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WikiLeaks

the state persecutes its idealists

1 The premise of the WikiLeaks project is that the exposure of governmental and corporate secrets is the critique of those parties. The project and its manifesto – written by Julian Assange before WikiLeaks took off – is concerned with fighting conspiracies, acts carried out in hiding, away from the prying eyes of the public. WikiLeaks detects these hidden agendas in authoritarian regimes and – as a tendency – in some democratic governments.¹ Against those tendencies, WikiLeaks does not argue its point or its political position, since it assumes that exposing the secrets of those who are in power suffices to upset the suppressed masses: "Authoritarian regimes give rise to forces which oppose them by pushing against the individual and collective will to freedom, truth and self realization. Plans which assist authoritarian rule, once discovered, induce resistance. Hence these plans are concealed by successful authoritarian powers."² What WikiLeaks aims to accomplish is to reveal these concealed plans so that democratic resistance for freedom, truth and self realization is induced. According to WikiLeaks, if the people do not rebel, it is because they do not know about the sinister plans of their governments.

2 WikiLeaks claims that authoritarian rule and authoritarian tendencies within democratic governments are characterised by their operation in hiding. However it is no secret that profit is the driving motive behind corporations, that the USA and its allies are fighting deadly wars in Iraq and Afghanistan for their own national interests, and that the US government considers WikiLeaks to be an enemy of the state.

These things are not suppressed information; on the contrary, they are openly declared and discussed.



That Hosni Mubarak ruled Egypt for 30 years, that his police tortured and suppressed any opposition using a 30 year state-of-emergency law, that the USA backed this rule because of its interests in the region, that the EU negotiated a free trade agreement with the Egyptian regime and that the EU cherished Gaddafi's Libya for its contribution to keeping refugees from entering Europe: all this is public record. There are also actions and policies by authoritarian and democratic governments which are secret,

such as extra-legal killings, torture, intelligence gathering, renditions and some deals with other states or corporations. But this does not imply that these governments' rule is primarily characterised by what their subjects do not know about. On the contrary, a regime which tortures its enemies to intimidate them wants them to know about it, so that they shy away from their plans.

3 WikiLeaks proposes that transparency leads to good governance, to a better life for the subjects. However, if a government truthfully reports that the current debt crisis requires large scale cuts to social services, this is transparency; if the US government openly declares its enmity to WikiLeaks, this is transparency; if the law informs someone that his material needs count only insofar they are effective demand, this is transparency; if a state mobilises its population to militarily defeat the mobilised population of another state, this is transparency. Transparency in itself does not prevent harm: rather, most of the misery is wrought in the open.³

4 In characterising "successful authoritarian powers" as anxious to hide their own character for fear of resistance, WikiLeaks disregards the purposes of domination. Before asking how something is achieved, one must determine its intended purpose. Both modern authoritarian and democratic states demand much more than merely to maintain themselves. Since a strong economy is the basis of any state's power, especially so under capitalism, the state's subjects are not merely tedious masses but useful ma-

¹"Today, with authoritarian governments in power in much of the world, increasing authoritarian tendencies in democratic governments, and increasing amounts of power vested in unaccountable corporations, the need for openness and transparency is greater than ever." <http://213.251.145.96/About.html>

²WikiLeaks Manifesto, <http://www.thecommentfactory.com/exclusive-the-wikileaks-manifesto-by-julian-assange-3342/>

³WikiLeaks posits an opposition between hoarding information and publishing it: "By definition, intelligence agencies want to hoard information. By contrast, WikiLeaks has shown that it wants to do just the opposite." However, intelligence agencies do publish information, that is, when it suits their agenda. They use information to embarrass or intimidate competing states and their governments. It is not its admiration for WikiLeaks' idealism of democracy which caused China to promote WikiLeaks as a candidate for the Nobel peace prize; China proposed WikiLeaks because it embarrasses the USA and in order to demonstrate the function of the Nobel prize as a title by the USA and its allies against its competitors.

terial.⁴ States spend considerable effort fostering their economies, jealously compare GDPs – the overall economic activity of one country – with other states, closely watch currency exchange rates and stock indices: they compare the economic performance of their populations because it is the basis of their power. But the population's contribution to the might of the state does not end with its economic activity. The state wants its subjects to cherish it, to support its policies.⁵ When it is deemed necessary the state even demands that its population go to war. These purposes cannot be achieved secretly, they must be publicised.

5 WikiLeaks' practical critique of governments across the globe is driven by its appreciation for the institution of government as such. WikiLeaks aims to induce a resistance which aims to "shift regime behavior"⁶, not to end regimes. The prospect of getting rid of domination – i.e. systematic and forceful rule – and the idea that regimes are only necessary because of the conditions they establish, is not present in WikiLeaks publications or actions. Accusing the WikiLeaks project of being anarchist, possibly opposed to governments and corporations in principle, is wrong. On the contrary, WikiLeaks' activism is driven by the assumption that the democratic state as such deserves defense and not fundamental critique.

6 WikiLeaks promotes the raw publication of unpublished data, without commentary, since the data itself ought to spark resistance. Yet, it is not information – facts – as such that gets people to oppose certain policies – but how people interpret these facts. The slaughter of Iraqi civilians by US troops is interpreted by opponents of the war in Iraq as yet another reason to stop the war. Others might take away the message that war had ugly sides yet that those are unfortunately necessary, that the insurgents are to blame since they would hide behind civilians, that those killed should not be out in the streets in a war zone or that those "subhumans" deserve no better. The facts only provide the material for verdicts, they do not determine verdicts. This is especially so when most of the data that reached the public through WikiLeaks

only confirmed what everybody knew already: "This is a description of the Afghan War that a bright 10-year-old could have given you without the benefit of [...] 90,000 leaked documents."⁷ All that previously unknown facts can provide is a necessary precondition for new verdicts that might be impossible to make without them.

7 WikiLeaks' ideal of a state is one that is measured by the principles of the democratic state.⁸ A modern democratic state presents itself as a service to its subjects and as an expression of the will of those subjects. It grants its subjects rights and freedoms, it asks its subjects to select its agents, it provides basic infrastructure for their economic activities and it provides some social security. That the state establishes the conditions which force its subjects to rely on the state does not change this fact. WikiLeaks agrees with these principles: "Better scrutiny leads to reduced corruption and stronger democracies in all society's institutions, including government, corporations and other organisations."⁹ Restricting oneself to battling corruption in government and corporations implies that it is not the principles of these organisations which ought to be blamed for the observed misery, but the deviation from those principles.¹⁰ Thus, WikiLeaks' fight against corruption indicates support in principle for those organisations once they are free of corruption. When WikiLeaks agrees with the US Supreme Court about "effectively expos[ing] deception in government"¹¹, this is no rhetorical trick – they both want effective institutions, the institutions of the current social order. Both WikiLeaks and the US constitution share the ideal of a democratic, capitalist state which fosters its citizens' "pursuit of happiness".

8 Some of WikiLeaks' distrust of those who are in power is also institutionalised in the state. The institutional set-up of the state reveals a considerable lack of trust in those who hold office, it reveals the suspicion that the state's agents might secretly (or openly) abuse their power. Law requires regular elections and thus ensures that the collective will of the people corresponds to that of politicians.¹² Some

countries even have term limits for the highest offices in order to prevent one person from clinging to power. Law mandates a division of powers between the government, parliament and the courts so that no branch can appropriate the power vested in it for purposes other than those in their job description. Law guarantees freedom of press, speech and assembly and thus allows the democratic opposition to voice its concerns. Also, presidential candidates sometimes pledge to "strengthen whistleblower laws to protect federal workers who expose waste, fraud, and abuse of authority in government"¹³. The democratic state is a state of law and as such suspicious about its agents who exercise this law.

9 This institutionalised distrust is not without reason. First, these agents are people who – like everyone else – have private interests, yet their job is to maintain the order in disregard of particular private interests. If bourgeois society is a society of competing subjects then recruiting from this society carries some risk. These agents might abuse their power to pursue their own agenda, by accepting bribes or by bending law to benefit their friends.¹⁴ It is this kind of misapprehension of positions of power against the state's rules, regulations and separation of power is aimed. It is also this kind of corruption against which people like the US president want to mobilise whistleblowers.

10 The second reason for distrust is that the checks and balances of a democratic state get in the way of effective government. A limit on the power of the government is a limit on its ability to do its job. The checks and balances are blind towards what the government tries to accomplish and thus may hinder it in pushing through policies which are in the national interest. This is why politicians and other agents of the state who have the highest admiration for democracy and the rule of law regularly bend the rules – illegal wiretaps, rendition, etc. Whether these kind of transgressions are treated as violations of the principles of the state or not cannot be decided a priori. This depends on the success of these policies. Avoiding a possible conviction for such a digression (whether it is for per-

⁴There are indeed some states where the population is of no use to the state since these states have their economic basis simply in exporting their natural resources. In such states the population is mainly kept away from the sources of revenue for the state. The Sudan is, besides most countries in the "Third World", such a state which expects little of its population and has little to offer to it, because it cannot compete on the world market against successful economic powers such as the USA, the EU and China.

⁵Democratic states even invite their populations to choose the agents of the state. See "You mean they actually vote for the lizards?" in kittens #1 available at <http://www.junge-linke.org/en/you-mean-they-actually-vote-for-the-lizards>

⁶WikiLeaks Manifesto

⁷<http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php/site/article/9348/>

⁸"In its landmark ruling on the Pentagon Papers, the *US Supreme Court* ruled that 'only a free and unrestrained press can effectively expose deception in government.' *We agree*. Publishing improves transparency, and this transparency creates a better society for all people. Better scrutiny leads to reduced corruption and stronger democracies in all society's institutions, including government, corporations and other organisations. A healthy, vibrant and inquisitive journalistic media plays a vital role in achieving these goals. We are part of that media." <http://213.251.145.96/About.html> (emphasis added)

⁹<http://213.251.145.96/About.html>

¹⁰"Similarly, some intelligence services have an obligation to go about their activities to the best of their ability and that, sometimes, involve secrecy. But, what is not a right, is for a General or, Hillary Clinton, to say that they want to use the criminal law on every person in the country, to stop talking about embarrassing information, that has been revealed from her institution or from US military. She does not have the right to proclaim what the worry is, that's a matter for the court." Julian Assange in an interview on "Frost over the World" on Al Jazeera (21.12.2010).

¹¹<http://213.251.145.96/About.html>

¹²This goes both ways. The leadership shall not stray too far from the people and the people shall realise where the national problems lie. See "You mean they actually vote for the lizards?" in kittens #1 available at <http://www.junge-linke.org/en/you-mean-they-actually-vote-for-the-lizards>

¹³http://change.gov/agenda/ethics_agenda/

¹⁴To avoid a misunderstanding: If certain policies benefit some people more than others this does not violate the purpose of democratic rule. However, if policy is made solely to benefit a particular group in disregard of the national interest, it generally does.

sonal enrichment or doing the best for the nation without following the law) is one reason why state agents may choose to try to keep certain actions away from public.

11 Thus the US campaign against WikiLeaks, which is backed by its international allies and both big parties in the USA, is aimed against a project which is fundamentally supportive of the state as such. It is running a campaign against people who have the highest admiration for its principles. The people who are declared enemies of the state are driven to their actions by their admiration for the principles of the state.

12 It could seem like a miscalculation on the end of the US administration and other governments to attack WikiLeaks: both seem to be in favour of the same principles. However, there is a fundamental difference as to what role these principles play for both sides. For WikiLeaks and its supporters democratic principles are the first and grounding principles of the state, it is what makes the state. For the state, on the other hand, these principles are means of domination. Just because the state provides services to its citizens does not imply its role is restricted to this provision. If that were the case, no cops, courts and prisons would be needed. Just because the state is a state of law and principles,

just because it seeks the support of its subjects, just because it aims to use the private interests of its subjects productively for its own power, does not mean that its rule is no domination and requires no secrecy. It still suppresses interests which fundamentally oppose its rule. In general, it presents boundaries to any interest of its subjects: one may pursue one's own interest – but in accordance with the law.¹⁵ Put differently, just because the state fosters and protects some legitimate private interests, this does not imply – contrary to WikiLeaks' belief – that its ultimate goal is to guarantee the well-being of its subjects: benevolent domination is a contradiction.

13 Second, the publication of the diplomatic cables and internal military reports by WikiLeaks does threaten the US internationally. Public statements by agents of the state – especially within the realm of international diplomacy – are considered to be expressions of policy. An open critique of another state or its personnel is an attempt to show this state its limits or to probe these limits. The official account of one's own war efforts is aimed to send a message to friend and foe.¹⁶ By publishing internal US memos WikiLeaks made policy for the USA, it made the US government say things it did not want to say in public, sending all kinds of messages to governments across the globe.

