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Contents

Editorial	3
Passive Revolution and the Reform of the Revolution	5
Walter Baier, Marco Berlinguer, Mario Candeias, Scipione Semeraro	
Hegemony, Nonviolence and Transformation	14
Giuseppe Prestipino	
Equality of the Sexes?	27
Birge Krondorfer	
Radical Politics and Ideals	38
Juha Koivisto	
Labour and Life	45
Mimmo Porcaro	
On a Feminist Conception of Work	55
Lia Cigarini	
Roundtable on the Concept of "Communism" Today	60
Patrice Cohen-Séat, Roger Martelli, Jean-Louis Sagot-Duvauroux	
Capitalism, Socialism, Property and Transformation	72
Michael Brie, Dieter Klein	
On Economic Democracy	83
Michael R. Krätke	
Red and Green: The Ecosocialist Perspective	93
Michael Löwy	
News from Somewhere: Participatory Budgets and Social Transformation	102
Javier Navascués	
Building a "Socialism of the 21st Century"	112
Leo Gabriel	

Chronicles

Reading Beauvoir	121
Marlene Streeruwitz	
From a Two-party to a Multi-party System	126
Christoforos Vernardakis	
Germany's New Nationwide Party: Die LINKE	131
Cornelia Hildebrandt	
The Development and Challenges of the Spanish United Left (IU)	135
Javier Navascués	
A New Left-Wing Dynamic?	140
Elisabeth Gauthier	
The Italian Left Before the Elections	145
Walter De Cesaris	
Giving Notice to Neoliberalism	150
Kaarina Kailo	
Utopia – The Explosive Potential of the Present	155
Birge Krondorfer	
The Irish Campaign: A New Version of the French "No" Victory?	156
Raquel Garrido	
Ratification of the Lisbon Treaty	159
José Cordon	
The European Welfare Models: Changes, Prospects and Strategies	163
Stefan Sjöberg	
The Attack on the Welfare State in the Name of the Welfare State	169
José Casimiro	
Left Without Work	172
Ruurik Holm	
"1848 – 150 Years Later"	173
Alfred Hrdlicka	

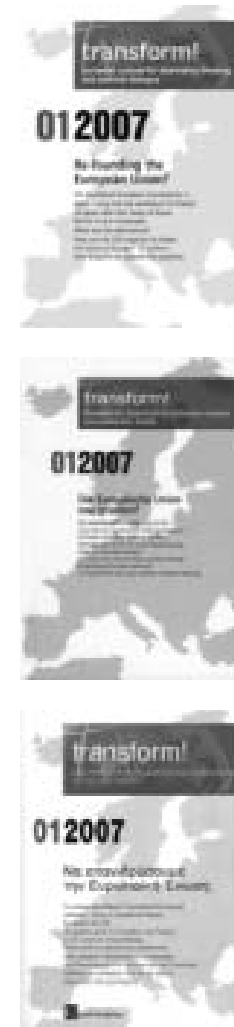
Editorial

The first issue of transform!, centring on the theme "Re-founding the European Union?" presented diverse left positions for debate and discussion. In the last months, with the ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty, this debate has intensified. Two contributions to the current issue deal with the contradictory course of this process (see Raquel Garrido, The Irish Campaign – A New Version of the French "No" Victory? and José Cordon, Ratification of the Lisbon Treaty: How it is Playing Out in Different Countries). The thematic focus of the current issue is on left conceptions of emancipatory theories ("Reform of the Revolution"), which was also the subject of last November's conference organised by transform.italia and transform!europe.

The first issue of our journal appeared in English, Greek and German editions. A Spanish edition is making its appearance with the current issue. The fall will see the addition of a French and Italian edition, and further languages will follow in the future. Multilingualism is one of the pre-conditions for the development of a common political culture within the European left, and that is why it is one of the characteristic features of the journal transform!

The journal and its website are means of communication of the European transform! network which at present consists of 13 organisations and journals in 9 European countries. All these institutions are active in the area of political research and education. In contrast to most organisations of the radical left, transform!europe comprises organisations of widely varying type. Some of them are, in their national contexts, close to parties which have combined forces on the European level within the European Left Party; others are closely related to parties belonging to the Nordic Green-Left Alliance; and a third group of transform! members is independent of parties. This pluralism of actors represents the second decisive characteristic of the renewal of political culture to which the transform! network feels itself committed.

Cutting across all differences, the partner organisations of transform! are united in their resistance to neoliberal ideological and cultural hegemony and in the struggle for alternatives which can increase the left's emancipatory potential. In this way, the network sees itself as a part of the European left in the broadest sense. With this understanding, it was recognised last year by the European Left Party as a partner organisation in the context of the creation of a political foundation, which will make possible access to European Union funding as well as the network's capacity to support concrete forms of cooperation. At the centre of this common research work is the "European Social Model and Left Protagonists" project.



One of the contributions to the current issue introduces the Seminar on the European Welfare and Social State, which is part of this framework, and which will take place in Stockholm this June (see Stefan Sjöberg, The European Welfare Models: Changes, Prospects and Strategies).

The great Austrian left sculptor, draughtsman and print artist, Alfred Hrdlicka, celebrated his 80th birthday in February. On this occasion we are printing, with the kind permission of the artist and of Wiener Galerie Ernst Hilger, 14 etchings from his 1998 cycle "1848" along with his text of the same year on the 150th anniversary of the 1848 Revolution.

Hrdlicka studied painting from 1946 to 1952 with Gütersloh and Dobrowski at the Academy of Visual Arts in Vienna. After receiving his degree in painting he went on to study sculpture with Wotruba, which he completed in 1957. Hrdlicka's credo has been "back to reality". In following this orientation, he was in those days in the shadow of the great avant-garde artists, although as an outstanding maverick. Hrdlicka is to this day an artist with an intimate relation to the classic figures of Western sculpture – from Michelangelo to Rodin. His torsos are, however, in no way seen as symbols for what is historically specific in ancient sculpture; they stand rather as a form of expression of the tortured, oppressed body, with the atrocities of the Second World War and fascism as a background. Hrdlicka sees truth in ugliness, in pain, not in beauty. His best-known work of sculpture dealing with corporeal violence is the multi-part memorial on war and fascism in Vienna, intended as a warning to future generations, unveiled in 1988 after fierce domestic political controversies and completed in 1991.

In his work, sculpture and drawing or etchings cross-fertilise each other and are on an equal footing. They exhibit their own different qualities, from a chamber-music-like etching to a monumental orchestral study in marble. All are products of one of the great classic *peintre-graveur* of our time. Hrdlicka, who left the Communist Party of Austria (KPÖ) in 1956 after the events in Hungary, has continuously intervened in political conflicts with his typical verve, for example in 1986 in the context of the controversy around the later Austrian Federal President Kurt Waldheim, whose membership in the SA Reiterstaffel became known during his electoral campaign. The sculptor dedicated a 3-metre high wooden horse which became a symbol against forgetting the past. In 1999 he became a top candidate of the KPÖ in Carinthia, the adopted home of the Austrian right populist Jörg Haider. Last but not least Alfred Hrdlicka could be called the godfather of the new German party, Die LINKE, in that in 2000 he brought Oskar Lafontaine and Gregor Gysi together on the occasion of a dinner in Saarbrücken.

With our birthday greetings to him, we join in with the legions of other well-wishers.

Walter Baier, Editor

Passive Revolution and the Reform of the Revolution

Walter Baier, Marco Berlinguer, Mario Candeias, Scipione Semeraro

In November 2007, transform! organised a conference entitled "The Reform of the Revolution". The title was chosen to convey two theoretical political objectives, namely: the reformulation of – that is, the giving new form to – the idea of a radical transformation of society, and at the same time, a radical critique of the historical concept of revolution itself.

Two critical phenomena are coming together at the beginning of the new century: On the one hand, the crisis of neoliberalism, whose full implementation was supposed to lead to the "end of history," that is to an era of growth and of economic and social stability – by contrast, today there is the risk that the world economy could be shaken to its foundations through a crisis of the international financial system; on the other hand, the forces arrayed against neoliberalism, especially in Europe, have still not succeeded in developing common, coherent political projects that are capable of winning over a majority of the population. Even the anti-globalisation movement which arose at the turn of the century is having a difficult time conceiving of a transition from resistance to political alternative. How then, in the current relations of exploitation, domination and repression, do we locate and understand tendencies to a transformation that would transcend the system? In different words: Where can we locate, within the inner contradictions of contemporary capitalism, which knows no boundaries, the approaches that could bring about a political unity of the very diverse forces which can be mobilised in the struggle for a new society, and how can we find, after the dramatic upheavals at the end of the 20th century, a new language in which these forces and their struggles can express themselves?

Hence the question is: can a revival of the radical left be achieved without it degenerating into a non-critical apology for the forces of domination, of which a growing number of the liberal left have been guilty? Without degenerating into the naturalisation of capitalistic social relations? Without losing sight of the political goal of overturning such relations?

The reintroduction of the concept of revolution into the political vocabulary may be useful for this reason, as it may allow us to free ourselves from the grip of anaemic, subordinate pragmatism, and to recapture that independence and radicality, that analytical and political

courage, that has been missing in recent years. But what does the word “revolution” actually mean? Would it be satisfactory or even meaningful to use the word “revolution” in the sense in which it was understood during the “short 20th century?”

1) Passive Revolution and Social Transformation

During the 1920s and '30s, Gramsci undertook a similar project with regard to the concept of revolution in the western capitalist world. Defeat in the West, together with the abstractness, in that particular context, of a conception of transformation reduced to the question of the “takeover of power”, led Gramsci to produce novel forms of analysis and new theoretical categories. In the succeeding decades and up to the present day the radical left has faced this question of societal transformation. The reform of revolution encompasses a new understanding of state and civil society in a left strategy of political parties and social movements, reflecting the need for transformative molecular changes and effective breaks – problems which Rosa, Luxemburg, Antonio Gramsci, the Austromarxists, the anti-fascist popular fronts in Spain and in France, Nicos Poulantzas, the left currents of Eurocommunism and others dealt with, but now need to be redefined in a different period of capitalist development, under different circumstances of transnationalisation and in view of the various experiences of social movements.

Gramsci saw in Americanism and Fordism first of all the endless innovative capacity of the governing classes and the capitalist system as a whole – its ability to incorporate in its own innovation a whole series of forces, aspirations and changes resulting from the struggles of new players on the historical-political stage – albeit by ‘passivising’ and subordinating the independent aspirations of such players. Gramsci’s notion of ‘passive revolution’ as not only strengthening but transforming bourgeois rule may contribute to a more rounded understanding of the hegemony exercised during the 1980s and '90s, on the basis of new technologies, by the ‘revolution without revolution’, which we call ‘capitalist globalisation’, and by the neoliberal, post-Fordist system of capital accumulation.

Meanwhile the way social conflicts have been processed has gone through successive re-articulations of the ruling project, from conservative-liberal neoliberalism through social-democratic and finally to authoritarian neoliberalism. Thus we ought not to conceal the presence within this “revolt of capital” of an attack on the democratising processes perceived as responsible for the crisis and as a hindrance to capital accumulation. Here it also becomes clear that states or new state forms – national as well as transnational elements of statehood – still play an important role in capitalist societies. The question that arises then is: In what way can the general expansion of the new state instruments of re-

pression and control and its glaring contradiction to the promises professed by neoliberal hegemony – promises of the establishment and expansion of fundamental rights of freedom – be turned into a weapon with which neoliberal hegemony itself can be cracked open?

The question is more complicated than it may at first sight appear because the restricting of the rights of citizens and of freedom can find majority support to the extent that the argument that this is necessary in order to deal with external threats, like terrorism and immigration flows, convinces people. Taking the post-Fordist transformation of contemporary capitalism as a point of departure therefore does not mean imagining that these developments describe all societies in the same way and that they do not have different effects in different societies. As regulation schools for example, argue, capital accumulation in the capitalist wealth and power centres presupposes the reproduction of both Fordist and non-Fordist modes of production and life in different sectors. The old exists alongside the new, forms the complex social reality of today’s world and generates incoherent social experiences. This provides one of the foundations for the mass effectiveness of contemporary fundamentalisms in terms of politics and world views, among them also a new nationalism.

A realistic left transformative strategy must, while opposing fundamentalisms, be able to absorb very varied forms and experiences of the neoliberal restructuring of capitalist societies, namely new forms of subjectivity, which also produce new emancipatory possibilities, alongside, however, new, more intensive forms of exploitation and repression.

Above all this requires us to acknowledge the central role played by the radical political movements of the 1960s and '70s, in bringing about the crisis of the system of capital accumulation established after the Second World War, prior to their defeat by the change in the political scenario at the end of the 1970s. And not only this. It was these movements which, through their protest against Fordism’s characteristic division of labour and hierarchisation of societies, including gender hierarchisation, induced the terminal crisis of so-called “actually-existing socialism” in Eastern Europe. In so doing, they also subjected to criticism the strategies of the Western Communist movements connected to these Eastern systems.

Further, this way of analysing the changes in contemporary capitalist societies requires the acceptance of an ambivalent reading of the ensuing network-based, post-Fordist, globalised, flexible form of capitalism, together with the acknowledgement that certain impulses from the political movements of the 1960s have been incorporated into this new form of capitalism. The ‘new spirit’ of capitalism, its new values, its capacity to mobilise its own productive energies, the hegemonic force it has succeeded in exercising, are all the result of a differentiated, ambivalent process characterised not only by repression, but also by the

cooptation of certain aspects of, and certain players in, the process of social transformation.

Acknowledgement of this historical development is useful not only from the analytical point of view, but also in political terms, since it points to an ability to perceive the persistent ambivalences inherent in the anthropological transformation of recent decades; an ability to grasp the presence and development, also within this new capitalist hegemony, of a series of distorted, opaque processes of democratisation (globalisation, individualisation, liberation, disalienation) and of transformation, inspired by the social movements and players of the 1960s; for example, the evolution of popular culture and means of communication, the development of the post-patriarchal family, the furtherance of the feminist and sexual revolutions, and the emergence of new forms of labour organisation.

Of course within neoliberal hegemony, these elements take a neoliberal form, where the progressive elements are entangled with new forms of coercion, self-marketisation and subordination. The altered positioning of knowledge and subjectivity, on the one hand, is linked to an extended relative autonomy of the workers in the labour process. The higher the degree of "scientification" (Verwissenschaftlichung) of activities, the harder it becomes to ensure a direct control over the labour process. However: due to capitalist imperatives autonomy is limited to activities favourable to the competitiveness of the corporation. This forces employees to internalise flexibility, efficiency and entrepreneurial thinking. The real subsumption of labour to capital reaches an historically and qualitatively new stage. Therefore the concrete relation and level of self-exploitation and autonomy is an object of everyday (class) struggle. So the question is: How do we put our finger on those needs and social interests which although mobilised by neoliberalism point in an emancipatory direction; how can these be collectivised; where do group interests contradict each other and to what extent can such contradictions be absorbed and transcended into a political strategy?

2) Gender Relations and Critical Theory

One of the core issues of the (second) women's movements (see e.g. Simone de Beauvoir) was the criticism of the gendered division of labour, the forcing of women into patriarchal matrimonial relations where they were – for the most part – excluded from (full-time) employment and, being dependent on the male family breadwinner, relegated to the realm of the private. Now this becomes obsolete in a strange way precisely through the neoliberal reconstruction of labour relations and welfare state. Female labour becomes self-evident at the same time as jobs become scarce and competition increases because of structural unem-

ployment. In opposition to the paternalist state and family relations of (Western) Fordism, the market passes on the responsibility to the women themselves, linked to the promise that personal activity and willingness to perform can potentially lead to success. In order to offer her whole labour power on the market, a female labourer is – following Marx – not only free to sell her labour power and free from the burden of owning the means of production, but also free from socially necessary reproductive work ("the threefold free female wage worker").

Gender, class and "racial" differences are nowadays combined in a complex way. The working poor in rich capitalist societies is overwhelmingly made up of women, while successful career women have been able to emancipate themselves from old forms of family by falling back on cheap female – often illegal – immigrant labour power for domestic work.

The third wave of the women's movement made it possible to radicalise the way we understand gender relations, by expanding the latter to include the symbolic and linguistic representations of patriarchal relations of domination. In so doing, the historical emancipatory theories linked to the labour movement, among them Marxism, also became an object of feminist critique. From this arises the question of what this expansion and radicalisation of the critical theory of capitalism to include the critique of patriarchy means for today's understanding of the emancipation and development of left transformative strategies. To what extent is it possible to combine the Marxist analysis of social structures and the feminist critique of the symbolic relations of domination?

Nevertheless, the impersonal domination of the market promises new freedoms. Quite correctly, the 68 movement and the women's movement criticised the oppressive aspects of a paternalist and patriarchal welfare state that pressed the free development of individuals into a straight-jacket of standardised ways of life. The neoliberal movement picked up this criticism, turned it around and radicalised it. It presents tendencies to social crises as consequences of "over-regulation", as general crises of state control, that is to be met with down-sizing and deregulating the state. Against welfare-state tutelage neoliberals oppose the emphatic discourse of individual freedom that – articulated differently – is also emphasised by the left; here the reactionary impulse of the neoliberals meets the emancipatory aspiration of the left, but now in the context of altered relations of power. Thus, former 68ers, Greens and social democrats themselves became driving forces of an orientation towards self-responsibility and de-étatisation – a process Gramsci called "trasformismo".

By adopting such a perspective, taking into account the new dimensions and qualities of restructured capitalism, and thus its contradictions, the left may be better equipped to break out of that defensive (and thus conservative), ghettoised corner into which it has been forced by the neocapitalist offensive.

3) New Social Movements

One sign of this incipient radical new direction is the series of social movements that emerged at the turn of the new millennium. The advent of such movements marked an epoch-making transition, as triumphant neoliberalism gave way to an emerging profound crisis in the hegemony of the governing classes on a global scale, a crisis that has constantly deepened ever since. The intention here is not to encourage or lend support to a sterile apology for the movements, and thus overlook their weaknesses, their redundant features and failures and the symptoms of stagnation and crisis which they are apparently now undergoing. Rather, what is needed is an in-depth, critical understanding of the work of these movements, and of the underlying reasons for the emergence of their difficulties and deficits.

