

*Proudhon,  
the 10 December Society  
and the Idle Debtors' Club*

*A Conchetto in Three Acts*

CANCELED

No · Notice · Notice

*Due to exceptional circumstances, the esteemed Mr. Choral Society  
has the honour of presenting the independent pavilion*

### **Le Réalisme**

*designed by the artist Alice Ohmeland [Landless Alice]  
within the framework of the Expo Show.*

*This pavilion will optimise the space  
in front of the Expo, offering a contrast to the tents,  
which she detests, of the aristocrats of fusion,  
the modernisers of humanity, the salary cutters,  
the lobbyists for genetic engineering, for atomic engineering,  
and the friends of the people.*

*The pavilion will house 42 paintings, including the renowned*

### **L'Atelier de la peintrice**

*which was already exhibited to great acclaim this winter.*

*Step right and see for yourselves, look until you can't take any more!*

Landless Alice, Berlin, Geneva, Paris

Dear Mr. *Choral Society*,

I have no intention of showing the pictures, not because they have nothing to contribute to the circumstances, but rather because they may be sold at any time. This is something that you should have thought of earlier. In the pavilion I will organise a performance by a travelling theatre company, the works of which still provoke fear and terror among the audience.

Yours sincerely,

*Proudhon,  
the 10 December Society  
and the Idle Debtors' Club*

*A Conpetto in Three Acts*

Proudhon (PIG) - Teresa Guardans  
Compère (ELEPHANT) - Ainhoa Grandes  
Secretary (OWL) - Konstanze Schmitt  
Home Secretary (DOG) - Sonia Abian  
Sovereign of the People (LION) - Sibila Estruch  
Lobbyists (BEAR and BADGER) - Alice Creischer and Minze Tummescheit

**UNIVERSAL**

J. HÖPPNER

W. SEIDEL-HÖPPNER

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*Von Babeuf  
bis Blanqui*

*Band I: Einführung*

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RECLAM

**BIBLIOTHEK**

**ACT 1: PROUDHON**

Paris, National Assembly

PIG, DOG, LION, ELEPHANT, OWL – *in the background*, BEAR and BADGER

*They all talk simultaneously and take no notice of each other.*

PIG (*at the lectern*): Between 1803 and 1831, the population of Lyons increased from 93,000 to 146,000 without a rise in the consumption of meat and wine. What we have here is not an industrial bourgeoisie and a factory proletariat. The entrepreneur is modern. He buys raw materials, has them processed in small workshops for an hourly wage and sells the finished products. He dominates the market, he has people in advertising agencies and labour courts and appoints the municipal authorities through donations to political parties.

DOG (*whispering to Lion*): You had a bad dream today. Something entered your home, immediately discovered all your valuables, your watch, your mobile phone, your wallet, and then jumped onto your bed and was about to grab you by the throat. You woke up bathed in sweat. You walked over to the window and looked down at the endless public spaces of the pavement and the insolence of the shadows slinking away from your gaze.

LION: Yes yes yes yes no no yes no no yes yes etc.

*Owl transcribes Lion's utterances in a list of dashes.*

ELEPHANT (*in the foreground*): June, Paris, four months after the latest disputes. At 10 a.m. the temperature in the room is already 27°C. Proudhon says that the critical situation that has led the workers to go on strike can be resolved by a fundamental correction of the principles governing property: that is, the neutralisation of private capital or a revolution of interest-free loans. Beads of sweat on the skin beneath the deputies' moustaches. As if spontaneously and without any agreement being reached, it is decided not to respond to the proposal, to simply disregard it, to erase it from the collective parliamentary memory and toss it away like a dirty, snow-covered shoe. They fan air into each other's faces.

*Behind the curtain, the lobbyists Bear and Badger walk to and fro. They start a duet:*

BEAR: In the façades, the assets reflect each other exclusively. You see that the glass surfaces could gaze at each other almost endlessly. Dresdner Bank sees Allianz, Allianz sees empty floors (but that doesn't matter), and even the small stores are immersed in each other due to all this gazing.

BADGER: And in between?

BEAR: There's nothing in between. The pavement, the kerb, the asphalt are hardly anything...

BADGER: ...more than a negotiation.

