

TRANSITIONAL PROGRAM FOR ANIMAL LIBERATION

A contribution to the discussion on strategy for the animal liberation movement as part of the revolutionary left

Alliance for Marxism and Animal Liberation



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Originally published in German: March 2023

English translation: March 2025

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This translation seeks to make our Transitional Program accessible to international comrades. Please note, however, that the original text partly references political developments specific to German-speaking countries and may not be directly applicable to other contexts. After discussions with international comrades, minor changes were made to the demand catalogue.

A remarkable process can be observed in the German-speaking animal rights and animal liberation movement of the recent past. Individual actors or alliances of the movement have repeatedly attempted to develop political demands for the contemporary struggle to liberate animals and to bring these to public attention. These demands are specific to the movement, as

they make the exploitation and domination of animals their foundation. Furthermore, they have mid- to long-term, strategic character and formulate concrete steps for reforms. Particularly noteworthy examples are the 40 demands of the »Bündnis für gesellschaftliche Tierbefreiung« (»Alliance of Societal Animal Liberation«, BGT), drafted on the occasion of the COVID-19 pandemic[1], and the six demands of the network »Gemeinsam gegen die Tierindustrie« (»Together Against the Animal Industry« (own translation), BGGT)[2].

The understandable considerations behind developing such catalogues of demands, which spring from the immediate practice of the movement, are manifold. They serve to intervene in specific political discourses, outline a possible path for change, and offer collective orientation to individual actors and ultimately the whole animal rights and animal liberation movement. They enhance the visibility of the goals and the movement as a collective political actor in the public. Moreover, not only can internal debates be informed by these demands, but newly politicized activists, other movements, as well as the interested and sympathetic public can also rely on them for guidance.

Beyond this immediate usefulness for political praxis, in the current historical and social constellation there are at least three more good reasons for developing a

program for the movement: an ideational, a strategic and an organizational one. First, in concrete class struggles, a program can serve to anchor the objectively necessary aim of political praxis among wage labourers and political activists: the revolutionary liberation from capitalist exploitation and bourgeois rule. Second, such a program can make it possible to mediate between the struggles for reform and revolution, that is, to recognize the former as an instrument that is in itself insufficient in the struggle for the latter, without, however, having to forego fights aiming for reforms. Third and finally, a program can lead the path towards an overarching and medium-term revolutionary organizational process that equally exceeds the narrow borders of both, the politics of individual movements and subcultures as well as of »red« identity politics and small parties. A movement's program therefore is directed at the subject of class struggle from below, that is: the wage-earning masses, the already organized activists of the animal rights and animal liberation movement, and the revolutionary-socialist forces. Its purpose is to advance class struggle, taking the current objective and subjective conditions for a revolutionary rupture into consideration.

Not all demands or programs automatically live up to such standards. All demands are not the same. A view into history shows how the postulates of the animal welfare, animal rights and animal liberation movements

have differed considerably. They certainly all reject the current practices of the animal industries in the main. However, this common ground does not level the differences in how the movement's actors confront meat capital and its political representatives. They have each pursued different agendas, tactics, and aims.

Analogous to other social movements, at least three different currents can be identified: a liberal, a radical reformist and a revolutionary-socialist one. The liberal one outright backs the modernization of the bourgeois society in the field of animal politics—through vegan consumption, through changes in the individual consciousness and ethics, as well as through cooperation with (animal exploiting) companies and state apparatuses. The radical reformist section of the animal movements pursues a cultural-revolutionary program. It attempts to eliminate the dominion over animals through social movements and pre-figurative action—that is, by pursuing conflicts with the animal exploiters and formulating demands aimed at both the state and society, while at the same time living the better vegan life in the here and now. The revolutionary-socialist current, by contrast, aims to overcome the bourgeois property relations (including ownership of animals) and its corresponding bourgeois rule—through the struggle of the working class, which also includes marginalized groups and politicized individuals, against capital and state.

The negatively determined unity of animal movements in relation to animal exploitation hence turns out to be porous once one determines positively who exactly fights, how the fight is envisioned, and for what exactly it is waged. These differences also show in the concrete propositions in the programs of the BGT and the BGGT.

A Radical Reformist Roadmap

The six demands formulated by the BGGT unquestionably represent the most advanced draft of demands from Germany's movement. They contain several ideas that animal rights and animal liberation organizations should embrace: for example, that »good alternatives« need to be created for employees in animal husbandry and abattoirs or that advertising campaigns for animal products have to be discontinued. Of course, one should also support the demand that »no further expansion and new construction of livestock farms takes place«.

The demands each differ significantly in how far they reach and in how easily and at what point in time they can be realized. On the one hand, each of the six main demands includes a bundle of additional, sometimes highly detailed, demands that are supposed to be realisable »realistically and soon«. On the other hand, the

BGGT demands the socialization of large companies and their conversion into plant processing facilities under workers' control. This latter demand might not be the last step towards a liberated society. However, the transformation of Tönnies, Vion or PHW—the three leading meat producers in Germany—into social ownership is surely not accomplished »realistically and soon«.