Just as neoliberalism could turn people's subjective needs, arising in reaction to the crisis of Fordism, into an instrument for the transformation of the given social relations, so the social movements represent the subjective expression of an objective worldwide necessity, namely the need to intervene against the destructive social effects of an unbridled free market (Karl Polanyi).

One of the most characteristic features of the new movements is that in their struggle for alternative solutions they tend to favour, both linguistically and conceptually, an analysis based on the notion of the public sphere as a common good rather than a state good. The renewed critique of the processes of privatisation and commodification no longer looks to the past, but attempts to go beyond the criticism of the state apparatus, in search of new common institutions (that is, new forms of democratic involvement and control, and new forms of cognitive and practical cooperation).

Another new aspect related to the transformation of capitalism is that the social movements situate the removal of barriers on the part of the globalised economic processes within the context of the global environment and the limits of ecological capacity. It is universally agreed within the radical left that integration of ecological and social thinking is necessary. However, certain theoretical consequences of this are less clear: If, as regards the ecological crisis, concepts like "productivity," "labour," and "development" or "progress" have lost their innocence, how does our understanding of emancipation change? Will these concepts become superfluous or do we need to define them anew? What ethic of producing, distributing (on a global scale) and of consuming does this make necessary? Apparently a requisite in the striving for a new hegemony consists in the integration of an emancipation of very many dimensions. Can this occur on the basis of a single knowledge or does revolutionary subjectivity not rather demand being fundamentally based on a plurality of theoretical world views?

The movements have managed to overcome substantial difficulties and to begin to lay the foundations for a new, critical, transformative subjectivity. This new wave of intermittent, discontinuous, metamorphosing movements offers a material basis and subjectivity for the reconstruction of a political project for change. However, the same movements, while they helped to get the question of transformation back onto the political agenda, have also underlined, once again, the definitive decline of the old model of socialist transformation.

What appears to be necessary here, in fact, is the ability to confront contemporary subjectivity and anthropology critically, but without nostalgia. We need to perceive their ambivalent features and to see them as potential sources of a new, critical antagonism and transformation, as we prepare to face the new challenges before us.

This seems particularly important now that the hegemonic and structural downturn of the capitalist cycle is increasingly evident.

4) New Contents and Forms of Democracy

The same could be said of representative democracy's traditional institutions. Once again, we need to perceive a number of ambivalences, and to realise that representative democracy is not only emptied of significance by the upward transfer of power and sovereignty – by the so-called forces of 'globalisation and empire' – in favour of supra/meta-national capital and power; and to see that it is also being attacked by the broad demand for sovereignty from the grassroots – that is, by people's desire for independence, for the reappropriation of the power to take those decisions affecting them – which is grounded not only in the decline of the legitimacy, representativity and efficacy of all existing representative institutions – but is also being relativised by the wealth of knowledge, skills and means of communication, both individual and network-based, that people now possess, and which both permit and require new forms of regulation (coordination, organisation, connection, cooperation, competition and separation). This is why criticism of the undemocratic trend in contemporary society, which has served as a catalyst for the no-global movement, and of a multitude of other social, political and cultural movements, does not propose the restoration of lost constitutional forms, but the search for other new, democratic, participatory, post-representative forms. Here the questions of new forms of mediating institutions, of different relations between self-organisation and representation in a perspective of absorbing state into civil society, comes into play. Does this mean that, as an emancipatory project, it is a matter of a substitute for representative democracy by direct or participatory democracy, or is it the complementing of representative institutions by participatory practices at which we are aiming? Or will this

question remain open for a long time to come?

What importance – if any – do democracies constituted as nation-states have in the age of globalisation? What role do regional integrating spaces, like Europe, play in an emancipatory strategy, and in what ways can participation and self-determination be conceptualised in a global framework?

Finally, we would like to give another example of ambivalence and shift of paradigm: the creation of a political space which, in a certain sense, lies beyond the paradigm and notion of the political as perceived up to now. Once again, we are talking about a process that has accompanied capitalist globalisation, and may be defined as the privatisation of the public sphere and of social life, the reduction in the public sphere, the parallel extension of the scope of non-public powers, and the emptying out of politics and democracy as such. Nevertheless, there is also another parallel process currently underway, which has accompanied the decreasing faith in the instruments of representative democracy, and which may be defined as the creation of a public space beyond the state, or a public space over which traditional collective players have no control: a space for molecular political transformation. One such example is represented by the private-political practices of the feminist movement, inspired by the critique of patriarchal society and power; another is the creative, social appropriation of the new means of communication, which has developed beyond the state's dominion and the logic of the market. This same ambivalent, extra-state political arena is the terrain upon which the no global (or alter-globalisation) movement has emerged; it has provided that movement the space within which to combat the politics of neoliberalism, to create informal, supranational, undemocratic powers, and to stake its claim as a truly independent protagonist.



Prof. Dr. ...

Hegemony, Nonviolence and Transformation

Giuseppe Prestipino

Giuseppe Prestipino, journalist, trade-unionist, politician, has taught Philosophy at the University of Siena. His most recent book is *Tre voci nel deserto. Vico Leopardi Gramsci* (Carocci, 2006).

Gramsci certainly did not disdain the conquest of power via an assault on its palace. But his idea of revolution perhaps became a “revisionist” one as it was understood by the founding fathers, though it conceded nothing to reformism. Transforming the world is better than turning it upside down in order to leave it essentially as it was before. He defined a (peaceful) “battle between hegemonies”, something not unlike what a not always bad disciple of his was to call “progressive democracy”. He used military metaphors. East and West were also synonyms for two different kinds of warfare (of manoeuvre and of position), but may have implied an alternative between war and non-war, the latter meaning “strategy” for a more certain and more civil victory: in civil society, rather than against the state. He could not have foreseen that seventy years later, the world would have become increasingly “large and terrible”, due partly to the normalisation of day-to-day violence everywhere. I am not referring here only to “major” violence – to permanent warfare and the terrorism that many people hope to eradicate with that method, and which, thanks to that method, is becoming stronger, more widespread and itself “permanent”. I also refer to the (at present “peaceful”) economic struggle among large and small enterprises.

1) Hegemony and Nonviolence

To believe that neoliberalism is triumphant today is an error, even if one ignored the persistent protective measures for agriculture (or considers them “exceptions to the rule”). A boxing match is run according to the rational rules of the sport, but the supreme rule is that the stronger man should win. Our global market is global violence: a war of all against all – pre-ordained, according to that same intrinsic rationality, to assure the victory of the strongest. Do those who control or monopolise the most advanced technologies (I am not saying “intellectual property”, because I usually do not use such foul terms) or strategic natural resources, those who can use outright wage dumping via run-away shops or other forms of pressure on labour, compete on an equal footing with the others, in a “free market”? Is permanent war, with or without military weapons, among the present-day manifestations of the permanent revolution that

the Marx of the Manifesto came close to praising as one of the techniques of capitalist production, and that Gramsci thought typical of both the advent of the bourgeoisie on the political scene and the later counteroffensive phases aimed at preserving the bourgeoisie’s domination over the new proletariat and its subalterns in general?

The “great theorist” to whom Gramsci alludes in his Prison Notebooks¹ is Lenin, protagonist of the revolution in a backward “East”: “[...] the greatest modern theorist of the philosophy of praxis in the area of political struggle and organisation has reassessed the front of cultural struggle, in opposition to the different ‘economistic’ trends, and has built the doctrine of hegemony as a complement to the theory of the coercive state and as the present-day form of the 48 doctrine of the ‘permanent revolution’.” The “permanent revolution” assumes a new form in the October Revolution conceived and realised in the East, but nonetheless remains a “48 doctrine”. Accordingly, I do not think one can infer that every hegemonic struggle conducted under the banner of the philosophy of praxis – even the one conducted in the West and during the new war of position – is in line with the “48” permanent revolution, or that one can say without further qualification, as Fabio Frosini does in a still-unpublished essay, that “The reference to the ‘permanent revolution’ is not replaced outright by the reference to hegemony, which is one form of it”. Frosini maintains even more explicitly that if the working class proves capable of taking up the capitalist challenge of passive revolution, “theoretically and practically”, it can “make the permanent revolution topical once again”. Conversely, it seems to me that although the hegemony of capitalism in the West is prolonging a permanent revolution even in the form of the different passive revolutions carried out up till now, Gramsci sees the post-Lenin anti-capitalist hegemony in a more “advanced” West no longer as a form of the permanent revolution, but as a “replacement” of it. In other words, the “permanence” remains, but not the “revolution”, and the permanence remains in the “form” of “intellectual and moral” reform, whose contents are economic and social reform²

In fact, in Gramsci’s thought the passive revolution is one of the possible syntheses in the dialectical opposition between two conflicting forces, one representing the “old” and the other the “new”. Gramsci dwells at length on the conservative synthesis and mentions only occasionally, though clearly, the possible innovative synthesis. In reality, the passive revolution as a conservative synthesis is an active operation set in motion by the conservative side. And being active – and here Frosini is right – it still has the features of a permanent revolution. In the essay mentioned above, Frosini captures another aspect of the passive revolution: its passivity is not due only to the fact that subalterns undergo it without counteracting vigorously and effectively; in some circumstances, they can accept it willingly, either because of the hegemonic penetration

¹ Antonio Gramsci, “Quaderni del carcere”, edited by V. Gerratana, Turin: Einaudi, 1975, p. 1235.

² Ibid., p. 869. On the out-datedness of the permanent revolution for the western labour movement, Gramsci observes that, “The term is proper to an historical period in which the great mass political parties and the great labour unions did not yet exist, and in many respects society was still in a fluid state, so to speak” (ibid., p. 1566). In the note titled “War of position and war of manoeuvre or frontal war”, he writes, “It remains to be seen whether or not Bronstein’s [Trotsky’s] famous theory about the *permanence* of the movement is the political reflection of the theory of war of manoeuvre (remember Cosack general Krasnov’s remark), in the last analysis the reflection of the general economic-cultural-social conditions of a country in which some portions of national life are embryonic and loose, and cannot become a ‘trench or fortress’” (Q7, 16, 866). Lastly, Gramsci’s replacement of “cultural revolution” with “moral and intellectual reform” in copying a passage from Q8 to text C of Q10 is symptomatic. In Q8, p. 1044, he says that: “If the intellectuals’ task is to determine and organise the cultural revolution...it is clear that the ‘crystallised’ intellectuals are reactionaries, etc”.,

but the phrase we read in Q10, p. 1408) is "to determine and organise moral and intellectual reform". Are the passages in which Gramsci attacks L. Davidovich and Rosa for their wish to prolong the permanent revolution of the proletariat beyond the Leninist and "eastern" October dictated by "opportunistic acquiescence" vis-à-vis the victorious Stalin, or do they flow instead from Gramsci's conviction that in the Communist struggle better suited to the advanced West, what should remain "permanent" is "intellectual and moral reform"? And does the replacement of "cultural revolution" with "moral and intellectual reform" in Q10 aimed at avoiding censorship? Gramsci gave less thought to the censors than is generally believed, especially in the final months of his imprisonment; indeed, even in his last notes he sometimes speaks of the "philosophy of praxis" and sometimes of "historical materialism".

3 Antonio Gramsci, *L'Ordine Nuovo 1919-1920*, Turin: Einaudi, 1955, pp. 157-158.

4 Immanuel Kant, *La religione entro i limiti della sola ragione* (Italian translation), Bari: Laterza, 1985, p. 138.

of the dominant ideas (as commonly understood), or because they have a sort of misplaced trust in the inevitability of their future ascendancy, and think their task is to "wait" until the others' domination "wears out", due in part to the concessions granted to the subaltern strata during the passive revolution. I would add that in today's globalisation, the penetration of the dominant ideas and the consequent de-politicisation of the masses are far more visible than the messianic expectations and fatalistic but hopeful immobility of the defeated. Hugo Chávez, the president of Venezuela, was trying to "use" Gramsci in his own way when, in a speech delivered on June 7, 2007, he saw his country as embodying the specific case of a state/government that takes potentially more advanced reformist positions, and a backwards civil society under the hegemony (in the media, the schools and the Church) of the globally conservative "passive revolution". Chávez was implying that in this case the state/government would have the task of educating, or re-educating, the subaltern strata and their attitude in civil society.

In the new situation, the opponents of this "global" restoration must perforce turn to Gramsci. But Gramsci, who had attributed the "passive revolution" to the attempted conservative synthesis, had used for those who would construct the future city, and for the alternative synthesis they might have brought about, the phrase "intellectual and moral reform" – a phrase loaded with historical meanings, because it evoked processes set in motion as early as the Italian Renaissance, and especially since the Protestant Reformation. Was there a religious component in Gramsci's perspective? While Benedetto Croce theorised a lay religion of liberty (or, rather, of classical liberalism), was Gramsci thinking of a lay religion of socialism or communism? Wasn't he anti-religious? He certainly did not love the Catholic Church, but he recognised emancipatory strivings in early Christianity³, and (as I have said) he lauded the Reformation, seeing in it (as Weber did) a great "propulsive thrust" toward the birth of modern capitalist civilisation, though he also saw a historical limit in all religions. Moreover, a historical critique of religion had already appeared in Kant, when he wrote that religious cults would have duties derived from the honour rendered to the Lord, that is, from the rules in place in the historical climate of feudal secular rulers, not from the practical use of human reason⁴. Gramsci by no means shared the messianic spirit of Walter Benjamin or Ernst Bloch, but he too conceived of his Reformation as strongly innovative, or transformative, slow but permanent (the opposite of reformism), building the future (again, the opposite of reformism) by learning from the past: not only from our mistakes and defeats, but also, and especially, from the victories of the others, the people we want to fight and lastingly defeat.

In the first session of the conference held in Rome from April 27th to 29th, 2007, to celebrate the seventieth anniversary of Gramsci's death, a number of speakers mentioned Indian scholars who seem especially in-

terested in Gramsci's ideas, especially his concepts of subordination and hegemony. As I listened, I imagined a possible comparison, between Gramsci and Gandhi, that no one has yet attempted. I can already hear the objections: Gramsci was not a theorist of nonviolence and Gandhi was not a socialist. Here and there Gramsci criticised Gandhism, just as he criticised Tolstoyism. He talks about deep, uninterrupted reform; he speaks of the struggle between hegemonies, which may mean democracy. He does not speak of a moral and political tension tending to nonviolence, but he may be suggesting it between the lines.

The phrase "intellectual and moral reform" is full of anti-economistic theoretical implications, hence it is unorthodox in relation to canonical Marxism and Leninism. It shares with 19th- and 20th-century reformism only the concept of a journey necessarily made up of gradual steps (not revolutionary leaps, much less of permanent revolutions), the only one suited to the social and political makeup of the "West". But the phrase is clearly distant from both old-style reformism and from Soviet-type experiments, because Gramsci had (at least implicitly) dismissed the concept of an improbable "total replacement" which, according to all the old-school Marxisms, was bound to sweep away all traces or survivals of the capitalist past. Instead, he advocated the idea of a struggle between conflicting hegemonies. The possible reforming and truly innovative outcome of the struggle would be the success of the one hegemony that proved capable of leading to an "ethical-political catharsis" and, in the mode of production too, to the emergence of a growing supremacy of the common or public good over the private – in other words, of communism over capitalism – with a moment of "break" (of the previous relationships of force) that would, however, be visible only in retrospect. In this connection, we might coin the term "permanent reform" to describe a "good" infinity, in that it is now released from the "bad" side of the dialectical opposition, and in that it is another possible synthesis, not necessary or required⁵.

Though Raul Mordenti, in his excellent book, remains faithful to the interpretation of Gramsci as theorist of the "revolution" (in the West), he mentions as appropriate⁶, the interpretation suggested by Eugenio Curiel in his 1944 book *La nostra lotta*: "A diluted qualitative transformation". It seems to me that Mordenti is alluding here to two examples of hegemonic synthesis operating on the antithesis side. The first would be offered by an interpretation of the passage in which Gramsci contrasts Lenin's concept of hegemony with Croce's: Marxism, according to Lenin, absorbed some elements of the idealistic philosophy by turning them upside down⁷. Does the ability to "absorb" concern only the superstructures (Marxism versus idealism), or also the structure (Communism versus capitalism)? The second example introduces a "weak" and incidental variant of the concept of an innovating synthesis, because it adds in some decisions of (real or apparent) retreat from a more advanced

5 Social-democratic reformism is "what Gramsci thinks most distant and inimical", according to Raul Mordenti, *Gramsci e la rivoluzione necessaria*, Rome: Editori Riuniti, 2007, p. 45.

6 Mordenti, op. cit., p. 100

7 Ibid., pp. 46-47.

strategic line. Mordenti may also be alluding to the NEP as a necessary reprise of capitalist elements that had been suppressed prematurely.

Stalin's suppression of the NEP opened the floodgates. But the trajectory of the October Revolution, as seen today, cannot be identical to the one seen at the end of the 20th century. Today we are better acquainted with the power of capitalism, and its ability to force its opponents to "step back", willingly or unwillingly. And we know better the "horrors" of late, fully globalised capitalism. I do not mean to say that we should "acquiesce" to Stalinism of its "horrors". I mean to say we should de-ideologise the necessary critique of that phenomenon, in part by comparing it with the misdeeds perpetrated afterwards, on the global scale and in the former Soviet area, up to the reign of "Czar" Putin, whose "Caesarism" is anything but "progressive". God forbid I should consider Togliatti a forerunner of today's sacrosanct rejection of any clash between civilisations, but the historicist Togliatti tried to make people understand that every continent or country has a history of its own, and that certain "Asiatic" forms (in particular, centuries-old czarism) cannot be eradicated easily, from one day to the next.

But a new and much more radical ethical-political reform, associated with intellectual reform, would be inseparable from an equally pervasive economic-social reform. Indeed (and here too, historical comparisons are helpful), economic and/or social reform can come first, to prepare the (superior) reform which, in a possible future, will affect the complex superstructures centring on ethics, giving them a sort of "primacy": "Can there be cultural reform, meaning civil elevation of the lower strata of society, without a prior economic reform and a change in social position and in the economic world? Hence an intellectual and moral reform cannot but be linked to a programme of economic reform; indeed, the economic reform programme is the concrete way in which any intellectual and moral reform presents itself".⁸ And economic reform makes consensus – a prerequisite for the alliances that will consolidate the new political order – take root and spread.

