

Thesis on the difficulty of solidarity.

*firstly presented at the BUKO 10 (1986) in Bremen
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The preoccupation with the Third World is often becoming an escape from the political reality in ones own country.

The right insight that many current political processes are dominated by international economic and military interest stands in stark contrast to the frustration about the difficulty of political work in such parts of the world. Due to their resignation in the face of inner political circumstances many seek their revolutionary salvation outside of their countries.

The Third World is not so much a place to discover the unknown or other, but rather the known, preferably European, but mostly it is a search for the simple.

The solidarity movement is often looking for links somewhere else, which are closest to our way of thinking, may that be liberation movements that adopted European theories for their political struggles; may that be countries that are culturally closest to us. Chilean music rings much more of a tone than Lebanese and the catholic Philippines after 300 years of Spanish and 50 years US colonisation are easier to deal with than other Asian countries. The self-serving choice of solidarity objects is looking for and intensifying the European elements in the Third World more than supporting separate processes.

The objects of solidarity are constantly exchangeable.

The volatility of solidarity from one country to the next, from one experience to the next, to an utopia most consistent with one own is self evident. German expectation were not met by the Algerian and Vietnamese or Cuban revolution, by the Portuguese left, Chilean resistance and the Sandinista government in Nicaragua. When the development is becoming difficult and complex many turn away. The people in these different countries are exchangeable anyway, they have remained "the other".

Revolution is great but it is better if others do it for us.

Revolution always appear to be easier and more promising around the world - especially if one does not look too closely - than a revolution of all things here at home, even if a revolution at home might be more important so as to ease self-empowering processes elsewhere. The simplification of social conditions is simplifying the possibilities for self-identification and is therefore a basic cause for the bust and boom cycle of the movement. Whoever ignores the problems and contradictions within specific liberation movements can only turn away piqued when these contradictions come to the fore after the liberation. The initial virgin revolution has always turned in to a prostitute of realpolitik and power.

Those who do not know the difficulties of a revolution can not understand its mistakes.

Often the solidarity movement is not showing solidarity with a country, but rather with ones own projection. In most extreme cases it is a solidarity, which is based on a fiction that quickly crumbles when revealed as a fiction. The history of the Third World movement is rich of such cases - taking the blind devotion of the Vietcong by student movement or the out of touch with reality hope in the Chilean left after the coup d'etat, or the hoped for construction of a conflict free socialist society in civil war ridden Nicaragua.

Solidarity work is not the same as internationalism.

Many solidarity groups only see "their" project, "their" country, "their" field of problems, regardless of whether it is the question of financial support campaigns or which representative of which liberation movement is allowed to speak at a demonstration. Often the overarching political structures are not taken into consideration. This form of solidarity then becomes apolitical and parochial, fitting the narrow image of that particular Third World group. This kind of solidarity also serves merely the assertion of specific groups' interest and by extension its members' independence rather than showing solidarity with the actual object.

Military conflicts are overemphasised.

From the comfort-chairs of Berlin, Freiburg or Cologne the demand for a intensification of military conflicts elsewhere is done easily. The glorification of violence had its climax in the Vietnam movement, where military victories were partly celebrated like "soccer victory". One consequence was the blind copying of Latin American urban guerilla strategies by the RAF (Red Army Faction) as well as the unbroken support of some K-Groups for the violent Pol Pot regime in Cambodia. But often it is the same groups that one the one hand applaud the military side of liberation wars, but who on the other also immediately turn away disappointedly when after the the liberation the previously developed hierarchical military structures are not dissolving right away. That was the case if Algeria, Vietnam, Cuba and Nicaragua alike. And that might be the same in El Salvador and South Africa.

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The opposite of idealisation and blindness is often intervention and paternalism.

Many turn away from those they showed solidarity with if ones own ideals are not met or even when the conditions, demanded from this side, are not taken into consideration "over there". Even though the recipes for revolution at home are lost, many claim to know to still know recipes for revolution for other countries on different continents. part of such an attitude is the integration of ones solidarity objects into our ideological corset, may that be Moscow or Peking orientated, autonomous, independent or Christian leaning.

The purity of the doctrine is easier obtained afar than at home.

Some think the XXX, that so often have proven to be useless in the political context at home, can be implemented in the Third World. In the end the preferred engaging with changes in the Third World leads to a denial of people's own contradictions and mistakes, in short their humanity. Because why on earth is socialism supposedly easier implemented in bombed, defoliated and poisoned jungle of Vietnam than in neatly areas such as Germany's Black Forest. Why should the "new people" rather come from year long war battles of blood and squalor and death of Salvadorian guerilla camps than Cologne's communes, which ahas comparably much more peace leisure and time and money to read books and think about socialist alternatives? And why should non-hierarchical, conflict free conditions supersede in a economically dependent, war destroyed country like Nicaragua on a national level, if such ideals are nowhere put in place in precisely such solidarity groups? Cause often they consist of just a handful of people that only meet and have to deal with each other every second week?



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The authors of thesis have also published the book Hoch die internationale Solidarität.

Zur Geschichte der Dritte-Welt-Bewegung in der Bundesrepublik“ (1986) English: "Praise, international solidarity! On the history of the Third World Movement in Germany" (1986)