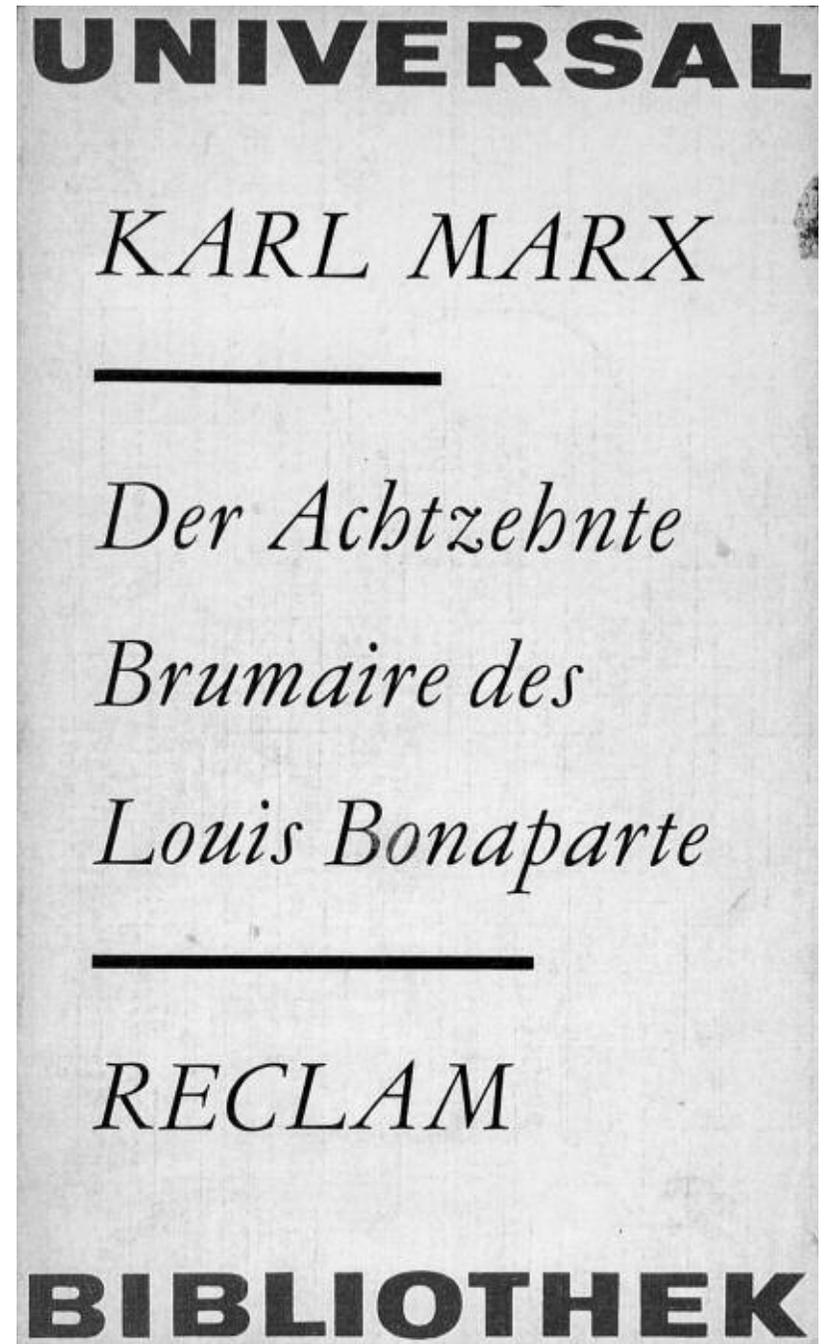
BEAR: ...or war. The lines in the city can ultimately be traced back to the first cases of enrichment.

BADGER: As if they had destroyed the centre. Violence...

BEAR: ...this showdown in which the first to draw his gun says that exploitation is possible! And the other accepts it.

BADGER: ...is the circumference of all things.

BEAR and BADGER (*together*): Violence is a horizon.



## ACT 2: THE 10 DECEMBER SOCIETY

### Scene 1

PIG, ELEPHANT

*Exhausted, Pig and Elephant have slumped into armchairs. But as they don't want their exhaustion to be noticed, they pretend just to be lazy. The other actors have left the stage.*

PIG: First period, from the 24th of February to the 25th of June 1848. Prologue. Illusions of universal brotherhood.

ELEPHANT: It is officially declared that the improvised government considers itself *provisional*. Nothing and nobody would dare claim for itself the right to truly exist and act.

PIG: It couldn't be any other way. The February meetings initially had as their goal an electoral reform that would abolish the exclusive rule of the financial aristocracy. But when the true conflict broke out, the people manned the barricades, the National Guard maintained a passive attitude, the army put up no serious resistance and the monarchy fled: the Republic appeared to be an undeniable reality.