Hence, there is a tension between demands that are viable and feasible in the short term and those that can only be realised in the long term. Yet this tension does not determine the political orientation of the catalogue of demands. The demand for social property rather is the exception that proves the rule. Its scope and characteristic are not representative of the six core demands. It merely features as a subordinate point of »good alternatives for employees«.

Although the majority of the sextet is quite ambitious, it is ultimately orientated towards realpolitik. This is especially the case for the central demand of a socially just way to »decrease the present [animal] stock by at least 80 percent until 2030«, which in its form appears to be inspired by the German climate and anti-coal movements. As specified in the explanatory Outro, the demands are designed to be »an *entrance point* [our emphasis] to a socially just and ecological agrarian

and dietary transition«. This transition is supposed to be »part of a comprehensive systemic transformation towards a solidarity-based, ecological mode of production and organization« which »does not take place at the expense of other sentient individuals and is not profit-orientated«.

In other words: The demand for a change of the current »system« (which is not further specified, for example as »capitalism«) is stated, if only vaguely (»change« instead of »revolution«). However, in the programmatic part of the catalogue of demands, which serves to intervene into today's social struggles, the BGGT renounces to name explicit goals, such as the liberation of animals or socialism. Neither do the six demands outline the potential means of a revolution, like the expropriation of animal capital that needs to precede any »transfer into social ownership«, or the role of political power.

Nevertheless, against the background of the socio-economic relations of exploitation and domination as well as the current political balance of forces in western capitalist centres, the demands of the Alliance are of course »radical«. Not, however, because they address the root causes. Rather, radical reformism distinguishes itself by pushing through the most progressive reforms allowed for within the current political-economic situation in the sense of a struggle for hegemony as a preliminary

stage for »system change«. Radical are the reforms in relation to the political status quo and to what appears to be still legitimate and negotiable from the left within this status quo—not, however, in relation to the causes of capitalist exploitation and domination. It is radical hence not in the sense of what is necessary, but in view of what appears politically possible at present. For that reason, the »system change« can as an objective not be found in the means. Reforms and »system change« are not mediated with each other.

This critique means in no way that all reformist demands should be abandoned. But they need to be embedded in a strategy and program of revolutionary Realpolitik. For example, calling for an end to state funding of advertising campaigns for meat as well as to subsidies for the export of meat products is appropriate. Yet in themselves, these propositions are no indicators of a program for the liberation of workers, nature, and animals. They can also be easily integrated into an eco-modernist or eco-Keynesian project.

The collection of reform ideas and their radical-reformist character correspond with the political-strategic design of the BGGT catalogue of demands. It is laid out as a kind of roadmap for social movements to negotiate singular changes in the political economic structure via conflicts with the government and specific sectors

of the economy («sustainable» instead of fossil energy production, vegan groceries instead of animal products). Its strategic form, however, hardly creates opportunities to connect as a broader revolutionary movement and organization, nor for a comprehensive program that could give expression to the goal of overcoming capitalist society—extending beyond individual movements. Furthermore, it does not appear to explicitly address a specific social subject which has the potential to be the bearer of a revolutionary break with the relations of exploitation and domination in bourgeois society (such as Marcuse’s «marginalized groups plus intellectuals» or indeed Marx’s «proletariat»). From a generalized perspective of humanity, the program rather appeals to both society and the organized political forces of civil society and the state to implement changes in specific political areas (agriculture and nutrition), while abstracting from class antagonism.

This radical-reformist strategy (which could be described theoretically as «strategy of extended Statism») usually goes hand in hand with a political focus on self-improvement and subcultural projects («prefigurative» politics) as well as on one (or more) oppressed group(s) determined by the logic of identity politics (animals, women, migrants, etc.). In social movements, this strategy is the equivalent to «trade unionism» (social change by way of reforms of labour and wage relations

negotiated at the hands of unions) and to the fixation on the (welfare) state by classical left-wing social democratic forces. In the past, intersectional strategies—just like traditional social democratic party and union politics—have contributed to the progressive modernization of bourgeois society. Yet at the same time, precisely through such modernization, they have integrated subaltern factions of the exploited and suppressed.

Caught Between Two Stools—From Party to »Ten-Point Program«

The criticism of BGGT's six demands is not to be misinterpreted as an outright rejection of the tool of programmatic demands for movements though. The usefulness of this tool has already been outlined above. However, to assess its purpose and limits, a comparison with other formats in history proves instructive. Let us therefore look at the intersections and differences of the catalogues of the BGT and BGGT with the customary forms up until today.

