

On the death of German writer Hans Magnus Enzensberger (1929–2022)

Wolfgang Weber
30 January 2023

The German author and intellectual Hans Magnus Enzensberger died November 24, 2022, at the age of 93. The intellectual life as well as the literary and political history of Germany after 1945 cannot be imagined without him. Enzensberger was not only shaped by it, but he also influenced it and created landmarks with his poems, essays and plays.

Born in 1929, he grew up in the family of a senior telecommunications engineer who did not engage in resistance against the Nazis, but preferred to hold himself at arm's length from them.

Following the military collapse of Hitler's Third Reich in World War II, Enzensberger was repulsed by postwar West German society. Countless former Nazis cheerily announced their adherence to democracy and brazenly remained in or took over leading roles in politics, the judiciary, state administration and at universities and schools, while at the same time millions of their victims were consigned to political oblivion.

Immediately after graduating from high school, Enzensberger seized the first opportunity to escape to the "promised land" abroad. He was able to spend a year in Paris, immersing himself in debates involving well-known European writers and philosophers. The far more liberated cultural climate in Paris, however, could not compensate for the great political and intellectual crisis that prevailed throughout Europe after the war. The potent culture of Marxism, which little more than 30 years earlier had been provided such an impetus by the 1917 Russian Revolution, had been largely destroyed by Stalin's political genocide in the Great Terror and the show trials of 1936–38, which claimed the lives of hundreds of thousands of Communists, socialists, progressive-minded scientists and intellectuals.

Consequently, in Eastern Europe as in the Soviet Union, the Stalinist bureaucracies were able to strangle every independent, revolutionary movement of the working class. In the West, in league with the Social Democratic Party (SPD) and trade union bureaucracies, the Stalinists suppressed the class struggle and revolutionary opportunities in Greece, France and Italy. And so, a reactionary brew of irrationalism, mysticism, existentialism, Catholic and Protestant bigotry could contaminate the intellectual climate in Europe and especially in Germany.

Under these conditions, the young writer Enzensberger, who regarded himself as a nonconformist, was drawn to the philosophers of the Frankfurt School (founded in 1923): Max Horkheimer, Herbert Marcuse and, above all, Theodor Adorno. All three had been forced into exile in the US following January 1933, when state power in Germany was handed over by the ruling class to Hitler and his Nazi movement. The treacherous leaderships of the two mass workers parties, the SPD and KPD (Communist Party of Germany), which even in parliament together represented a majority, surrendered to the fascist gangsters without a fight.

Failing to understand the root causes of that political catastrophe, Horkheimer, Marcuse and Adorno drew the most pessimistic conclusions. Already in the late 1920s, in the wake of the defeats of the German Revolution in 1918–23 and the Chinese Revolution in 1927 and the rise and consolidation of the Stalinist bureaucracy in the Soviet Union, they

developed the strong conviction that the working class did not play any progressive, much less a revolutionary role, in society. Then, after 1933, the Frankfurt School figures explicitly rejected historical materialism, Marxism's philosophical foundation. Marxism in their view had to be "updated" by a return to the philosophy of idealism, to Kant and Hegel, and others.

Yet Adorno, Marcuse and the others camouflaged their flight into irrational idealism and subjectivism behind pseudo-dialectical, occasionally "Marxist"-sounding phrases. That gave their bleak philosophy the appearance of a progressive "critical theory," of an "alternative" to German ruling class ideology, which continued in the postwar period to be permeated with chauvinism, persistent anti-Semitism and other right-wing conceptions in many areas of political and cultural life.

By the early 1950s, Horkheimer and Adorno had returned from exile, determined to re-establish the Frankfurt Institute of Social Research and to "re-educate" the German people with their conceptions. Enzensberger, back in Germany from Paris, was immediately attracted to their seemingly progressive "critical theory," above all to Adorno's "cultural criticism," which claimed that the crux of capitalism was not the exploitation of the working class for profit, but the ostensibly invincible power of the media to drive workers like sheep into stupefying mass consumption.