Collective will is thus formed by stages. I will skip the first one and the second. "A third stage is the one in which people become aware that their own "corporate" interests, in their present and future development, extend beyond the "corporate" circle – that is, the economic grouping – and can and must become the interests of other subordinate groupings. This is the most strictly "political" phase that marks the clear transition from the pure structure to the complex superstructures; it is the phase in which the ideologies that germinated before come into contact and conflict until a single one of them, or at least a single combination of them, tends to prevail, to impose itself, to spread".⁹ In this passage we must underline, first of all, the phrase "their own 'corporate' interests... can and must become the interests of other subordinate groupings". For Gramsci, "social group" and "economic grouping"

⁸ *Quaderni*, pp. 1560-1.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 457.

are synonyms of "social class". Accordingly, in the "most strictly 'political' phase" people must uphold the interests of their own class and also those shared with different classes. Lastly, the reformer must know that even on the terrain of ideologies, after the phase of conflict "a single one of them, or at least a single combination of them", tends to spread, but also to prevail over the other ideologies. And since the different ideologies are, according to Gramsci, expressive of different political directions that are in turn carriers of different social classes, he seems implicitly to suggest that even after the reformer's victory, different political organisations (parties), hence different social groups (classes), can or must operate, provided that a single political ideology, or a single social class, prevails over the others. And in light of these reflections of Gramsci's that lead us to foresee a hegemonised pluralism, he seems to suggest implicitly that if different political organisations are operating, one of the classical requisites of democracy does not disappear in socialism, and that if different social classes remain, the capitalist mode of production does not disappear altogether, just as in all other historical modes of production traces (albeit subordinate) of earlier modes of production did not disappear. An implicit corollary, or at least one that Gramsci does not rule out, is that if the "conflict" turns violent, it is most unlikely that the winning side will be able to impose its hegemony over the losing side.

We can no longer accept, from Marxist theory, the idea that ownership of the means of production is decisive. Bettelheim and others explain this convincingly enough. But is the centrality of the class struggle between wage-earners and capitalists in Marxist theory still a valid idea? In the modern era, what is valid is not the centrality but the character of the original conflict, which is followed today by new and different conflicts, new and different contradictions "alongside" the wage-earners' struggle and not secondary to it, although they too all explode from and within the (new) capitalism. The capitalist (anti-capitalist) character they share deters us from considering them "alongside" each other. In September of 2007, the prestigious and intelligent editor of a Communist daily newspaper replied to a reader's letter more or less in these terms: Saying I am a Communist is no longer enough for me, because I am also a feminist, and also an environmentalist, and also a supporter of the migrants, the excluded, the different, etc. To my mind, the imprecision of this reply lies in the word "also", because the different choices listed here are not added to the Communist option; they are organically joined in the Gramscian concept of Communism, and constitute its backbone, or ribs.

This is not hard to explain. In Gramsci we find the pairing, or antithesis, between the bourgeoisie and the working class, or between capitalists and wage-earners, but as a particular (or perhaps exemplary) species of a wider and more comprehensive antithesis, the one between domi-

nation and subalternity. Not by chance, Gramsci analyses with great insight the “Southern Question” and the coercive – but also hegemonic – forms of subjugation imposed on the southern part of Italy (and, by analogy, the southern part of the world). And likewise not by chance, “subalternity” and “hegemony” are the Gramscian terms most explicitly used today in post-colonial studies, cultural studies, etc., on the various continents. In Gramsci, the concept of subaltern groups includes workers, the so-called sub-proletariat, peasants and the lower strata of society and of the countries we now call peripheral. And Gramsci likewise discusses subaltern cultures or common sense degraded in comparison to the dominant or innovating culture. But we, faithful to the spirit of Gramscian communism, can certainly employ the same concepts of dominion and subalternity to denote patriarchal usages or the subordinate condition of women (including the subordination that sometimes persists in the tradition and mentality of the labour movement), or to denote the dominating and destructive power of technology in the form of capitalist enterprise devoted to pillaging natural resources. If, as I have said, domination over subaltern groups and peripheral peoples can be exercised with hegemonic forms of penetration or assimilation as well as with repressive force, the task of the political movement that aims to achieve emancipation of the subalterns and put an end to all domination and all separation between the rulers and the ruled, is to exercise over the whole of society a hegemonic capacity that prevails over the coercive functions and could in the end replace all coercion. Those who reassess the idea of nonviolence today are justified in appealing to the Gramscian conception of hegemony as far as it connotes neither domination nor even insurrection against domination, but a higher-level “intellectual and moral reform” as the principle of radical transformation within the “superstructures” and within the “structure”.

2) Politics as History and as Project: One Example of a Transforming Transition.

From 1945 on until the early 1970s, the Italian Communist Party's central and local leaders used to open meetings with a lengthy review of world history before imparting instructions and slogans for work to be done in the immediate future. This custom derived on the one hand from the Third International in the post-Lenin period, and accordingly was flawed by doctrinal schematism and pedantic ritual; and, on the other hand, from a Gramscian vision of politics as history, since it is the premise for politics as project and also as short-term intention for “molecular” processes with capillary penetration. In the following pages, I mean to imitate that module, first outlining 20th-century history up to the present time. [...]

We can start with Fordism, or some of the features of Fordism analysed by Gramsci. In the first place, Fordism had understood that a relatively closed economy, such as the ones operating in individual countries at that time (including the United States), where most of the population still consisted of workers or employees in general, would be hit sooner or later by a crisis of overproduction, due to underconsumption by precisely those lower strata of the population. Fordism thus understood that cutting costs by raising productivity with Taylorism and the assembly line would not suffice, but that it was necessary to establish a virtuous circle between profit increases and wage increases. Profits would rise if workers' per-capita output increased and if their purchasing power increased at the same time, because workers were also consumers. This remedy for the threat of cyclical crises worked, at least in part. It might have been more effective had the Fordist-Taylorist experiment been generalisable to all sectors of industry and industrialised agriculture.

Still, it was not effective enough. Particularly the crisis of 1929, with its prolonged effects, persuaded part of capital that it was possible and necessary to further increase popular consumption through public intervention capable of absorbing into work activity (especially works of public utility) a great deal of unemployment, by then chronic, and equipped to guarantee additional benefits to dependent labour in the form of free or low-cost health care, pensions, workers' compensation, temporary unemployment insurance and, in some cases, in the form of partial economic planning, which according to Gramsci had already been tried in the United States by the auto industry, and in Italy, more extensively, by the Fascist government. From the theoretical standpoint, these ideas became known as Keynesianism. From the political standpoint, they were the foundations of the future welfare state. After World War II, and especially within the geographic boundaries of old Europe, the welfare state extended its responsibilities, or its function, which was still subsidiary (as regards wages, which were rising). During that period and in that geopolitical region, two new and interlinked factors appeared: greater combativeness in the working classes and, on the side of capital, a greater fear of socialist backlash. The two factors were linked because both received impetus from the existence, and the new power, of the Soviet bloc (from the example – encouraging for the workers, alarming for capital – seen in the Soviet Union and its satellites).

Up to this point, there is nothing new beyond the overall diagnoses of many experts, historians or economists, ideologically not aligned on the side of capital. What happened afterwards, and why? This is more complicated, because many concurrent causes of transformation and crisis in capitalism came into play. On the one hand, the collapse of the so-called socialist countries made the world of labour less courageous but also made capital less fearful. On the other hand, the so-called globalisation

of the market – that is, reunifying the world under the domination of capital, and surpassing the old, relatively decentralised markets that focused mainly on their countries' domestic regions – renders obsolete the policy of high wages at home and government guarantees to labour. On the contrary, globalisation turns into an obstacle to the expansion of capital that which formerly facilitated its growth. Today capital is increasingly bent on conquering external markets, and at the same time expatriating itself in order to procure low-cost labour. It is true that productivity growth rates fuelled by innovations in product and process technology are declining, especially in Europe, in relation to those of the age of the welfare state. It is true that the growth of commodity production, hence of GDP (which is more or less the same thing), is declining in the West. And it is true that today GDP growth rates in the United States and Europe lag far behind those of countries like China and India. In fact, wage pressure and stronger unions used to stimulate rapid innovation, hence increases in productivity. But in the new world market, let me repeat, competitiveness based on technological revolutions, particularly revolutions in information technology (Silicon Valley, etc.), though not negligible, becomes a secondary element compared with cutting labour costs, downsizing public welfare and its costs, and not least the size of the enterprise, that is, its ability to redistribute costs and benefits on a larger scale, as regards both cost outlay and the quantities of goods put on the market.

Some of the new "costs" have been mistakenly overlooked by many economists. For instance, the cost resulting from the ever more serious environmental crisis of our times has been overlooked (but not by James O'Connor). If we think above all about this crisis, capitalism's creative destruction (Schumpeter) now appears instead to be destructive creation, which antagonistic forces should counter, so to speak, with conservative construction: the construction of a radically new order capable at the same time of preserving the fundamental resources of nature and culture inherited from the historical past of our species. We usually say, rightly, that enterprises aim to turn a profit, hence they have no interest in preventing the environmental crisis; on the contrary, they are compelled to aggravate it. But we usually fail to take account of certain negative effects of environmental deterioration that weigh increasingly on corporate balance sheets. In the first place, we do not take account of the number of working days that individual employees miss (but the employer pays for) due to illness caused by polluted air or similar banes (unwholesome diet due to multinational corporations' manipulation of food, urban stress caused by the unlivability of places that have become anthills of slow-moving cars and trucks, and so on). Life expectancy has increased, but we usually do not consider that the frequency of sickness per year of life has increased too, and not only in elderly people, but also in people of working age and in their families, and that health-care costs

have increased, whether paid for by the government (out of taxes, including corporate income taxes) or by insurance companies (which, being enterprises themselves, help lower the average profit rate if they are forced to pay out more for their insurees). It must be said that the labour movement too, during the 20th-century "golden age", was neither anxious about, nor even perceived, the general damage that even then the environment was suffering or about to suffer as a result of headlong growth in the production of goods (especially unnecessary ones).

The annual cost in the European Union of respiratory diseases is estimated at approximately 102 billion euros, which comes to € 118 per capita. The greatest part of this cost, 47.4%, results from lost working days, which account for € 48.3 billion. Next comes hospitalisation, at € 17.8 billion, or 17.5%. Outpatient care costs € 9.1 billion (8.9%), and prescription medicine € 6.7 billion (6.6%). A total of around 66,155 working days are lost every year by 100,000 EU inhabitants due to respiratory disease. Bronchial pneumonia is the principal cause (62.4%) of absence from work, followed by asthma (21.4%) and pneumonia (7.6%) (Source: ELF). These data give management and its political representatives another good reason to resist limits on temporary work: if a temporary employee gets sick too often, the employer can simply not renew his contract.

I must mention other well-known transformations of the "Fordist" period and of the current phase. The growth of consumption, in particular popular consumption, has gradually led to the growth of many forms of commercial mediation between production and mass consumption. It has led to expansion of the services sector, articulated either as a function of the sale of products or as the provision of services. In the Fordist period and during a good part of the 20th century, most of the service sector was made up of small businesses that on the one hand earned a small profit on industrial or agri-industrial goods, but on the other hand broadened the pool of consumers of industrial products, hence returned profits to industrial enterprises. Taken as a whole, commercial capital was subordinate to industrial profit, so it did not eat into, but invigorated, the latter's dominant function. Conversely, a phenomenon that characterises the present period is the growing concentration of commercial capital; that is, the formation of giants that tend to make life very difficult for small merchants or eventually put them out of business; they thus tend to share industrial capital's dominant position. In many cases they create a true symbiosis between production and distribution activities (for instance, supermarkets whose shareholders include industrialists or owners of information-media chains). Even the mafias have turned modern, shifting from parasitic intermediation to the management of productive enterprises; a typical example is the building industry, with its appendices of speculation and corruption. Something of this kind is occurring in raw materials and energy sources, particularly fossil

fuels. In the past, the owners/controllers of mines or oil fields (such as the old Arab emirates) could be likened to landowners, and their income was a result of investments by industrial capitalists. Today the great oil companies are part of the industrial complex, or, in the United States, the military-industrial complex.

Toward the end of the 20th century, something changed as a result of globalisation, partly as the ceaseless movement of capital from one country or continent to another, and partly as the need to form concentrations capable of competing in the global market, thanks to their larger size and the greater quantity of products they sell. Because of these two aspects of present-day capitalism, we are witnessing an expansion of financial capital, whose tendency to dominate was noted, perhaps prematurely, by Lenin. Credit, or rather other people's money which entrepreneurs need to finance their growing investments in productive ventures, makes the latter (in certain respects) a dependent variable. The leading role is shifting to high finance. And for industrial enterprises to be able to pay interest on borrowed capital, as well as advertising costs (now an indispensable tool in competition), they need more than ever to save on costs, above all the cost of labour. There is a social aspect in this phenomenon that cannot be overlooked: consumer debt. On the one hand, underpaid workers are reluctant to buy less, now that they earn less, a reluctance fomented by all the advertising and consumer ideology propagated by the power of the new media. On the other hand, many poor souls in the West, especially in the United States, see themselves as potential capitalists – another effect of a perverse ideological campaign – and as a result buy measly stock or take out loans and especially home mortgages. Indebted capitalists, indebted consumers, the world's most powerful nation deeper in debt than any other: this mix can hardly fail to become explosive unless capital comes up with ways to defuse the bomb. The worker becomes a "capitalist" in part by assimilating the "animal spirits" of intercompetitive capitalism; that is, by allowing himself to be won over by old and new ideologies that lead him to consider not his boss but his fellow worker – especially if an immigrant – as the "true" enemy to be fought (and hated).

Some people, even some advocates of extreme neoliberalism, take to be incontrovertible the primacy of economics supposedly enunciated and argued by Marx. At most, they attribute its most recent supremacy to the economic-financial magnates. But if we reread Marx, especially his unpublished writings, we realise that the "development of productive forces" he thought to be the engine of history (he ought to have said "the engine of modern capitalist history") – that is, its premise – was and is in reality a result of the unending technological revolution he celebrated, and insightfully analysed, in many writings, above all in the famous fragment on machines. What is driving the radical changes taking place today is the rapid "eclipse" of the gigantic old machines, replaced

by ever more agile electronic devices that can easily be transferred from the old industrial cities to the farthest corners of the planet. The result is not the end of wage work, but the renewed primary relevance of the cost of labour. For the purposes of competition, financial capital, followed by industrial and commercial capital, must reduce that cost every which way, and governments are forced to lend their support to the perverse logic that "saves" the so-called "wealth of nations" by ruining global society. This trend can be reversed only by putting an end to the primacy of the scientific-technological revolution and its "laws". Gramsci invoked in their stead the primacy of ethical-political reason. [...]

Equality of the Sexes?

Feminism Reloaded¹

Birge Krondorfer



Heinrich Sichrovsky schmuggelt, als Arbeiter verkleidet, Wertpapiere und persönliche Dokumente der Kaiserin Anna Karolina aus der Stadt.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Having been asked to speak on "(leftist) feminism as a liberation theory" on the grounds that "by and large knowledge of the theoretical problems involved in sexual relations is still amazingly limited", I must confess to finding the prospect daunting on three counts. First: Is it really true? Second: How is it possible? Third: Am I up to answering these questions?

The first question will be answered one way or another in the course of the lively discussion that I hope will follow. The second question is the subject of the following remarks, and the third question is being answered right now in a rather ambivalent manner: for a simple "yes" may be taken either as an expression of arrogance or as an indication of the impossibility of covering in such a short space of time theories and policies that took decades to take shape and a history that goes back for centuries, if not millennia. Also, my perspective is closely bound up with the women's movements, the examination of which – in a double sense – is our concern here. I assume that I am in company where "partisanship" is not viewed with suspicion, and would like to talk about just some of the ways – as more is not possible in the time available – in which sexual relations can be viewed as political relations. I will begin by giving a brief overview of feminist theories before attempting to draw some conclusions for the present context.

To start with, here are a few quotes to mark out my position: "And so in reality the exchange of wealth (90%) takes place among men." (Mascha Madörin)

"My dream is to be able to see with the eyes of a woman." (Gregor Gysi)

"Male imperialism either marginalises women or trains them to be the same (homologous) as men." (Jean-Francois Lyotard)

The sexes have become "equal" and the division of labour between them is a historical success that capitalism in Europe and the USA can claim as its own. For women capitalist globalisation means that they do two thirds of the world's work, while only receiving a tenth of men's income: "If women were to present the bill for their work, the world would go bankrupt." (Gerburg Treusch-Dieter)

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¹ This text is in the form of an undelivered speech.

Our whole society tries to neutralise the otherness...in the aseptic flow of communication, in the interactive effusion, in the illusion of exchange and contact. ... The whole spectrum of the denied otherness rears up again as a self-destructive process. (Jean Baudrillard)

"We don't want a larger slice of the poisoned cake." (Devaki Jain)

May I assume that what the Indian feminist means by the symbol of the "cake" is something that none of us want? Or perhaps we do in secret?

"The teleology of the left – the only one that rightly or wrongly interests us – may be much talked about and bring about good election results. Nevertheless, no one lives in accordance with its values, and there is probably no one who is prepared to give up his or her real living conditions for its sake..."² This perception, formulated 30 years ago, has a topical ring – don't you think – and we seem to have been here before, despite all the appearance of fundamental changes in "the" left in recent times: the advanced (ego) individualisation leaves no one unaffected, and election results look quite rosy again. It's so nice to have a seat in the European Parliament, for example. So perhaps it is a matter of demanding a slice of the "poisoned cake"?

Blind Conformity

By now we are closer to the problem at hand. A minor digression toward a question that no one seems to want to raise any more will help us find the way to a critical gender policy: who bakes the "cake"? And who would like to attend the tea party?

Absolutely everyone talks about "participation" nowadays, as much in mainstream as in alternative scenarios. It has become common currency. But we have to ask ourselves what is to be participated in?

