

EDITORIAL

Editorial

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Since 7 October, the question of whether to support Israel has polarized societies. Even in Germany, unwavering support for Israel has declined over time. [Artists](#) and [intellectuals](#) have voiced their concerns over the German state's hypocritical stance on the matter. Much ink is spilled over the contradictions in the official policies of the state, which, as criticism grows, appears to develop ever more absurd positions, from a city-wide school-ban to wear keffiyehs (Berlin), to a Bundestag resolution that aims to protect Jewish life in Germany. As many commentators pointed out, the latter draft obsessively points to artists, students, and migrants as the primary sources of antisemitism in the country, implying that the most significant threat to Jews arises from individuals linked to leftist politics and those who are not originally from Germany. The critique, however, in its Sisyphean effort to call out hypocrisies, leaves the most pressing issues unanswered. A debate is turning into a vicious cycle.

The cycle looks something like this: the state supports Israel on the ground that it is Germany's *Staatsräson*, a compound denoting Germany's moral obligations and strategic interests towards Israel as part of its post-World War II identity. In contrast, more critical voices argue that the state rationale is contradictory, as it cannot be in the interest of a democracy – and the “Räson” refers back to the founding of the post-WWII West German state – to support a genocide. In response, voices supporting the state repeat that, well, it is the state rationale. And so, the debate goes on.

Similarly, a plethora of [articles](#) lament that when people do take positions, they fail to see the other side. Asking participants in a debate to relativize their positions, much like pointing at state hypocrisy, overlooks the significant power imbalances at play. For example, while protestors advocating for Palestinian rights with the chant “From the River to the Sea” face legal [repercussions](#), Neo-Nazis chanting xenophobic slogans like “Germany for Germans, Foreigners Go Home!” may be [asked](#) to go home, but appear not to encounter equivalent judicial actions. The demand for relativization, under the guise of fostering a balanced viewpoint, inadvertently supports the status quo by failing to understand *Machtpolitik*.

In Beckett's universe, the characters are trapped in their own absurdities and the vicious cycle is truly evil – it hides an unpronounced desire for violence. In

Shakespeare's world, it is still possible for the court jester to reveal taboo topics to the audience through wisdom. In *King Lear*, the jester translates the stupidity of the monarch into poetry. The clownish characters in Beckett plays, on the other hand, naively capitulate in front of the contradictions of the world. They demand their oppressors to account for their speech, to admit the absurdities that make them suffer. The moment the oppressors must defend their language and actions, however, they are also granted the power of definition. In that way, the clowns feed into an absurd dialectic. By demanding clarity and meaning, they unintentionally contribute to strengthening the power of the oppressor. In their role as unravelers of hypocrisy and nonsense, they remain trapped in a system that absorbs and reverses their criticism. Only when, in the *Endgame*, Clov no longer believes in the words and concepts uttered on stage, is he allowed to leave it, and in front of Hamm, his oppressor, are unfolded the ruins of the earth.

Exiting the vicious cycle of our times requires shifting from merely pointing out contradictions and hypocrisies to confronting the underlying dynamics of power that inform these policies. To reframe the argument, we must start by acknowledging that Germany's support for Israel, while rooted in historical guilt and strategic interests, also serves as a form of atonement that legitimizes past horrors through the lens of current support. This is not a contradiction, but a direct continuation of *Rassenlehre* under a different guise. Backing a state disparaged for violating human rights ultimately reinforces historical views that legitimize the harsh treatment of those deemed "inferior" – it is an ex-post humiliation intended as moral redemption. This stance is not just about Israel but reflects a broader acceptance of a hierarchy where some lives are deemed more valuable than others. It is not a contradiction within the framework of power politics; it is an extension of it.

To truly challenge problematic policies and systemic contradictions, the discourse must shift towards understanding and deconstructing the power relations that enable such policies to persist. This is all the more difficult when the state abuses its own power to undermine dissident voices, criminalize peaceful forms of protest, and impose uniform standards of thought. Rather than capitulating in front of a state supporting a senseless war in the name of reason, empowering change comes from actively dismantling the foundations of such power.

This month, we continue publishing Martin Kudláč's coverage of the 2023 Ji.hlava International Documentary Film Festival with reviews of Lea Petříková's [If I Ever Lose My Eyes](#), an experimental exploration of the unseen and invisible, Matej Bobrik's documentary about the experiences of a Nepalese immigrant family in [Distances](#), and Jaro Vojtek's [The Third End of the Stick](#), an intimate, portmanteau portrait of a Roma community. In our Interviews section, you will find our interview with [Anna Hints](#) on *Smoke Sauna Sisterhood*, which we reviewed last month. Hints shares her approach to the intimate and sensitive context of her documentary feature, and speaks about the longwinded process of producing her film. Antonis Lagarias, who interviewed Hints,

also discusses Dmytro Moiseiev's [Grey Bees](#), which turns into an unexpected metaphor for the disappearance of blurry lines during war. Finally, we are publishing an essay by Tajana Kosor on [Lost Country](#), in which she unveils the Bressonian pitfalls of Vladimir Perišić's first film in fifteen years.

We hope you enjoy our reads.

Konstanty Kuzma & Moritz Pfeifer

Editors