In 1957, Enzensberger delivered a caustic polemic on the radio against the jargon of the so-called "news magazine" *Der Spiegel*, based on factual, irrefutable analysis—and became known overnight, above all, because the publisher of the magazine, Rudolf Augstein, deeply impressed, published the radio essay shortly afterwards in *Der Spiegel* itself.

Enzensberger's first volume of poetry, *Defence of the Wolves*, also published in 1957, emerged like a bolt of lightning in sultry weather. It captured the attitude of an entire generation, the 20- to 30-year-olds of the time, who, like Enzensberger, had nothing but contempt and indignation for the society into which they have been born.

But even in Enzensberger's poetry, Adorno's attitude, like that of other representatives of the Frankfurt School toward the working class, toward the "masses," shines through: the thoroughly gullible masses accept everything, they read the trashy tabloid *Bild* newspaper every day, they throw themselves into consumption, supposedly intoxicated by West Germany's incipient "economic miracle"—"where things are going upwards, but not forwards." "You do not change the world" reads the reproach in the last line of the title poem of the volume.

"Frankfurt School," one might say, "yet not pseudo-intellectual gibberish, incomprehensible to most people, but in downright breezy, accessible, cheeky, sometimes sad or wicked verse."

In 1963, Enzensberger received Germany's most important literary prize, the Büchner Prize, named after the great poet, scientist and revolutionary Georg Büchner (1813–1837). He was now internationally renowned and recognised. Together with Heinrich Böll and Günter Grass,

Enzensberger was regarded and celebrated by a global public, which was still suspicious of official postwar (West) Germany, as the representative of another, a better Germany.

Elated by growing social struggles in Europe, which was rocked by the first major economic and political crises since postwar reconstruction, and highly motivated by the civil rights movement in the US and the national liberation movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America, Enzensberger founded the influential political-literary journal *Kursbuch (Timetable)* in 1965.

With this publication, edited by him until 1975, Enzensberger provided the ideological representatives of middle class layers radicalized all over the world a platform for the exchange and discussion of their ideas. Petty-bourgeois nationalists like Fidel Castro and Frantz Fanon, anti-Marxist student leaders like Rudi Dutschke, exponents of structuralism like Claude Lévi-Strauss and Roland Barthes and of postmodernism like Michel Foucault, renegades from Trotskyism like Ernest Mandel—all found a place in the pages of the *Kursbuch*. What united all these forces was their hostility to Trotskyism and their worship of the anti-communist big lie of the 20th century: “Stalinism equals socialism!” or, viewed “critically,” equals “real existing socialism.”

During the German student revolt of 1967–68, and especially during the protests against the emergency laws finally passed by the grand coalition of the conservative Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union and SPD in May 1969, Enzensberger and his *Kursbuch* played a crucial role.

He called for the imitation of “French conditions,” referring to the then general strike of May-June 1968 in France—which was to be betrayed shortly afterward by the Stalinist Communist Party and trade unions. Already by the end of 1968, Enzensberger sounded the retreat in a series of essays and ironic commentaries in *Kursbuch*, parodying the dreams and visions of revolution that were sinking to the bottom like the Titanic.

The essays “The End of the Consequence” (1981) and “In Defence of Normality” (1982) signalled that H.M. Enzensberger had made his peace with the status quo. “All the revolutionary visions of the 19th century, Marxism as well as anarchism, have proven to have failed, to be unrealisable,” he later repeated time and again in interviews to justify his abandonment of previously held positions.

And: “Only trees need a standpoint! People have to be mobile, they always have to change their point of view!”—this cynical “bon mot” served him as justification for his coming to terms with the “normality” of philistine opportunism.

Around the same time, many Maoists, anarchists, Stalinists and a faction of the Pabloites in Germany founded the Greens as a purely bourgeois party. The founding statutes of the party stipulated that its members renounced any reference to socialism or Marxism.

Enzensberger remained very productive in literary and publishing terms, but politically he was pining away—until the destruction of the Soviet Union and former East Germany (GDR) by the Stalinist bureaucrats ruling there and the restoration of capitalism in the East pushed him, like other ex-radicals, far to the right!

