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Globalization in the *Manifesto* and today¹

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1. "Globalization" as neoliberal politics

There is one slogan of the Zapatistas which is particularly popular among leftist circles everywhere in the world today: to "fight globalization". Less popular among the radical left was the notion to "defend the Nation State" against globalization². But one cannot nail a pudding to the wall: "globalization" today means a confusing mixture of quite different things - from universal free trade and competition to the globalization of dys-ecological effects, or the spreading of epidemics like AIDS, and from global mafiosi and drug dealers' or children prostitution networks to elements of what Gramsci calls the "cultural unification of humankind". Post-communism has given its specific flair and configuration to this mixture. To avoid equivocation one must start with clarifying, maybe even deconstructing the overdetermination of different processes which are rather covered than exhibited by this concept: *globalization*. Being "against globalization" without pulling apart the different meanings leads into the trap of anti-

historical conservatism, for whom, as Marx laughed, a whip is a good whip as long as it is a historical whip.

If one refers to globalization of capitalism as the forming of a capitalist world market, the objection will come promptly: This is not new. It has, e.g., long ago, been described by the *Manifesto*. So, what is specific in today's globalization? How can we explain the mobilizing effects of slogans that oppose globalization?

The reason is that it has become the operational myth of Neoliberalism. Neoliberals hide their politics behind the myth of an uncontrollable process going on and forcing all peoples to compete against all others in adapting to this process, with the ensuing band-waggon-effect of a self-fulfilling prophecy, the social engineers of this process themselves panic-strickenly trying to comply.

Comply to what? To say: to a politics of *enforcing* global formal equality & free trade politics in the interest of the "market winners", touches something very real -- and yet it touches only the surface. Its negativity is, however, overwhelming: neoliberal politics of enforcing "globalization" is not only destroying national development regimes of the poor everywhere; it is also destroying national-social welfare state-structures of the rich societies. In both cases neoliberal globalization politics means abolition of protections against cheap competition, though with very different consequences: disseminating wild capitalisms here, furthering so called postindustrial social structures with mass unemployment and all kinds of phenomena of decay and parasitism there. So it is enforcing changes in the international division of labour, if one may call the allocation of unemployment and parasitism still "division of labour". If we add to this image the cosmopolitan "money society" and finance capitalism, as the dominant interests, and the hollowing out of Nation States everywhere, we get at what on the left is commonly

understood when one speaks about - and against - globalization. It seems to be evident that today one has to fight globalization. And yet there is something missing.

During the first years of Nazism an international meeting of writers took place in Paris. There was a lot of talking about cultural values and the high principles of morals and civilization to be defended against a regime of immorality and barbarism. Then Brecht went to the micro and said: "comrades, let's talk of the relations of property." With this, he followed the recommendation of the *Manifesto*:

"In short, the communists everywhere support every revolutionary movement against the existing social and political order of things. In all these movements they bring to the front, as the leading question (*Grundfrage*) in each, the property question, no matter what its degree of development at the time."

(#204³)

At that occasion however, Brecht's sentence was a very ambivalent thing to say, left-radically disturbing the broad unitarian politics of antifascism. Today, however, it is necessary to interrupt the discourses of leftist common sense and say: "Comrades, let's talk about the mode of production." This may be supported by interpreting today's globalization in terms of the *Manifesto*.

2. Analyzing "globalization" in the light of the *Manifesto*

Among the predictions which were ahead of their time but in the meantime have come true, only few seem today more adequate and topical than (1) that of the globalization of capitalism. Its sibling-prediction (2) is the one on the permanence of capital revolutionizing its technical basis. Undoubtedly the *Manifesto* is right with these two main statements (which are linked to many others):

(1) "The bourgeoisie cannot exist without constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society." And consequently: "Constant revolutionizing of production, uninterrupted disturbance of all social conditions, everlasting uncertainty and agitation distinguish the bourgeois epoch from all earlier ones."

