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Platypus: Declaration of Intent (Leaflet)

Historical Note

This leaflet was published by the [Platypus Nicosia](#) group in August 2018.

Content

Platypus: Declaration of Intent

Platypus is the project of self-criticism, self-formation and, ultimately, the practical reconstruction of a Marxist Left. At present, the Marxist Left appears as a historical ruin. The inherited wisdom of today dictates that past failed attempts towards emancipation are not moments filled with possibilities that can still be fulfilled, but rather represent “what was” - utopianism that was doomed to end in tragedy. As critical heirs of a shattered tradition, we struggle to show that -after the failure of the New Left of the 1960s, the disintegration of the welfare state and the destruction of the Soviet Union in the 1980s and 1990s- the current disorientation of the Left does not allow us to claim that we know the tasks and goals of social emancipation better than the “utopians” of the past.

Our task is criticism and education in order to reconstruct the Marxist Left. We argue that the ruin of the Marxist Left as it exists today belongs to a tradition whose defeat was largely due to self-inflicted injury. Thus, at present, the Marxist Left is historical and at such an advanced stage of decay that it has become too difficult to form coherent programmatic socio-political demands. In the face of a disastrous past and present, the first task for the reconstruction of a Marxist Left as an emancipatory force is to recognize the causes of the historical failure of Marxism and to clarify the necessity of a Marxist Left for the present and the future. - *If the Left is to change the world, it must first transform itself!*

The improbable - but not impossible - reconstruction of an emancipatory Left is an urgent task; we believe that the future of humanity depends on it. While the sweeping forces unleashed by modern society -capitalism- persist, the unfulfilled promise of social emancipation still calls for its redemption. Abandoning this promise, or obscuring the gravity of past defeats and failures by seeking “resistance” to the dynamics of modern society “from the outside”, means affirming its present and guarantees its future catastrophic reality. Platypus asks these questions: in what way does the thinking of critical theorists of modern society, such as Marx, Lukács, Benjamin and Adorno, relate to the struggle for social emancipation today? How can we understand the long history of the bankrupt politics of the Left that reaches up to the present -from the international Marxist Left of Lenin, Luxemburg and Trotsky, to today's sterility- without being horrified or discouraged by this history? How can the answers to such questions contribute to the urgent task of reconstructing the Left at its most basic levels of theory and practice? How can we contribute to an effective escape from the impasse in

which the Left has found itself? We hope to reinvigorate a debate on the Left that has long been stagnant or silenced, in order to help rediscover an emancipatory political practice that is currently absent. What was the Left and what more can be done? Platypus exists because the answer to that question, even its basic formulation, has long since ceased to be self-evident.

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