The Greens, along with the SPD and the trade unions, in collaboration with the turncoat Stalinists of East Germany’s former ruling party, the SED (Socialist Unity Party, renamed the PDS [Party of Democratic Socialism], and later the Left Party), all lined up to help the German government of Helmut Kohl to smash the nationalized property relations in the East and the social gains of workers organically linked to them, thereby creating mass unemployment and poverty.

As far as Enzensberger was concerned, he sent an important foreign policy signal to the ruling class. In an essay in *Der Spiegel* in February 1991, he declared his unqualified support for the cruel colonial war that the US, with the support of its NATO allies, was waging against Iraq. Washington’s aim was to take control of Iraq’s energy supplies and

reaffirm its vast military supremacy in the world—including vis-à-vis the newly reunited Germany, which had risen to become the leading power in Europe.

Iraqi President Saddam Hussein was a reincarnation of Hitler, Enzensberger argued, and the bloodbath unleashed by the American military in the former colonial country therefore a “war of liberation.” In reality, the US invasion was the opening shot of decades of unceasing wars by the US and its NATO allies in the Middle East, Central Asia and Africa, aimed at redividing the world after the restoration of capitalism in the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and China.^[1] Even after the extent of the destruction and carnage wrought by the US in Iraq became known (and the lies on which the invasion was based), Enzensberger maintained his position. He had been right in the matter, he declared in interviews years later, he would only choose other words today!

Over the following three decades, he continued to be creative in the field of literature, writing worldwide bestsellers with his books for children and young people on mathematics. Politically, however, taking into account his prostration before imperialism, as a democratic “rebel” or even merely a democratic “admonisher,” Enzensberger was definitively dead.

This disturbing and shocking development has a significance that goes far beyond Enzensberger as a writer and individual.

For what was truly experiencing a rebirth immediately after German reunification was German militarism, which had already triggered two catastrophic world wars. The ex-radicals of the 1960s and 1970s, first of all Enzensberger and the Greens, were its godparents. “Defence of human rights,” “defence of democracy” were the mendacious slogans they gave this campaign to disguise its true and age-old goals: to secure the domination of German corporations and banks in Europe and participate in the re-division of the world among the imperialist powers.

It was the Greens under Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer who in 1998, in violation of international law, instigated the first ever postwar deployment of German troops in a war—and that, of all places, in the Balkans, overrun with resulting mass devastation and mass murder by the German *Wehrmacht* in World War II.

And today again, 25 years later, the Greens are the most important and most ruthless of all war parties, threatening to plunge Germany into a new World War, by betting on a “final victory” over Russia and by rearming Ukraine and, above all, the German military on a gigantic scale just as Hitler rearmed the *Wehrmacht* in the 1930s.

Enzensberger’s 1991 article in *Der Spiegel* on war in Iraq thus blazed a trail that was ahead of its time.

On the occasion of his second, physical death, we are therefore republishing today the article with which this author responded to Enzensberger in the *Neue Arbeiterpresse* on February 22, 1991, in slightly edited form and with explanatory footnotes for today’s readers. The *Neue Arbeiterpresse* was at that time the weekly paper of the Bund Sozialistischer Arbeiter, the forerunner of the Socialist Equality Party, the German section of the International Committee of the Fourth International.

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The case of Hans Magnus Enzensberger

Wolfgang Weber, February 22, 1991

On February 4, 1991, a sensational essay by Hans Magnus Enzensberger entitled “Hitler’s Ghost” appeared in *Der Spiegel*. The cause of the stir was not so much due to the cover of the magazine, which featured the slogan “Saddam = Hitler.” This was the same accusation already used for months by US President George W. Bush, French President François

Mitterrand, British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and German Chancellor Helmut Kohl to justify the mass bombing campaign launched against the Iraqi population in the guise of a “war of liberation.”

Bush, the organiser, financier and beneficiary of numerous military dictatorships, racist and/or fascist regimes in South Africa, Chile, Turkey, lacked any credibility to pose as an anti-fascist liberation fighter. Equally disqualified was Helmut Kohl, the representative of the same German banks and corporations that financed and profited from Hitler’s fascism.

The real sensation was the fact that that piece in *Spiegel* came from the pen of a well-known writer who for decades had been regarded as a radical critic of capitalism in general and German capitalist society in particular.

