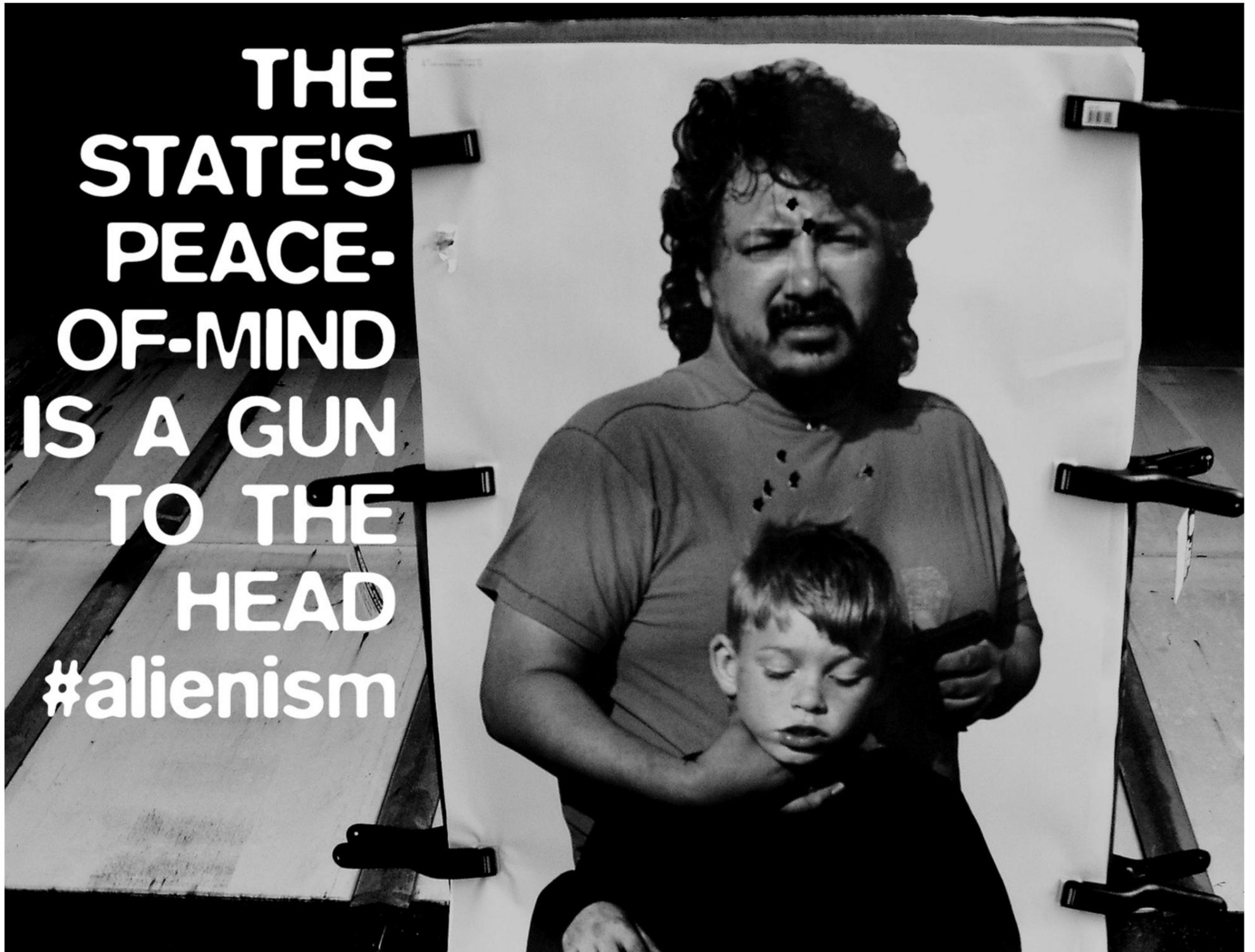


# WLLIENIST



THE  
STATE'S  
PEACE-  
OF-MIND  
IS A GUN  
TO THE  
HEAD  
#alienism

## BERLIN THESES

### NO "VELVET" REVOLUTION

The coercive strategies of the corporate-state apparatus are not unknown – the question is, why does anyone accept them? How have people been conditioned to deny in themselves an existence unmediated by the state (when the state is little more than a self-legitimising protection racket posing as the guardian of the individual's "right to self-determination")? The grotesqueness of this flagrant paradox is that it is concealed from no-one. It gives the lie to the idea that individual self-determination is anything more than narcissistic opportunism. The state holds a mirror to the anxiety & conceitedness of the overweaned. Its power stands in a direct relation to a *wilful subjectification*. Thus it proffers only the most corrupted gratifications.

Yet POWER CONCEDES NOTHING.

The greatest mystification of contemporary life is the indispensability of the state, irrespective of its avowed ideological formation. This mystification, whose consequences have been shown time & again to be both inimical & deadly with regard to the emancipatory aspirations of its subjects, conspires behind a universal pretence to the *improvement* of humanity. Such compulsory optimism does nothing to mask the contradictory state of affairs that confronts us at every

moment, but instead presents the compensating spectacle of the state's unique competence in this open-ended domain of "crisis management," henceforth representative of a "best of all possible worlds."

In the final account, the state justifies itself in opposition to the impossibility of *any other workable state-of-affairs*. It forces upon all pretenders to its throne the calculatedly unreasonable demand to propose "functioning alternatives" (doomed in advance to insufficiency), as if one might debate with a Sphinx. Yet the task of Alienism isn't to astonish this master, as if it might applaud, but to steal the very air in which its cynical approbations resound.

### THERE'S NO EXTREME TO WHICH ALIENATION CAN'T BE PUSHED

We cannot count on the existence of any insurrectionary party or other insurrectional forces within a society which, though subjected to intolerable conditions of an endemic & not merely transient kind, is more prepared to accept either a reactionary or reformist panacea than to accept responsibility for the onerous task of emancipation. We