

SUMMARIES PROKLA 186, Vol. 47 (2017), No. 1

Ingrid Artus: The “extraordinary” strike year 2015. Reasons, results, perspectives. The paper discusses causes, contexts and consequences of the exceptional high level of strikes sweeping Germany in the year 2015. It gives a detailed overview of the three biggest strike movements (nursery teachers, postal strike and metal industry warning strikes) and sums up the vast number of smaller strikes. The new intensity of conflict is interpreted in a double way: On the one hand it is the consequence of a long lasting union weakness in the past resulting in erosion and fragmentation of collective bargaining. On the other hand it shows that there is a current fight going on to end union defensive. New conflicts at new economic places are breaking off and they are often led by employees who have no long union and strike experience. The feminization and tertiarization of strikes involve for the unions the necessity to refine ‘old’ fordist strike strategies and to deal with new subjects, maybe in a more democratic way than before.

Bernd Belina: On the Geography of the Society of Downward Mobility. The Rise of the Extreme Right – Comments on Oliver Nachtwey and Didier Eribon. Departing from a discussion of two books that were popular in the German academic left and beyond in 2016, Oliver Nachtwey’s “Die Abstiegs-gesellschaft” [“Society of Downward Mobility”] and Didier Eribon’s “Returning to Reims”, both touching on the topic of how changes in class structure are related to the rise of parties of the extreme right in Germany and France respectively, the paper argues that we need to pay more attention to uneven geographic development within and between cities and regions. Following Lefebvre, Harvey and Massey, it insists that it is in everyday life that subjectification and the constitution of classes and other social groups occur, and that the multiple ways in which everyday life is structured and differentiated spatially can play a crucial role in how global political-economic processes are perceived and translated into political positions. It urges radicals who want to understand the ascent of the extreme right to have a closer look at the systematic geography of the society of downward mobility.

Christian Frings: The problem of the left with the technique. An interjection from the engine room. Within the left discourse concerning technology there is a tendency to regard new technologies like the computer and the internet either as blessing or as curse. While some scholars are suggesting that the new so called digital economy is leading us to a new post-capitalist society ruled by a “general intellect”, others fear that “big data” and digital control will inevitably strengthen the power of state and capital. The article uses Marx’ critique of capital as a fetish as a framework and argues that the blessing-curse-discourse is – on both sides – only replicating the fetish character instead of criticizing it. The critical discourse about technology should focus more on the relationship between new forms of struggles linked to new technologies, leave the walled off academic sphere, and abandon the blessing-curse-debate.

Kathrin Ganz: From a free Internet towards a post-digital society: Political economy in the Digital Rights Movement’s Discourse. For the last ten years, the political discourse of Germany’s Digital Rights Movement has centered around a highly idealistic notion of a “free internet”, whereas questions regarding societal relations of production that shape digital economies have been neglected. Recent developments in the field of internet policy and digital rights show that the internet is subjected to capital interests which have been underestimated by the movement. However, the movement is capable to develop a perspective of transformation, stemming from activists’ social practice that is characterized by commons-based production.

Renate Hürtgen: What kind of revolution?! What kind of century?! Casting a glance at the history of left-wing reappraisal. 27 years ago the Soviet power bloc collapsed. However,

since then the Left has not managed to open a political and theoretical debate in order to discuss its controversies concerning the nature of the Russian Revolution and the „post-revolutionary societies“. This article departs from a conference of the European Left, held in Venice in 1977, which was dedicated to this topic. It inquires about the questions that remained open at the end of the conference, and that can maybe answered from a contemporary perspective.

Martin Kronauer: State of emergency? Going on as before is no longer possible. The comment takes a critical look at the article “Global Capitalism in a State of Emergency” written by the editorial board and published in PROKLA 185. It appreciates the analytical and political intentions of the article but questions the appropriateness of the term “state of emergency” to characterize global capitalism in its current conditions. It also deplores the lack of consequences of the analysis for the most pressing issue of the rise of right-wing groups and governments in Europe and the USA. In this respect, the comment suggests two topics which urgently deserve the attention of the Left. The first one concerns the reasons for the rise of the Right. The comment argues against the assumption of striking parallels to the rise of fascism in the 1920 and 1930s, proposes an alternative view (the undermining of institutionalized social reciprocity in decades of prevailing neoliberalism), and draws some conclusions. The second topic concerns the overrepresentation of workers among the supporters of right-wing parties. Here the comment calls upon the Left to embark on policies which aim at the regeneration of working-class consciousness and not to go for compromises with nationalism and xenophobia.