In the 1960s and ’70s, Enzensberger played a key role in the student movement as editor of *Kursbuch*, a political-literary magazine. He wrote a series of linguistically dazzling and politically biting poems and essays critical of German bourgeois society, riddled with former Nazis. He also wrote works opposing the colonial oppression of poor, backward countries by imperialist powers.

His play and television movie *The Havana Inquiry* (1970), dealing with the Bay of Pigs operation, the failed US invasion of Cuba under President John F. Kennedy in April 1961, was seen worldwide and became renowned.^[2]

Now, 20 years later, Enzensberger has tossed aside his radical left credentials and has suddenly emerged as the vehement advocate of a brutal colonial war.

Hence, his argumentation in this regard deserves close examination.

1. The Character of Hitler’s dictatorship

Enzensberger writes:

The parallel with Hitler is evident. The *Führer*, too, was not concerned with defeating one or another internal or external opponent.

This is a gross falsification of history!

Enzensberger is as well versed in the history of class struggle^[3] as he is in the history of literature. He is very well aware that the first priority of the Hitler regime on behalf of the ruling class was to defeat the enemy at home: i.e., the working class.

Immediately following the handover of power to Hitler, the first concentration camps were filled with thousands of workers, Social Democrats and Communists, trade union officials and resistance fighters. Countless numbers of them were murdered. The trade unions were destroyed, the Social Democratic Party and Communist Party banned and all working class democratic rights brutally suppressed.

Hitler and Nazism had been financed and brought to power by the German banks and industrial corporations for precisely this purpose. This was the only way they could impose savage conditions of exploitation on the working class, wage a new war against their imperialist rivals to seize colonies and destroy the Soviet Union and conquer its vast resources and raw materials. The murder of 6 million Jews was bound up with this class dictatorship. The victims were mainly the poor proletarian and petty bourgeois strata of Eastern Europe and Russia. In the case of wealthier Jews, they were expropriated and eliminated as unwelcome competitors.

Enzensberger denies the class character of the Hitler regime as an open dictatorship of capital and disguises its historical role by simply declaring

Hitler to have been an “enemy of the human race.” Why? Because this is the only way to justify equating Hitler and Saddam Hussein as “enemies of the human race.”

Only on this basis can the writer attempt to draw an equivalence between the fascist dictatorship of a highly developed industrial power striving for world domination and the unstable bourgeois regime of an oppressed, former colonial country that stands in the way of the imperialist powers and their aspirations for unrestricted oppression.

It is only on this basis that Enzensberger can claim that it is not US President Bush and his allies in Europe, with their slaughter of hundreds of thousands of Iraqi workers, peasants, women and children, who stand in the tradition of Nazi fascism, but rather Iraq’s Hussein.

Of course, this requires Enzensberger to turn not only history, but also the facts of the current war on their head. According to Enzensberger, it is not Bush, Mitterrand and Kohl who are busy “wiping out cities,” but Saddam Hussein.

2. Legitimising genocidal policies

After defining Hitler as an “enemy of humanity,” he deals with the causes of his dictatorship. According to Enzensberger, responsibility for fascism does not rest with the German capitalists or their henchmen in the Social Democratic and Stalinist workers’ bureaucracies, which politically disarmed the working class and handed it over to fascism in 1933 without a fight.

In their 1933 May Day appeal, the Social Democratic trade union leaders officially called on the working class to “collaborate with the new state” and march under the Nazi swastika on May Day to demonstrate their loyalty to the Hitler regime. The unions thereby announced they would not organise any resistance. One day later, on May 2, 1933, the Nazis responded by storming the bureaucracy’s headquarters and smashing up the unions.

But, no, according to Enzensberger, it was not the treacherous reformist and Stalinist officials who were responsible for the ability of the German bourgeoisie to implement its plans, but rather “the people” (*Das Volk*) and their “death wish”:

A Hitler, a Saddam can only appear in history when an entire people wish for their coming. Their power does not grow from the barrels of guns, but rather from the boundless love and subservience of their followers. ... What excited the Germans was not only the licence to kill, but even more the prospect of being killed themselves. Today, millions of Arabs are just as fervent in their desire to die for Saddam Hussein.