The point here is not whether these cables contain news in terms of factual statements. The point is that the US government did not want to say these things to its allies and enemies openly; WikiLeaks made the US government say it regardless. WikiLeaks forced the hand of US foreign policy by publishing those memos. In reaction the state interprets this attack as a very principle questioning of its rule – regardless of WikiLeaks' intentions.

14 The US campaign against WikiLeaks is conflicted. On the one hand, there are calls by some politicians for Assange's assassination and the US administration is looking for legal loopholes to charge Assange. Bradley Manning – the alleged whistleblower who leaked the cables and other internal US documents – is likely to rot in prison for a long time to make an example of those who threaten the state. On the other hand, WikiLeaks still is not illegal in the USA, and hardly any regard has been given to e.g. the New York Times, which collaborated with WikiLeaks on the release of the diplomatic cables.¹⁷ The state does want to shut down WikiLeaks but it hesitates to dismantle the freedom of press in the process. The state want citizens like Julian Assange, but these good citizens should consider the reality of the state they are subject to before acting on their idealist conception.



¹⁵See "Private property, exclusion and the state" in kittens #0 available at <http://www.junge-linke.org/en/private-property-exclusion-and-the-state>

¹⁶Additionally, allies of the USA started to wonder in public whether it was safe to share sensitive information with US officials in light of the leaks. This might limit the US' ability to collect this kind of information.

¹⁷The difference in treatment of the NYT and WikiLeaks also shows what kind of press the state has an interest in. As a "fourth branch of government" the press exposes inefficiencies and outright corruption. On the other hand, the NYT insists – against all evidence to the contrary – on not calling interrogation tactics by US troops "torture", underlining its pledge of allegiance to the American state. WikiLeaks, on the contrary, is not obstructed by patriotism in demanding its ideal of the state to be fulfilled.

Jobs, Growth, Justice

an alternative that isn't

With its economy in recession, the British government plans to cut a sizeable chunk of its subject's means of living. In protest, British unions have united under the slogan of 'Jobs, Growth, Justice'. What we want to explain in this text is how, if we look at each of those things in turn, the unions might as well have demanded 'Poverty, Poverty, Poverty.'

Jobs

It may seem naïve, but one could easily be puzzled by a demand for jobs or generally more work. Work is first of all an activity that is not done for the enjoyment of it, but is necessary for some other purpose. What one wants to consume must be produced first and the process of production is work. A society that ran out of work for its members would seem like a very rich society: it is so productive that people can enjoy their time instead of having to work. Of course, under the current social conditions this is not true. A lot of free time – being unemployed – means poverty. However, this does not speak in favour of a demand for jobs but against the current social conditions.

A company will hire an employee when it expects that arrangement to be profitable to them somehow. The wage received by that employee is a cost on the books of a company. A cost in its capitalist sense is an investment to make a profit, for instance money expended for materials and machinery, to lease some land, to hire workers. These 'factors' lead to the immense collection of commodities whose sale ought to return a profit. The magnitude of wages is not determined according to some measure of what people need and want, but according to the calculations of companies about their profits.

For a company to be successful, the wage must be lower than the sum of money a company makes by selling the products of labour produced by its employees. The lower the wage and the higher the efficiency of the workers, the higher the profit. This relationship is based on the fact that companies buy the ability to command workers' activity for some time when they hire them. Workers receive wages and may dispose this money as they like. A company in return receives the right to direct their workers' activity and the ownership of everything these

workers produce. A worker's performance and how much money can be made on it is the concern of the company, not the worker.¹ While many people believe that the wage somehow reflects the performance of the individual worker, the opposite is true: precisely the separation of a worker's performance and her wage allows a company to prosper. This relationship is economic domination, or in other words exploitation.

Yet, British citizens are not forced to sign labour contracts – they are free to abstain from any contract they deem unacceptable. Workers are just as free and equal on the labour market as their future employers. Thus, it might seem to miss the point to call this relationship exploitation. This formal argument disregards the conditions under which each side competes. Those who own money can pick their sphere of investment according to the biggest expected yield. If rubber products do not sell that well, a rubber product producing company can switch to producing mobile phones. This works because the state established conditions under which money buys just about anything. A worker on the other hand – who only has his labour-power to sell – cannot switch branches. He is stuck with the only thing he possesses: himself. A company has the freedom to invest in whatever sphere it wants, a worker is stuck on one market: the labour market. Additionally, those who have enough money to invest it and those who live from hand to mouth enter a wage negotiation under radically different conditions, one side has the freedom to wait for a better offer, the other side does not. Looking at the masses of unemployed people competing for jobs, companies have many reasons to be confident that someone will accept to whatever offer they make.² The equality of employees and employers is about the same as that of two people, one tall, one short, both asked to grab a book from the top shelf.

Those who even lack the 'privilege' to work for some company's profits have even less to hope for. Under the current economic regime a worker can only reproduce himself if making profit out of him succeeds. Every crisis and bankruptcy shows that if no profits are realised then no wage labour is required and workers cannot even earn the little wage that companies

pay. This shows that wage labour is a service to companies, started and stopped according to their calculations, and not – as the TUC implies – a service to workers. The demand for jobs is a demand that the other side should get what it desires anyway.

What companies desire are cheap workers who work efficiently such that these companies can grow. Jobs are not the solution to poverty but part of its cause.

Growth

The TUC wants the economy to grow as an alternative to the current government's cuts to the public sector. Of course, none of the ruling parties – Tories and LibDems – are opposed to economic growth; on the contrary, they would love nothing more. Furthermore, the government and the TUC agree that the current level of public debt is unsustainable³ in the long term compared to the strength of the national economy.⁴ Thus, it might seem a bit strange to posit growth as an alternative to the current government's policy. Yet, there is indeed a difference between the TUC and the government. When the level of public debt is considered too high, essentially two approaches to lower it present themselves: cut the public debt to match the strength of the national economy or grow the national economy to match the public debt. Usually governments try to do both at the same time – cut 'unproductive' public spending and stimulate the national economy. The TUC – and the Labour party, for which the TUC march essentially campaigned – hold that more stimulation was in order than the government has planned and mobilise their supporters to the streets to argue this point.

The TUC does not explain in its mobilisation pamphlet⁵ how exactly giving poor people money will help to stimulate the economy, but we can assume that the idea works roughly as follows: the state contracts debt and spends money on various (welfare) programmes. This money, which comes from the state rather than from economic activity, generates demand for various goods and services which in turn stimulates the economy to meet this demand. This increase in economic activity then allows to pay back debt or to justify the increased public debt

¹ Companies sometimes pay wages per piece or bonuses to motivate their employees. However, this should not be confused with an objective relation between money made and money spent on wages. For bonuses to make economic sense, they must be lower than what 'output' they stimulate. Even if a company offers an employee, say, 8% of the money he brings in through his activity, this money first of all is the property of the company which it then can choose to pay as part of the wage to motivate the worker. That 8% is paid because of the company's calculation that it will be beneficial. There is no objective, direct connection between the performance of the worker and even his bonuses.

² There are legal limits to the offers a company can make such as the minimum wage and regulations on working conditions. A look at the conditions under which illegal migrants work demonstrate graphically what conditions would prevail without these legal limits. However, these limits and public welfare cannot be used to deny exploitation. On the contrary, they show that the economic principles need external and forceful intervention to prevent them from wasting the population entirely.

³ 'A big deficit and a growing debt are inevitable in recession. In time we need to get them down. But that does not mean that the government's chosen methods or rapid timescale make sense.' – TUC, *Cuts are not the Cure*, <http://falseeconomy.org.uk/files/wrongcure.pdf>

⁴ Public debt is usually considered in relation to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), a figure which supposedly measures the strength of a national economy. Here, it does not matter whether one agrees that such a thing as a 'national economy' exists or not, this is what investors and governments consider. A more in depth account of public debt can be found for example in 'Public debt makes the state go round' in kittens #1 available at <http://www.junge-linke.org/en/public-debt-makes-the-state-go-round>

⁵ TUC, *Cuts are not the Cure*

when more debt is contracted later. One first thing to note about this proposal is that potential welfare programmes and hence welfare recipients play the role of means not end. Money spent on them ought to stimulate the economy; they are a means to the economy instead of the other way around. The end of this endeavour is economic growth and the state's ability to maintain the services it deems necessary through debt. The TUC asks its members to back a plan in which their role is that of being material for the sake of capital and the state.

Furthermore, one has to wonder why the TUC proposes such a roundabout way of having money arrive in the hand of companies, why not mail them a cheque directly? Of course, the claim is that eventually this alternative would bear fruit for everybody – including those people who are addressed in the TUC pamphlet. Indeed, we remember well the high times under Labour and before the financial crisis when sixth-formers were partying on £30 EMA allowance a week, when university students were paying the £3,600 tuition fees from their pocket money, when workers took home a whooping £457 on average each week if they had a job⁶, when the unemployed enjoyed their £50 allowance each week and when the NHS only charged for such superfluous things as dental care. Even during a boom in the UK, enormous material wealth on the one hand confronted masses of people who could not afford it on the other hand; a situation commonly referred to as poverty. This poverty is systemic.

If economic growth is that on which everything else depends, then the rules of economic growth must be obeyed. Unproductive expenditures on poor people – e.g. through harsh taxation which is used to fund welfare services – is a withdrawal from the power of companies to grow, to make profits, the very thing they are expected to do. Relying on successful companies to provide the taxes for various welfare programmes means taking away part of their means to be successful. This is also the reason why tax avoidance is often treated ambivalently by the government, companies avoid taxes in order to grow and that is precisely what the government – and the TUC – want them to do.

In reality, the TUC does not really believe in this argument. If government spending on poor people was such a great means to get an economy going, why not increase benefits massively? Why not give everybody on the dole £5,000 each month? That would surely generate much more demand than simply maintaining the meagre current benefits. By restricting its demands to the current poverty level the TUC indicates that it too has not found a convincing argument why material provision for everyone would make sense according to the principles of economic growth. It also indicates that the TUC understands awfully well that the dole is a means to convince people to find a job with a company – it is only meant as a 'safety net' – and not a means to ensure that no one is poor. If everything is subordinated to economic growth mass poverty prevails.

Justice

By demanding justice the TUC does not absolutely measure what people need. Instead, it compares how their own members' sacrifice measures against that of other people. This way, the TUC accepts exclusion from material wealth as if it was a natural law: justice is an ideal that only makes sense under scarcity, only then is it relevant to ask how to distribute what little one possesses. By demanding justice the TUC claims that nothing can be done about the socially established toil and sacrifice – 'justice' is the TUC's way of showing humility. Hence, the TUC accept defeat before they even started struggling, they accept impoverishment right from the start.

Its ignorance towards the function and purpose of the state compels the TUC to call for well-meaning protests in which it politely suggests to the state that its measures bring misery for its population. But with its positive reference to growth & jobs they put these interests into perspective before the other side even had time to reply. Their position defeats itself.

Effective opposition to the planned impoverishment by the government would require posing the question where all poverty in this society comes from. Without it, protest after protest will continue to put forward philanthropic slogans which effectively demand poverty for the people.

Education is a duty

The 2010 movement against education cuts in Britain presented itself as composed of at least two tendencies. On the one hand, there were voices which seemed to soberly defend their quality of life against an attack by the government, making little attempt to disguise their materialism for something else.¹ Confronted with the prospect of a £9,000 annual tuition fee they seemed to realise that they cannot afford it or would rather spend it on something else if possible. They seemed to realise that their own interest in education is secondary to other goals

in this society and express anger about it; however powerless their actions might seem.

On the other hand, there were voices which appear to be very concerned about education cuts damaging society, transparent and fair implementation of cuts and not to 'obstruct students or staff in any way'.² They advised the government that it was making a mistake³, that education is a right⁴ and that 'our' problems could be solved without overly harming higher education – for instance by taxing tax-avoiding companies. Taken seriously, it was not their blunt

materialist interest which drove these protesters to the streets. It was rather their concern for the values of this society in which their access to education is denied more and more, i.e. which values their interests little.⁵

Obviously, the two approaches had a common denominator. Both tendencies were the first big response to the cuts across the board in the UK. In fact, the general public and the authorities seemed genuinely surprised by the advent of this movement, puzzled about how strongly people are opposing these cuts on the

⁶cf. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/business/7082630.stm>

¹'We have to make a statement, ... We're not having it!' some guy at <http://bit.ly/dSu21G>.