(2) "The need for a constantly expanding market for its products chases the bourgeoisie over the whole surface of the globe. It must nestle everywhere, settle everywhere, establish connections everywhere." And consequently: "The bourgeoisie has through its exploitation of the world market given a cosmopolitan character to production and consumption in every country. To the great chagrin of Reactionists, it has drawn from under the feet of industry the national ground on which it stood."

The hollowing out and "caziqization"⁴ of the Nation State can be understood in the prolongation of this observation. The form in which these developments proceed is described by the *Manifesto* as that of a periodicity of crises:

"Modern bourgeois society [...] is like the sorcerer, who is no longer able to control the powers of the nether world whom he has called up by his spells. For many a decade past the history of industry and commerce is but the history of the revolt of modern productive forces against modern conditions of production, against the property relations that are the condition for the existence of the bourgeoisie and its rule. [...] In these crises a great part not only of the existing products, but also of the previously created productive forces, are periodically destroyed. In these crises there breaks out an epidemic that, in all earlier epochs, would have seemed an absurdity - the epidemic of over-production."

If we add to these observations the prediction of a continuous concentration and centralization of capital, we get a basic pattern of theses which, linked with those of the

painful consequences for the peoples of the world - f.i, having made dependent "the nations of peasants on nations of bourgeoisie, the East on the West" (today discussed as the North-South-antagonism) -, may justify the judgment of Jacques Derrida who, a few years ago, disturbed the false peace of postcommunism by saying that there is maybe no other text, "in the whole philosophical tradition, whose reading seems to me *today* more urgent"⁵. If we consider the nexus of technological innovation, capital concentration, and the chase for profit over the whole surface of the globe with all their consequences for production and consumption, for politics and the State, for war und peace, we get a better understanding of what today enters into this very concept: *globalization*.

And yet this came as a Marxist surprise for real existing State socialism. (Because there are, as Ernst Bloch liked to say, "Marxisms of reality itself".) The most solid State socialism, that of the Soviet Union and its client States, has "melted into air". Its politics of security turned out to create insecurity; its "solidity" of a primarily compulsory "emergency State" proved finally to be fatal. This antidialectical conception of stability was the heritage of another example from the school book of historical materialism: Various authors have shown how the implantation of Fordistic technologies under the conditions of the early Soviet society with its low grade of development necessarily led to a super state as the direct economic government, a kind of economic bonapartism or better: Statist mode of production⁶ with the highest possible degree of centralization etc. This is based on the type of productive forces of mechanized mass production with tayloristicly shaped industrial relations: a marked vertical division of labour, particularly a sharp division of manual and intellectual work and a steep hierarchical work organization with highly standardized operations at the base.

The resulting structures, together with their dismantling effect on individual initiative and responsibility and the resulting inner secret security regime, turned into an unsurmountable barrier for the development of higher technologies. There are

bookshelves full of soviet or soviet-allied publications on the scientific-technical revolution, written since the early sixties. But the implementation of this revolution never took place. Michael Gorbachev and his circle started their project from this very insight, articulated publicly already in 1984⁷: that the relations of production had become too narrow for the new productive forces and that a revolution had to be accomplished, changing all social systems, from the political system, via the legal state and civil society to education and media, rendering them compatible with the needs of a productive world marked by computers and global communication. The "socialization of production in developed socialism" had to be reconceived, as the title of a dissertation in the GDR from 1985 states, "as a unitarian process of scientific-technical revolution and socio-economical maturation".⁸ Maturation meant the emancipation of a socialist civil society from the overpowering and suffocating tutelage of the State. Because the productive forces revolted against the State socialist relations of production, as in general terms predicted by the *Manifesto*, and because, on the other hand, the bourgeoisie also behaved as analysed in the *Manifesto*, the informal subsumption of the State socialist economies under the capitalist world market took place: State socialist economics tended to a certain degree to become a sub-economy to western capitalism.