The (party) program has been the classical format of the last 150 years or so for laying down political guidelines for revolutionary movements. It usually sets out the principles of a socialist or communist organiza-

tion, analyses the main characteristics of a historically specific developmental epoch of capitalist society, and determines the tasks of the organization. Through mediation of these three aspects, it identifies the aims and means, the strategies, and the revolutionary subject and it deduces the demands for next steps in the contemporary phase of class struggle. An example is the founding program of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) from 1918/19.[3]

The initiatives by BGGT and BGT correspond closest with the part of proposing next steps, that is, demands for everyday politics formulated in party programs—although parties usually do not restrict such demands to a single political field. However, there are also explicit as well as implicit considerations in the demands by BGGT that relate to the other characteristics of a (party) program. In case of the 40 »Demands of the Alliance of Societal Animal Liberation on the Occasion of the Coronavirus Pandemic«, the interpretation of the historical and social development obviously proves particularly relevant as a foundation for their demands. Even if the BGT does not thoroughly investigate the historical and socio-ecological conditions (»the Coronavirus pandemic«)—note that it does reference texts framing its demands[4]—the Alliance’s demands unambiguously represent a direct intervention in a new socio-historical constellation.

Likewise, the documents launched by BGGT and BGT exceed both mission statements commonly launched by political actors of the western movement-political left and campaign objectives. A mission statement is usually restricted to demonstrating succinctly who its actor is, how it is organized and what general aims it pursues. Such statements are a kind of lowest common denominator of autonomous groups within the extra-parliamentary opposition or of partners in an alliance, and as such, they are rather a phenomenon of the new, project-orientated left. Campaigns, in turn, are mostly restricted to pragmatic, individual realpolitik-demands. Typical examples are the release of a political prisoner (»Free Mumia Abul-Jamal!«[5]) or, in the case of the animal rights and animal liberation movement, the demand on fashion companies to stop the sale of fur[6].

Thus, the two initiatives from the animal rights and animal liberation movement neither fully resemble a (party) program nor can they simply be compared to a mission statement or a campaign. Yet, as generally intelligible programmatic demands of a social movement, similarities with prominent historical precursors nevertheless exist. For example, shortly before the start of the attempted revolution in 1848, Marx, Engels, and four of their comrades formulated a leaflet for the Communist League, which listed seventeen »Demands of the Communist Party in Germany«[7]. However, these were first politically

and theoretically framed by the previously published »Manifesto of the Communist Party«.[8] There was hence no doubt about who were the social actors calling out the demands and what the means and aims were for their achievement. Second, the suggestions were not directed at a social group defined by the logic of a particular identity, such as »the animals«, or at a particular section of society. Third, the nationalization of nearly all key industries as a prerequisite for their democratic administration, along with the democratization of the state, formed the core and connecting elements of the League's program.

The perhaps strongest short program that almost exclusively consists of demands by a political organization that pursues the interests of a particular social group stems from the New Left's heyday in the west. The so called »Ten-Point Program« of the Black Panther Party from 1966[9] presents ten demands, which at first sight appear to be geared towards the everyday and pragmatic, such as »decent housing«. Nevertheless, the first two demands (»1. We Want Freedom. We Want Power to Determine the Destiny of Our Black Community. We believe that Black people will not be free until we are able to determine our destiny. 2. We Want Full Employment for Our People«) and their corresponding, short clarifications connect these concerns relatively openly with socialist aims. Besides »freedom« and the right for self-determination for black people (note: not »involvement«, »participation«, »code-

termination«, or »partaking«), number two declares: »if the White American businessmen will not give full employment, then the means of production should be taken from the businessmen and placed in the community so that the people of the community can organize and employ all of its people and give a high standard of living. « Here, the mediation of revolution and reform is achieved plain and simple. At the same time, the demand provides a starting point for connecting the Black struggle for liberation with the social struggle for the liberation of the working class.

In light of these historical predecessors and the demarcation from other formats, it hence is far from outright wrong to compile programmatic demands. What matters is how these demands are configured and framed politically and theoretically, and what goals they aim to achieve. Moreover, it must be clear why a compilation of next tasks in this form is needed today.

A Bridge Between the Is and the Ought

An argument from the essay »The Death Agony of Capitalism and the Tasks of the Fourth International«[10] by Russian revolutionary Lev Davidovich Bronstein, better known as Leon Trotsky, can help to answer these questions. In his essay, Trotsky attempted

to determine what needed to be done at the time of publication in 1938. It was written under the impression of the authoritarian-shaped Soviet democracy and the opportunism of social democracy in western countries, as well as of the crisis of the capitalist model, which—for him already predictable—eventually led to the Second World War.

To look ahead, he turned backwards to classical social democracy and its mistakes. He identified as an essential problem that in the social democratic movement a »minimum program« and a »maximum program« stood next to each other unmediated. The former »limited itself to reforms within the framework of bourgeois society«, the latter »promised substitution of socialism for capitalism in the indefinite future«. »No bridge existed« between the two.

Rosa Luxemburg issued a similar critique in her speech »Our Program and the Political Situation«[11] at the founding convention of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD; 30 December 1918 – 1 January 1919). She diagnosed that in the Erfurt Program of 1891, which was formative for the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD) at the beginning of the First World War, »the so-called immediate minimal aims were placed in the forefront, while socialism was no more than a distant guiding star, the ultimate goal«.

