



# **routes sucrées**

**What Inter- and Antinationalism Mean to Us**

**Why Rage Against The Machine Wanted to Burn Down Their School**

**Why Not All Porn is Hot**

**What David Graeber Said to Us**

# Imprint

"Routes sucrées" is an inter-/antinationale leftist magazine that is being distributed for free in English-speaking countries - if you are interested in distributing it, please contact us. We will send it to you for free (everytime we have enough money). It focuses on providing undogmatic food for thought for a liberated society – one free of capitalism, sexism, homophobia, the state, racism and other forms of domination. One that we, for lack of a better name, would call communism. "Routes sucrées" is the "little sister" of a German youth magazine entitled "Straßen aus Zucker"<sup>1</sup>, which has a circulation of over 100.000 copies and has been in existence for over three years. The newly launched English-speaking version will begin with 30,000 copies distributed via info shops, autonomous centers, activist gatherings as well as conferences and panel discussions (Spanish, French and Turkish versions are coming soon - if you would like to translate texts please contact us). We are not affiliated with any party or large organization, we are a dedicated volunteer-run collective of individuals and people from the undogmatic left-communist group "TOP – Theory. Organisation. Praxis." Our project has provided an important platform for left debates in the German-speaking world. We hope to continue this with our comrades, friends and allies from abroad!

Get in touch: [INFO@STRASSENZUCKER.TK](mailto:INFO@STRASSENZUCKER.TK)

TOP (Theory. Organisation. Praxis.) is a Berlin-based antifascist, anti-capitalist group. They are part of the "...ums Ganze!" alliance which consists of more than ten groups from all over Germany and Austria. To get in touch with them write to [mail\(at\)top-berlin.net](mailto:mail(at)top-berlin.net) and check out [HTTP://WWW.TOP-BERLIN.NET](http://www.top-berlin.net).

<sup>1</sup> "Straßen aus Zucker" literally means "Streets Made of Sugar" - taken from the song "Mindestens in 1000 Jahren" by German political electro pop-punk band "Frittenbude". Even though we are a bit worried about cavities and sticky feet, this strikes us as quite a beautiful image for a communist society.

---

web:	<a href="http://STRASSENZUCKER.TK">STRASSENZUCKER.TK</a>
	<a href="https://FACEBOOK.COM/STRASSENZUCKER">FACEBOOK.COM/STRASSENZUCKER</a>
cover photo:	MAURIN DIETRICH
editorial design:	<a href="http://WWW.OWIEOLE.DE">WWW.OWIEOLE.DE</a>
supported by:	ROSA-LUXEMBURG-FOUNDATION

ROSA LUXEMBURG FOUNDATION

# Content

- 3** **Instead of an Introduction**  
Why an internationalist antinational magazine?
- 5** **Expanding the Floor of the Cage?**  
Why we need a revolution. And why a revolution is not enough.
- 7** **"Fuck you, I won't do what you tell me!"**  
Interview with Tom Morello of "Rage Against the Machine"
- 9** **Start with Yourself!?**  
About uneaten McDonald's burgers, unworn H&M clothes and unbooked journeys.  
Or: How consumer criticism is often too simple.
- 11** **Actually Existing Socialism?**  
What we think about the Soviet Union & Co. and why their horror is ever the more reason to fight for communism.
- 13** **When the Birds and the Bees...**  
Why sex and the state get it on with each other
- 14** **"It's their Fault!"**  
Capitalism. Crisis. Conflicts. Jews are blamed for almost everything.
- 17** **PorNo? PorYes? PorHaps...**  
Why not every Porno is hot.
- 19** **We're Running out of Work – at Last!**  
About work and karoshi.
- 21** **Interview with David Graeber**
- 22** **We are not disabled, we are being disabled.**  
"It's not our bodies that are wrong, but a poorly-equipped society."

Read online or  
download this issue:





# Instead of an Introduction

Why an internationalist antinational magazine?

© Steve Cadman

**R**outes sucrées, or "Straßen aus Zucker", is a left magazine of politics published in German – until now. Founded in Berlin in 2009 as a one-off project for young people reacting to rising nationalist sentiment fueled by soccer World Cup and reunification festivities, the massive positive feedback it received turned it into a regular magazine. Meanwhile, eight issues have been published. The articles deal with topics such as the critique of everyday life, nationalism, love, gender relations, sexuality, the critique of capitalism, religion, and much more. We try to keep our texts comprehensible – there are already enough left texts which are alienating and make you feel small.

When writing in German, however, a very important aspect is missing: international exchange. Again and again, we are surprised at how much discussions within the left are confined to language. It seems that oftentimes we only have a stencil-like image in our heads of the debates going on in other parts of the world. And likewise, when we travel we are confronted with funny ideas about what is apparently going on in the German-speaking left.

But as the world needs heaps of people everywhere in order for it to be changed, we need to get in touch and understand each other. So, finally, our first international issue in English. We want to debate and network. We want topics discussed across the borders of language (let alone national borders). This issue therefore contains texts on topics that are dear to our hearts. If you'd like to contribute and discuss, get in touch:

[INFO@STRASSENAUSZUCKER.TK]

We will collect and anonymously publish comments and debates on our website, if you're ok with it.

Our wish for exchange and debate is grounded in two concerns we would like to briefly outline. A movement which represents our interests and ideas would have to be, among many other aspects, two things: internationalist and antinational.

## Why antinational?

The most common objection we hear to our statement of being antinational is that, in the end, this is 'our country' as well. Part of this is true: people as residents of a certain country do own the respective country's passport or other official documents, making them 'legal' residents. So when they don't manage to find a job, it is the authority of 'their country' that harasses or even criminalizes them. It is 'their' country which offers a world full of competition, which provides education in schools either in an understanding way, or just by hammering it into you that to make it in this society you have to struggle. All because your 'own state' must compete against other nations, and unfortunately, you are all dependent on its economic success on the world market. And when times are tight, like in the current crisis, you are called upon to sacrifice 'for the good of the nation', which has in fact never done you any good. And once 'your country' decides any other (alliance of) state(s) to be their 'enemy', and its mercenary soldiers are not sufficient, you will be the one to shoot others or be shot. Thank you very much!

For people without a passport of the country they live in, the concept of 'nation' is all the more violent. They have to protect themselves against harassment by the state on the one hand, and against racist violence on the other. You can see our concern is not that nationalism – or patriotism, for that matter – have gotten out of hand somewhere, or that the 'wrong' politicians are in

power. We see the problem to lie deeper, which is why we are not only 'anti-nationalist', which is something liberals as well as conservatives may agree to be a good thing these days, but 'antinational': Nations, and the love for them, are deadly.

Our regime goes by the name of Deutschland. For people in Argentina, it is Argentina, and in Russia, Россия. An example might illustrate the thought here: In 2012, during the soccer world championship, some wished for Greece to win, as the "battered nation needed hope and joy". This shows what ties nationalism is supposed to mend. Social antagonisms are danced away, all the newly homeless Greeks shall, even if they have nothing to eat, at least cheer and be proud of 'their country'. But this pride is actually a hindrance to changing the current conditions which cause hunger and homelessness. Many people in Greece don't give a shit about national success as they know it won't better their lives. They start, within their boundaries, to take matters into their hands collectively, as done a few years ago in Argentina.

We don't put any hope in raising the GNP neither; because we know we won't see anything from it. And even those who do profit from it could be better off in a society that was more rationally organized. We reject the blabber about 'business location' for which we are supposed to endure austerity measures. We also reject the liberal talk that we should take pride in 'our' state's constitution, or its social legislation. It is not that we could decide which constitution in the world we liked best and then become a citizen of that state. This alone is enough to expose the idea of the "nation as wellness agency" as a lie. We reject cheering for 'our' national team, we will only call out "our" regime's name in commemoration of its victims. Therefore, instead of the black-red-gold the German flag displays,

we might remake it into more hopeful color combinations (red and black for instance), or not give a shit about flags altogether. We don't need a nation, we need friends.

We want good living conditions for all people, and we want everybody to be able to take part in deciding what that would mean, and not have some administration or parliament argue that bogus capitalist constraints determine that wages, welfare, and asylum seeker support are sufficient.

### Why internationalist?

We see internationalism as an attempt at overcoming national frontiers. Which is why the concept as it prevails in some left circles gives us a headache: internationalism does not mean automatically supporting any resistance movement in the whole world. We do not uncritically offer solidarity with any insurrectionary movement but first ask for their reasons. We think the logic that 'our enemy's enemy is our friend' is illogical. We tie our support to the emancipatory aims which we fight for with arguments. We criticize people who are into martial habits and male dominance, request party discipline and don't reduce workload but want to elect the 'employee of the month,' as well as people who tolerate racism and antisemitism in their midst, or reject homosexuality and transgendered people. We don't have anything in common with people whose critique of capitalism consists of making bankers personally responsible for all evils caused by it, nor with those who want to sustain an imaginary 'purity of race', or those who only dislike dominance when it is exercised by the wrong people. Even if we happen to criticize the same dominance, we don't want random success, but success with our political goals. Those who forget what they struggle for just to achieve greater numbers can override our political goals.

What then do we understand by internationalism? Presently, people are divided as 'nations' and 'peoples'. Our goal is to make all people see that these separations distract them from uniting with each other. There is only one humankind. The love of one's 'own' nation - for any reason - is the exact opposite of the political solidarity amongst all people we want to achieve. Patriotism and international political solidarity are mutually exclusive. Patriots will, sooner or later, turn out to be our opponents as their goal is, in the end, not the liberation of all.

This explains our reasons for internationalism. Why confine our discussion within the borders we fight against, when we feel a lot closer to a feminist in Benin than to a racist in Berlin? On the other hand, capitalism's constitution is a global one. The anti-authoritarian communism we struggle for, which will finally have production follow needs, is unthinkable to establish in a single country. It would take little time for a military intervention to destroy, as we have

seen before, any attempt at setting up conditions for a better life for all. And in a world economy based on the division of labor, one would have to support the criteria of competition and the capitalist economy to have access to things one could not produce or harvest in one's own region, which would have an enormous effect on one's own need-driven production. That is why we have to organize, even in times when a revolution is not in sight. In these times, when we are only a small minority, we can build up structures which function beyond language barriers. Structures which make it possible to create the forms of organization for revolutionary times, so that once events unfold, we can discuss a liberated society in the most non-hierarchical way possible, which we think is a form of communication that has to be tested and learned. How can hierarchies of knowledge be eroded, how can we make sure it is not just always the male or older ones talking? But also: how can we write texts together, so we can all understand them but without making things more simple than they are? What forms of organization could prove useful? We want to give it a try!

Are you up for it, too? Contact us! If you know a group or collective with the same aims, then let us know! Would you like to help us distribute this magazine, or know a good spot in your neighborhood that should have it for people to pick up? Get in touch, we can send you copies free of charge (though it might take us a while)!

But for now, have fun reading! And if you have criticism for our articles, drop us a line, too!

---

#### Further reading:

*State, World Market, and the Reign of False Freedom. 20 Theses against State, Nation, Capitalism*

[WWW.UMSGANZE.ORG/OTHER-LANGUAGES]

KITTENS LONDON: *Why antinational*

[WWW.JUNGE-LINKE.ORG/EN]

[PLATYPUS1917.ORG]

[SIC.COMMUNISATION.NET]



# Expanding The Floor Of The Cage?

Why we need a revolution. And why a revolution is not enough.