ELEPHANT: In no other period do we find a more bizarre mixture of grandiloquent statements and ineptitude, of enthusiastic aspirations to innovation and the old routine, of more apparent harmony between all levels of society and more profound discord between its elements.

PIG: While people were revelling in the sight of the great perspective that had opened up before them and devoting themselves to serious discussions of social problems, the old forces of society had regrouped and reunited, and had reflected.

ELEPHANT: The National Assembly that met on the 4th of May had to cut back the results of the revolution to the bourgeois scale of values. The demands of the Parisian proletariat are Utopian nonsense that has to be silenced once and for all.

PIG: The Parisian proletariat responded to this declaration by the Constituent National Assembly with the *June uprising*. The bourgeois republic won. Standing

alongside it were the financial aristocracy, the industrial bourgeoisie, the middle class, the petty bourgeois, the army, the lumpenproletariat organised in the manner of a Mobile Guard, the intellectuals, the clergy and the rural population.

ELEPHANT: Standing alongside the Parisian proletariat was no-one other than itself.

PIG: The whole of Europe trembles before the June earthquake, while the successive defeats of the upper classes are achieved at such a low cost that only the blatant exaggeration of the winning side can pass them off as events.

ELEPHANT: The defeat of the June insurrectionists had prepared the ground on which the bourgeois republic could be erected.

PIG: More than 3,000 insurrectionists were massacred after the victory, and 15,000 were deported without trial. With this defeat, the proletariat retreated to the *back* of the revolutionary stage.

### Scene 2

PIG, ELEPHANT, BEAR, BADGER

*Bear and Badger appear on the stage and ignore Pig and Elephant. Absorbed in conversation, they walk back and forth gesticulating intensely.*

BEAR: The period from the 20th of December to the dissolution of the Constituent Assembly in May 1849 is the history of the twilight of the bourgeois republicans.

BADGER: In the 1848 revolution it's the other way round. The proletariat party constitutes an appendix of the petty-bourgeois-democratic party, which betrays it. The democratic party, for its part, stands on the shoulders of the bourgeois republicans. But as soon as the latter feel sure of themselves, they shake off their annoying comrades and stand, in turn, on the shoulders of the party of order. The party of order shrugs its shoulders, sending the bourgeois republicans tumbling to the ground, and leaps onto the shoulders of armed power. And when it still believes it is standing firmly on those shoulders, one fine day it finds that those shoulders have turned into bayonets. Each party kicks at those who are pushing from behind and leans forwards on those it's pushing from behind.

BEAR: It's no wonder that, in this ridiculous posture, it loses its balance and, after pulling the inevitable gruesome faces, collapses jerking to the ground.

BADGER: In the name of calm, a terrible agitation; in the name of the revolution, the most solemn sermons in favour of serenity; passions without truth; truths without passion; heroes without heroic feats; history without events, a process whose sole driving force seems to be the calendar, tiresome due to the constant repetition of the same tensions and relaxations, a constant sinking into the mire without succeeding in decomposing; presumptuously flaunted efforts and the bourgeois dread of the danger of the end of the world and at the same time of its saviours.

BEAR: When, finally, the “red spectre” appears, after being constantly evoked and conjured by the counter-revolutionaries, it will not be wearing the Phrygian bonnet of anarchy but the uniform of order, with baggy red trousers.

BADGER: The Legitimists and Orleanists formed the two major factions of the party of order. What kept these two factions apart was no other than two different conceptions of property, the old rivalry between town and country, capital and landowning. And who can deny that, at the same time, there were old memories, personal animosities, fears, hopes, prejudices and aspirations, articles of faith and principles that bound them to one dynasty or another?

BEAR: However great the sum of passion and declamation that the party of order might pour from the platform of the National Assembly against the minority, their speeches were as tame as a riddle whose solution we already know. Whether talking about the right of petition or the wine tax, freedom of the press or freedom of trade, the catchword is always the same, the verdict is always ready and it invariably says: “Socialism!” The term “socialist” was slapped on bourgeois liberalism, the bourgeois enlightenment, bourgeois financial reform...

BADGER: And if, in spite of this, they insulted the Republic and manifested the repugnance they felt for it, instinct taught them that, even though the Republic had consummated their political domination, it had also undermined the social foundations of that domination, because now they had to face the oppressed classes with no form of mediation at hand. It was a feeling of weakness that made them retreat, trembling, before the naked conditions of the rule of their own class, and to yearn for the less perilous forms of that rule.