While victories tend to have a couple of fathers, defeats are orphans. It is only too clear that in the former Soviet Union the project of combining socialist democratization with a politics of development of the productive forces failed, entailing a capitulation to Neoliberalism, which is a particularly bitter defeat. And though there are, particularly in Cuba, more reasons to dislike the leadership of the Perestroika, it is a great weakness and leads to deceptive pseudo-Marxism to indulge in conjuration-theories about the end of the SU, instead of accepting the *questions* to which the Perestroika tried to answer in its insufficient way. This weakness has a long prehistory in the traditional absence of

Marxism in the selfunderstanding of Marxists. The whole world develops according to the rules of historical materialism, with the exception of those, who know these rules: as if the endeavours of Marxists or socialists evaded the otherwise iron laws of historical materialism. In a certain way this reminds us of the criticism of the utopian socialists developed in the *Manifesto*:

"The first direct attempts of the proletariat to attain its own ends, made in times of universal excitement, when feudal society was being overthrown, these attempts necessarily failed, owing to the then undeveloped state of the proletariat, as well as to the absence of the economic conditions for its emancipation, conditions that had yet to be produced and could be produced by the impending bourgeois epoch alone." (497)

The utopian consists in the search "to create these conditions".

In the situation of postcommunism this theoretical weakness - which is the other side of a voluntaristic over-estimation of one-self - reappears in underestimating Neoliberalism by emptying it of its historical materiality. Because this is the kernel of neoliberal competence and hence hegemony: Neoliberalism was - and still is - managing a revolution in the mode of production. If we describe the main formative powers (and inner compulsive powers, as Werner Sombart called them) of this revolution we come to understand a new dimension of "globalization": let us consider such productive forces as electronic computing technology applied to satellite-based telecommunication. By this device the global as such has been constituted as an operational unit. It allowed a number of "big bangs", from stock exchange to management of production and distribution, thus technologically paving the way for the emergence of transnational companies as the dominating form of industrial capital. The computer as leading technology made in its way shift the borders of reality-for-us no less than telescope and

microscope once did. What has come to be called high technology is a couple of basically micro-technologies with macro-reach. And just as the *Manifesto* in general predicts, this revolutionizing of the productive forces and hence of the mode of production entailed all the ensuing consequences, be it in the mode of life, or in the mode of destruction, in the constitution of the collective imaginary or in the structure of subjectivity and needs etc.

3. Re-reading the *Manifesto* in the light of today's globalization

If the conditions for a higher society according to the *Manifesto* "could be produced by the impending bourgeois epoch alone", this is, according to the same *Manifesto*, more or less already a thing of the past and no longer of the present, let alone of the future. To think that this end-of-bourgeois-history was proclaimed already 150 years ago! Today, given the experience of present day's "globalization", it hits the eye, how utterly incongruous the time perspectives of the *Manifesto* are. More than once the time-slope has been observed in which the statements of the *Manifesto* seem to be caught. In many respects they are far, far ahead of their time. I am hesitating whether to be more astonished about the fact, that central predictions of the *Manifesto* have come true - or about the chronological bias of these predictions. The enormous distortion of their time perspective is linked to an epistemological misrepresentation: Their form is that of description of what is the case; their content is that of prediction of what will be the case. In some respects, they are even altogether out of time and space, utopian against the authors' intention.

For a re-reading of the *Manifesto* today it is important to scrutinize the false evidences, which these untimely assumptions presented to the authors. As usual, a strong evidence can be generated because a number of not necessarily related assumptions stick together.

If we want to shed light on the present globalization-debate from the *Manifesto* - and vice versa, from this debate and today's *coyuntura* on the *Manifesto* - we have to deconstruct the aggregation of mutually strengthening assumptions.

Eric Hobsbawm has described the illusive and delusive evidence, shared almost unanimously by public opinion and scientists towards the end of the 19th century that the science of physics was near completion. A whole generation believed more or less, that within their lifetime one would know the physical world once for ever. Just as the continents were 'discovered' and the last white spots were vanishing from the geographical maps, so the scientific continents seemed to be definitely measured and described. Marx and Engels shared this view, while *in abstracto* insisting on the endlessness of dialectics. They were persuaded to have discovered and more or less definitely mapped the continent of history, at least in its general determinations.