The very term "participation" has a certain ambiguity, as it can be understood in a passive (= "having") or an active (= "taking") manner. Broadly speaking, a distinction can be made between "dividing up what is held in common" and "helping to determine what happens in the community". Nowadays, however, participation is often identified with the "individual" in the literal sense, who wants/has to take part here, there and everywhere. What tends to be forgotten, however, is – very much in the sense of the citizen – the dialectic of co-determination and responsibility this entails. Is this a case of an old virtue being turned upside down in a post-Fordian sense? Are the Emperor's new clothes now to be available for all? This may be where the real trap lies. Ever since the turn towards neo-conservatism, i.e. the devaluation of institutionalised co-determination organisations, participation rates high in the neoliberal dis-

² Jean Francois Lyotard: Das Patchwork der Minderheiten. Für eine herrenlose Politik. Reihe: Internationale Marxistische Diskussion 69, Berlin, 1977, p. 40

course: both at the "centre" and on the periphery. "Since the participation phase (wage agreements, co-determination, concerted actions) together with its bonuses (jobs, minimum wages, redundancy payments schemes) has been inexorably drawing to a close...the participation ethos has been steadily in the ascendant... He who has nothing left, takes what he gets."³

But who decides on distribution (which as we know is anything but a redistribution) or the extent of it? Why are those "on high" suddenly so keen on participation from "below"? What "cunning reason" [Hegel's "List der Vernunft, tr. "] is behind all the praise of participation? There is an insidious suggestion of a democratic complicity, as required by today's loudly proclaimed strategy of self-empowerment. That is to say, the participants must learn to govern and regulate themselves. To put it bluntly, they are being encouraged to become accomplices. This poses an alarming question: are we living in a simulated democracy?

At this point we "apprehensively" approach the problem of the still awaited sexual democracy as it is essentially understood.

So I would like to take the plunge and refer to a forgotten (or denied, or suppressed) political conception from the tradition of the women's movements, namely that reflective feminist option which never indulged in a state feminism, a party feminism, or an egalitarian feminism – although all these were recognised as everyday political necessities, of course – but which pursued a "radical" vision of refusal to accept the status quo. Those who belong to small or large but real communities with a deeply sceptical attitude towards a patriarchal order that lives from the exclusion of women, cannot blithely take part in something whose aim it is to degrade those who do not fit in and force them to adapt. Taking part in something suggests equality and entails system immanence, which was not what the autonomous women or their movement were after.

In this interpretation, participation – however aware one may be of an inevitable (internalised) participation in the system – is not a way of positioning oneself to make really effective changes. For participation is no protection against being taken over. The insistence on difference(s) – whether by deliberate aloofness, critical distance, refusing to help stir the cake batter, or staying distant from power (which lives on conformity) – eludes uncanny conformity to norms.

As ingredients of a politics other than realpolitik, terms like resistance, dissidence and subversion might well regain their attractiveness.

The "Sexless" Left

Those of you who have been listening carefully will not have failed to notice where my political sympathies lie – and, albeit in a "transformed"

³ Wolfgang Fach: "Partizipation", in U. Bröckling, S. Krasmann, T. Lemke (eds.): Glossar der Gegenwart, Frankfurt/Main 2004, p. 201

way, still do. For a quarter of a century my political activities concerned the organizing of women by women and had its roots in the so-called autonomous women's movement, which used to mean things like not joining any party, no matter how left-wing, progressive and pro-women. A "party", of whatever shade, meant – and unfortunately still means – structural and hence essentially male domination – and the denial of this fact by the unreasonable and unreasoning identification of being a man with being a human being, and the accompanying assumption that "gender" is allegedly equal (or egalitarian).⁴ It was evident that the pursuit of a feminist women's politics carried out exclusively by women made sense, and it was clear that the "revolutionary" perspective had as its primary object not the class conflict, but the conflict between the sexes.⁵ The abolition of male domination was ideally combined with the abolition of all domination, which was why the triad of "race, class and sex" had always been mentioned in the same breath, as the marks of oppression and exploitation. To put it quite simply: The struggle against patriarchy was foregrounded because it formed the background of capitalism and imperialism. There were countless disputes between left and "radical" feminists – enough to fill whole bookshelves – and this generally led to divisions, on both theoretical and practical planes. For adherents of the one strategy the "women only" approach was too little, while for others their male colleagues were intolerable, especially as regards their claim to be the political representatives of a universal humanism.⁶

At present the second position seems to be on the way out, since capitalism in its neoliberal guise suggests the freedom of everyone to do and be what they like. At least in our prosperous climes. In this state of "freedom", and on the basis of the basic women's rights that have been won and are now taken for granted, women's emancipation seems to have been accomplished and thus made itself superfluous. Every public proclamation of a critical-feminist viewpoint sounds downright quaint and embarrassing. Everywhere. Everywhere?

Radical left positions are getting the same treatment, where they are not being demonised. It is a remarkable phenomenon of our time that the condemnation of every clearly defined political attitude as (outdated) ideology is accompanied by growing unease at the gross distortions in social relations. To adapt a bon mot of Günter Anders who said (in 1964!): "Let's not be shy. Let's be unfashionable. Let's talk about capitalism", I would like to say: Let's not be shy. Let's be unfashionable. Let's talk about sexism.

At present my interest focuses on more involvement and reflection in "mixed" alternative contexts (and if not within the "left", where else?), although without today's oh so popular parlour game – from the left of the spectrum through the centre to the right – of cheering on the women's movements. In view of the world situation – and of the women in it – there is an urgent need for a critique both of society and of cap-

4 Exceptions prove the rule – or they wouldn't be exceptions.

5 This did not mean, on the other hand non-cooperation – for example in connection with international Women's Day – with leftist and other alternative women's organizations. It may be, however, that this is a specifically Austrian phenomenon, because in a country that is not only territorially small but deeply conservative (Catholic clericalism, no serious attempt to confront its own fascist past till the mid-1990s, ...) co-operation is a practical necessity.

6 Yet one cannot help but feel nostalgia for that period, as there really was something at stake.

italism, this time without leaving out the gender issue. And that may be why I am standing here before you both as draftee and volunteer. And with no or fewer reservations than many young people or even some members of my own generation, about an institutionalised left; no doubt because they have no traumatic memories of party discipline, because the great (including the Marxist) master narratives arouse distrust in any case, and because a feminist experience of life and knowledge acts as a protection against being taken over. For it must be said in all clarity that the male comrades and (most) of the practising female comrades (historically) never gave a hoot about the so-called woman question, as it was not considered an important part of solving the world's problems.⁷

Report from the Women's Movement

Feminist theories and gender studies have filled whole libraries – and present a lot of contradictory findings.⁸ But do not imagine they have in any sense found their way into the generally recognised academic canon. On the contrary, the university reforms have ushered in a retrograde tendency, and gender studies – despite their fashionable trappings as gender expertise – have been relegated to the backwater of special study courses. But that is another story.

By now you will understand that I can only present the complexity of the material in a highly compressed form (and hopefully without redundancy), i.e. that I have to be selective.⁹

I will do this first by identifying the various tendencies within the women's movement, and secondly by briefly presenting the various paradigms of feminist theory.

A political statement that in principle combines all theorems and forms of practice might be: "Feminism as a politics of transformation is aimed at changing social institutions and overcoming all forms of oppression, and not at gaining more space for particular groups of women within existing structures. This politics is not only in the interests of all women, but of all human beings. Nevertheless – or for this very reason – it is a challenge to the defenders of traditional patriarchal power structures."¹⁰

First of all we can trace chronologically five currents that still occur and which existed alongside and in conflict with one another, both in harmony and intermingled. This is worth stressing as it shows that the women's movements were not organised on an authoritarian or hierarchical basis, although of course there were always passionate debates about the right perspective at any given time.

7 I don't mean to deny the existence, thankfully acknowledged, of EL-fem, the feminist network within the ELP.

8 I should say that I know of no social movement with an academic apparatus that is so self-critical (not always in the friendliest of ways, alas). The discoveries this led to, such as the deconstruction of racism in its own ranks, were then snapped up by scholars in other fields and movements that did not, however, feel it necessary to credit the source. A similar "fate" overtook the methodological variety and interdisciplinarity which characterized gender studies right from the start and were later loudly proclaimed to be general academic paradigms worthy of emulation without a single reference to the women who had developed them.

9 All that follows refers to developments in second-wave feminism, i.e. since the 1960s.

10 Elisabeth List: *Feminismus als Kritik*, in E. List/H. Studer (eds.), *Denkverhältnisse. Feminismus und Kritik*, Frankfurt/Main. 1989, p. 10

Liberal dialectic (bourgeois) feminisms	Equal social rights
Socialist feminisms	Class and production relations
Radical feminisms	Patriarchy, forced heterosexuality
Cultural (gynocentric) feminisms	Upgrading of female identity
Post-structural feminisms	Symbolic order; "doing gender"

These labels will have to suffice here, but even in this abridged form they reflect the bandwidth of areas of struggle and investigation as well as the complex and interlocking levels of women's subordinate status. An important feature which distinguishes feminism from other alternative movements and critical areas of scholarship is the inclusion of the private sphere in those of politics and intellectual inquiry. The recognition that the political is also private and vice versa is one of the essential "achievements" of 20th-century political thought and, because it raised the issue of male violence, is "naturally" not recognised as such.

At odds with and inside these divergent tendencies there were waves of heated debates on rights of interpretation and priorities relating to recognition theory and political demands and aims.¹¹ We might mention the wages-for-housework debate, the lesbian/hetero debate, the female-accomplices debate, the subsistence-economy debate, the institutionalisation debate, the internationalisation debate, the PorNo debate, the migration debate, the racism debate, the transgender debate ..., to name but a few.

Secondly, there has always been wide-ranging discussion and reflection on the (changing) paradigms of feminist theory, so the following digest is just my subjective view. Four basic lines can be identified:

Equality theories	Equality of the sexes, equality of treatment, women as a homogeneous group
Theories of difference	Equal value of the different features of the sexes, women are heterogeneous
Deconstructive theories	Logo/phallogocentrism constitutes a whole culture; woman does not actually exist
Constructionist theories	Gender arises interactively/performatively, bisexuality is a construct

That should shed some light on a lot of history crammed into a short space of time.

General (global) dynamics produce big question marks – and some powerless rage. One of the main maxims of the women's movement – the

¹¹ I refer here to the debates in the German-speaking countries. In the UK, for example, the Marxist-feminist debate was conducted on a broader basis than here.

self-determination of women – has been misappropriated and twisted to fit the discursive category of the neoliberal self, which is concerned with optimizing its own interests, when it is not concerned with sheer survival – as is particularly the case with female existences. In terms of intellectual history this shift can be expressed both in the postmodern "subject" debate and in the context of feminist theories. The struggle against oppression and exploitation was primarily directed against the female object status (egalitarian feminism) and was consequently in favour of the subjectification of women (differential feminism). At this historical moment – i.e. from the 1980s to today – a certain male "cunning reason", under the pretence of demoting man from his role of master, declared the subject to be dead, any authorship to be obsolete, and progressive politics to be reactive. Advanced feminist theory was prepared to accept this offer to dissolve the subject in so far as it prevented a concept of "femininity as otherness", being confined to the adaptation of a rigid, genuine, quasi-natural and prescribed female subject (deconstructionist feminism). With the discursive switch to the total abolition of the female subject as just a registered and ascribed body – with simultaneous dematerialisation – "woman" (and hence the subject of feminism) was discarded in favour of a never-to-be-pinned-down, but constantly self-determinable identity (constructionist or post-feminism).

At this point I cannot refrain from remarking that I have not encountered any "normal"¹² male who has to ask himself whether he exists, or is allowed to exist as such.

Before I come to the last part, in which I will allow myself a personal-political assessment and a modest appeal, I should like to say of the internal post/feminist dispute how necessary these critical voices were, however difficult and even painful the disputes may have been. They continue to carry an explosive charge, so that the walls of the apparently self-evident are in permanent danger of crumbling, which keeps us always on our toes.

Feminist Enlightenment

Although I promised to state a personal judgment, I would not like to have it regarded as private, and will therefore presume on your patience by offering some quotations which I consider to be very apposite.

On sexual relations:

"The term 'sexual relations' is intended to facilitate a critical examination of how the sexes are harnessed to overall relations. It assumes what itself is a result of the relations to be studied: the existence of 'sexes' in the sense of the men and women to be found in history. The complementarity in procreation is the natural basis on which social forms emerge in the historical process, and also determines what has to be re-

¹² This refers to the interesting question of why there are hardly any left-wing homosexuals. Has the left always been a heterosexual affair? Someone should look into this.

garded as 'natural'. In this way the sexes emerge from the social process as unequal, their non-equality becomes the basis of further outgrowths, and sexual relations become fundamentally regulated in all social formations. They permeate or are central to questions of division of labour, power, exploitation, ideology, politics, law and religion. Morality, sexuality, the body, the senses, speech – indeed there is no field that can be meaningfully studied without also studying the way in which sexual relations take shape and are formed. The only way to avoid this is to assume – as scholars have traditionally done – that there is only one sex, the male sex, and that all relations are thus to be represented as male."¹³

On Women

"They continue to hold their own by working twice as long and harder than men, as though they were punishing themselves for existing. Unpaid in the family and underpaid at work, they are the last to be hired and the first to be fired, although lately we are assured of the opposite. Yet women make up almost two-thirds of all the unemployed, social welfare recipients, part-time workers, and holders of jobs not subject to social insurance, and most of the single parents. Yet they are prepared to shoulder this double burden, although it is exclusively at their expense. It is true that in so doing women aim at boosting a sense of their own value, but this cannot be realised within this circle. For it is negated to the extent that nothing is more profitable than someone of no value who produces value without receiving at least the equivalent of social recognition for it. In this respect, too, we are now assured of the opposite: women are present, although still under-represented, at all levels of society, including business, academia and politics. Yet this very "too" expresses a refusal of recognition, thanks to which emancipation has so far brought nothing more than a further 'civilisation' of women without any of their demands being met."¹⁴

¹³ Frigga Haug: Zur Theorie der Geschlechterverhältnisse, in: <http://www.linksnet.de/drucksicht.php?id=552> Accessed: 25.2.08

On the Difference Between the Sexes

"This is the way in which man-as-human-being plays out the parable of the self. He finds and recognises himself as what is special in his universalisation. Woman, on the other hand, finds that she is only special as the eternally other that is contained in the universal neuter, human-being-as-man. ... Sexual limitation in its male form, that universalises itself by making itself absolute, celebrates its sex in the process without, however, taking cognizance of the difference that is rooted in it and in which it consists. ... The consequence of this for woman is that she cannot

¹⁴ Gerburg Treusch-Dieter: Frauen gemeinsam sind stark - aber was stärkt Frauen? Köpfung als Strategie. Atentatsachen und Terrortraumata. Revisionen zum 11. 9. 2001, in: <http://www.treusch-dieter.de/> Accessed: 2.3.08

recognise herself in the thinking and speech of a universal subject that does not include her, indeed excludes her ... This makes woman the universal 'human being' with the 'addition' of female sexuality. ... Thinking in terms of the difference between the sexes is thus a difficult task, for it is subject to the obliteration on which Western thought is based and has developed."¹⁵

I will sum up in five theses:

Sexual relations are socially produced relations and regulate sexual relations as power relations.

Politics is structurally and substantively "men's business". Men create "meaning".

What women do is undervalued and unrecognised, no matter what it is or how hard they work. Emancipation has so far meant adaptation to male standards.

The West cannot know of or think in terms of the difference between the sexes, since man has established himself as the universal subject.

In this interpretation, feminism as a liberation theory for politicians and activists of the "European left" should be seen first and foremost as a theory of recognition and perception.

What can a European left do if it wants to learn from feminist insights and prospects?¹⁶

- "Re-Form the Revolution" could at last be understood in a feminist sense, since so far all "revolutions", whatever their slogans, have been able to live with the "second sex" notion perfectly well.
- A genuine desire to practise a pluralist politics means first of all no longer avoiding the gender divide, but confronting it. Lip service of the usual kind, claiming to embrace "women, migrants, homosexuals, the disabled, etc., etc.", only draws attention to the fact that men do not appear in this equivalence chain, and are thus above and beside it.
- This in turn shows that we are still talking about a supposed or voluntaristic proxy politics. And plurality threatens to degenerate into an empty pluralism – analogous to neoliberal ideology.
- Feminism as a theory of political liberation – from what, to do what? I suggest we start by having women come to their senses and having men come to their senses. Which is not the same. Freedom for women would not be against something (men), but for something (women), while freedom for men would primarily be against something, namely their habit of regarding themselves as the general "self".
- One conclusion: institutionalisation of formative political processes, demanding and promoting self-determination and self-development in the "trialectic" of given facts, collective relations, and subjective realities: for men it would mean the importance of self-diagnosis – which would involve opposing the eternal repetition of the same thing; for women it would mean the importance of self-awareness –

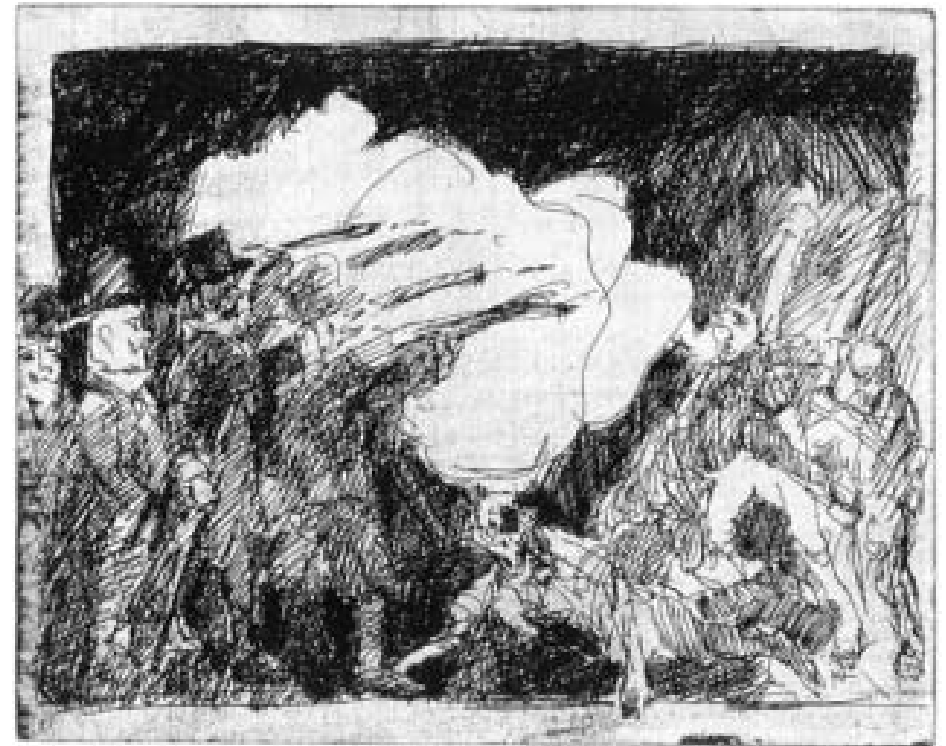
¹⁵ Adriana Cavarero: Ansätze einer Theorie der Geschlechterdifferenz, in: *Der Mensch ist zwei. Das Denken der Geschlechterdifferenz*, Diotima (group of feminist philosophers from Verona), Vienna 1993 (2nd ed.), p. 67ff

¹⁶ A reversal of the question, if possible at all, would require further reflection and might be stimulating.

which would involve joining others in resistance to eternal sameness. How this might look in practice could provide material for another lecture and a lot of discussions.¹⁷

As a parting thought I offer you the words of the black, lesbian, feminist writer and activist Audre Lorde:

"I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own. And I am not free as long as one person of colour remains chained. Nor is any one of you!"