must, therefore, be prepared to operate decisively in the absence of an organised movement – in isolation, if necessary, with only a contingent view to general mobilisation. The task of the Alienist isn't to lead a direct assault upon the state & the aligned forces of commodification but, by a tactical programme of sabotage & subversion, to assist in bringing about a *conflict* across a

broader social-cultural front – with the aim of provoking the state to *generalise its response* & thereby accomplish, by its own operations, the work of focusing the insurrectional consciousness of those incompletely aware of the degree of their present disenfranchisement. Disenfranchisement not only by the corporate-state apparatus, but also its adjuncts in the economy of permissions & approvals of "popular action" represented by the established opposition parties, trade union bureaucracies & public intellectuals.

This disenfranchisement is nowhere more evident than in the expropriation of "emancipative" discourse by the very instruments of its negation, like a Guy Fawkes at a Westminster funfair – illuminating the latest apocryphal episodes in the afterlife of democracy, free thought & the avantgarde.

It is of course worthless to accuse the advertising industry of cynicism, in the use of words like "revolutionary" to denote each momentary nuance in an ever-changing scenscape of cheap consumer goods circulating in the world like space-junk. Worthless, too, to bemoan the opportunism of the culture industry, in converting what was once revolutionary in art into a prestige economy via which the idea of revolution itself is normalised as a *precession of commodities*. Knowing that the very *means-of-production of emancipative discourse* has been annexed to an ideal scheme of commodity renovation – which, unblushingly, henceforth poses as the sole (authentic) realm of emancipative possibility – is only a first step. Since, at the same time, a "general acceptance" of this state-of-affairs is constructed around the falsely formed belief that the *possibility*

of *desirable change* is no longer expressible *anywhere else*. In this way, the instruments of corporate-state normalisation (with whom it'd previously been in conflict) maintain a visible monopoly over the idea of emancipation turned inwards upon itself – & an image of "Culture" arises in radical opposition to culture itself.

Thus it isn't merely a question of breaking the rules of the state, but of the language in which they are stated.