To solve this problem, the communist revolutionary responded with her strategy of »revolutionary Realpolitik«, which she had introduced already in 1903, in her article »Marxist Theory and the Proletariat« for the social democratic newspaper Vorwärts.[13] »Proletarian class-politics« ought not to be orientated at what »is real from the standpoint of material daily politics«, but needs to follow what »is real from the standpoint of the historical tendency of development«. What still seems slightly historico-philosophical here actually indicates that reforms have to be orientated towards the implementation of socialism. »[P]roletarian Realpolitik is ... revolutionary in that it goes in all the parts of its endeavours beyond the bounds of the existing order in which it operates, by consciously regarding itself only as the preliminary stage of the act that turns proletarian Realpolitik into the politics of the ruling, revolutionary proletariat.« In other words, the enforcement of reforms must serve the class struggle for the socialist revolution and must not stifle it or contribute to the integration of the working class.

The matter was quite clear for Luxemburg and the KPD in 1918/19. Owing to the opening window of opportunity for a socialist revolution after the First World War, they could simply adopt the program of the »Communist Manifesto« by and large. Luxemburg therefore concluded: »For us there is no minimal and no maximal

program; socialism is one and the same thing: this is the minimum we have to realize today«. [14] Trotsky, by contrast, drew a distinctly different conclusion in 1938 under the impression of a later historical and social constellation. He issued the goal »to help the masses in the process of the daily struggle to find the bridge between present demand and the socialist program of the revolution«. [15]

Trotsky argued that although the objective economic conditions would have made the revolution tangible in 1938—the productive forces were advanced enough; the capitalist system was in crisis—the subjective conditions did not. It was especially »the historic crisis in the leadership of the proletariat« that prevented socialism. In other words, the opportunistic social democratic leadership and the central committees of the communist parties were the obstacles that needed to be overcome on the path to socialism. One does not have to agree with this specific argument for building bridges between reform and revolution, of course. In fact, Trotsky's analysis is one-sided and overemphasizes the »leadership problem« in the labour movement.

Nevertheless, his general ideas remain applicable to the way in which class struggle in the current phase of capitalism can be fought in a revolutionary-realpolitical way through a collection of programmatic demands.

First, because the objective and subjective conditions for a revolution are currently not identical. Secondly, a constellation in which the subjective factor is underdeveloped in comparison to the objective situation requires a linking up of (necessary limited) everyday politics »under circumstances existing already, given and transmitted from the past«[16] with the revolutionary aim of socialism. At any rate, socialism is and remains the only possible progressive alternative to exploitation and domination under capitalism and to barbarism.

Trotsky concluded from his reflection in 1938 that the »the strategic task of the next period (...) of agitation, propaganda and organization« was to overcome the contradiction between so-called objective maturity and subjective immaturity. This then would also be the purpose of so-called »transitional demands« or of a, as he calls it, »transitional program«[17] respectively, which he explicates in his article.

To put it differently, a catalogue of demands in the manner of a transitional program is a tool to politically, theoretically, and culturally form the revolutionary subject under business as usual-conditions of a non-revolutionary phase of capitalist development. It serves to mobilize the working class for and in current class struggles, convince all its factions of the necessity and feasibility of a socialist revolution, organize the exploited in a stra-

tegic project (or multiple, for the time being) that works towards the realization of socialism, and establish the political-theoretical class consciousness necessary for its realization. A transitional program hence is a means for self-development and -organization of the working class in theory and practice, a bridge between its *is* and its *ought*. Yet as such it is not a substitute for the socialist program or for the revolutionary goal.

Political-Economic Conditions of Revolutionary Politics Today—a Summary

The historical and social conditions under which revolutionary politics and organization have to be realised today differ significantly from those during Trotsky's times, even if there are continuities in the basic political-economic relations and underlying structures and we experience one of the historically gravest crises of capitalism. Here is not the place for a thorough analysis of the current period of bourgeois society. It is obvious though that the objective and subjective conditions for a socialist transformation of society remain separated by a deep chasm.

Capital has subdued the earth, both literally and figuratively, and created a world in its own image. The fully

internationalized and intensified exploitation of the working class, which is historically unprecedented in its extent, forms the basis of this image. The »normal« exploitation of workers (even of the highly qualified and specialized ones), is coupled with the super-exploitation of large parts of the proletariat in the periphery and of factions in the imperialist centres, as well as with the particular exploitation of nature and animals worldwide at a previously equally unprecedented scale. In addition, the contemporary capitalist economy distinguishes itself by interlinking capitalist production in the classical economy (agriculture, industry, service sector) and in the spheres of culture, leisure and social reproduction, since the latter have successively been opened up for accumulation from the middle of the 20th century onwards. Furthermore, capital profits to a large extent from non-commodified labour outside of capitalist production and circulation. Class society has increasingly become polarized again, even in the imperialist centres. In the periphery the antagonisms have always been more clearly noticeable.