One solution – revolution! A-, Anti- Anti-capitalista - Overthrow the System, revolution anarchista! The revolution is my girlfriend! And all the rest of it. At demonstrations, on t-shirts, in lyrics: the magic word "revolution" has a big importance in left images and language. But when we actually start some form of activism – at university, at school, in groups or autonomous centres – our activities can often seem far away from fundamental political change. Much rather we go to anti-Nazi rallies, meet in reading groups, criticize dominant male talking at the student council, or block nuclear waste transports. Sometimes, when we read a text or write a call for a demo this "revolution" pops up, but it always seems to be an empty phrase, somewhat detached from our daily lives. In the following, the magic word will lose its magic and the empty phrase will be filled with some content. So why do we want something like that – a basic change of society, a break with existing conditions? And in which cases are smaller changes – reforms – enough?

## Reforms are not enough

We don't want a revolution because it is cool. Of course, we can enjoy all of these things: posters with masked guys (sometimes and more and more: women, too) hurling rocks, pictures of the Zapatista uprising in Mexico or historical accounts of the Kronstadt rebellion

in 1921. We are actually quite glad that all we have for supposed "normal" things like patriotism, racism, sexism, homophobia or capitalism is an outstretched middle finger. And that what we want is something totally, totally different. But in fact, it's not about aesthetics, being cool, a big "fuck you" gesture or about being dogmatically grounded in abstract revolutionary principles. We want a revolution because some conditions simply can't be changed step by step. Instead, some kind of turning point is needed – hopefully sooner than later – where a large proportion of people says: "Nyet. This capitalist mode of production, what a silly thing! It's time to fundamentally restructure society."

An example may illustrate how we come to this conclusion: Every day about 30,000 people die as a consequence of malnutrition. For a long time there have been attempts to ease the situation – emergency aid, genetic engineering to improve crop yields, boosting the local economy by help of microfinancing, and always new UN targets to reduce world hunger. They all fail, it's devastating. When, at the same time, there is food overproduction in Europe, the suggestion seems reasonable to bring these goods to poorer regions. Oftentimes, this suggestion is struck down as naive because it would destroy local economies. This point illustrates the very insanity of the capitalist mode of production, where it makes more sense to destroy food surplus than to help starving people with

it – because by helping them even more people would starve in the long run! Instead, everyone is supposed to be enabled to participate in the competition of the market economy. The only problem is: Where there is a competition there will inevitably be losers. As long as money is needed to buy food, large quantities of losers will starve. We don't have any idea how to modify this perfidious logic via reforms (if you know better, please send us an email!). Until then, to make hunger history we don't see any other possibility than a revolution in the current mode of production.

But it's not even necessary to look at faraway regions. Even in everyday life, one runs up against the limits of capitalism: When someone is hungry but doesn't have any money and therefore steals cheese in a supermarket, they get into trouble: annoyed cashier, aggressive security personnel, abusive policemen, police station, getting charged. The behavior of "not taking part in their game" certainly didn't abolish any form of authority and nobody is better off afterwards (apart from maybe a sadistic cop). The same goes for the idea of moving to the countryside with some friends to grow carrots to live on. If people enjoy this they certainly should do it. However it's no skin off capitalism's nose. In short: Capitalism is a tough nut to crack. It's no use to just scratch the surface. For production to not be focused on producing profit anymore – with the abovementioned consequences – it needs to be fundamentally altered.

We imagine this revolution as a kind of "collective self-liberation," as a joint process that takes our personal needs and desires as a starting point while focusing on fundamental change. Before that, however, we need to become aware of what actually constitutes these needs and desires. Because not every revolution is necessarily emancipatory. Moreover, left symbolism often lets one think that a revolution is a matter of half a day. Some highly symbolic building gets stormed, the red and black flag hoisted and - hey! - we have a new society! When we talk about a "rupture", however, we actually envision quite a long process. Who knows, maybe there will be such a symbolic day with stormed, burning buildings. But more importantly, there will be discussions before and after about how to create a new society.

### More than a revolution

At the same time there are some differences when we talk about other forms of hierarchy than capitalism: if we aim for a society that doesn't produce for profit but for our needs that doesn't mean that sexism will automatically be obliterated. Chances are high that again it would be men talking in the councils (or however we would organize ourselves). Maybe someone would insult their lesbian neighbor. And we have to assume that many people would continue to be racist. In the long run, different economic conditions could change this: in a world without nations, without an absurd division of labor, the idea of splitting people up into good "natives" and bad "strangers" wouldn't make sense. And if the economy had no structural need for high and low-paying jobs, people would no longer have to foster the illusion that women have some kind of special talent for domestic work, raising children, being a secretary or taking care of the elderly.

But returning to the original topic: What we want is "the good life". And it would be cynical to say, as some do: "Sure, it will change after the revolution". Because even in the here and now there are some strategies for changing ways of thinking and behaving that make life a little more worthwhile and certainly more emancipatory. This change in the "here and now" makes less sense concerning capitalism than it does concerning some other power relations: Concerning capitalism, the first step is to understand how it actually works, what attempts at abolition there already have been and why they mostly failed, so that we know how to do it better next time. The means to achieve this knowledge are reading and learning, discussing and organizing, in reading groups, workshops, seminars, groups. Ever closer to the day when the majority of people says: "Nyet!"

Much more concrete possible courses of action are available when it comes to racism for example. If in the supermarket I see some "white" grandpa harassing a "black" person in the

queue in a racist way, it makes sense to intervene. In order to show Nazi grandpa limits, in order to support the person who experiences racism and in order to make clear in public that racism isn't accepted. It may not make a difference in grandpa's head, but some things will become less acceptable. Or when a shop assistant asks a woman looking at drills if she is searching for a nice birthday present for their boyfriend, it may make sense for someone to point out that it's her passion to drill - while at the same time thinking how silly it is to state such nonsense only to unhinge his old-fashioned perception of women a bit.

Or when an unknown woman dares to ask, hunkered in a coochie-coochie-coo-style over a buggy: "Is it a boy or a girl?" One might answer: "I don't know. That's its decision, but it's not able to talk yet". Thus challenging her odd belief only two genders exist. In theory, it's well imaginable that categories such as "man", "woman", "transgender", "gay", "asexual" and so on may become unimportant to people. In order to make the absurdity of these categorizations clear no "revolution" is necessarily needed. Changes in meaning can happen step by step. It makes sense to start with yourself, to question the clichés in one's own roles and head.

### Expand the floor of the cage, but remember it's still a cage

In short: We don't think it's wise to hold everything off until "after the revolution", just like Christians hold off on their Kingdom of Heaven. "Reform" is often used as a swearword. "Reformist" sounds uncool and seems boring. However, we don't really mind, because again, it's not about being cool or uncool, but rather the best strategies for changing society. And we approve of everything that makes people happier, that focuses on people's needs and repels authority. If these are strategies that work in the here and now, that's perfect.

One example of this could be non-hierarchical decision-making. The editors of "Routes sucrées" are a collective for good reason, consisting of different age groups and experiences. Perhaps our work would be more "efficient" with one boss who makes decisions and arranges duties. But we want to live in a world where the opinions and needs of every single person count, where no one has to feel small and insignificant, gets bossed around or has less to say. And it makes sense to get better at dealing with each other in a non-hierarchical way, with all the difficulties that come with it - because of course even in formally non-hierarchical groups there are hierarchies that must be examined.

Another example could be leftist "free spaces" such as alternative housing projects or squats. Certainly, they are only partially "free" - the existence of squatted buildings is dependent on official decisions. And often, much energy is used up talking about the tedious details of living

together. It's hard to say how this would look like in a free society where you wouldn't have to worry about utility bills and rent. The converse argument - "It doesn't work in my shared flat, how could it ever work in a free society?" - is invalid, because it ignores the lack of money and time as reasons why "it doesn't work". In any case, in a liberated society there will - finally - be a need to decide all things collectively. It makes sense to "practice", because political struggles are always a communal process. And even in the time of Facebook and cell phones, all the reading groups, events and political meetings need concrete physical places. For this, left "free spaces" like squats, housing co-ops, and autonomous centers form essential infrastructure.

### Lost in the revolutionary supermarket

Reforms, meaning small steps towards a better world, always involve dangers: It's easy to get caught up in the small changes and forget that the aim actually was something "completely different". Most people might want this in the long run, but often lose sight of this initial aim in their daily work to ameliorate refugee rights or other injustices via political parties or NGOs. That's why in the middle of all these non-hierarchical experiences we don't want to forget the fact that the reason for all the harm isn't only the bad behavior of individuals, but that this society structurally encourages people to behave like crap. And that the current mode of production systematically produces harm. And that many basic changes won't happen without a complete overthrow of existing society. Therefore: To the books and onto the barricades!

---

#### For further reading

##### *Reform, Revolution and Resistance*

Audio by the PLATYPUS AFFILIATED SOCIETY  
[WWW.PLATYPUS1917.ORG]

##### MURRAY BOOKCHIN: *Anarchism, Marxism and the Future of the Left*

[AK PRESS, 352 P.]

##### *How (the critique of) capitalism DOESN'T WORK: 7 Left Myths about capitalism*

[WWW.SOCIAL-ECOLOGY.ORG]



# "Fuck You, I Won't Do What You Tell Me!"

Interview with Tom Morello of "Rage Against the Machine"

Tom Morello is the guitarist of "Rage Against The Machine" and plays as a solo guitarist as "The Nightwatchman". As a political activist he supports labor struggles, immigrant rights and fights against the death penalty. Straßen aus Zucker met Tom before a concert in honor of the 100th anniversary of the communist folk singer Woody Guthrie.

In our latest issue we deal with strategies for radical social change. According to you, what are the best strategies?

*I always hesitate to dispense advice for situations I am not part of, but I will tell you about my experience in the US, and if there's some lessons to be drawn for your readers, they can decide for themselves. Over the course of the last year things have changed dramatically in the US. I know that in Europe, the issue of class is more hotly debated among people who want to see a different world. That is not the case in the US. That's the thing that's been the most encouraging about the pro-union and the Occupy movement there. The one thing we have on our side is that people feel their backs are against the wall economically, the contrast is more stark than ever, and people's*

*interests are much more clearly visible in times where there is this global economic downturn. With regards to organizing strategies, continuing to think outside the box is the only way to gain ground. Because of the monolithic power structure that we face and that is against us.*

What do you mean by this "monolithic power structure"?

*The realization that it's not 99 vs. 1 %, it's 0.001%. The untouchable decision-makers – whether it's the IMF, World Bank, G8. People who divide the world for their best interests. That means if AIDS drugs are not distributed in Africa because it's less profitable – so be it. That's not affecting their families. If it means that much of the US becomes a sweatshop – so be it, if it doesn't affect their yachts.*

But isn't capitalism a system in which we all have to play a part in our everyday lives? Or do you really think the problems are caused by conscious decisions by the people who own the yachts?

*NoNoNo, let me make that clear. If the people who own the yachts behaved differently they'd be out of their jobs. It's structural, the structure is set. But those roles are a crucial part of the structure.*

What role does alternative media play in organizing? You yourself run a website for activists, [axisofjustice.net](http://axisofjustice.net).

*I think alternative media is crucial. But I think it's important not only to educate via alternative media but also to inspire. My twin passions*



are music and activism. I always wanted my music to be political and I always wanted my activism to be as much fun as my music. For a while I was a door-to-door canvasser, I was horrible at it and it was boring. Finding a role in the struggle that matches your talents is I think important. There were always people who approached me after shows and asked me, "how can I get involved?". They were people just like me, teenagers just like me, who saw that the world wasn't right, but there was no way to plug in. So the first thing that we did was a grid where you click the state you were in and the issue you were interested in, so this afternoon you could get involved. That was the idea, to be an easy bridge to activism.

