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Auschwitz - the Big

Alibi

A recent leaflet of the M.R.A.P. (Movement against Racism, Anti-semitism and for Peace) attributed to Nazism the blame for the death of 50 million human beings, of whom 6 million were Jews. This position identical to the fascist warmongers slogan of self-styled communists, is typically bourgeois. In refusing to see that capitalism *itself* is the cause of the crises and cataclysms that periodically ravage the globe, the bourgeois ideologues and reformists have always pretended instead to explain them by each other's **wickedness**. One can see here the fundamental similarity of the ideologies (if one dares say it) of fascism and anti-fascism. Both proclaim that it is thoughts, ideas, the will of human groupings which determine social phenomena. Against these ideologies, which we call bourgeois because both defend capitalism, against all these faded idealists, of today and tomorrow, Marxism has demonstrated that it is, on the contrary, *social relations* which determine the movement of ideas. This is the keystone of Marxism, and in order to see to what a degree pseudo-Marxists have disowned it, it is sufficient to point out that as far as they are concerned, everything comes about through ideas: colonialism, imperialism, capitalism itself, are nothing more than **mental states**. And to cap it all, the evils that humanity suffer are due to evil doers: misery mongers, oppression mongers, war mongers etc. Marxism has demonstrated that on the contrary misery, oppression, wars of destruction, *far from being anomalies* caused through deliberately malevolent wills, are part of the **normal functioning** of capitalism. This is particularly so in the epoch of wars of Imperialism, a theme we will

develop further because of the important way in which it bears on our subject: the question of destruction.

Even though our bourgeois' or reformists recognise that Imperialist wars are caused through conflicts of interests, they fall well short of arriving at an *understanding* of capitalism. One can see it in their total lack of understanding of the basic causes of destruction. For them, the aim of war is to obtain victory, and the destruction of the adversary's installations and people are merely the means for the attainment of this end. This is believed to the extent that some innocents predict a war won through dosing the enemy with some kind of sleeping draught! We have shown that the reverse is true; that destruction is the principal aim of the war. The Imperialist rivalries, which are the immediate cause of wars, are themselves only the consequence of ever increasing overproduction. Capitalist production is effectively impelled into war because of the fall in the rate of profit and the crisis born of the necessity of continually increasing production whilst remaining unable to dispose of the products. *War is the capitalist solution to the crisis*: the massive destruction of people remedies the periodic overpopulation which goes hand in hand with overproduction. You would have to be an illuminated petit-bourgeois to believe that imperialist conflicts could be regulated as easily as in a game of cards or in a roundtable, and that this enormous destructiveness and the death of tens of millions of men are through the 'obstinacy' of some, and the 'evil' and 'greed' of others.

Marx in 1844 was already reproaching the Bourgeois economists who considered greed as being innate, explaining it by showing why the greedy were obliged to be greedy. Also from 1844, Marxism demonstrated the causes of overpopulation:

The demand for men necessarily governs the production of men, as of any commodity. If supply increases over demand a number of workers become paupers or die of starvation

Marx in "Ökonomisch-philosophische Manuskripte."

Engels wrote in "Umriss zu einer Kritik der Nationalökonomie":

"The population is only too large where the productive power as a whole is too large" and "... (we have seen) that private property has turned man into a commodity whose production and destruction also depend solely on demand; how the system of competition has thus slaughtered, and daily continues to slaughter, millions of men."

The last war, far from weakening Marxism and demonstrating that it has 'had its day' has exactly **confirmed** our expectations.

It was necessary to recall these points, before taking up the matter of the extermination of the Jews, so as to draw attention to the fact that it took place not at any old time, but **precisely** at the time of an acute crisis and within an imperialist war. It is accordingly *within the context* of this gigantic destructive undertaking that it is possible to explain it. The problem can then be cleared up **not** by

trying to explain the destructive nihilism of the Nazis, but rather why the destruction concentrated itself largely on the Jews. On this point also, Nazis and anti-fascists are agreed: It is racism; a hatred of Jews and a ferocious and uncontrollable 'passion' that caused the death of the Jews. But, as Marxists, we know that social passions don't have a life of their own, that nothing is more determined than these big movements of collective hatred. We will see that the study of anti-Semitism within the imperialist epoch confirms this.