²Leaflet distributed by Royal Holloway students to explain their sit-in.

³Or alternatively that university management was making a mistake: 'We find the dismissive attitude of UCL management towards the aims and demands of this occupation frankly inexplicable. The fight against cuts to education is the fight for the future of UCL.' – <http://ucloccupation.wordpress.com/demands/>

⁴'Education should be universally available by right and not according to privilege. We believe that its core aim should be to enable the critical, creative and independent thinking that is essential for any healthy democracy. Since the mid-1980s we have witnessed a marketisation of higher education that has steadily taken us away from this conception of education.' – <http://lseoccupation2010.blogspot.com/p/public-statement-and-demands.html>

⁵'As members of a social sciences institution we are particularly outraged that these cuts aggressively discriminate against the arts, humanities and social sciences, showing an unacceptable disregard for these disciplines' immense contribution to society.' (LSE Occupation)

⁶'The scale and reach of this month's student protests have shocked the authorities, who fear that mobilisation against government austerity cuts could spread.' – <http://www.guardian.co.uk/education/2010/dec/01/student-protests-day-three>

⁷'On Wednesday, the riot cops at Millbank were reported to have been 'bombarded' with short poles from placards, sort of grown-up lolly sticks. The one exception was the fire extinguisher dropped from the roof which, we are told, 'almost killed a policeman', which is another way of saying it didn't hit anybody.' – <http://www.spiked-online.com/index.php/site/article/9885/>

streets.⁶ The Metropolitan Police even predicted a new era of riots after a fire extinguisher didn't hit anybody⁷ and an old police van was rattled. What a large part of the published opinion in this country found puzzling is the extent to which people expressed their anger openly about a restriction of their basic life needs.

Immediately, these cuts mean that people have less money in their pockets and thus have less access to the stuff they need. But these cuts also mean that more people will find it harder to even pursue a university degree. This limits their potential earnings in the future – however uncertain those are to begin with. These are uncertain since a university degree allows one to earn a better salary if and only if one finds an employer in need for one's services after graduation.⁸ The possible material perks of education can only be collected if that education benefits a company's business. This is a first hint that the state does not (and did not in the past) provide education as a service to its citizens but for a different purpose.

The democratic state and its interest in education

That the state has a strong interest in basic education of its subjects is pretty evident. The state even mandates that children are educated: education is a duty.⁹ Compulsory school education was introduced in the late 19th century in the UK mainly for two reasons. First, in order to prevent capitalists and parents from ruining young workers so fundamentally that they are unemployable when they reach adult age. Sec-

ond, in order to satisfy the demand of companies for skilled workers.

While companies have an interest in using trained workers they do not have an *immediate* interest in training them – training workers might be a means but is not an ends. The investment necessary for teaching young workers to read, write and calculate does not pay off especially in a society with a free labour market. Furthermore, when companies do train their own employees they have no interest in teaching them general knowledge as such. Their interest is only to provide them with the skills immediately relevant to their job.

Thus, the state provides free school education for every citizen in order to produce a workforce with a general knowledge applicable to a variety of jobs.¹⁰ This way the state also gets to teach its young citizens about the benefits of being dominated. Both educational goals are laid out in the 'National Curriculum'.¹¹

School content – the National Curriculum¹²

Technical skills are a requirement for any worker. Basic *Mathematics* is central for understanding a wide range of issues relevant to business and bureaucracy; without the basic knowledge such as simple arithmetic operations with rational numbers most office and many blue collar jobs could not be performed.¹³ *Science* allows for a better understanding of nature and prepares the student for understanding production processes. *Geography* teaches how local, national and global production and reproduction processes in nature and human society in-

teract. In *Design & Technology* students are specifically introduced to research processes, they learn to design products and relevant practical skills for possible future jobs.¹⁴ *Information & Communication Technology* teaches to interact with computers such that students are capable of performing the basic tasks almost all companies require from their employees these days.¹⁵ Command of the *English* language allows students to become able citizens and employable workers since it allows them to interact in spoken and in written form – reading manuals, writing reports etc.¹⁶ *Modern Foreign Languages* provides the student with the skill of conducting business with people who speak different languages.

Yet, technical skills do not suffice in this economy. The state does not command workers to work in a particular company but they are free to pursue their own happiness on the labour market. In fact, they *have* to. The state simply sets the rules, excludes first of all everybody from the means of living through private property, and then allows everybody to find employment (or some other source of income), i.e. to sell his own skin at a price such that it is profitable for a company.¹⁷ Workers must show initiative both when looking for a job and quite often on the job. This economy needs individuals who can on the one hand critically assess their skills and who can on the other hand deal with the inevitable setbacks produced by universal competition: if everybody competes, there simply must be losers and those losers are also expected to get up on their feet after each defeat. *Music*¹⁸ and *Art & Design*¹⁹ are subjects which are quite explicitly focused on developing this kind of personality. *Physical Ed-*

⁶Of course, learning about something can be motivated by something else than employment. However, since all access to wealth in this society is mediated by money, the question of how to get it takes precedence for many people.

⁹Among citizens any right is a duty because what is a right to Alice in relation to Bob, is a duty for Bob in relation to Alice. In the relationship between citizen and state, a citizen's right is a self-commitment of the state. However, education is not just a right, the state has made it mandatory. It is one of the few areas where the democratic state directly commands its subjects. Another example of direct command is conscription.

¹⁰'The Government believes that our universities are essential for building a strong and innovative economy.' – ConDem coalition agreement.

¹¹Another education goal, not discussed in this text, is international competition among states for recognition of their education systems. The UK was 'stagnant at best' in the most recent PISA study which in itself presents a problem to nationalists. To them the PISA study revealed a potential problem in the future – British workers not skilled enough – and a current problem – national disgrace for being overtaken by other countries. The Browne Report – commissioned by the previous government and partially implemented by the current – speaks the same language: 'The current system puts a limit on the level of investment for higher education. As a consequence we are at risk of falling behind rival countries.'

¹²This section talks about the state's interest in education and not about what individual teachers might think about their job. There might be teachers who do not agree with these educational goals, however, the possibilities of those teachers are rather restricted and their students need the skills required by the National Curriculum.

¹³'Mathematical thinking is important for all members of a modern society as a habit of mind for its use in the workplace, business and finance, and for personal decision-making. Mathematics is fundamental to national prosperity in providing tools for understanding science, engineering, technology and economics. It is essential in public decision-making and for participation in the knowledge economy' – <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/subjects/key-stage-4/mathematics/index.aspx>

¹⁴In design and technology pupils combine practical and technological skills with creative thinking to design and make products and systems that meet human needs.' – <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/subjects/key-stage-3/design-and-technology/index.aspx>

¹⁵'The increasing use of technology in all aspects of society makes confident, creative and productive use of ICT an essential skill for life. ICT capability encompasses not only the mastery of technical skills and techniques, but also the understanding to apply these skills purposefully, safely and responsibly in learning, everyday life and employment.' – <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/subjects/key-stage-3/ict/index.aspx>

¹⁶'In studying English, pupils develop skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing that they will need to participate in society and employment.' – <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/subjects/key-stage-4/english/index.aspx>

¹⁷See 'Private property, exclusion and the state' in Kittens #0 for a more developed argument on this.

¹⁸It might seem strange to almost ignore the content of the subject when it comes to its purpose for the state. However, this ignorance towards the content is not our invention: 'Music is a unique form of communication that can change the way pupils *feel, think and act*. Music forms part of an *individual's identity* and positive interaction with music *can develop pupils' competence as learners and increase their self-esteem*. Music brings together intellect and feeling and enables personal expression, reflection and emotional development. As an integral part of culture, past and present, music *helps pupils understand themselves, relate to others and develop their cultural understanding*, forging important links between home, school and the wider world. Music education encourages active involvement in different forms of music-making, both individual and communal, helping to develop a sense of *group identity and togetherness*. Music can influence pupils' development in and out of school by fostering *personal development and maturity*, creating a *sense of achievement and self-worth*, and increasing pupils' *ability to work with others in a group context*. Music learning develops pupils' *critical skills*: their ability to listen, to appreciate a wide variety of music, and to make judgements about musical quality. It also increases *self-discipline, creativity, aesthetic sensitivity and fulfilment*.' (<http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/subjects/key-stage-3/music/programme-of-study/index.aspx?tab=1>, emphasis added) In all that personality building, it's hard to find references to music. It is plausible that most music teachers do not share the disinterest in music expressed in the National Curriculum. However, the fact that teaching music is justified this way is telling about what the authors expect to be the state's interest in school education.

¹⁹Art gets slightly more appreciated in itself by the state: 'In art, craft and design, pupils explore visual, tactile and other sensory experiences to communicate ideas and meanings. They work with traditional and new media, developing *confidence, competence, imagination and creativity*. They learn to appreciate and value images and artefacts across times and cultures, and to understand the contexts in which they were made. In art, craft and design, pupils *reflect critically on their own and other people's work, judging quality, value and meaning*. They learn to think and act as artists, craftspeople and designers, working creatively and intelligently. They develop an appreciation of art, craft and design, and its *role in the creative and cultural industries* that enrich their lives.' (<http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/subjects/key-stage-3/physical-education/index.aspx>, emphasis added)

ucation teaches kids the constant need for self-improvement. Also, being healthy is an advantage on the labour market.

But the state does not only provide school education to produce able workers. It is also interested in loyal subjects. Students are provided with the fitting ideology in their *Citizenship* classes. They learn to appreciate their rights, learn about their duties and to pursue their interests according to the rules the state sets.²⁰ *History* teaches students to identify with the nation by providing material for this identification.²¹ Students are also taught to appreciate the *English* heritage, to develop national pride. *Modern Foreign Languages* serves the same purpose and teaches students to distinguish between their and other cultures and to identify with 'their own'.²² *Geography* provides further material for this identification and also provides the basic information and appreciation needed to follow world politics.²³

School form – just domination and selection

Schools also contribute to the formation of modern democratic subjects by their mere form. Compulsory school education forces children to be at certain places for certain times and to direct their attention towards a topic picked by someone else. The school form teaches subordination. It teaches acceptance of the rules set by the state and that punishment is meted out if those rules are broken. It teaches to accept that others may dispose over one's time, whether it be the state or an employer with whom one signs a contract. Yet, schools are not lawless places, children are not completely subject to the arbitrariness of their teachers; the teacher only confronts children as an agent of the state. Through the limited power of their teachers students learn that at the end of the day, authority does not rest with the person-

nel but with the state, its rules and regulations. But even these rules and regulations are not arbitrary. They are designed to enable students to learn the kind of qualifications necessary to survive in the 'real world' and to become the kind of subjects the state needs. If certain practices turn out to be counter-productive for this end, they may be dropped.²⁴ Since students do learn the skills necessary to pursue their own competitive interests, school appears like a service to them. Their will is broken in their own interest – as the agents of the state (teachers, principals and social workers) do not get tired pointing out. The message of this is that schools, like any other institution of the state, is not just *domination* but *just* domination, not *merely* but *fair*. This way the school form is a successful contribution to the production of the kind of subjects a democratic state demands: subjects who insist that domination over them is a service to them.²⁵

The economy does not only need common workers, but also workers employable in higher positions, positions in management or performing more complicated tasks. Schools separate those 'suitable' for higher jobs and those heading for the minimum wage jobs at best. The school system has a double task: education and selection. The task of selection stands in conflict with the task of education. For instance, education or knowledge transfer is not merely measured by its success. Somebody who does not get long division is not given the time and peace to learn it, perhaps even a reason why they should care.²⁶ The pace is not determined by those who ought to learn the material. If education was the sole purpose of the school system, those having most trouble learning would be given the most time to learn. Yet, in this society 'good' students get to spend more time in school than their peers.

Through regular tests and grades a hierarchy of students is produced which prepares the way for a hierarchy of jobs. Contrary to feudal times

the social hierarchy in a bourgeois society shall not be determined by heritage or favours but instead by skill and toil. This way, a just selection of the elites ought to be accomplished: the 'smart' people get the best jobs and those stuck with minimum wage can take solace in knowing that they tried their best; at least they got equal opportunity, right?²⁷

Yes and no. Selecting people according to their performance at tests might contribute to but does not *ensure* a performance based hierarchy. 'Smart' kids from poorer backgrounds have it much harder to excel at these tests due to lack of financial resources and peace to conduct their studies. In order to offset this disadvantage the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was introduced which throws students from poorer backgrounds some breadcrumbs (up to a generous £30 a week!) to ease their financial worries. The current government decided that this investment was not worth the price, i.e. that the recruitment of the elite can easily take place without it. Of course, the government could in principle be making a mistake. But when protesters advise the same government that pushes through these measures, they conceal the purpose of the EMA and how ridiculously low it was to begin with.