According to Enzensberger’s version of history, it was not the gun barrels of the SS and Gestapo, not the terror of the Nazi People’s Court, not the tens of thousands of executions, not the torture and concentration camps that sustained Hitler’s fascism, but instead the German people’s “boundless” subservience to the new regime and their yearning for death.

Enzensberger sees the cause of this longing for death in the

feeling of a long-standing collective grievance that utterly corrodes the self-esteem of millions. From this point of view, the Germans, if they had a better memory, could recognise themselves in the Arabs. ... The parallels [between the Germans] and the

peoples of the Middle East is obvious. When a collective no longer sees a chance to make up for its—real and imaginary—humiliation through its own efforts, then it deploys all its psychic energy to accumulate immeasurable stores of hatred and envy, resentment, and vindictiveness. It feels like a pawn and victim of circumstances and denies any shared responsibility [!] for the situation it finds itself in. The search for the culprit can begin. Then the hour of the *Führer* has come. The enemy of humanity can charge himself with the accumulated death energy of the masses.

If one thinks through these trains of thought to the end, it allows only one conclusion: if fascism has its historical and social roots not in capitalist class society, but in the “anthropological problems” of a people plagued by inferiority complexes, then, in order to eliminate a fascist dictatorship, one must exterminate the entire population!

And when the mobilisation and militancy of “millions of Arabs” against colonial oppression can be equated with the fascist ideology of the maddened, ruined petty bourgeois masses, then it is precisely these millions of Arabs who must be exterminated.

Consequently, it is necessary to support the war of extermination of the US and its allies against Iraq.

We are not reading this conclusion into his essay, Enzensberger himself spells it out:

The elimination of Hitler cost countless lives. The price for removing Saddam Hussein from the face of the earth will be astronomical...

Given this line of reasoning there is no longer a good reason *not* to carry out such a “surgical operation,” not just with hundreds of thousands of tons of conventional incendiary, petrol and fragmentation bombs, but also with nuclear weapons—and there is none with Enzensberger. On the contrary, he already identifies the next targets for imperialist “wars of liberation,” namely the entire “Arab world,” the Indian subcontinent and the Soviet Union. In his opinion, a nuclear “final solution” is close at hand.

Literally, he says:

It is foreseeable that in the future other peoples will cheer their and our own executioners. There are eternal losers in all directions. Among them, the sense of humiliation and the tendency towards collective suicide increases with every year. In the Indian subcontinent and the Soviet Union, the nuclear arsenals stand ready. What Hitler and Saddam failed at, the final victory, that is, their “final solution”—their next revenant could succeed in doing.

Enzensberger formulates in literary form a recipe for destroying the masses of workers and peasants who threaten to rise up in India and elsewhere against their oppressors in even more formidable numbers than in the Middle East and—in the case of the Soviet Union—who oppose the attempt to reintroduce capitalist exploitation with the help of Soviet Premier Mikhail Gorbachev.

3. The enemy within

Enzensberger identifies not only the next external wartime enemy, but also the internal enemy at home with whom it is necessary to come to terms: the German youth, who like the entire German people, is, in his opinion, latently “fascistoid,” i.e., seized by an “inclination to collective suicide,” by “remnants of fascism no one wants to be reminded of.”

As proof, Enzensberger cites the fact that “a considerable proportion of German youth identifies more with the Palestinians than with the Israelis” and “would rather direct their protest against George W. Bush than against Saddam Hussein.” In other words, the writer reacts against the fact that young people spontaneously show solidarity with the victims, the Palestinian and Arab masses, rather than with the organisers and bastions of imperialist and racist oppression, the US and the Israeli state.

This position of Enzensberger’s taken to its logical conclusion means nothing else than that just as the imperialists’ colonial war of extermination must be supported externally, so must police-state oppression be supported internally, directed against the working class and youth and their “fascist death frenzy.”

The ultra-reactionary character of this position is made clear by the fact that the ruling elite in Germany is already vigorously reviving not only militarism but also domestic repressive measures.

