

# We know the Wolves are On our Side

Franklin Rosemont

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This is an excerpt from a 2003 essay, "Surrealism & Wilderness" that is included in Rosemont's anthology *Revolution in the Service of the Marvelous: Surrealist Contributions to the Critique of Miserabilism* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 2004).

Many oppositional movements that burst on the scene in the 1960s and '70s have long since faded away or made their peace with Business-as-Usual. The radical ecology movement, however, has not only persisted and gathered momentum, but also has never ceased to develop its revolutionary implications. Its effectiveness, in the world-historical sense, has been demonstrated repeatedly during the past thirty-five years. Consider, for example, its impact on the world's attitudes toward wolves.

Among the most maligned and hated animals in history, the wolf is one of Christianity's prime symbols of evil, a stock villain in fairy tales, folklore, and mass-market fiction as well as in the vicious propaganda passed off as "scientific" literature. Complete wolf extermination—that is, extinction—was official policy in the US, the USSR, and many other lands. Millions of wolves were massacred by or with full approval of the US Forest service and other government agencies, at the behest of the gangsters quaintly known as cattle barons. If ever a species appeared friendless and doomed, it was the wolf.

Wolves, however, have not only survived, but in many places are actually flourishing today, and with the enthusiastic and constantly growing support of millions of humans. Throughout the world scores, probably hundreds of organizations are agitating for wolf protection, and for the reintroduction of wolves into places from which mercenary ignoramuses had driven them.

Somehow, millions of people have managed to see through the age-old lies embedded in anti-wolf myths and propaganda, and have come to love the very creatures they were taught to hate.

This change soon led to others. As a symbol par excellence of the wild, wolves have always been a challenge to the values of the domesticated social order, and it should surprise no one to discover that their human defenders are increasingly critical of that order. Doesn't humankind's long reign of terror against wolves reveal the fundamentally nature-hating character of Christianity and capitalism? As people become aware that a major motive for wolf extermination was the cattle ranchers' phony contention that wolves threatened their property (i.e. cattle), more and more began to question the legitimacy of the corrupt meat industry—and, indeed, the entire system that puts profits before everything else.

The fact that the US government continues to subsidize the meat industry—and all ecocidal industries—has in turn made it plain that the capitalist state is not at all "neutral," but rather, as the adjective implies, the armed servant of Capital.

Prior to the twentieth century, the outspoken friends of wolves were few indeed. The poets William Blake and Alfred de Musset, the eccentric Fourierist utopian and "Passional Zoologist" Alphonse Toussenel, and that great man of the wild, John Muir, are probably the best known of those who dared attempt—in Toussenel's words—"to rehabilitate the wolf in public opinion." Today, the defenders of wolves constitute a veritable mass movement that would have been unthinkable a half-century ago.

The process by which wolves at last have come to be recognized as good, and the cattlemen and their government henchmen as the bad guys, is surely worth pondering.

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