Higher Education

While for the higher sort of education the state's educational goals do not change much, it does not rely on direct command.²⁸ Since the state does not need everybody to receive higher education, it relies on a speculation by its young citizens: "If I invest 3-4 years of my life and enough money for study fees and supporting myself, then I might be able to find a company which requires my services. In that case, I can then use my salary to pay the debt I took on to earn it." However, this speculation – as any speculation – has an uncertain result, as

²⁰ 'Education for citizenship equips young people with the knowledge, skills and understanding to play an effective role in public life. Citizenship encourages them to take an interest in topical and controversial issues and to engage in discussion and debate. Pupils learn about their rights, responsibilities, duties and freedoms and about laws, justice and democracy. They learn to take part in decision-making and different forms of action. They play an active role in the life of their schools, neighbourhoods, communities and wider society as active and global citizens.' <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/subjects/key-stage-4/citizenship/index.aspx>

²¹ 'It helps pupils develop their own identities through an understanding of history at personal, local, national and international levels.' – <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/subjects/key-stage-3/history/index.aspx>

²² 'Languages are part of the cultural richness of our society and the world in which we live and work. Learning languages contributes to mutual understanding, a sense of global citizenship and personal fulfilment. Pupils learn to appreciate different countries, cultures, communities and people. By making comparisons, they gain insight into their own culture and society. The ability to understand and communicate in another language is a lifelong skill for education, employment and leisure in this country and throughout the world.' – <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/subjects/key-stage-3/modern-foreign-languages/index.aspx>

²³ 'Geography inspires pupils to become global citizens by exploring their own place in the world, their values and their responsibilities to other people, to the environment and to the sustainability of the planet.' – <http://curriculum.qca.org.uk/key-stages-3-and-4/subjects/key-stage-3/geography/index.aspx>

²⁴ For instance, corporal punishment was banned in UK state schools in 1987.

²⁵ Of course, 'produce' cannot be understood in a strict sense. If the school system was that successful in producing submissive citizens this text and some forms of student protest would be impossible. Indeed, the authors of this text learned reading, writing and perhaps a bit of how to argue in a school. That the school system teaches skills that are also applicable beyond and against what they are intended for is a nice *effect* but nothing more.

²⁶ 'Meters of bookshelves are full with pedagogic literature are trying to figure out the trick to teaching somebody something they do not want to know. Yet, these books often do not even acknowledge this contradiction.'

²⁷ Equal opportunity is a weird thing anyway. First, it does not even claim to provide a good living for everybody – just having a 'chance' at it suffices. Second, 'equal treatment' and 'equal outcome' are quite different things, since one only *treates* equally what is different. It does not make much sense to treat two identical things equally, since they are equal. However, treating two different things according to the same set of rules must lead to different outcomes. Since all this treatment does is to ignore the difference, it clearly favours one side by choosing to ignore its advantages. On the other hand, actively offsetting the differences by positive discrimination favours the other side. Thus, 'equal opportunity' and 'equal treatment' provides material for endless (moralistic) debates over what constitutes a corrective and what is positive discrimination.

²⁸ 'Higher education matters because it transforms the lives of individuals. On graduating, graduates are more likely to be employed, more likely to enjoy higher wages and better job satisfaction, and more likely to find it easier to move from one job to the next. Participating in higher education enables individuals from low income backgrounds and then their families to enter higher status jobs and increase their earnings. Graduates enjoy substantial health benefits – a reduced likelihood of smoking, and lower incidence of obesity and depression. They are less likely to be involved in crime, more likely to be actively engaged with their children's education and more likely to be active in their communities. Higher education matters because it drives innovation and economic transformation. Higher education helps to produce economic growth, which in turn contributes to national prosperity. OECD countries which expanded their higher education sectors more rapidly from the 1960s onwards experienced faster growth.' (Browne Report, p.16) The fact that graduates might know stuff is only relevant insofar it benefits the economy and the nation.

²⁹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-11652845>

students have come to realise in recent years through increasing numbers in graduate unemployment.²⁹ The fact that the livelihood of workers is dependent on the success of companies presents itself directly even to those pursuing a graduate career.

These unemployment numbers indicate that workers with university degrees are produced which are not needed by capital. At least too many people get degrees in the wrong kind of subjects. The proposed increase of the maximum tuition fee presents new conditions on which aspiring students must base their speculation: the price of studying something 'useless' becomes higher. First, because in the proposed scheme tuition fees for arts and humanities would rise more quickly since these subjects are about to lose their teaching grants. Second, the better the prospects of a job the better the chances that the 'investment' (the debt taken on to finance it) in one's own education is worthwhile.³⁰ Earning an English Literature degree, for example, becomes less appealing since the gap between debt and possible income gets bigger.

There is no reason to doubt the government when it expresses its wish that no one should simply be turned away from universities.³¹ What it wants is human material that matches the requirements of capital. This is not different from 1963 when the massification of higher

education was introduced in the UK. The difference between 2010 and 1963 is that back then the state expected more students to be useful for the growth of the national economy. On the contrary, the government's opinion in 2010 is that the burden of financing education can be placed more on those being educated, since university graduates are not deemed as critical for the national economy any more, even those who study the kind of subjects the government appreciates: mathematics and the sciences.³²

If the current trend continues we might see another student movement in a few years defending the £9,000 tuition fee caps against an 'unjust' increase. Because, however grim the prospects of a good life with a university degree look, the prospects of a good life without a degree are usually much worse in this society. However bad the conditions for studying are, it is probably still worth it financially for the individual.

Protest

What is strange about the current movement is that it on the one hand demands that education is a right. Yet on the other hand it naturally accepts that food, shelter and entertainment are not.³³ We see protests against a Government decision to allow more freedom in *pricing* ed-

ucation but silence about the fact that there are prices on food, flats and fixie bikes. This is particularly puzzling since for most people the main reason to go to university is to get a job and thereby a salary in order to buy these things. Also, we see protest against education cuts but no mention of how this education sorts people into a wage hierarchy, excluding most people from the stuff they need.³⁴

The apparent blunt materialism expressed on the streets is not that blunt after all. It is a strangely mediated and submissive materialism. It is *mediated* because it demands access to university education (usually) not because it is an end in itself but only because uni is a means to get a better salary. It is *submissive* because it accepts being excluded from the means of living and accepts the established rules for overcoming this exclusion: getting a university degree, getting in debt for it and finally working for some company's wealth to pay that debt off. The idealism expressed in university occupation declarations ('education is a right') and by those who suggest a redistribution of the cuts in whichever way, is ignorant of both the material reality and the purpose of education for state and capital. If those who protest against the cuts agree with the principles which produce those cuts, they invite defeat, regardless of how 'radical' their tactics are.

Historical Materialism

an anti-revolutionary theory of revolution

Historical materialism is an essential feature not only of the Marxism of the traditional workers movement but also of Marxist-Leninist ideas. A critique of historical materialism explains some of the dreadful aspects of the practice of Marxism-Leninism in power ('actually existing socialism') and thus is part of the answer to the question of how their project turned out to be such a failure from the perspective of the abolition of exploitation and domination.

"In Soviet Russia history makes you"

Marxism-Leninism criticises the exploitation of the working class under capitalism. Whereas in this society workers work for the accumulation of wealth of others, in a socialist society workers would work in the interests of their own class. In fact, the whole purpose of production would be the satisfaction of the needs and desires of workers. In Marxist-Leninist the-

ory the working class is considered to be the bearer of the revolution. This is based on the assumed interest of the working class not to be exploited any longer. Inherent to this reasoning is the idea that people make history – in this case those people who are part of the working class. The same reasoning is implied whenever any Marxist group hands out leaflets or holds public meetings, in short when they agitate for their ideas; and this is rightly so.

³⁰It is precisely this calculation the Conservative party appeals to on its 'Tuition Fees – The Facts' website when they write: 'Graduates earn, on average, at least £100,000 more over their lifetimes than non-graduates, so it's fair that you contribute towards your education.' – <http://www.factsonfees.com/index.php>. Compared to the alleged £100,000 'income', the 'investment' is 'fair'. The Labour commissioned Browne report agrees: 'The return to graduates for studying will be on average around 400%.' (Browne Report, p.5, emphasis added)

³¹Liberal Democrats believe university education should be free and everyone who has the ability should be able to go to university and not be put off by the cost.' – <http://www.libdems.org.uk/education.aspx> Similarly, in the foreword to the Browne Report Lord Browne writes: "In November 2009, I was asked to lead an independent Panel to review the funding of higher education and make recommendations to ensure that teaching at our HEIs is sustainably financed, that the quality of that teaching is world class and that our HEIs remain accessible to anyone who has the talent to succeed." (Browne Report, p.5)

³²There is a critical role for public investment *even if students are investing more*. There are clinical and priority courses such as medicine, science and engineering that are important to the well being of our society and to our economy. The costs of these courses are high and, if students were asked to meet all of the costs, there is a risk that they would choose to study cheaper courses instead. In our proposals, there will be scope for Government to withdraw public investment through HEFCE from many courses to contribute to wider reductions in public spending; there will remain a vital role for public investment to support priority courses and the wider benefits they create.' (Browne Report, p.27, emphasis added)

³³Leaving aside for the moment the fallacy of demanding a right as if right was something prior to the state.

³⁴When university students demand 'the full living wage package for all cleaning, catering and security staff with no cuts to hours and jobs' (UCL occupation) they accept the wage hierarchy and the miserable conditions of those who they prevailed against in school (or those who did not even attend a British school). That the demand is a long standing demand of the workers at UCL themselves (and that management at one point gave in to it) does not change the fact that the students' demands reach about as far as Boris Johnson's when people predominately without a university degree are concerned.

¹While for Marxism-Leninism *productive forces* include all factors which are relevant for the purposeful interaction of humans with nature, the *relations of production* are determined by the way humans relate to each other in production and distribution. Marxism-Leninism also speaks of a *mode of production* which is the unity of productive forces and relations of production. These categories were inspired by Karl Marx who wrote in the preface of *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy* in 1859: "In the social production of their existence,

At the same time, Marxism-Leninism asserts a proposition which opposes this thought. The relations of production determine the interests of people and those relations of production are in turn determined by the productive forces.¹ People do not make history in and by themselves but are determined by (economic) history.

Productive forces express nothing but the productivity of labour, that is the amount of useful things that can be produced in a given time. This productivity can be increased by applying tools and through the knowledge of nature. For example, machines speed-up the production of certain goods or fertilisers can increase the productivity in agricultural production. Yet, tools and knowledge are a means for people; it is people who apply them. How could these tools determine the historical development of the people who apply them? A spade, a tractor, or a computer chip can be used under different social conditions to perform the same, similar or completely different tasks depending on the purposes pursued by those who apply them. These tools or/and the knowledge held concerning their proper application cannot dictate either the ends or the social relations that result between the people who are applying them. Surely, certain technical developments, such as the telephone, make certain social interactions possible, such as long distance real-time conversations; they do provide a choice. But they can never determine the result of this choice. The telephone for instance allows for organisation on a larger scale, but it neither brings about this organisation nor does it determine the purpose of organisation.

The idea that laws of history determine people's behaviour is based on two ideas from Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels's writings which

are however transformed into two ideas quite different from what they were.

First, in *Capital* Karl Marx showed that in a capitalist society people are subject to economic laws. For example, an increase in the productivity of labour does not benefit the immediate producers but reinforces their separation from the means of subsistence. Moreover, most people are not even aware of these laws, yet their actions follow them. While in such a society even capitalists are subject to economic laws², in previous societies this was different. There the rulers immediately determined many of the social conditions of their time without being subject to them. If these rulers were subject to conditions then it were conditions imposed by nature or by other people.

Second, both Marx and Engels³ stated that freedom is not expressed by ignorance towards the laws of nature, but by understanding and applying them for one's own benefit. Instead of ignoring the laws of nature, insight into necessity allows freedom in relationship to nature. One cannot escape the laws of physics – such as gravity – yet one can apply them to send a bunch of people to the Moon; by studying these laws our options increase. Marxism-Leninism takes this last thought and applies it to history rather than nature. The theory claims there are such laws and that freedom would consist in understanding those laws in order to apply them for oneself. However, in a society human beings deal with their own kind and not with nature.⁴ Exactly those figures which are expected to be mere objects of the laws of history are at the same time assumed to understand and apply these laws – those laws which ostensibly govern their understanding. Their thoughts, interests and aims are determined by laws which they can understand and apply for their own interests and aims. On the one hand, their

thoughts are driven by these laws and on the other hand, they apply these laws purposefully. Marxism-Leninism claims that people must obey the laws of history. At the same time Marxism-Leninism emphasises people must *make* history. This contradiction is usually resolved towards determinism that people can accelerate progress but cannot change the course of history.