We emphasise that we are talking of anti-Semitism in the Imperialist epoch, for whilst idealists of all shades, from Nazis to Jewish theoreticians, claim that the hatred of Jews has been the same at all times and in all places, we know it to be nothing of the sort. The anti-Semitism of recent times is *totally different* from that during Feudalism. We won't go into the history of Jews here, which Marxism has already entirely explained. But we can say we know why feudal society preserved the Jews as such; we know that whilst the strong Bourgeoisies, i.e. those that had been able to make an early political revolution (England, U.S.A., France) had virtually entirely assimilated their Jews, the weaker Bourgeoisies hadn't been able to do this. We haven't explained here the survival of the Jews, but the anti-Semitism of the imperialist epoch. And it will not be so difficult to explain if instead of occupying ourselves with the nature of Jews or anti-Semites, we look at the place of Jews in society.

As a result of their previous history, the Jews find themselves today mainly in the middle and petit-bourgeoisie. A class condemned by the irresistible concentration of capital. It is this which shows us what is at the source of anti-Semitism.

Engels said: *"(it is...) nothing other than a reaction of social feudal strata, doomed to disappear, against modern society with its essential composition of capitalists and wage-earners. It therefore serves only reactionary objectives disguised under a socialist mask."*

Germany between the Wars illustrated this phenomena in a particularly acute form. Shattered by the war and the revolutionary thrust of 1918-28, and menaced at all times by the proletariat, German capitalism suffered deeply from the world crisis after the war. Whereas the stronger victorious bourgeoisies (U.S.A., France, Britain) emerged relatively *unscathed* and easily got over the adaptation to the peace economy crisis, German Capitalism was **overtaken** by a total depression. And it was probably the small and petit-bourgeoisie that suffered most of all, as in all crises which lead to the proletarianisation of the middle classes and to a concentration of capital enabled by the elimination of a proportion of small and medium sized businesses. But in this instance, it was such that the ruined, bankrupted, dispossessed, and liquidated petit-bourgeoisie couldn't even descend into the proletariat, who were themselves affected badly by unemployment (7 million unemployed at the worst point of the crisis); they therefore fell directly into a state of pauperism,

condemned to die of starvation when their reserves were gone. It is in reaction to this terrible menace that the petit-bourgeoisies invented anti-Semitism. Not so much, as metaphysicians would have it, to explain the misfortunes that hit them, but rather to preserve themselves by concentrating on one of its groups. Against the terrible economic depression, against the many and varied destructions that made the existence of each of its members uncertain, the petit-bourgeoisie reacted by sacrificing one of its groupings, hoping thereby to save and assure the existence of the others. Anti-Semitism originated no more from a Machiavellian plan than from perverse ideas: *it resulted directly from the constraints of the economy*. The hatred of Jews, far from being the a priori reason for their destruction, represented only the desire to delimit and concentrate the destruction on them.

It eventually came about that even the workers succumbed to racism; when menaced by massive unemployment the proletariat tend to concentrate on certain groups: Italians, Poles or 'Coons', 'Wogs', Arabs etc. But these tendencies occurred only at the worst moments of demoralisation, and tended not to last long. From the moment when they enter the struggle, the proletariat sees clearly and concretely who the enemy is. But, whilst the proletariat, is a homogeneous class that has a historical perspective and mission, the petit-bourgeoisie by contrast is a condemned class, and as a result it is condemned never to understand power, and is incapable of struggle; all it can do is merely flounder about blindly, crushed from both sides. *Racism isn't an*

aberration of the spirit. It is and will be the petit-bourgeois reaction to the pressure of big capital. The choice of race, that's to say, the group on which the destruction is concentrated, depends on the circumstances of course. In Germany, the Jews were the only ones to 'fit the bill': They were almost exclusively petit-bourgeois, and within the petit-bourgeoisie itself they were the only group sufficiently identifiable. It was on them alone that the petit-bourgeoisie could concentrate the catastrophe. It was particularly important that identification present no difficulty, and to have the means to define exactly who would be destroyed and who would be spared. Thus logic would be finally well and truly thrown out of the window with the allowance made for grandfathers who had been baptised; thereby flagrantly contradicting the theories of race and blood and serving to demonstrate the *incoherence* of these theories. As usual though, Democrats, who content themselves with demonstrating the absurdity and ignominy of racism, miss the point.