#### And what role can music play?

*Speaking specifically for Rage Against The Machine: There were plenty of fans who never learned about politics. But there were many more who never knew anything about the politics before listening to the music and they were introduced to a whole world of ideas by that band. For me it was The Clash and Public Enemy. They didn't teach me about issues, they made me realize I wasn't alone in what I was thinking. And there was a truth to both the lyrics and the music that resonated with me, that made me think that there is a world beyond the confines of the small conservative town I grew up in.*

#### What was it that got you into politics actually?

*My introduction to politics was that I grew up being the only black kid in an all-white town. And from the time I was four, five years old I experienced racism first hand, so the feeling of injustice was very personal when I was a little kid.*

#### But how people interpret these experiences is a whole different matter. Whether they see them as racism, or for example blame themselves instead.

*That's right. In that regard I can only thank my mother. When I had these experiences as a five-year-old she told me about Malcolm X. So that certainly was an introduction to self-defense and the idea that injustice needs to be confronted. And in high school there was a small group of us, the anarchist contingent, who were pretty sure we had it all figured out. We were going to leave the high school a burning husk by the time we were done. And we had an underground paper and did some controversial things. But the protest, when I was best at it, was also a form of self-expression. It was enjoyable to write these articles and that I had to research – whether it was Central American death squads or apartheid or the cartoons that we drew for the stories about the fact that the dean of the school was a dick.*

#### What do you think about the recent Occupy movement, what is its influence in the United States?

*I played at about 16 Occupy camps. Now a lot of the encampments have been pushed out. But what it did provide for a time and which remains in the consciousness of the people who are interested in changing the world is a location. It's not just I'm getting a twitter about a thing or once every six months we march against the war. No, on any given day you can just stop by. It's like things aren't right and here's a community of people who feel the same way. A key part of that was that it made people feel a lot less isolated. And I think it's isolation that makes people feel like they can't do anything.*

#### And did the Occupy movement in the US have any impact on young people at all?

*Occupy has opened the door to a new generation of young people to the realization that they can have something to say, they can have their hand on the wheel of power. There was a lot of frustration in a lot of younger people prior to Occupy. They asked themselves: What are the steps that I can take as a 19-year-old to do anything? In the US it's so insular. But when people realize that even in a small way on one particular afternoon they can have some sort of impact, the world was different than what it was when they woke up that morning, that's a lightbulb that can go off. If you start pulling that thread the whole sweater can start to unravel.*

#### You are a member of the radical union "Industrial Workers of the World" and support labor struggles. What do you think – should we fight for better working conditions or for the abolishment of work?

*In my youth I was the fiery anarchist in high school. I had it all figured out and I was gonna let everybody know exactly what utopia was gonna be like, I was gonna name the streets of utopia before lunchtime in the cafeteria. I had it all worked out. Now I look at it more as what my role is in social justice struggles. My final goal is a society that is just: that is economically just, politically just, and that is one where everyone's basic needs are met. On a day-to-day basis, how does that play out? If we force a right-wing governor of Wisconsin to quit that doesn't end capitalism. But it strikes a blow for justice and it provides the belief that we can have a momentous change like that. At one point the Berlin wall was thought to be an eternal thing, that apartheid was something that was never gonna go away, that women would never be allowed to vote. Those are things which were entrenched as the idea that we must always be a capitalist society where there are rich and poor. Any world you can envision, you can make happen, but you have to begin taking some steps to do it.*

---

---

#### For further reading:

*About Occupy and a critique of capitalism*  
[WWW.KOSMOPROLET.ORG/ENGLISH]

*It's not enough to be angry - Fight capitalism 100%*  
[WWW.UMSGANZE.ORG]



# Start With Yourself!?

**About uneaten McDonald's burgers, unworn H&M clothes and unbooked journeys.  
Or: How consumer criticism is often too simple.**

There are some perennial discussions in leftist groups, at the dinner table of housing co-ops, and amongst activist friends, among them the question of how far your individual behaviour is able to change social relations. Was MICHAEL JACKSON right when he sang: "I am starting with the man in the mirror"? Debaters on both sides seem to have a point. A lot of people who have found their way to the political left actually started their political awareness by questioning their own behaviour, more precisely their own consumption behaviour. Whether it is boycotting McDonald's restaurants, H&M clothes or Coke, the refusal of animal products, avoiding specific travel destination and certain means of transportation or buying TransFair products, they all have one thing in common: They all attempt to change bad conditions through the means of one's personal behaviour.

Against that stands a form of criticism which could be paraphrased as: "It's the system, stupid!"

defamed as being mere charity. But as much as we share the opinion that suffering is mostly produced by social means, and therefore can only be replaced via a radical program of abolition, we also share the opinion that such a critique is often too simple.

## **Changing what we can, where we can**

The area in which a reflected and potentially altered behaviour may reduce suffering already takes an enormous place in our own lives. We are talking about gender relations. On the one hand, it can be seen that some changes in gender relations perfectly adapt to current demands of capital and the state. For example the current ideal in western countries that women are supposed to be able to combine child care and a job is based on the fact that modern states cannot afford to exclude half its citizens from being used by capital. On the other hand there are no objective

trophies to them, a change within your circle of friends or your political group is likely to occur in the end. This dynamic is quite similar for racist stereotypes. Besides a critique of the content of such stereotypical images, which stand against every form of human emancipation, this demands reflection about the images in one's own head, as well as a change of personal thoughts, feelings and actions. Whereas oftentimes individual action is attached to a certain form of abstinence, in this case it is different: To free oneself from these kinds of images creates a win-win situation for everyone.

Another field where people can start with themselves is communication. Even in left circles communication is often riddled with authority. A result of this, apart from the direct suffering this can cause, is the emergence of status hierarchies. But if the next revolution should really be about liberation it needs people who don't just want to follow anymore and who believe that everyone has something important to say. An analysis and change of one's own communication style is necessary so that this doesn't result in individual fights between people who want to become authority figures.

## **The privilege of being poor in rich countries**

As the examples above have emphasised the importance of individual action in order to make change, the following examples will show its limitations. Most notably, in the following examples the call for different behaviour is actually proof of a misleading critique of capitalist production. To start off: When some of the editors of this fine magazine made a plan to escape the cold winter and fly to Morocco, they tried to convince a friend who had little money: "Bungalows there are just two Euros". The friend, however, was shocked. He complained about our joy, because supposedly cheap prices are based on people's poverty there. "But", we replied, "We can't afford expensive trips. Is staying at home the answer?"

Generally speaking, changing personal behaviour is extremely limited when it comes to economic relations. This is because of the way in which stuff is produced for people to live, and the reasons why. It is not done based on people's needs and how to fulfil them. Instead, companies speculate that a product increases consumer



Whoever wants to change his or her behaviour individually is under an illusion because this can only be a drop in the ocean, and therefore is senseless. Eventually the sentence (which the communist thinker THEODOR W. ADORNO actually meant somewhat differently) is brought up: "There is no right life in the wrong one". Attempts to alleviate suffering in the here and now are

bounds which deter anyone from breaking out of the silly conceptions of how one has to be and how to present oneself. In other words: If a lot of people refuse the idea that girls and women are soooo sweet and need to be protected or have the world explained to them even by progressive men, and that boys and men are soooo strong and smart that even emancipated women can only be

demand. Therefore they buy the labour of people who need to earn a living. This relation is therefore founded on the exploitation of people living in misery who have nothing to offer but their ability to work. Those people – more or less all of us – are confronted with a "silent constraint." It is not forbidden not to work, but if you don't sooner or later you won't be able to pay your rent. Former German chancellor Schröder made that clear by saying that laziness was okay, as long as lazy people did not claim state benefits. Very funny. This makes it sound as though having no money is your own fault. But it's exactly the other way around! If companies assume they can make money with a certain product, you are allowed to produce it for them. How much money you can earn mainly depends on one thing: how many competitors there are. If there are a lot of people who can do what you can, you have to give away labour and time without earning a lot. Mostly people have to handle their money carefully because it is hard enough to buy the necessary things and to fulfil some of those small dreams that have not vanished already.

When the winter is unbearable, an expensive vacation is not affordable for most people – and besides, the reason why luxurious hotels are expensive is certainly not because wages are any higher there. But what is the result of not going on vacation at all? A lot of people in Morocco live from tourism. This is not meant to make tourism seem purely beneficial for the people living there. But it is no help to them if you spend your holiday in Germany instead. In this example, individual behaviour is tangled up in the capitalist economy and its implicit laws. In a similar vein, no one would label it an act of emancipation to forgo a job after an interview in order to leave it to another applicant. This would be a form of charity which certainly not everyone can afford, and therefore is not a form of behaviour that can be universalized. So do we instead demand that at least rich people buy organic food and TransFair products? No, they should rather imitate a capitalist named FRIEDRICH ENGELS, who financed the studies of his buddy KARL MARX. This would help to find a solution which is able to help everyone.

### **Change your burger and your pants?**

No one can proclaim that not buying H&M clothes or renouncing Burger King and McDonald's is something one has to be able to afford. Different forms of boycott have been organised against all those products. They have focused on collective action to make companies change their behaviour. Boycott movements actually have succeeded with certain initiatives. The fear of bad press has pushed some companies change their form of production. Moreover, an awareness of important topics – like worker's rights, the environment, or repressive regimes – can be achieved as well. However, the practise

of boycotting is not able to achieve anything beyond that and remains symbolism limited to a small number of companies or products. The production practises of the competitor companies often work in similar ways, which is ignored by boycotters. Moreover, a success in boycotting a company usually brings across the idea that the terrible effects of the markets are only caused by single companies. The possibility is evoked that misery might disappear if bad intentions are just exchanged with good ones. Such an assumption might explain the popularity of this kind of criticism: Hunting for the guilty protagonists earns more "likes" than questioning markets and states which are assumed to be beneficial. But should one therefore abstain from boycotting?

For a few years there has been a McDonald's in Kreuzberg, an 'alternative' neighbourhood of Berlin, which for a long time was guarded by ten cops every night. Obviously, opinions on the company differ within left structures. A grassroots initiative in Kreuzberg targeted the company's working conditions. At first sight, working conditions in a traditional snack bar might be more comfortable, but usually the workers in these small businesses have to work seven days a week. It remains unclear whether it would be better for them to work at McDonald's, where they are actually covered by social security. Furthermore, at a large company there are formal criteria for hierarchies, as opposed to working conditions influenced by family structures which often are dominant in snack bars. Is this a recommendation on what to eat? No, it's simply too expensive at McDonald's, chips are wishy-washy and the McChicken is too small. But criticism of big companies is often superficial and overlooks or idealises equally problematic things occurring within smaller companies. It often ignores why the salaries are kept low. H&M and other clothing companies are also often criticised, typically aimed at child labor. Even people who criticise the general conditions which workers have to deal with in countries with low labour costs cannot deny the special nastiness of child labour. Indeed, several local changes can be achieved via boycott and public campaigns, but making child labor illegal oftentimes is not helpful for the children concerned. Due to several reasons children are cheap workers and have to contribute to their family's income. Even though international companies ostracise child labor, working children are a part of capitalism. Moreover there are children who organise themselves in order to enforce their rights. There have been, for example, protests of working children against the abolition of child labor. In this case, abolition would actually make how they make a living illegal. They would suffer even more from the dependency on their bosses and constantly fear the cops. In some cases children's protests (and the protests of those who exploit them) were successful, causing

changes in laws and constitutions. Child labor is a tragic example of making things worse by having good intentions.