It is no act of masochism, but of necessary rearticulation of Marxism, to assemble a series of such predictions, put forward by the authors in the form of simple statements about what was the case, which turned out to be erroneous and politically misleading. To mention only a few:

The two-classes-thesis:

"The other classes perish (decay) and (finally) disappear in the face of Modern industry" (#45)

(however: modified by a more differentiated analysis:

"In the countries where modern civilization has become fully developed, a new class of petty bourgeoisie has been formed, fluctuating between proletariat and bourgeoisie and ever renewing itself as a supplementary part of bourgeois society. The individual members of this class, however, are being constantly

hurled down into the proletariat by the action of competition, and, as modern industry develops, they even see the moment approaching when they will completely disappear as an independent section of modern society, to be replaced, in manufactures agriculture and commerce, by overlookers, bailiffs and shopmen." #152)

The direct-class-confrontation-Thesis:

"Society as a whole is more and more splitting up in two hostile camps, into two great classes directly facing each other: bourgeoisie and proletariat." (#5)

(This ignores the mediations, the manifold ways in which the "two great classes" are *indirectly facing each other*; particularly the bourgeoisie is, in Brecht's words: "a master who doesn't want to be named")

What is more, the "bourgeoisie" is no great, at least no big class. Engels explained 1888 (fn. 1):

"By bourgeoisie is meant the class of modern Capitalists, owners of the means of social production and employers of wage-labour."

Marx, in *Capital*, states that the bourgeoisie is only "a few" (i.e., no "great class")

(what about the underlings, what about the "non-productive workers"?)

So much as to the 'direct confrontation of two great classes, to which all other classes are reduced'.

No less erroneous is the de-ideologization-thesis:

"The bourgeoisie [...] has put an end to all feudal, patriarchal, idyllic relations [...] and has left remaining no other nexus between man and man than naked

self-interest, than callous 'cash payment'. [...] It has resolved personal worth into exchange value [...]. In one word, for exploitation, veiled by religious and political illusions, it has substituted naked, shameless, direct, brutal exploitation."

"The bourgeoisie has stripped from its halo every occupation hitherto honoured and looked up to with reverend awe. It has converted the physician, the lawyer, the priest, the poet, the man of science, into its paid wage-labourers." (#15)

(This is 1. only half true; 2. it seduces to the illusion that things were better before.

Marx uses a quite different language in the *Theories on Surplus Value*.)

Or the self-denying denunciation of German idealism and the intellectuals as ridiculous "litterati":

"They wrote their philosophical nonsense beneath the French original. For instance, beneath the French criticism of the economic function of money, they wrote 'alienation of humanism', and beneath the French criticism of the bourgeois State they wrote 'dethronement of the Category of the General', and so forth." (#162)⁹

The class-reductionist thesis on law, ignoring its compromise form (however distorted or biased by interest):

"just as your jurisprudence is but the will of your class made into a law for all" (#92)

A general contempt for what later was called reformism, i.e.,

"administrative reforms, based on the continued existence of these (capitalist) relations" (#179)

The omni-dominance of the property question, regardless of the conditions:

"...as the leading question (*Grundfrage*) in each, the property question...", as quoted above (#204f)

A revolutionary defaultism regarding the dominant ideas of a time:

"The ruling ideas of each age have ever been the ideas of its ruling class." (#115)

Or:

"When people speak of ideas that revolutionize society, they do but express the fact, that within the old society, the elements of a new one have been created, and that the dissolution of the old ideas keeps even pace with the dissolution of the old conditions of existence." #116

Much more interesting what the *Manifesto* says on the contradictory fight of the old aristocracy against the already ruling bourgeoisie:

"In order to arouse sympathy, the aristocracy were obliged to lose sight, apparently, of their own interests, and to formulate their indictment against the bourgeoisie in the interest of the exploited working class alone." #141

The negative-emancipation-of-women-thesis:

"Differences of age and sex have no longer any distinctive social validity for the working class" (#33)

The homo-oeconomicus-thesis applied to the modern worker:

"The proletarian is without property; his relation to his wife and children has no longer anything in common with the bourgeois family-relations; ... modern

subjection to capital [...] has stripped him of every trace of national character"
(#48)