In Berlin and Bavaria, citizens from Arab nations, defamed as “potential terrorists,” have been deprived of their democratic rights and placed under direct police supervision. At the same time, a 1930s-style police raid is taking place at the IG Metall [union] headquarters in Heidelberg, and that over an anti-war appeal; anti-war demonstrators are being arrested; a further tightening up of police laws is planned; the imposition of emergency laws is planned in the event of Germany officially entering the Iraq war.

None of this forces Enzensberger to rethink or even hesitate.

In the 1960s, he denounced and analysed the colonial oppression of peoples in the Middle East, Latin America, Asia and Africa and supported revolutions and liberation struggles in Algeria, Cuba and Vietnam. In the 1970s, he continued to oppose the construction of a police state in Germany. Now the very same man is putting his not inconsiderable literary talents unreservedly at the service of the powers that be and their war propaganda.

Enzensberger writes all this in the same magazine about which he observed in a brilliant 1957 essay (“The Language of *Der Spiegel*”) that it possessed the “power and ability not only to overthrow corrupt ministers, but also to corrupt the opinion of millions!”^[4]

4. Enzensberger—a social phenomenon

This political about-face cannot be explained by the individual Enzensberger, but only by the evolution of certain petty bourgeois strata, whose ideological mouthpiece Enzensberger has always been. The position of this layer within capitalist class society has changed fundamentally in the recent period. After the Second World War, this social grouping was systematically built up as a buffer between the two main classes, the bourgeoisie and the working class. It was entrusted with the administration of capitalist state affairs and the shaping of the “bourgeois consciousness industry” (Enzensberger), that is, the media, the education and academic system, and it was tied to the capitalist state with the help of extensive privileges.

In the 1960s and 1970s, these layers reacted to the emergence of national liberation movements in Africa, Asia and Latin America, the civil rights movement in the US, the Vietnam War and the crisis of capitalism in the central industrialised countries with the so-called student movement. The perspectives of this movement, however, never went

beyond protest against imperialism, albeit with the occasional use of radical phrases.

Its ideologists like Enzensberger explicitly rejected the revolutionary role of the working class and thus the perspective of a proletarian revolution to overthrow capitalism. They used Marxist phrases to distort Marxism. They turned to the workers' movement, not to mobilise it with a revolutionary programme, but merely to exploit it as a lever to introduce and impose their own bourgeois reformist programme, to assert their own ascendancy in the state and society.

Politically, they all ended up embracing Social Democracy and Stalinism, or at least bowing to them in a "critically distanced" manner. Based on the continued control of these counterrevolutionary bureaucracies over the working class, they promised themselves a stable and tranquil future under capitalism. Many of them became members of the arch-Stalinist German Communist Party (DKP), joined one of the numerous Maoist groups, rose in the ranks of the SPD and trade union bureaucracies or, in the case of the fake "Trotskyist" Pabloite organisations, acted as their left fig leaves.

During the 1980s, a period in which the only thing that still flourished under capitalism was the unrestrained enrichment of capitalists through financial speculation and swindling, sections of these petty bourgeois layers increasingly abandoned their anti-capitalist phrases and plunged into business—as yuppies on the stock exchange, publishers or sought-after authors in the "consciousness industry." They even became government ministers such as Michel Rocard^[5] and Jean-Pierre Chevènement^[6] in France, or the former Juso [SDP Young Socialists] Chairman Gerhard Schröder^[7] and Joschka Fischer^[8] from the Greens in Germany.

In the last two years, the material position of this affluent stratum and thus its function as a buffer between the classes has been severely shaken. The near collapse of the stock markets,^[9] the intensification of trade wars between the great powers and the threat of state bankruptcy in leading capitalist nations have undermined their chances of enrichment.

Finally, with the collapse of the East European Stalinist bureaucracies and the crisis of Stalinism in the Soviet Union, a decisive political pillar of the entire postwar imperialist order has toppled. The more class conflicts come to a head in Germany because of the takeover of East Germany and the war in the Gulf, the more the Social Democratic bureaucrats, who organise low-wage labour and mass unemployment, are also in danger of losing control of the working class.

This change in class relations has driven sections of the privileged petty bourgeoisie to the right. Their ideologists and literary representatives like Enzensberger see no other alternative than to throw themselves into the arms of the ruling class. At the very moment when the ruling class is once again arming itself for war and dictatorship, they openly appear as defenders of the tottering capitalist order and as heralds of imperialist war.