### **What remains?**

So how does all this differ from the opinion that there is no possibility to change anything, already criticised above? It differs because we look at the claims of people who believe in changing things via certain behaviour. We don't disparage certain behaviour in an abstract way. And we don't ridicule or look down upon ameliorative actions, for example helping refugees by protesting against deportation, even though they may only be a drop in the ocean. Such actions are desperate attempts to reduce misery and to stay human under the current conditions. And it is therefore understandable that some kind of change needs to happen instantly when one cannot bear this horror any longer. But just because of this fact, we should avoid focusing on scandal without considering systematic conditions. Naming and explaining those conditions to others could be an important element of personal behaviour. Future insurrections have to be organised as well. Those who claim to have all those systematic conditions in the back of their head, but sees an ultimate need for very concrete actions doesn't share our criticism. This person denies the fact that the very ruling principles of this economic system are responsible for the situations where one sees the need to reduce misery by altering individual behaviour to remain endless and immeasurable. You could go to cinema or give your money to a person who is begging at the station instead. You could go on holiday or support a project like this magazine. The capitalist economy is responsible for an endless occurrence of such situations. And therefore there can be no satisfying answer to the question whether you should change your consumption habits or not. Everyone has to decide that for her- or himself. Learning names of bad companies by heart instead of using that energy for reflecting one's own racist or sexist behaviour to avoid concrete misery seems to miss the point. And those who believe that changes in consumptive behaviour might cause fundamental changes, if only a lot of people took part, harbour under an illusion. And it is those people who in the end stand in the way of real change.

---

#### **Watch and listen more:**

SLAVOJ ZIZEK's *thoughts on consumption, ethics and charity*

[[WWW.YOUTUBE.COM](http://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM) - TYPE IN "RSA" AND "ZIZEK"]

*Seven Left Myths About Capitalism*

[[WWW.SOCIAL-ECOLOGY.ORG/2012/09/SEVEN-LEFT-MYTHS-ABOUT-CAPITALISM](http://WWW.SOCIAL-ECOLOGY.ORG/2012/09/SEVEN-LEFT-MYTHS-ABOUT-CAPITALISM)]

Audio: *Consumption and Consumerism in Capitalism: Myths and Reality*

[[WWW.RUTHLESSCRITICISM.COM](http://WWW.RUTHLESSCRITICISM.COM)]



© Thomas Alan

# Actually Existing Socialism?

**What we think about the Soviet Union & Co. and why their horror is ever the more reason to fight for communism.**

**"But it doesn't work, look at the last time"**

Whoever criticizes capitalism has sooner or later been confronted with this phrase. A lot of responses to a fundamental criticism of existing social relations point to the failure of so-called "actual existing socialism" in the Soviet Union and the GDR as "proof" that there are no alternatives to capitalism. "Look, maybe capitalism isn't brilliant," so the argument goes, "but any other way of organizing human society inevitably ends up in a dictatorship."

A lot of leftists in return think that this is a stupid argument and that one doesn't need to deal with this brand of so-called socialism and its crimes. But if we're looking for an alternative to capitalism it's clear that we can't avoid dealing with the problem of what was once called 'communism' or 'actually existing socialism' by people on both sides: its opponents in the West and its representatives in the East. Our aim here is not to discredit the search for a fundamentally different model of society – one which is based on the needs of human beings – and we certainly won't be equating the states of the Eastern Bloc with the Nazi regime. Instead, we want to make

it clear that our idea of a communist society actually has very little in common with either of the former dictatorships.

But what exactly was this 'actually existing socialism'? According to those in power in those days, the people had embarked on a path towards the construction of a classless, egalitarian society. But since this classless society had obviously not been achieved yet, they called it 'actually existing socialism' instead.

## **'Actually existing socialism' I: Dictatorship over rather than of the proletariat**

When Karl Marx deals with the transition from capitalist to communist systems, he speaks of a period of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat'. During this stage, the proletarians who have come to power are compelled to defend the revolution from the former ruling class. Once this danger has been dispelled, the institutions necessary for doing so, such as the state and military apparatus, wither away because they are simply no longer needed.

The rulers of the Eastern Bloc states appealed to this 'dictatorship of the proletariat' as the

ideological justification for their instruments of rule and structures of power. In the course of events, the demand for broad-based self-determination on the part of working people actually turned into its exact opposite: the dictatorship of party bureaucracy over the vast majority of the population.

Under LENIN's leadership in 1917, the October Revolution led to the Bolshevik faction of the Social Democratic Workers' Party taking over government. Immediately afterwards, the people managed to establish real popular self-determination for the first time. This was clear, for example, in the fact that workers were able to plan industrial production themselves, collaboratively, whereas previously they had always had to implement orders handed down from above.

But this phase didn't last long. It was soon brought to an end by the dictatorship of a small party clique, a system introduced by LENIN and taken to its extremes by STALIN. After STALIN's death, the personality cult that had developed around him and the Soviet leadership was abandoned, and a period of 'destalinization' began. Crimes that had been committed by the state were also addressed to a certain extent, though the authoritarian rule of the party bureaucracy

over the population and extensive control of almost every area of life nevertheless continued in all the Eastern Bloc countries.

### **'Actually existing socialism' II: Liberation through instead of from labor**

The Eastern Bloc countries promised their inhabitants an economic system that would function without mass unemployment, without the principle of competition, and without exploitation. But in fact, the Eastern Bloc countries failed to develop a proper communist economic system. There was actually no fundamental break with the principles that determine capitalist economies.

It would be more accurate to say that those in power in these countries imitated the mechanisms of capitalism. They essentially just changed the company name from 'private company' to 'nationally owned company'. The basic criteria of capitalist production – exchange, money, wages, and profit – were not really called into question. This is clear enough from the fact that even the 'actually existing socialist' states were in competition with one another and the capitalist states and even used military means to obtain spheres of influence at a global level. Those in power in these so-called socialist states were in fact eager to compete with capitalism in its most central categories: the pressure to work, the need to be efficient nevermind the effect on people. Pretty idiotic – so no big surprise that capitalism won this game in the end.

In everyday life under 'actually existing socialism' these developments manifested themselves, amongst other things, in the predominance of a fully-fledged labor fetishism. People were set to work simply to expand the wealth of the state, rather than that of the population. Others had to do largely pointless or superfluous work in order to create the impression of 'full employment'. Thus labor became more than a necessary evil that you only do when it has to be done. People had to work just as much as they had under capitalism.

### **'Actually existing Socialism' III: Hard-working bodies, hardened souls**

This fetishization of work was only one part of this so-called socialist ideal. Hard work was also supposed to toughen the body, and the demand for a moralistic and ascetic way of life was reminiscent of the dreary and oppressive atmosphere of protestant churches. But when every sign of weakness is condemned and every demonstration of emotions labeled as 'petty bourgeois', the necessary foundations of a society that is based on needs cannot be laid: the capacity for empathy, non-authoritarian behavior and an attempt at non-violent and needs-based communication. Now, why do we come up with this point? Because we see that who-

ever wants to be successful in capitalism has to toughen up and strengthen those bits of him- or herself that are authoritarian and violent. That doesn't mean calling for everyone to be 'good' and altruistic. There's already enough altruism in our society, leading people to willingly die for 'their' nation. No, what is needed is an interest in realizing one's own needs and bringing these desires across in a non-violent manner. In our experience, the realization of one's own authoritarian ways can be quite scary. But it is the first step toward changing them. So, back to 'actually existing socialism' and its cult of toughness: An authoritarian personality developed that was comparable to capitalist society. Therefore, we are not surprised what cruelties people who called themselves 'communist' were capable of doing. A society that is not interested in supporting people's capability for empathy and instead advocates and is built on authoritarianism and toughness is the very opposite of what we would call an emancipatory society.

### **'Actually existing Socialism' IV: Was failure inevitable?**

When people criticize the former Eastern dictatorships, others object that they emerged out of seriously difficult circumstances. Their starting conditions are supposed to have been far more difficult than those of their competitors in the West.

And indeed: the October Revolution in Russia happened despite severe pressure from the capitalist powers in Europe. The West supported internal enemies of the revolution – the 'white' counter-revolutionary groups – as much as it possibly could. In particular, Germany – which would become Nazi Germany a few years later – exerted an enormous amount of pressure on the Soviet leadership. They had to press on with industrialization, and with no small human sacrifice, in order to arm the country against an expected attack.

There is a kernel of truth to all these explanations. But they overlook the fact that revolutions always happen under very difficult conditions. A politics created under such circumstances must be prepared to deal with these problems rationally. Even within the communist parties at the time there were calls to create a liberated society of individuals coming together of their own free will. On sober reflection then, and to judge by these standards, 'actually existing socialism' clearly failed.

But pointing out these adverse circumstances should not give the false impression that the power structures of 'actually existing socialism' were based entirely on LENIN's Bolshevik ideology. 'Democratic centralism' does not inevitably lead to Stalinism. In practice, Lenin's 'vanguard party' was indeed the authoritarian rule of professional revolutionaries over their party base. This was for example evident from the fact that opposition was not permitted even within the party, and that the party base was strictly bound to the decisions of the party leadership.

In our view, purges come as no surprise given

a doctrine of Historical Materialism which sees the party as the vanguard of inevitable historical change. "Necessary processes" which stagnate or fail can be explained in two different ways. The first option is that such changes were ultimately not necessary after all. But unfortunately very few took this view, whether Lukács, left communists like GORTER or PANNEKOEK or Critical Theory. The other explanation starts with a search for the "culprits" for the failure. This explains the terribly long list of supposed counterrevolutionaries within the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and other countries. In this view of history, it is no surprise that Stalin and company became the biggest murderers of communists in all of history.

### **What now?**

Even if our reasons for addressing the issue of 'actually existing socialism' are entirely different from those of the political mainstream, in our view this project was indeed a catastrophe. But it would be stupid to conclude from this that the search for alternatives isn't worth the effort. The capitalist system we live under means constant terror. This terror takes the form of war, poverty, and oppression in the so-called 'developing countries', but also increasingly in the capitalist metropolises. One doesn't even have to mention the 30.000 people that die because of capitalism every day in order to point out that the search for alternatives to this economic system cannot wait one day longer.

---

#### **For further reading:**

*Historical Materialism – an anti-revolutionary theory of revolution*

[WWW.JUNGE-LINKE.ORG/EN]

HERMANN GORTER/ANTON PANNEKOEK/SYL-VIA PANKHURST: *Non-Leninist Marxism: Writings on the Worker's Councils*

[176P., RED AND BLACK PUBLISHERS]

ARNO LUSTIGER: *Stalin and the Jews.*

[450 P., ENIGMA BOOKS]

*A critique of Khmer Rouge ideology and practice*

[WWW.JUNGE-LINKE.ORG/EN]

*From 1917 to Perestroika: The Victory of Morality over Socialism*

[WWW.GEGENSTANDPUNKT.COM/ENGLISH/USSR/USSR-ALL.HTML]



# When the Birds and the Bees...

When sex and the state get it on...

## Sex, sex, sex... Have we caught your attention?

In case people are wondering why they're stumbling across this in a radical left-wing paper, or are hoping for a "juicy article;" well, then we can reveal it: This text deals with how gender and the state get it on with each other, and it's about feminism. Feminism? Wait a second, isn't that old hat? Something to do with madly screaming naked women from the 1960s? Why do start with that again?

## An old relationship...

Because: Whether it's just silly slogans and pick-up lines or male-dominated, dudeish behaviour in school, at work, within your circle of friends or the activist group – sexism is still a part of our everyday life. From "old boys' networks" in the university and economy which ensure that women don't get better paid jobs, to physics teachers who still believe that women aren't able to think as logically as men (a belief that in return causes quiet and insecure behavior on the part of girls), up to verbal and physical violence when two women kiss each other on the streets or maybe just do not fit into the mould of how a "real woman" should look like.