Half-full, most definitely

With historical materialism Marxism-Leninism constructs a historical teleology⁵. The productive forces (development of technology) produce certain relations of production (social conditions). Those in turn foster or inhibit the development of productive forces, such that the productive forces make people develop interests which lead to a revolution of society. This is how Marxism-Leninism thinks of human progress as a 'staircase development' from primitive communism, to slavery, to feudalism, to capitalism, to socialism and finally to communism.⁶ The same teleology is implied when people refer to some ideas as progressive and others as backward since those words imply a direction of movement, a goal.⁷

This 'scientific optimism' is not scientific at all but optimistic and opportunistic. It is optimistic since one's own success is guaranteed by history⁸ independent from one's thoughts and actions. However, a contradiction of optimism is that it is only necessary when faced with a lack of success⁹.

It is opportunist because whatever happens, whatever horrors capitalism manifests; they are good because they lead us one step closer to its abolition. It also appeals to and solicits opportunists because it advertises that one's own project will inevitably succeed and that one is

men inevitably enter into definite relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production." See <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1859/critique-pol-economy/preface.htm>

²This fact was often ignored by Marxist-Leninists.

³"Freedom does not consist in any dream of independence from natural laws, but in the knowledge of these laws, and in the possibility this gives of systematically making them work towards definite ends." Friedrich Engels, *Anti-Dühring*, 1877, see <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1877/anti-duhring/ch09.htm>.

⁴There are also passages of Marx and Engels which posit a law that history will lead to communism. Those deserve critique just as well. Some Marxist critics of Leninism such as the SPGB share this misconception with it: "Thus the dialectical materialism of Marx is simply the science of the universal laws of motion and evolution in *nature, human society and thought*." (SPGB Executive Committee, *Historical Materialism*, 1975, <http://www.worldsocialism.org/spgb/pdf/hm.pdf>, emphasis added)

⁵A thing, process or action is teleological when it is for the sake of an end, i.e., a *τελος*: (end, purpose) or final cause.

⁶While Marx sometimes wrote about history in a teleological way, Marxism-Leninism revised his views and erased the 'Asiatic mode of production' from its account since it does not conform to their straight staircase model, cf. Karl Marx, Preface to *A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy*, 1859. It should also be noted that in *Part 4: The production of relative surplus-value of Capital*, Volume 1, Karl Marx describes how the social relations of production (the capitalist mode of production) revolutionise the technological development (the development of big machinery) which does not fit into the technological deterministic worldview of Marxism-Leninism (cf. Derek Sayer, *The Violence of Abstraction: The Analytic Foundations of Historical Materialism*, Chapter 2, <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/en/sayer1.htm>)

⁷Even for pessimists like Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer it is possible to claim a teleology of history. In the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* they wrote: "Now that power ['Herrschaft' (domination) in the German original] is no longer necessary for economic reasons, the Jews are designated as its absolute object" (Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Stanford University Press 2002, pp.137). The two most well-known authors of the Frankfurt School held that domination was once a necessity but that it survived its best before date. However, instead of communism an administered world came about, with fascism being the most obvious expression. After this historic moment, the bourgeoisie "was [...] advancing ineluctably toward a reversion to pure oppression ..." (ibid., pp.138, emphasis added) This new phase they called 'late capitalism' in which rackets and monopolies had replaced the law of value and the market. This notion is informed by Friedrich Pollock's analysis which is based on historical materialism (cf. Moishe Postone and Barbara Brick, *Critical Theory and the Limits of Traditional Marxism* in *Theory and Society*, Vol. 11, No. 5 (Sep., 1982), pp. 617-658).

⁸Again, this is no monopoly of Marxism-Leninism. For example, in *Endnotes #2, Misery and the Value Form* the article *Crisis in the Class Relation* describes the production of surplus population under capitalism. The article concludes: "With its own reproduction at stake, the proletariat cannot but struggle, and it is this reproduction itself that becomes the content of its struggles. As the wage form loses its centrality in mediating social reproduction, capitalist production itself appears increasingly superfluous to the proletariat: it is that which makes us proletarians, and then abandons us here. In such circumstances the horizon appears as one of communisation; of directly taking measures to halt the movement of the value form and reproduce ourselves without capital." The horrors produced by capitalism force the proletariat to bring about the kind of revolution the authors appreciate. See <http://endnotes.org.uk/articles/2>.

⁹The council communist Anton Pannekoek picked up on this: "The theory of the economic catastrophe is thus ready-made for intellectuals who recognise the untenable character of capitalism and who want a planned economy to be built by capable economists and leaders. And it must be expected that many other such theories will come from these quarters or meet with approval there. The theory of the necessary collapse will also be able to exercise a certain attraction over revolutionary workers. They see the overwhelming majority of the proletarian masses still attached to the old organisations, the old leaders, the old methods, blind to the task which the new development imposes on them, passive and immobile, with no signs of revolutionary energy. The few revolutionaries who understand the new development might well wish on the stupefied masses a good economic catastrophe so that they finally come out of the slumber and enter into action. The theory according to which capitalism has today entered its final crisis also provides a decisive, and simple, refutation of reformism and all Party programmes which give priority to parliamentary work and trade union action — a demonstration of the necessity of revolutionary tactics which is so convenient that it must be greeted sympathetically by revolutionary groups." (Anton Pannekoek, *The theory of the collapse of capitalism* in *Capital and Class*, 1977, <http://www.marxists.org/archive/pannekoek/1934/collapse.htm>)

on the winning side. Capitalism's many detrimental effects for so many people are not presented as the most fitting arguments against it but rather the certainty that it will perish. Domination is criticised not because it is powerful and successful but on the contrary because it is ostensibly weak. Yet this logic also works vice versa in that socialism is not envisaged as a sensible society but simply, as inevitably the winning one.

Leninism, the highest stage of decadence theory

This view on history has another consequence: a Marxist-Leninist philosopher of history permanently searches for tendencies of capitalist decline.¹⁰ Consequently, crises and wars are not treated as what they are: detrimental or even horrifying realities for masses of people produced by deadlocks in capitalist accumulation and competition among capitalist nation-states. Instead, they are considered to be expressions of the deeper logic that capitalism is about to collapse.¹¹ Every slaughter is seen as a harbinger of communism and "in the last instance progressive".

The right-wing of the old German social democracy supported even German colonialist expansion and war using a Marxist sounding argument that it would foster the development of capitalism and thus its eventual decline. Similar reasoning led Karl Marx to support the colonial policies of Great Britain.¹²

Mission behind enemy lines

The working class is not only at the centre of attention within Marxism-Leninism because it has good reasons to desire the death of capitalism but also because it is given the "great historical mission – to emancipate itself and the whole of the [...] people from political and economic slavery."¹³

This expresses a contradictory interest if Marxist-Leninists in the working class. On the

one hand, the working class is the bearer of historical progress due to its social nature. On the other hand, if this is the case anyway, why does it have such a mission and who gave it to the working class in the first place?¹⁴

These historically optimistic considerations were common to all Marxist tendencies of the 20th century, from social democrats through to communists. However, these different groupings used to argue in favour of rather disparate tactics. The right-wing of the German Social Democrats (SPD), whose members later constituted the first government of the Weimar republic and who were responsible for murdering left socialists, communists and anarchists, arrived at the following conclusion: if socialism could be taken to be on the verge of arrive automatically, then they could follow a path of reformism within capitalism until the last of days of its existence would come. Against this argument, Rosa Luxemburg made the following more sympathetic but still erroneous point: capitalism will collapse on its own due to its own inherent contradictions, but the workers have to learn how to build socialism. The council communists focused on the trade union movement and thought no political organisation was necessary that would be separated from these workers organisations. If the workers are the bearers of the revolution one only needs to push them where they are organising among themselves if such pushing is needed at all. On the contrary however, for Lenin, the working class on its own only ever develops a trade-unionist consciousness, which means that they only ever demand more wages and better working conditions but that they do not fundamentally opposes the system as a whole.

Lenin's Revolutionaries

Thus, Lenin came to the conclusion that the success of the revolution cannot solely rely on the spontaneity of the masses. On the contrary, he considered a cadre organisation of professional revolutionaries to be absolutely crucial. He did not want to adapt the revolutionaries

worldview to the masses but to lift the masses to the level of revolutionaries. Lenin held that the organisation of professional revolutionaries, for which the class background would be irrelevant¹⁵, must "train the proletariat in steadfast and stubborn struggle".¹⁶

What happens when on the one hand the working class guarantees the revolution by its very existence and yet on the other hand this inherent mission requires instructions and education by the communist party?

The question of the party

For Marxism-Leninism not only the proletariat has a historical mission but the party as well: to instruct the workers correctly. The party's work is not justified by the interests of its members but by the historical mission: "On the contrary, this movement imposes the *duty* upon us; for the spontaneous struggle of the proletariat will not become its genuine 'class struggle' until this struggle is led by a strong organisation of revolutionaries."¹⁷

Thus, it is accepted that many workers do not want the revolution. However, this the Marxist-Leninists do not take seriously in the sense that they then ask what theoretical mistakes underlie the actions which the workers have engaged in and how to critique these actions such that they then move on to become revolutionaries.¹⁸ One explanation by Marxist-Leninists – for the fact that workers do not behave the way expected by the communist parties – is that they have been instructed by the wrong people, that they have been seduced by the wrong suitors. One variant of this seduction narrative is that they have been bribed ('worker aristocrats') or else that demagogues from social democrats through to fascists have confused them.

Another, contrary explanation of many Marxist-Leninists is that the time is not right yet for revolution. The professional revolutionary has the responsibility to study history and the current conditions in order to establish when it is the right moment for revolution thanks to his scientific insight into the laws

¹⁰It should be noted that the theory of decadence, i.e. that capitalism outlived its 'best before' date, is not limited to those who believe in historical materialism. The German 'value-critical' group *krisis* for example writes in its well-known *Manifesto against Labour*: "A corpse rules society – the corpse of labour ... The society ruled by labour does not experience any temporary crisis; it encounters its absolute limit." (<http://www.krisis.org/1999/manifesto-against-labour>) Leaving aside the discussion whether their account of capitalism as a "society ruled by labour" is adequate, they clearly expect capitalism to fail by its own standards.

¹¹Of course, this critique does not imply that capitalism cannot collapse. Assuming it will due to universal laws of movement however unfounded. As with any other argument, theories of collapse have to be examined in their own right. Lenin's theory is criticised for instance in <http://www.ruthlesscriticism.com/lenin.htm>.

¹²"England has to fulfil a double mission in India: one destructive, the other regenerating the annihilation of old Asiatic society, and the laying the material foundations of Western society in Asia." Karl Marx, *The Future Results of British Rule in India*, 1853, MECW Volume 12, pp. 217, see <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1853/07/22.htm>.

¹³Lenin, *The Urgent Tasks of Our Movement*, Lenin Collected Works, 1964, Volume 4, pp. 366-371. Again, this idea was originally put forward by Friedrich Engels: "To accomplish this act of universal emancipation is the historical mission of the modern proletariat!" (Friedrich Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, 1880, Marx/Engels Selected Works, Volume 3, pp. 95-151, See <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1880/soc-utop/ch03.htm>)

¹⁴The writer Bertolt Brecht criticised the historical mission of the working class through the character Kalle in the play *Talk of Refugees*: "I always objected against the mission, instinctively so to speak. It sounds flattering, but the flatterers I always distrust, don't you? [...] They imagine an ideal state and we ought to establish it. We are the operators, they remain the leaders, eh? We shall save humanity, but who is that?" (Bertolt Brecht, *Flüchtlingsgespräche*, Frankfurt a. M. 2000, pp. 61f., our translation)

¹⁵"In view of this common characteristic of the members of such an organisation, all distinctions as between workers and intellectuals, not to speak of distinctions of trade and profession, in both categories, must be effaced." (Lenin, *What is to be Done?*, 1902, Lenin's Selected Works, Volume 1, pp. 119 - 271)

¹⁶ibid.