The de-qualification-thesis (over-generalizing under the impression of the decline of precapitalist handicrafts:

"Owing to the extensive use of machinery and to division of labour, the work of the proletarians has lost all individual character, and, consequently, all charm for the workman." (#31)

The way in which the authors continue seems to be anticipating the fordist mass worker:

"He becomes an appendage of the machine, and it is only the most simple, most monotonous, and most easily acquired knack, that is required of him." (#31)

Particularly problematic is the reductionist concept of political power (if one reminds oneself of Gramsci's analyses on the constitution of hegemony, and the agents and efforts involved):

"Political power, properly so called, is merely the organized power of one class for oppressing another." #139

Therefore, on the other hand, the identification of the proletariat and 'its' State, linked to the conceptions of State property and centralization:

"The proletariat will use its political supremacy (*Herrschaft*) [...] to centralize all instruments of production in the hands of the State, *i.e.*, of the proletariat organized as the ruling class" #125

The eschatological finality-of-the-class-struggle-thesis:

"times, when the class struggle nears the decisive hour..."

Linked to this is the inevitability-of-proletarian-victory-thesis:

"Its (i.e. the bourgeoisie's) fall and the victory of the proletariat are equally inevitable" (#54)

Undoubtedly this listing of strong and weak points, of empirically corroborated and empirically refuted assertions of the *Manifesto* could go on for some time. The key question is: Is there an order in this series of wrongs & rights? I think, Derrida is right when he sees the discourse of Marx and Engels - and much more so of subsequent Marxists - haunted by elements of a metaphysics of history, by guaranties in the delusive ontological form of being itself: this is condensed in his witty neologism of *hauntology*. Marx and Engels are still haunted by quasi-ontological predetermination. The end is inscribed in being; and it is imminent. Thus, the bourgeoisie has had a history and made one, but now, that 'we' come, it no longer has nor makes it. It once was "constantly revolutionizing the instruments of production, and thereby the relations of production, and with them the whole relations of society", but now, peremptorily, it cannot do it any longer.

As "end" has two meanings, that of ending and that of reaching a scope, historical materialism, as articulated in the *Manifesto*, is still in the process of freeing itself from the eggshells of philosophy of history. This leads to a series of false evidences which are stabilizing themselves mutually. And it leads to neglect the active side of the struggles. It is an illusion to believe that any class is forced by its very being to do this and that. This illusion may explain the dyshegemonial style of the *Manifesto*: Christian socialists or ethical socialists of all kinds are treated with derision. All the other tendencies have to unconditionally surrender to the one and only line.

4. Contradictions of globalization to be delt with

Today, for the first time in history, all continents & countries are more or less and in one form or another caught in the world wide web of capitalism, as predicted (in the illusionary form of stating, what is the case) in the *Manifesto*. In *Capital I*, in the particularly important chapter on the *Historical Tendency of Capitalist Production*, this anticipation is reformulated as the *entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world market*:

"Hand in hand with this centralization, or this expropriation of many capitalists by few, develop, on an ever extending scale, the cooperative form of the labour process, the conscious technical application of science, the methodical cultivation of the soil, the transformation of the instruments of labour into instruments of labour only usable in common, the economizing of all means of production of combined, socialized labour, the entanglement of all peoples in the net of the world market, and with this, the international character of the capitalistic regime."

But capital is, at least in its main countries, no longer centralizing, disciplining and increasing a modern labour class. Instead, a growing segmentation and dislocation of labour force is taking place. The concepts of working class, which were able to grasp the reality of the fordist mass workers have lost all their grip on reality. The social mode of systematization¹⁰ has hollowed out the Nation State like a Swiss cheese.