The development of the productive forces under these conditions is not regressive per se. Today, more than in Trotsky's lifetime, these forces could allow for a planned economy, the provisioning of all people and a reconciled relation with nature and animals. But the productive forces have been developed to a large de-

gree as destructive forces, as not only climate change makes apparent. Since 2007, the capitalist society has been once again in a structural crisis. This is at heart an economic crisis, which at the same time affects a range of relationships that capital maintains, such as to nature and to animals. Ultimately, the hunt for profits and international competition has lead capitalists and states not just to a political and economic scramble for raw materials, markets, and workers as well as spheres of influence, but increasingly also to military confrontations and imperialist wars.

In the West, the subjective conditions have developed in reverse proportional relation to the rule of capital and the expansion of bourgeois conditions of exploitation. Regardless of how one appraises actually existing socialism, its collapse has, if not started, at least significantly accelerated a process of disintegration and decline of the left. The results of this decline are the disintegration and marginalization of revolutionary organization and a decline of true class consciousness among the masses, who, again today, impoverish and are increasingly subjected to daily struggle to survive, also in the imperialist centres. The remaining Marxist-Leninist, Maoist, or Trotskyist parties and extra-parliamentary splinter groups that share programmatic affinities have little—and still waning—social influence in the wider population.

Left social democracy is equally hopeless. In Germany, it is split into two camps. One pursues the reconstitution of the national and social welfare state via party and union politics (classic Keynesian economics plus cultural conservatism) and wants to return to the Fordist regulation of capitalism. The other focuses on politically pressuring the extended state through engaging in movements and parties (left-liberal radicalism plus cultural revolution). It aims for a kind of fully-developed, liberalized, and participatory social state (»infrastructural socialism«). However, beyond all papers, proclamations, and ostentatious closeness to movements, the praxis shows that the left wing of social democracy fulfils the latter's historical role. It supports cutbacks, spending cuts, privatization, layoffs, environmental destruction, deportations, and wars and presents them to the people as natural necessity. This is the case in German state governments under left participation. In case of doubt, the left wing in the USA or in Greece likewise have placed governmental responsibilities and jobs above their political integrity. At the same time, left-social-democratic formations have led to the integration of factions of opposition forces. In other places, such as the UK, the project of social democracy's rejuvenation from the left already failed miserably within the party, even before it had to prove itself in government.

Those who enforce the class war from above, including the ideological apparatuses of the bourgeois state—the

media, institutions of higher education, schools, churches etc.—have done everything they could to bring the small successes of socialist movements and states into disrepute. At the same time, one also has to recognize that the crimes committed under actually existing socialism, its failing, as well as social democratic opportunism have albeit not eliminated yet discredited the belief in a socialist and communist alternative, and the struggle for it and its corresponding ideas, among wage-labouring masses and marginalized people.

The large social movements of the recent past have not served to improve this overall picture in any meaningful way. It is true that they have brought the destruction of nature into the centre of political disputes in state and civil society as they are visible in the media. Even the question of animals is publicly raised for the first time in history, mostly as a part of the struggle against the climate crisis. However, judging by the class positions of their cadres, their programs, politics, and aims, these movements are, for now and in their majority, left-liberal modernizing movements with an at best ambivalent relation to the working class and socialism.

Finally, the decline of the left is accompanied and accentuated by the renewed rise of fascism as a movement in both the periphery and the centres. Within the intensifying class conflicts in the current crisis of the capita-

list social formation, fascism embodies simultaneously the pre-emptive counterrevolution and a latent option for a different form of bourgeois domination. In other words, fascism serves to neutralize left demands, to push through reactionary economic and political measures, and, if it comes to it, to safeguard as ally capital's profits and the power of the ruling class in society through transition to a fascist form of power. Such alliances between fascism and capital have already been and continue to be pursued in some European states and the USA, as well as in imperialist conflicts, as the alliance of western-capitalist centres with fascist forces in Ukraine shows.

Unlike to Trotsky, today, the potential revolutionary subject does not resemble a swaying headless body. It is also not a plethora of unconnected local groups which form the basis of a potential revolutionary party and which swim like fish in water of battle-ready masses, as Vladimir Iljich Uljanov, called Lenin, outlined in »What Is To Be Done?«[18]. Likewise difficult—to put it benevolently—is it currently to find this revolutionary subject in a mass of workers that, in Luxembourge's sense, spontaneously grows out of everyday struggles and that takes action independently, learns from its struggles, voluntarily pursues self-discipline, and determines a leadership from its own ranks.[19]

Rather, the revolutionary-socialist left—at least in Germany and Switzerland—exists in civil society at best as an unevenly distributed and loosely connected network of circles, small groups, intellectuals, and individual activists. Occasionally it features as organized, yet for the most part rather uninfluential minorities in extra-parliamentary movements and projects as well as in parties that are either represented in parliament or irrelevant in terms of electoral politics. Thus, the revolutionary-socialist left, if very unevenly, presents across the whole spectrum of left-green social democracy all the way to the Marxist-Leninism of actually existing socialist character. At most, it shows sporadic contact to the revolutionary subject.