The roles that even we reproduce every day by these very notions, ideas and comments aren't new at all. Concepts of how girls and boys, men and women have to be have been in

existence for centuries. Over the development of capitalism in the 19th century, a rather clear-cut distinction between housework on the one hand and wage labour in the factories and coal mines on the other hand emerged, based on already existing distinct gender roles. It seemed only natural that the woman takes care of home and children, cleans, cooks for the family members who also cry on her shoulder, and for whom she does a lot of emotional work in general. In short: that she is responsible for the reproduction of her husband, so that he is able to bust his ass working the next day.

Although family structures have changed since then, this is more or less still the case these days. 90% of single parents are women. And even on the job market it's still mostly women who look after children, care for the sick and wash the old – all jobs which on average aren't paid very well.

## Cooking, Caring, Child rearing

Nonetheless: Nowadays, many things seem to look better in Western countries. Women have successfully struggled to improve their social situation: Women's suffrage, the sexual revolution and taking up university studies are regarded as a matter of course by most girls and women. And we don't want to deny that quite a lot has happened in the last few hundred years, especially since the 1960s women's movement's (yes, these "man-hating feminazis" that so many

people make fun of) assault on the hell of petit-bourgeoisie-desperate housewife existence. Over time these struggles finally found expression in law [*Translator's note:* all of the following examples are from Germany, but the developments are similar in most Western countries]: Women have been allowed to vote in Germany since 1918 (it took until 1971 in Switzerland). Whereas our mothers and grandmothers had to seek permission from their husbands before they were allowed to sign a job contract, free choice of employment has been in effect since 1977. In 1979 the father lost authority over "educational matters". Marital rape has been a criminal act since 1997 (but was prosecuted only at the request of the woman until 2004). And so on and so forth. Yes, one could almost think that the state is actually the greatest feminist of all. Because without financial incentives such as the parental allowance introduced in Germany in 2007, most fathers surely wouldn't bother to learn how to change diapers. This state payment is given to parents under the condition that both take a leave of absence from work to do child care. Likewise, some countries have introduced laws which enable a woman to go to court to fight discrimination in the recruitment of female workers.

That's all very well, but in this article we want to show that there are very particular reasons for governmental action in gender relations. And these reasons have nothing to do with the intention of fighting sexism, but are – directly or indirectly – connected to economic interests. Now,

one could say: Never mind, as long as the right things happen. Well, there's a catch: First of all it is clear that the individual laws are not about emancipation. Secondly: Whoever fights gender inequality will sooner or later in their struggle encounter structural limitations when turning to the state. And we definitely do not want sexist conditions to be slightly reformed, like old shit in new packaging.

### **When the stork comes...**

States have one primary task: making sure capitalism can run smoothly within their territory. Because only then do they have the chance to be well placed on the world market in relation to other states. To that end it needs a population which is to some degree satisfied and isn't going to rebel at any moment. It is on this basis that every emancipatory movement is examined by the state: claims and reform efforts which don't threaten the state's principal aim are frequently recognized, while others are suppressed. This was also the case regarding women's emancipation. Modern industrial nations can't afford not to utilize half their population as capable and willing laborers. This also means that rigid gender roles and stupid sexist images can at times be perceived as obstacles. Some of the above-mentioned improvements follow from this dynamic.

At the same time these improvements don't change the state's general interest in family and population policy, and with it the interest in the "female" body: in birth control, child-rearing and controlling who sleeps with whom. After all, we are talking about prospective citizens, as well as prospective workers. As stated in article 6 of Germany's Basic Constitutional Law: "Marriage and the family shall enjoy the special protection

of the state." This proves that the family is still a very important unit in the eyes of the state. Many say it is the "seedbed of the state" - yuk! But not all parents are to be this "seedbed": in the case of the above-mentioned parental allowance it's especially the high earners who profit the most - and this is how the state wants it. German Chancellor Angela Merkel said in 2006 at the German Employers' Federation Day, that "today we have the problem that 40% of academics have no children... This is a situation that a country which wants to call itself 'highly developed' cannot afford." That's how modern population politics works.

### **Blue or Pink?**

The state maintains the binary gender order through law and erases everything in between. Everywhere we encounter patterns and norms that we have to fit in - "Come on, act like a real lady", "Go prove that you're a real man"... People who don't feel like one or the other or that just do not (want to) fit into the mould of any of these (pre)dominant roles become outsiders in school, the sports club, at work. The state contributes by making it obligatory to tick either "male" or "female" on one's ID. This social and legal pressure creates a situation where intersex people born with so-called "ambiguous sexual characteristics" are forced to undergo surgery shortly after birth to settle any ambiguity that might upset the binary gender order.

### **Cuddle, Canoodle, Communism**

What all of the above shows is that: in the course of history many things have changed, and certainly nobody wants to fall behind the advantages that women's movements have

fought for. Nevertheless we should not have any illusions: These reforms fought for by social movements still only represent expansions within the norms of capitalism. This means that somehow everything remains unchanged: Capitalism won't be better just because homosexual marriages are allowed, because the birth control pill is available or because the child allowance is raised. Capitalism only adjusts itself to new circumstances so that the everyday horror may continue tomorrow as well.

But emancipation and gender equality mean more than simply having an equal right to be exploited. Emancipation based on state and nation can never be real emancipation. This means that apart from all the everyday struggles against sexism, we're gonna have to fight for a society without capitalism and states as well - and the other way round.

And if anyone is still interested in what happens in the bedroom I will tell you as much: The revolution is my girlfriend!

---

### **For further reading:**

FEMINST FUN: *Mash up gender-specific advertisement*

[WWW.GENDERREMIXER.COM]

NANCY FRASER: *Feminism, Capitalism and the Cunning of History*.

[NEW LEFT REVIEW 56, MARCH-APRIL 2009 ]

# **"It's Their Fault!"**

## **Capitalism. Crisis. Conflicts. Jews are blamed for almost everything.**

Antisemitism is one of the oldest and most persistent prejudices. Whether open and violently, or as a quiet opinion or attitude, it finds expression in everyday life including antisemitic graffiti on the streets or synagogue walls, desecration of Jewish cemeteries, strange comparisons between Israel and Nazi Germany, and statements in politics and the media. On school grounds "You Jew" can be heard as a swearword, in public debates financial investors and bankers are attacked as a "plague of locusts," an image reminiscent of biblical anti-Jewish stories. Even antisemitic conspiracy theories, like those concerning the attack on the World Trade Center, are popular. It is therefore not surprising that

according to a study by the Pew Research Center in Washington DC from 2008, about one quarter of all Germans were found to be antisemitic. But this issue is not confined only to Germany - antisemitism exists in Europe, Arab countries and many other regions of the world.

### **But what does antisemitism mean exactly?**

Antisemitism is the most common term for all forms of hostility against Jews. Historically, this hostility existed long before the advent of the term "antisemitism": Jews have been perceived as a threat for a long time. Whether in ancient

or medieval times, they have consistently been blamed for various perceived ills; their very existence seen as cause for religious, cultural and social problems. Antisemitism therefore describes different degrees of hostile attitudes against Jews. It operates with a variety of excluding prejudices and attributes that are ascribed to all Jews. You may have heard ideas of "the Jews" as alleged parasites, as people assumed to be greedy and deceitful.

But antisemitism not only stands for simple prejudices against Jews but also for a specific explanation of the way the world is arranged. In this world view Jews are held responsible for all the bad things happening in the world. This



characteristic distinguishes antisemitism from other forms of racism: "foreigners" are usually described as lazy and inferior. "The Jews", on the other hand, are described as influential and powerful. They are not only bad and threatening but also superior to others, and therefore hated.

### **Where does all that crap come from?**

Already at the beginning of Christianity a religiously motivated hatred against Jews arose: anti-Judaism. It helped Christians set themselves apart from Judaism, a religion that basically came to be equated with evil. In the Christian middle ages (5th to 15th century) this religiously motivated hatred spread further. It became accompanied by more and more anti-judaistic myths. Many stereotypes - for example of the rich and avaricious Jew - are left over from these times. Approximately two hundred years ago, with the beginning of the modern age, antisemitism changed significantly. Religious prejudices fused into economic, political, and cultural ones. This happened in a time of major social changes; upheavals and transformations, like the establishment of capitalism, were not understood by many people and brought fear

with them. Therefore, simple explanations were welcome. Allegedly, "the Jews" were undermining the national culture, dominating politics, as well as ruling the economy. These attributes almost inevitably suggested that the "Jews" were extraordinary powerful - so powerful they could rule the world.

At the same time science was intensely involved in the construction of an "Aryan race" and with it, racial antisemitism. Following the pseudo-scientific, biologicistic race ideology of the 19th century, Jews were not treated as a cultural or a religious denomination but as a distinct "race" with specific characteristics. In Nazi Germany, this racially motivated antisemitism led to the systematic mass murder of six million European Jews.

### **How antisemitism shows up today...**

Quite simple - by taking up older antisemitic tropes and adjusting them to the international situation. Thus new projections arise in debates around the Middle East conflict, the United States, or criticism of globalization and capitalism. Here, simplified explanations for current issues can sometimes tie in with antisemitism by once again putting the lion's share of the blame on the "Jews."

An additional fact is the rejection of remembering the Holocaust among many Germans, which plays a major role in antisemitism today.

After 1945 a new form of antisemitism developed, which can solely be explained by the specific German situation. This so-called "secondary antisemitism" describes the post-Holocaust hostility against Jews springing from a rejection of memory and guilt. Not despite, but because of Auschwitz, resentments against Jews arise. The majority of Germans then and now avoid addressing the fact that they, their parents, grandparents or great-grandparents were involved in the mass murder of six million Jews - actively, by looking the other way, by failing to resist. So they complain about how much longer must they atone and suffer, and how long their innocent grandchildren and great-grandchildren will have to pay for the Holocaust. They also harbor suspicions that Jews make a lot of money from the genocide with the help of a so-called "holocaust industry". Denial of guilt and responsibility, relativization of historical events and the desire for a "normal" way of relating to one's country are all part of this form of "secondary antisemitism". Alternately, Auschwitz is a tale made up by the Jews, the bombing of Dresden is equated with the Holocaust, or Israel's policies get compared to Nazi Germany. A lot of Germans



© Emmanuelle Huybrechts

despise Jews because their presence seems to remind them of their own Nazi past. They would much rather close this darkest chapter of German history once and for all and make peace with the nation - they want to be "normal" and happy nationalists again.

### **... and why and how it even exists among leftists.**

One point of reference for current antisemitism is the Middle East conflict. Often under the guise of criticizing Israeli policy, these kinds of conversations sometimes are an open invitation to rally against "the Jews" in general - especially because after the Holocaust open antisemitism is not really accepted anymore in public debates. Antisemitism, however, has never vanished - it therefore had to find new forms of expression. The new Jewish state founded after the Second World War provides a welcome projection screen. Certainly, not every criticism of Israeli policy is antisemitic. But often the lines to antisemitism are crossed. It becomes suspect when people call into question the very existence and right to self-defense of a country, while at the same time they have no problem with all sorts of other countries and wars in the world. Or when the TV presenter MICHEL FRIEDMAN, a German Jew, gets asked in an interview what he thinks of "his country's" policy. Of course, the interviewer meant Israel, implying that Friedman serves as some kind of representative for Israel even though he is from Germany and has lived there all his life. In the German context, when Israelis are called Nazis and a "Holocaust in Palestine" is discussed, this implies that the victims of the past have turned into today's perpetrators, doing exactly what has been done to them. All of which of course amounts to a crass relativization of the Nazi Holocaust, with the effect of making German guilt appear not quite as damning as it used to. Unfortunately this form of antisemitism is also reflected in leftist circles. Some of these positions can be found in the pro-Palestinian movement. When, for example, the Palestinian struggle is inseparably associated with the struggle for peace, for human rights, and for the political right of self-determination of the Palestinians. There is no recognition that for example suicide bombings have nothing to do with emancipation. Nor is it recognized that a radical antisemitism exists in groups like Hamas or Hizbollah. If these groups prevailed it would mean the death of five million Israeli Jews. But also gays, lesbians, feminists, transgender or even just people who want to dance to loud music would have a hard time according to the ideas of Hamas - presumably as would the rest of the population. Strange organisations for left-wing solidarity, aren't they?

