

A CONTRIBUTION TO THE CRITIQUE

STATE, WORLD MARKET AND THE REIGN OF FALSE FREEDOM

OF THE NORMAL EXECUTION OF CAPITALISM

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CONTENT

- 4 INTRODUCTION
- 14 STATE, WORLD MARKET AND THE REIGN OF FALSE FREEDOM
A Contribution to the Critique of the Normal Execution of Capitalism
- 102 WHO WE ARE
Groups organised in the »...umsGanze!« – alliance

INTRODUCTION

This book presents a fundamental critique of the state - the bourgeois-capitalist state that emerged over the past 200 years as the main institutional form of social domination. Our text reflects discussions within the libertarian communist '...umsGanze!'- alliance about essential parameters of radical politics. '...umsGanze!' was founded in 2006, and by now has many chapters in Germany and Austria. Its name roughly translates as 'For the Whole' or 'Do or Die!'. We try to organise the radical left on a federal and transnational level, in an effort to augment its political impact.

But why bother and publish an entire book about and against the state as such? Because many in the left still see the state as some kind of neutral regulator that - once in good hands - would be useful for the common good. This is a misconception the left shares with the general public and with mainstream economists alike. Especially in times of crisis, everyone seems to call on the state to tame the excesses of capitalism and to correct its outrageous injustices, pleading to resurrect the long-gone 'welfare state'. The state may certainly try to rein in capitalism, but it will never be able to transform it into a humane order. Even worse: In responding to the crises of capitalism, the state will inevitably renew and intensify its constraints. That's what we are currently seeing all over Europe. That's the logic of history in a capitalist world.

The left's reaction to the ugly reality of capitalism is to accuse the bourgeois society of not being faithful to its own ideals of 'freedom', 'justice' and 'equality'. Isn't it strange, though, that a society with such noble principles continuously produces exploitation and social exclusion? From our point of view, this is a hint that something is seriously wrong not only with the current social formation, but also with the terms used to describe it. That's why radical politics cannot exist without radical critical analysis.

In this book we analyse basic structures and categories of the capitalist society. Everybody has certain ideas about 'state, world market, law or politics'. But it's important to investigate how these spheres correspond and interact to systematically reproduce social domination, exploitation, and exclusionary collectivism. This is what we want to illustrate, starting with the elementary structure of bourgeois-capitalist society. This structure didn't emerge out of nowhere, and there is no master plan behind it, but it does comprise a set of general principles.

Today's bourgeois-capitalist states emerged after centuries of intercontinental trade, after a world market had long been established. Over the past 200 years, they proved to be the most effective way to organise an incessant campaign to

increase productivity and commercial advantages – a global rat race for profit that still rages on today. Only in this context we can understand the hostile nature of both, the nation state and the world market system. At times, our analysis remains on a rather general level, as we seek to identify the adverse principles behind the multitude of conflicts and struggles we observe every day. We think this will in turn help to understand the historical transformations of bourgeois societies, from their revolutionary beginnings to authoritarian decline and neoliberal decay.

Within the German-speaking radical left, our book has caused some debate, especially on the issue of the nature of nationalism. Some claimed we had overemphasised the relevance of material interest in the buildup of such national allegiances. Others argued we had exaggerated the hostile effects of capitalist competition as the driving force behind ideological yearnings for national community. Both argued our analysis was therefore economistic, missing the cultural plasticity of national ideology. While we admit some unfortunate wording, we would strongly reject that claim. Both the individual material interests of the bourgeois subject and the threatening impositions of capitalism as a whole are clearly key factors of an ideological mechanism. We emphasise them in order to counterbalance existing abstract conceptions of nationalism as a mere ‘construction’ or ‘invention’, which have become commonplace in leftist politics and social sciences. Instead, we conceptualise nationalism as an objective mode of thinking and ‘feeling’ within capitalist societies. Moreover, we do not consider nationalism a mere reflection of economic conditions. Instead, we take it as an ideological projection that involves the entire subjectivity of the individual, trying to make sense of and find peace in his or her vulnerable condition. What’s stereotypical here is not our analysis, but the ideological drives of nationalism that continue to engulf everyone.

WHO IS ‘...UMSGANZE!’ AND WHY ‘...UMSGANZE’?

Most groups participating in the ‘...umsGanze!’-alliance build on the tradition of the autonomous antifascist movement, which is a late descendant of the anti-authoritarian revolt of 1968, or rather of its decline and defeat in the 70s and early 80s. The government crackdown on anti-capitalist organisations and the assimilation of the so-called New Social Movements led many to a unique political style. Combining their fundamental opposition against institutional politics with a militant struggle against Nazis, the ‘Autonome’ tried to protect and develop potentials of self-determination. Theoretical analyses of National Socialism and

the Shoah have been of major importance within that movement. Theories trying to interpret fascism as an inherent consequence of capitalist crises have been around for a while. But in their traditional framework Nazis were regarded by many as mere storm-troopers of the ruling class. The 'system' would make use of them in order to suppress social and anti-capitalist movements. This obviously couldn't explain the mass consensus that National Socialism built upon in Germany and Austria. A radical critique of capitalism therefore had to include a radical critique of the way individuals would internalise collectivist ideologies such as nationalism, racism and sexism – as victims, bystanders and perpetrators. This perspective remains essential for what we're doing today.

The so-called reunification of the two German states in 1990 triggered a wave of racist assaults, arson-attacks and pogroms against migrants and asylum seekers. Racist and fascist ideas seemed to be held not only by organised Nazis, but also by a large part of the population. In reaction to this, a plethora of local Antifa groups were founded. Almost at the same time, there were initial attempts to establish a nationwide organisation, the most successful example being the AA/BO. (AA/BO is short for Antifaschistische Aktion/Bundesweite Organisation – that's Antifascist Action/Federal Organisation.) In many cases, antifascism was a bare necessity for defeating Nazi dominance in the streets. But autonomous Antifa groups also understood antifascism as a 'Kampf ums Ganze', a struggle against capitalism as a whole. Some argued that direct action against the most reactionary parts of society meant attacking the entire system. Others saw it as a strategic challenge against the police, the state and the general public.

This anti-state and anti-capitalist project of the Antifa took a serious blow in 2000, when the governing coalition of Social Democrats and the Green Party initiated their so-called Antifa-Summer or 'Revolt of Decency', unchaining a wave of repression against the organised right. Thus, the whole concept of Antifa as being something rebellious was called into question. Government officials themselves pointed out that Nazi violence especially in former Eastern Germany threatened foreign investments as well as Germany's reputation abroad. But beyond such rather instrumental motives, there had also been a significant shift in the way German nationalism was articulated, with politics and civil society trying to finally pacify its Nazi history. Exorcising past and present national-socialist demons was an essential part of this procedure and one which would finally allow Germany to re-enter the higher levels of international politics. With its left-wing credentials, the government coalition quickly turned the moral burden into a national asset. In a clear breach of the constitution that had been designed to

contain German militarism, it claimed there was an ethical obligation to wage war against former Yugoslavia to 'prevent a new Auschwitz' (the line of argument used by former Foreign Minister and Green Party member Joschka Fischer).

This double-edged change of policy sent many Antifa groups into an identity crisis. Some chose to denounce the state's actions as hypocritical, asserting that the social and ideological structures of Nazism still existed in the 'post-Nazi' society. Others realised that antifascist actions were no 'Kampf ums Ganze' any more. Fighting Nazis remained an obligation, but radical politics had to develop a broader perspective. For many, the struggles against capitalist globalisation showed a way out of this impasse. It became clear that social domination had to be confronted at eye level – i.e. on a transnational and global scale.

SUBPRIME MORTGAGE CRISIS, BANKING CRISIS,
SOVEREIGN DEBT CRISIS – ALL GREEK TO ME!

The current crisis reveals systemic frictions and disparities of capitalism as a system. Its shockwaves have created spaces for new struggles, but also the danger of authoritarian appeasement. Western governments have spent the last 35 years building a neoliberal order that today appears to be without any reasonable alternative. It's up to us to prove them wrong.

In 2007/08, the US subprime mortgage debacle and the subsequent banking crisis shook the foundations of the world economy, quickly expanding into a global credit crunch and the collapse of key financial markets. The mass default of bad loans revealed a huge bubble of "toxic" bonds and derivatives, spread in portfolios of corporations and investment funds all over the world. As a result, private lending collapsed in many industries, creating a vicious circle of unemployment, decreasing demand, increasing welfare expenditures, and recession. Not many countries could afford to soften the blow of these immediate effects of the crisis with governmental credit and investment schemes. In many EU member states, especially those in the periphery of the Euro-zone, the credit-driven growth of the past decade came to a sudden halt. This resulted in what appears to be a 'sovereign debt crisis', with countries such as Greece, Spain, Portugal, and Ireland failing to refinance their deficit, and many others struggling.

This development has put the European joint currency in danger, causing a major institutional crisis in the EU, with heated debates about monetary and fiscal policy of the union and nationalist repercussions all over the continent. Should these alleged 'Schuldensünder' (literally 'deficit sinners') be bailed out

by the EU and thus by its stronger economies, or should they be cast out? This controversy will most likely continue, reflecting the hybrid construction of the EU being a union of competing nation states. Nonetheless, comprehensive austerity measures have already been imposed to “reassure the markets” and bolster European competitiveness on a global scale. In many countries, this resulted in social devastation, with collapsing healthcare and public services, mass impoverishment and general despair. To keep things in check, new EU fiscal policies were hammered out, forcing governments and voters to comply with a comprehensive neoliberal growth model of capitalist Europe.

Governments and many leftists alike interpret this ongoing crisis as a consequence of ‘ruthless speculation’ by ‘greedy bankers’, pushing financial markets beyond their limits instead of investing in solid production. The so-called ‘sovereign debt crisis’ is seen by most as a consequence of incompetent or corrupt governments and an outdated welfare-state-mentality of their populace. And from superficial perspective, there is some truth to this: Financial markets, investment bubbles, and bonuses have grown exponentially in recent decades, while welfare expenditures did in fact strain national budgets and general competitiveness – especially since emerging markets (e.g. China) became serious contenders of capitalist globalisation.

But all this is neither a natural given, nor a matter of policy failures that could be corrected by a more socially-minded growth model. By its very nature, capitalism is always ‘speculative’. Yet, there is a different bottom line: Neoliberalism is in itself a reaction to a previous fundamental crisis of capitalism, an approach that has only prolonged the suffering. Neoliberal policies and institutions have been introduced in the 70s and 80s to improve corporate profits and national growth rates that seemed to have reached a dead-end. The extensive privatisations did offer some temporary relief – in conjunction with the collapse of most state-socialist regimes in the early 90s and the subsequent opening of new markets.

In a broader perspective, however, this deepening and expansion of capitalism only globalised its general tendency towards crisis. Competing for lucrative investment, more and more capital had to flee into the fictitious realm of the financial industries. Such virtual, credit- and debt-inflated growth quickly exceeded the combined global product by an exponential margin. The current crisis and downturn eliminate some of those virtual assets. Austerity measures will allow the agents of capital to squeeze some more profit from its primary source, wage labour. But all that won’t ease the accumulated constraints and systemic impasses of capitalist accumulation itself. So, yes, capitalism can consolidate its

profitability for some time under a new regime of austerity and coercion. But the left shouldn't pretend that a new infusion of a caring social market economy would be either possible or desirable. This option is over and out.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

The ongoing crisis seems to have deprived capitalism of any kind of utopia. This did not, however, lead to the development of an alternative capable of inspiring and mobilising people, not even to a general criticism of the current formation of society. New forms of protests, like the assemblies in Southern Europe or the Occupy movement, did have international ambitions as well as the expressed intent to question the capitalist system as a whole. The major problem was, however, their demands' strong orientation towards state control and an often moralistic and foreshortened critique of capitalism, grounded in nationalism and conspiracy theories.

With the European Day Of Action on March 31, 2012 ('M31'), we tried to initiate a new phase of crisis protests. Together with other anti-capitalist initiatives in Germany and with comrades from many European countries, we called for simultaneous joint manifestations and actions. Demonstrations and rallies were organised in more than 30 different cities, from Kiev to Lisbon and from Athens to Utrecht. We wanted to connect with local struggles and to overcome the national limitations of previous protests. Our common goals focused on anti-capitalism, self-organisation and anti-national critique.

Two months after this promising beginning, tens of thousands of demonstrators from several European countries participated in "Blockupy" in Frankfurt am Main, a three-day event aimed at blockading Frankfurt's financial centre. The German police enforced a state-of-emergency-like policy as it banned various demonstrations and rallies and took more than 1,500 demonstrators into custody. But the anti-capitalist notion of Blockupy did not go unnoticed.

Central ideas from Blockupy and M31 were carried over into the formation of 'Beyond Europe - Antiauthoritarian Platform against Capitalism'. BE was founded in 2013 by groups from Germany, Greece, Austria, Cyprus and the United Kingdom and based on a common rejection of state, nation and capital and a shared willingness to cooperate together against austerity and capitalism. One of the first major events to put this into practice was Blockupy 2015, where several thousand demonstrators exposed the European Central Bank in Frankfurt as an important political actor in support of the Troika carrying out austerity measures.

Its 'opening party' was mitigated to a little event, a demonstration held in the afternoon took public dissent to the streets.

In August 2015 the 1st Beyond Europe Camp in Greece was co-hosted by us as a part of Beyond Europe. We decided to organise this gathering in Skouries, North-Eastern Chalkidiki, not only for the purpose of organising a come-together and an exchange of anti-authoritarians from all over Europe, but also to support the local ecosocial struggle against the devastating project of reopening the local goldmine. This struggle is not only concerned with resistance against the goldmine, but is deeply involved in the question of how we wish to work and live together. Thus, we were able to show that local struggles, activism, and transnational organising cannot be understood solitary, but rather stand in a dialectical relation. This specific region would arguably be affected most by the goldmining and it is neither a coincidence that this project was started in the crisis laboratory Greece nor that authorities are enforcing it despite massive resistance. Our gathering therefore aimed at exchanging ideas and taking part in a struggle against capitalist exploitation as well as learning from the struggle. It was, for many of our participants, an important and inspiring experience to take part in a thorough and powerful social movement.

2015 also coincides with the 'refugee crisis'. After witnessing and watching the drowning of thousands of refugees in the Mediterranean Sea for years, governments competed in a race to the bottom on who is able to treat the surviving asylum seekers the worst. Cynically, governments celebrated themselves via the local press for supporting and helping the arriving refugees. Refugees, who had to undertake perilous routes only because of these governments and their continuing work toward building a Fortress Europe. The German deal with Turkey to keep Syrian refugees off the European mainland, the building of barb-wired fences and the reinstallment of borders and border-controls in the EU unveils the real interest of Nobel Peace Prize Winner EU. Commodities are still allowed to move rather freely between states, humans are not. Especially, if they own the wrong passport and are not considered to contribute to the national economy. Meanwhile in Germany and other countries, racists, fascists, and 'concerned citizen' are demonstrating against refugees, blocking transportation to local refugee homes and arsons happen on a weekly basis.

Events have recently followed up in quick succession. The Brexit has led some to announce the beginning of the end for the European community of states, while the French Social-Democrats have announced 'Loi Travail', harsh labour reforms, similar to those unleashed by the German state with its Agenda 2010.

Islamist attacks and a European swing to the right, together with European subventions for Turkish automatic firing systems seem to darken the last silver linings. A thorough analysis of the capitalist society, concerned with its functioning and why this functioning is the exact problem, is time-consuming, but even more essential for a left wishing to tackle the challenges ahead.

We therefore want to stress that this book is not to be understood only as theoretical analysis. It is also an offer for further debate and cooperation with groups and political initiatives fighting for emancipation of a society in disregard of fundamental human interest. Capitalism and its crises are already global, our resistance has to follow suit.

Up the Irons!

...umsGanze! - Alliance

(June 2016)

**STATE, WORLD MARKET
AND THE REIGN
OF FALSE FREEDOM**



A CONTRIBUTION TO
THE CRITIQUE OF THE
NORMAL EXECUTION
OF CAPITALISM

THE SYSTEMATIC CHARACTER OF SOCIAL DOMINATION

1 Normal Execution as Catastrophe 2 Capitalism and State — State and World Market 3 Critique of the Whole 4 The Bourgeois State as Political Form and Force of the Capitalist Mode of Production 5 Inequality and the Domination of Impersonal Forces as the Content of Bourgeois “Freedom” and “Equality”

THE CRITIQUE OF POLITICS

6 Violence and Competition — the Bourgeois State and its Political Conditions of Existence

THE NATIONALISATION OF THE INDIVIDUAL

7 The Developmental Unity of State and Capitalist Private Property as the Determining Form of Social Domination 8 The Integration of Class Society into a Collective of Citizens 9 The State as “Ideal Total Capitalist” — and The Individual 10 The State as Trustee of the National Competition for the Wealth of the World 11 State Socialism? 12 The Wage Labourers’ Loyalty to Business and the State under the Force of Competition 13 A “Loss of the State’s Capacity to Act” in the Era of Neo-Liberal Globalisation?

