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They’ll Never Walk Alone

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Why do we still talk about Gastarbeiters, the men and women from the poor countries of Southern Europe and Northern Africa, who moved to the wealthy countries of Northern / Western Europe for work during the decades following the Second World War? Not only was the guest worker a short-lived figure of a relatively limited period of post-war economic recovery that already ended in 1973 with the oil crisis, but the general historical framework of this figure – however socially marginalized and politically invisible – still had a clearly defined position and function in its time. This has fallen apart in the meantime – along with the old world of industrial modernity. The Gastarbeiter was predominantly based on the Fordist mode of production, and it had its own historically specific forms of political subjectification from mass movements – ranging from revolutionary motivations with the goal of overthrowing the capitalist order altogether to those mobilizing around counter-revolutionary or fascist agendas – to the traditional bourgeois parties, well-embedded in the system of parliamentary democracy and the rule of law.

In geopolitical terms, this context began to develop as an order in the seventeenth century after the Peace Treaty of Westphalia: a network of sovereign nation-states that each encompassed their own national economy, relatively homogeneous and transparent society, an allegedly unique culture, history, and, in most cases, a

standardized national language. Each of these states consisted of similar political, economic, juridical, and educational institutions, including, in the most advanced of them, institutions of social welfare. Ultimately, the world of late industrial modernity was characterized by its own historically particular forms of political and economic migration – the figure of the "guest worker" being among them as a rather prominent one – at least for a while in post-World War II Europe. This world has disappeared, however, and with it the Gastarbeiter.

John Berger describes this transformation in a book on migrant workers in Europe he co-authored with photographer Jean Mohr in 1975. In the preface to the new edition, published thirty-five years later, he explicitly addresses the change that has turned migration into an essentially global phenomenon:

> The world political structure has been transformed as a result of the collapse of the Soviet Union and the establishment of the global economic order, known as neoliberalism – or, more accurately, economic fascism. The power of trade unions and the power of national governments have both been diminished. Factories now are becoming as migratory as workers. It has become as simple to build a factory where labour is cheap as to import cheap labour. The poor have become poorer. The present concentration of global economic power is unprecedented. Its agents are the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the World Trade Organisation.[1]

The contrast to the old world of industrial modernity cannot be more striking. In the structure of economic and power relations that characterize the order of global capitalism and shape its migratory processes, there is clearly no longer a place for the

Gastarbeiter. So, why then, are we insisting on remembering such a marginal and ephemeral figure of a bygone past today? There is one good reason for it it, which seems at first glance to have nothing to do with the past. Rather it is a phenomenon of the present that the general public as well as the political elites in Europe opportunistically call the "migrant crisis." Although the history of Europe, especially the more recent history following the collapse of the communist regimes in the "East," cannot be told without taking into consideration processes of migration, both to and within Europe, which have consistently intensified in recent decades, the European public needed the shock of the summer of 2015 – the sight of migrant masses pouring into Europe in a seemingly unstoppable flow, the pictures of actual men, women, and children in bare desperation as opposed to abstract numbers from statistical data – to become fully aware of its new reality of which migration has become an undeniable part.

It was only a matter of time then before the issue of migration fully manifested its political impact on present-day Europe. In the manner of a return of the repressed, which suddenly reveals all of the pathology of one's constant denial of reality, the migrants, now seen as a "problem" and the cause of a "crisis," suddenly reappeared at the very center of European politics, throwing its long-existing power relations and predictable decision-making into unprecedented turmoil. It suffices to briefly look around: the "problem" of migration has become the hottest topic of the current elections in EU democracies. It has not only challenged the forces of the European status quo – the countless times that democratically legitimized bourgeois parties, however politically weakened and ideologically emptied, still managed to guarantee the stability and relative prosperity of the old continent for decades – these traditional political forces, being ever more openly confronted

by growing right-wing and neo-fascist movements, are rapidly losing popular support today. Moreover, the very survival of the European Union is now at stake. Its final fate, as it is claimed, will be decided by migration, or more precisely, by the ability of the ruling political elites to urgently resolve what they call "the migrant crisis." Yet, behind the cheap populist formula of saving democracy by saving Europe from migrants, lurks the failure of a much larger dimension: the inability of the ruling elites to cope with the true crisis, the historical deadlock of neoliberal globalization, which is what is actually demolishing the European dream of democracy today.