Furthermore, antisemitic images sometimes appear in left debates revolving around a critique of globalisation and associated critiques of capitalism. For example when the negative consequences of globalisation are seen as a

conspiracy of "evil capitalists" and "imperialist politicians" - who are sometimes implied to be Jews or under Jewish control. Or when even capitalism itself is not seen as a system that is inherently set up in a harmful way; a set of social relations under which people are forced to go to work not to meet social needs but to create profit - not because the particular employers are so greedy but because competition forces them to. Instead, capitalism is understood as the work of individual capitalists or corporations - a critique of capitalists, not of capitalism. In some cases, people only have something against capitalism when it is about interest rates or financial markets. They don't see that the financial sphere is closely related to the production of goods and that criticizing it alone doesn't make much sense, ignoring that the real evil lies in a mode of production in which people are exploited through wage labor.

What does all of this have to do with antisemitism? As we have seen above, the equation of Jews with money was a pervasive image for centuries, it is firmly fixed in Western thought. Hence such a "foreshortened critique of capitalism" always provides a ready opportunity to make the Jews responsible for the ills of capitalistic society. In this logic, it must always be a group of people who possess the features that for centuries were associated with "the Jews" being the so-called "speculators" who cunningly "drain the people dry" economically by claiming interest and thus "dominate the whole world." This line of argument then - consciously or unconsciously - builds upon antisemitic stereotypes. Interestingly enough, this "abbreviated critique of capitalism" is also found among Nazi groups, where it is rooted in their ethnic and nationalist ideas.

### **To sum it up...**

Antisemitism is not just crazy prejudice against Jews but represents an even crazier form of false explanation of what is wrong in the world, according to the formula "They are to blame!". The reason and motivation for antisemitism are not always identical; antisemitic images are often updated and adapted to the current world situation. Thus they can be heard in discussions around the Middle East conflict, the United States or the critique of globalization. And because leftists also are part of a society shaped by antisemitism, they are certainly not immune to such stereotypes. All this is reason enough to develop a comprehensive and liberatory critique of capitalism, to understand the complex situation in the Middle East, and to be certain of the urgency of PRIMO LEVI's realization that "It happened, therefore it can happen again: this is the core of what we have to say. It can happen, and it can happen everywhere."

---

### **For further reading:**

Interview with MOISHE POSTONE: "*Zionism, anti-semitism and the left*"  
[WWW.WORKERSLIBERTY.ORG]

TOP B3RLIN: *Make a foreshortened critique of capitalism history! Without a radical critique every action becomes mere activism-reflections on the anti-G8 mobilisation 2007*  
[WWW.SHIFTMAG.CO.UK/?P=73]

The Greece-based group TERMINAL 119 is dealing with antisemitism and the left  
[WWW.TERMINAL119.GR]

SPENCER SUNSHINE: *Occupied with conspiracies? The Occupy Movement, Populist Anti-Elitism, and the Conspiracy Theorists*  
[WWW.SHIFTMAG.CO.UK/?P=512]

According to Wikipedia, pornography or porn is "the explicit portrayal of sexual subject matter that seeks to create the sexual arousal of viewers and their erotic satisfaction, usually by including erotically stimulating material such as nudity and the explicit portrayal of sexual activity". For many of us, it is now part of our daily lives. Maybe at some point we blushed upon finding the blue movie collection of our parents in the far back of the DVD drawer, or friends showed us some pics on their cellphones, perhaps some of us have

coming-out, tabloids regularly have headlines like: "Every woman is free to masturbate" and nowadays you can even question monogamy and consider the advantages of an open relationship – or deconstruct the categories 'friendship' and 'partnership' altogether. Movies like 'Drei' (translator's note: 'Three', a drama set in Berlin directed by TOM TYKWER centred on a 40-something couple who, separately, fall in love with the same man) have made it out of subculture. Sexuality can feel awesome, and it seems to make sense to enable as many people as possible

ways pretty sexist. Women usually appear only to pleasure men, they're always 'willing' and ready and often rather cutsey and in less powerful positions: as pupils, baby sitters, hostesses or nurses. Lesbian sex is never emancipated, but always only goes on until the guy enters the door, is totally turned on by the women and proceeds to show them what they had been missing the whole time. Naturally, the man is always up to it and can keep it up indefinitely. Of course all women match the established body norms – not all that much attention is being paid to the



## PorNo? PorYes? PorHaps...

Why not every Porno is hot.

surfing YouPorn, but even normal movies rarely do without a sex scene. The media even calls us "generation porno". If people discuss the matter, they often use catchwords like 'youth protection', 'PorNO' (translator's note: Campaign of the anti-pornography movement in Germany, which was influenced by ANDREA DWORKIN, author of Pornography: *Men Possessing Women*), 'censorship', 'loss of innocence', etc.

### I wanna sex you up

We neither feel like listening to prude moralizers pointing fingers at allegedly pervy teenagers, nor like watching this society's common sexism that continues to reduce women to sexual objects. And we don't find it that easy to form an opinion on porn movies. Still, we want to try to clarify a couple of things.

One thing is pretty clear to all of us: sex is not evil. Fortunately the times are over when you had to be married in order to have it. Education on contraception and sexually transmitted diseases is easily available, it has become easier, at least to some extent, to have a gay or lesbian

to have great sex with themselves and one, two, three, many others. So if sexuality is something positive to begin with, shouldn't this go as well for porn movies which aim is to "create the sexual arousal of viewers"?

### There's no sex in your violence

Well, there's just one little problem: In this society, sex is not only linked to desire, but often to violence and sexism, too. According to a study of Munich University, one in five women have experienced sexual assault during the course of her life, and sexual assault against boys and men is also increasingly brought up. Sexism appears everywhere: when it's only women who do the dishes, when in a meeting only guys talk among themselves, when women are considered not tough enough to riot, plus clichés in advertisements, films and so on. All these ideas are being produced by social structures, for example by public child and family policy or by unequal payment, but also by our own daily thoughts, feelings and behavior. Back to the problem: Mainstream porn is almost al-

men's bodies. The whole thing always ends with the 'money shot', i.e. the man ejaculating into the woman's face, usually while she is kneeling down. Many porn movies show violent fantasies of men against women that are not BDSM sex (Bondage, Dominance, Submission, Masochism, based on trust and consensus) but rather imply rape. Often enough, mainstream straight porn is an expression of the existing sexism in society. And the movies simultaneously contribute to its constant re-affirmation, simply because there are no other images of sexuality. Consequently, many young teenagers get their first ideas about sex from porn movies and are stressed out when they actually get laid for the first time – because they think they have to perform the very same activities they saw on the screen. At the same time – see above – sex really is something awesome. And it can be nice and possibly inspiring to watch other people have sex, even if it's just on video.

The debate whether or not porn consumption can be reconciled with a non-sexist, feminist attitude is not a new one, by the way. Women of the feminist movement in the 1970s identi-

fied pornography as an important battleground of sexist attitudes in society. It was suggested that the inhibition threshold for violence against women was lowered through the consumption of porn. "Pornography is the theory, and rape is the practice" was a slogan of that time. Feminists in Germany started the recently reprised "PorNO"-campaign in 1987, demanding a law against pornography. Although the assumption that porn directly causes violence and turns previously harmless men into rapists has been disproven by now (countries that liberalized the legal situation often even experienced a decline in rape – certainly, this is also due to the liberalization of sexuality as a whole), the sexist content of mainstream porn has changed little ever since.

### **Too sexy for this party**

As a response to these movements, a feminist movement was formed in the United States in the early 1980s calling itself "sex positive". Although these feminists also criticized the sexist imaginary of mainstream straight pornography, they wanted to confront the stereotype of the prude and anti-sexual feminist. Instead of perceiving women as passive objects of male desire, they emphasized female passion and active involvement in sexuality. In their opinion, the overall critique of pornography denied the sexual self-determination of women. They also thought that the focus on porn was distracting attention from all the other places where sexism appears in the media. One example is the classic role allocation in TV series. They even saw an opportunity in porn movies, because in those scenarios, unlike in everyday life, power proportions can be consciously staged, exaggerated and reversed. After giving thought to role allocations, one can play with them and turn them upside-down. That way, one can render fixed and often invisible correlations visible and flexible. The sex-positive movement also argued that the PorNO-feminists were backing up conservative attitudes by demanding a prohibition on pornography. Indeed, it was first and foremost lesbian and gay book shops or the BDSM community that were hit by tightened censorship, which, for example, made sexual education difficult. Also, this strict anti-porn-position often coincided with a pitiful and contemptuous attitude towards female porn actresses and sex workers, who did not always perceive themselves as victims, but who, on the contrary, wanted to clarify that their shitty job was just one out of many, and that rather than compassion, they needed better working conditions and unionization.

### **She's got the look**

Sex-positive feminism has reached Europe since that time and influences the alternative porn scene, so that there are now more and more studios and (female) producers shooting porn with feminist or emancipatory standards. They have developed different criteria for feminist

pornography. Inhuman and misogynist stuff was dispensed with, the use of condoms or dental dams was included in the game. Generally, only safer sex was performed and it attempted to transgress conventional ideas about sexuality. And why should the actresses and actors not occasionally laugh or hug each other? The production of porn was to be explicitly shaped by the involvement of women, just as female passion was to be focused on. Violence is only depicted if the agreement which clearly marks it as a game is also shown. Diversity among actresses and actors concerning age, gender, origin, body type, and sexual orientation is encouraged. There are also reference points regarding sexual practices: Sex is not always depicted as only building towards male ejaculation, as a competitive exhibition fixated solely on penetration. Rather, it's about widening the sexual spectrum, about playing with gender stereotypes and unconventional forms of sexuality which do not have the orgasm as their single aim. These guidelines are represented, for example, by the PorYes-Award, the first European feminist porn festival which has taken place in Berlin since 2009.

### **Let's talk about sex, baby!**

So is it all so easy then? We simply watch alternative porn? It's certainly not a bad idea to experiment with what turns you on, and to find out if there aren't other possibilities than those which we've always perceived as 'normal' sex. This also includes benefits for ourselves. Why should it always be the guy who penetrates the woman in straight sex, if there are strap-on dildos? Why does something have to be penetrated all the time anyway? In fact, why always this fixation on the orgasm – no matter how great orgasms are, they can be demanding and feel like physical exercise. And why not acknowledge that, in our experience, it's a myth that everything always works just like in porn movies – without embarrassments, loss of passion, toilet breaks, getting tired, menstruation blood stains, goofing around, thirst, limbs gone numb, and spasms. Besides, no matter how great sex is: perhaps sometimes one just doesn't feel like it or is fed up. Not only are there people who generally define themselves as 'asexual', it's also a fact that sexuality is just not always loosey-goosey-easygoing. Experiences of sexual assault often affect how a person can live her/his sexuality. There might be 'triggers', i.e. a certain gesture, a word or an act causing sudden memories of earlier sexualized violence. Or a general discomfort caused by too much sexualization. In order to avoid things like that as much as possible, it's best to agree on the SSC-principle (Safe, Sane, Consensual) beforehand, meaning safer sex, well thought-out and based on the approval of all participants. Clearly, this does not work without communication! As a consequence, this calls for clear labeling of media and spaces. Be it the cover of a porn DVD clarifying what sexual practices are being shown and if there are, for example, violent scenes; be it

the flyer of an alternative party informing that porn movies will be shown and that there's a darkroom; etc.