THE LONGING FOR UNITY: IDEOLOGIES OF COLLECTIVE IDENTITY

14 The Distributed Frontlines of Social Competition: Ideologies of “Race”, Gender, Culture, and Religion 15 Nationalism as Central Ideology and “Objective Form of Thought” of Collectives of Citizens 16 The Common Ideological Basis of Nationalism and National Socialism or Fascism 17 “National Self-Determination” — On the Political Economy of Sovereignty, Separatism, and “Nation Building”

[NO] END OF THE NATION STATE

18 No “Decrease in Importance” of the State through the EU 19 The Cunning of Capitalist Unreason: China, Systemic Crisis, “The Social Market Economy” 20 Communism!



THE SYSTEMATIC



DOMINATION

CHARACTER OF SOCIAL

1

NORMAL EXECUTION AS CATASTROPHE

› BEDEUTUNGSVERLUST <

In its centuries of development, capitalism has brought about immeasurably powerful and sophisticated industries — an organised social power against the subjugation to nature of primitive existence. Never before in history have humanity's technical knowledge and productive abilities increased in such volatile manner. For the first time, humanity has the means of protecting everyone from hunger and most illnesses. And with each passing day, it acquires new capabilities that could extend and improve the lives of all.

Yet at the same time, the centuries of capitalism have been filled to the brim with organised violence, mass poverty, and forlorn desperation. At the pinnacle of this civilised barbarism stands the society of National Socialist Germany with its war of annihilation and the Holocaust. And whereas the capitalist centers periodically raise a toast to the eternal peace within their domains, outside people still die like flies from long since avoidable and curable illnesses, and in the struggle for exploitable resources.

But the visible corpse piles of the capitalist world are only the excesses of its everyday irrationality. In place of the often primitive subjugation to nature of pre-industrial societies, a new coercive dependency has entered the stage. Production is not conducted in social self-determination according to conscious aims and based upon fundamental needs. Production occurs under the constraints of the valorisation of capital, under a system of entrepreneurial and state competition for the wealth of the world. The notion that an “optimal regulation” of production is achieved through “supply and demand” is bourgeois ideology. For the majority of people, not only do existential needs go unfulfilled; within the capitalist logic of valorisation, they are systematically disdained and violated.

After the Cold War had, by means of the military and the welfare state, restrained the impositions and recurrent crises of capitalism, the latter have begun once again since 1989 to race around the entire globe. Even developed industrial countries are forced to confront the fact that their affluence and economic predominance are no longer guaranteed. For that reason, all social resources are mobilised for the global competition. In the former capitalist centers, the social guarantees of the state no longer apply. Opportunism, always an attribute of the bourgeois form of individuality, becomes an increasingly urgent characteristic of a capitalistically socialised humanity.

In a world order based upon competition and exploitation, “injustice” and social exclusion are not coincidental occurrences, but rather systematically invested. Economic and social crises can hardly be traced back to incorrect policies. They are, plain and simply, the means by which capitalist competition as a system of social domination is regulated. That does not mean that politics is pointless. The question of which policies to use to react to structural crises is not irrelevant. However, in its institutional forms, politics reproduces the preconditions of capitalist irrationality. It is part of a world order in which the next “humanitarian catastrophe” and the next economic or mental crash are just a matter of time. To that extent, the normal execution of capitalism is already a catastrophe. Its political and institutional form is the bourgeois state. With the shifting of a few state functions onto state alliances such as the European Union, their bearer has changed, but not their comprehensive social efficacy.

2

CAPITALISM AND STATE — STATE AND WORLD MARKET

In developed capitalist economies, people’s existences as owners of private property and competitors with one another have become an unquestioned matter of course. Regardless of whether they have to earn their living as wage-earners, as “self-employed” entrepreneurs, as managers or in some sort of pseudo-self-employed hybrid form, they stand in competition with one another — for jobs and promotions, for contracts and profits, for dividends and growth rates. And this competition will never end under capitalism. The advocates of this social order regard this as the greatest possible freedom: in the contest of the best minds and hands, individuals develop the greatest creativity, and humanity as a whole blossoms economically and culturally. And in fact, the centuries of capitalism have not lacked for productivity. The engine of capitalist development is precisely the structural force of competition, the drive toward constant competition to increase productivity.

However, capitalist competition is not simply a contest for the best solution of individual and social needs. Its aim is not the good life and social self-determination. In capitalist societies, an all-encompassing, impersonal drive to valorisation is realised through the relationships of competition between individual economic actors. From the smallest rendering of service to the largest industry, the principle in force is that an investment must yield a profit. And this

profit is only guaranteed by the unconditional willingness to outdo economic competitors. Even those who, for lack of capital, are unable to participate at their own cost in the contest of elimination are still subject to its demands. Even those who, as wage-labourers, simply want to do “good work”, are evaluated, treated, and if necessary, made redundant according to the criteria of profitability. The comprehensive drive to valorisation is renewed daily in general competition. In the last instance, social production does not serve social needs, but rather the expanded reproduction of capital, the goal of using money to make more money. This drive to valorisation is the inescapable principle of the capitalist mode of production. It is, to formulate the matter paradoxically, a “natural law of society”. And because this law decides rather concretely over life and social participation, it leaves its mark upon every zone of so-called individuality.

The capitalist enforcement of self-constraint does not strike individuals in an unmediated way. Just as self-evident as their position in competition is their existence as citizens. They are beings of flesh and blood, but in their social intercourse they encounter one another as bearers of universal rights. And these rights (and respectively the “legal entity” of the individual) are guaranteed solely by the bourgeois state, and are usually subject to mandatory enforcement.

Daily in the media and in personal conversation, a balance sheet is drawn up by the moral and economic condition of the state to which people belong, only by the accident of birth. The existence of universal law is endorsed; wide-reaching obligations such as compulsory education and taxation are fundamentally accepted. What is subject to debate is only their most effective possible organisation. The decisive criteria of this effectiveness is the ability of the state to create the conditions for a successful economic life. Citizens must be able to sustain themselves as economic subjects, and social wealth should tend towards growth.

Under the conditions of the so-called “world market”, which are periodically re-negotiated, the economic growth of a state rests upon its “competitiveness” in the contest between states. But usually, the bourgeois state itself is not an economic actor. Decisive is the ability of domestic private enterprises and the national workforce to assert themselves in the economic competition for global demand, for sales markets and for investments. The pressure of national and international competition objectively determines the “room for maneuver” that the state-recognised “bargaining partners” and the state tax apparatus have in the struggle for a portion of social wealth. Day in and day out, this pressure conveys to individuals the benchmarks of successful conduct.

3 CRITIQUE OF THE WHOLE

State, capital, and “world market” constitute a conflict-ridden system of social domination. It manifests itself in any situation of everyday life, and yet can only be fought as a whole. Otherwise, politics drifts off into naïve activism. Those, who wish to concern themselves with concrete issues usually miss the context from which state-mediated capitalist competition emerges. From a perspective critical of domination, all the alternatives of pragmatic politics are usually equally wrong. Pragmatism and stupidity go hand-in-hand in the bourgeois world.

The following is thus concerned initially with a general determination of the function of the bourgeois state as an institutional mediator of a once again global capitalism, as well as with the role thereby accorded to politics. In the foreground are not the excesses of this social order, but rather its self-evident preconditions. But they are these, from which those excesses continuously emerge and which for that reason are no less scandalous. The object of inquiry is the bourgeois-democratic form of socialisation as such, which at the same time constitutes the systemic character of social domination (Chapters 1-5), and the critique of politics within this form-determination (Chapter 6). From here, it should be possible to substantiate what the actual problem is with concrete political problem areas and ideologies, and what is not. The historical development of the capital-relation is reconstructed as the nationalisation of the individual (Chapters 7-13). The structural conflicts of this system of rule constantly generate ideologies of collective identity (Chapters 14-17). They orbit around race, gender, culture, and religion, and find their civic integration in nationalism and National Socialism. The conclusion deals with the contemporary and future destiny of the nation-state (Chapters 18-20).

That the conjunctures of the national and global economy appear as a coercive necessity is both truth and deceit at the same time. It is true because the capitalist system of private production of social wealth constantly develops crisis-prone dynamics that cannot be foreseen or controlled by any economic or political actor. In the constant contest between production locations for favorable conditions of valorisation (and between enterprises for increased productivity and market share), the value of a product is decided solely in the realised comparison with other products as a commodity on the market, usually on the world market. This objective comparison is merciless: whoever is not able to compete, fails.



And another comparison does not exist. Whether one's own productive investment is of "value" can only be determined retroactively. This experience may have different consequences for various economic actors — some are driven to ruin by it, while for others it is merely an expensive lesson. Each time, however, private economic competition functions as an iron law of economic valuation. This objective coercion is multiplied by thousands of refractions in all spheres of life. Even capitalists are condemned by the bond of competition to make a profit or go down. But the coercive necessity is also a deceit, because it only emerges within a historically specific form of the social production of wealth. Competition and the drive to valorisation only function as a "natural law" in societies in which a capitalist mode of production dominates, a mode of production in which people must produce their subsistence and survival in an economic contest against each other.

4 THE BOURGEOIS STATE AS POLITICAL FORM AND FORCE OF THE CAPITALIST MODE OF PRODUCTION

The normal execution of capitalism has preconditions, which do not emanate from capitalist competition, but which are indispensable for the maintenance of this competition. No individual economic actor has an interest in competition as such. On the contrary, as competitors they have an interest in their own individual success in competition, tending therefore towards a monopoly position. Their striving necessarily works for the defeat of their economic competitors, and in the mobilisation of all available means to achieve this goal. In accordance with this logic of the capitalist contest of elimination, they would resort to any means against their economic adversaries, including means that would destroy the order of competition as a whole: violence, deception, theft, extortion, sabotage, slander, etc. But such techniques cannot be standards of capitalism as a system of social reproduction. A sustainable valorisation of private wealth as capital can only be achieved in a social system of "free commodity exchange", the exclusively economic conflict of individuals and enterprises.

What is therefore required is an entity that stands outside of capitalist competition and safeguards the preconditions of this competition — including against fraudulent and violent practices that are motivated by capitalist competition.

This entity is the bourgeois state as the guardian of justice. In order to implement justice and the law, it claims the monopoly of force — the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical violence against all people and economic and institutional actors within its territory. This central function of the state already serves to document that the capitalist social order is marked by an everyday tendency towards violence and fraud. In the world of competition, there are always good reasons for both.

However, a functioning capitalist mode of reproduction as a whole presupposes that the economic contest of elimination is conducted overall according to general rules. Economic antagonism is thus consummated in the form of a contract between formally free and equal legal subjects, who mutually recognise one another as owners of private property. Every legal transaction is based on such a contract. And the bourgeois state, by virtue of its sovereign monopoly on the use of force, guarantees this contract through universal law. The state establishes law according to general principles and situational necessities, imposes it everywhere through its executive organs, and clarifies questions of interpretation in the regulated proceedings of its judicial system. In developed capitalist societies, exploitation is therefore usually confined to the profitable application of the commodity labour-power. It proceeds in accordance with justice and the law, and at a negotiated and enforceable wage. Without the constraint of economic competition and exploitation reinforced by the state, the latter would constantly revert to direct violence. Where that leads can be studied in the case of institutionally disintegrated states like Afghanistan, Somalia, or the Democratic Republic of Congo, where the authority of the central government, in case of doubt, ends at the borders of the capital city and business interests have to be protected and imposed by private armies. Due to lack of investment security, productivity stagnates at an extremely low level. A modern industrial nation cannot persist in such conditions.

The state protection of private property cements a state of affairs in which the sources of social wealth are not socially owned, but rather privately, that is to say, exclusively. The protection of private property forces all, who do not own any relevant private property other than their own labour-power to sell this labour-power in exchange for a wage. And this compulsion leaves its mark upon their whole life. The modern state is thus not a large institution for the greatest possible harmonic organisation of social cooperation. Bourgeois state and capitalist private property constitute a conflict-ridden developmental





matrix in which the state guarantees the general conditions of capitalist competition, and protects them against their own tendencies toward crisis. To that extent, the bourgeois state — through its various, often contested institutions — is the overall ordering force of capitalist society. In its articulated structures “the objective coercive character of social reproduction finds its political form.” (Johannes Agnoli)

5 INEQUALITY AND THE DOMINATION OF IMPERSONAL FORCES AS THE CONTENT OF BOURGEOIS >FREEDOM< AND >EQUALITY<

A fundamental function of the state thus consists in guaranteeing the social intercourse of people as free and equal owners of private property. In the constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany, freedom and equality stand at the top of the basic rights, right after the guarantee of human dignity in Article I. Freedom and equality are not materially guaranteed, but rather formally determined as the free and equal legal entities of individuals as owners of private property. In their concrete economic intercourse, on the other hand, people obviously have unequal conditions of competition, and in their decisions are constantly subject to constraints.

In short: the guarantee of private property makes it possible for people reduced to subjects of competition to freely dispose of their own goods. At the same time, the state guarantee of property forces them to recognise the goods of others as alien property and as commodities. Property is first and foremost the exclusion of all from socially produced wealth — and from the means of production with which this social wealth is produced. This exclusion of the social power of disposition over socially necessary resources can be used by the respective owner to their own material advantage: by granting a use permit (“leasing”), or through sale. The consequence of private property is that needs are only met when payment can be offered. Consequently, in capitalist societies both, deprivation and affluence can reign at the same time. Under the condition of private property, the state guarantee of freedom of contract and action grants all citizens the possibility of pursuing economic success

with their own respective means. This possibility is at the same time an inevitable compulsion. People are responsible for their own success, and have to achieve it against one another. That is the positive (in the sense of valid) determination of bourgeois freedom. This freedom is limited by the imposed recognition of other, hostile competing private interests. Since all citizens are forced to compete for a share of social wealth with their own means, they have to violate the identical interests of others for their own advancement. “Autonomy” in capitalist societies does not mean that one can do what one wants or what one should reasonably do. It essentially means that one can at any time enter a legal contract, that is to say one can (and must, in order to survive) enter into a business relationship — insofar as somebody else can be found, who also has a private interest in this transaction.

The state guarantee of freedom and equality is formal, because it disregards all material dependencies and inequalities, in particular those of the position of individuals within the process of production: just as it is forbidden for an industrialist to sleep in a heated subway station, a homeless person is fundamentally allowed to purchase a multinational business. And both are equally prohibited from constituting a monopoly — unless the state sovereign as an exception recognises a “national interest”. With regard to particular private competitive interests, the state therefore remains neutral. As the trustee of universal law, the state merely guarantees to all the same general conditions of capital valorisation within its territory. Its neutrality serves to secure the development of the capitalist national economy as a whole, upon which it is itself dependent in the form of taxes. It therefore definitely has a partisan interest in a thriving development of the whole economy, and therefore in the maintenance of capitalist relations of domination and exploitation.

Social inequality does not emerge through the unequal application of justice and the law or through systematic fraud or corruption (exceptions prove the rule). Social inequality and injustice in capitalism are consequences precisely of the equal treatment of people as citizens and respectively as legal entities before the law. Through the guarantee of private property, materially unequal individuals are constrained to arrange for their own advancement with their unequal means. Through the equal treatment of haves and have-nots, social inequality is continued. Wage-workers contribute, with their labour-power and their time, to the

expansion of the private wealth of all those who can afford to allow others to work for them. In that the state alleviates the gravest consequences of socially produced inequality through redistributive measures, it protects its social principle from critique.

That is why every demand for “equal rights” is an embarrassment when it abstracts from social content: the production of material inequality. The critics of this result of formal freedom and equality can think of nothing better than to demand “equality of opportunity”. Instead of criticising the principle of the production of inequality, the claim is raised — in the name of gender, ancestry, or some other category of ethnic classification — for proportional access to the higher positions in politics, the academic world, and the economy. In most bourgeois societies, this claim is legally recognised in some way, but is not taken into consideration in reality. The demand for equal participation in the social contest of elimination amounts to a re-proportioning of its victimised groups. Whoever is disturbed not by the sorting of society into above and below, but only by the unequal representation at the top, has to claw and kick his or her way to the top as a “woman”, “immigrant” or “child of working-class parents”. The carousel is already revved up, and there are only a few places free (Note: the above is concerned merely with the cynicism of the demand for equal participation in the social contest of elimination. For a critique of race- and gender-specific discrimination, see Chapter 15).