Three Arguments for a Transitional Program of the Animal Liberation Movement

What purpose would it then serve to compose a program of any kind under the current conditions? And even more so for the possibly smallest of the post-1968 social movements, the animal rights and liberation movement?

Firstly, one has to recognize that under the immediately encountered circumstances as they are given and transmitted from the past, the drafting of a party pro-

gram would ignore the developmental level of the subjective factors. Currently, the forces that could support such a program and redeem its expectations in reality do not exist. Furthermore, the cooperation, coordination, discussion, or organization of the revolutionary camp does not meet the requirements of a socialist party process even remotely.

Mission statements or demands from campaigns, by contrast, are politically too restricted, for pragmatic reasons too narrowly composed, and orientated towards specific, immediately practical purposes. They cannot provide the foundation for developing a strategy for the struggle of the subaltern classes or even just for a socialist current in a social movement.

In contrast to these means of political struggle, a transitional program that responds to the specific historical and social constellation can work today for developing revolutionary politics against the class adversary, within the proletariat and for the organized left. A transitional program can indeed build a bridge between the objective situation and non-revolutionary, subjective conditions, if revolutionary socialists deploy it for the formation of the revolutionary subject. It is also a means to realize Luxemburg's strategic suggestion of a revolutionary Realpolitik in an area of concrete class struggles and to mediate reform plans with revolutio-

nary aims. In the manner of the Black Panther Party's »ten-point-program«, finally, socialists can use a transitional program to build or grow, respectively, a socialist current within a social movement that seizes on its concrete concerns, as well as to create connections for actual collaboration and discussion of socialist forces across movements and organizations.

In other words, within concrete class struggles a transitional program can serve to first of all embed the objectively necessary aim of political action in the consciousness of wage labourers and political activists: the liberation from capitalist exploitation and from the rule of capital in all their manifold forms by way of a revolutionary break as precondition for the construction of a society in which humans, animals, and nature can live and prosper peacefully with each other. The task is hence to not be rendered dumb by the generally prevailing powerlessness and the innumerable varieties of capitalist realism[20], to illuminate a concrete perspective for a solution of social, ecological, and other problems, and to develop class consciousness through the catalogue of demands, instead of selling palliative care as cure. This is the political-ideational argument for a transitional program.

Secondly, the program needs to combine the revolutionary aim with today's political praxis in its limited

reach and to show the possibility to move away from processes of modernization and integration. The program's demands concretize the aim in line with everyday politics and tailor it to the political controversies as they occur under today's socio-economic, political, and cultural-ideational conditions of class struggle. Thus, the demands allow to press for improvements for animals, workers, and nature within current and each specific class struggles and to reactivate demobilized parts of the proletariat for class struggle. At the same time, the demands also highlight how these reformist advancements serve to improve the position for the proletariat's struggle and how they cannot be separated from the overall process of revolutionary liberation. Just like wage increases and good working conditions, a vegan lifestyle and production can either serve the modernization of capitalism or approaches for its abolition—depending on who establishes these changes, how, and with what aims. Thus, on the basis of a transitional program, one struggles not just for everyday improvements but uses the latter to work towards a break with the rule of capital and the construction of a different society. On this basis, current struggles around modernization can be transformed into class struggles, while actually existing social movements can become refined politically and theoretically. This is the political-strategic argument for a transitional program.

Thirdly, the program is the foundation for collective organization in one specific field of class struggle with the perspective of a revolutionary unification that traverses individual parties, groups, or movements. Indeed, considering both historical mistakes and the currently prevailing fetishism for movements, neither in the medium nor in the long term is there an alternative to a revolutionary organization. On the one hand, actors involved in specific fields and particular class struggles (animal liberation, feminism, ecology, war and peace, and so forth) can pool their efforts on the basis of a transitional program, to build a recognizable socialist current within their respective social movements. On the other hand, circles, small groups, parties, and individual activists who are engaged in different fields can recognize a foundation for joint activities and a joint orientation. In other words, transitional programs of specific movements can merge into a socialist transitional program, because these programs are similarly orientated in terms of strategy, organisation, and content. This is the political-organizational argument for a transitional program.

To all intents and purposes, these three arguments are valid for all social movements of the post-1968 type. They thus do not only apply to the animal rights and animal liberation movement. Nonetheless, a socialist transitional program for the liberation of animals

provides specific advantages for this movement. First, the program is a politically and strategically justified weighting and systematization of existing demands (published or unpublished). Nothing of this kind has been produced before. It gives the animal rights and animal liberation movement a proper agenda that allows it to determine and measure its aims and demands in the struggle against animal capital as well as in its relation to other movements and official politics. Secondly, a transitional program is a tool to confront the growing attempts to trim down demands for animal liberation and animal rights in favour of a liberal project of animal-political and ecological modernization of capitalism—regardless, whether these attempts are owed to opportunism or weakness. One can also counteract with such a program the processes of integrative recognition that have already begun, to stave off an integration of subaltern and oppositional factions to the degree as it has taken place for example in the ecological movement. Thirdly, it would be the first socialist program of its kind and thus a first point of convergence, discussion, and departure for a socialist current in the animal rights and animal liberation movement, a resource for socialists not yet active in the movement, and a platform to collaborate with other socialist forces. All this is—in contradistinction to other social movements of the post-1968 type such as the feminist movement, where there have been repeated attempts

at establishing a proletarian feminist movement—unprecedented in the history of the animal rights and animal liberation movement.