We don't want to feel bad because we like porn. But we want to be aware of the kinds of images that are being reproduced and of the kind of sexuality that is again and again affirmed as the 'actual' and the 'right' one. If you like porn, it might be worthwhile to experiment with alternative movies. And we don't want to build up pressure by suggesting that you're only hip, cool and sexy if you have at least one porn movie on your hard disk. Ultimately, we want to be sensitive to the fact that sex, even though mainly something amazing, is also linked to violence in a structurally sexist society. Thus it is mandatory to communicate a lot with your sex partners about the things that turn you on – very much unlike in porn movies. And now, with or without sex: Have lots of fun!

---

#### **Read and watch more:**

*Feminist Porn Award Europe*  
[WWW.PORYES.DE]

*Infos about queer porn film and makers*  
[WWW.REALQUEERPORN.COM]

*FEMINIST PORN: Sex, Consent and Getting Off*  
[TEXT; CHECK IT OUT ON WWW.FEMINISTE.US]

*Three* (2010 film)  
directed by TOM TYKWER



# 「We're Running Out of Work – At Last!

About work and *karoshi*.

**R**unning out of work, are you kidding me?!? Reading this, you might think we have gone mad. In this society, labor is one of the most important things imaginable. Unemployment statistics are published regularly and people get excited when any drop is reported. When a planned new factory raises protest, perhaps for environmental reasons, the most common counter argument is usually "But come on, this creates jobs!" It almost seems as though work is a value in itself. Apparently, many people don't work to afford a more or less bearable life, but rather they live to work. This even goes as far as inventing new jobs just as busywork. In 2009 the German government introduced a car scrappage scheme in order to stimulate the economy: When exchanging their 'old' car for a new one, people received a bonus of 2500€. Apart from stimulating the economy, the main line of argumentation was that this would be good for the environment. But destroying a small car in order to buy an SUV has certainly not helped the planet. So ironically, this caused many cars

that were still fairly new to end up on the junk yard – so that car manufacturers would have enough work. What a crazy idea: The main aim was to simply produce more, and as an effect do away with perfectly fine cars. Another example: Sometimes tasks are invented just to make people who (have to) live off unemployment benefits "get used to work". Others speak of work as if it ennobles and cultivates those doing it. And we are all supposed to work longer and longer, even though many people won't make it to retirement because of job-related illness. At the same time, more and more young people are unemployed, unable to find work in the first place.

## **If toil is worshipped it is not my revolution**

The idea that work ennobles is a misconception also widely found on the left. The degradation of the proletariat as "uncivilized drudges" by the bourgeoisie led to a fetishisation of work in the Soviet Union and the other "socialist" states just

as scary as its capitalist version. The "hero of labor" – an award given to exceptional workers in the GDR – doesn't see his or her work as a means to an end either, but as an end in itself. But the reason why we want a communist society is to have a good life for all – and that means avoiding unnecessary work and instead the effective use of labor, so that there is more time for friends, art, parties, politics and whatever else one feels like.

However, many unions and other left forces are united with the majority of the population in rejecting a culture of indolence and hedonism. Oftentimes, this opinion is topped with the anti-intellectual remark that "a little bit of hard work never hurts anyone," or that all these students should drop their books and do some "real" work instead. Not that hard labor in a factory cannot be an interesting experience, but this view is basically designed to make "slackers" feel guilty for not wanting to do mindless toil.

But even in the self-declared hedonist left that critiques "work," one can find fetishization of labor. For example, when everyone talks

about their "projects", how depression is only socially accepted in the form of "burn-out", or when people blabber about their stressful lives only to indicate how productive they are; these are moments when the totalitarian character of our society reveals itself. To just relax and do nothing is acceptable, maybe, only on the weekend. Even in the left we often think that true social approval can only be achieved by proving our productivity, in one way or another. Equating an individual's value with their productivity has become second nature even to critics of labor fetishization.

**"Work is half of life"** (*German proverb*)

Where does this idea that you are only worth something when you work come from? We think it has a lot to do with the reason why, and in what form, labor exists in this society. This may sound strange, because after all, hasn't work existed as long as mankind? True, but labor today appears in a very specific form, at least in the industrialized countries: as wage labor. What are the consequences of this basic fact?

In our society, we are compelled to work in order to have an income. Most people can't even afford to consider waiving part of their income in order to work on something they would enjoy. Actually there aren't too many enjoyable jobs on offer in the first place. And just as people must work in order to earn money, the goods that they produce are meant to yield a profit. In one aspect, production in our society is very egalitarian: the actual type of product is secondary as long as it can be sold on the market. The measure of value is not whether the product in question will produce happiness or if you enjoyed producing it. The only thing that matters is if it makes money. All of this is pretty abstract and far detached from you and your occupation. Some call this form of labor "alienated", in that it is disconnected from either its use or the desires of the person who actually produced it.

In the end your actual occupation does not matter, your working hours only add up to a fixed amount of some product (be it screws, advertisement copy or school classes). Furthermore, the use of machines usually does not mean less work but only intensifies it. Therefore, it comes as no surprise that there is endless competition to merely create "more": More working hours, more products. This is not about you, as you matter only as a cog in the wheel since kindergarten days, and on the other hand all your social recognition as an individual depends on hard work, then this comes down to: "I work. A lot." No joke. I can illustrate it with a common enough example: Whenever my dad calls his first question is: "So, lots of work?" An affirmative answer is enough for him to be relieved. What is actually done is not something he cares about, as long as I don't slack off. In this logic, work is the primary meaning of life, and this is not simply an old-fashioned concept. Even hip

freelancers in advertisement agencies organize their private lives around the gym and speed dating, their free time increasingly mirroring their work routine until everything, including love and desire, has become work and productivity. There's another aspect to this pride in one's work: The pressure to work and the necessary suppression of needs and desires that accompany it find expression in a hatred against all those who (seemingly) do not work. This is clearly expressed in the many talk shows where people are invited to publicly denounce those who don't see a reason to work. It is easily imaginable what the mob would do to these "asocial" elements living on welfare once the cameras were turned off if they knew they could get away with it. The increased number of homeless people murdered in the last few years demonstrate this point clearly.

**Would anybody work in a communist society?**

Those who criticize the work fetish and the resulting hatred for all those 'parasites' are usually confronted with the objection that if it weren't for external pressure, nobody would do any work. When one asks those fans of coercion if they only work because they have to, they typically claim the contrary, namely that they find fulfillment and self-realization in their work. A peculiar contradiction, but in reality both are false. On the one hand, in this irrationally organized society where people produce for an abstract market under constant pressure and force, we are not surprised that many people are not keen to work. One reason for this is that our work itself is completely untransparent. Not because everything has become so complex, but rather because it is deemed unimportant that people understand what their labor is actually for. But even if people do know the function of their work, this doesn't necessarily make it liberatory. And concerning the alleged self-fulfillment through work, one does not have to interview all the call center drones or workers in Asia forced to produce trainers under horrendous conditions (because machines would cost a few cents more than manual labor). The claim that some truly enjoy their job, or another makes a living from their hobby also often falls flat when faced with reality. In the end, either jobs are paid badly or the amount of enjoyment one gains is relatively small compared to what actually must be done.

Our alternative to all this is a society where production aims at actual human needs and not – like in capitalism – because these needs are a source of profit. We're not interested in producing goods that are designed so poorly that one has to purchase a new something-or-other every few months. And we want a society where all human beings can collectively decide and plan what goods are produced, and how. Where a person is not a mere cog in the wheel but actually matters and is asked: What are their needs, how

much do they want to work, how do they feel at the workplace? We want a society where the elimination of labor is the actual benchmark for production. When one looks at the advertising industry, or at all the people performing various tasks solely to shuffle money around, it is clear how much labor would be superfluous in a society based on producing what is needed. And one could further reduce the amount of human labor by effectively using technology instead, whereas in capitalism machines are used only if there aren't enough able hands to do the task cheaper. And finally, we envision a society where some kind of jobs rotation system exists; and no, this doesn't mean that a pilot has to perform a heart surgery. So why not think of ways of changing our current production processes, where people have to work in monotonous, boring or dangerous jobs? Clearly, we can't afford to continue such a crazy sort of production: It's finally time to organize a reasonable way of getting the things we need in life, both our basic as well as luxury goods!

---

**For further reading:**

*Why the use of robots and machines in capitalism won't lead to more spare time*

[KARL MARX, in CAPITAL, VOLUME 1, CHAPTER 13.]

ADORNO: *Sur l'eau. In: Minima Moralia: Reflections from Damaged Life.*

[WWW.MARXISTS.ORG/REFERENCE/ARCHIVE/ADORNO/1951/MM/CH02.HTM (No. 100)]

*Manifesto against Labour*

[KRISIS.ORG/1999/MANIFESTO-AGAINST-LABOUR]



# Interview with David Graeber

DAVID GRAEBER is an anthropologist, anarchist, and one of the main organizers of Occupy Wall Street (OWS) in the United States. He has written about direct action, revolutions, capitalism, anarchist anthropology, and other issues; his latest book is "Debt: The First 5000 Years". His writings have been translated into several languages. We interviewed DAVID in Berlin.

While in Europe, you got invited by non-leftist members of the German parliament, mainstream TV talk shows, and conservatives applauded your new book. What do you make of the fact that both state institutions as well as those who want to abolish the state seek your advice or at least the discussion?

DAVID GRAEBER: *It's really strange. And I don't know what to make of it. My first reaction was that these guys must be in really big trouble, much more than they say. Which I think is in fact the case. Members of the elite have spent a lot more time on ideological warfare than they have on the practicalities of maintaining a viable system. They seem to think it's much more important to convince people that capitalism is the only viable system than creating an actually viable economic system. With the result that when things do start falling apart, nobody can imagine that that could be really happening and that nothing else could replace it. Obviously, as so far they want me to save capitalism for them, I couldn't help anyway [laughs]. So I'm not really worried.*

You are both a public intellectual and an activist who is openly anarchist. This has caused problems for you in the past. What would you generally say about being in a career where you inevitably have to hide some political views?

*I think we can't separate theory from practice. Which is of course what academia is all about: trying to do that. They don't care what you think in academia as long as you are willing to be a hypocrite about it. But we have a problem when we try any form of actual practice that is consistent with your ideals. My solution is that I never published anything about politics in journals. And when I wrote something about politics, I did it with anarchist groups. So I have kind of two lives. I would agree, it is a profound problem.*

You were very active with "Occupy Wall Street" in the US. One thing that stuck out with OWS was that there were no demands towards the state, those in power etc. This also means not acknowledging them as a legitimate entity.

*Yes! In fact it was a delegitimizing strategy.*

OWS, and you as well, speak of the 99% and of the 1% that profits. But doesn't that ignore structural factors and open the way for a personalized critique of capitalism?

