

GEGENSTANDPUNKT

Political Quarterly

current events

You don't want to pay for the crisis of capital? Then just don't.

Actually, you've been paying for a long while! And the calls for demonstrations say how: when the markets collapse, when business contracts in industry and trade, then companies avert damage to their balance sheets by passing it on to their workforce. They lay off workers, order short-time, cut wages. They bring their costs in line with reduced business opportunities and defend their profits. This is the front on which the fight takes place over who has to make sacrifices, and how much, so that growth gets going again and the entire capitalist bullshit starts all over. Anyone not prepared to put up with the role of flexible cost factor; anyone fed up with standing ready for the growth of profits with flexible readiness to work in boom times, and with restoring the firms' balance sheets back by giving back wages in the contraction phase, cannot avoid terminating his role as labor power in the commodity form. The calls to protest rail fiercely against capitalism, and call for "*the foundation of a better world*" that "*works for people and the planet*" — but what they don't find necessary is the *fight to abolish capitalism*.

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"*Fundamental change is needed*" — this is the common theme. It's a rather peculiar change of system that takes right back on board all the figures who call the shots in the bad old society, and whose profit-making has caused all the enumerated evils of poverty in Europe and around the world, up to and including climate change.

- The millionaires for instance. They stay millionaires: they will finally be slapped with a millionaires' tax to reduce the government's costs in saving the banks.
- "*The banks are ours!*" They must be saved, of course! They, too, are indispensable for a "*society united in solidarity*." Only sound banks can serve business with a capital advance in credit — and for the working population, capital is really as necessary as their daily bread, isn't it? And the people still need the wealth of the banking sector — after all, only rich banks can provide the funds demanded by the calls for protests for bailing themselves out of the crisis and sparing the people the costs for the indispensable "*restoration of the banking sector*."
- And all the bosses of the "*real economy*" are of course also needed in the "*new system*": who else could utilize the bank credit and — together with their own profit — extract interest for the banks out of labor. Only exploitation can provide all the jobs that the people need! This is what needs to get going again, because as far as concern the capitalism-criticizing calls to protest, the evil of capitalism doesn't seem to consist in the fact that workers have a livelihood only if their work yields profit, but in the circumstance that at present, capitalism doesn't function properly.

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Not just the rich and powerful, but even the *poor and dependent* appear in the “*new system*” in their old roles again: why even call for a “*social umbrella*,” unless one takes it for granted that there will continue to be helpless hardship cases needing protection:

- a *minimum wage* for those employed in the *low-wage sector*. This sector is apparently to exist a while longer.
- “*decent jobs and public services for all*” —extended support for the long-term unemployed, who also are not going to become fewer in number, nor will their perpetually insecure existence become less so.
- a pension at age 65 instead of 67 for the old folks who are forced out of the factories before reaching the age of retirement.

Can there be anything more modest than this? But what else is to be expected of calls for protest that set “*people before profits*,” i.e., revise the rank of the two supreme Goods? Profit has to be, after all, but the human being must not be forgotten in all that! People and profit should be able to coexist, isn't this how it's meant? How does this fit with profit from the outset being made at the expense of the working people — with profit being nothing other than what the capitalist gets from his workforce?

Is this what a “*better world*” looks like? Is this the “*fundamental change*” that you're demonstrating for?

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No, one reads that a “society united in solidarity” doesn't stop with a minimum wage, secure social assistance, retirement at 65, etc. Those are all only “immediate measures,” “*first steps*” — but steps *to where?* The calls to protest list many evils caused by the capitalistic economy for the working class. But they do *not* turn *against capital*, rather *to the state* that is supposed to limit the damage. That is, they turn to the same address that begets, secures, and oversees the *economic power of capital* by guaranteeing private property with its *political power*. A more socially-oriented policy is supposed to remedy the damage caused by the economy. These calls for damage limitation take for granted and accept all the economic principles that hold sway in capitalism, and all the social roles this system generates. This is not a first step toward the abolishing of capitalism; it's a call for a social policy that goes with this exploitation economy as long as it exists.

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Anyone who doesn't want to continue to be made a victim of the crisis and crisis management, who doesn't want to be, once again, a means of profit in a new upswing, has to do something other than to build up social pressure for a change in social policy in Berlin, London, or elsewhere.

You don't want to pay for the crisis of capital?

Then refuse to participate! But don't haggle with the government for a price reduction in paying for the costs of crisis.