The Design

A transitional program requires a specific design to meet the expectations laid out above. It should have a revolutionary-realpolitikal character, be tailored to the historically specific objective and subjective conditions of revolutionary politics, and set a standard for its successful implementation. All three elements mutually complement each other and are inseparable from one another.

Generally, the revolutionary-realpolitikal character of the program needs to emerge from its demands. The fact that the revolution is the objective cannot be concealed—it must become evident from the demands. The demands are written in this spirit and they transport it. Moreover, the demands must be tailored to require real concessions from the class adversaries and to weaken them. The class adversary must be forced to surrender territory when they adopt demands. At the same time, the program should contain individual ideas for reform that can be implemented. It therefore

has a double character to avoid the false alternatives of a principal orientation towards revolution instead of reform irrespective of the concrete social situation (revolutionism) on the one hand and towards reforms instead of revolution (reformism) on the other. Once some demands are realized, new, further reaching ones take their place. When the necessity ensues to react to new circumstances owing to successes, failures, or new emerging class struggles, demands can continually be added to the program. In other words, the design of the transitional program adjusts to capitalism's respective developmental period and the constellation of class struggles. The program hence has necessarily a process character to react flexibly to the economic, political, and cultural-ideological modernization of capitalism.

Secondly, the catalogue of demands must clearly state that the capitalist property and production relations are the main problem and the class that upholds them is the primary political enemy. This orientation results from the intention to hit the opponent at its strongest and simultaneously weakest point: the economic production and distribution of wealth. At the same time, the design must follow the structure of the social formation that is to be abolished—for the (international) production and distribution of (surplus)value only works within and with the help of the whole social edifice. This

means that the transitional program takes aim at the material »economic structure«[21] of society, but extends concurrently to the mode of distribution and consumption as well as to all »various« political-cultural »factors of the superstructure«[22], including individual subjectivities and identities. Thereby, all relations of exploitation and domination that rely on each other and are integrated are considered in so far as they serve the preservation of bourgeois society as totality.

Even if a transitional program for the liberation of animals is written from the perspective of the particularities of the animal liberation struggle against animal capital, it thirdly cannot be single-issue-minded. A catalogue of demands which does not address the concerns of workers and ecological contradictions corresponds neither with the current development of capitalist society and its relations of exploitation and domination nor with the problems and the composition of the subjective factors of the present. The programmatic demands must be a means to win over demobilized workers from all fields of class struggles to fight actively, to create topical and organizational connections between the remains of the socialist labour movement and the socialist currents in the new social movements, and to open up a perspective for a collective, overarching practice and organization.

Fourthly and finally, the measure for the success or failure of the transitional program is the improvement of objective and subjective conditions for class struggle and therefore the revolutionary break. The implementation of the transitional program and its individual demands must noticeably improve the working and living conditions of the exploited and repressed—humans, animals, and nature. This also means that its implementation must weaken the capitalist class economically, politically, or cultural-ideationally. One can only speak of real successes, if two conditions are fulfilled: first, the capitalist class must be forced to make real concessions in essential areas. Second, these concessions must go beyond partial adjustments that individual factions of the subaltern are granted in the spirit of divide and rule, in order to weaken opposition and to co-opt oppositional factions.

A transitional program is not a universal remedy for the ideational, political, cultural, and economic problems of the animal rights and animal liberation movement, and certainly not for those of the left more broadly. Especially, since Rosa Luxemburg rightly pointed out that »far more important ... than what is written in a program is the way in which that program is interpreted in action«[23], and that it is hence the praxis that determines the program's fate—for better or for worse.

However, as sketched so far, a transitional program can be a tool to initiate and advance processes of mobilization, reorganization, and discussion under current conditions of revolutionary praxis among the working class as well as in and between still existing parties, organizations, movements, and individuals. In this spirit, we conclude with a draft of a transitional program for the liberation of animals.

[X] Sources

All sources can be found online:

mutb.org/pages/tp-sources

12 Point Transitional Program for Animal Liberation

1.

Expropriation, nationalization, and conversion of animal industries into a rational, that is, democratically planned, sustainable, organic, and vegan production that is controlled by its producers. This process is to commence with the meat industry, the most profitable and, on a political-cultural level, most deeply rooted branch of animal exploitation, as well as the closure of those private institutions of animal exploitation that cannot be repurposed.

2.

The immediate abolition of all informal and precarious working conditions (no temporary contracts, no contract work, etc.), an immediate end to super-

exploitation of migrant workers and women in the meat industry (equal—need-based—wages for equal work; cancelling of migration policies tailored to the interests of the private sector; residence and living security for migrants, and rigorous prosecution of all forms of violence and discrimination) as well as a significant reduction in working hours (e.g., a 30-hours week) on full pay and the democratic control of the companies by the employees.