Under the unceasing pressure of capitalist competition, the individual, in the case of economic advancement, experiences the frustration that the social content of bourgeois freedom and equality has little to do with the resonant emancipative promise of those words. Their real content is not the emancipation in solidarity of humanity from subjugation to nature and social domination, but rather the subjugation of all under the impersonal, systematic coercion of capitalist valorisation. That is to say, the in principle limitless compulsion to constantly re-invest profits anew as capital, and while doing so to displace other capitals subject to the same compulsion. In the competition between wage-workers, enterprises, and states as production locations, this drive to valorisation encompasses every corner of the planet. Its cycles, despite all attempts at steering, remain as unpredictable as the weather, which is why the financial markets are discussed using meteorological metaphors. The question of who emerges

as the winner from the global capitalist productivity contest, and whose investment is squandered, is always decided retroactively as the result of the unbounded attempts to displace competitors. In this system of social reproduction, every material advantage is only temporary, and can be revoked in future competitive battles. The compulsory competition, as well as the crisis-dynamic of the capitalist order of reproduction, constantly calls into question the already highly exclusive gains of freedom of bourgeois individuality. The political economy of bourgeois freedom thus systematically produces individual and social powerlessness. That is its self-contradiction — which the bourgeois state maintains by force of its monopoly of violence.

THE CRITIQUE OF POLITICS



6 VIOLENCE AND COMPETITION — THE BOURGEOIS STATE AND ITS POLITICAL CONDITIONS OF EXISTENCE

A non-partisan monopoly of the use of force, the equality of citizens before the law and the protection of their private property are the essential preconditions of capitalist competition. Without these extra-economic conditions guaranteed by the state, no capitalist accumulation process can develop and be sustained. In contrast, distinct democratic “liberties” are in the strictest sense superfluous to thriving capitalist growth — which is why they have often been abolished in many capitalist states; in order to avert the “socialist threat”. The monopoly of the use of force, legal equality, freedom of contract, and private property constitute, as indispensable preconditions of capitalism, something like its fundamental form, the core of its social form determination. We can speak of form or form determination because these elements of necessity must be present in every capitalist society. In the everyday course of business, they appear as the completely self-evident conditions of social intercourse. They are not even perceived as particular social arrangements. Business partners for example usually assume that mutual contracts are “valid”, regarded as binding by both parties. They know that in the case of conflict this validity can be established in a court of law, and that the state can impose the law by means of force. They rely upon the state monopoly on the use of force, equality before the law and the protection of private property. Their social effects are so fundamental that they are understood by everyday “common sense” to be expressions of human nature.

Within the framework of this form determination guaranteed by the state, the capital relation develops as a comprehensive system of social dependencies. This applies to the economic relationships between citizens of a state, as well as for the state’s own macroeconomic destiny as a location for globalised capital valorisation. The general conditions of capitalist globalisation are periodically renegotiated between states. However, every recognised sovereign can only intervene according to its own economic power and the potential — contingent upon that economic power — of exercising direct military force. States are thus always driven to macroeconomic egoism. The political room for maneuver is thus always defined by the general drive to valorisation and its particular cyclical trends, which are not subject to arbitrary political manipulation. The interest of the bourgeois-capitalist state in itself only permits forms of social reproduction that vary in their grade of violence. The tendencies of growth and crisis on the world market have proven so far to be more compelling than the monopoly of force and political arbitrariness.

In other ways as well, the political room for maneuver in the bourgeois state is considerably affected by the constitutive preconditions of the capitalist mode of production and the overall cycles of economic competition. The state guarantee of private property also means that the control of social production is *not* decided politically. So the material foundation of social life — the question as to how society produces wealth, what it produces, and for whom — is in fact *not* an object of the political decision making process.

Those are the conditions of the political in the bourgeois state. But that doesn't mean that politics is determined directly by economic conditions. Because nobody can ever be sure as to what the most promising strategy for the state is in the worldwide push and shove between national economies, the debate concerning its "best practice" can never cease. Regulation models and tax formulas in capitalism are always based upon cyclical prognoses — and those are always canceled out by the basically unpredictable upheavals and crises of the valorisation process. The manner of reacting to cyclical fluctuations is the object of social struggles. That sounds rebellious or even revolutionary, but that's rather seldom the case, because social struggles are initially also directly affected by the framework of bourgeois-capitalist socialisation guaranteed by the state. Their main protagonists — such as trade unions or employers associations — represent in the first instance and in most cases positions of interest such as arise within the logic of the institutionally supervised valorisation process: struggles over the distribution of the wealth of society, and not over the mode — that is to say, the social (or rather asocial, namely private) form — in which wealth is produced and at the same time appropriated. Different branches of the capitalist national economy also, according to their economic structure, follow different and to some extent conflicting political goals. But what is subject to debate is only how — and not whether — to comply with the inherent necessities of capitalism. For that reason, all too frequently social struggles are limited to the attempt to defend a few state guarantees, in the case of wage increases to at least compensate for inflation, and to keep taxes and health insurance premiums as low as possible. A welfare statist — that is to say retroactive — re-distribution of wealth from top to bottom cannot be had without a favorable capitalist "climate of growth". And in the case of demands that do in fact pose a threat to the system, political allies can hardly be found.

Thus, the limits of the political are already inherent in its capitalist form determination. Only those campaigns, which respect these limits have a chance for success; they must therefore participate in the reconciliation and productive

management of competing positions of interest within the capitalist national economy. A politics which aims at the whole ensemble must therefore always at the same time be anti-politics, an attempt to pry open the constitutive constraints and predeterminations of the political form. However, the institutional arrangements of bourgeois society have so far effectively prevented this. For example, the system of parliamentary representation reduces the already limited political regulation of the social process to a one-time, indirect vote — not a vote concerning pertinent social issues, but rather for parties, who only offer their models of regulation and distribution in a total package, and who in fact after the election can no longer be effectively held accountable. The institutional limitation of political participation thus secures in this manner a mediation of the bourgeois-capitalist system of rule with the least possible friction — and with it the stability of the state.

The fact that a few faked pieces of evidence can tip the scales between war and peace demonstrates on the one hand the enormous scope of configuration of the political. On the other hand, it also illustrates at the same time how well the state in question has already prepared to wage war, and thus how much the military state of exception has already become the rule.

A single state sovereign cannot simply choose between protectionism and globalisation, at least not without endangering the macroeconomic foundation of its own existence. Politics can distribute the pressure of national and international competition in various ways, and thus either assist or cancel out the chances of survival for millions of people. That this is within the range of its power is a good reason for engaging in politics. But above all else it's a good reason to abolish the political in its bourgeois form determination — that is to say its limitation — and to take the social relations into one's own hands.

THE NATIONALIZATION

OF THE INDIVIDUAL



7 THE DEVELOPMENTAL UNITY OF STATE AND CAPITALIST PRIVATE PROPERTY AS THE DETERMINING FORM OF SOCIAL DOMINATION

The structure of rule known as ‘the state’ did not always play the role of guardian of a uniform and general legal system encompassing all competing individuals and social classes. And comprehensive formal legal equality of all inhabitants as a ‘people’ was only accomplished in the 20th century. The institutional forms of bourgeois-capitalist socialisation arose in a crisis-laden process of economic reform and revolution spanning centuries. Traditional relations of exploitation were economically eroded and displaced by new arrangements. There was a clash of interests between different fractions of the nobility, artisans organised in guilds, and the emergent, upwardly mobile commercial bourgeoisie. The paths of development toward the capitalist mode of production were extremely uneven for the European *Ancien Régime*. In some cases, bourgeois-capitalist forms of social intercourse emerged from centrally controlled manufacturing economies, whereas in other places early on an “autonomous” commercial capitalist initiative was able to play a decisive role in further development. However, the implementation of these forms of social intercourse consistently led to a characteristic split between the “economic” and “political” exercise of power, and with it the increasing independence of political rule. Traditional privileges of rule had always encompassed both spheres. “Economic” power rested upon the personal or estate-based disposal over social labour-power or over the wealth it created (corvée or tribute, tax privileges, etc). This privilege also yielded at the same time the means for a further reaching ‘political’ power, in the sense of a violently enforced command over all issues of social order. The guild artisanry also combined for centuries the control of social production with the ‘political’ exercise of power (guild constitutions, councils, and mayors).

This personal or respectively estate-based amalgamation of economic and political power was displaced in favor of a social order in which competition between “equal” owners of private property was governed by an institutionally independent state apparatus maintaining sovereignty over every individual in equal measure. This developmental unity of a superordinate state and capitalist private property is not the consequence of inevitable historical necessity, but does follow a compelling and anything but friendly logic.

In contrast to traditional, static forms of reproduction, which are locally rooted through thousands of special rights and obligations, the emergent centralised absolutist state (as an institutional system initially under personal command) owes its instruments of power to the same process determining the rise of the bourgeoisie (as a class): the mobilisation, aggrandisement, and commercial — that is to say, mediated by money — exploitation of domestic and foreign sources of wealth (nature and labour-power) by means of profit on investment and taxes. To that extent, they shared an at least “objective” interest against forms of production and rule bound by tradition: only the furthest reaching use of territorial resources and forces of production could yield enough taxable wealth in a form necessary for building a trans-regional apparatus of rule and bring all of its structures under a unified command: the form of money. And only the growth-oriented use of territorial resources and forces of production could ensure that such a central power was able to assert itself against competing regional or foreign claims to power. The intensified exploitation of domestic resources was just one possible way of achieving this. The conquest of foreign sources of wealth through maritime trade and colonial exploitation also played a decisive role in the development of modern statehood. The construction of a commercial merchant marine, its military defense by a navy, and the occupation of colonies or trading posts required a bundling of social resources, which in the long term only a centralised government could guarantee. In return, the capitalisation of domestic sources of wealth and the coordinated exploitation of foreign sources of wealth secured the material foundations — via the regime of taxation — for the state’s political capacity to act, vis—à—vis its own population as well as other competing states. However, the construction of commercial sources of wealth required in the long term uniform conditions of competition: a universal legal system.

From the perspective of direct producers of social wealth, this historical process presents itself in a rather unfriendly light. The pre-history of the bourgeois state, the history of the emergence of its material preconditions and institutional forms in Western Europe, proceeded by means of the disfranchisement and expropriation of direct producers. Marx used the term “primitive accumulation” to denote this process: with the backing of the aristocratic state and the assistance of its decrees and means of force, traditional rights, guild monopolies and collective claims

of ownership were annulled. Natural resources were placed under private ownership, and personal relations of exploitation were transformed into private economic relations of wage-labour. For the affected peasants and artisans this meant above all else the loss of ancestral means of subsistence: through expulsion from communal land and allotments and respectively the displacement of artisanal guilds by home industry and manufacture, and later by large industry. By means of expropriation as well as economic ruin they were separated from their partially private, partially communal means of production, and thus lost their individual and collective social power. Under these circumstances they were compelled to perform waged labour for others, under intensified conditions. The competitive drive to increase the productivity of labour requires strict labour discipline, and this must be imposed by authoritarian supervision and performance-based compensation. The capitalist pressure of productivity and the drive to control also alter the material labour process itself. The technical structure of factories and machines serves in capitalism not only the most simple and efficient performance of labour, but also the control and most intensive possible exploitation of the immediate producers. Refusal and resistance by wage labourers was consistently answered by the emergent early-bourgeois regime with a ban on collective organising and by police prosecution. Only “the advance of capitalist production develops a working class, which by education, tradition, habit, looks upon the conditions of that mode of production as self-evident laws of Nature.” Permanently separated from the means of subsistence, the involuntary wage labourers were sooner or later driven to self-constraint under the discipline of the factory. That was why the use of free wage labourers was more effective than the violent exploitation of colonial slave labour and independent artisans. The freedom of wage labour forces direct producers to participate in the competition for productivity, which is activated by the permanent competition between private capitals. It is the freedom of self-constraint.

Marx describes the developmental unity of state and capitalist private property from the viewpoint of capital. “The state” as “the concentrated and organised force of society” promoted in “hot-house fashion” “the process of transformation of the feudal mode of production into the capitalist mode”, thereby shortening the “transition” by means of force. The metaphor also works from the reverse perspective: only when the competition among capitals is freed from feudal constraints and extended over an

entire territory does this lead to the hothouse-like development of the social forces of production to which the state owes its means of force and foreign influence. Only the ruthless capitalisation of social production brought the constant thrust of development by means of which the European commercial powers could develop into modern industrial nations. Their commodity output was in terms of quality and quantity, and so also in terms of capitalist “efficiency” far superior to that of the rest of the world. Private property and competition proved to be unbeatable forms of the social production of wealth, conducive to growth. Initially, this wealth did not benefit the direct producers. But from the perspective of state institutions — historically speaking, from the perspective of the hereditary nobility and moneyed aristocracy constituting the personnel of the state officialdom — emergent capitalism deserved unconditional support as the cash cow of the national economy. Depending upon requirements and the business cycle, this sometimes amounted to a system of laissez-faire policies, at other times the deployment of state means of force or the administrative control of investment. In this process, the capitalist mode of production became decisive for societal development. Aristocratic or manorial claims of ownership and office did not have to be wrested away in a revolutionary process. They lose their overriding economic importance in light of the capitalist growth dynamic. Conversely, the capitalist command over social labour as such does not create a claim to political privileges. Rather, the state and the private economy develop as a national economic alliance of wealth acquisition with separate spheres of duty. The state develops an interest in the well-being of private capitalist business, and the various capital fractions in turn develop an interest in the state guarantee and promotion of private property. For that reason, the bourgeoisie during its period of ascendancy to its position as the economically dominant class often found itself in a coalition of interests with the aristocratic leadership of the state. It usually only revolted when its commercial potential was crippled by the clientelism of the aristocracy. With the imprisonment and later decapitation of Louis XVI, the revolutionary bourgeoisie of France left no doubt as to in whose hands social power actually resided. For decades afterward, the bourgeoisie voluntarily surrendered its claims to a republican state, as long as its command of social labour-power remained secure. So there exists a necessary relation between capitalist private property and the state, but not necessarily between capitalist private property and the



bourgeois-democratic state form. Time and again in the rough history of capitalism there were forms of voluntary political self-disempowerment — as long as the new, anti-democratic commanders of state power defended or reinstated the endangered order of private property. Such cases openly reveal the ultimate purpose of state rule: the armed protection of capitalist accumulation against its own tendencies toward valorisation crises and struggles over the distribution of wealth (which are occasionally carried out in an extremely ideologically manner).

The development of bourgeois state and capitalist private property is thus an integrated process, in which social power takes on the separate forms of economic disposal over wealth and state force. Together, they constitute the cornerstones of the bourgeois-capitalist system of social domination. The state is not the “superstructure” of “the economy”, it belongs to the foundation of the political economy of capitalism.

8

THE INTEGRATION OF CLASS SOCIETY INTO A COLLECTIVE OF CITIZENS

The revolutionary hope that the continued exploitation of the proletariat would inevitably compel it to abolish all exploitation and domination has not been fulfilled. The social democratic vision of a society continuously advancing toward socialism also remained a flight of fancy. Capitalism’s power of resistance and integration in the 20th century is not due to an armed class coalition of nobility and bourgeoisie, as was often the case in the 19th century. The bourgeoisie has also not transformed the state into a direct instrument of exploitation. Decisive for the continued existence of the capitalist state throughout all crises was the political integration of the working class on the basis of the improvement of its material condition. With an increase in the productivity of industrial labour, the quantity of goods which workers could purchase with their wages increased, even when their relative share in the total social wealth as a whole declined. So the proletariat’s sharing in the social wealth it created was anything but a magnanimous act of generosity. Its increasing protection by labour laws and social welfare programs, its integration and promotion in the state educational institutions — all of this corresponded to the necessity in the competition between states

to develop the national labour force, and thus secure social peace. Under these preconditions, the struggles of the proletariat for participation and recognition as citizens were at the same time steps in the development of the capitalist mode of production, towards its consolidation in the developed welfare state. A recognition of the proletariat as citizens nonetheless only occurred with great caution, restricted by census suffrage, a ban on political parties and a legal gagging of their position of power as direct producers. The German working class only obtained full rights as citizens after they confirmed their loyalty to the Fatherland by their self-sacrifice in the First World War.