¹⁷ibid., emphasis added

¹⁸This difference is lost in the article *Communisation and the Value-Form Theory* (<http://endnotes.org.uk/articles/4>) in Endnotes #2 when identifying critique with Leninist agitation: "Nonetheless, most accounts of the Neue Marx-Lektüre understand one of its main characteristics to be a rejection of Marx's attribution of an historical mission to the proletariat, and a sensibility of scepticism towards the class struggle has been prevalent on the German left. But if in this type of view the proletariat is rejected as an agency of revolution then the question becomes of course — where will the abolition of class society come from? The somewhat unsatisfactory answer prevalent in various forms in German discussions seems to be that it is a matter of having the right critique — that is, in seeing the revolution as a matter of acquiring the correct consciousness. In this focus on correct consciousness and critique, it seems that ironically — for all the questioning of traditional Marxism — a certain Leninist problematic separating educator and educated is retained." The same problematic is retained when someone explains the way to the train station, when the authors of Endnotes explain this very point or when we argue against it here. Leninist agitation tasks its counter part with a mission instead of acknowledging the disagreement.

of history. Among Marxist-Leninists a big debate once took place about what revolutionaries ought to do in the meantime; and the faction that prevailed opted for social democratic reforms and support for workers interests within rather than outside of capitalism.

But even after their revolution, in the Soviet Union, workers did not behave as the Marxist-Leninists expected, since their order was objectively not in the interest of those working class people. In order to explain this, two conclusions were drawn which were obvious and common:

First, claimed the Soviet Marxist-Leninists, there was still a reactionary, petty bourgeois consciousness present among the population. Thus the population was to blame. This blame was then in a second step taken back to some extent: this wrong consciousness was only still present because the party had failed in its task of instructing the workers and/or at studying the laws of history.

Against the common idea that critique was banned in real socialist countries it is necessary to point out that critique and self-critique were permanently exercised there, including party

purges as one of its special forms. What deserves critique is the content and end of this critique and self-critique which was hostile towards a rational project. The Marxist-Leninists did not demonstrate to their comrades which mistakes they made and did not argue using the forceless force of the better argument. Instead, all different opinions were placed under suspicion not only as being potentially wrong but also as being – relative to the moralistic historical mission – evil in the sense of being absolutely treacherous.

“If we have rice, we can have everything”

a critique of Khmer Rouge ideology and practice

1 The Khmer Rouge have become synonymous with the terror of ‘communism’. Regardless of the context in which someone today makes the case for a different society, Pol Pot and his alleged ‘stone-age communism’ is always invoked as a counter-‘argument’, along with the KGB and the Berlin Wall, Stalin and the Gulag, all of which supposedly show what happens if people attempt to change society radically. ‘Democratic Kampuchea’¹ seems to be made for this purpose: a group of left-wing students in Paris encounter what passes at the time for Marxism; they later join the Communist Party, return to their home country, go underground after some attempts at political reforms, come to power through a guerilla army, and then set up a regime of terror. All city-dwellers are driven out of town to the country, first money then private property is abolished; the population is obliged duty to dress uniformly and to build up ‘people’s communes’ to live, work and eat in common. Bourgeois common sense has always pictured communism like this, hence the outrage is great and there is little interest in finding out why the Khmer Rouge did what they did.

2 To avoid any misunderstanding: there is no doubt about the fact that the Communist Party of Kampuchea killed millions of people through shootings and mass executions with pick axe and baton, through torture and the famines they brought about. It is clear as well that the Khmer Rouge forcibly imposed life in communes which has nothing to do with a ‘free association of free producers’, but closely resembles a work camp with uniform clothing, malnutrition, and everyone spying on and coercing everyone else. It is just about the opposite of what you would want for your own future.

3 Therefore it is of more than academic interest to explain why the Khmer Rouge established such a regime. To do this, it is necessary to examine factually the conditions under which Pol Pot and his henchmen acted, what their aims and means, their self-understanding and fears were, who their real or imaginary opponents and allies were. A few problems arise with this. The Khmer Rouge only left a few written documents; much of the available information only exists in the memory of refugees or comes from radio reports wiretapped and translated by the US secret service, and from a few documents translated from Khmer into French, sometimes from French into English, and in the worst cases into German afterwards. They were translated by avowed opponents of the Khmer Rouge, who mostly had completely wrong theories about the Communist Party of Kampuchea (CPK), and who read and translated the documents from this standpoint. The Vietnamese and Chinese archives are not accessible either; allies and opponents remain taciturn – and they certainly know why. In subsequent court proceedings Khmer Rouge cadres have simply lied (“all were Vietnamese agents”), and their testimony is probably influenced by their interest in acquittal or lenient sentencing. This fundamental and critical assessment of sources means some caution is needed with regard to the exact wording, and that biased readings as well as mistakes and inaccuracies in the translations must be taken into consideration as possible origins of contradictions.

4 For a better understanding of the Khmer Rouge’s 1975 victory, a short synopsis of Cambodian history may be helpful. After the Second World War Marxist-Leninist guerilla troops inflicted crushing defeats on the French colonial power. Together with Vietnam and Laos,

Cambodia – under a king installed by the French – became independent. King Sihanouk determined Cambodian politics from 1953 to 1970, including a brief period when he renounced the throne. His politics were referred to as ‘Buddhist Socialism’, and this link between the idea of some kind of communal economy and a religious ideal based on abstinence and frugality already hints at its character: this ‘people’s socialism’² had nothing to do with the people’s well-being or even partial fulfilment of their needs. More than 90 per cent of the population worked in agriculture, which, aside from a tribute portion reserved for the king was focused on subsistence. Living conditions were meagre, with bad harvests frequently leading to famine. Artificial fertilizers hardly existed, technical devices were rarely applied. Industrial production was mainly pushed by foreign aid and was oriented towards exports; foreign trade was marginal and under state control, the banks were completely in the hands of the state. Foreign policy was oriented towards friendly relations with France, Japan, the USSR and China and sought to profit from the Cold War and the Sino-Soviet disputes, in order to achieve as much independence as possible by remaining neutral. The Sihanouk regime even tried to keep out of the Vietnam War, but it did tolerate that the communist Vietcong crossed Cambodian territory to supply their comrades in South Vietnam.

5 The Khmer Rouge cadres often were students who had been sent to university in Paris by the Sihanouk regime in the 1950s and who came into contact with the Communist Party there – not quite the regime’s intention. Just like the few remaining cadres of the Communist Party of Indochina, these students were above all fervent patriots, but quite dissatisfied with their nation’s social, economic and polit-

¹The Khmer Rouge replaced the name ‘Cambodia’ with ‘Kampuchea’ after they came to power. The reason was probably that the word ‘Cambodia’ was seen as a colonial term. Today the country is called ‘Cambodia’ again, therefore we are using this name, and call it ‘Kampuchea’ only when referring to the time between 1975 and 1979.

²This is what the political movement under the king’s leadership was called.

ical conditions and dependencies. They differed from ordinary patriots in that they had come into contact with 'Marxism'. For most of them, this meant that history was the history of class struggles, that the capitalists – evil! – must objectively meet their end, and the workers – good! – would take over the whole thing sooner or later through the Communist Party. The subsequent Khmer Rouge – and many other intellectuals from recently or soon-to-be independent countries – do not seem to have learned more from Marx's work than the hint that classes and class struggles existed in their countries as well. But even with this not particularly deep insight they could have gotten somewhere – for example they could have assumed, following Rosa Luxemburg, that nationalism was only "an expression of the aspiring indigenous bourgeoisie aiming at their own exploitation of the country for their own profit"³. Instead, the young dissatisfied nationalists did not even calm themselves down with Lenin's thesis that every anti-imperialism was objectively and ultimately progressive because it weakened the system as a whole.⁴ In exact opposition to Lenin's instrumental assessment (ideology of national liberation is good for socialism), they discovered in socialism the fulfilment of all the true patriots' hopes, and set out to find out whether their home country's social classes might be useful for the nation's prosperity, or if those classes would rather do business with evil capitalist states. As radical idealists of their national state, they were ready at any time to regard every 'true patriot' as their ally; hence it is no surprise that at the beginning of the 60s three communists briefly became royal ministers. This might have worked out, not just because the Khmer Rouge took pride in the old Khmer Culture of Angkor Wat in a manner quite alien to class struggle, but also because they agreed with the Sihanouk regime that foreign countries were exploiting Cambodia, and that a great deal of national independence would be good. Everything bad and evil in Cambodia's history had come from outside, and even neighbouring Vietnam and Thailand had tried to enslave the great Khmer people in the distant past⁵. Nonetheless the alliance did not work out. Those who discover different class interests within the people's national unity, or even suspect that the underclasses have some reason to oppose the insults delivered from above, are suspect in the

eyes of the true patriot, appearing not as 'patriots' at all but as 'insurgents'. Consequently the Cambodian communists were persecuted in the early and mid-1960s, with their cadres and alleged followers tortured and murdered. The CPK had to withdraw to the very poor mountain regions far from Pnomh Penh. They could not set their hopes on help from their Soviet, Chinese or Vietnamese comrades, all of whom were quite grateful to Sihanouk for not stabbing their backs in the Vietnam War and did not want to offend him by supporting a communist guerilla group against him. This strengthened the CPK's conviction that nothing good could be expected from foreign countries, no matter whether they were capitalist or socialist. The people recruited by the CPK in this region were usually desperate, angry and undernourished, and generally had nothing much to lose.⁶

6 When the US decided to bombard Cambodian territory as well – one of the Nixon administration's many secret operations – the Sihanouk regime broke off all relations with the US and intensified the persecution of the Khmer Rouge, who were becoming increasingly popular after long years of irrelevance. Some right-wing military men who were worried about a communist takeover did not regard the regime strategy as coherent, and staged a coup d'état in 1970, while the King was on a state visit to the USSR. All of a sudden, Cambodia had become a republic under the leadership of General Lon Nol. This 'republican' regime collaborated closely with the US, allowing the bombardment of Cambodian territory and even asking for military help in fighting the communist guerillas. The guerillas' support and success grew with the increasing ruthlessness of the war against the population and the large number of deaths caused by US bombing (between 200,000 and 700,000: the number can no longer be verified⁷). In this situation King Sihanouk was persuaded by China to take over the leadership of 'Democratic Kampuchea', with the Khmer Rouge as its main pillar. The equally corrupt, inefficient and brutal regime of Lon Nol had no chance against this strange coalition, especially as the US decided in the mid-1970s that it no longer needed to demonstrate its power in Indochina, leading it to abandon the South Vietnamese and Cambodian regimes. In Vietnam this led to the victory of the Communist Party. In Cambodia the

victorious Khmer Rouge paraded into Pnomh Penh on April 18, 1975.

7 The first official act of the new rulers – initially calling themselves 'Angkar' (meaning something like 'organisation') – was to announce to all inhabitants via loudspeaker that they had 48 hours to clear Pnomh Penh. The capital's population had grown from 600,000 to two million during the war⁸, including many refugees, injured and maimed people. Now the new rulers told the inhabitants that bombardment by the US Air Force was imminent, and that the evacuation would only last a week⁹. From kindergarten to intensive care unit, all townspeople – in other towns it was about the same – had to set off on foot and were distributed to the rural communities. Insofar, that is, as they survived the marches lasting days or weeks, during which they had little food and were exposed to beatings, rapes and executions. Pol Pot claimed in 1978 that there had been no clear plan: the evacuation of the towns had arisen from the situation. This is unlikely, because the whole operation was meticulously prepared, at least with regard to the eviction of the population, and the Khmer Rouge had proceeded similarly in towns they had previously conquered. Pol Pot has cited the economic necessities of feeding the population and using it in production as a reason for the eviction. But according to what is known today, this was a pretext.¹⁰ The second aspect he mentions is the danger of a revolt inspired by US imperialism.¹¹ Ieng Sary, one of the Khmer Rouge's leading representatives, said the towns had been a danger to the revolutionary troops' fighting strength because of money, alcohol and prostitution.¹² A further gloomy picture of the whole operation is drawn by discussion minutes from the time before the takeover, if these are authentic. "The question of urban and rural population as opposites does not exist, because all towns are of foreign origin, inhabited by foreigners [...] so the townspeople have emerged from the miscegenation with these foreigners; they are not of pure Khmer origin and can therefore be eliminated without any political or psychological difficulties."¹³ Whether or not the source is real – this matches the Khmer Rouge's actual approach.

8 The brutal relocation of the urban population by the Khmer Rouge is often interpreted as an attempt to build 'peasant communism'¹⁴,

³Luxemburg: Fragment. In: Rosa Luxemburg Gesammelte Werke 4, p.369, our translation

⁴"The bourgeois nationalism of any oppressed nation has a general democratic content that is directed against oppression, and it is this content that we unconditionally support." Lenin: The Right of Nations to Self-Determination, Chapter 4.