3.

The banning of all commercial in- and export of animals, such as for abattoirs, zoos, circuses, laboratories, private use and so on, as well as all exports of animal products, to reduce the reliance on and exploitation of the peripheries in the global capitalist system.

4.

Recognition and enforcement of the right to life and bodily as well as psychological integrity for animals.

5.

Political representation of animals' interests and needs in democratic decision-making processes through human representatives (who must act

based on the most recent scientific findings). Individual persons and animal rights organizations get the right to represent animals in court and sue on their behalf.

6.

Establishment of a compensation and financial fund from the profits of animal capitalists for:

6.1

the establishment of large, protected spaces in the manner of sanctuaries for animals who have been released from exploitation and oppression, with guaranteed provision of food, medication, and emergency care until their natural death, commencing with the spaces of former animal businesses;

6.2

the development of alternative workplaces, and (re-)educational programs for workers formerly employed in the animal industry;

6.3

the treatment of health-related problems that have resulted from (bodily as well as psychological) harm through working in the animal industry and the operations of the animal industry, such as for example resistances to anti-biotics, illnesses from zoonotic diseases, contaminated groundwater, etc.;

6.4

the restoration of natural cycles (which have been disturbed due to nitrate contamination of groundwater and soils, for example), and biodiversity both in the capitalist centres and in the global periphery in correspondence with the political-economic interests of local populations;

6.5

the return to a civilian life for imprisoned—and the compensation for convicted—animal rights and animal liberation activists.

7.

Immediate closure of state-owned/ public institutions like zoos, animal laboratories, animal military programs and the halt of all animal testing and state-owned/ public research programs for chemical, military, and similar purposes that experiment on animals.

8.

Termination of all financing, subsidies, tax relief, advertisement, sponsorship and guarantees for exports, etc. for animal capital, its political organizations, and associations.

9.

Financing, subsidies, tax relief—indeed, the employment of all forms of state support and ideational advancement—for:

9.1

the establishment of an organic vegan agriculture democratically administered by the direct producers, the development of vegan (substitute) products, and the creation of research, information, and workplace programs in this sector;

9.2

the creation of wild nature reserves, which can be used only for scientific research purposes and otherwise are to be exempt from human use to serve exploited animals and the revitalization of nature and its processes that are necessary for a sustainable economy (biodiversity, carbon sink, etc.) in the manner of Soviet *zapovedniks* (these were nature reserves established by the revolutionary government, accessible only to scientists, allowing nature and animals to develop undisturbed);

9.3

the restoration or repurposing of areas once used by the animal industry for the cultivation of organic vegan and other produce to the capacity of social-natural requirements and depending on the respec-

tive soil compositions, under the democratic control of workers over the land and agricultural production;

9.4

the promotion of animal-friendly academic research and teaching in the natural and social sciences, with development and implementation of alternatives to animal testing in the development of medication leading the way;

9.5

the organic vegan and democratically administered production of foods, as well as projects and initiatives related to this production in the global periphery, in order to advance the construction of progressive movements and to promote a self-sufficient food supply while reducing the dependency on the imperialist centres, especially in animal industries;

9.6

a vegan lifestyle (diet, clothing, etc.) within state-owned institutions (schools, universities, canteens, etc.) and for projects and initiatives respectively that educate the public on these matters;

9.7

supporting cultural-scientific efforts to understand the life-worlds and individuality of animals, the betterment of the coexistence of humans and animals,

and the cultural reflection of relationships between humans and animals in all art forms (literature, music, painting, architecture, video, etc.), including for the remembrance of their exploitation in the animal industry. In cases where conversions are not possible, such as in zoos, they can be restructured as memory spaces, museums, and/or studios.

10.

The backing of all international efforts to reduce or abolish the exploitation of animals, on condition that these efforts do not intensify the (super-)exploitation of workers and nature or worsen general living conditions. This implies support for people living in the peripheries who exit animal exploitation, and non-violent management systems for »invasive« species constraining organic and vegan agriculture. The latter are implemented at the expense of the centres.

11.

Release of and general amnesty for all imprisoned animal rights and animal liberation activists, who have been convicted for liberating animals or similar activities of civil disobedience.

12.

Ending of all persecution of the animal rights and animal liberation movement and its activists by the intelligence service, police and judiciary and the complete investigation and public transparency of their wrongdoings.

Based on which demands must we fight for the liberation of animals and the transformation of society today?

With this brochure, the Alliance for Marxism and Animal Liberation presents a transitional program as part of a socialist agenda. Drawing on, among others, the concept of revolutionary Realpolitik and historical examples from the communist movement, we outline what a bridge between politics in the here and now and the objective of a break with the contemporary relations of property and production can look like.

The Alliance for Marxism and Animal Liberation is an association of activists from the animal liberation movement and the communist left. You can contact us at: **mutb.org**