*It is a slogan. It could lead to almost anything. It is not in itself an analysis. But the reason why we thought that it would be a good starting point is because it points to something deeply structural about contemporary capitalism. The 1% of the population is the one who managed to turn their wealth into political power.*

When we think of a liberated society, for lack of a better term we often speak of "communism". In the United States, this term is not so much used by anti-authoritarian, radical left groups. Do you think it is of any use?

*I think it is difficult to use because of the historical baggage. However, I think it is absolutely critical to make an intervention there! Because the way the term is deployed is quite insidious. One reason I tried to set up a different definition of communism was that I think we need just to transform totally the way we talk about these things. I think we are all communists most of the time. Whenever we cooperate and we are together in a common project, that is how we act. Obviously capitalists are ultimately exploiting communist relations so that they will be turned into their opposite. Capitalism is just a bad way of organizing communism. State socialism was not a great way to organize communism, either. We need to come up with a good way of organizing communism, but communism is always here.*

David, thank you for the interview!

Due to lack of space, only part of the interview is printed here. Moreover, we needed to save a little bit of space for some remarks on our part: During the course of the interview, we had several disagreements with Graeber. While we want to use the interview above to give room for his arguments, we also want to sum up our criticism here: We believe that David Graeber's

success in both the conservative and the economically liberal media, i.e. the mainstream, can be explained by the fact that his ideas are more or less harmless (sorry, David). Yes, we believe that Graeber truly wants to abolish capitalism. But according to him, a rupture with the current society – something that radical critics usually propagate – is not necessary. Graeber uses radical language which won't lead to radical acts. By labeling every form of non-monetary co-operation "communist", even Mother Theresa could be called a communist. While we believe that building autonomous institutions can be important for various reasons (see the article "Start with Yourself?" in this issue), we also think that for a truly liberated, "communist" society, it won't be enough to extend already existing principles of solidarity. In the long run, some form of rupture – a "revolution" – will be necessary to get us out of this misery called capitalism.

[see the article EXPANDING THE FLOOR OF THE CAGE]

English version out now:

## State, World Market, and the Reign of False Freedom

20 Theses against State, Nation and Capitalism.



download @ [umsganze.org/other-languages/](http://umsganze.org/other-languages/)

# 「We are not disabled, we are being disabled.

**“It’s not our bodies that are wrong, but a poorly-equipped society.”**

The fact that the self-determination of people with disabilities is a public issue today is not a matter of course, but rather the outcome of a movement which started forty years ago in the United States but which is still largely unknown: the disability rights movement. For the first time people with disabilities are making their voices heard – loud, ungrateful, even angry, because of the constant paternalism they have experienced. We talked to the left-wing activist Tim in Berlin about who is disabling whom, what needs to happen, and why the cinema is apparently not for disabled people.

Many know about the women’s rights movement, the political struggle of gay people, but still relatively few have heard of the disability rights movements. Does that surprise you? And do you actually use the term ‘disabled’?

*Yes, I do use it, but only in the sense that society is disabling us. And the fact that the movement is so unknown does not surprise me at all. Disability is not a very trendy theme in general. It first provokes misgivings; many want to stay away from it. Also, the movement has become small, especially over the last years. It annoys me that nobody knows it. Many achievements that are taken for granted today would not exist without it. Elevators in train stations or the chance to choose one’s caregiver – it’s not that the government just came up with all that.*

...or to rename the German TV lottery which gives money to disability projects ‘Aktion Sorgenkind’ (‘Campaign Problem Child’) into ‘Aktion Mensch’ (‘Campaign Human Being’).

*Yes, but that only happened in 2000. It was the disability rights movement that turned itself particularly against the idea of aid and this whole business of pity: people who do not know me are convinced they know how my life looks like, how I am. However, it is me who knows best.*

...and all this being nicely presented in a well-meaning fashion.

*Yes, that really gets on my wick. It’s not long ago that I got petted on the head by complete strangers or that I was given a Euro – as a donation. Stuff like that happens less frequently today. What still gets me though is when people are talking about me over my head. For instance when I am with others, especially non-disabled people, it is always them who are being addressed, not me. They are then being asked: “Where does he want to go?” or “Can he get there with his wheelchair?” As if I just wasn’t there. People are so insecure and afraid to do something wrong, they rather avoid any contact whatsoever. I’d prefer if people would say said something funny at*

*times, or ask a stupid question rather than being constantly excluded as a subject. I also experience this type of exclusion in lefty circles, although to a lesser degree. But often interaction becomes normal more quickly, probably because people are used to the feeling of being outcasts themselves.*

**What does social exclusion of disabled people look like today? I’m not that familiar with it, I only know that there are special care homes and schools for people with special needs. Have you been in any of that?**

*No. But my parents had to fight for that. They wanted to me to go to school with all my friends from school. However in order to do so I needed to undergo numerous tests. Many medical reports were needed. Nevertheless enrolment only happened on a trial basis. At any time they could have taken me out of the school and put me into a special needs school. It is good that there is a lot of talk about ‘inclusion’ today and that it is not compulsory to attend special needs schools any more. However, many children with special needs are being put there since regular schools are claiming not to have enough money or properly trained staff. Apart from that this new politic also shows a modernisation of capitalism.*

**What do you mean by that?**

*Well, what and who is defined as disabled always depends on how people are ‘vernutzt’ (used up for economic profit). Those who possess very little only have their body to work and earn money with. But what if this working force does not ‘function’ probably? Then there is the question of how to deal with a person labelled as ‘unproductive’. The common method used to be custody. These days, however, physical work has become less important in most Western states. Thus the entire ‘disabled’ workforce lies waste. It can be useful after all. That’s why part of my specially equipped car is being financed – but only if there is proof of employment. On the contrary, if I would be unemployed I do not need to leave my house according to the state. I am allowed to submit*

*travelling receipts for going to the job centre or job applications, but apart from that I am supposed to just stay at home. Going to the café or meeting friends does not count. They gave me my first car when I entered university, and strictly speaking I was only allowed to use it for driving to the university. After graduation, public authorities took it back. This shows that it is now commonly accepted that disabled people are ‘vernutzbar’ as well. Thus disability is being addressed just to the extent that it is counter-productive to the ‘Vernutzung’ (the profitable usage of human capital). According to that view, an unemployed, disabled person should not necessarily go to the cinema.*

**But the idea that ‘they are disabled’ is not only the state’s view. Most people have internalised norms about what is supposed to be ‘beautiful’ and ‘normal’ and perceive the world in that way. How could such concepts be dissolved?**

*I believe that as long as disability remains connected to pain, suffering and disadvantage, this won’t change. Maybe if people with disabilities are perceived as self-confident, joyful and sometimes equally depressed people, and if this becomes part of normality, such things could dissolve slowly. But in order for that to happen, all those disabilities made by society have to be removed.*

---

**For further reading:**

*Disability Studies Quarterly*  
[DSQ-SDS.ORG/INDEX]

*A project dealing with “mental illness”*  
[THEICARUSPROJECT.NET]

*The Ragged Edge*  
[RAGGED-EDGE-MAG.COM]

*Ouch Blog*  
[BBC.CO.UK/BLOGS/OUCH]



**Dear everyone,**

**welcome to the last page. As  
already noted we would love  
to be in touch with you:**

Drop us a line telling us what you think, what  
you liked and where you disagreed:

INFO@STRASSENAUSZUCKER.TK

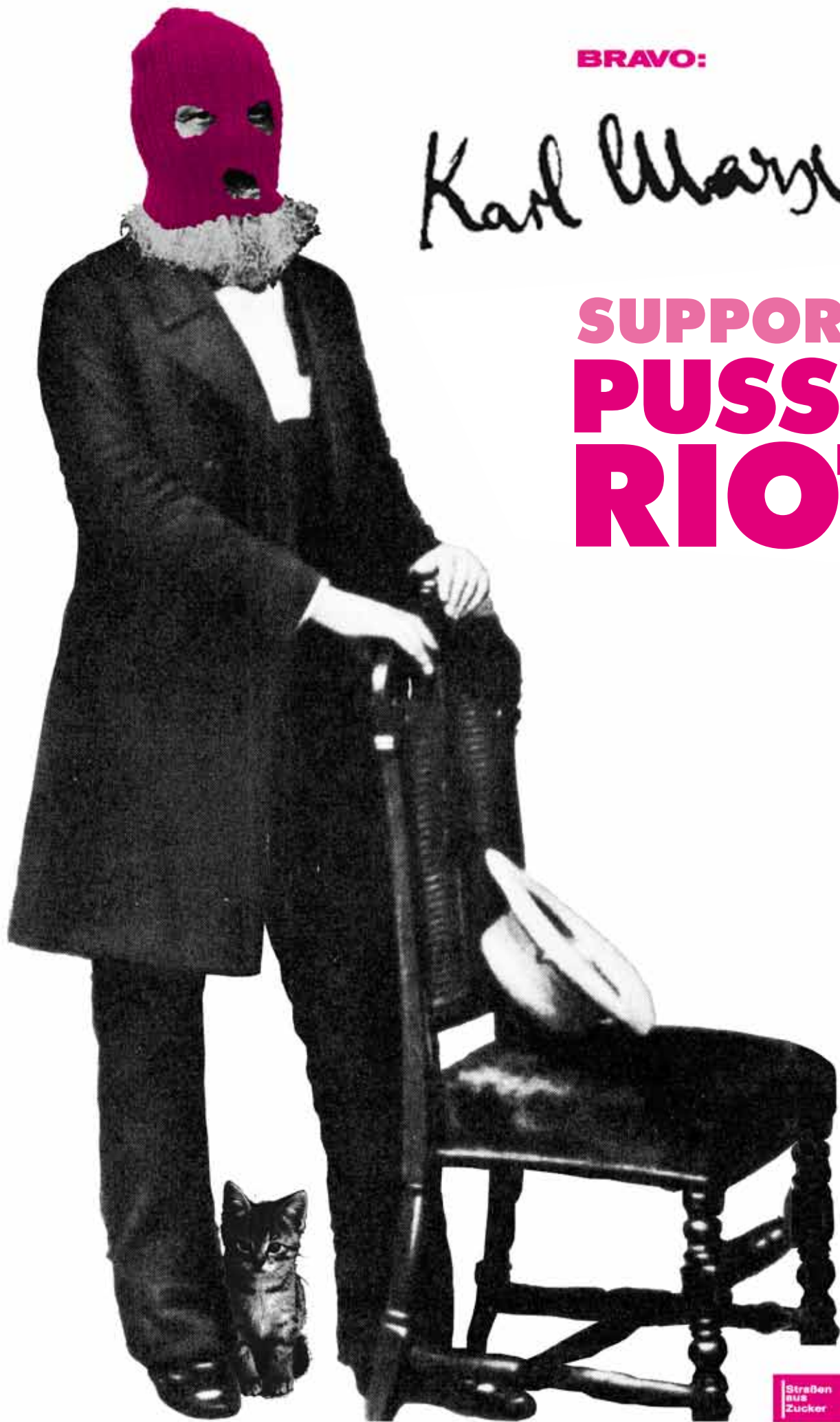
Stop by if your travels bring you to Berlin.

Get in touch if you want to do an event or dis-  
cussion with us in your hometown. Maybe one  
of us happens to be in the area.

Finally: This magazine needs distributing! We  
are happy to send you copies for free if you want  
to pass them out or leave a stack in your favo-  
rite alternative bookstore, squat, social centre,  
university cafe...

Til then:

**Onward in the fight for a  
world where the streets are  
lined with sugar!**



**BRAVO:**

*Karl Marx*

**SUPPORTS  
PUSSY  
RIOT**

**Straßen  
aus  
Zucker**