It is within this much broader historical context that migration as a "crisis" and a "problem" has taken center stage in European democratic politics. At stake is a vague and profoundly anxious awareness of an epochal closure. The simple truisms of old politics, in which the general ideological strategy was directly translated into everyday political practice, facilitating decisions "with no alternative," no longer work today. Easiness and certainty of policy-making is now replaced with doubt and confusion. The whole ideological edifice of the old order now seems to be crumbling. Radical ideological and political turns that would have, until recently, been unthinkable take place before our eyes today: an open rejection of the "cult of selfish individualism," the disbelief "in untrammelled free markets," the call for regulation, which is "necessary for the proper ordering of any economy," the promise to "enhance worker's rights and protections" or the advocation for an "economy that works for everyone" are no longer claims and demands of a marginal left-wing critique of the neoliberal political mainstream, both conservative and social-democratic – we now find them in the 2017 Conservative election manifesto.[2] The Tories in the United Kingdom – the political force that claims the

historic turn to neoliberalism – is openly dropping ideological Thatcherism today, which it shared with Labour for decades. But do they know what to claim instead now? They do not. And this gives them no reason to panic as long as there is the so-called migrant "crisis" that they are now promising to manage. Crisis management has become the politics of the last resort for the failing ruling elites of today. It can reassure them of their historical legitimation and help them regain the popular support they have been rapidly losing since the begin of this century. As long as they no longer know where to lead their societies, they can still offer to protect them. Yet the move from mobilizing hope to inciting fear is a risky and dangerous one. It might end, like it once tragically did, in fascism, defined by some as the "crisis management of capitalism."

The experience of resistance, however, also learns its own historical lessons when the stakes become so high that politics should no longer be left to political elites. This especially applies to the real problem that shakes the foundation of western democracy today, which is not migration itself, but rather its ruthless politicization from above. That is, in regard to the ruling political elites that desperately struggle to safeguard their power, a politicization that the frightened liberal-democratic publics perceive as a populist mobilization of the masses. If there is, nevertheless, some strategy for their dealing with the "problem of migration," it relies on being presented as something temporary that, in the manner of a sudden shock, has struck Europe and the West from the outside. Whether intentional or not, this strategy achieves two major effects.

Firstly, it shifts the focus of public attention to the question of security, or more precisely, to the task of strengthening border control. While promising to stop the influx of migrants at the state borders, the political elites easily gain popular support for

increasing the use of legal violence in solving political problems. Their true intent is, however, not to prevent immigration, since European economies cannot survive without migrant labor. What they, in fact, achieve is rather a more efficient differential inclusion of the migrant labor force, whereby "more efficient" increasingly comes to simply mean more violent. There is, of course, nothing new in the perception that capitalism needs violence in order to survive its crises. The belief, however, that this violence can be relocated to and contained at the outer borders of society is what makes today's post-liberal condition extremely dangerous. It is only a matter of time until the barbed wire erected along the borders, which separate Europe and the so-called "West" from the "rest of the world," start to cut into the flesh of Western societies, tearing them apart into mutually hostile parts that will start to maul each other sooner or later.

The second effect of the elite's populist politicization of migration concerns the dehistoricization of the "problem." In presenting current mass movements of migrants as a sudden and temporary challenge for the otherwise normally functioning liberal-democratic order, this policy has huge ideological advantages. It suppresses awareness of immigration as a structural precondition of this very normality, creating the illusion of a pre-existing harmony in which capitalist societies lived before hundreds of thousands of migrants and refugees suddenly amassed at the borders of their nation-states. Only a "migration issue," which abruptly appears ex nihilo of the chaos, can now be presented as "the mother of all political problems," as one leading German politician recently claimed.[3]

A general dehistoricization of the "migrant issue" today has become the tacit ideological precondition for its populist politicization. This may sound like a paradox, but what has essentially facilitated