⁵The Khmer nationalists were not bothered by the implied identification of some old polities with the newly emerging nation states. And why should they be! For them, their Kampuchean people was the successor of the great Khmer people, so there was a biological or cultural relation.

⁶Of course, in itself having nothing left to lose is never the reason to subscribe to a political position. It is still a particular content that makes sense to its followers.

⁷Sontheimer: Kambodscha, p.22.

⁸Sontheimer: Kambodscha, p.31.

⁹See the corresponding slogans in Locard: Pol Pot's Little Red Book.

¹⁰Twinig: Economy, p.115.

¹¹Schmidt: Leben, p.173.

¹²Sontheimer: Kambodscha, p.31.

¹³Schmidt: Leben, p.174. Allegedly this was a result of discussion within the group around Pol Pot before the takeover, but no source is given.

¹⁴<http://www.history.co.uk/encyclopedia/pol-pot.html> 31.12.2010 16:00

¹⁵http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pol_Pot 31.12.2010 16:00

¹⁶<http://answers.yahoo.com/question/index?qid=20100531164828AAUcTay> 31.12.2010, 16:00

'an agrarian communist utopia'¹⁵ or 'stone-age communism'¹⁶, or as the obsessive romantic illusion of 'turning back the clock to something pure and authentic'¹⁷. The often-quoted slogan "If we have rice, we can have everything"¹⁸ seems to mean exactly this: a narrow-minded limitation to agricultural production, and most of all to the product the Cambodian population's life depended on (and still does), resulting in the strategy of emptying the towns and relocating everybody to the rural areas.

9 But was it really the reactionary utopia of a peasant 'communism'? It may help to hear the rest of the quotation: "If we have rice, we have everything; our people can eat their fill and we can export it for hard currency. [...] The more we export, the better we can afford to buy equipment, machines, and other instruments necessary for building our industry [...] and for rapidly changing our agriculture."¹⁹ This leaves us with 'stone age communism' in search of foreign exchange. And did it really sound like a peasant state when Pol Pot explained in 1977: "We take agriculture as the basic factor and use the fruits of agriculture systematically to build industry [...]. We also intend to transform the backward agricultural Cambodia rapidly into an industrialized Cambodia by firmly adhering to the fundamental principles of independence, sovereignty and self-reliance"²⁰?

10 The ten-year plan introduced in 1976 speaks exactly the same language. The CPK assumed that Cambodia could not hope for disinterested help from anywhere (and it was right there, for a change), that it had no natural resources and that its industry was no good. But it did have a successful party and a hard-working population, so that it should be able to improve rice cultivation considerably. And being proud nationalists, they focused on the good aspects. The party decided to build up socialism by intensifying and extending rice cultivation in order to buy industrial facilities with the returns from exports. It was planned to reach a yield of three tonnes of rice per hectare by installing irrigation plants throughout the country. It was supposed to be the task of the whole population to build these irrigation plants and to cultivate rice. Anyone who did not want to participate or was unable to do so did not belong to the Cambodian people. In 'Democratic Kampuchea', this was usually a death sentence.

11 Let's talk about rice. Rice is no aquatic plant. But many varieties of rice grow better (also in regard to pests and weeds) if the fields are flooded. Rice can be grown in dry, mountainous regions as well, but this method is clearly less productive. The yields of many varieties can be enhanced by repeatedly flooding and draining the fields²¹. An elaborate system of canals, dams, water inflow and drainage is necessary to do so. The productivity of rice cultivation in Cambodia was relatively low in 1975: in 1970 – before the carpet bombing and the extension of the civil war – the average yield was one tonne per hectare; by comparison, the average was 7.6 tonnes per hectare in Australia and 3.3 tonnes per hectare in the USSR²². The four-year plan of the second half of 1976 envisaged a yield of three tonnes per hectare on normal rice fields, six to seven tonnes on some particularly fertile fields²³.

12 The plan to treble agricultural yields within four years in a country destroyed by war might be called 'bold' – and with regard to a planned economy, 'bold' means 'probably will not happen' – but the method can only be called 'foolish'. It might be doubted that it is a good idea to let nurses, teachers, pharmacists and taxi drivers dig mud and sow rice, although in times of need obtaining help from untrained people for urgent tasks can be a reasonable strategy. It is downright wretched and inhumane, however, to drive people out of their homes, segregate them according to gender and force them to work under murderous conditions. In addition, it was extremely counterproductive. What should we call those who, on top of all this, feed their workforce nothing but watery rice soup – or worse, rice glume soup – sometimes only once a day, while simultaneously fighting the private cultivation of spinach, cabbage and tomatoes in order to 'combat capitalist tendencies', while cadres and soldiers are provided with considerable rations²⁴, and while "thousands of tonnes of rice" are exported in order "to accumulate capital for national defence and reconstruction" (Pol Pot 1977)²⁵ – what should we call them? Assholes? Shit-bags? Villains? What they certainly can be called is nationalists²⁶.

13 Because they did not stop at reducing everything in the world to the question of 'Khmer or non-Khmer' as defined by the Khmer Rouge, which in itself had the bitter consequence that everyone they did not like was deprived of citizenship and thus placed in perpetual danger of

death. Additionally, whether out of patriotic pride or fear of foreign interference, they managed to throw all foreign aid organizations out of the country, despite a growing food shortage and a medical state of emergency. They proudly congratulated themselves on how they did everything differently from the Vietnamese, Chinese, North Korean or Soviet Communists, and thus they thought it beneath them to ask the state-socialist countries for help, even where it was simply a question of the survival of the people who had suddenly ended up under their rule. As the history of capitalist nation states proves, you do not need to have studied Stalin in depth in order to treat people so brutally and carelessly as mere material for state plans: all that is needed is the simple idea that the nation is more important than the individual. Thus the Khmer Rouge were nationalists first and foremost.

14 And they were also idiots. A system of dams and canals requires at least some knowledge of how such canals are to be dug, how dams are made to last, and how to ensure that the water flows only – and we mean only – when it is intended to flow, to name just a few. It would also be a good idea if the canals were not so deep that the water had to be pumped laboriously onto the fields, and it might also help if the dams were able to survive heavy rain, for example. You guessed it: the majority of the new or rebuilt irrigation systems were a complete failure, in part ineffective and in part pointless. Some broke under the first rain, burying rice fields and sometimes also villages under mudslides.²⁷ After three years of massive failures, which caused rice production to decline drastically in certain areas, some of the irrigation systems eventually worked, thanks more likely to trial and error – and the productivity of undernourished, exhausted, traumatised and desperate people forced to work under conditions entirely unlike anything they knew – than to systematic theoretical thinking. But even this 'success' was nowhere near what the Khmer Rouge had planned for.

15 Khieu Samphan, the head of state of 'Democratic Kampuchea' from 1977, apparently declared: "Those who think politically, who have understood the regime, can do everything, technology comes later ... we do not need engineers in order to plant rice or corn or to rear pigs"²⁸. This Maoistically-inspired thought is first and foremost utter stupidity: Leaving aside what the Khmer Rouge meant

¹⁷Twining: Economy, p.125.

¹⁸Margolin: Kambodscha, p.693; the slogan also appears as "Whoever has rice has everything", "Whoever has rice has absolutely everything" (Locard: Pol Pot's Little Red Book, p.238).

¹⁹Jackson: Ideology, p.60.

²⁰Twining: Economy, p.110. No source is given.

²¹Brockhaus 1970, → Reis

²²Brockhaus 1970, → Reis, → Kambodscha

²³"The Party's Four Year Plan to Build Socialism in all Fields" In: Chandler, Pol Pot plans the future, p.5. Probably the qualifying remarks that they had not registered all available land were supposed to make the CPK's optimism seem reasonable.

²⁴Twining: Economy, p. 116.

²⁵Twining: Economy, p. 148.

²⁶"If there was a key phrase used in lectures given the people from 1975 until the collapse of Democratic Kampuchea, it was 'national independence'". Twining: Economy, p.116.

²⁷Margolin: Kambodscha, p.667. See also Twining, Economy, p. 130.

²⁸Qtd. in Margolin: Kambodscha, p.694.

with “politically” exactly, it surely helps to have intelligent political thoughts when developing, testing and applying technology, because it is a political aim one wants to realise using technology.²⁹ But technology itself is also by no means properly understood this way. And it’s especially important, when dealing with something in such direct involvement with nature as agriculture, to have proper knowledge about nature and how and with what consequences it is influenced by man.

16 And just to avoid any misunderstanding: of course it is good and correct to realise that existing circumstances can be changed and that often the people who suffer from such circumstances lack the imagination to think of alternatives. However, it’s doubtful whether you really need courage to dream in order to gain the strength for a fight: thus far our dreams have helped neither to organise our summer camps nor to design our website. But it is important to recognise the need for action against resignation to the given world, and to understand that some necessary changes and improvements will demand collective force. That means having to persuade some people, because even those who criticise something can be blinded by the power of existing relations. This is roughly the reasonable essence of anarchist sayings such as “be realistic, attempt the impossible”. When anarchists and Maoists insist that politically they want something that does not currently exist, and that without the will to change nothing will change, they are initially right with this fairly banal insight. And they come across as much more likeable than the Stalinists who every time they fuck something up have the good excuse that it was ‘historically necessary’ in this and no other way. You could even argue for the Maoists and the CPK that without a certain stubborn attachment to their own political programme, regardless of the concrete chances of its realisation, they would have never been in a position to change anything. But this argument against a dull and affirmative realism — against a perspective which cannot imagine anything different because it does not want to do so — is completely different from an idealism that declares reality to be negligible and replaces analysis with some more or less encouraging slogans, more suited to a church meeting (belief moves mountains) than to the construction of a real, beautiful planned economy. The development of productive forces is no child’s game; a plan without a safety net is bullshit, and utopian thinking does indeed lead to catastrophe if it fails to address the conditions of realisation. And that is what happened,

in addition to the directly intended brutalities, in ‘Democratic Kampuchea’.

17 There must have been reasons for these obvious problems with ‘socialist development’, and the Khmer Rouge were quick to start looking for them. It could not be the party, of course — they had the right line — and the Khmer people, whose good characteristics a Cambodian patriot could not call into question, were also excluded from guilt. Thus traitors and saboteurs were clearly active just about everywhere. As a matter of principle, suspicion was directed against the Vietnamese and Chinese minorities who in the old society had mostly been artisans and merchants³⁰, and also against the Muslim minority, who in the eyes of the CPK did not belong to the traditional Khmer rice-farming people because of their belief and their trade (fishing). City dwellers were of course suspected to have been privileged under the old regime or even to have fled from Khmer Rouge troops. Generally, the Khmer Rouge distinguished between the ‘old people’ who had survived under their reign for a while and were thus more trustworthy, and the ‘new people’ who had only recently ended up under their control. And ultimately some saboteurs and traitors must have hidden within the CPK, as otherwise they could not have proceeded with their disgraceful work without Angkar noticing them. Initially, the Khmer Rouge mostly killed adherents of the old regime, soldiers of the Lon Nol troops, urban intellectuals and then people who had returned from exile, wrongly assuming that the war was over and that they could help to develop Democratic Kampuchea. But the Khmer Rouge soon started also to torture and kill people from their own ranks and to suspect everyone of being a spy.³¹ The terror was extended to the countryside — a terror against everyone who did not fulfil the required workload, who stole from the harvest or from food remnants out of hunger, or who dared secretly to slaughter an animal.

The sick, the old, the weak, the injured, the handicapped etc. were, as useless eaters, at best left to their own devices and thus often subject to death from starvation, or they were simply killed. Those who joked about Angkar, criticised a measure or showed themselves to be ‘enemies’ of the regime in some other way rarely survived. But even if someone’s plough broke down, or if their buffalo didn’t obey or if they dared to have sexual relations without permission, they faced public humiliation at best, often more rigid forms of punishment and sometimes even death. It is estimated that Cam-

bodia had about 7.4 million inhabitants in 1975. In 1979 there were about 5.8 million.³²

18 After various border violations by Kampuchea’s army and a fierce reciprocal propaganda war, Vietnamese troops marched into Cambodia at the end of 1978 and in less than three weeks managed to drive out the Khmer Rouge. After that Pol Pot and his comrades (still internationally recognised as the ‘legitimate government’ of Cambodia) ruled over refugee camps in Thailand and some hard-to-reach camps in the border regions of Cambodia. There the Khmer Rouge’s terror continued. The largest part of Cambodia was now under Vietnamese control, and here the ‘People’s Republic of Cambodia’ was founded. Now the Khmer Rouge were fighting a guerilla war against Vietnamese troops and against the new Cambodian army. The USA and European countries supported the Khmer Rouge in its fight against an ally of the USSR.