Heine

¹⁷ In the establishing of a left educational foundation, for example, one would have to make sure that the subjects of sexual relations and politics, and gender as politics, were an immanent part of the curriculum and the agenda. And not just for the benefit of the students, but also as an institutionalized self-reflective process for politicians and activists.

Radical Politics and Ideals

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In the Preface to the Critique of Political Economy Marx regards law, politics, religion, art and philosophy as “ideological forms” in which social struggles are fought out (MEW 13, 8). Recalling the earlier analysis in *The German Ideology*, Engels later called them “ideological powers” (MEW 21, 302). The primary force is, for him, the state. For Wolfgang Fritz Haug (1987, 61), the concept of ideological powers facilitates the “attempt at an historical-materialist theory of ideology”.

To put it briefly, the approach of Haug and of the Projekt Ideologie-Theorie (PIT) can be understood as a rethinking of the concept of contested practices and discourses, inaugurated by Gramsci and Althusser, and, with the help of Engels’ (MEW 21, 302), the concept of ‘ideological powers’ (ideologische Mächte). They rework, so to speak, the neutral conception of ideology as contested practices or discourses by critically examining forms of socialisation (Vergesellschaftung). The approach focuses on the critique of practices and discourses which reproduce social relations of domination by generating consent through ideal socialisation ‘from above’.

The ideological powers are by no means solid formations, capable of fulfilling their socialisation function without friction. On the contrary, they are, from the start, plagued by internal controversies and struggles; the contradictions of society can be contained only by absorbing them into the orbit of the ideological powers. In so doing, the contradictions become translated into specific ideological struggles, i.e. struggles shaped by those ideological forms. The socialisation ‘from above’ becomes realised – to the extent that it does – in and through these ideological struggles between different or even antagonistic forces.

For Haug and PIT, the critical point is to grasp that the development of an ideological power also contains the development of a specific discursive sphere of ‘celestial’ political, juridical, moral, religious etc. ideas and values. The point here is that inside the ideological powers ideological struggles are fought in relation to these ‘celestial’ ideas and values (God/King/Fatherland, ‘Law and Order’, ‘National interests’ etc.). These are strings on which the political actors play their tunes. That is, to carry on the struggle, the actors must “place themselves – ‘from below’ – in relation” to these ideas and values (ibid. 94). In so doing, mundane economic or social interests are transformed via political projects into ideological articulations, producing distilled and displaced ideological struggles over social contradictions and relations.

The duplication of the ideological powers into concrete practices and “celestialised images and values” (ibid. 95) renders them somewhat unstable. For instance, the values of an ideological power can be turned against itself; thus it is possible – as the Reformation shows – “to appeal to God or to lay claim to the Holy Bible against the Church” (ibid. 95). Further more ideological powers encounter problems whenever their practical interests clash with their celestialised aspirations. “When social antagonisms articulate themselves within this split, those from ‘below’ may aggregate anti-ideological (e.g. plebeian) elements to the invoking of supreme ideological values.” (ibid. 96). Of course, even anti-ideological plebeian expressions of disillusionment do not have a prescribed and fixed political meaning, to say nothing of a revolutionary ‘essence’: “Make love, not war” can also turn into “Make love, not revolution”. The concrete meaning is not given, but is established in antagonistic processes of articulation.” (ibid. 96-7)

There are, however, counter-tendencies reinforcing the stability of the ideological powers. Most importantly, ideological struggles are always pre-formed, because, after all, ideological powers have the advantage of defining their parameters. The struggles tend to become translated into the ‘language’ of the particular power within which they are fought; so, for example, struggles fought within the domain of law take on the form of juridical dispute. They become, in other words, particularised according to the division of labour of the ideological powers, confined to their limits. As such, they are hardly capable of challenging the ensemble of unequal social organisation which the powers incarnate. So, even though the ideological struggles may render the realisation of the socialisation ‘from above’ very complicated – for instance, their outcome “will never be totally one-sided” (ibid. 97) – they do not put an end to it.

We can illustrate some of the above points by an example of what Haug calls “the antagonistic invocation of community” (ibid. 88-98). When, in the course of history, the development of privileges begins to decompose old forms of solidarity, the disadvantaged will lay claim to them. In this process the communitarian elements begin to function as values to which not only the disadvantaged but also the advantaged relate their projects.¹ This supplements what we said above in one important respect: ideological values are brought forth not only by the ideological powers but “it is the force below that decisively contributes to the constitution of the celestialised” (ibid. 95).

The invocation of communitarian elements emerging from different, even antagonistic, quarters is the antagonistic invocation of community – or “the ideological restitution of community” through which the real “disintegration of community stabilises itself” (ibid.). Of course, these elements will be articulated differently in various opposing discourses and projects; nevertheless, they exemplify such “concepts, values, forms” in which “the antagonistic claims (...) necessarily meet” (ibid.). These “con-

¹ In this connection, a critical analysis of the recent communitarianism debate in philosophy would be very interesting.

cepts, values, forms" constitute a site for the interaction and competition of antagonistic forces. In this site the "ideological presents itself as a kind of 'anti-matter' in relation to domination and exploitation; at the same time, however, the ideological reproduces and eternalises its respective 'anti-matter'" (ibid.) – that is, the domination and exploitation within the society.

What further complicates and extends this "law of complementarity" (Haug 1993, 19), active in the ideological, is that there are different competing/complementary ideological powers corresponding to the differentiation in modern societies: "every sphere confronts me with a different and opposing yardstick", as Marx puts it (MEGA I.2, 282-83). Rather than being dysfunctional, these contradictions between moral and economic imperatives, religious and political aspirations etc. can be functional for domination, since these competing claims complement each other and provide avenues for the displacement and weakening of defiance.

It is crucial in this respect to study how symbolic representations of gender relations, attained through various compromises, articulate this complementarity. Historically, the formation of the ideological powers may be preceded by male domination and, as far as the symbolic responses to it are concerned, it is then a question of 'ideological relations antedating the ideological powers'. Accordingly, the pre-state 'horizontal socialisation' is not a Shangri-la but has its own forms of domination (often men vs. women is articulated together with old vs. young) and symbolic compensation.

With the development of ideological powers the gendered relations of domination and their symbolic representations multiply and cross-fertilise each other, creating relations of resonance between various instances, as in the case of the Christian Holy Family and its earthly counterpart, where the sacralisation of the family familiarises the sacred (Haug 1993, 200). Generally speaking, male domination leads to ideological re-articulations of gender relations where the oppression of women finds its compensation in 'motherhood' and other patterns of non-instrumental conduct related to 'Home' as opposed to war, politics or economy. Accordingly, even morality has two genders, as Frigga Haug has pointed out (1984). Indeed, these real-imaginary gendered relations, articulated as they are with the practices of various ideological powers, regulate everyday life in a very intricate way:

"The practical and active filling up of gender-specific spaces by individuals produces the sexual subject-effect. (...) Thus, while sexual instinct functions as the motor in those spaces of action, it becomes the agent of order." (Haug 1993, 201)

Accordingly, monitoring and regulating oneself in relation to the spaces created by gendered relations generates identity and social stability – though surely not without friction and contradictions.

However, as already noted, an ideological symbol of community can also be articulated as a protest against oppressive relations. The revolutionary Mexican peasants fought the landowners under the banner of the Virgin of Guadalupe (see *ibid.* 199). She is the ideological symbol of community precisely by representing the opposite of the rulers; she is a woman, a non-white *morena* or sometimes an Indian. Her humble figure is appropriated and celestiated by the church, producing a figure that is experienced as representing and uniting 'the people' by transcending the three most serious forms of domination: gender, class and 'race'.

As Haug points out in his article on 'anti-ideology', Gramsci's theory of hegemony can function as a guideline in countering these perils and forming an historical bloc in anti-ideological perspective (1995, 343). Starting from Gramsci, he has tried to develop a conception of structural hegemony (1981) to take into account the new – though in the USA more familiar – situation where there is no "political representative of the working class available as a hegemon" (1981, 170). What Haug means by structural hegemony is a "hegemonic structure without a classic hegemon" (*ibid.* 172). This structure is not obtainable simply through political tactic but only through a long-term cultural articulation of different "social, political, and cultural forces" (*ibid.* 170) which respect each other's autonomy.

However, it is not just a question of a mechanical addition of social forces but of individuals who are themselves, as Gramsci put it, 'historic blocs'. The aim is to help individuals to empower themselves, i.e. develop their own social capacity for action through these articulations. Structural hegemony is like finding the solution to a crossword puzzle where the traversing columns represent various social movements and issues: the stakes are both the possibilities of many-sided individual development and the most urgent social and ecological problems facing us. – At present the emergence and growth of Die LINKE in Germany poses the question to what extent it could become a hegemonic articulator enabling the building of a new 'historic bloc' (see e.g. Solty 2007 and von Lucke 2007).

Some ways of 'bringing us together' are urgently needed if we are to oppose growing economic inequalities, military 'solutions' and ecological threats, not to speak of lesser evils. But how to do this in an anti-ideological perspective? There are several conceivable perils. First of all, as has already been noted, there are no guarantees that plebeian anti-ideological re-articulations entail increased social capacity to act, that is, empowerment, in an emancipatory sense. They can also lead to refined forms of domination by getting people to bind themselves to subalternity. For example some plebeian articulations may model sexuality in a way that isolates male workers from other groups. Secondly, leaving the terrain of ideological powers and their cherished values, without a struggle, to one's opponents to re-articulate them would concede formidable

power to them. Indeed, "every project of transformation must (...) necessarily intervene in the field of ideological articulations." (Haug 1987, 97) Thirdly, there is the possibility that a collapse of ideological values leads to a breakdown of their protective function for the weak and to a radicalisation of domination (Haug 1993, 89-90): after all, discourses of community – though an imaginary one – can enable solidary forces that function as a check on violence. Thus, for example, Nietzsche's demolition of the ideological values of morality and religion was celebrated by German fascism because it helped justify the replacing of moral values like 'equality', 'love of neighbour' and 'humanity' with other less peaceful moral values (Zapata 1994, 209-210).

Critique of ideals is an integral part of the theory of ideological forms and practices. As Gramsci noted, the task is to give a "new form" to aspirations articulated in the form of ideals, "to regenerate these aspirations" and "not to destroy them" (Notebook 1, § 29). The Marxist perspective of critique, repossession, and worldliness aims at their transformation into coherent and sound goals for action. "Materialism, therefore, is not at all lacking in ideals" wrote Max Horkheimer in 1933: "They are determined beginning with the needs of commonality and are measured by what is possible in the near future with the available human resources. However, materialism refrains from conceiving of these ideals of history, and thus also of the present, as being independent of people." (GS 3, 105).

In Brecht's Me-ti the figure of Marx says to the workers: "Beware of people who preach to you that you have to carry out the grand order. These are priests. They're reading something in the stars which you're supposed to do. Now you're here for the grand disorder; then you're supposed to be here for the grand order. In fact, for you it's still about ordering your affairs; [...] Beware of becoming the servants of ideals; if not you'll soon become the servant of priests."²

² "Hütet euch vor den Leuten, die euch predigen, ihr müsset die *Große Ordnung* verwirklichen. Das sind Pfaffen. Sie lesen wieder einmal irgend etwas in den Sternen, was ihr machen sollt. Jetzt seid ihr für die große Unordnung da, dann sollt ihr für die *Große Ordnung* da sein. In Wirklichkeit handelt es sich für euch doch darum, eure Angelegenheiten zu ordnen; [...] Hütet euch, die Diener von Idealen zu werden; sonst werdet ihr schnell die Diener von Pfaffen sein." (GW 12, 507)

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Labour and Life

Memorandum for a Future Investigation of (Class?) Consciousness

Mimmo Porcaro

The paradox of our times is that the more class position determines people's lives, the less people think of themselves as members of a class (or of a coalition of classes). This is another way of saying that while the social relations of production continue to play a decisive role, the collective entities that take shape, even if only in the embryonic stage, seem not to orient their political initiatives chiefly around these social relations. What gave rise to this paradox, and how should we interpret it?

My attempt at an answer is based on the following assumptions (which cannot be argued theoretically nor demonstrated empirically within the compass of this short essay):

1) the fact that today labour and life (production and reproduction) tend to intertwine does not mean they are identical; to the contrary, the more they intertwine, the more they need to be kept conceptually distinct;

2) in most cases, when life "enters" work, it is not people's relational capabilities that transform work in a positive way; it is work that imposes its own logic on relational capabilities;

3) the fundamental distinction between labour and life lies in the fact that labour (being immediately directed toward valorizing capital) is a formalised, regular and visibly other-directed activity, whereas life is less formalised, regular and other-directed, and therefore has innovative potential.

Let us start with labour. Labour is unquestionably far more subservient to capital today than in previous decades. But because of the form that capitalism has now assumed, the greater concentration of power in the hands of management is matched by a dispersion of labour – not only organisational fragmentation, but above all legal and cultural fragmentation – that makes it very difficult for labour to respond.

Outsourcing is the best-known way by which labour is dispersed, but its dispersion is also due to differences in the terms of the contracts of employees hired for identical tasks, to the transformation of many employees into independent (and often individual) suppliers of services, and to the organisation of work by groups (or teams) that are considered clients, suppliers and competitors of other groups located upstream or downstream in the production process. Moreover, in such groups workers are induced to discipline themselves and to act as controllers of fellow-workers.

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I hardly need to dwell on the effects of all this on class consciousness, or even simple union-consciousness. What I would point out, though, is that on the one hand this process of individualising work makes it have a still greater impact on life than work used to have, while on the other hand it makes workers (hence their lives) far less free than what is claimed by those who extol (with less and less conviction) the alleged superseding of the oppressive and levelling "Fordist" order.

A great many of us have the good fortune to recall an era when there was a perceivable difference between work and life. An era in which, moreover, living time – time when people can freely build relationships of their own choosing – was continually becoming more important than work time. Today, though, all too many people experience only the invasion of living time by work time, and confusion between the two.

Longer workdays, frenetic switches from one task to another in the same day, anxious and ceaseless job-hunting, looking for employment of any kind: in all these forms, work seizes life and seems never to let it go free. But there is also a movement in the opposite direction: since the relatively regular connections and relatively stable hierarchies proper to the previous form of capitalism have given way to the dispersion of production and the weakening of direct employment, social relationships (cooperative and hierarchical) must be built from scratch time and time again. The end of automatism means that each individual has to perform linkage functions, has to repeatedly redefine relationships, and is very often forced to make risk-laden choices instead of simply following orders. (It must be said that this situation arises out of a sort of ploy on authority's part. Today authority seems to be drawing back and becoming less oppressive, because it simply demands results, saying nothing about the ways and means of achieving them. But in a situation of scarce resources, it's exactly this silence about ways and means that compels workers to perform more daring stunts than when they had only to obey clear instructions.)

All this requires people to invest the whole of their experience in their work, including their relational capabilities, which, as we shall see, tend to be shaped by this new function, and formalised so as to make them more efficient.

Accordingly, it would be hard to argue that work (and, in the last analysis, class position) does not decisively condition life and does not constitute a significant element in the construction of identity. What has been cancelled out in the present-day form of production is not only the centrality of work for life and for identity; above all, it is the *linkage between work and collective action for emancipation*. Work is a pressing need, or the way to try to implement an individual project (or a group or corporate project); it's no longer the venue for creating a collective intent on building a future.

This fracture is obviously related to the historical defeat of (state) so-

cialism and to the effects of mass consumption, a subject to which I shall shortly return. It's important to add here, though, that the present-day lack of faith in collective action aimed at a clear goal and steadfastly pursued is also due to modes of work that make it hard to think of *individual life* as a rationally describable chain of events.

In fact, work is not only being outsourced and fragmented, technologically and legally; it is also characterised by two further dimensions. On the one hand, it presents itself more and more often as "project work" (even when it is performed on a permanent basis in large-scale production facilities). On the other hand, it is constantly exposed to risk: the risk of project failure, which would translate into personal failure. As Richard Sennet observes, once a project has been completed, another one must be thought up and carried out. As soon as one risk has been forestalled, another risky situation appears. The reappearance of risk prevents the individuals concerned from thinking about a narration of their own lives, because each time they must start over again from scratch; at each throw of the dice, the possibilities of winning or losing are the same¹. As Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello note,² what is required of a worker today is not so much the ability to complete a project, verify and modify it, and consider its effects in relation to his or her own life; rather, it's the ability to be immediately available for another project, of whatever kind it may be.

Thus "project-by-project life", as defined by Mauro Magatti and Mario De Benedittis,³ has taken the place of the "life project" for individuals and, I would add, for collective entities as well.