The dependency of citizens upon the success of national wealth production objectively superimposes itself upon the class antagonism to which party-based Marxist dogmatism had tied its revolutionary hopes. That the proletarians of all countries massacred one another in the hundred of thousands for the sake of their respective fatherlands in the First World War, rather than — as envisioned in the Communist Manifesto — becoming an armed class, the revolutionary advocate of humanity against domination and exploitation, does not document in the first instance the lack of “class consciousness”. Rather, it reveals the historical stand of the objective nationalisation of the proletarian class, its integration into the national-economic “we”. Its cultivation and maintenance as the source of wealth of bourgeois society by the welfare state and population policy gave the proletarian human capital a real and “good” reason to hope: the hope that after the military re-determination of the balance of power between the leading capitalist states it would in the future permanently stand on the winning side of history as a *national* working class. Against the perspective of a “revolutionary internationalism”, it was already clear to the proletariat on the basis of concrete experience that its livelihood depended upon the macroeconomic balance sheet of its own state in the competition for colonies and on the world market. And that within this framework the proletariat in fact had something to win and something to lose.

The late-aristocratic/bourgeois class state of the 19th century transformed itself with the development of a state social security system around the turn of the century and in the early 20th century into a cross-class planner of society in the competition between national capitals. Polemically speaking, the emerging welfare state organised its personnel — bourgeois and proletarian — by means of such transfer systems into a *Volksgemeinschaft* (national collective) with a common destiny in international competition. The liberal class interest in free competition, which opposed both aristocratic privilege





and proletarian unruliness, transformed into a national-economic common interest which also took into consideration the issues of the national labour force. Of course, that does not abolish the competing positions of interest within capitalist competition. It's just that more immediately than ever they are tied to the competitive success of the national economy as a whole, and thus alter their character: out of class struggle arises a sociopolitical competition of ideas organised into interest groups close to the state: in institutionally recognised trade unions and employers associations under state law, in Germany even enjoying constitutional status.¹ As organs of the bourgeois-democratic social order, these interest groups of national labour and national capital channel the competition over social wealth — and thus confirm themselves as a social principle. From the viewpoint of the state, economic competition appears as an instrument of overall social planning that needs to be carefully moderated. Ever since, wage labour and capital are subordinate (sometimes even by state decree) in equal measure to an “obligation to the public weal” — as they constantly remind one another as “collective bargaining partners” and ideological shareholders in the nation.

At the same time, there is hardly a particular, single policy goal, which is unequivocally in the interest of “the capitalists” as a class. These capitalists are enemies to one another in the competition for profit and investment opportunities. The state subsidises individual capital interests or cancels them out, depending upon its own estimation of the overall benefit to the national economy. Friedrich Engels came up with the term “ideal total capitalist”² to conceptualise this position and function of the state. According to Engels, the “modern state” is nothing other than “the organisation that bourgeois society takes on in order to support the general external conditions of the capitalist mode of production against the encroachments as well of the workers as of individual capitalists.”³

1 Article 9 of the German Grundgesetz. Significantly, there are pretty much no anti-capitalist trade unions in Germany. Instead, the organised working class in industrial trade unions submits to the particular economic cycles of the enterprise, and cooperates with corresponding employers associations as a “collective bargaining partner”.

2 Translator's note: this is rendered in the official Marx-Engels Collected Works as „the ideal personification of the total national capital.”

3 Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring*. Herr Eugen Dühring's Revolution in Science, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/ch24.htm>

9 THE STATE AS “IDEAL TOTAL CAPITALIST” — AND THE INDIVIDUAL

Engels' concept of the “ideal total capitalist” encompasses the cross-class function of the state of securing and extending the general framework for a developed capitalist economy within its territory, which “bourgeois society” in the more narrow sense — the society of owners of private property fragmented into thousands of different positions of interest — cannot itself guarantee. The competition of economic actors and the inherent crises tendencies of capitalist society as a whole require a supervisory and ordering instance that does not follow any particular private economic interest, but rather which moderates the “macroeconomic situation.” The implementation of a universal legal system is only the foundation for more tangible supportive measures by the state. Exactly what gets to count among the “general external conditions of the capitalist mode of production” referred to by Engels depends upon the state of development and the particularities of the capitalist national economy in question. As the ideal total capitalist, the state attempts to develop at all times those resources and institutions, which are beneficial to capital accumulation within its territory, but which at a given point in time cannot be conducted as a private business, either because such efforts do not yield a sufficient profit, or because a private capitalist standpoint of interest cannot reliably guarantee the public function of such institutions. In the society of private wealth, the personnel of the state are also subject to the temptation of using the sovereignty granted to them for personal gain. For that reason, the state demands a loyalty oath from its public officials, increasing the risk of punishment, while at the same time buying loyalty with above-average compensation and job security.

As ideal total capitalist, the state must also secure and extend the comprehensive infrastructural preconditions of capital accumulation within its territory. It does this by means of legal ordinances, tax incentives, tax-financed investment in the private economy, its own infrastructure projects, and by means of public institutions. One central task here is the construction of a transportation system, which is expensive and often less profitable, but absolutely indispensable for national economic growth. Canals, bridges, streets, and highways are always built under state direction if no commercial valorisation seems possible. In contrast, railway lines in the 19th century were often financed by private joint-stock companies, and only later transferred into public ownership — as their national

economic importance increased and their usefulness for the military had become obvious. With increasing differentiation of the capitalist national economy, there also arose a macroeconomic and hence state interest in a sufficiently educated populace. A level of education is “sufficient”, if a populace is able to manage all technical and organisational challenges that must be dealt with on average at a given level of economic development. That can vary from state to state, and the schools reflect this. With public schools, education acts, and the formal implementation of a partly already-existing compulsory education, the European states at the end of the 19th century attempted to protect the future national labour force from an all too premature using up and stupefaction in the agriculture of their parents or within emerging capitalist industry, in order to make something useful out of them. Even more conspicuous is the relationship to valorisation in some branches of science. Long-term, expensive, and therefore less profitable “pure research” is conducted in universities and research centers funded by taxes; as soon as the results of research appear to offer the possibility of being profitably used, they are brought to “product maturity” in a capitalist enterprise. From this point on, they are the “intellectual property” of private enterprise — and as such are protected in turn by the state.

Some of the tasks described switch back and forth between the state and the private sector, depending upon whether a profitable business can be done with them or not. Among those sovereign functions of the state in the narrower sense is the issue of a uniform currency as a general “means of payment”, and its management through monetary policy, usually by a national or central bank⁴. Initially, during the emergent phase of capitalism private commercial banks issued paper money as a means of payment — institutionally guaranteed promises to pay in a specific quantity of a precious metal. The contemporary term “bank note” reflects this. But the national economic advantages of a uniform currency and a coordinated monetary policy have called the state into action in all those countries where the capitalist mode of production predominates. Its sovereignty in matters of monetary policy offers a starting point for steering national economic development as a whole in a flexible and comparatively swift, if indirect, manner. Measures for the regulation of the money supply and rate of interest influence the availability and the price of private money credit, which is the foundation of all capitalist growth. Mediated by its issuing conditions with regard to private banks and the legal regulation of its credit lending, the state or

4 On the integration of the European currency and economic region, see Chapters 12 and 18.

its central bank can attempt to stimulate or restrain private borrowing, in order to promote macroeconomic goals (price stability, growth) or to moderate valorisation crises. But this can only happen if it can actually impose its sovereignty in matters of monetary policy within the private sphere of business transactions. For that reason, the state usually defends its currency as an exclusive means of payment, thus forbidding the use of other means of payment within its territory, particularly foreign currencies. The use of other currencies would make its economy dependent upon the monetary policy of other countries — thus upon the cyclical interests of other states. Currencies are not just harmless “mediums of exchange” that simplify economic transactions. They are instruments of state power in a society in which competition and exploitation are organised in the form of the “free exchange” of commodities and money. But for precisely that reason, the sovereignty of monetary policy is also at all times subordinate to the generally unpredictable cycles of capitalist competition.

As the “ideal total capitalist”, the bourgeois state does not only act under extraordinary changes in demand and special cyclical challenges. All of its policies and its distinguished institutional structures are determined and developed according to the necessity of promoting domestic economic power, sponsoring it in the international competition, and maintaining social peace by means of transfer payments. In doing so, the state must constantly subordinate the interests of individual classes, branches, businesses, and interest groups to the overarching interests of an altogether greatest possible and sustainable growth of its national economy. Hence, state policies are not simply determined by specific economic interests — but definitely by the general compulsion to wring out a macroeconomic optimum in every situation.

For this reason, the integrated bourgeois state is not simply an instrument or servant of the bourgeoisie, the “fat cats” and managers. It is not merely a “committee for managing the common affairs of the whole bourgeoisie” as polemically formulated in the Communist Manifesto of 1848. At least, it isn’t anymore. In the integrated bourgeois state of the 20th and 21st centuries in which economic individuals contract with one another as free and equal owners of private property, the proletariat no longer consists merely of disfranchised starvelings, but rather entitled citizens, recognised sources of national wealth. The proletarians owe their upward social mobility not only to their “strong arms” gruelingly inculcated by their position as direct producers of capitalist and national wealth, but also to the position of the national economy within the world market, organised by the state. Only within this framework can it be decided what



chances for development individual economic actors and classes have at all. This dependency of individual life opportunities upon the growth and valorisation crises of the national total capital also generalises the perspective of the “ideal total capitalist”: because all individuals tend to be affected directly or indirectly by the cycles of the national economy, they consistently take the standpoint of the “ideal total capitalist” spontaneously. Concern for the state conditions of capital reproduction is an automatic emotional state of nationalised individuals in developed capitalism. It transforms the inescapable compulsion in capitalism to achieve one’s livelihood as a private property owner against others. Hence, there arises a characteristic schizophrenia of civic existence: a contradiction between the capitalist drive towards ruthless egoism and a dependent loyalty with regard to the “total capitalist” goals of the state and national economy. In the process, the developmental goals of the state — at least in contrast to the narrow standpoint of private competition — wrongly appear to be thoroughly at the service of public good.

As a consequence of the systemic crisis of the years 2008/2009, the states of industrial capitalist nations have openly acknowledged their role as ideal total capitalists. The state “rescue packages” are tailored to the needs of each respective national economy. The possible partial nationalisation of domestic banks also does not make states entrepreneurial competitors in the financial sector. It serves primarily as the safeguard of private banking credit for national industry when “the market” can no longer provide this credit on its own. However, national production is not the only source of wealth for national enterprise and therefore of the state. For that reason, the regulation of the crisis also has an international dimension. Global rules for the most sustainable world capitalism possible are supposed to be prepared — at the most favorable possible conditions for each national state’s own position in the global competition.

10 THE STATE AS TRUSTEE OF THE NATIONAL COMPETITION FOR THE WEALTH OF THE WORLD

For centuries, the mother countries of capital repeatedly engaged in a military contest for dominance in world trade, over the partitioning of colonial territories and the most efficient exploitation of their populations. Today, these states compete worldwide in the form of a contractually regulated “world market,”

hence under the precondition of mutual recognition. The international standing of their respective economies is not solely determined by the technical capabilities of domestic enterprises, i.e. which useful goods they are in a position to produce. Decisive is whether these enterprises and their commodities are — and can remain — competitive in the capitalist world market as a whole, and whether they can successfully valorise their capital beyond their own national borders. If this is the case, then usually the domestic economy grows, that is to say private wealth, which constitutes the foundation of future growth and from which the state creates its own funds by means of taxation. For that reason, states are world-political trustees and agents of the global opportunities for valorisation of their own national economies. So the state's provision for the general conditions and special chances of capital accumulation do not end at its own national borders. These limit its recognised sovereignty, i.e. its monopoly of the use of force, but not its political, economic, and, should the situation arise, military potential for extortion.

Foreign economies, whether capitalist or not, offer diverse opportunities for domestic enterprises to use their capital to make profits and expand reproduction. Capital as such is a “rootless cosmopolitan”: since it can only maintain itself and expand by means of constant valorisation, it always pursues possibilities for profitable investment, regardless of borders. From the perspective of the state, there is no objection to be raised to the foreign engagement of footloose capital. What is decisive is how this export of capital affects the corporate and financial bottom line: whether it impairs domestic growth, or in fact promotes it by tapping into new zones of valorisation. However, the mutual opening of markets also contains a danger: that domestic businesses or entire branches are ousted by foreign competition. Free trade leads to a direct comparison of foreign and domestic productivity. That's why states make an effort to tweak foreign trade strategies in a way that maximises their own national economic advantage while hindering the successes of foreign enterprises — for example through tariffs, trade quotas, exchange rate policies, and restrictive quality requirements.

The system of national protective tariffs was successively weakened since the mid-1970s, in favor of the doctrine of “free markets” pushed by the highly productive industrial nations. All states can join this world of free competition — as long as they submit to its rules. These rules were drawn up and institutionalised by the leading global industrial and commercial powers in the interest of their own foreign economic growth, and these powers use their dominant position in the institutions of international trade to adjust and interpret these rules to

their own advantage. Their genteel renunciation of violent exploitation and the use of the military to open markets do not mean that competition between national economies has in the meantime transformed into a friendly give and take. The term “world market” suggests all too friendly exchange relationships. Even “just”, formally equitable “terms of trade” are always in general at the expense of the weaker, i.e. less productive “trading partner”, whose capital is too small, credit too low, and whose own advantage in competition — cheap wage labour — is notoriously weak in growth. But in light of the dynamic of capitalist development, for most of these economically inferior states opening to and producing for the world market is the only possibility for obtaining technology and capital. And those are the fundamental preconditions for any independent development of productivity. In return for corresponding credit, debt guarantees, and trade agreements, dependent sovereigns make a commitment to creditor nations (or respectively to the international currency, credit, and trade institutions steered by the leading capitalist states: IMF, World Bank, and WTO) to use their sovereignty in a manner serving global capital valorisation: opening their countries to commodities, services, and investments from the developed industrial states; privatising state monopolies and public services, thus capitalising social reproduction; and through discipline in monetary policy, a guarantee of national debt service, and political compliance. The governments of the affected countries know very well that private investors from the developed capitalist countries compensate an increased risk of default by an increased rate of return, and in the process aren’t squeamish in their manner of dealing with the local population and environment. In a correspondingly rigorous manner, they use their own means of state force against social protests which might upset “confidence” in their investment location.

For decades, reliable growth guaranteed the developed capitalist states access to markets, raw materials, and wage labour beyond their own national borders. The “invisible hand” of the “market” also functioned here only within frameworks laid out by the capitalist industrial and commercial states themselves. Which economic-political strategy of using foreign countries yields the greatest advantage for the domestic economy, and which elements of this strategy can actually be implemented in the diplomatic wrestling match among capital exporters and investment “locations”, is constantly decided anew. Even under the conditions of the “free market” for capital, commodities, and services, the developed capitalist states have a variety of instruments at their disposal for promoting the competitive success of their own economies: through preferential lending rates, more or less

hidden subsidies, investment guarantees, administrative market barriers against foreign capital, etc. Furthermore, they must attempt to improve the competitive position of their own national economies against other national economies and currency zones by means of their respective monetary and currency policies (steering exchange rates, interest rate policies, borrowing money). The price or price stability of the domestic currency on the international foreign exchange market — in relation to other currencies — is decisive for domestic industry's access to foreign credit, for the international economic value of the domestic currency, and for the global competitive position of domestic export production. The currency policy of national states or the European Union is thus always an instrument of global economic competition. Decisive for the international exercise of political-economic power is the competitive position of domestic enterprises, the volume and growth of the national economy as a whole, the purchasing power of the national currency — and depending upon all of this, the tax-financed military extortion potential of a particular state or alliance of states. Not every war or “humanitarian intervention” waged by the military great powers of world capitalism follows a primarily economic interest. However, their military power is the best guarantee that the ensuing peace is organised according to the needs of the world market system to which these states owe their economic dominance.

After the economic ruin of state socialism in the 1980s, the socialist-inspired governments of the dependent Southern hemisphere were also forced to recognise that unconditional participation in the capitalist world market remained their only chance of developing an economy capable of growth. Even the importance of strategic natural resources as means of power rises and falls with the cycles of the global economy. Thus, Venezuelan “socialism” is financed by the income from oil exports to imperialist countries, particularly the US. That is the only reason this state can pay for its educational and welfare expenditures and keep its host of public employees and early retirees happy. Since Venezuela cannot even educate enough doctors to meet its needs, these are borrowed from Cuba in exchange for petrodollars. So even this program of national benefaction has limits set by a national productivity that remains permanently backward within the context of international competition. Venezuela is even dependent upon Western corporations in order to profitably produce and refine oil. If the demand for oil slumps as a result of the economic cycle, not only does the Venezuela oil industry suffer, but also the state as a whole, and with it the material welfare of every single citizen.