The fact that Enzensberger is not alone shows that this is a social phenomenon and not just about an individual "Enzensberger case." He has been joined, for example, by former East German dissident Wolf Biermann, who on February 1 wrote a vicious, two-page diatribe against demonstrations opposed to the Iraq war in *Die Zeit*, the weekly for the "educated" petty bourgeois:

Let's be clear: I am for this war in the Gulf!—Of course, the Americans are also interested in oil. I am glad that there are such reliably rotten interests. Israel would otherwise stand alone.

A week later, another chief ideologue of the former student movement, Jürgen Habermas^[10], came forward in the same newspaper:

To say in advance: the intervention is a philosopher!—I consider justified!^[11]

Similar statements have already been made by the "critic of Social Democracy" [writer] Cora Stephan and other greats of the former student movement, not to mention the Green politicians Fischer, Udo Knapp and Klaus Hartung, who openly call for Germany's active participation in the imperialist armed encounter with Iraq—all under the hypocritical pretext of "defending Israel."

5. Enzensberger and Marxism

These ideological leaders of the petty bourgeoisie have one thing in common—they have broken relations, however superficial or formal, with the working class and declare the bankruptcy of Stalinism to be the end of Marxism. They openly admit that if they ever criticised Stalinism, they have always done so from the right, from the standpoint of bourgeois democracy and anti-communism, and not from the left on the basis of a socialist perspective.

Only a fortnight ago, Enzensberger himself emphasised in a television interview that he had "borrowed" from Marxism during the student movement, but had never been a Marxist. He took an intellectual crumb from Lenin here to "criticise" imperialism, a morsel from Trotsky there to "expose" Stalinism, and also borrowed something from Hegel to "better understand" the course of history.

Contrary to Enzensberger's eclectic view, however, Marxism is a scientific method of comprehending the world. It is the basis for a correct historical, economic and political analysis of the class struggle and thus for mobilising the international working class with a socialist programme for the abolition of capitalism.

Enzensberger explicitly rejected revolutionary Marxism; in contrast, as he explained in the television interview, he "always retained a tenacious residue of unease."

Enzensberger presented himself as a particularly "critical" spirit, "independent of all doctrines and ideologies." In fact, this was merely the posturing of a thoroughly average petty bourgeois democrat and nationalist philistine. In his essay published in the 1960s, "European Periphery," he himself was aptly able to describe this species of politician and ideologue—based on picking through Marx and Engels:

They can muster a certain, paternalist-like benevolence for the revolution in Cuba, in Algeria and in Vietnam, but only as long as the revolutionaries do not endanger the rule of law, parliamentary democracy, freedom of the press, the social market economy and private property. One is familiar with this behaviour from the class struggles of the nineteenth century and knows where it leads, if not "in principle," then in reality: favouring existing power relations.^[12]

Now Enzensberger has caught up with his own political prediction to an extent that would have probably frightened him 20 years ago; shedding the flimsy garb of "intellectual independence," he unabashedly postures as an intellectual prostitute for his own bourgeoisie and its war propaganda.

For the working class, this molting of Enzensberger and many other upper-middle class radicals contains an important lesson: it can free itself

from capitalist exploitation not just by shaking off the yoke of the Social Democratic and Stalinist bureaucracies. It must also free itself from the influence of petty bourgeois radical ideologues and their paternalism.

This requires the building of the Trotskyist world party, the International Committee of the Fourth International and its German section, the Bund Sozialistischer Arbeiter. It is the only political tendency in history that has defended Marxism and the perspectives of socialist revolution against both the counter-revolutionary bureaucracies of Social Democracy and Stalinism and their props in the petty bourgeoisie.

To the extent that the working class, through the building of the Trotskyist party, turns again to the perspectives of Marxism and participates in the class struggle as an independent political force, it will also be able, as in previous revolutionary periods, to break the best representatives of the intelligentsia from the bankrupt, pro-imperialist policies of middle class radicalism and win them to its side in the struggle for a socialist future of mankind.