BEAR: The bourgeoisie was clearly aware that all of the weapons it had forged to combat feudalism were now turning against it, that all the cultural media cre-

ated by it were rebelling against their own civilisation. Consequently, when the bourgeoisie condemns as “socialist” what it previously hailed as “liberal,” it confesses that its own interest obliges it to flee from the peril of its own government, that in order to maintain its social power intact it has to violate its political power; that bourgeois individuals can only continue to exploit the other classes on the condition that their class is condemned along with the other classes to the same political nullity: that, to save its purse, it has to relinquish the crown.

BADGER: And so, throughout this period, we see the party of order obliged by its ambiguous position to convert its struggle against the executive power into nit-picking squabbles over competences, trivialities, legal niceties, boundary disputes, and to make the most insipid questions of form the content of its activities. It does not dare to accept confrontation at the moment when this has assumed vital importance. If it did so, it would be giving the nation the order to mobilise, and it fears nothing as much as seeing a mobilised nation.

BEAR. After setting aside the litigious question in its broadest terms, the executive power calmly awaits the moment when it can raise it again for petty and insignificant reasons – and then the contained wrath of the party of order will explode, it will tear down the curtain that hides what goes on behind the scenes, it will denounce the presidents, it will declare the Republic to be in peril.

### Scene 3

LION, DOG

*A large banquet at the edge of which Lion and Dog appear. They try to keep their distance and so attain the apparent objectivity of mere commentators.*

LION: Third period. From the 9th of October to the 2nd of December 1851. An open split between Parliament and the executive power. Parliament signs its own death certificate and capitulates, abandoned by its own class, the army and the other classes. As in 1849, during the parliamentary vacations, the party of order split into its various fractions, each one busy with its own Restoration intrigues.

DOG: Bonaparte, then, now felt authorised, in turn, to travel around the French *départements* and make public – tacitly or explicitly, according to the frame of mind of the city with which he was gracing his presence – his own Restoration

plans, garnering votes for himself, and always accompanied by members of the 10th of December Society.

LION: Under the pretext of creating a beneficent society, the lumpenproletariat of Paris had organised itself into secret sections, each directed by Bonapartist agents and with a Bonapartist ruling over all of them. Ruined swindlers, wayward sons of the bourgeoisie, gamblers, pimps, brothel owners, penniless scribblers: in a word, all of that formless, diffuse and errant mass that the French call *la bohème*.

DOG: This Bonaparte regards historical life as a comedy, in the most vulgar sense of the term. For his invasion of Boulogne, he stuffs a few lackeys from London into French uniforms to represent the army. On his journeys around the country, groups of these proletarians were sent ahead to the railway stations to simulate popular enthusiasm, to cry *Vive l'Empereur!*, to insult and beat up the republicans – under police protection, naturally. On his return journeys to Paris, they were made to form the front line, to stop counter-demonstrations in advance or disperse them if they went ahead.

LION: If ever there was an event that projected its own shadow long before it actually occurred, it was Bonaparte's *coup d'état*. The Bonapartist newspapers had been threatening a coup in response to every Parliamentary storm, and the closer the crisis came, the louder they yelled. In the orgies that Bonaparte held every night, as midnight approached and the abundance of liquor loosened tongues and inflamed imaginations, it was resolved to stage the coup the following morning. Swords were unsheathed, glasses chimed together, members of Parliament flew out of windows and the imperial mantle fell on Bonaparte's shoulders – until daylight scared off the ghosts and a startled Paris learned, from the less discreet of its paladins, of the danger it had once again escaped.

DOG: When finally, however, the *coup d'état* triumphed, the second Bonaparte sought out his model in the annals of criminal jurisprudence. He robbed the Bank of France of 25 million francs, bought General Magnan for a million and the soldiers for 15 francs and a shot of *eau de vie* each, secretly met up with his accomplices at night like a thief, ordering them to attack the houses of the most dangerous parliamentarians, dragging them out of their beds and carrying off Cavaignac, Lamoricière, Le Flô, Changarnier, Charras, Thiers, Baze and others,

ordered the main squares of Paris and the Parliament building to be occupied by troops, and posters loudly proclaiming the dissolution of the National Assembly to be stuck on all the walls at dawn.

