

<https://gegen-kapital-und-nation.org/en/debate-and-analysis-make-foreshortened-critique-capitalism-history/>

## Debate and Analysis of "Make a foreshortened critique of capitalism history!"

In the very first issue of SHIFT magazine the Berlin-based group TOP delivers fragments of their critique (<http://shiftmag.co.uk/?p=73>) of the anti-G8 mobilisation in order to "make a foreshortened critique of capitalism history" (TOP). A sympathetic cause indeed to challenge antisemitic currents and nationalist floods (not only) in that movement. Unfortunately TOP fails to deliver a striking critique of those positions. In some cases they provide a wrong explanation and in other cases critique is replaced by moral appeals and warnings. In this reply we aim to provide arguments against these shortcomings hoping to aid TOP's cause which we subscribe to (This article first appeared in SHIFT Magazine #2 (cf. <http://www.shiftmag.co.uk>)). TOP rightfully 'refuses' 'economistic and personalized (state-conceptions)' within the anti-globalisation movement and writes: 'one of the inherent dangers of this logic is to fall into anti-Semitic stereotypes' and goes on giving a brief overview of reason and substance of the antisemitic world-view. However, TOP does not detail their position enough what capitalism is, why and how so many protesters come to a wrong differing conclusion about it and how this involves antisemitism. The brief remarks about their understanding of capitalism are: Capitalism is described as a 'process, which arises following its own structural logic without a particular leadership'. As TOP writes that 'domination has neither name nor address' when considering the meeting of the most powerful states in the world, we think that this position is a consequence of TOP's failure to understand the democratic state, its elected agents and its objects of government: the people. But lets start with the stuff we probably agree on: capitalism is a society where for example one's hunger is not a sufficient condition for food because that food is private property of e.g.~a grocery store owner (who bought it from a grocery factory owner and so forth). Those owners don't stock food to feed the hungry but to make a living. The first principle of capitalist interaction is free and equal trade or in less palliating terms: without giving there is no receiving. So only if a store owner sells enough stuff this month he might be able make a living with it next month. This is complicated by the fact that there are many grocery stores around competing to attract buyers. That is because even though many people want to eat they don't necessarily have the means -- money -- to make that happen which reduces the amount of potential customers. This competition exists on all levels -- it is universal -- and also involves global corporations, they too compete for customers. If they fail to do so, they go bankrupt. To survive in universal competition they improve their production, increase the absolute exploitation of their workers (prolong the work day, more intense work, lower wages). They do so not because they are evil but because this is their means to stay in business and make a profit. Capitalism is a labour divided society which means that the producers are dependent on each other. On the other hand the guarantee of private property and free and equal trade implies that they are dependent on the free will or arbitrariness of other producers rather than a conscious common plan. Being subject to other's free will in such a way means that always aiming for the best result is indeed best practice and therefore universal competition is logical in capitalism. This is probably what TOP would call 'structural logic'. Note that for most people the situation is even worse: They don't even have a grocery store, a factory or even the means to produce the products they need to make a living themselves. All they have to sell is their own labour power to work for other's wealth which makes them dependent on other's calculations while being severely limited to improve on their competitiveness. A position which

wants to preserve free market and private property of the means of production but singles out capitalists or corporations for their 'greedy' and immoral behaviour is therefore indeed a wrong personalised conception: 'the notion misconceives that in capitalism the economic actors are following a rationality that is forced upon them by the economic relationships themselves.' (TOP) To this point we assume that we are actually pretty close to what TOP would have written if they had expatiated their position. But Heiligendamm was not a meeting of grocery store owners, farmers or factory workers but a meeting of heads of state. A store owner (or any capitalist) and Gordon Brown fulfil some very different roles for capitalist reproduction. Gordon Brown's government's decisions reach to (and beyond) the borders of this country, the control of a grocery store owner reaches as far as his own store/factory at most. The capitalist -- regardless if he produces, sells, etc. -- has to act within the rules of private property, while the government dictates these rules. Even more: The state creates all the messy business, by guaranteeing private property and enforcing it when necessary. To guarantee private property the state needs force. A society based on private property provides a lot of misery for the people living in it and there are many reasons (e.g.~hunger, universal competition) not to obey private property. A state that wants private property cannot tolerate this and enforces each owner's freedom that his property cannot be touched without consent: the state guarantees a private sphere where only one self's will applies. This act of state makes a human being a person: a state grants the right to property and thus acknowledges this personal freedom. Or in other words: being a person implies a regimen which grants this right. Without government there is no person and in particular no 'juristic person' (TOP). Thus nation states cannot be juristic persons -- as TOP writes -- because there is no instance which would grant this status. Consequently, TOP's explanation why G8 was a legitimate meeting fails. G8 -- besides assembling mostly democratic states -- does not need to worry about legitimacy, those states aggregate a fair amount of the world's force. To fulfil the crucial duty of granting personal freedom and private property the state has to be sovereign with respect to his subjects. How sovereign a state is depends on how much it pushes its monopoly of force through internally and its interests externally. The G8 is a meeting of states which generally don't have a problem with that. This does not imply on the other hand that there are no other states with a significant military force. However, in many other states most of the capital is in the hands of foreign capitalists and every government -- whatever the intention -- which touches this property risks being confronted with the military force of the US and EU. Thus even though state actions are somewhat limited by the international community of states (read: mainly G8) the limits of a capitalist and a state (including its personnel) are very different. State is not subject to the 'structural logic' of capitalism. The EU for example limited the free exchange of crop and subsidises its farmers to make sure it is independent of foreign food suppliers. Other examples are road works, public education and public health. Those sectors are not subject to the invisible hand of the market because the state decided so. Or consider any embargo or war where a state practically negates the possible business interests of its national capital. Exactly because state is independent of the 'structural logic' of capital it can provide the 'particular leadership' necessary to perform 'domination and exploitation ... within and through these forms [democracy and law]' (TOP). Note that using this result to demand different politics from the government would be foolish. First, those people believe in freedom, democracy, and capitalism and so do the parliaments which sent them. Also those parliaments are re-affirmed routinely by the people of their respective countries via elections. Also, most governments have agendas which are documented in their respective constitutions. Abolishing capitalism altogether is not part of those constitutions and even if Gordon Brown was convinced to stop the madness of capital and nation he could not do it. Modern states have safety measures to make sure a government does not go rogue -- in either direction -- like ballots and (if necessary) the state of emergency where democracy and freedom are suspended in order to preserve the state. Capitalism is neither a conspiracy of a few nor a 'process ... without a particular leadership'. The anti-globalisation

movement generally approaches this problem from a totally different angle. Instead of asking how and why the world is set up as it is, the movement compares state and capital with some ideal. Consequently, this movement either demands 'better politics' or loses interest in the political class and aims to replace it. As there is no interest in understanding how democracy, freedom and equality preserve exploitation and domination the anti-globalisation mainstream keeps searching for violations of those high principles. If the system itself is not flawed there must be some external source for all the trouble: corrupt politicians, greedy bosses, loss of culture and this search for external jamming sources is where antisemitism has some 'answers' to offer.