Tormented by capital, the German petit-bourgeoisie had thrown the Jews to the wolves to ease its burden. This was certainly not done in a conscious way, but this was what lay behind its hatred of the Jews and of the satisfaction it derived from the closing down and pillaging of Jewish shops. It could be said that Big Capital from its point of view was **delighted** with this stroke of luck: it was able to liquidate a part of the petit-bourgeoisie with the petit-bourgeoisie's permission; even better, this same petit-bourgeoisie took charge of the liquidation. But this *personalised* image is not the best way of presenting

capital, for it is important to point out that capitalism, no more than the petit-bourgeois, was not aware what it was doing. It was suffering economic constraints and followed passively the line of least resistance.

We haven't said anything about the German proletariat because it didn't intervene directly in this affair. It had been beaten and, take note, the liquidation of the Jews wouldn't be possible until *after its defeat*. But the social forces that had led to this liquidation existed before the defeat of the proletariat. It had only allowed these forces to realise this liquidation by leaving Capital's hands free.

It was at this point that the economic liquidation commenced: expropriation in all its forms, eviction from the liberal professions, from administration etc. Little by little, Jews were deprived of all means of existence, having to live on any reserve they had managed to save. During the whole of this period up to the latter part of the war, the politics of the Nazis towards the Jews hung on two words: *Juden raus!* Jews out! Every means was found to ease Jewish emigration. But if the Nazis intended only to throw out the Jews whom they didn't know what to do with, and if the Jews for their part only wanted to leave Germany, nobody else would allow them to enter. And this isn't really so astonishing if one considers that nobody could let them enter: there just weren't any countries capable of absorbing and providing a living to millions of ruined petit-bourgeois, only a tiny fraction had been able to leave, The greater part remained, unfortunately for them and

unfortunately for the Nazis. Suspended in mid-air as it were.

The imperialist war was to aggravate the situation both qualitatively and quantitatively. Quantitatively, because German capital, obliged to reduce the petty-bourgeoisie so as to concentrate European capital in its hands, had extended the liquidation of Jews to the whole of central Europe. Anti-Semitism had proved its worth; it need only continue. It found an echo, moreover, in the indigenous anti-Semitism of central Europe, which was more complex, being an unpleasant mixture of feudal and petit-bourgeois anti-Semitism which we won't go into here. At the same time the situation was aggravated qualitatively. Conditions of life were made harder by the war and the Jewish reserves fell; they were condemned to die of starvation before long. In normal times, when it only affects a few, capitalism can leave those people rejected from the production process to perish alone. But in the middle of a war, when it involved millions, this was impossible. Such disorder would have paralysed it. It was therefore *necessary for capitalism to organise their death.*

It didn't kill them straightaway though. To begin with, it took them out of circulation, it regrouped and concentrated them. And it worked them to death. Killing men through work is one of capitalism's oldest tricks.

Marx wrote in 1844:

"...to meet with success, industrial competition requires numerous armies that can be concentrated in one place and copiously decimated."

It was required of course that these people defray their expenses whilst they were still alive, and of their ensuing deaths. And that they produce surplus-value for as long as possible. For capitalism couldn't execute the men it had condemned - *unless* it could profit from the very execution **itself**.

But people are very tough. Even when reduced to skeletons, they weren't dying fast enough. It was necessary to massacre those who couldn't work, and then those for whom there was no more need, because the avatars of war had rendered their labour useless.

German capitalism was uncomfortable however with assassination pure and simple, not on humanitarian grounds certainly, but because it got nothing out of it. From this was born the mission of Joel Brand, to which we refer because of the light it sheds on the answerability of global capitalism as a whole (see "L'Histoire de Joel Brand" by A. Weissberg, Éditions du Seuil). Joel Brand was one of the leaders of a semi-clandestine organisation of Hungarian Jews. This organisation was trying to save Jews by every possible means; hiding places, illegal immigration, as also by corruption of the SS. The SS Judenkommando tolerated these organisations which they tried more or less to use as auxiliaries in the sorting out and gathering operations.

In April 1944, Joel Brand was summoned to the Judenkommando in Budapest to meet Eichmann, who was head of the Jewish section of the SS. Eichmann, with the approval of Himmler, charged him, with the following

mission: to go to the Anglo-Americans to negotiate the sale of a million Jews. The SS asked in exchange 10,000 lorries, but were ready to bargain, as much on the nature as on the quantity of the merchandise. They proposed as well the freeing of 100,000 Jews - on the official acceptance of the agreement to show good faith. It was a serious business.