LION: No Circe disfigured with her evil spell the work of art that was the bourgeois republic, turning it into a monster. That republic lost no more than its veneer of respectability. Modern-day France was already contained in its entirety in the parliamentary republic. All that was needed was the prick of a bayonet for the bubble to burst and the monster to be revealed.

Alfred Sohn-Rethel  
Ökonomie und Klassenstruktur  
des deutschen Faschismus  
Aufzeichnungen und Analysen

Herausgegeben und eingeleitet von Johannes Agnoli,  
Bernhard Blanke und Niels Kadritzke

Die soziale Rekonsolidierung des Kapitals

(Deutsche Führerbriefe, September 1932, im Rahmen des  
Mitteldeutschen Wirtschaftstags

(jetzt in etwa übersetzbar wie „Konzeptpapiere des BDI“))

in Paris, studierte in Heidelberg  
ger Jahren in engem Kontakt mit  
to. Er lebt seit seiner Emigration  
erschien sein Buch *Geistige und  
gesellschaftlichen Synthesis*.  
Aufzeichnungen sind in doppelter  
reich: sie beziehen sich auf die  
dreißiger Jahren, und sie bilden  
zusammenhang, auf den künftig  
d Rücksicht nehmen müssen. Die  
zwischen 1937 und 1941 in der  
s Wechselspiel der Interessengrup-  
nen Großkapitals, die Hitler zur  
thlichen Teil seiner Politik bestimmt  
gänge in jener Periode von einem  
sten aus verfolgt – als »wissen-  
türo des »Mitteleuropäischen Wirt-

(1973)  
Suhrkamp Verlag

### ACT 3: THE IDLE DEBTORS' CLUB

*Around 90 years later in the neighbouring state. Bear and Badger are sitting in a distant corner of the club.*

*On the 30th of December, the regime of deficit-ridden companies began. A financial web is woven in which bankrupt firms pass on their deficits to the state. Because of the intensification of class differences, this violation of the conscience of profitability is achieved at the cost of a dull unrest.*

*The creation of profit is as contradictory as the opposition's reaction is insignificant. Nonetheless, the bourgeoisie's generation of profit is constantly accompanied by the oppositional appearance of its contradiction, enabling the fascist citizens to retain their moral guise. The party seems to be at the service of the bourgeoisie, but only when it places its saddle on the bourgeoisie's back, mounts up and uses spurs and bit to dictate its own path.*

BEAR: The task of the last few months has been the *reconsolidation of the bourgeois regime*, and this exceeds the aggravation of the current moment. The present government does not yet represent this reconsolidation, even if it declares that it does and this declaration is the indispensable fiction for maintaining the functioning of the government.

BADGER: Consequently, the government depends on forces that have not yet been overcome, are not yet included in it, and the reconsolidation remains pending. The possibilities of this occurring can only be set out here in the most schematic fashion.

BEAR: Any solid workers' movement must be revolutionary, and no constant domination must be able to operate against it, not even by means of military violence. The necessary condition of the reconsolidation of bourgeois rule is the *division of the working class*.

BADGER: A kind of canal-lock mechanism, whereby the employed part of the working class enjoyed, within the snares of the labour market, an advantage which, although restricted, was considerable in comparison with the fluctuating unemployed mass of the lower categories.

BEAR: The political boundary between social democracy and communism runs almost parallel to the line of the lock gate.

BADGER: The struggle shifts from the factories and the street to the parliament, the ministries and the chancelleries. The overall chaining of the whole working class to the bourgeois state. A bourgeois regime must allow social democracy a sufficient number of conquests.

BEAR: A bourgeois regime that destroys all those achievements must seek a substitute for social democracy.

BADGER: The serious *state of danger* which with the suppression of those conquests also renders ineffective the mechanism of splitting the working class pushes it towards communism.

BEAR: This abyss can only be bridged when the splitting of the working class is achieved in a *different, more direct* manner.

BADGER: Either the employed part of the working class is split by means of a new political subjection to a set of *employment regulations*, or, on the contrary, an attempt is made to take the unemployed part as the basis, organising an *artificial sector* of the economy under a rule of obligation to work.

BEAR: But it must be borne in mind that these two paths involve two very different ways of operating.

BADGER: If a regime like this, with its extreme autarchic policy, were to kill off the export industry and the interests associated with it, there would be no possible relation with a worldwide growth scenario.

BEAR: Only *in part* for this reason is it possible for this option, at least as established in the government's economic programme, to facilitate the transition to a system of a true reconsolidation of bourgeois rule.