What makes this form of capitalist social relations especially significant is that – as is always the case – it is not simply a veil behind which one might seek and eventually discover (perhaps thanks to the awareness of an enlightened vanguard) the true, simple and glaring contradiction between capital and labour. This contradiction never exists in a "pure" form, but *it exists each time in historically determined forms*. The individualisation of work, the features of relative freedom and autonomy that characterise it, are not an ideological smokescreen concealing the opposite reality; they are *the very way in which the subjection of labour to capital is achieved today*. This subjection is thus especially hard to view as such. Indeed, even when the harsh reality of the facts decides to "reveal" the inanity of project-by-project life, this is interpreted as a personal failure or a momentary setback, not as the effect of a common situation that common action might avert.

It seems, then, that for both internal and external reasons, the idea of collective entities (*and still earlier, the idea of individuals*) capable of entering into a transformative and rational relationship with their own historical situation cannot grow out of the experience of work. The idea of a socialist-oriented entity seems definitively relegated to the past.

But just when the past seems lost and unrepeatable, it shows us how

1 Richard Sennett, *The Corrosion of Character: The Personal Consequences of Work in the New Capitalism*, Norton & Co. 1998.

2 Luc Boltanski and Eve Chiapello, *Le nouvel esprit du capitalisme*, Paris: Gallimard 1999.

3 Mauro Magatti and Mario De Benedittis, *I nuovi ceti popolari. Chi ha preso il posto della classe operaia? [The New Popular Classes: Who's Taken the Place of the Working Class?]*, Milan: Feltrinelli 2006.

to read present-day reality, and how to change it. It does so indirectly, allusively, sometimes only evocatively, but it does show us how.

In our case, the past reminds us that the idea of labour as a collective entity – an entity with political and social rights, hence entitled to take historical action – is not necessarily (or perhaps almost never) the effect of the concentration of masses of workers in “big industry”, of which Marx speaks. Among the many possible examples, let us look at what Thompson says about the formation of the English working class. It was not the the collective worker of the textile industry that constituted class as a political entity; it was the London of a thousand different – and differently subordinated – trades, the London of craftsmen and unskilled labourers. It was the England that resounded with the principles of constitutional government (and the related myth of the “free-born Englishman”), speeches and pamphlets on the rights of man, and the enduring traces of religious millennialism, all catalysed by the echo of the French Revolution and the movements that followed in its wake in England⁴. In short, it was the remnants of pre-industrial (but not pre-capitalist) labour that created – thanks to particular historical and cultural situations – the ideas, usages and institutions that produced the concept of the autonomy and value of labour as an entity in and of itself, in counterpoint to others, and handed it on to the industrial proletariat.

This (too) confirms the fecundity of Raniero Panzieri’s observation that the “level of the working class” cannot be inferred from the “level of capital”.⁵ There is no necessary relationship between a certain arrangement of production and a certain formation of the working class and its subjectivity. This thesis goes hand in hand with the one that underlies Thompson’s reconstruction of history: class is neither a structure nor a category; rather, it is an *event*, the result of an encounter among *altogether heterogeneous* social, cultural, ideological and political elements. It is a “becoming” in which *the leading role falls to the way in which workers describe and narrate their experience of an historically determined class*; what ties their description to their experiences is not a law, but a logic that must be reconstructed ex-post.⁶

But if one cannot infer class from capital, if class is the result of cultural elaboration by working people themselves, and if this elaboration can result only from the condensation of numerous heterogeneous elements, then *the structure of the work process is one, but only one, of the elements that contribute to the creation of class consciousness*.

Furthermore, if it is true (and it *is* true) that this structure is the decisive element in explaining the overall dynamics of the social process, it is equally true that when one analyses the dynamics of the formation of subjectivity, the structure weighs as much as the other elements in an individual’s experience. If it is true that the transformation of the terms of employment is decisive for transforming the overall social process, it is by no means certain that the need and the idea of such a transforma-

tion must necessarily arise from within labour, and cannot have external motivations that eventually affect and transform labour itself.

In the last analysis, even when class consciousness seems almost to reflect a “homogeneous” material condition – and here I’m thinking of the protagonist of the 1970s, the one defined, with some approximation, as the “mass worker” – this common social base succeeds in producing that particular form of consciousness and politics only because of the concurrent presence of *other conditions*. For example, as regards the Italian situation in those years: the construction of a unified national public space through generalised television, the early effects of homogeneous mass schooling, the ingraining of standardised models of consumption. Also, the temporal mismatch resulting on the one hand from the pre-industrial reminiscences of the immigrant working class (which clashed with the “absurdity” of work rules), and on the other from a political system and a welfare state that were notably “backward” compared with the immanent logic of Fordism. Without the concurrence of all these elements, it would be impossible to explain the efficacy and the radical nature of the workers’ movement in those years. And we must also factor in the elements of socialisation induced by communist culture, social-Catholic culture, and the culture of critical minorities and of the student movement itself, none of which arise spontaneously and naturally from the assembly line.

All of the foregoing leads to another theoretical consideration. According to Charles Tilly, an eminent scholar of social movements, the latter are always produced by an intersection between two dimensions. One of these dimensions is membership in a common social category (what Tilly calls “catness”), and the other is the ability of the members of this category to build relational networks that are independent of those imposed by the dominant social actors (Billy calls this “netness”). The result is a “catnet” – the combination of an “objective” class position and a “subjective” capacity to produce institutions and values that interpret that position in a particular way⁷.

When the relational network is connected to the productive dimension (as in the case of many Fordist factories), there may seem to be a univocal connection between belonging to a category and subjectivity, but this is only *apparently* so. Work emerges and becomes a significant factor for collective action only because it intertwines with the other dimensions of life.

To conclude this part with a suggestion for a future investigation: Let us ask ourselves, and ask our interlocutors, what experience and what consciousness of the individual and the collectivity is formed *outside the workplace*, and whether and how this experience and this consciousness intersect with the perception of work.

If the results of an investigation of this kind confirm that today, as in the past, buds of collective consciousness are born primarily *off the job*, they would confirm that (especially today) the main venue for the for-

4 E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, Gollancz 1963

5 Raniero Panzieri, *La ripresa del marxismo leninismo in Italia [The Reprise of Marxism-Leninism in Italy]*, Milan: Sapere Edizioni 1972.

6 It is worth noting that Thompson’s thoughts here intersect Althusser’s, though Thompson himself says he is a theoretical adversary of Althusser’s, above all of the Althusser who maintains that only a casual encounter among heterogeneous elements can – if the encounter stabilises – produce a new historical form, and that the fundamental contradictions in capitalist society exist always and only in an historically specific, hence changeable, form. As a result, the contradiction between capital and labour can express itself in a thousand different ways and can give rise to very different forms of class consciousness.

7 Charles Tilly, *From Mobilization to Revolution*, Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley 1978.

mation of a potential class consciousness is *not production, but life itself*, in all its many forms. Does this imply a weakening of the socialist discourse? Allow me to observe that *a collective movement of workers (and others) oriented toward social transformation can be built only if and when "consciousness" takes shape as the effect of "whole life"*, because strong ideas capable of truly affecting politics ("public" ideas accessible to everybody, regardless of their class and family, ideas organised as causes, which Valerio Romitelli has been discussing for some time now⁸) can be born only *as the result of the whole ensemble of life experience*.

I would add that the highest level of awareness is reached not via class consciousness, but via *consciousness of the historical situation* (individual and collective)⁹: consciousness that to become fully realistic must incorporate, but cannot be reduced to, consciousness of class position.

"Not production, but life itself", I've just said. This way of putting it may be suggestive, but it is doubtless too generic, so I shall go on to a somewhat more careful consideration. Rather than production per se, we should look at the connection between production and reproduction. An analysis of this connection shows how difficult the situation is today. All the spaces outside the workplace that used to be venues for the possible formation of relationships alternative to capitalist ones are ever more tightly controlled by capitalism itself. And not only through ideological influence, strong though that is, but also in a far more subtle and pervasive way. In fact, what we are seeing now is the *industrial production* of larger and larger parts of *social life*. Everything from the primary elements of reproduction (food and, most important, the cultural models related to it) to symbolic processes has become the business of specific sectors of capitalist industry, which are turning social reproduction into a profit-making enterprise and ensure the training of people disposed to enter still more actively into the field of production.

This is not a matter of television alone, though television does play a decisive role, because it is a true and proper *machine* whose raw material is people and whose product is viewers – a machine that transforms and organises our desires and perceptions so as to make us attentive and receptive to a particular type of language.

Today consumption is organised as a symbolic machine that is much more coherent and persuasive than ever before. In its new formats (or at least its decisive virtual aspect), it captures ever-larger portions of the poorer classes. Except in rare cases, there is no alternative structure mediating between goods and consumers, one that might lower the prices and modify the symbolic weight of commodities. The task of people who try to rebuild such alternative structures is thus more important than ever before, but also much harder.

This state of affairs is especially portentous, because for most people today it is consumption, more than work, that constitutes the main

space for socialisation¹⁰. Work is valued precisely because it is the key that enables people to enter the sphere of consumption, the only sphere really capable of providing meaning (in abundant doses) to people's actions. People bring to their jobs desires, ideas and approaches to reality (these too governed by the logic of self-determination and "project-by-project life") that have matured primarily in the sphere of consumption and are mediated by the social groups (family, friendships, etc.) within which people consume goods.

Here is another suggestion for a future investigation among workers: Ask which commodities they see as most significant, how and where (i.e., in which socialisation groups) they consume these commodities, how and where they discuss what they consume, how much of such discussion enters the workplace, and with what effects. This suggestion would also apply to our politics: *Oversee the venues of consumption* (as the earliest workers' movement did, out of necessity and intelligence), from the signature of a home-mortgage agreement to weekly grocery shopping, because these too are venues of conflict and of identity construction, and are just as important as the "factory".¹¹

And also because – thanks in part to the ambivalence of the dominant ideas – constraints that seem to be unquestionable and inevitable social norms in the sphere of production (due to globalisation, competition, the risk of layoffs, etc.) often appear in the sphere of consumption to be unnecessary and unacceptable surcharges¹².

Alongside this invasion of what we might call the "median" sphere of social life is the transformation of the more massive and the more subtle structures of socialisation: the state on the one hand, and language on the other.

The state is fast losing its capacity to coagulate unitary concepts of citizenship, and thereby to encourage the formation of an equally unitary social movement. Evidence of this loss can be seen in the rise of federalism, in a subsidiarity principle that tends to dissolve the possibility of ascribing responsibility to anyone, and in scholastic autonomy and the consequent fragmentation of school curricula and approaches. Once again, everything obeys a principle of growing liberty (meaning the liberty of the various social and institutional bodies), which, however, often leads to a constrictive logic impinging on those to whom public policies are addressed, without people being able to identify a specific and stable interlocutor for their requests and initiatives.

But perhaps language – in particular the language used in fine-grain management of social relations – is what has undergone the most severe and radical transformation. It is not only a matter of the social construction and the media's construction of gestures, a phenomenon that goes back to the 1950s but is now extending (in what may be the only real novelty) to the most intimate spheres of sexual relationships, of which subtly constrictive public models are being continually built,

10 Magatti and De Benedittis, op. cit.

11 Cf. Oscar Marchisio and Jadel Andreotto, *Bologna operaia. Inchiesta fra i metalmeccanici [Working-class Bologna: An Investigation Among the Metalworkers]*, Granarolo dell'Emilia: Socialmente 2007, a book to which this essay is greatly indebted.

12 I hope it is clear that I do not mean to say that since we have been defeated in production, we can do no more than act in the sphere of consumption. No left politics (much less any socialist politics) can hope to be truly effective without intervening in production relations, industrial strategies and investment choices. The paradox lies in the fact that an accumulation of forces capable of intervening in the production sphere can apparently occur today primarily *outside* this sphere, unless we beg the question by saying that today "everything is production". In my opinion, though, this would produce ambiguities that space does not allow me to describe here.

8 Valerio Romitelli, *L'odio per i partigiani. Come e perché contrastarlo [Hatred of the Partisans: How to Fight It, and Why]*, Naples: Cronopio 2007.

9 Romitelli, *ibid.*, defines it in much the same way: "understanding of the current situation", "ability to distinguish what is to be done and what is to be thought from what has already been done and is now known".

thereby providing proof of Michel Foucault's most prophetic theories.

The very action of building social relationships – from those between friends or within couples to those between employer and employee – has become the target of a capitalist industry I would describe as “how-to”: a tidal wave of different kinds of publications and courses presented on different kinds of “supportive” instructions but all converging monotonously around a few ineluctable words: manager, success, self-respect, self-assertion. Here, “putting life to work” appears as a formalisation of life: steering life in a strictly utilitarian direction. Interpersonal relationships, which in ordinary life fluctuate constantly between unselfishness and instrumentality, operate here in their purely instrumental role. The “group” has worth not in and of itself, but for what it can produce; the “other” is primarily a means, and only occasionally an end.

According to this theory, life doesn't transform work; it's work that transforms life, attempting to reduce life's freedom and disorder by turning them essentially into its own momentum. And the heterogeneous multiplicity of relationships that shape living experience tends to converge on uniform, neutralised models.

Nothing is left to chance any more, everything is (or at least is intended to be) devised according to preestablished codes. The practice of building relationships – the great discovery that in the 1970s enabled people to understand the degree of artificiality contained in familial and social hierarchies, and prompted attempts to change them –, that endless source of rebellion and social invention *has become a normal job*, and the thought that stems from it is no longer able to understand the real novelties (whether generated on the individual plane or the collective), because these can appear only as *unforeseeable events*, and as such would be unthinkable in the current managerial-reductionist logic.

Consumption, the public sphere and the language that innervates everything thus seem to be undergoing a transformation much like the one that labour underwent. They seem subject to forms of subordination that often assume the guise of liberty, of a dialogic construction of relationships. And it seems that in the sphere of reproduction too, it is very hard to detect the conditions necessary for the formation of a collective entity.

But in this case too, we should not infer the forms of subjectivity linearly from social mechanisms. The logical mechanisms noted above are certainly dominant, but this domination does not operate in a totalitarian way. Production and reproduction are always arenas of conflict. Describing the dominant trends in work and life does not imply predicting an outcome; it implies mapping out the territory in which the inevitable conflict among the various parties is moving and will move. That is why only an investigation (not an apriori inference) can tell us how much oppression and how much freedom is produced in a given situation.

The fact is that in reproduction – and today *primarily* in reproduction

– *there actually exist* practices of resistance that are often highly self-aware and effective. An investigation of the forms of subjectivity should start with an empirical survey of these practices.

Alternative forms of consumption, shopping cooperatives, solidarity networks of various kinds and collective protection initiatives are making their way back, and this is where the formation of a “we” with good (albeit intermittent and sector-specific) capacities for expansion can be tested. Pro-environment struggles against capitalism's “building craze” (which stems more from the quest for relatively easy profits than from any Faustian spirit) aggregate a “we” that only occasionally identifies itself as an ethnic group; rather, it takes root in a space perceived as one of rights. Groups that demand and control public services are attempting to give new substance and new shape to citizenship. There are more and more experiences of social, political and civic volunteer work against utilitarian relations. By necessity and through choice, people are trying out new relational models and new families capable of moving in today's languages without waiving the creativity of experience.

A future investigation of workers' conditions and consciousness should start precisely from the space in which these practices occur. This space is defined by the territory – or, rather, the territories, the changing geographies – in which the different contradictions express themselves: a neighbourhood, an apparently random grouping of urban and suburban areas, a chain of malls, a contested or requested network of virtual or real communication. The territory also contains the factory, which itself is often made up of variously combined pieces of territory. Consciousness of an individuality that can gradually accumulate the resources capable, among other things, of expressly posing the question of labour, and of capital, moves and takes shape within these territories..

A future investigation should not bewail the lack of class consciousness; it should draw up a catalogue of workers' different “experiences of the ‘we’,” on the understanding that sooner or later these experiences will combine with ongoing experiences on the job.

This new investigation closely resembles the one that should become a new politics: the interconnection of a thousand heterogeneous experiences from which an unprecedented collective entity may emerge. This entity will not emerge from abstractions: not from Work, not from Life, not from Politics. Work, Life and Politics are in some way “neutral”: they are battlefields that can have different outcomes, including, respectively, labourism, retreat to the quotidian, or opportunism. Rather, the new entity will be engendered by *concrete, hence unpredictable, choices* made by millions of men and women who will want to take sides on each of these battlefields, to arrive at a solution that does not reproduce today's hierarchies: a non-repetitive solution, not devised beforehand, the one that best fits a consciousness of the historical situation capable of renaming the present and the future.

On a Feminist Conception of Work

Lia Cigarini



Lia Cigarini

Barrikade 1848 (Frankfurt)

I would like to discuss with you the question of labour from the point of view of its feminine specificity which has been, and is, in my opinion, creating new political forms and a new way of thinking of work.

The principal change which occurred due to the exponential growth of women's labour is that when we speak of it we are speaking of labour in general, of men and women, without specification. Part-time and marginality no longer characterise feminine labour. In fact, women, being the most educated and cultured part of society, are rapidly increasing their presence in sectors previously almost completely masculine, such as in the judiciary, where they are around 40 %, in the ministries (47 %), in prefectural careers (44 %), in public non-economic entities (51 %), and in the national health service (58 %). As far as second-generation freelance work is concerned, women make up 57 % of consultants and 40 % of unregistered professionals. Finally, as far as liberal professions are concerned, if we consider those registered in associations at 44 years of age, they turn out to be a majority of doctors and lawyers.

These data tell us that women are amply represented in sectors like health and law, school and university, and in the high value-added service sector, which should be the decisive sectors for the social and political development of a country.

These data also tell us that in those places which one reaches through competitions or qualifying examinations or through a high-level professional formation and not by *co-optation*, women are present in very different percentages. While they work hard in places they reach by *co-optation*, namely in politics, which has to all intents and purposes become a paid metier, and in careers within enterprises where professionalism and competence are rarely considered resources that favour women and lead to retaining them with flexible schedule when they become mothers. (Moreover, as is known, in Italy so-called human capital is generally undervalued; both women and men workers are considered only as a cost.) It should be added that in politics and in business enterprises men tend to hire their own in institutions of power. In the area of labour, therefore, conflict between the sexes is beginning to appear.