The institutionally supported dynamic of the capitalist world market was resoundingly superior in the long term to that of the state socialist block. The factual bankruptcy of these states proves first and foremost that they were anything but “communist”. A communist society emancipates itself from economic competition, from the rivalry of the private and monetary “exchange” of goods as commodities. Such a society cannot therefore be “incur losses” or “go bankrupt”. Because the states of the Eastern Bloc sought to engage in the economic competition of productivity with the capitalist West, their economies remained dependent upon the system of world trade as a source of technology and currency. Bilateral trade agreements with Western countries made socialist “brother” countries into world market and currency competitors.

Over the course of decades, the Eastern Bloc countries were highly productive economically. After the destruction of the Second World War, some of them developed by leaps and bounds. The German Democratic Republic in particular was among the leading industrial countries of the world. Overall state planning did not stand in the way of this — in the free west as well, the development of heavy industry and the coal, iron, and steel industries was aided by national and international development programs. In contrast to the capitalist states, the Eastern Bloc states did not support any system of private capitalist productivity competition. However, neither did their economic planning realise the freedom of self-conscious social producers. Their management of production was subordinated state political aims and constraints. And precisely for that reason, most manual and intellectual labourers in socialism recognised that state planning goals were not their own, and in the production of social wealth at most only “worked to rule”. The state power for its part constantly drove its human material to greater exertion by means of strategically implemented “market elements”. And that even worked — which says something about the so-called “market”, which is a whip cracked to drive performance. People then decided in 1989/1990 that they preferred the original: self-constraint with the prospect of the privileges of private wealth, rather than state coercion without them.

The Eastern Bloc fell in a Cold War, not because of a diplomatic ice age or a cuddly “change through rapprochement” but rather because its authoritarian “integral statism” (Max Horkheimer) could not keep up in a constantly intensified productivity competition, and consequently overextended itself in the arms race.

The downfall of state socialism does not prove that a society free of domination is impossible, but rather that state socialism itself was not such a society — also because the capitalist west from the very beginning prevented it from becoming one.

12 THE WAGE LABOURERS' LOYALTY TO BUSINESS AND THE STATE UNDER THE FORCE OF COMPETITION

In the developed capitalist countries, the visible differentiation of citizens according to their class position — which determined many social panoramas well into the 20th century — has dissolved into a multiplicity of pseudo-independent individual life circumstances. However, for most people there still persists the existence-defining compulsion to sell their labour-power in exchange for a wage to a capital that wishes to employ it profitably. In the here and now, absent the political and at the same time anti-political perspective of abolishing the compulsion of wage labour and organising social production in solidarity, individuals are forced to pursue happiness and win their livelihood in competition with one another. As wage labourers, they are at the same time dependent upon the success of “their” employer. Already at the level of everyday business in the workplace, every effort on behalf of one’s own enterprise is simultaneously an effort against the jobs of other wage labourers in competing businesses. Concessions (overtime, wage sacrifices) by employees to “their” businesses — supposedly to “save jobs” — force the employees of competing businesses to make the same sacrifices, or be ousted from the market.

Individual and business opportunities in competition are both dependent upon the overall success of national wealth production in competition on the world market. Whether an individual capital has a chance at all of trying its luck on the world market already depends upon the currency in which it is denominated, thus upon the economic power of the state that attempts to support its domestic capital through diplomacy, infrastructure, credit, and debt guarantees. The world market’s unerring comparison of productive capacities and possibilities for rationalisation decides whether a territory and its population come into question at all as a location for profitable valorisation, and which structural adjustments it is thereby forced to adopt. The appeal to “social achievements” that cannot be given up reaches here the objective limit of its own financial feasibility, since the

social guarantees of the capitalist state are tied to its tax revenues. And by nature, social services are particularly in demand when the tax base declines: in times of a general economic stagnation or crisis. And thus in Germany, the cyclical general weather situation made sure that the Social Democratic Party, of all parties, implemented the greatest social welfare cuts in the history of the republic. In the welfare state insurance and transfer systems, the charitable-integrative instruments and disciplinary instruments of population policy have become more directly entwined ever since. Where the compulsion to self-constraint mediated by competition and liberal forms of social control no longer have any effect, the agencies of the state become more directly pedagogically active.

On the basis of the experience that a previously reached level of modest general prosperity in capitalism is constantly endangered and can only be maintained by a continuous, at best worldwide competitive success of domestic enterprises, civic individuals register every sign of national weakness as an omen of future social cuts. Within this alarmist perceptual grid, the competitive position of the national educational system carries as much weight as the export difficulties of domestic high-tech, the “loss” of jobs to “low-wage countries”, or the performance of national sports teams. German athletic virtues are the virtues of every national and private labour force: discipline, a high sense of duty and commitment, and willingness to make sacrifices: “Durch Kampf zum Spiel”⁵ — only without the *Spiel*. In light of the comprehensive dependency of the private individual upon the competitive success of “his” enterprise and “his” state, his loyalty to the agencies of social domination and exploitation is only too understandable. But what seems understandable from the perspective of the individual is, within the total context, an egregious contradiction and absurdity: engagement for a system of social domination, social self-incapacitation in the attempt — demanding many sacrifices — not to lose out at least as an individual.

13 > LOSS OF THE STATE'S CAPACITY TO ACT < IN THE ERA OF > NEO-LIBERAL GLOBALISATION <?

Everyone is shouting it from the rooftops: the “epoch of neo-liberalism” has just ended. Supposedly characteristic of this allegedly “Anglo-Saxon” model of capitalist regulation is an unscrupulous and heedlessly speculative greed

5 „Finding one's way in the game (*Spiel*) through struggle (*Kampf*).”

for profit, with no regard for social values, but only for short-term profits, not for social or national responsibility, but rather for “shareholder value”. One widespread allegation claims that “neo-liberal globalisation” has undermined the state’s “capacity to act”, and that this must be now energetically reclaimed.

Now, it cannot be denied that the shape of world capitalism has changed considerably since the valorisation crisis of the 1970s. That crisis ended an era of mass integrative, social democratic redistributive policies, which were succeeded by a strategy of capitalist “liberalisation”. In many western states, public enterprises or parts of the social security systems were privatised, or restructured according to entrepreneurial considerations. Trade union entitlements were politically rolled back. At the same time, there was a far-reaching integration of the capitalist world economy: state trade and investment barriers were dismantled, which led to an intensification of global capitalist competition. With the collapse of the Eastern Bloc, this development encompassed the entire globe.

But it is misleading to bemoan this process and its consequences as a loss of the state’s “capacity to act”. The capitalist competition on the world market did not simply fall from the sky. It was and is a growth strategy of the leading capitalist national economies. And it is anything but “deregulated”. “Liberalised” global capitalism presupposes a comprehensive system of inter-state and international treaties concerning mutual capital and commodities traffic. These agreements regulate the general conditions of competition, and mediate special conditions for individual states: customs conventions, rules for accountancy, investment agreements, equity models, workplace safety regulations, etc. When these are negotiated, the dominant capitalist states in no way experience a loss of control, since the global productivity competition and the free movement of capital is the way in which these states exert and extend their national economic power. Over the course of generations and world wars, the capitalist industrial states developed a more or less strong global valorisation of their domestic capital. That is why the industrial, commercial, and public infrastructure in these states is oriented towards constant growth in the national and international competition. Export world champion Germany obtains a considerable share of its national wealth from the regulated-deregulated world market, and is represented in its institutions with considerable shares and corresponding voting rights.

Of course, the complaint about the powerlessness and loss of the political sphere’s capacity to act in the face of global competition is not entirely baseless. It expresses the correct intuition that people in the contemporary world do not decide over their social relations of existence, but rather that the reverse is the

case. At the same time, the discourse concerning the loss of the capacity to act is also ideology. It misses the actual role of the state, due to an obvious — but nonetheless false, i.e. ideological — assumption about capitalism as a whole. According to this assumption, the state and capitalist (world market) competition are not recognised as functional aspects of a comprehensive system of social domination. As a result of the specifically capitalist separation of social reproduction into a political (public) sphere and an economic (private) sphere, both spheres superficially appear to be opposed to one another. The political institutions of the state appear to be instruments of a free and self-conscious process of social decision-making, whereas “private” social production essentially appears to elude the grasp of political control, and thus presents itself overall as the inaccessible precondition of “the political”. This appearance is confirmed and reinforced by the unpredictability of capitalist competition experienced everyday. The “economy” constantly appears to be a more-or-less “natural” sphere of production. In this seemingly obvious perception the capitalist economic form determinations are “naturalised”, i.e. regarded as self-evident conditions of production in general. In contrast, the state appears as the only comprehensive entity capable of acting, and therefore responsible for public welfare. The state is supposed to implement social needs against an apparently external economy. This view of things suggests various, equally false explanations for the manifest hardships and “injustices” of capitalism. Either people in general are egoists, and must be restrained and governed by the state in its role as guardian of the public good. Or only a few people are egoists, who corrupt an otherwise useful and reasonable social competition. Then only the alleged personal greed of unscrupulous capitalists and bonus-hungry managers comes up for criticism.

In its ideological underdetermination, the accusation of the state’s loss of its capacity to act loses any critical content, namely the intuition that in its endless drive to valorisation, the society of state and capital does in fact become independent vis—à—vis the very people who in fact recreate this society everyday. The call for state control trivialises the systemic constraints of the bourgeois-capitalist order. And it idealises the post-war model of a capitalism pacified by social partnership, with modest mass affluence and stable growth. The appearance of a manageable system of human benefaction, simultaneously capitalist and organised according to social partnership, arose under the extra-economic constraint on competition of the Cold War. This era of capitalism did in fact allow many people to have a share of social wealth (which they themselves created). But as is the case for a social order ripe with contradictions, this era collapsed under the weight of









its own advances. In this phase of capitalism, competing capitals in the western industrial states automated large sectors of production, making enormous leaps in productivity. In doing so, they created the foundation for their advantageous position in high technology branches, which is still going strong. However, it was precisely this successful rationalisation that also undermined the basis of mass integration through strong-growing industrial wage labour.

So global capitalism is both: a highly regulated yet nonetheless altogether uncontrollable system of social domination. Even in capitalism, industrial production is of course extremely planning intensive, and the world market is based upon numerous agreements. But social reproduction as a whole does not happen according to socially determined aims, but rather the hunt for new possibilities for valorisation in the global economic contest of elimination between businesses and economic locations. A reliable control of the entire economy in capitalism does not fail due to, for example, its technical complexity. It fails fundamentally due to the impossibility of predicting the commercial (and therefore macroeconomic) value of a specific private act of production or investment. This value only reveals itself “retroactively”, when the results of global private productivity competition are compared on the world market and in national economic statistics — when therefore competitors and macroeconomic development strategies fail one after the other, even though all have made their best effort. That is why the capitalist drive to maximum productivity and profitability is in the final instance an impersonal one, even when it is organised by specific capitalists and diligently implemented by specific wage labourers (Marx therefore speaks of “character masks” as “personifications of the economic relations that exist between them”⁶). It is a drive which through the competition between people and national economies assumes an independent nature against those very people. It cannot be controlled, but only abolished in its entirety.

6 <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/cho2.htm>



THE LONGING FOR UNITY:
IDEOLOGIES OF COLLECTIVE UNITY

14

THE DISTRIBUTED FRONTLINES OF SOCIAL COMPETITION: IDEOLOGIES OF “RACE”, GENDER, CULTURE, AND RELIGION

In the Communist Manifesto of 1848, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels emphasised the revolutionary role of the bourgeoisie and its mode of production, which eroded all traditional social relationships. Capitalism “has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked self-interest, than callous ‘cash payment’.”⁷ All “religious and political illusions” have been replaced by “naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation”. Even the “sentimental veil” of the family relation has been “torn away”. This diagnosis is self-evidently incorrect; the opposite is rather the case. It is true that the dynamic capital relation has destroyed the last economic and cultural bastions of the feudal order. However, the sober dictates of “cash payment” have always been accompanied throughout the entire bourgeois epoch by ideologies of collective identity, which have indelibly stamped the everyday consciousness and sense of self of most people. Against all enlightened or skeptical predictions that through the “progress” of science, economics, and administration the world would become increasingly “disenchanted” (Max Weber), capitalism presents itself as a veritable incubator of dubious ideologies. Where the presupposed “autonomy” of the bourgeois individual is constantly frustrated by the impersonal compulsions of valorisation, the imaginations of collective identity promise relief and orientation. Among the most powerful are “race”, gender, culture, and religion. They were and are still imagined to be irrevocable characteristics that define the essence of individual personality, while at the same time guaranteeing membership in a superordinate group. They appear to precede naked economic interests and political decision-making, beyond the reach of “callous cash payment”.

And precisely therein lays their ideological function. Ascribed identities of “race”, gender, culture and religion constitute, under the constant pressure of social competition, a system of social roles and taboos, by means of which political loyalties and claims of social participation are justified or curtailed. And this process is subject to constant renewal. In truth, ideologies of collective identity are enormously flexible. What remains the same is the appearance of an extra-economic and pre-political foundation of identity, a source of collective identity beyond the perils of capitalist competition. This ideological projection of a deeply rooted heritage and identification secures a claim to validation set in stone, which

7 <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/cho1.htm#007>

makes collective identity all the more a political factor. The more archaic the foundation of an identity, the more reassuring and therefore enticing it is to the restless desire for identity on the part of individuals atomised and menaced by the drive of competition.

However, “race”, gender, culture and religion are not constitutive of identity as strategically chosen positions, but as more or less spontaneous ideological interpretive models. They emerge within social conflicts more or less unintentionally, and thus appear to all participants at first and even second glance as being self-evident. And precisely therein lays their ideological functionality: the imagination of a deeply rooted, immutable identity legitimises (or delegitimises) social inclusion or exclusion of the characterised person or groups. With the authority of traditional, natural, or god-given group identities, current claims are represented. It is exactly these formation processes and this ideological function that must be constantly taken apart by social critique. Conflicts have a social basis, and are not merely questions of worldview. It also plays hardly any role whether a particular identity and the claims connected with it is justified religiously (transcendentally), or whether it legitimises itself “naturally” or merely “culturally”, i.e. as in principle changeable. Naturalisation and culturalisation fulfill the same inclusionary/exclusionary or hierarchical function in social conflicts. That’s why the traditional biological justification for racist exclusion in many societies could be replaced by more subtle, culturally justified demarcations, or why religious patterns of identity could take on a more cultural character, without changing anything with regard to the production of social exclusion.

“Race”, gender, culture, and religion are often described with a certain critical intent as “constructs”. The allusion to their determination in “contested discourses” serves to remind that attributions of identity also always represent relations of domination. And in fact, every historical comparison shows that the social importance of supposedly immutable categories of identity consistently changes rapidly. But the attempts to conduct something like “identity politics” by means of “discursive interventions” are inadequate. With a minimum of historical awareness, one can recognise that such “discourses” constantly gain importance and change within the context of social conflicts over the distribution of wealth and power, during shifts in the particular system of social domination. They serve partly as claims of entitlement, partly as ideal reparation for experienced exclusion, partly as a triumphal gesture of social dominance. So such attributions of identity can only be politicised within the context of social conflicts over the distribution of wealth and power.

That does not mean that ascribed identities merely “reflect” such distribution conflicts in an unmediated way. Identities themselves contribute to the forging or dissolution of political alliances, and the concentration of social groups into political collectives. However, the maneuvers of identity politics gain (and lose) their social plausibility and impact only within the compelling cycles and crises of the globally integrated capital relation. In their concrete emergence, composition, and change they process the capital relation’s conflicts in an unambiguous way: as more or less spontaneous attempts to devise a clear-cut and stable basis for action amidst an all-encompassing competition with constantly shifting dependencies. They offer a collectively insured standpoint of personal identity, free of contradiction, amidst the contradictory impositions of state and capital. The need for such a standpoint detaches itself again and again from concrete material interests, such as those which result from one’s level of income or educational background. Ascribed identities react in a highly-sensitive way to the particular social status quo. However, they unfurl their reassuring power only as anticipations, as ideological projections of a reconciled world, free of contradictions. In that, they are symptoms of an unreconciled reality.

Under the reign of private property and the drive to valorisation, every emphatic identity standpoint is always at the same time self-deception and exclusive of others. In a social order based upon competition and exploitation, “personality” can only develop as a system of temperamental positions of attack and defense. And every blueprint for an identity free of contradiction (as part of a collective) papers over real social conflicts and real social powerlessness, in favor of an efficient capacity to act on behalf of one’s own clique. Such identities constantly threaten to tip out of their everyday balance. That is all the more the case when the direction and intensity of social distribution conflicts constantly and unpredictably change under the compulsion of a restless and crisis-prone capital valorisation. In contrast to all other historical social formations, it is a characteristic of the conflict structure of bourgeois socialisation that “personal identity” is always merely provisional, and fundamentally in danger of breaking down. In light of this threatening breakdown, the alleged foundations of each identity are defended all the more vehemently. That is why racist and religious fanaticisms are not gradually dwindling historical ideologies, but rather vibrant elements of social domination in capitalism.