19 How can the terror and mass murder be explained? The contradiction between the atrocities and the supposed gentle and friendly national character of the Cambodians is often emphasised. Behind this particular racist-idiotic national caricature, various kitchen psychologists discover another ‘reason’: the dark side of the Khmer ‘national soul’. Even sworn anti-communists, for whom Hegel and Marx are to be held directly responsible for the Killing Fields, will not do without national character as an explanatory pattern: in the case of Cambodia it is the “tradition of cruelty which slumbers behind the Buddha’s gentle face”. The supposed explanation lies in the beautiful Khmer word *kum*, as best defined by a ‘native’: “a Cambodian word for a particular Cambodian revenge mentality — more specifically, an ongoing grudge which eventually leads to an act of revenge whose damage is far greater than the original injury [...] it is an infection that spreads in our (national soul)”.³³ We see. In the light of this infection of the national soul, it seems strange that former adherents and enemies of the Khmer Rouge work together in the highest ranks of the new Cambodian kingdom. Perhaps the *kum* is taking a little break? Even assuming that such socially anchored and accepted mentalities were widespread across the country, the question of the origin of the undeniably real grudge remains.

20 Among other reasons, the Khmer Rouge’s reign of terror was presumably so brutal because the political-economic conflict between poor peasants and the urban middle classes —

²⁹Why is this so? A smart political approach would for instance make sure that dangerous or unpleasant labour is mechanised as quickly as possible. But it would also try to support the development of machines of a kind which are not only productive but also do not ruin workers and do not have stupid side effects for the surroundings (be it noise, poison, whatever). In technological trials such side effects would for example be a focus of attention; in the use of technology they would be a focus for improvement, if they still existed.

³⁰This is in no way unusual. Many pre-capitalist societies passed the areas outside agriculture and the apparatus of traditional rule on to groups which for some reason or other had no place in traditional society, often immigrants or followers of different religions. Because the sphere of trade played a destructive role for traditional production when capitalist development first started, these groups were often held responsible for the nastiness of capitalist modernisation (and colonial politics). Add a colonial power which knows how to use differences more or less smartly in order to set different groups of colonised peoples against one another, and no-one should be surprised by the series of full-on pogroms against these minorities that accompanied some ‘national liberations’.

³¹Sontheimer: *Kambodscha*, p.34

³²Twining: *Economy*, p. 150. Other numbers closer to 3 million victims were probably Vietnamese propaganda.

³³Quoted in Sontheimer: *Kambodscha*, p.65/66

a leftover from colonial politics, administered latterly by the respective local elites – was fought out violently. (The same kind of conflict has led to all sorts of bloody carnage in Thailand recently.) This conflict was waged because the Khmer Rouge placed themselves at the head of a peasant guerilla campaign in a destabilised country and were able to win in a power vacuum created by imperialism. Thus one side was utterly inferior and for once it was the side that had previously always been slightly more successful at pushing its interests. And the conflict was waged so bloodily because the hate against the city people proved to be quite a good ideology for mobilising around the strategy of concentration on agriculture above all in the building of an independent Kampuchea. On top of that it fit the fascist³⁴ ‘cleansing fantasies’ of these red-lacquered Khmer nationalists.

21 So what kind of people were these Khmer Rouge then? Of course it would be easiest to portray them as insane criminals, whose theory was a “morbid conglomerate of utopian ideas ... which were not at all based on the insights of Marxist theories”³⁵; this at least is how those in the GDR rejected any relation between Marxist-Leninism and the Khmer Rouge. But that is clearly insufficient. It is often said that the Khmer Rouge were ‘ultra-Maoists’³⁶, cultivating a ‘radical Maoism’³⁷, with politics inspired by the ‘Great Leap Forward’ and the cultural revolution³⁸. That’s not supportable: the Great Leap Forward was meant to build communism in three years, whereas the 4-year-plan of the Khmer Rouge was meant to produce an export surplus for buying weapons and industrial plant. Bombing ‘headquarters’ regularly in order to terrify the party’s own bureaucracy was not Angkar’s thing.

The Khmer Rouge even explicitly rejected the Maoist theory of an initially necessary pact with the national bourgeoisie: “There is no national bourgeoisie in Cambodia, all bourgeois are foreigners”³⁹. The close alliance with China, which was already well on its way to a ‘socialist market economy’ at the time of the Khmer Rouge, was not so much based on what little ideological ground they shared but mostly on their common enemy: the Socialist Republic of Vietnam, which was well-known to be

an ally of the USSR. The Khmer Rouge also took on little in terms of ideology from its other ally North Korea. They neither had a sun-like leader (the Cambodians only found out in 1977 that Pol Pot was their big guy, some claim it was even later than that), nor did they fall for the idiotic North Korean idea of developing an independent state ideology (Juche) whose main content is that the people’s unity is better than class struggle. That was how North Korea ‘further developed’ Marxism-Leninism ‘dialectically’. No doubt the Khmer Rouge were proud of starting on a daring path to building socialism, a path which was previously unknown and untried and was genuinely Kampuchean. But in many ways, despite all their Khmer national pride, they were very orthodox Marxists-Leninists.

22 But did Pol Pot not attempt “up to the last consequence” to “introduce communism immediately and completely without the long transition period proper to the tenets of orthodox Marxism-Leninism”⁴⁰? Did the Khmer Rouge want to “build ... a communist society after the revolution and simply skip the socialism stage”⁴¹ — an approach which would raise some questions? Was it a matter of ‘war communism’⁴²? And did the Khmer Rouge promise to build a ‘thriving communist future’ with their 4-year-plan⁴³? Even if Angkar never officially invoked Marxism-Leninism⁴⁴ their theoretical documents show them as especially thickheaded-nationalist and paranoid Marxists-Leninists. The documents talk of “socialism”, not communism, all the way through⁴⁵, and the policies were about agricultural surplus and foreign currency income – however nuts the strategy to achieve this might have been and however unreal the other assumptions were (e.g. a constant rice price on the world market).

23 Incidentally, this should not lead us to the converse fallacy that the Khmer Rouge’s reign had been some kind of ‘state capitalism’. The Khmer Rouge did indeed relate to the world market with their aims and would have loved to transform Cambodia into an agricultural supplier for international capitalism. But they never got that far. And unlike in the USSR they did not even try to turn wage, price and

profit into factors of planning. Instead of trying to plan in terms of money, which would not have meant bad capitalism but a badly planned economy, it was rice that had to be delivered in Kampuchea. A ‘domestic market’, whether of a capitalist or state socialist kind, did not exist; the money of ‘democratic Kampuchea’, which had already been printed, was not introduced as currency.

24 For a long time the left refused to believe that ‘democratic Kampuchea’ was ruled by such an evil regime. There were reasons for this: “falsifications and intentional lies, subsequently proved to be false, made it hard to believe the few sources available.” For example a French doctor’s report from April 30, 1975 on various atrocities that definitely did not take place, supposed that witness reports supplied in exchange for dollars at the Thai border by people who had not been in Cambodia at the time in question, staged photographs produced by the Thai secret police to influence elections, or the most famous photograph, which circulated worldwide with the caption “A Khmer Rouge shops with a pistol on the day of liberation”: in fact he was asking looters to stop immediately⁴⁶. With this in mind, the attitude of the West European and North American Left may have been unpleasant but it was not incomprehensible. Given the complete closing-off of Kampuchea, the only available information came from opponents of the Khmer Rouge, and for the most part it was not exactly reliable. All this is alarming, but one minority definitely to be disregarded is the element of the Left that continued to hold onto the Khmer Rouge until much later. Of course, one thing most morally outraged anti-communists prefer to suppress is that after the expulsion by the Vietnamese Army it was the free West that financed the Khmer Rouge murder gangs and gave them military support, allowing them to continue their slaughter in the border regions edging on Thailand. “You can’t be squeamish about auxiliary forces”. The West in its fight against the USSR and Vietnam took the words of old-school conservative Franz-Josef Strauss truly to heart, and even the Khmer Rouge, after their fall, were welcome.

³⁴The word ‘fascist’ is not meant to imply ‘totalitarianism’ here. There are several essential differences between state socialist and fascist regimes, abstracting from which is simply bullshit that no longer explains anything. It must be admitted nonetheless that the Chinese, North Korean and Kampuchean variations of state socialism, because of the local radical nationalism, share similarities with typical fascist developments in bourgeois nation states, while barely any ideas of an emancipatory change of society can be discovered. One of the slogans in Kampuchean mass meetings was apparently: “We have to exterminate and remove from society everyone who imagine themselves to be ill.” (Quoted in Locard: Pol Pot’s Little Red Book).

³⁵Thürk: Reis, p.10

³⁶Süddeutsche Zeitung, 26/7/2010

³⁷<http://www.sueddeutsche.de/politik/kambodscha-und-die-roten-khmer-tage-terror-1.488469-10,22/7/2010>

³⁸Twining: Economy, p. 111.

³⁹Schmidt: Leben, p.174

⁴⁰Margolin: Kambodscha, p.643

⁴¹Sontheimer: Kambodscha, p. 87

⁴²Margolin: Kambodscha, p. 692

⁴³http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rote_Khmer,22/7/2010

⁴⁴Margolin: Kambodscha, p.692

⁴⁵There are also different words for both these terms in the Khmer language, implying that this is not a translation problem.

⁴⁶Schmidt: Leben, p.156/157

About this journal

Critique's failure does not usually derive from peoples' inability to see the misery around them; work, unemployment, war, hunger, racism, toxic waste, sexism, drowning refugees, homophobia, stress, to name but a few. Everybody knows and almost everybody resents these facts. However, as quickly as most people offer pity, they offer wrong explanations why these facts keep surfacing in the 'most human of all societies'.

We claim that modern misery ultimately is the result of capitalism and the nation state. The purpose of this journal is to prove this claim by explaining manifestations such as those listed above. We therefore criticise many other theories about the conditions we are forced to live under, as wrong. The purpose of this journal is to criticise those conditions which ensure that wine and cheese are not available to everyone and to criticise everyone who justifies this. Luxury for everyone!

The Wine and Cheese Appreciation Society of Greater London is the rather small group behind this journal. We are not in the business of being the vanguard of the working class nor are we self-sufficient intellectuals writing about Marx behind closed doors. We want to criticise, discuss, engage, argue. We do not believe that insight follows from one's social position in a positive (Autonomia) or negative (Marxism-

Leninism) way. Arguments do not have a standpoint, they are either correct or wrong, insufficient, incomplete.

Since we refer to Marx quite a bit, a few clarifications. Capitalism does not vanish by itself. Its crises are nothing but crises of its valorisation. On the other hand, the fact that it causes people harm is an inevitable part of its package in crisis and in boom. Modern democracies, where politicians generally care about nothing except the well-being of the country, are the adequate form of government for the capitalist mode of production. The emancipation of politics from individual capitalist enterprises is a necessary condition for the existence of general capitalist relations. Nation states are not capitalist players on the market – they rather make markets possible.

We have nothing positive to say about sociological Marxism with all its classes, strata and social groups, with its 'power relations' and 'objectively progressive interests', which allegedly give rise to the right strategy. We do not follow the wide-spread 'realism' which consists of doing stuff one does not want and to not talk about the stuff one actually does want. The lesser of two evils is still an evil. We do not want to be successful with something, but with a rather particular critique. We do not understand the Soviet Union as 'state capitalism' nor do we

think the 'experiment' started out alright but went wrong on the way. We do not follow the cult of the working class nor any other Leninist-Stalinist-Maoist nonsense. Declarations of love towards the workers, 'the people' and 'the little man' are absent from our texts since this prevents a proper critique of their wrong consciousness. This critique is necessary because it is them who will have to move in order for anything to change. The kind of anti-capitalism, which suspects evil parasites behind everything and conspiracies everywhere, will not be found in our texts; however, arguments against this rubbish will be.

Though our published results and conclusions might be misinterpreted as dogmatic we do not claim at all to have monopolised the truth. On the contrary: This journal is an invitation to critique. Every verdict based on scientific criticism we welcome.

Our group is part of the network 'Junge Linke gegen Kapital und Nation'. This journal contains both articles produced by us and translations of texts by other groups in this network. If you want to discuss articles published in this journal, get in touch at

wineandcheese@hush.com or

<http://www.junge-linke.org/en>.