the implementation of this populist strategy was precisely the cultural depoliticization of history. Above all, it concerns the various forms of cultural memory, in what Pierre Nora calls "the age of commemoration," which have replaced history as a discipline of humanistic knowledge.[4] This shift from history to memory was accompanied by a new interest and respect for the past – real or imaginary – that was closely connected to a sense of belonging, collective memory, and identity. Nora even calls this new age, which he sees emerging in the wake of 1989, as an age of passionate, fetishistic memorialism, in which people have begun to frenetically stockpile everything they believe may eventually testify to what they are. It is within this conceptual and historical context that the past of migration in Europe has been remembered more then ever before. And so too were the Gastarbeiters raised from the dead by new and powerful memory culture, which brought them to museums and exhibition halls, to the pages and websites of cultural journals or into the discourses developed in academic conferences and intellectual panel discussions. Many aspects of their lives were discussed and shown, from the economic logic of their historical emergence and the social effects of their presence in the "host" countries to the spoons with which they ate their cheap stews or the shoes they wore and the letters they wrote to their loved ones in their home countries. However, what such memory-driven cultural formats and theoretical reflections have never managed to organize is a moment in which the reawakened figure of the Gastarbeiter could politically encounter the migrant of today in a simple meeting in the street. In other words, the cultural memory along with the discourses it generates can never make up for the historicization of the actual social reality that takes place in the act of political solidarity.

Those who cannot historicize the conditions in which they live will never be able to politicize them. However, such a historicization today cannot follow any single master narrative. It cannot bypass economic, political, and social affinities and differences between the old and new forms of migration, nor can it ignore cultural and linguistic aspects of such encounters between the past and present. In short, it must recognize and give voice to the genuine heterogeneity of any attempts at looking back into the past that are led by an emancipatory interest.

Certainly, this book alone will not be able to accomplish this task either. Yet what it can still do is to modestly remind us that any meaningful attempt at reawakening the memories of Gastarbeiters must follow the imperative to historicize the current experience of migration and its dangerous political appropriations. It, thus, aims to reveal a hidden genealogy of domination, exploitation, and manipulation as well as the struggle for justice and emancipation that underlies today's "migrant crises."

The following articles will thereby explore Gastarbeiters from different angles in order to show a multifaceted view of their relevance to both the past and present. The articles draw from the publications and events organized by the eipcp within the project They Were, Those People, a Kind of Solution. They are in both English and German, prioritizing the original language version of each given paper. All articles, with the exception of the last one – "They'll Never Walk Alone: A Discursive Experiment" – are available online in three languages: German, English, and a third language that represents the author's preference in terms of its most relevant audience (Slovenian, Serbian, Arabic, Georgian, Bosnian, Mandarin Chinese, Turkish, Croatian). The links to the other language versions are identified in the first footnote of each text. The book is also separated in three chapters that correspond

to some of our key focal points. These focal points also provided a framework for structuring the web-journals and conference panels in an attempt to develop all of the discursive elements as a kind of continual dialogue.

Seeing it as imperative to outline a complex history of the figure of the Gastarbeiter, whilst linking it to conditions of contemporary migration in order to find both common ground as well as differences, the first chapter approaches the task of mapping some of the transformations that have taken place in recent decades in the landscape of migration in Europe. This was primarily motivated by the interrogation of the question why talk about Gastarbeiters today? However, this chapter not only looks at the relevance of discussing Gastarbeiters today, it examines the problematic appropriations and instrumentalization of the Gastarbeiter as a historical figure in contemporary right-wing politics. Analyzing these issues and helping to draw a timeline from the time of the Gastarbeiter to the present-day, chapter one, "An Avant-Garde Figure or a Role Model? The Relevance of Gastarbeiters Today," consists of articles by Monika Mokre, who maps out the intersections and differences between Gastarbeiters, irregular migrants, and refugees; Manuela Bojadžijev, who maps out transformations in the treatment of migrants, their access to the labor market, and the farce of integration in Germany in recent decades; Jana Dolečki, who critically analyzes integration in Austria as well and how official Austrian policies have linked to recent cultural projects on Gastarbeiters, Serhat Karakayalı, who presents cases of migrant strikes in the Ford company and housing conflicts in Germany; and an interview between Davor Konjikušić and Sandro Mezzadra, which outlines recent transformations in the filtration structures of border and migration regimes in Europe.

In the second chapter, “Marginalized and Invisible Experiences – Women Gastarbeiters and Queer Flight,” it was important for us to break away from the all too common representation of the Gastarbeiter as a strong male industrial worker in order to make visible the marginalized positions within guest work, which were further marginalized by many recent representations of them. Even the German term Gastarbeiter is a male form. However, in an attempt to destabilize this term, the various differentiations between “labor migration,” “economic migration,” “guest work,” and “Gastarbeit” became clear. These differentiations are also a topic that is discussed in numerous articles throughout the book. However, in an attempt to inscribe an alternative history into the existing narrative, we carefully and critically use the term Gastarbeiter whilst emphasizing that this is a misconstructed misnomer. Although nearly a third of the guest work force was comprised of women – and many factories preferred woman as they were thought to have “smaller, more delicate hands” for assembly – and approximately half of today’s migrants are women, these stories have somehow remained largely forgotten for a number of reasons that are sometimes evident but often simply ignorant. The articles by Katja Kobolt and Margareta Kern outline a history of women’s work within the Gastarbeiter system. Furthermore, they link their own artistic historical research to contemporary cultural exhibition projects to show the importance of telling these invisible stories.