Within the spectrum of cultural, religious, sexual, and even racial ascribed identities, one can always find reflexes of a fundamental refusal against the impositions of capitalist competition: ascribed identities that attempt to extricate themselves





in some way from the bourgeois-capitalist drive to self-constraint. Most notably religious or humanist ideologies offer a comforting recourse that allows one to compromise in the daily competitive battles and still feel like a winner. However, the ideology of a heavenly reward for ethical life conduct already makes clear that even religious consciousness is just another attempt to stand on the winners' podium in the end. And this is the case with all other identitarian grounds for ethics and customs. They ideologically compensate the feelings of powerlessness and fear of loss of the bourgeois individual, instead of criticising their social foundation. As ideologies constituting identity, they are just as opportunistic as the drive to valorisation that they purport to fight against.

The bourgeois state plays a contradictory role in the contest of identities. Already its status as a "non-partisan" monopolist of force expresses the fact that in the bourgeois order, "race", gender, culture, and religion do not justify a power of disposition over social life independent of the state. Whoever wishes to conduct politics in their name must move within the boundaries defined by the bourgeois state with its universal legal order. And in exactly this sense there exists in the bourgeois state — at least in principle — freedom of religion, as well as to a large extent a jester's license.⁸ However, precisely as the political force of capitalist society, the state is forced to promote certain concrete social development goals that are constantly imposed anew in the world market competition between national economies. And the political representatives of state power thereby seek and find a connection to social ideologies and ideologues of "racial", sexual, cultural, or religious identity. Ultimately, both sides move — with different organisational means and interest standpoints — within the same social field. Religion and culture are in essential respects nothing other than modes of mediation of a specific social ethic as suggested by the structure and level of development of social relations of reproduction. And that's exactly why religious institutions are called upon by the state and supervised, sometimes even "recognised" and supported. In a similar way, models of reproductive self-determination are supported which are beneficial to state-political or more narrowly national economic development goals in the world market competition. Depending upon the state and economic cycle that means: promotion of the family and childbearing, or promoting participation in the job market without having children, or both: working and having children, with or without the family. The latter is the guiding principle of population policies

8 Such freedoms count in most of these states as aspects of "personal freedom", which is justified by the economic contractual freedom of competing individuals — the juridical basis of the capitalist system of reproduction (see Chapters 4 and 5).

of the German state and the developed capitalist states in general: mobilisation and safeguarding the national labour force at a high level.

The example of gender relations also makes clear the contradictory entanglements of collective identity standpoints with the capitalist mode of production. Capitalist society is based upon a consistent separation between production (“the workplace”) and reproduction (“the home”). Essential means of production and labour are not found for most people in personal or collective ownership. And those who possess these means do not themselves work with them, but rather use external labour power in exchange for a wage. With the historical imposition of the wage-labour relation, traditional relations of dependency are dissolved. The political governance of society thus becomes an independent “public task”. This specific structure of capitalist reproduction relationships establishes significant separation of life into a “public” or “economic” and a “domestic” and in that respect “private” sphere. Alongside this historically established, socially objective division line developed a very fundamental form of a sexual division of labour, which in the course of capitalist crises is constantly accentuated and varies: the role of the man as bread winner, and the woman as the spirited guardian of home and child. But both attributes — or “roles” — first arise as the result of ideological disambiguations of actual distribution conflicts, because the capitalist mode of production generates a counter-tendency. A tendency to level out gender roles within the wage-relation: in bourgeois-capitalist society, women can win a measure of material autonomy from husband and family, a possibility that was denied to them in previous societies. Static relationships of reproduction and family, constitutive of hierarchies and with binding traditions and conventions, are broken up by the generalised drive to valorisation of capital, and at least in principle transformed into formal legal relationships guaranteed by the state. Wherever a chance for valorisation opens up, capital doesn’t consider gender. The price of this “gain in freedom” for women is their new dependency upon the cycles of valorisation. The direst consequences of this dependency were only slowly alleviated by state law for the protection of its human capital. The constellation described generates structural contradictory gender identities: the tendency to push women away into the sphere of the “private”, and the counter-chance of breaking up traditional family bonds in the direction of free wage labour. Thus, women in the labour struggles of the 19th century demanded a “male family wage”, a wage level that would allow a (male) wage labourer to support his entire family. Through this, women could avoid the sphere of direct valorisation — only to fall once again into familial dependency. During crises of valorisation women

are time and again pawns of the national economy: they tend to lose their jobs earlier and usually only get them back under worse conditions. The fact that women's qualifications for certain job descriptions are constantly denied is part of the gender-specific distribution struggles in everyday capitalist competition. The official gender policies of developed capitalist states have attempted in the last few years to alleviate this effect of capitalist competition. Under the catchword "gender mainstreaming", measures are coordinated Europe-wide that are intended to secure the "equality of man and woman" in all areas of society. This admittedly changes nothing of the distribution conflicts that repeatedly lead to gender-specific discrimination.

Collective identities thus always remain frontlines of social competition. They are also effective even when they produce no direct economic effect. The symbolic humiliation of the "other" already has a reassuring function — for example in the discussion of whether the specific height of minarets already threatens the cultural identity of Germany. The answer doesn't really matter, because merely posing the question already allows thoughtful citizens to imagine themselves as belonging to a national collective which is authorised in case of doubt. That's why, even though the fear of cultural hypergenesis through the construction of mosques is completely irrational, it fulfills a tangible ideological function: it provides people who are pushed around in capitalist competition day in and day out the reassuring certainty of having an identity and a few roots. And it also makes it possible for them to perform in competition not as nobodies or big shots, but rather "as Germans" — which in the hectic competitive daily grind can in fact make a big difference.

15 NATIONALISM AS CENTRAL IDEOLOGY AND "OBJECTIVE FORM OF THOUGHT" OF COLLECTIVES OF CITIZENS

The cycles of the world market always impact people as citizens of a state. Educational opportunities, jobs, economic growth, public services, and state transfer payments all depend upon the competitiveness of the national valorisation zone. The objective dependency of the individual upon the fortunes of "his" state in world market competition is imparted to everyday consciousness as an obvious and ineluctable precondition of individual existence. This socially produced appearance



of a “natural” togetherness of individuals and the state creates a feeling of certainty of national identity. Fractured into thousands of ideological reflexes, it tinges the most personal perception of national colors: art and culture, sport successes, growth rates, victims of kidnapping, and educational plights — they all become aspects of a national schematised division of the world into “ours” and “the foreign”.

In Europe, historically distinct patterns of justification of the national increasingly align with one another. There is neither a flawless “republican” nationalism in France, which discriminates solely according to place of birth and political denomination, nor does pronounced folkish-racist nationalism — with criteria of exclusion oriented to the ideology of a biological ancestral community — predominate at present in Germany. The economic integration of Europe as a barrier-free zone of growth for capital has allowed a transnational, pragmatic chauvinism of affluence to emerge, which above all distrustfully guards the geographical and ideological external borders. However, the identification with the nation remains an automatic need of capitalistically atomised individuals. They are dependent elements of the nation-state and national economy, which still remain their essential social interrelation.⁹

Like the ideologies of “race”, gender, culture and religion, national identity is also not a strategically chosen or suggested worldview. It is no longer the case that national identification emerges as an ideological vision of free self-empowerment towards political sovereignty, but rather as an involuntary reaction to the fundamental threats against bourgeois identity under the constant pressure of valorisation. The need for a reassuring identity is an answer to the powerlessness of the individual manifest everywhere, in the face of overpowering cycles of globally intensified competition. As a projecting surface of an original and therefore “real”, crisis-free identity, the identification with the nation guarantees a deceptive relief from the constantly latent crises and offenses of capitalist socialisation. That is the reason for the ubiquitous interest in national “origins” in the depths of history. National historiography answers to a specific bourgeois-nationalist desire for identity. The citizen — always threatened in capitalism and tormented by contradictory compulsions — looks here for indications of a secure, unquestionable, and contradiction-free common bond rooted in an ancient past. He finds satisfaction not only in the imaginations of the historical greatness of “his” nation, but just as well, and even better, in its historical defeats. Every national historiography contains stories of an allegedly “commonly” endured suffering. A community of suffering is the best guarantee of the harmony so

9 See chapter 9, 10, and 12

missed and longed for. And it is this longing that guides the historical imagination of nationalism. Even when national identity is cultivated only as a diffuse “feeling” or in a pseudo-ironic fractured way, its ideological yield is undiminished: the claim and the certainty of a steadfast common bond.

The euphoria of national community constitutes an ideological reconciliatory counterbalance to the necessary distrust with which bourgeois individuals must face their daily competition. That this longing for community is consistently ignited by symbols of the nation only reflects the unbroken dependency of the individual upon the world market fortunes of “its” state valorisation collective. In ritual acts of national communion, bourgeois individuals skip their social competition and enjoy themselves as *the* community of common destiny which they actually *are* in the superordinate world market competition between national economies. In contrast to their actual private atomisation and powerlessness, as a collective they experience a capacity for action.

As an ideological form of reflection of the everlasting and inescapable drive to valorisation under which bourgeois states and individuals carve out a living, the feeling of national identity is also an everlasting and compulsive attitude. And analog to the constant mobilisation in the social competition, national identification is also a comprehensive system constantly in need of renewal. Deeply symbolic indicators of national performance and moral superiority are evaluated, from economic data to sports results to the perception of fellow countrymen in the rest of the world. At the center of this symbolic universe stands the state. First the identification with the sovereign power of the force monopolist promises the transcendence of the lasting experience of individual powerlessness from which not even the privileged and the lucky are spared in capitalism. This identification with the state promises participation in its perfected power, beyond the desperate compulsions of daily valorisation. (That is also the entire explanation of the cross-class enthusiasm for national sports teams and state flags, which citizen idiots hang up or paint on their faces — a modern form of magic identification that capitalism itself provokes.)

In light of the structural conflicts of socialisation in capitalism, the ideology of national identity expresses a claim to recognition and participation. The state should concretely guarantee what it can only formally guarantee as the political subject of the capitalist system of reproduction, but which it at all times powerfully and inescapably imposes against the individual: it should guarantee real equality, although in accordance with its function it can only impose formal legal equality. It should guarantee the actual, material recognition of the person, and not just

the formal recognition of the legal personality, which is consistently canceled out in competition. It should offer a real guarantee of protection against the perils of relentless economic competition which it itself maintains in its role as “ideal total capitalist”. The state is called upon as a guarantor of national claims, because its power actually appears to be sovereign. The nationalist demand of exclusive provision thus relies upon a sovereign, i.e. extra-economic guarantee of privileged claims. In the cycles of competition, it appears to be the only reliable protection.

Since every citizen can take a reading of its dependency upon the state collective from the macroeconomic cyclical data and the figures of the state budget, it has every reason to accept as patriotic obligations the impositions of national competitive success and the state mobilisation of the national human capital. The state and the nationalised individual share here a competitive interest, and thus usually act in concert with regard to demographic policy. Furthermore, the social reality of private property teaches that recognition, secure existence, and the guarantee of a good life, to which every democratic nationalist lays claim, are only obtainable as constantly threatened privileges. The nationalist demand for guaranteed participation thus amounts to limiting the circle of those with a legitimate claim, and increasing the obligations of membership. Civic nationalism thus acts just as exclusively as private property, but beyond the arbitrariness of the market.

The aggressiveness of this national attitude of entitlement also reflects the experience always possible in capitalism that “honest work” literally “doesn’t count” in competition, that it does not prove itself in the contest, and that it is therefore simply worthless in capital’s sense. In this recurrent, structural threat of capitalist socialisation, the state as guardian of right and law appears to be appointed to provide for justice. With its superior instruments of power it is supposed to overcome the offensive and tormenting sense of not getting one’s “just deserts” in capitalist competition despite a complete willingness to perform; the sense of being constantly duped and cheated. The nationalist *argumentum e contrario* is that every income that doesn’t result from hard work is freeloading. Radical citizens derive from that the right and even obligation to exclude and attack such “freeloaders”. Liberal Democrats insist that the state fulfills its duties in this regard.

The recurrent racist excesses of the mobs of Rostock-Lichtenhagen or Johannesburg are thus a recurrent moment of the ideology of national identity. In a pogrom, the nationalist mob does not primarily define its outside, but rather its own claims of entitlement. It demolishes the requirements of bourgeois law,



and converts the endless drive of competition of capitalism into a concrete decisive battle. The tolerant everyday nationalism of the citizen also obtains its energy and pacification from the promise to enclose the hopeless impositions of capitalist competition within a national (or at least ethnic) collective of equal peers, in which survival and recognition do not have to be eked out anew every single day. National identity is thus a general, objective form of thought of capitalist socialisation, a unified need born out of structural threats. It reproduces the conflicts to which it owes its existence.

16 THE COMMON IDEOLOGICAL BASIS OF NATIONALISM AND NATIONAL SOCIALISM OR FASCISM

The National Socialist ideology of folkish nationalism responds to the collapse of the bourgeois-liberal promise of emancipation in the global competition of capitalist industrial states. In Europe and North America, national economic development was based upon property rights guaranteed by the state, and was accompanied by a gradual generalisation of further bourgeois rights. But in the national economic competition among states, and even more in the global valorisation crisis of the 1930s, its liberal content dwindled away. Bourgeois freedom was a source of existential insecurity for most people. It vividly revealed itself as the compulsion to self-constraint and the powerless obligation of socially atomised people.

The ideology of folkish nationalism openly proclaims the nullity of the individual within the valorisation process and the individual's dependence upon the common destiny of the state community. But it combines this with the promise of absolutely inviolable solidarity and privileges guaranteed by the state. Whereas the "autonomy" of the contractually empowered individual — unavoidably presupposed and demanded in capitalism — is repeatedly unable to cope and is cancelled out economically in the daily valorisation process, national socialist ideology spontaneously arises as a reassuring imagination of a pre-political "unity" of the nation as a people and race — as a national socialist ethnic community. As opposed to the usual civic nationalism, National Socialism promised to end once and for all the tilting at windmills of political mediation and the antagonism of social interests, and to impose the longed for national privilege through the measures of an authoritarian state. And as opposed to the usual authoritarian and fascist regimes, the Germans during the National Socialist period did not con-

tent themselves with “restoring social peace” — i.e. securing the capitalist course of business and steering it within certain limits — by means of dissolving parliaments and murdering a few thousand trade unionists, parliamentarians, and leftist intellectuals. The Nazis reacted to the capitalist crash around 1930 with revolutionary voluntarism. The offensive experience of political and economic powerlessness was transcended through acts of volition of a truly sovereign — namely directly violent — system of rule. The National Socialist promise of collective self-empowerment is based upon this program. Its state cult of concrete, hard, and self-sacrificing labour offered a more than symbolic way out of the experience of crisis of capitalist wage labour, namely that even complete effort does not guarantee self-determined survival.

The ideology of National Socialism noted with complete accuracy that capital, in its quest for valorisation opportunities, is in fact a “rootless cosmopolitan” — that it combs over the entire globe in search of valorisation opportunities, without regard for national economic interests and social development goals, and that “the peoples” in fact for better or for worse compete against each other in the world market competition between states. But National Socialism did not criticise the structural coercion of an impersonal system of social domination: a reign of capital as a social relationship in which economic actors are primarily “character masks” (Marx) of their respective position within the valorisation process, dependent functions of a universal drive to valorisation. As a mirror image to its ideological doctrine of revolutionary arbitrariness, National Socialism alleged a formative will even behind economic crises, unscrupulous forces that accepted and exploited the poverty of the masses: so-called “*raffendes Kapital*”, or rapacious capital, personified by “the Jews”.

That Jewish people or respectively “the Jews” were made responsible as an implied collective for the coercion and misery of capitalist valorisation ties in with the European tradition of Christian anti-Judaism. Elements of anti-Semitism were predetermined here, such as in the image of a secretly operating occult power, or in the identification of Jews with the money economy and trade, which was allocated to them for centuries as a source of income by the Christian feudal lords. But modern anti-Semitism gains a new quality as the ideology of a folkish anti-capitalism. In National Socialist ideology, “the Jews” as a supposed “race” personify all flash points and inimical principles of capitalism: they are regarded as “cosmopolitan”, as nationally unreliable agents of a “rapacious capital” which is driven by an unscrupulous greed for gold and money, for wealth which others have allegedly produced by the sweat of their brows: the honest worker and “productive capital”.