I think, however, that there is no need to cite other statistics on feminisation of labour to convince us that, despite masculine opposition, feminine labour is not a segment of the labour market as was thought

Lia Cigarini is a major figure of Italian feminism. She has been a lawyer, a politician and central to the "autocoscienza femminile" movement.

until now; it is, rather, labour *tout court*. Feminisation is not a question only of quantitative data but of a change in mental schemes, management techniques and product strategies. The present mode of production, in fact, by way of technological development, requires giving one's psyche and body; the walls of the private, the familiar are broken through and material and immaterial goods are produced which require more intellectual preparation and physical effort, etc. This tends to favour women workers who have more study titles and above all a more relational attitude.

"It is rather natural, therefore, that being the protagonist of work in post-fordism, women are also the hinge of coalition dynamics, including those which in many cases require initiative", according to Sergio Bologna in the recently published book *Ceti medi senza futuro?* [Middle Strata Without Future?] (Derive Approdi 2007).

I will return to the point of women's practical politics as a decisive element in understanding how labour is changing and in possibly modifying it.

Here I would like to underline that, in the face of a left and trade union that continue to emphasise the disadvantaged condition of women and set the goal as parity with men, some scholars / politicians of labour, for example Alain Touraine in the book *Le Monde des femmes* 2006, soon to be published in Italy, see them as active and thinking subjects of a politics for our time.

In fact, he affirms that "women as collective actors create the stakes and the cultural field of conflict with other social actors ... , in other words they construct themselves repairing that which was dismembered by globalisation, by exposure to the drift of market forces".

Alain Touraine, like Sergio Bologna, Christian Marazzi and others, have taken seriously what has been said for years by report groups and groups reflecting on feminine work experience, that is that women are not modelled and politicised with the cognitive and political paradigms of fordism, but rather following the feminist consciousness and the activism of the feminist movement.

Feminists in the strict sense have been a minority, but the movement has radiated in the whole social body and has thus modified women's sense of themselves as well as the relations between the sexes.

Recounting in a loud voice, within their consciousness-raising groups, their experience, of which the culture had known too little, women finally appeared in public space. Labour is undoubtedly a fundamental articulation of public space. This public space which welcomes women, was able to create itself because separation (meetings exclusively of women) drew a line creating a symbolic field of feminine autonomy.

The community, the places where people speak, are innumerable, and the process of speaking up is not yet over, rather it has been taken up again in small groups scattered throughout Italy, which reflect on the

meaning of work, on desires, and needs and interests which they bring to work.

The presence of women in the work force as protagonists, connected to consciousness, is therefore the disruptive element in the market and opens up new conflicts on the political and symbolic level, the level at which it is more narration and more representation, rather than political representation, that is needed.

Following this formulation, I think therefore that narration is the practice adapted to breaking the paradigmatic framework (in which one makes of work and of workers objects of analysis and study rather than having them speak in the first person) through a new experience.

Is there another way of undoing those interpretative paradigms which do not account for the feminine labour experience?

Let us introduce at this point a consideration: The partial overcoming of the division between the productive and reproductive spheres, about which Sergio Bologna, Alain Touraine and others, have spoken has *not* nullified the specific way in which women are tied to life and the work of healing. They passionately study and want to work, remaining however linked to the symbolic and to the practices of reproduction of human existence. From this, for example, their attention to relationships of which we have already spoken.

This is why I maintain that labour in the feminine mould has a broader and deeper meaning than that which men imagine, or, better, it is at bottom work as the junction between production and reproduction of existence. And here I see an irreducible difference between women and men in work. By this I do not at all mean to distort the thesis that women's work is work *tout court*, rather to show that the presence of women in work gives us an extra lever.

Using this lever of feminine work one can remove labour from the many abstractions that has dehumanised it. And noting that "a woman carries everything" to the market, also the quality of relations in the workplace and the work of healing, one can think more concretely of a valorisation of "human capital".

The majority of women, in fact, say yes to work and yes to maternity. I have always struggled to make it clear that the feminine difference is not *of the order of things* (women are different because they bear children), but the sense and meaning which is given to being a woman. And it is, therefore *of a symbolic order*.

Nevertheless, it seems important to emphasise that this double yes in the present organisation of work, based on the desires and needs of men, comprises new and different contradictions.

The first is between labour time and living time. Through this contradiction, time and its flexibility, part-time, work at home, the acquiring of a free-lance work job which to some extent allows the autonomous organisation of time, and time becomes prioritised above salary. The data

tell us then that women enter and leave the productive cycle according to the rhythm of life: At the birth of the first child, 2,500,000 women in Italy remain home (for this reason, among others, women workers are less able to be represented by the trade union).

This double yes perhaps means less adherence to the masculine mystique of work and provides a limit to alienation: when it is a question of earning more money, a labour lawyer once told me, there is no limit to masculine alienation. This is to say that for women there is an opportunity to engage in a play between personal relations and relations imposed and regulated by the market. They do not give themselves up completely to the standard of money and competition. This dialectic is by now visible and no longer quiet.

I therefore do not agree with those analyses that see in this development a further commodification of human activity (the idea that life, private relations, become commodities, and are thus snatched up by capital); the fact that women carry "everything to the market" *makes visible that which goes beyond profit* and therefore makes possible the beginning of a change in the organisation of labour.

I think that, if one broadens these reflections on work, keeping steady the line of difference, other mediations and constructions of the masculine workerist tradition fall down.

What is now involved, for everyone, is to rethink the sense of women's and men's work. The dynamic factor for me is the sexual difference.

The formula I prefer in order to take account of what is now happening, is the one I delineated earlier: carry everything to the market: subjectivity and relations, children, passions and affectivity, etc., do not separate therefore the relational sphere from the world of work, as has been done until now.



Zeughaus – Auf zu den Waffen (Bewaffnung der Wiener Studenten)

Roundtable on the Concept of "Communism" Today

Patrice COHEN-SEAT is an attorney, chair of ESPACES MARX and member of the National Executive Board of the French Communist Party (PCF). He is the author of "Communisme l'avenir d'une espérance" (Communism, the future of a hope)

Roger MARTELLI is an historian, director of the journal *Regards*, member of the National Board of the French Communist Party (PCF) and author of several works about communism in France: "Le communisme" (ed. Milan) http://www.amazon.fr/1956-communiste-glas-dune-esp%C3%A9rance/dp/2843031400/ref=sr_1_2?ie=UTF8&s=books&qid=1204031953&sr=1-2 (The Bell Tolls for a Hope) *La Dispute*

Jean-Louis SAGOT-DUVAUROUX is a philosopher and a playwright. His text *Emancipation*, (to be published in *La Dispute* 09/08) may be read on the website: <http://www.emancipation-blog.net/> Also see: *De la Gratuité (L'Éclat)* <http://www.lyber-clat.net/lyber/sagot1/gratuite.html>

Three critical intellectuals, Patrice COHEN-SÉAT, Roger MARTELLI and Jean-Louis SAGOT-DUVAUROUX, talk about the word and the concept "communism". This term is the object of much controversy and passion, being as it is historically and politically highly charged and remaining an important reference for many of those who are active in movements for human emancipation in France – for some of them it is represents a fundamental identity. For our journal, Patrick COULON, with the help of Chantal DELMAS¹ met with the three and asked each of them what they understand by the word communism and how they connect it to conceptions of alternative and emancipation.

They went more deeply into the question, asking the three whether they thought the concept is still operational, how they analyse the nearly global failure of those who relate to it, and whether they could outline the approaches to solutions they envisage in the area of social and emancipatory transformation.

Patrice Cohen-Séat: "The Historical Account"

The word "communism" cannot be separated from an historical account. It necessarily refers to a collection of historical events, to the history of political regimes and forces that claimed to be communist. This historical experience dominates the current meaning of this concept, for the way the word itself is perceived nowadays. It is massively coloured by the failure of Soviet-type regimes. And it also refers, in a problematic way, to regimes like that of China, which still calls itself communist.

On the other hand, in a country like France – where there never was a communist regime – the engagement of those who claim to be communist always responds to a desire to fight against injustice, a struggle which was enriched through political experience, finally to become an engagement for human emancipation, that is, against everything that alienates human beings. Practically, communism is that which leads

people to question the existing order, the capitalist system itself, and finally all forms of exploitation and domination. Therefore, there is a break, and even a deep contradiction, between that which led, and continues to lead, thousands of men and women toward this kind of engagement and the way the society generally now, globally, takes in the word. Fundamentally, there is a contradiction between the meaning of this word in society in general and the meaning given to it by activists who identify with it. This is a major political problem in France today.

In other countries, because communism has been compromised, because its sense has been negatively loaded by history, the very word has been excommunicated. The problem is that it has not been substituted by another word retaining its positive sense. In political life, the word is the bearer of the project of overcoming the capitalist system and of the ambition of human emancipation. And it inscribes this project in a representation of reality, in a representation of history which is the history of class struggle. Politically, it cannot be separated from the issue of social classes and consequently from the consciousness they have of themselves. It places in the centre of political life the need to unify the proletariat and therefore to gather together the exploited and dominated. The word "communism" connotes a particular objective (human emancipation) and carries with it a representation of the necessary path of emancipation (class struggle). However, on a political level no other word has assumed this position: one could say that there is a breakdown of words. This is one of the dimensions, or symptoms, of what is called the crisis (or death) of ideologies.

I would add that if the meaning has been heavily burdened, the word is a product of history, and every force claiming to be communist has its share of responsibility. In France, the relationships the Communist Party had with Soviet-type regimes, the delay and, until 1991, even hesitation, in criticising these regimes, and in going beyond the condemnation of Stalinism, played a great part in the public image of this party and of communism itself. In any case, here political work is necessary: not only thoroughly to critique the experiences which once claimed to be communist and those that continue to do so, but also to critique the reasons why we French Communists were so slow and reluctant to do this work.

Roger Martelli: "To be a communist today means to inscribe oneself in a specific history"

On one hand, "communism" is globally associated with the old movement for justice and freedom. I would like to say, as Jacques Bidet did, the movement for "equaliberty", because it is impossible, unlike in the liberalist vulgate, to think of equality and liberty separately... With this

¹ Both members of the board of Espaces Marx

struggle in mind, it is possible, of course, to go way back in time, even before use of the word "communism".

On the other hand, "communism" takes on another sense, in particular from the middle of the 19th century, when capitalism became the dominant social-economic system, the matrix of the universal organisation of social relations. From this moment, communism begins to act like a global political movement, claiming to be a radical critique of the dominant system. It becomes a movement critical of capitalism, with a worker base, inscribed into the terrain of politics in particular with the founding moment of 1848 and the Manifesto of the Communist Party.

At the turn of the 19th to the 20th century, "communism" designates a special political formation, crystallised after 1917 in the form of an explicit communist movement. The Bolshevik model becomes a massively recognised point of reference, the theoretical and practical matrix for the constitution of 20th-century "communist parties".

Finally, from 1917, and of course even more after 1945, "communism" presents itself as an comprehensive conception of economic and social management. It becomes a social model, through the various avatars of sovietism. For decades then, communism comes to be identified predominantly with this social model.

Communism is all that. To be a communist today means first of all to choose to inscribe oneself in a specific history in all of its dimensions. Communism is not an idea or a vague ideal from which a reality could be deduced. It is an historical political movement whose originality could be summed up in four affirmations.

- The first affirmation is that capitalism is not the end of history, but only a particularly sophisticated form of exploitative and oppressive society. A historical, hence transitory, configuration whose radical overcoming must be actively conceived. To be a communist is first of all to think that it is at once just and realistic to adopt the perspective of a society operating according to other norms, other rules and logic different from those of capitalism.

- The second is to say that for this alternative social dynamic to emerge, a revolution is necessary. No equaliberty is possible inside the present system. One cannot adapt to the system: one has to escape from it and think "beyond" the prevailing system. The shape taken by this revolution-abolition-overcoming has to be concretely defined; it cannot be mechanically deduced from its necessity, but this necessity is a fundamental given.

- The third affirmation: none of this happens within the realm of ideas. To change the world, material and spiritual forces able to do it are needed. From the 19th century on, modern political communism is based on the idea that this material force is created in the major historical form of industrial labour, that is, it is rooted in the realm of workers. Revolution does not come from "above" but is made by the people; the mod-

ern people is built on its proletarian base, so said Marx and Engels.

- And finally, the last affirmation: all of this needs to be constructed inside political space. That means that if communism wants at any time to affect the world, it has to constitute itself as a political force, as a "communist party".

At the dawn of the 21st century, communism remains as relevant as ever – and even, in some respects, more relevant than it was a century and a half ago. Therefore I continue to claim these historical roots in order to think through the social struggle and the work of emancipation. But at the same time, this relevance cannot hide the fact that it was in the 20th century that attempts were made to transform communism into a concrete – not only imagined – alternative to the existing world order and the order of capital. And thus one cannot think about the current premise of communism without starting from the historical failure of this attempt at a concrete realisation, illustrated in particular by the emergence and establishment of sovietism. Twentieth-century communism assumed a dominant form, which included a conception of society and its subversion, of the form assumed by revolution and of the form of the communist party itself. This conception was valid for a period that is now over. The world in which we now live is the same as, and yet drastically different from, the world which saw, one and a half centuries ago, the modern emergence and formulation of communist thinking on a Marxist basis.

I cannot separate the affirmation of a persisting relevance from the conviction that it is absolutely necessary today to discover the forms that will allow the communist premise to implant itself in the actually existing order. I am even inclined to think that we have come to one of those historical moments in which, for the history of communism, its continuation cannot be thought of other than in terms of a break with its formerly dominant form of existence. Political communism has no future unless it breaks with the historical matrix of communism.

Contrary to the recurrent temptations, the break will not occur by "going back to". It was not enough to go back to Lenin in order to overcome Stalinism; it is not enough to go back to Marx to overcome bolshevism. The founding premise of the Marxian moment remains intellectually relevant if, and only if, it is able completely to refound itself. A completely new re-foundation means rethinking, at any given moment, the intellectual foundations, the practical driving forces and the organisational forms which allow us to conceive today, in the new framework, the communist contribution to the common struggle for emancipation. We have to rethink the framework of an emancipatory movement that can no longer be reduced to the reference to a revolutionary labour movement or even just to anti-capitalism. I believe it useful to conceive of a genuinely "communist" contribution to this general emancipatory movement. A contribution is not nothing ... but it is not everything.

Jean-Louis Sagot-Duvaurox: "Something to put into the common pot..."

A first remark: I completely agree with an idea expressed by Patrice and by Roger: communism is a history, a concrete history. We cannot separate the communist ideal from what actually happened. If someone calls himself a communist, he is, above all, part of a lineage.

Second remark: as Roger said, there is a conviction continuously expressed in modern communist history: capitalist rule is not the end of history. We can define liberalism as the exact opposite political option: whatever liberty is possible is obtained only through western representative democracy, freedom of the market, the capitalist form of organising production, and western governance of the world. At best, it is possible to complete this success, lead Iraq to an electoral, multiparty system, promote the development of peoples such that they "catch up" to western consumption levels, standardise the world economy by detecting any threat to "free and fair" competition, normalise the world economy by hunting down any situation in which "free" competition is challenged... In the liberalist view, every attempt to accomplish a step forward in the history of human emancipation turns to its opposite and diminishes liberty. Liberalism bases its influence on a very solid argument: all concrete attempts to overcome this end of history have been completely unconvincing, especially as far as liberty is concerned. For this reason the liberal postulate is massively shared, often even regretfully.

Third remark: beyond the failure of sovietism, I believe that one of the major weaknesses of our communist lineage is that it was not able to see its relative character, that it saw itself as the unique, universal, legitimate form of human emancipation.

The full reality is more modest and perhaps more beautiful. Men and women – mostly men, mostly workers living in a part of the world – the West – at a certain time in western history, the moment of industrialisation, are moved by the desire for emancipation and they come up against a concrete obstacle blocking their path, a concrete alienation: the universalisation of capitalist power. They then think: we are going to free ourselves of these alienations which confront us concretely. And they go further. They invent organisational forms for this. They work out high-level theorisations, for example Marxism which offers a luminous analysis of capitalism and the oppressions it engenders. They build institutions and political processes which seem to be able to break through these constraints. They make values come to life, especially those radiating from the idea of the "common", creating the idea that escaping from the liberal enclosure of history means pushing liberty forward to what is to be commonly shared, that is, to equality. And, indeed, we all see that liberalism puts a stop to the history of liberty at the very point where it begins to produce equality.

All of this means that we can say without hesitation: this history of emancipation, led by a white, mostly male, working class inscribed within western history and culture offers something really solid to put into the common pot if we want today to reopen the adventure of liberty. Nevertheless, the communist story cannot present itself as the universality of emancipation. It has to be ready to speak with others. We could take the enlightening example of feminism, which produces theory and organisational forms completely different from those invented by the western working class in opposition to capitalism. There we have a history that is an authentic step forward for emancipation, yet not inscribed in the communist lineage, even if the two often cross. The same could be said of the massive appearance of non-western emancipatory lineages, which are more evident now with globalisation. The centres of emancipation are plural and diverse because it is always concrete human collectivities which face constraints that are themselves also diverse. For a long time, the communist lineage fought against theorisations and organisational forms which did not accept its supremacy. Many of its aberrations are linked to this blindness.

In order to allow the communist contribution to become positive again, or continue to be, it seems to be that it needs to accept the idea that communism is only one of the lineages making up the emancipatory movement. In my opinion, this orientation could be a real tonic for this history, but it is clear that it will considerably alter its further course.

I wear the communist identity for the concrete reason that I belong to this lineage and because it is useful to throw one's own innovations into the common pot. But I consider this lineage only one of the currents of a broader movement, the trend toward emancipation, the trend toward autonomy... Communists share this political conviction with others, who run up concretely against oppression and want to reduce it. Communists bring to this movement the emancipatory heritage of the western working classes engaged against capitalist oppression. Their point of view, in an optical sense, may claim to bring a certain wide view of our world and its emancipation. But, it is not the only possible view of emancipation, because other look-out posts have been set up in different places.

Patrice Cohen-Séat: "The matrix of 20th centuries communism did not stand up to history"

Communism, as a very concrete political history, is in a deep crisis. One of the major causes of this crisis is the failure, and even the collapse, of the experiences that claimed to be communist. But, more broadly speaking, this crisis results from the obsolescence of the (Bolshevik) matrix which inspired and supported them, a matrix, (theoretically, ideologically, politically), which was itself the result of a specific state of society.