### POWER IS NEVER RIDICULOUS IN ITS OWN EYES

The supposed failure of the revolutionary project – encapsulated in Fukuyama's "End of History" at the fall of the Soviet Bloc in 1989 – has been turned into an alibi for the sublimation of emancipative thought *in the form of an accusation*: that the cause of this sublimation, & the accompanying acceleration of all forms of alienated-production, is the *failure of the revolutionary project itself*. This sophism – under the guise of postmodernist neoliberalism – was designed to engender a radical new species of alienation: the perceived impossibility of emancipative thought *beyond its commodified form*.

Acquiescence to this pseudo-historical viewpoint is the principle adversary of critical consciousness today. Worse, it represents an active collaborationism with those forms of cultural-economic totalitarianism presently dominating the global horizon – fully intent upon relegating all "revolutionary" discourse to a conventional & ultimately passive subcategory of *literary fantasy*. By way of "compensation," you're sold a real-estate instalment plan – for a slice of the moon. But why is it easier to believe in "revolution on credit," than in revolution forestalled? To migrate across a lifetime between one conurbation & another, as from a nursery to a retirement home, persuaded of telemarketing utopias of palm trees & slot machines, but not of a *world without the state*?

Since the dawn of modern times, every cell in this collective panopticon has been its own "reality TV." Left cold by the prospect of examining "itself" – which has paradoxically come to appear as the acme of artifice – neoliberal humanity has been freed *by virtue of its constraints* to contemplate the prospect of its own emancipation as a telenovela of endless Rousseauisms: the primordial nature it dreams of returning to in a passively impassioned revolt *against the "self"* – like so many pristine forests of cliché set ablaze.

### THE SICKNESS UNTO DEATH

There is an advantageous degree of uncertainty about the place & time of the coming confrontation, & even more about its outcome. It is said that no-one so far has provided the vision, the strategy, the instruments, to channel the almost global discontent towards a revolutionary conclusion. In this sense, perhaps, the conflict that is about to begin will appear "spontaneous." But only to the extent that the media has programmed the spectator masses to accept the idea that spontaneity, naivety, ignorance, amnesia and a lack of preparedness are all somehow virtues. The triumphalism of postmodernist neoliberalism has since extended to all areas of contemporary life & is nowhere more visible than in the realm of "public protest."

The media are always gratified to moralise & then mourn over the "democratic prerogative" of protestors to turn themselves into riot-cop fodder. They don't say: The exponential criminalisation of protest & heavyhanded "law enforcement" make seizing the airwaves – by hacking, occupying or disabling the TV studios, etc. – an "attractive alternative." Likewise, the established opposition parties waste their time urging protestors to keep quiet & stay in their homes for fear of backlash, since the criminalisation of protest is tacitly of their making.

But protest & backlash are also "signs of something deeper" than a momentary struggle for power in the streets. They are signs of the sickness concealed by the mass-hypnotising spectacle of "social media" & the end-game of narcissistic capitalism. The sickness of a world threatened with fatal obsolescence, by that which it has come to adore even more than itself. The sickness of a world in which protest & backlash represent a "taste for the whip" to punctuate the unending sentimental pornography of the boredom & entertainment economies. The sickness you are expected to secretly embrace, like a guilty conscience.

One should always be wary of the supposedly sick.

### AT THE INTERSECTION OF TWO NIGHTMARES

The Parisian Maoist, Badiou, says, "The communist hypothesis is the hypothesis of emancipation." Made to perform in our own collective show trial, we are constantly being impelled to surrender everything. These daily humiliations remind us that the *idea of universal emancipation* remains a force in the world – by which *not only* the subjects of state totalitarianisms are seduced or oppressed. Yet the danger we're faced with today is less the direct threat of seduction or oppression, than that of boredom posed as self-knowledge. Boredom, posed as *subjective freedom* & drawn from a collectivized non-

experience of *collective subjectivity*, stands against the "hard labour" of dissent.

