



During the cold season, the Cinema Against Austerity now takes place in Lecture Hall **Phil D** of the Philturm.

- Free of charge -

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On 15.11.2023, from 8 p.m. in **Lecture Hall D** of the Philosophenturm (Von-Melle-Park 6)

„Modern Times“

A film by Charlie Chaplin
(USA, 1936)

The neo-liberal policy of rampant capital favouritism has not made the world a more peaceful, socially just, democratically enlightened or friendlier place over the past decades. Nevertheless, or precisely because of this, a central tenet of this doctrine is repeated ever more mantra-like on all channels: if you only try hard enough, dutifully follow the rules and don't develop too many demands, you can make

"The demand to give up illusions about one's condition is the demand to give up a condition that needs illusions."
Karl Marx, "On the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right. Introduction", MEW vol. 1, 1844.

it to the top - or at least bring about a certain security and a little happiness in the private sphere. The criticism of this promise of advancement, which is very useful for the few profiteers of the current social order, is as old as capitalist society itself. However, it has rarely been expressed as artfully and forcefully as in the great film classic "Modern Times" by Charlie Chaplin.

Made in 1936 during the "New Deal" period, when massive public investment in education, culture, social security systems and infrastructure, large-scale redistribution programmes, strict regulation of monopoly corporations and state support for the unionised labour movement pulled US society out of a profound structural crisis (which is quite comparable to today's global one), the film reflects on the period of the Great Depression and thereby makes statements about the nature of exploitative society as a whole that are significant beyond time.

The viewer accompanies the Tramp - the slightly clumsy, maladjusted narrative figure embodying the human principle in Chaplin's silent films - on his way to supposed "happiness".

He first works in a steel mill where the idle boss drives the pace of monotonous assembly line activity in order to keep up with the competition. As an alienated appendage of a production machinery that punishes every human movement with extra work, the attempt at overbidding assiduity ultimately ends in madness and dismissal to the lunatic asylum. By chance caught at the head of a demonstration of striking workers, the tramp is ar-

rested and - due to good behaviour (under the influence of drugs) - has to look for new work. In the process, he meets a half-orphan from the slums around the harbour. From then on, they walk their bumpy paths together and fail again and again because of their illusions or the norms of an "up-

wardly mobile society" oriented towards numbing mass consumption, which seems to have no place

for actual kindness, productive sympathy, artistic inventiveness or even the human need for solidarity in creating pleasant living conditions. Even their greatest coup - an impromptu singing performance in an entertainment venue (a cinematic experience of a kind) - is thwarted by the merciless law enforcement agencies. So in the end, all that remains for the outcast humanitarians is to strive together for a new expanse beyond the horizon.

Through the cinematically brilliant, analytically clever and humoristically enlightening contrast of the permanent urge for human-productive development on the one hand and the dehumanising essence of a society standardised according to exploitation standards in all its facets on the other, this breadth can even be defined more closely than the film itself does.

Under the conditions of a society based on exploitation, competition and alienation, the decisively meaningful, overarching life activity consists in breaking these chains together. In this way, man becomes a friend to man, life becomes lighter, work becomes more enjoyable and culture becomes an intervening pleasure. There is a right life against the wrong.

The filmic work itself is impressive testimony to this.

We can learn from history for the present realisation of a humane future.

Therefore: Bread, peace, dignity - now! International solidarity: an end to austerity.

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