicts, mainly located in South Tehran, were given six months to kick the habit - otherwise they will be executed.

This cult of death may well fascinate a large number of middle class youths, who are the victims of emotional blocks, and are frightened of freedom and libertarian ways. It is however no solution in face of the real problems which shake the very foundations of Iranian society.

A person such as Khomeini, who suffers from historical sclerosis, and who in his book *Islamic Government* deals with such serious problems as the buggery of a poor

donkey by a poor Muslim, and who is incapable of creating an Iranian bourgeoisie, can only return to the American fold or fall under Soviet influence. "We are less independent today", admits Bani Sadr, "than we were under the Shah. Our budget depends on the credit of foreign banks. Our dependence on arms and foreign military experts is quite simply tragic." (Footnote 9) Has Bani Sadr, the spiritual son of the Imam, finally grasped that in a world unified by the violence of the laws of the market Iran cannot be independent, whether the Imam, present or absent, likes it or not? Has he understood that the Koran cannot be applied in one area of capital importance: the banking system? Before the Shah left, this Islamic economist calmly promised those who wanted to listen that he would abolish the banking system, "as it is incompatible with the prohibition of usury in the Koran". Has he now realised that this abolition requires the fulfilment of nineteen conditions which would take nineteen years? Obviously, the logic of capital is stronger than all the prohibitions of all the religions.

The middle classes, who at first idolised Khomeini in the belief that they had found in him the universal miracle cure, now turn away from him to await the *coup d'état*. The sub-proletariat, who served him as cannon fodder, now suffer more than ever with the repression of Khalkhali. The proletariat are engaged in a permanent struggle in their work-places to counter the intervention of the Islamic committees, and only stop specific strikes to return to their permanent go-slow.

Contrary to what Islamic propaganda claims, and many western leftists believe, today's Iran does not represent the reinvigoration of Islam but its swan-song, except that it lacks any beauty.

The fallacy of a new Islam, which many people have fallen for, is now beginning to be dispelled. The awakening of the 'ordinary people' could be fatal for it. In fact, the 'ordinary people', although contaminated by the plague of Koranic fatalism, are everywhere dissatisfied by this over-abstract Allah - too distant and too impenetrable to play a role in their daily life. This is why the ordinary Muslim, both in Africa and in Asia, is so fond of totemic and pagan cults under the facade of Islam. He reveres fetishes, amulets, marabouts and tombs which help him to deal with the suffering of everyday life, to cure ills and to foretell the future. This humble Muslim, once the first surprise and the enthusiasm is over, appears as unwilling and even resistant to a literal application of Koranic barbarity which condemns him to asceticism, castration, flagellation and stoning. In a moment of frankness, Hasan al-Banna' admitted in 1947 to the members of his Brotherhood that the first obstacle they would meet on the path to the re-Islamisation of secular Muslim society, in his opinion, would be the hostility of the people. "I must tell you", he said, "that your preaching is still a closed book to the majority. The day when they discover it and

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realise what it aims for they will resist violently and oppose you tenaciously". He added - "You will first have to confront the ignorance of ordinary people concerning the truth of Islam." (Footnote 10) In fact, for the people Islam is more of a refuge than a set of deadly dogmas - take for example the public transgression this year of the fast of Ramadan in countries such as Egypt and Iran where Islamic discourse dominates.

The return to Islamic archaism is part of the process of totalitarian uniformisation of all the aspects of cultural consumption. Outside the confines of the dominant model - that of Islam for the Muslim and of Christianity for the Christian, that of Judaism for the Jew and that of the media for all - thinking is forbidden. There is no room left for free and critical reflection. The arbitrary in Khomeini's Iran encroaches even on the freedom of choice in clothing for women and in choice of food for all.

Under the rule of a mercantile civilisation, which impoverishes more each day and is in its own way bigoted, any creation becomes necessarily heretical. When Khomeinist moralism becomes the norm, any reflection or 'abnormal' act can only be punished.

Apart from its exemplary punishments, Islamic archaism has nothing new to offer. It appears to me to be part of the process of the break-up of the state in a world which is becoming ungovernable. If the Islamic movements were to take power following the failure and the expected fall of Khomeinism, they could only profoundly destabilise the Islamic world which is already smitten with crisis, terrorism and open or masked civil war. It is however obvious that Islamic archaism cannot come to power, or remain in power in an acceptable manner. Its force is already spent before it begins.

"After the death of God", says Nietzsche, "the most difficult thing to overcome is his shadow". His sinister shadow is this stupid and stupefying society, which produces and reproduces religion and spectacle; this

society of exploitation, of radical alienation, of emotional plague, of loneliness, of insecurity, of degeneration, of generalised passivity, of representations which represent nothing but themselves, of waste and malnutrition, of fear and war. If religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, it will cease to exist when that creature is no longer oppressed but has become the creator of his own daily history.

Text history

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