Unfortunately, if the supply existed, the demand *didn't*. Not only the Jews, but the SS had been taken in by the humanitarian propaganda of the allies! The allies **didn't** want these millions of Jews. Not for 10,000 lorries, not for 5,000, not even for *none at all*.

We can't enter into details about the misadventures of Joel Brand here. He left through Turkey and languished in the English prisons of the near-east. With the allies refusing to take the affair seriously, doing everything to stifle and discredit him. Finally in Cairo, Joel Brand met Lord Moyne, the British minister for the near east. He entreated his to obtain, at least a written agreement for the release, which would at least save 100,000 lives:

"And what would the final total be?"

"Eichmann spoke of a million."

"How can you imagine such a thing, Mister Brand. What can I do with this million Jews? Where can I put them? Who will receive them?"

"If the Earth hasn't any more room for us, there remains only for us to be exterminated." came the desperate reply from Brand.

The SS had been slow to comprehend: they **themselves** believed in Western ideas! After the failure of Joel Brand's mission and in the midst of the exterminations, they tried again to sell the Jews to the Joint (the Jewish American organisation), even depositing an account of 1700 Jews in Switzerland. But apart from that, the matter was never brought to a conclusion.

Joel Brand had almost grasped the situation. He had understood what the situation was, but not *why* it was so. It wasn't the Earth that didn't have anymore room, but **Capitalist society**. And for their part, not because they were Jews, but because rejected from the process of production, useless to production.

Lord Moyne was later assassinated by two Jewish terrorists, and J. Brand learned later that he had often sympathised with the tragic destiny of the Jews. "His politics were dictated to him by the inhuman London administration."

But Brand, who we here refer to for the last time, hadn't understood that this administration is merely *the administration of capital*, and that it is capital which is **inhuman**. And capital didn't know what to do with these people. It didn't even know what to do with the rare survivors, those displaced persons whom nobody knew where to put.

The surviving Jews succeeded in finally making room for themselves. Through force, and by profiting from the International conjuncture, the state of Israel was formed. But even this had been possible only by 'displacing' the indigenous population: hundreds of thousands of refugee Arabs from then on would drag out their useless (to Capital!) existence in the resettlement camps.

We have seen how capitalism condemned millions of men to death by expelling them from production. We have seen how it massacred them, in such a way as to extract from them as much surplus value as possible. It is left to us to see how it still exploited them after their death, how it *exploited their death itself*.

First of all, there are the imperialists of the allied camp, who used the deaths to justify their war, and following their victory to justify the infamous treatment they inflicted on the Germans. Such as the swooping on the camps and the corpses, walking around everywhere with horrible photos and proclaiming "*See what bastards the Boche are! We certainly had good reason to fight them! And how justified we are now to give them a taste of pain!*" When one reflects on the countless crimes of Imperialism: when it is considered for example that even at the moment (1945) when people like Thorez [the PCF leader] were singing their victory over fascism, 45,000 Algerians (fascist provocateurs!) fell under the blows of repression; when it is considered that it is Global capitalism which is responsible for the massacres, the shameless cynicism of

such hypocritical satisfaction makes one feel *truly disgusted*.

Meanwhile all our good democratic anti-fascists hurled themselves on the corpses of the Jews. And ever since they have waved them under the noses of the proletariat. To make it aware of the infamy of Capitalism? Why no, quite the contrary: to make it *appreciate*, by way of contrast, true democracy, true progress and the well-being it enjoys within Capitalist society! The horrors of capitalist death are supposed to make the proletariat forget the horrors of capitalist life, and the fact that the both are inextricably linked! The experiments of the SS doctors are supposed to make the proletariat forget that capitalism experiments on a large scale with carcinogens, the effects of alcohol on heredity, with the radio-activity of the 'democratic' bombs. If the lampshades of human skin are put on display, it is in order to make us forget that capitalism has transformed *living man into lampshades*. The mountains of hair, gold teeth, and bodies of men, become merchandise, are supposed to make us forget that capitalism has made *living man into merchandise*. It is the work, even the life of man, which capitalism has transformed into merchandise.

It is **this** which is the source of all evils. Using the corpses of the victims of capital to try to bury this truth, to make the corpses serve to protect capital. *Surely* this must be the most infamous exploitation of all.

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