This splitting of capitalism into honest labour on the one hand and fraudulent exploitation on the other is ideology in the narrowest sense: a false consciousness concerning the capitalist process of socialisation, which is constantly suggested by this process itself, and thus to that extent “necessarily” belongs to it. In capitalism, under the reign of private property guaranteed by the state, exploitation is consummated in reality not as fraud and slavery, but rather in the process of the productive application of wage labour under the compulsion of capital valorisation, thus not as an act of robbery, but on the basis of a contractual and fair exchange, labour-power for a wage. Fraud constantly presents itself as a possibility through the general force of competition, but remains forbidden and is usually prohibited by the state. The inimical principle of capitalism is therefore not visible. It does not consist in innocently produced wealth being snatched up by greedy crooks, but rather in the fact that state force and capitalist economy constitute a compulsive order, in which social wealth is always produced in a private — that is to say, exclusive — form, and in which the valorisation of capital as a comprehensive, impersonal, and by tendency globe-spanning drive assumes an independent character. The anti-Semitic projection of Jewish domination of the world — depicted as an all-powerful spider or octopus subjugating the entire globe — personalises in a grotesque manner capital’s domination of the world, instead of criticising it as an impersonal relation of social domination. The suspicion of fraud directed at an alleged “rapacious capital” ascribes to “the Jews” as a “racial” — and hence pre-political — community a motivation which in reality is implanted in every individual under the conditions of capitalist competition: the desire, by means of eliminating the competition, and if necessary through cunning and occasional unscrupulousness, to secure one’s own existence, supported by an apparently extra-economic, and thus inalienable loyalty of one’s own group. Hence, the anti-Semitic projection ascribes to “the Jews” central elements of its own National Socialist state program: worldwide dominance of a chosen people and “master race”, ruthless subjugation and plunder of the global (“living space in Eastern Europe”), as far as the Wehrmacht could reach.

The Germans did their utmost to completely destroy the inimical moments of capitalism personified in their image of “the Jews”. Their anti-Semitism was eliminatory. It drew its cross-class dynamic from the promise to transcend once and for all the world of capitalist discord and bring together the Germans as a reconciled “*Volksgemeinschaft*” (national community). State, capital, and wage labour were to realise the common good through effort characterised by solidarity and the willingness to make sacrifices. In order to pacify the boundless capitalist

competition, every means was justified for the folkish collective: occupation, economic plunder, and a war of annihilation. But at the center of the National Socialist promise of redemption was the destruction of that section of the population which in the projective perception of the Germans embodied the principle of the capitalist drive to valorisation, and was therefore responsible for all coercion and humiliations: "the Jews". Precisely for that reason, the six million Jews systematically murdered by the Germans and their collaborators were not simply one group of victims among many.

The search for reasons as to why National Socialism became a mass ideology in Germany of all places often verges on sympathetic exculpation. And the comparison of National Socialism with other models of state crisis management of the late 1920s mostly has an apologetic function. The comparison in itself (for example with Italian Fascism, with the American "New Deal" or with the Soviet Union) presumes National Socialism to be a product of its time, as one gaffe of history among many. In truth, the difference matters: nowhere else did the state and its citizens as a real "*Volksgemeinschaft*" begin a war of plunder and annihilation. And nowhere else could an eliminatory anti-Semitism become an acclaimed state program. The American "New Deal" was not simply just another "statist" answer to the crisis. It shored up bourgeois democracy in the USA, and thus counts among the essential preconditions for the Allied Victory over the Germans.

Among the particular historical preconditions of National Socialism is the specific relationship between individual and state as it developed under the Prussian Monarchy and then the Prussian-German Empire. As distinct from Great Britain or France, the German bourgeoisie did not emancipate itself by means of a revolutionary break with the social power of the nobility. The belated development of Prussian-German capitalism occurred under the supervision of an authoritarian monarchy. Thus there were phases of economic liberalism, but no revolutionary foundation of liberal institutions. Instead, early on a system of state social insurance promoted the social integration of the working class, which from then on did not rely upon its revolutionary force, but upon its recognition by the state. For that reason, German workers and German Social Democracy allowed the revolutionary chance of 1919 to elapse, and with that isolated the revolutionary Soviet Union. One would seek in vain in Germany the sort of pronounced mistrust of the state itself that can be found everywhere in the ideology of American liberalism. Bourgeois society here was and is always at the same time bound up with the state. These are the institutional and ideological conditions which allowed the Treaty of Versailles to appear as a "national dishonor" (which National Socialism promised

to remedy). The unmediated relationship of the German individual to the state was a power source of national willingness to sacrifice and steadfastness down to the last bullet in the economic and military competition between states. This is neither an exhaustive historical explanation of National Socialism, nor does it serve to excuse it. But these are the essential historical determining moments that relate National Socialism to the general form of bourgeois-capitalist rule. Incidentally, the National Socialist individual was in no way as disfranchised as the common theory of totalitarianism suggests. Entrepreneurial pioneer spirit is documented by the engagement of millions in the exploitation of slave labourers and in the private valorisation of the property of their Jewish former fellow citizens and neighbors. The fascist state authority only had to guarantee the freedom of national caprice.

That National Socialist ideology is based in capitalist competition and crisis also means that National Socialism was not a “break in civilization”, but rather the expression of the constitutive self-contradiction of bourgeois freedom which is also noticeable in civilized democratic everyday life. The metaphor of a “break in civilization”, which is intended critically, is a piece of ideology and conceptual refusal within the political and civic discourse of the Berlin Republic. Bourgeois “civilization” is so fragile because its social substance is a constant cutthroat competition of individuals and states under the capitalist drive of competition.

Like historical National Socialism, contemporary fascist ideology arises from the structural crises and constitutive experience of powerlessness of capitalist socialisation. The fascist demand for the abolition of politics in the folkish provisional state is therefore not “stuck in the past”, but rather always has a contemporary motivation. The anti-capitalism of folkish freaks seeks an authoritarian way out of the structural crises of capital valorisation, and out of the necessary shattering of illusions in the possibilities of political management.

But the ideological distinction between “productive” and “rapacious” capital is not made only by Nazis. It also structures everyday civic perception. Citizens like to hear about the export successes of national industry. But as soon as this national success seems to be endangered, their false, bourgeois-statist anti-capitalism is set in motion. It then denounces exorbitant “manager’s salaries” and expense-hungry boards of directors. Economic considerations of profitability are perceived as being “unscrupulous profit-mongering” as soon as they turn out to be inauspicious for one’s own location. The instinctive criticism of “Anglo-Saxon predatory capitalism and locust capitalism” nourishes itself from the choice of metaphors of the folkish anti-capitalism of the Nazis. And since the outbreak of the most recent credit crisis, the opposition between

“finance capital” and the “real economy” has once again become acceptable. The ideological kinship between this truncated criticism of capitalism with the false anti-capitalist of National Socialism proves the insufficiency of every anti-fascist theory and practice that remains fixated upon Nazis. National Socialism and fascism are not the complete other of bourgeois society, but rather one of this society’s ideological vanishing points.

17 “NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION” — ON THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF SOVEREIGNTY, SEPARATISM, AND “NATION BUILDING”

After 1989, the breakup of the multiethnic states of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia seemed to confirm once more that every nation has a justified right to statehood. And in fact, most of the nation-states of Europe enjoy existence as a matter of course, which is expressed in widely recognised national institutions and symbols. But besides nation-states, countless stateless nations also populate the globe. They often occupy contiguous strips of land, whether within larger states, or beyond the established borders of states. And even independent of such settlement areas it is also not uncommon for people to identify themselves as “national minorities” living among a majority population with its own state. In almost every new regional conflict, some stateless sector of the population emerges from the dark corners of world history and stakes a claim “as a nation” to recognition and the right of disposition over resources, governmental posts, and a territory, if applicable.

That such movements with national ambitions only achieve notice after high-profile acts of violence is partially due to the fact that international law of the 20th century and its institutions essentially only regards states as political subjects: the principle of national state sovereignty was institutionalised by states for states, under the precondition of (or with the legitimising foundation of) an undisputed state sovereignty within a specific territory. However, a much more banal reason for the occasionally surprising emergence of stateless nations is that they previously did not exist “as nations”. National identity only achieves a mass effectiveness as a line of mobilisation within the context of valorisation and distribution conflicts mediated by the state. Such internal and external distribution conflicts integrate people as competing and mutually exclusive population groups. And that is exactly the ideological function of

modern nationalism. Since these conflicts cannot be permanently stopped under the conditions of a global capitalist competition between states, they continue to be ideologically politicised as “national” claims of entitlement. Many contemporary stateless nations invoke the authority of a history spanning centuries, if not millennia. But in truth, such traditional lineages — like those of the majority of the well-established nation-states of today — are ideological constructs of the 19th and 20th centuries. Their “national” content of inviolable unity and loyalty first develops in the context of the real collectivisation of individuals in the emerging capitalist competition between states. The absolutist states of Europe had already functioned as institutional brackets of the populations within their borders, who were subject to taxation. And the idea of a “national” equality of people (or rather, men) had already been implemented across Europe in the 18th century as the political program of the upwardly mobile bourgeoisie against noble and estate-based privileges. In this sense, the concept of “the nation” was also mobilised by colonial elites in the New World in wars of independence against their respective mother countries. But only in the course of the 19th century was this political program generalised and transformed into an ideology of a primordial, organic, and exclusive community to which every individual directly and essentially belongs. Only with the capitalist penetration and integration of the globe in the competition between states was every single person (as an owner of private-property) integrated — at least in Europe — into an all-pervasive national economic valorisation process, and directly made identifiable and in need of identity as a member or outcast of a unified, comprehensive, and exclusive collective.

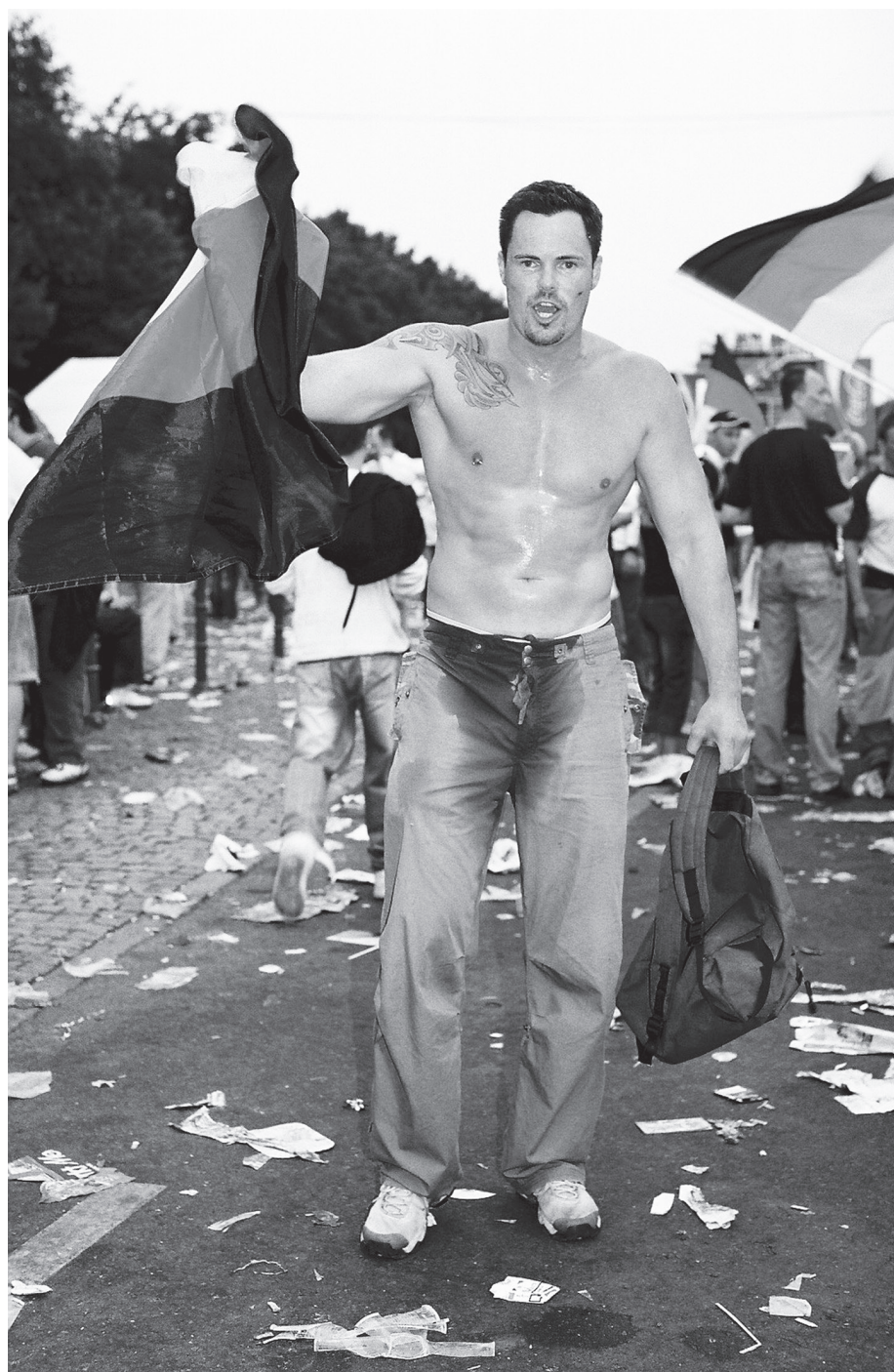
In Europe, this valorisation process underpinned by general law and state institutions integrated countless regional economic circuits across historical borders into functioning national economies. Regional identities were maintained often as merely harmless folklore. Such regional identities only became (and still become) politically explosive where national economic integration was not achieved, or was incomplete, and regional or traditional circuits of reproduction remained dominant. They constituted a bulwark against impositions of capitalist general mobilisation, or against laws and taxes of the central state which turned out detrimental to the region in question. In such cases, regional identity is produced and cultivated as a criterion of distinction. Traditions arise as an ethnic-cultural foundation for entitlements to special rights that can be permanently claimed from a central state. At exactly what point such economic and ideological fractures within a national economy themselves obtain a “national” character cannot be determined according to clear-cut economic criteria, since not every demand that is formulated as a collective and “national” claim

actually has the social basis and coherence to which every national ideology alludes. The national construction of tradition and its future promise have the purpose of compensating such real deficiencies. To that extent, every national identity born or reborn in distribution conflicts is essentially a project and a projection. In the case of changed relations of power, such acts of identitarian segregation can always serve as ethnic and territorial lines of mobilisation within a violent distribution conflict, whether in a civil war for state power, or for regional separatism. The collapse of the Eastern bloc and the breakup of Yugoslavia after 1989 offer dozens of impressive examples.

Many of the established nation-states in Europe also have to deal with “national minorities” that aspire to various levels of “autonomy”. Sometimes it’s only a case of the recognition of a second official language (such as in Austria, Italy, and Great Britain), sometimes it’s a matter of limited regional sovereignty over taxes and the police (like in Spain), and at other times it’s a matter of full state sovereignty (such as in France, Turkey, and once again in Spain). In some of these minority populations, separatism itself has become the only real national tradition. The capitalist states of Western Europe have so far shown an integrative strength that has been sufficient in securing a more-or-less normal business environment by means of limited concessions and limited repression. But the end of the Cold War also created new problem situations. Not only did it present unexpected possibilities for expansion to the superior national capitals of the West, but also intensified the worldwide competition, and with it the distribution struggles within the Western industrial nations themselves. In the course of that, since the beginning of the 1990s explicitly separatist movements from high-performance industrial regions have won seats in national parliaments. They openly agitate for separation from unproductive regions (for example in Belgium or Italy). The economic chauvinism of the global free market is here openly expressed: economically weak regions should no longer be supported by national transfer systems, and wealth should only benefit those who generate it by means of superior productivity. It’s still an open question as to what explosive force this regionalisation of competition will unfurl. The European economic zone has been further integrated compared to the situation at the beginning of the 1990s. That has altered the frame of reference for the chauvinism of affluence: under the condition of the continued economic integration of Europe it will be increasingly irrelevant whether Sicily belongs to the same state as Lombardy or not. However, conflicts of distribution between the state monopolist of force, regions with strong economic growth, and dependent regions persist, and such conflicts can escalate ideologically time and again. The Western European nation-states have also produced additional trouble spots in their former

colonial territories and imperial zones of influence, primarily in Africa, which was colonised relatively late in history. State construction here was only based upon sustainable economic integration in the rarest of cases, since in their demarcation of borders, the colonial powers were only considerate of established economic circuits and structures of rule if they could exploit them for their own national economic goals. The structure of colonial economies and their regulation by the militarised colonial powers reliably prevented an independent development of the forces of production. Colonial production was arranged according to the requirements of a foreign capitalism of theft and trade, and the colonial markets were flooded with finished products of the industries of the European nation-states. In order to rule these dependent territories, particular sections of the population or elites were instrumentalised, endowed with privileges, and given a share of the booty. This legacy has strained state construction ever since decolonisation. Almost always, anti-colonial nationalism adopted the republican claims to emancipation of European bourgeois nationalism, without possessing its national-economic substance. And whatever the colonial economies had to offer from now on had to be sold on the world market — a world market in turn dominated by the former colonial masters. In this situation, the new “independent” governments had one task above all: organise the selling off of the few internationally competitive or in demand products and natural resources to the developed capitalist industrial nations. For that reason, almost nowhere did the belated construction of sophisticated industrial production of wealth succeed. Instead, the control of the state apparatus and “national” resources has itself become a profitable source of income, and the former privileged elites have to compete with other sectors of the population. That is precisely the reason for the perpetual ethnic-national conflicts in the former colonial territories.

