

Darüber wollte ich schreiben, weil die mangelnde Vorbereitung und der Umgang mit der Katastrophe im Süden der USA auch zeigt, dass die neoliberale Ideologie total neben dem liegt, was wir in der modernen Welt brauchen: Solidarität. Die Katastrophe zeigt auch, wie albern das Spiel mit und die Hoffnungen auf die Zivilgesellschaft sind. Ich habe darüber mit meinem Freund Norman Birnbaum, Sozialwissenschaftler in Washington, und ein Kenner und Freund der Europäer telefoniert. Er hat daraufhin eine Mail geschickt; leider in Englisch. (Wenn unter unseren Nutzer jemand sein sollte, die/der Zeit zum Übersetzen hat, wir stellen dann den übersetzten Text auch noch ein.)

„Experiencing the miserable performance of the American Federal and state governments in the weather emergency in the Gulf States, our citizens have every reason to hope for a peaceful resolution of our historical conflict with China: one would not wish to have the same sort of performance after a nuclear war. It is a case of capitalism pure, heavily mixed with systematic irresponsibility, political corruption and of course stupidity.

1. For the better part of the past century, the Mississippi and the Delta region around New Orleans were subjected to the ravages of limitless economic development. The original provisions of nature for water run offs were replaced by building: housing, industrial development, ports (and around New Orleans, much petrochemical production.)
2. The dikes around New Orleans might have sufficed for a Hurricane Category Three but were not built high enough for larger storms, despite the increase over past decades in the frequency and strength of tropical hurricanes. This would have cost public funds—and so the expenditure was not made. Despite being below sea level, New Orleans and its suburbs were allowed to expand with disregard for the ecological consequences and dangers.
3. When the emergency came last week, and evacuation was ordered only a day before the storm was due to hit the shoreline, no provision was made for evacuating hospitals, old people's residences, or those without automobiles or, if they had autos, with no money to pay for gas or lodging. The more prosperous could flee, the poor remained behind. (Anmerkung AM: Das ist die natürliche Auslese.)
4. When the dikes burst and those left behind were in danger, the organized rescue effort took days to organize. It is true that what were needed were: helicopters, small patrol boats, engineering troops, field hospitals. These are in Iraq with the bulk of the regular army. Moreover, the military units specifically designated for civil emergencies, the so called National Guard (army units under the jurisdiction, normally, of the governors of the states) were also at least fifty percent depleted, as many of the units are also in Iraq.

5. A steady stream of reassurances (“help is on the way”) has come from Bush and his officials, the governors, the generals. One difficulty: on television reports from the affected areas, no help is visible.
6. New Orleans and its suburbs are inhabitable. Who will pay for the reconstruction—and for the lodging and maintenance of the population—close to a million—whose homes and livelihoods and communities have been destroyed? Bush is not without inspiration and asked his father, the ex President, and former President Clinton to organize a national charitable drive. The denial of a public responsibility for public events continues. Not entirely—Bush and his officials have been quick to emphasize that there is one thing that has priority over burying the dead, caring for the homeless and the sick, feeding the starving—law and order. It is singular: there has been some plundering, but given the ideology that has shaped our politics and society for some time, why not praise the plunderers for their entrepreneurship?

Regards to your readers, Norman Birnbaum.