[1] See David North, *A Quarter Century of War: The US Drive for Global Hegemony 1990–2016*; Part I: The First Iraq War 1990–1991, pp. 3–61.

[2] Hans Magnus Enzensberger: *Das Verhör von Habana*; Frankfurt/M. 1970. English edition: *The Havana Inquiry*; New York 1974.

This is based on original tape transcripts of the interrogation of factory owners, landowners, wholesalers, mercenaries and a Capuchin priest all of whom had taken part in or helped prepare the “Operation Bay of Pigs” a few days earlier, on April 17, 1961. This operation was organised and financed by 1,300 mercenaries from the CIA with the aim of overthrowing the Fidel Castro government in Cuba.

The interrogation was carried out in front of television cameras and radio microphones for the entire Cuban people to watch. It was “a self-portrait of the counter-revolution”—also the subtitle of Enzensberger’s play performed in many cities all over the world in the 1970s. Enzensberger tracked down the transcripts in Havana in 1968, when he, in protest against the Vietnam War, broke off a guest lectureship in the US and went to Cuba for a year.

[3] In 1972 Enzensberger, together with Rainer Nitsche and Klaus Roehler, published a 3-volume reader on the class struggles in Germany 1756–1971. In it he also published passages from the autobiography of Karl Retzlau, a leading member of the Trotskyist opposition to Stalinism, on the 1918–19 revolution and counterrevolution in Germany and on the bloody struggles against the rise of Nazism at the end of the Weimar Republic.

[4] *The Language of the Mirror*. Broadcast by Süddeutscher Rundfunk. Partial reprint in *Der Spiegel* (March 6, 1957).

[5] Michel Rocard, a leading Socialist Party politician, was French Prime Minister from 1988 to 1991.

[6] Jean-Pierre Chevènement, representative of the “left wing” of the Socialist Party in France, minister of various departments under President François Mitterrand, 1981–1991.

[7] Gerhard Schröder was chairman of the Jusos, the youth organisation of the SPD, 1978–1980 and described himself at the time as a “consistent Marxist.” Schröder was (1990–1998) minister-president of the state of Lower Saxony, and (1998–2005) chancellor of the coalition government of SPD and Greens. The cabinet included several leaders and supporters of the student movement of the 1960s and 1970s, such as Fischer (foreign minister) from the Greens, and the ex-Maoist Ulla Schmidt (health minister) from the SPD.

[8] Fischer was active in the Extra-Parliamentary Opposition (APO) from 1967 during the government of the Grand Coalition (CDU/CSU and SPD); and in the 1970s in the militant group Revolutionary Struggle, which engaged in street fighting with police during protest demonstrations such as those against the execution of political prisoners by the fascist Franco dictatorship. He was a co-founder of the Green Party in 1981 and

has been one of its leading politicians ever since.

[9] In October 1987, a global stock market crash took place, bringing the entire financial world to the brink of collapse.

[10] Jürgen Habermas, like Enzensberger born in 1929, became famous in 1953 for sharply attacking the influential philosopher and Nazi apologist Martin Heidegger in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. In 1953 Heidegger had printed in unchanged form a lecture, *Introduction to Metaphysics*, which he had first given in 1935 during the Third Reich. The lecture included remarks praising the “inner truth and greatness” of the Nazi movement. Habermas described this as part of the “continued rehabilitation of Nazism ... above all those responsible then and now.”

In 1956 Habermas joined the Frankfurt Institute for Social Research as a research assistant, and in 1964 was appointed professor of philosophy and sociology, succeeding Horkheimer. Well-known and popular with many students for advocating democratic reforms in education and higher education from the 1950s, he initially had a great influence on the debates of the student revolt in the second half of the 1960s, but soon came into conflict with its most eloquent representatives, such as Rudi Dutschke. In 1986, together with Hans-Ulrich Wehler, he opposed attempts by the historian Ernst Nolte to trivialise and rehabilitate Nazism and its crimes. This was the beginning of the so-called *Historikerstreit* (the *Historians’ Dispute*).

[11] Emphasis added.

[12] Hans Magnus Enzensberger, *European Periphery*; in: *Kursbuch 2*, Frankfurt am Main, 1965.



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