Susanne Lang: A Short History of the Internet. The design and development of the internet is conceptualized in three stages: the basic technological development and the social and political preconditions for its dispersion can be traced back to 1962 until 1992. Afterwards the technology is being appropriated and incorporated into the capitalist mode of production. From 1993 until 2003 business models and commercial enterprises arise and reshape the Service Sector. Finally, when the capitalist incorporation is completed in 2004, the phase of extensive and intensive expansion and its subsequent conquer of new markets proceeds.

Stephan Lessenich: The problems of class analysis. In analyzing the signs of the times in advanced democratic capitalism, it is pressing for a Marxist left to take into account the motivational structures of the dominated classes. Marxists tend to attribute the current rise of nationalist and authoritarian thinking and the recurrent dominance of protectionist and exclusionary practices to internal struggles in the ruling classes, leading to a split-off of the most reactionary class fractions who in turn successfully address the populace with a racist and pseudo-social semantic and programmatic. But what if such a programmatic is not only a class strategy “from above” and not external to the “actual” social imaginary of the dominated classes? What if at least major parts of the dominated in the rich capitalist societies of Europe and North America may be said to have an (“objective”) interest in sticking to what is given and to opt against solidarity – because they know or at least suspect that, at the end of the day, they profit from the structures of inequality that over decades have been established in global capitalism? What if we admit that, today, the proletarians have more to lose than only their chains? To be sure, class analysis (and, as it were, class struggle) becomes a much harder business then.

Christian Meyer: Digital Discipline. On the Transformation of Inner Security. Security is one of the most dominant issues in the current political discourse. Almost every topic, ranging from the internet to migration, is being related to security. The article argues that under neoliberal conditions and given the experience of terrorist attacks, inner security turns to-

wards more disciplinary techniques and a discourse, in which security cannot be questioned. It examines the current transformation of security in the sense of a dispositive and gives special consideration to issues of digital surveillance technologies and their relation to society. Following Foucault's concepts of power, the article argues that discipline and governmentality have to be understood within a new configuration driven by technological progress and crisis.

Sebastian Sevignani: Facets of the debate about digital work. Challenges for a Critical Theory of Informational Capitalism. This article introduces the reader to the so called 'digital labor debate' in the context of the political economy of (new) media and (digital) communication. The political economy of social media is best qualified as surveillance-driven production of culture and as an interplay between distinct modes of production (commons based peer production and commodity production). The latter gives rise to the problem of how to understand the interplay between these modes. The article discusses contributions from different theoretical angles, such as the materialist theory of communication, the theory of cognitive capitalism, the theory of prosumption, and the theory of rent in the informational age. The discussion is organized by three topics: Does the use of social media qualify as work? Are users subsumed to capital control? Are users exploited? The article marks theoretical challenges for a critical theory of informational capitalism.

Michael Wendt: The Myth of global Capitalism and the Actuality of the National. This contribution is a critical response to the article "Global Capitalism in a State of Emergency" written by the editorial board and published in PROKLA 185. In contrast to the editors' analysis, it argues that capitalism does not qualify as a global system with an international form of government and an international ruling class. We are still living in a state of „Varieties of Capitalism“ dominated by national states. This was proven by the deep crisis of the European Union and the political struggles within the EU. The model of finance-dominated capitalism is not able to explain why the export-oriented German capitalism, German politics and the German economic ideology of mercantilism can dominate the economies and the states in the European Union.

Benjamin Opratko: Right-wing populism as crisis in progress. Notes on the rise of AfD and FPÖ. The article discusses the rise of right-wing populism in Europe in the context of neoliberal capitalism's „crisis of hegemony“. The cases of the Austrian FPÖ and Germany's AfD are analyzed as instances of an „authoritarian populism“, intervening into this crisis and offering subjective modes of engagement with it. Three dimensions of the crisis of hegemony are considered in particular: A crisis of political representation, a crisis of the public sphere, and an economic crisis.

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