However, separatism is not merely a strategic affair in the former colonies or the mother countries of capital. Its ideological dynamic and practical, latent brutality is enhanced by the resistance of particular rulers or of the central state, which does not wish to simply give up its territorial integrity and economic sources of wealth. Ethnic-national massacres cannot simply be derived from an economic base. But the composition and the political options of ethnic-national movements develop regularly in anticipation of hoped for gains and advantages of ones “own” state in the competition of the world market. At the same time, there remains sufficient space for nationalist illusions. The experience of separatist regions and nations of being “disenfranchised” and exploited by a central power does not mean that things will be better after “independence”. In this world of capital, “independence” means above all that they can face the global competition at their own cost, and therefore at their own risk. Even those







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who have raw materials to sell find themselves exposed to the harsh cyclical fluctuations of the world market competition. The frustrations of national elation and feelings of togetherness are unavoidable. They are the breeding ground for banal, always a bit desperate, everyday nationalism.

18 NO “DECREASE IN IMPORTANCE” OF THE STATE THROUGH THE EU

With the integration of the European economic zone, a real nexus of socialisation has emerged, a powerful “global player” with a stable world currency alongside the dollar. The dismantling of barriers to capital valorisation between states (tolls, risks in exchange rates, inconsistent technical and political norms, etc.) within the EU single market is in the national economic interest of all European states. Only together as an integrated, highly productive economic zone can they assert themselves in the competition for growth which has again taken on a global character since 1989. Their key industries can only achieve the necessary capital magnitude at the European scale, not only in order to survive this intensified cutthroat competition, but also to have a perspective of winning it. Demands and blueprints of a common European political and cultural identity reflect this situation: protectionism and chauvinism on the part of individual states would be to the disadvantage of all participants, whereas the common currency and economic zone provides an additional institutional and economic importance for the nation states of the EU. “Europe” thus becomes a point of orientation and an ideological projection surface in handling the daily impositions of the world market competition — a world market competition to which the EU states in general and Germany in particular owe their current wealth.

However, “European integration” is in no way eroding the importance of the nation state. The nation state remains the central point of reference in the economic and ideological socialisation of individuals. The balance sheets of the world market competition are still drawn up within a national framework (growth rates, trade balances, tax revenues, unemployment figures) and handed over to Europeans as citizens of competing national states (the individual states organise tax plans, social insurance, health care, and pension systems, education and labour market policies, infrastructure and investment aid, etc.). In these individual spheres affecting people’s lives, it is still the national state that translates the opportunities and compulsions of the world market competition into policies that

animate its population towards productivity, and which adjusts the much-praised achievements of the welfare state to changed conditions of competition. The industrial policy of the European national states does not strive for a European, but rather a national optimum. “We must”, says Angela Merkel, “have better products than the others, if we also want to live better. And we do.” And so does the workforce of Volkswagen, into which Merkel is trying to instill this national development goal. Europe is a means to this end. Within the European framework, the European states continue to compete as locations for business, naturally against each other as well. If Europe promotes one’s own location and its capitals, then “we are all Europe”. If the nation loses within Europe or if Europe loses in the world, then citizens demand to have their national guarantees of prosperity back. Concern about the state’s “loss of sovereignty” to a distant “Brussels bureaucracy” is usually a sure indication that the domestic economic cycle is not keeping up with the European average. The better the German economy performs relative to the rest of the “Eurozone”, the less talk there is about the “democratic deficits” of Brussels’ institutions.

As the largest economy in Europe and constant export world champion, the German state has a special interest in the economic integration of the EU. Germany’s prominent position in the “concert of European nations” is due to this economic power. The German national economy is in fact either the “locomotive of growth” or the “impediment to growth” of the EU. However, further reaching “great power ambitions” would make no macroeconomic sense to the German state. That doesn’t mean that the possibility for nationalistic escalations can be reliably excluded. The energies that black-red-golden feel-good nationalism attracts are not restricted to civil use. The last time there were nationalist pogroms was at the beginning of the 1990s, and ever since entire swathes of land have been built up into “national liberated zones” by active young citizens.

The limits of European humanism are already demonstrated in the treatment of poor refugees from regions of the world that, as former colonies, could never construct competitive economies. The economic potential of their countries of origin are of interest to the global north primarily as opportunities for valorising its capital. Poverty and epidemics are not recognised as grounds for asylum, even when a thousand times more people die miserable deaths from them than at the hands of all the torture regimes of the world put together. The state “development cooperation” of the economically powerful states of the north obligates their payment recipients in the southern hemisphere to open up their economies, which consolidates their dependency upon demand and investment emanating from the

north. The sole competitive advantage of such economic zones and sovereignties lies in the possibility of doing without a living wage and expensive labour safety measures, and shifting the costs of the welfare state onto traditional sources of subsistence: families, clans, or communities. Ethical business standards that the European states impose upon enterprises engaged in foreign economic activity don't change anything about this predicament. They merely provide for a certain amount of sustainability in economic "cooperation", and are reliably ignored by the private economic "partners" as long as their American and Asian competitors are not held to the same "rules of the game".

The European national states would only cede their political and ideological preeminence to the EU if their right to levy taxes was directly transferred to European institutions — their monopoly of the right to levy taxes and allocate expenditures in a manner beneficial to competition, the essential lever of state social and regulatory policy. Then Europe would be nothing other than a capitalist state.

19 THE CUNNING OF CAPITALIST UNREASON: CHINA, SYSTEMIC CRISIS, "THE SOCIAL MARKET ECONOMY"

The capitalisation of the world — bristling with weapons — founded and guaranteed over the course of centuries the global dominance of the "West", the European states and in the long run of the USA. Due to its increase in industrial productivity, Great Britain was in a position to flood overseas markets with unrivaled finished products. In the span of a few decades other Western European states followed this path of industrial capitalist development. Together, in the "Opium Wars" of the 19th century they militarily broke the back of Chinese protectionism. With this, they demonstrated to the entire world the foundations upon which the future production and appropriation of social wealth was to take place: within the framework of a capitalist system of world trade that constantly opens up new opportunities of valorisation for the superior capitals of competing industrial states.

But this capitalist principle of economic dominance is now striking back at the mother countries of capital. The Chinese state also mobilises factors for its business location that are traditionally brought to the table only by dependent economies: cheap wage labour and authoritarian law enforcement. But this same state power also demonstrates its ability to organise an independent process of

industrialisation at a high technical level. With that, for the established capitalist industrial nations there arises a serious competition for production locations, markets, investment opportunities, and raw materials. China is also skipping over the phase of the sort of gangster economy that was characteristic for the successor states of the Soviet Union in the 1990s. The Chinese state is organising its “primitive accumulation” straight from the top: legally or through a tolerated bending of laws, through legal or illegal expropriation, expulsion from the land, and an authoritarian management of the migration of freed labour power. The social tensions of this process can only be controlled by the authoritarian deployment of state force. The struggle against corruption is draconian wherever personal enrichment has to be fought, whereas the state extorts systematic concessions as soon as foreign businesses want to share in the profits from China’s growth.

The success that the Chinese state is having with this development strategy leaves an ambivalent impression on the other side of the globe: as a gigantic and growing market, China is once again a desired field of deployment for the capital of western businesses. And western states support their access to the Chinese market through intensive trade diplomacy and credit guarantees. But the investment conditions dictated by the Chinese state (sharing of profits in joint ventures, contractually guaranteed technology transfers), the development of in part unrivaled productive capacity, and China’s price-raising hunger for raw materials darken the West’s total balance. That is not a problem of capital, which as liquid wealth can use every chance for a productive or interest-bearing use, regardless of where on the planet. But it is a problem of states and their citizens, who remain dependent upon the patriotism of capitalist profit, upon some of that wealth flowing back into their own national economy and state coffers.

However, the situation is precarious for both sides. The Western industrial states and enterprises cannot get ahead without China, and China cannot get ahead without the Western industrial states and enterprises. China’s growth rates can only be secured by means of its export production for Europe and North America. At the same time, supplying the USA with constantly needed fresh credit is essentially guaranteed through Chinese dollar reserves from the export surpluses of the past few decades. Meanwhile, enterprises from the Western industrial states expand on the back of Chinese growth. How fragile this system of mutual dependency is demonstrated by the systemic crisis of the years 2008/2009: every shortfall in demand on Western markets calls China’s growth strategy into question and with it the state employment goals for 200 million increasingly restless migrant workers. And an end to Chinese guarantees

of liquidity with regard to the USA (through government bonds, business loans, and direct holdings) would cause its economy to collapse — and with it would immediately devalue China's dollar reserves. The responsible state personnel on both sides of the Pacific and in Europe know what kind of powder keg they're sitting on. 20 years after the ideological final victory of capitalism freedom, they long for economic and political "predictability", "stability", and "sustainability."

And for that there are experts: the Germans. Under the supervision of the Allies, they transformed their National Socialist Volksgemeinschaft into a civil, corporatist model of society — a society in which "Business, workers, and the state share a common responsibility to shape the future rationally" (Merkel): "the social market economy". And in the chancellor's view, the future belongs to precisely this model. The promise of its regulative yields is enormous. What is being presented for acceptance is nothing less than a new, moral social order, in which all people can recognise themselves: "The social market economy does not want any excesses on the market. Rather, social market economy means an orderly competition. It doesn't want business at any cost, of all things not short-term business at any cost. It has rather a moral foundation and therefore a responsibility." — "The goal of all of our efforts is a humane market economy."

Official state appeals to the humaneness of their own social order are a sure indication of inhuman conditions: conditions in which the "dignity of man" is not just coincidentally, but systematically called into question by the state regulated drive to valorisation and its human appendages. The call for "orderly competition" also signals a clear consciousness of social tendencies toward crisis. But the origin of all these problems is not called by its proper name a single time by Merkel. There's a sort of taboo on the use of the word "capitalism" — as if merely mentioning it unleashes evil spirits. With formulaic incantations, the chancellor attempts to banish the self-contradiction of bourgeois-capitalist freedom: "Freedom of the individual [...] is not an absolute freedom, but rather it is always freedom in responsibility [...] to the common good."

With that, the dark secret of bourgeois freedom for the last 150 years is revealed and succinctly expressed. Bourgeois freedom's constant reversion to social powerlessness and the compulsion to self-restraint is a necessary result of the capitalist (state-) competition at a world level. And its crisis tendencies can never be reliably restrained through state instruments of control and appeals to the common good. Where individuals compete with each other as private property owners under the supervision of the state, where labour is performed as wage labour and the productive forces of society are developed as private investments, where

the producers of social wealth are always at the same time competitors for it, where therefore the conditions of social reproduction as a whole are subjugated to the uncontrollable effects of a private cutthroat productivity competition, then things like “inhumanity”, “immorality”, and social “lack of responsibility” are systematically engendered. The graveness of the consequences varies according to one’s nationality and position in the production process, but the necessities of private and national economic competition ultimately call the shots.

In that the chancellor calls upon “individuals” — i.e. people as private property owners — to commit to “the common good”, she basically admits that capitalism is an asocial principle of socialisation. And the community, whose welfare capitalist enterprises are supposed to be responsible for, is of course the national one: the (German) state. The asocial capital relation and the standpoint of national interest are the unspoken precondition of calls for “stricter regulation of the economy” and a “charter for sustainable economic activity”. The national crisis task force consisting of politicians, businessmen, and the trade unions is clear about the fact that a considerable need for regulation will persist. This need arises generally from the unbroken hostile conditions of an intensified global valorisation competition, which constantly threatens to get out of hand. National efforts at regulation thus do not confront the systemic compulsions and crisis tendencies of capitalism with the goal of abolishing them. On the contrary, the point is to make this system of competition viable, in a way that the nation’s competitive position comes out as favorable as possible. That is the second precondition of the diagnosed need for regulation. With the greatest matter-of-factness, in the crisis nation-states conduct national financial market and industrial policy. German banks and German industries are supported and protected against foreign competition, so that the global capacity to act of German enterprises is secured and maintained over the long term. That means that merely in attempting to alleviate the risks of the global valorisation competition, states follow the national economic compulsions of precisely this competition. That’s why, given the present state of things, it is complete nonsense to regard state “rescue packages” and state shareholding in enterprises as a “state capitalist” dismantlement of capitalist competition.

Exactly how capitalism is to be domesticated nationally and globally is still an open question. But under the preconditions named above, every attempt at regulation remains as contradictory as capitalism itself. The interests of citizens, businesses, and the state as predictable and crisis-immune conditions of valorisation constantly come into conflict with their equally compulsory interests in private or national economic competitive advantages. However strict the new regulations

might turn out: under penalty of economic ruin, capitalist enterprises must evade or stretch such regulations to the breaking point. Merkel's call for "the same rules of competition at the international level" correspondingly is only aimed at "unfair" competitive advantages of the foreign competition. World politics remains, even in the current crisis, an attempt to mediate the objective contradictions of global capitalist competition in a way that accords to the interests of individual states — instead of abolishing those contradictions.

20 COMMUNISM!

Abolishing the reign of state and capital and capitalist exploitation together with its reoccurring crises, in favor of a society free of domination — for us the term communism describes this program. A communist society is a society that consciously determines its aims and which organises the productive appropriation of nature on the basis of solidarity. This is the opposite of a society which is pushed around by the compulsions and crises of valorisation, private property, or the state. This is a society in which — in contrast to bourgeois society — "the freedom of the individual is the precondition for the freedom of all." A society to which everyone contributes "according to his abilities" and serves each individual "according to his needs" (Marx). A society in which social wealth is not economically devaluated simply because others work even more productively. In which it would therefore make no sense to deploy society's productive forces in a contest of elimination.

This program is "utopian" in a banal sense: it cannot by any stretch of the imagination be "constructively realised" in the existing social order. But it also does not deserve the suspicion of those who upon hearing the term "communism" can only imagine a gulag or authoritarian state.

In all modesty, our intent is essentially to get rid of this maddeningly stressful capital relation with its many victims and its system of social competition, along with the state form that attempts to govern and steer this compulsive and conflict-laden order in a more or less authoritarian manner. What needs to be discussed, and even argued over, is what a social praxis beyond the vicious circle of state and capital would look like. But what is beyond all doubt is that the current system of rule has to be transcended — with all of its domination.

Nationalised humans arduously produce their own social powerlessness daily — so they can also overcome it. They have a world to win.

**YOU CAN NOT
TRICK THE LOGIC
OF THE STATE!**



WHO WE ARE

ORGANISED IN THE
»...UMSGANZE!« – ALLIANCE

THEORIE.ORGANISATION.PRAXIS (BERLIN)

top-berlin.net

BASISGRUPPE ANTIFASCHISMUS (BREMEN)

basisgruppe-antifa.org

CRITIQUE'N'ACT (DRESDEN)

critiquenact.blogspot.eu

FAST FORWARD (HANNOVER)

fastforwardhannover.net

REDICAL M (GÖTTINGEN)

redicalm.org

AK ANTIFA (KÖLN)

antifa-ak.org

KRITIK & PRAXIS (FRANKFURT)

kritikundpraxis.org

AUTONOME ANTIFA [w] (WIEN)

autonome-antifa.net

THE FUTURE IS UNWRITTEN (LEIPZIG)

unwritten-future.org

ANTIFA NT (MÜNCHEN)

antifa-nt.de

LEVEL UP (TÜBINGEN)

kommunismus.tv





Although talking about a revolution nowadays might sound incredible naive, investing all of one's time and skill into coming to terms with the current misery is even more mad, considering how the development of global capitalism is undermining each and every attempt to establish purpose and reason.