Consequently, national and social citizenship step apart, from which a deep crisis of socio-liberal democracy arises. In this situation of a dequalification of traditional critical and revolutionary theories it would be easy to find a broad consensus on the left, that the *Manifesto* in its fundamental assumption and in its very approach is definitively

out-dated - if it ever was right: To assume the contradictoryness of the capitalist development, to see - through all the crimes and brutalities - the making of conditions of a globally constituted humankind. This double character of the development has been contradictory in the past, some might say; now it no longer is. Has dialectics come to an end, as Adorno already proclaimed in the 1950s? On the other hand, isn't today's transnational high tech capitalist mode of production - in however 'barbarian' forms of bread and circuses, in a framework of violence - promoting the "cultural unification of humankind"? Doesn't it contain elements of an economic basis, that finally liberates from monotonous and life-consuming work, positioning, as Marx saw it in the *Grundrisse*, the worker strategically beside the machinery, at the same time creating a technology which seems to be predestined to solve the unreflected contradiction of the *Manifesto*, where state centralism and the association of free individuals exist side by side, by a corresponding mode of a global social systematization: Potentially in a computer system as in the internet every peripheral position is equally 'central', or centrality itself is - I repeat: potentially - structurally replaced by the net. Should we fight the internet because it actually excludes the major part of humankind or fight for the inclusion of tendentially all - as the *Manifesto* fights for the "free education for all children in public schools" (#138)? Does it make sense to fight against globalization as such instead of against the neoliberal globalization politics? Doesn't the politics of the Zapatistas, in its global reach and new type of internationalism, show the double character of the technologies of globalization? And for sure, this would remain true even if they were beaten. Why not realize that we live in a world without guaranties, but full of contradictions. Brecht's sentence is as valid as ever:

*The contradictions are the hope.*¹¹

It has, however, to be accompanied by Walter Benjamin's sentence:

It is for the sake of the hopeless that hope is given to us.

This double orientation is that of the *Manifesto* where it is no longer haunted by ontological guaranties. And it is this orientation in which it should be rediscovered as being most alive. If for a long time Marxists seemed to be people who had an answer to every question, at best we discover anew the questions for the answers, together with those who put the questions.

¹ A contribution to the international conference THE SOCIAL EMANCIPATION 150 YEARS AFTER THE MANIFESTO, Havana, 17.-20. february 1998.

² Put forward e.g. by Subcomandante Marcos, "La 4ème guerre mondiale a déjà commencé", in: *Le Monde diplomatique*, 18.8.97

³ The numbers with # signify the paragraph of the *Manifesto*, beginning with ch. I, "Bourgeois and Proletarians", but following the German edition in the Marx-Engels-Werke (MEW), vol. 4 (which in two or three cases 'cuts' the paragraphs differently compared to the English translation).

⁴ The already prehispanic figure of the "Cazique" is a double representative: he is the chief of the local community, representing it towards the imperial power; at the same time, and dominantly, he is the executive of the imperial power against his community, structurally similar to a certain type of Western corporatism (cf. Hegel).

⁵ Cf. J. Derrida, *Marx' Spectres* (German edition: 31).

⁶ Cf. Henri Lefebvre, *De l'État*, vol. 3: Le mode de production étatique, Paris 1977; see also Georges Labica, article "Mode de production étatique", in: *Dictionnaire critique du marxisme*, Paris ²1985.

⁷ Cf. the speech, Gorbachev gave on Dec 10, 1984; cf. Wolfgang Fritz Haug, *Gorbatschow*, Hamburg 1989, ch. 4: "Die Perestrojka im Übergang zum High-Tech-Sozialismus", 103-26.

⁸ Cf. Jürgen Jünger, *Die Vergesellschaftung der Produktion im entwickelten Sozialismus als einheitlicher Prozeß von wissenschaftlich-technischer Revolution und sozial-ökonomischer Reife und die qualitativ neuen Anforderungen an die Forschungs- und Entwicklungsarbeit der Kombinate*, Dissertation A, Karl-Marx-Universität Leipzig, 1985.

⁹ To call such theories "philosophical nonsense" is a case of helpless radicalism; to insist, however, on the 'alienating translation' of French politics into German philosophy hits the point (in his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci several times reflects on this parallelism).

¹⁰ I introduced this term in my article "Was kommt nach dem fordistischen Marxismus", in: *Das Argument* 214, vol. 38, 1996/2, 183-200.

¹¹ *Dreigroschenprozess*, Motto; GA 21, 448.