Since the image that capitalism holds up to the world is one of universal alienation *disguised as emancipation*, any critique that engages capitalism on its own terms is doubly alienated. It isn't enough to observe, as if at a remove, those vast psychiatric conveyor belts of urban life, designed for optimal surveillance like the ubiquitous "open plan" corporate concentration camps in which the mass of white-collar "office workers" perform routinised alienation in a self-negating "reward structure" of mortgage credits. Nor is it sufficient to acknowledge that equivalent terms apply in the realms of intellectual & cultural labour – as if these are separate considerations. The task of the Alienist isn't to "produce" specialised critiques the way one might produce objects of contemplation, in accordance with a *political aesthetic*.

In order to disrupt this economy of *pseudo-critical consumption*, the Alienist must risk actions that can only arouse hostility & incomprehension in those who have taken it upon themselves to regard a refusal to conform to the established modes of "discourse" as an assault upon the very authenticity of collective social experience itself. But like the *procurateurs* of the Children's Crusade, it is these self-appointed "defenders of the faith" who, as accomplices in its subsidiary alienation, are the true "enemies of society." Above all, these "shepherds of the people" stand vigilantly opposed to any thought that "society" might possess a "will of its own." Forever evoking the spectre of populism, they hone their demagoguery to a fine art. Proclaiming themselves beyond ideology, these pseudo-critics demand that – like "lambs of God" – the masses be likewise purified of the taint of *consciousness*.

Neither aware nor aroused, the individual "citizens" of this most ideal polis are permitted only to be sufficiently bored.

### BORN THIS WAY?

The individual is indeed an IT. A manufactured abstract entity. To which may be added the unwelcome observation that all the ancillary activities of the "productive" individual are in reality designed to obscure that fact (from itself first of all) that it is devoid of an independent existence. In the purview of this pseudo-critical technocracy, the individual's existence is a purely procedural existence. Reduced to a vocabulary of empty actions, exclusively orientated towards the labour of consumption, such an existence remains exiled from of an *emancipative poetics*. Crucially, the individual doesn't experience this exile as a loss, since every form of affirmation it encounters distracts it from its inability to live critically – which is to say, concretely. The image of the "self-realised" individual in this scenario, is thus one of an ideal producer of its own alienation. The greater its efficiency in production, the greater its reward in mandated freedoms. Such are the heroes of the so-called post-ideological classless society.

The illusion is to believe that the *individual* can be otherwise without violating every aspect of its world – since the individual & the world it belongs to are indeed a myth. Which is to say, *ideological to their very core*. There is no "natural" individual, just as there is no "natural" world to which the individual belongs. To conceive of a *different world*, of the world *in a different sense*, is not to "let be" – as if it were merely a question of sinking back into the warm primordial waters. In every respect, laissez-faireism is the *negation* of emancipative thought. It masks not only the essentially alienated character of individual existence, but an ever more deceptive, more paradoxical alienation, arising precisely from the individual's misdirected struggle *against alienation* – a struggle which is only ever against some disfigured spectre of "itself."

### DISILLUSIONMENT IS LIKE THE FIRST SPOON OF A COLD SOUP

The alienation of emancipative thought isn't dissociable from the alienation of the individual: constituted in its subjectivity as the very *figure of alienation*, the individual stands in a mirroring relation to the alienated constitution of its world. Thus it is the character of this relation that determines the scope of its possibility *as consciousness*. There is no simple opposition between consciousness or emancipative thought & alienation *as such*. This stems from the fact that alienation, as *constitutive of experience*, is fundamentally *ambivalent*: it determines the *possibility* of experience, *not the terms of experience*. Likewise it determines the *possibility* of the individual, *not the terms of its existence*; nor that of its world; nor that of the operations of power within that world.

The apparent impasse of the question of emancipation is the impasse of a system in which abstraction is both primordial & transcendent. But it isn't mere romanticism that informs the desire to encapsulate life in a single adventure. The *delegation* of life, on the other hand, on the premise that experience "robbed of authenticity" isn't worth the price of admission, denies the fact that *inadmission* is out of the question. Likewise the tired excuse, that "everything has already been done." Yet such is the self-concealed optimism of the fatalist: existence is not without its precedents. Evolution, which has much to teach

about historical materialism, proceeds with all the ineluctable chaos of entropy – such that the movement of history courses with probabilities whose "outcomes" are indeed indeterminate, whose perturbations bear the potential to catastrophically destabilise any prospective future & the systems erected to fortify the claims of power upon it.