Moreover, if the topic of women workers, which constituted such a massive portion of guest workers, has been made so invisible, then it becomes clear that the challenge of addressing how other forms of marginalization or discrimination can have a voice and a place in such narratives is also imperative in order to not only challenge and unsettle stereotypes and historical imaginaries, but also to bridge these gaps and create new processes of mapping that traverse the

the time of the original Gastarbeiters and the complex forms of migration and their governance today. Therefore, in an attempt to reconstruct a mapping of queer experiences, Amir Hodžić outlines the legal restrictions and framework which would have pushed many queer individuals to hide their identities as guest workers, but which also could have provided new opportunities for individuals to leave their home countries in order to pursue different and more open lives. He, thus, expands these frameworks by focusing on the concrete migratory practices of queer people that took place during the Yugoslav Wars and the emergence of the European Union, and how individuals have had to adapt to these transformations and multiple levels of discrimination and marginalization in these different localities. Ana Hoffner's analysis, on the other hand, employs queer theory to question the roles of the "guest" and "host" in processes of labor-based migration in order to question potential forms of emancipation from a critical queer perspective.

The third chapter, "Rethinking 'Guests' and 'Workers' in Post-Fordist Forms of Labor Mobility," joins the histories and experiences of the first two chapters together for a closer focus on contemporary transformations in advanced capitalist economies. Keti Chukrov's article, which expands on the question of the relationship between the "guest" and "host" in labor migration, steers her critique to a critical analysis of cognitive capitalism and questions of emancipation in today's political landscape. Lina Dokuzović outlines transformations in the European landscape of a knowledge-based economy in order to show to these changes have influenced border and migration regimes today, ultimately drawing links between forms of labor filtration during the Gastarbeiter era and those taking place today, showing a growing segregation of forms of movement. Jon Solomon takes a deeper look at how

universities themselves are changing according to the imperatives of neoliberalism and how this links to questions of space and spatial divisions. Stefan Nowotny breaks down the terminology of "guest," "worker," and even "work" to critically examine the wage-labor relation as well as forms of dividing and labeling different forms of migrants today.

These various perspectives are an attempt to fill in critical gaps in narratives on guest work in order to address both the marginalized individuals who were excluded or had a marginal position in discussions on Gastarbeiters as well as more recent migrants that don't fit into Gastarbeiter storylines, but who are nevertheless being regulated by the appropriated and instrumentalized misrepresentations of their stories. Therefore, during the conference "They'll Never Walk Alone: Remembering Gastarbeiters in the Neoliberal Age," at Depot in Vienna from October 6–7th, 2017, we tried to bring people from different generations and experiences of migration together to share knowledges from their lived experiences, and to thus also break away from the classical academic conference format. This multilingual experiment brought several interesting points to light. This book, therefore, concludes with a transcription of that discussion and the hope that by making these narratives visible through connecting to them and trying to create a dialogue for questioning and challenging the reasons for these invisibilities and multiple marginalizations that we can understand the complex and manifold shifts that have developed in migration regimes in recent years.

They'll Never Walk Alone
The Life and Afterlife of Gastarbeiters
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[1] John Berger, Jean Mohr, A Seventh Man. A Book of Images and Words about the Experience of Migrant Workers in Europe, (London, New York: Verso, 2010), 7.

[2] Andy Beckett, "How Britain Fell out of Love with the Free Market," The Guardian, 4 Aug 2017. https://www.theguardian.com/news/2017/aug/04/how-britain-fell-out-of-love-with-the-free-market

[3] German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer in an interview for Rheinische Post, 6 Sept 2018. https://www.dw.com/en/migration-mother-of-all-political-problems-says-german-interior-minister-horst-seehofer/a-45378092

[4] Pierre Nora, "Reasons for the Current Upsurge in Memory," Eurozine, 19 Apr 2002, http://www.eurozine.com/articles/2002-04-19-nora-en.html