To speak of "abstract inauthenticity" is to stand with your back to the precipice of the world & call it the End of History. It is a clock stopped at three-minutes-to-midnight. It is the spectre of a world that cannot be dreamt. But what is that world?

When those who day-after-day produce alienation *against themselves* are no longer capable of appropriating it *for themselves*, existence itself comes to appear as nothing more than an abstraction of abstraction. Yet emancipative thought isn't a furtive nostalgia.

### THE VIOLENCE OF THE MORALLY WEAK ISN'T EQUIVALENT TO VIOLENCE OF THE POWERLESS

It is a false assumption that the contest over the future course of the world consists in totalitarianism versus democracy – as if it were a question not of the quantity, but the quality of the blood either has on its hands. There are many who confuse manufactured consent with emancipation; the corporate body with the social body. But real democracy isn't a ceremony of the permitted, purchased at elections scheduled by the state (even by a "dissident" section within the state). Nor is totalitarianism a gimp making a one-armed salute while cyborgs march the goosetstep, but the global orchestration of cash registers synchronized to the operations of "his & her" hard & soft power. Between them is the photogenic love affair of people with beautiful teeth.

The nature of capitalist planning & control is that it is historically conducted *on sporadic & discontinuous initiatives*, within & between which its influence, due to a pervasive self-interest & internal competition, remains often tenuous, amounting at times to little more than a confidence trick that is always (& ultimately *only*) guaranteed by the intervention, on its behalf & *against society*, of corporate-state power. The internally combative character of the corporatised state – which (defined by competition & the profit incentive) is the true ideological locus of its oppressive instinct – is also its point of decisive weakness. Capitalism, at its core, lacks a clearly defined ideological compass, since its sole orientation is accumulation – in other words, self-propagation – which it seeks to accomplish in a schizophrenic manner of self-regulated, self-competition. It is therefore *susceptible* to precisely those ambivalences upon which the possibility of abstraction, exchange-value, commodity, virtuality, & all other modes of "capital" are produced, & by which its hegemony has extended into the properly ideological sphere, as *the generalised possibility of "all" discourse*. It is, in effect, the manifestation of the dream of totalities: in it, like an enchanted mirror, ideology perceives its ultimately accomplished end.

It is here that subversive action finds its counterpart in the internal discontinuities of power. It is here, & here alone, that subversion – more than a mere play of words – is capable of appropriating the fallibilities of totalitarian discourse. Yet, for the same reasons, it is here that the corporatised state is also most *porous* & thus most adapted to the work of expropriation & re-integration, even if only in a delayed reaction. Subversive action cannot *negate* what here amounts to an inevitability – since the work of expropriation – of its forms, its outward appearance, even its tactics – is always only a matter of time. On the contrary, the nature of subversive action is that it must, at any moment, be capable of sacrificing, without the slightest hesitation, what only appears to belong to it. It is *antithetical to subversion* to attempt the occupation of territory or the consolidation of supposedly "material gains," which in reality will have already begun to assume the form of *property*. Against the seductions of its own reification, & in the face of expropriative inevitability, subversive action must always be prepared to re-invent itself rather than defend that which amounts to a shadow of its actual purpose.

To stake everything on the defence of mere artefacts of subversive action is to court unconditional defeat: it is the nostalgia of a temporary accomplishment soon to be definitively overwhelmed, blinded to a task whose force stems from the fact that it is *without end*. When the future is in the balance, defensive logic is the logic of a reactionary sentimentalism. Only by a constant strategy of surprise "panic attacks" & tactical retreats can subversive action retain, in addition to its material impact, a fully *symbolic* potential – as the signpost to a possible future, rather than as a signpost to defeatism. Defeated action is the action of the "unbearable burden of history": it is farce misrecognising itself as tragedy.

INTERIOR MINISTRY

30 November,

"Robert Schumann" Eurocity Express, Prague-Berlin

www.alienism.xyz