The political history of communism today cannot be separated from a period – the 20th century, and specifically its first half – shaped by the development of the working class. And I use this word in a precise sense: the men (more than women, it must be said) who performed material work tied to the machine tool. There is no class struggle without classes, obviously. And it was during this specific period that this specific working class was at the heart of the struggle. And if I say "class" I am by definition not speaking of a "socio-professional category", I am speaking of men and women who have access to the consciousness of the community or a convergence of interests in the face of opposing or contradictory interests of other social categories. The ideological matrix of 20th- century communism is totally linked to the existence and the development of this class, to the representation this class could have of itself, of its future (it was to be the movement of the immense majority) and of its role. The struggle was therefore organised around this class's main interests, above all in relation to the way it confronted capitalist exploitation, the capital/labour relation (and not all the other dimensions of the struggles necessary for human emancipation) becoming the hard core of communist militancy. Thus there emerged a conception and representation of social transformation structured by the interests of the working class, the party of the working class, this class's vanguard role, and a specific conception of social transformation: revolution, the role of the state, planned economy...

However, this matrix was not in fact able to stand up to history. Not only were there the crimes of Stalinism, the hyper-statist regimes and the infringements of liberties of which Roger spoke; the reality itself on which this conception was built changed. Work was transformed, society was transformed, the international division of labour was transformed, capitalism became financialised and globalised; the so-called computer revolution occurred... The social categories directly exploited by capital became broader to the point that they represent nearly 90% of society in a developed country like France and other European countries, but class consciousness was profoundly weakened. The huge variety of situations, even within the very working class itself, and all the more so in the whole complex of wage earners, created differences in interest and even contradictions: French citizens/foreigners, unemployed/employed, precarious or otherwise, and so on... Thus, political work aimed at unifying and gathering together the victims of exploitation and domination has become immeasurably more complicated. It is in this deeply transformed reality, beyond the fortunes and misfortunes of the experiences which claimed to be communist, that we locate the necessity of a real break with the conceptions stemming from the Bolshevik matrix.

Giving a future to the immense hope associated with communism means working in the political sphere – the area which connects repre-

sentation to real movements and mobilisations – in conditions of a new class consciousness. That means basing oneself on the current forms of exploitation and domination so that women and men become conscious of their communities of interest and come together politically. This can no longer be limited to the working class. It can no longer solely concern the capital/labour relation, even if work remains one of the central sites of exploitation and domination. One could say – as in Jean-Louis's thesis – that communism, because that is its history, concerns this capital/labour relation and that, therefore communism is one of the tributaries of the big river of all the struggles for human emancipation. One could – as Roger does – assign to communism the role of thinking and organising all the present dimensions of emancipatory struggle. I won't say "it makes no difference", because words do have great importance in political life – especially those as weighty as "communism". Therefore, investigating the use of this word is a political debate of the greatest importance. But I would say that the essence, the core of the difficulty which we are confronting today, is to ask how we can come together, how we can unify, and thus create the conditions for the consciousness of a community of interest of the men and women who are concretely exploited and dominated, in order to allow them to struggle against today's capitalism, which is financialised, globalised and increasingly militarised.

Roger Martelli: "We must reconstruct and re-found in a profound way"

The twentieth century was dominated by "one" specific conception of communism, the conception which integrates social dynamics, revolution, revolutionary transformation and the political form that makes possible this transformation/revolution. That is to say the party form: "the communist party", or simply "the party". I think that today any communist thinking should start from the understanding that this direction is foreclosed. Communism of the 20th century is irremediably dead, and it is useless to make believe that it can continue or be revived. This is the starting point.

All thought of communism is a thought about emancipation. It is not possible to think of communism today without evaluating as fully as possible the emancipatory conceptions which failed. There are certain emancipatory conceptions which failed in the 20th century and, in particular, two such conceptions that established prerequisites, as it were, for emancipation. These two prerequisites were seizing political power and the transfer of property. However, the experience of the 20th century teaches us that it is not enough to do the opposite of capitalism to overcome it. For instance: the transfer of property, without changing the

logic of dispossession, does not engender emancipation, but possibly creates over-domination, even at times despotism. A logic that is the logic of taking political power, if it does not subvert political power and does not accomplish a radical destruction of state domination – as Marxism always said in theory without ever having implemented it practically ... or more precisely, forgot each time it took power ... – produces despotism, not emancipation. Therefore, at a certain moment, this logic contradicts that of emancipation, and contradicts the possibility of overcoming capitalism. It is not enough to abolish or to reverse capitalism to produce human emancipation. We know that. Consequently, we must reconstruct, i.e. refound in a profound way.

To reconstruct, I think that we must leave behind a kind of thinking I would call "essentialist". It is useless to ask the general question: "what is communism" and then go on to envisage its modalities of concrete existence. In fact, it is best to start from what underlies the communist premise. The central thread is the demand for emancipation; what could be meant today, in the 21st century, by a politics of comprehensive emancipation of all individuals, as autonomous individuals and as solidary individuals, i.e. as a human collectivity, as humanity? The most important thing is to reconstruct emancipatory projects, knowing that this means breaking with any logic of adaptation to the dominant capitalist system. There can be no emancipation within this system. The 20th century was unable to exit from this system while producing "equaliberty". It also showed that there is no lasting justice possible within simple accommodation to capitalist norms and those of free and fair competition.

On a political level, the best strategy today on a European scale is to make viable the premise of consistent emancipation – meaning the break with any logic of adaptation to the system. Will the premise of emancipation, of radical social transformation, prevail or not on the left, in Europe and in the whole world? Will the logic of transformation, at a certain moment, penetrate the whole left and thence the European political area? That is the question of questions.

Within this framework – I repeat: within this framework – is there a place for a lineage that would be explicitly communist? I am inclined to think that there is. It remains useful to envisage a genuinely communist lineage which is able, on its own basis, to assimilate what has been a history of creativity and stagnation, noble conquests and mortal tragedies. All those things can be assimilated, critiqued, overcome, but cannot be forgotten. Turning one's back on history does not annul it.

Does this mean that this lineage should be structured in separate formations, taking the shape of separate organisations, of separate communist parties? I don't think so anymore. Communists should be organised inside thinking and acting collectives and consequently see the whole as a "communist party". But there is nothing to prevent this "communist party" today from being thought within a larger political move-

ment, in which it assumes the functions of a party, but brings together diverse sensibilities, traditions and currents. Inside this force, communists have their own place as communists; they do not necessarily need to assert themselves in the form of a distinct partisan structure.

Jean-Louis Sagot-Duvaurox: "The word 'communism' was identified with very ambitious libertarian goals"

For centuries, a tendency to autonomy has denied God, the prince, the nature of things or any other power the role of imposing a model of our societal life. For centuries, human beings have come together to ask themselves the political question: in what kind of society do we want to live, what kind of human beings do we want to be? The emancipatory point of view indicates a direction: I want to be a freer human being. I want to live in a more autonomous society.

All the other considerations, in particular questions of organisation, are secondary to the meaning, the concrete content, of emancipation. For instance, I believe that we should not define ourselves by "anti-capitalism" or by any other "anti". We want to continue the history of liberty and we come up against a concrete obstacle on our route: capitalism. Capitalism imprisons our time in subjugated forms of activity. It grants the rich free access to goods; it steals the fruit of our labour; it chains our minds to a consumerist thrall, etc. And we, because we want to free all human activity and create free access to goods, be the masters of the wealth we produce, free ourselves from commodity alienation, we confront this obstacle and invent emancipatory institutions or movements likely to replace it. The assertion that capitalism is bad by its very nature seems senseless to me... If this were so, destroying capitalism would "in itself" be emancipatory. There are several historical examples illustrating the contrary. The early communists had already recognised that capitalism was certainly bad for the exploited, but very desirable for the class that profited from it. We have to go further, to recognise that capitalism and liberalism today correspond to a political conviction held by the absolute majority of the people, and that to contest capitalism and liberalism means presenting an opposing conviction, and then politically convincing as many people as possible that this alternative conviction outlines a way of living together that is possible and desirable.

To determine the appropriate organisational form for communists, or more broadly for the emancipatory movement, we have first to identify the frontiers where some degree of emancipation is possible, where some liberty is attainable, beyond the liberalist enclosure. The communist lineage has much to bring to this critical work. Once, the very word "communism" was identified with very ambitious libertarian goals which are now nearly forgotten but remain astonishingly evocative. In the face

of the subordination of wage-earners and the exploitation of labour: abolition of the wage system, liberation of human activity. Against state coercion: withering away of the state, liberty. Against power from above: free association. Against commodity fetishism: unencumbered use of the goods we would like to enjoy. However, this contrasts to the way these aims are inscribed into the "real movement that abolishes the current state of things". We have seen communists in the first ranks of activism around shortening of obligatory work-time (cf. abolition of the wage system), of the resistance against the extreme armed force of the Nazis (cf. withering away of the state), of the struggle for free access to medical care (cf. "to each according to his needs"). However, we have also seen them building very coercive states, governing societies characterised by great paucity of goods or celebrating work as a religion.

Therefore, identifying the frontiers where emancipation is possible and desirable is not sufficient. We need to add to this a radical critique of the beliefs and the practices which led to turning emancipatory aims into their opposite. We have to discern the political, ideological and organisational conditions of effective emancipation. I have addressed this essential aspect at length in the second part of the text "Émancipation" (to appear in *La Dispute* 09/08). It is impossible to weaken the common sense produced by the liberalist option without following our work to its conclusion.

Will the communist lineage survive? It still exists and it is the only sector that can bring to the emancipatory movement the rich and varied heritage of this lineage. It is a player in the game and I cannot see any benefit to emancipation if it is pushed out. Is it eternal? If it believes this, it means it takes itself for God and then it will fall again into the same rut again, where it will stay as long as it lacks the strength to move. If it is not eternal, as is probable, it has to be useful today and in the years to come. It has often shown that it was able to accomplish this.

Translation from French to English by Nora Pettex (Paris)



Ferdinand Freiligrath

Capitalism, Socialism, Property and Transformation

Rethinking Fundamental Questions

Dieter Klein, Michael Brie

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The rise of a new capitalism, the current wave of neoliberal globalisation, the success of this project of counter-reforms on the one hand and the emergence of new social movements, the attempts to form new political alliances and to initiate alternatives at all levels of society on the other hand – all this makes necessary a re-invention of socialism twenty years after the break-down of the Soviet bloc. Just as was the case two hundred or one hundred years ago, socialist, communist and other anti-capitalist forces are obliged to pose again the most fundamental questions: 1) What is capitalism? 2) What is socialism? 3) What are the basic features of a socialist property order? 4) What ways lead to socialism? The following article tries to open the way for a new discussion on these basic issues.

1) What is Capitalism?

The basic economic structure of contemporary societies, with almost no exceptions, is capitalist. Capitalism marks the whole of our society and our way of life globally, regionally and nationally. But what is capitalism? Are markets and entrepreneurship the heart of capitalism or does its essence lie elsewhere? From our point of view it is the subordination of the economy and the whole society to the reproduction of capital, which makes a society capitalist. When profit-making becomes the dominant criterion of the production of wealth societies become capitalist.

The general formula of capital is the accumulation of money (capital) as a goal in itself: value is expected to be transformed into surplus value, money (M) into more money (M'), i.e. into profit. Mediated by the exchange of commodities C, M will become M' ($M - C - M'$), money "will be exchanged into more money", thus Marx in Capital. The basis for this miraculous "self-utilisation" is found in the appropriation of unpaid surplus labour.

The consequences of the subordination to capital of production and life processes, of economy and society, of inter-human relationships and of the relation of people and nature have already been discussed many times in the critique of capitalism. They are exploitation, repression, ex-

clusion, destruction of the natural bases of life, imperial expansion and militarism, alienation, consumerism etc. Pre-existing power relationships between the sexes (patriarchy) or between peoples (colonialism, racism) and capitalist relationships of power and rule come together in a symbiosis which triggers ever new anti-capitalist movements.

Globalised financial capitalism has reinforced the capitalist character of contemporary societies. Neoliberal politics aims at turning into commodities things which up to now were not subject to the "capitalist spirit of accountability" (Max Weber): education and health, plant, animal and human genes, knowledge and information and inter-human relationships themselves. Worse still than the kinds of profit which previously prevailed, is the profit resulting from short-term, speculative financial transactions and the increase of stock and shareholder value, which has become the decisive yardstick of this new capitalism.

Destruction of the environment, all-out rationalisation before the next stock issues at the expense of jobs, cost reductions in the social security system, flexible labour contracts and working hours, the emergence of a new precariat and an "economy of expropriations" are some of the consequences. Imperial policies including wars in violation of international law, disdain of cultures outside of the Western world, hierarchical relationships of rule and undermining of democracy are additional features of contemporary neoliberal capitalism.

Nonetheless, capitalism remains Janus faced. Bourgeois societies have produced a high technological level of productive forces, which for the first time makes a decent standard of living materially possible for all the earth's inhabitants. Educational level and technological performance capacity, productive division of labour and the development of individuality have advanced further than ever before. Pluralist democracy and the rule of law, despite their subordination under the given relations of domination, still provide significant possibilities for development.

Knowledge-based production requires from a large section of the wage dependent population a higher degree of responsibility, autonomous decision-making, communication and cooperation – in accordance with the requirements of the shareholders. The state is even more than before the power instrument of the rulers; but at the same time, it is the expression of concrete power relationships and an arena of struggle and negotiation processes (Nicos Poulantzas). The subordinated classes have been able to modify these processes in their favour. Is it possible to continue doing so in a new and different way?

In its neoliberal counter-attack against all achievements of the workers' movement and all other emancipatory forces, capitalism has become ever more capitalist by, first of all, unleashing the financial markets and their dominance over the economy; second, by strengthening the power of capital vis-à-vis the working classes, communities, regions and many countries; third, by empowering interests with a shorter-term horizon and

weakening the forces of long-term reproduction in ecology, education, health-care and culture; fourth, by the transformation of many spheres into new objects of capital production; and fifth, by militarisation, new imperial tendencies, and increased authoritarianism, and the open disrespect even of the most fundamental liberal rights. By becoming more capitalist, our societies become at the same time less social, less democratic, less peaceful. They reveal more traits of open barbarism.

If capitalism can become “more capitalist”, if it can lose social, democratic qualities that it had once achieved, then it is completely wrong to imagine capitalist societies as a uniform whole without any counter-tendencies. Instead, these is a kind of parallelogram of forces at work (Friedrich Engels), in which as a result of the prevailing property relationships, capitalist tendencies can dominate emancipatory counter-tendencies representing non-capitalist interests.

It is the power relationships, however, the social and political struggles, which determine the extent to which the balance between capitalist tendencies and counter-tendencies can be shifted in favour of the latter. Historically, there have been such partial successes – precisely those which neoliberalism has dismantled or hopes to dismantle.

In our view, contemporary societies are, on the one hand, capitalist, inasmuch as capital production and profit dominate economy and society. Yet, on the other hand, they are not *only* capitalist, because as a result of the struggles for democracy, social justice, peace, sustainability, and emancipation, counter-tendencies were and are brought to bear. These societies are battlefields of opposing and cooperating forces. They are contradictory in a deeply dialectical way in that they represent at the same time capitalist tendencies and a potential of non-capitalist elements. The left must seek out the developmental potential within contemporary societies as starting points for their alternatives.

2) What is Socialism?

In the process of left political renewal, different concepts of socialism are contending for hegemony. Already in the 19th century, there was a strong tendency to think of socialism and communism mainly as the negation of all of the institutions of bourgeois society: of markets and money, of state and law. Only the total negation of all these institutions seemed consequently to be socialist or communist. However, in the 20th century, in the framework of the state-socialist experiment, so many democratic achievements – the rule of law, capacity for innovation and efficiency – had been destroyed that this kind of socialism had to lose in the competition with Western capitalism.

While capitalist societies are distinguished by the subordination of their reproduction and development to capital utilisation, to what goal

will social reproduction be subordinated in a socialist society? If the wealth of capitalist societies is measured by the wealth of usable commodities (Gross National Product), by what criteria will it be measured in a socialist society? What is the standard according to which property and power relationships might be shaped in a socialist way?

The objective of a socialist society is the promotion of a free, universal development of its individuals mediated by the solidary development of all. The social reproduction should be organised in a way that at the end of each respective cycle of reproduction individuals are enriched as humans – richer in needs, enjoyments, abilities, relationships and sensations. Taking part in social reproduction in a socialist society individuals (I) would become more developed individuals (I'). Their solidary contribution to the development of all (S) would become the condition of their own individual development. The general formula of socialism might therefore be written as follows: I – S – I'.

How must society be changed so that a freer development of individuals really contributes to the solidary development of all, which in turn promotes individual freedom? That is the basic question for any kind of socialism.

The socialist politics flowing from this conception would have its own, positive standards opposed to profit dominance – that of efficient production and of just distribution of those goods which allow each of us to live a free, self-determined life in solidarity with all others (goods of freedom). This understanding of democratic socialism follows from a vision of a society that allows each and every person to acquire the conditions for a self-determined life in freedom and social security. These conditions are: existence-securing good work for all those looking for work, high-quality education independently of social origin, equal access to the health and social security systems and a strong democratic say in all affairs affecting one's life! Following this opinion, the programmatic self-understanding of a new left in Europe circles like an ellipse around two centres: around the basic libertarian idea that democratic socialism means individual liberty of each person in solidarity with the others, and around the renewal of the world of work and the social state and socio-ecological transformation.

According to this outlook socialism is a society in which production, services and their distribution are dominated by the goal of producing the best possible conditions of the unfolding of the individuality of all, so that they may be used by the individuals both for their own well-being as well as for the solidary development of the productive forces of the community. Marx and Engels formulated it this way: “an association where the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all”¹. For this end all relationships of property and rule – including relationships justified by male dominance, by ethnic superiority – “in which man is a de-based, enslaved, abandoned, despised essence”² must be transcended.

1 Karl Marx; Friedrich Engels: Manifesto of the Communist Party. In: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1848/communist-manifesto/ch02.htm>.

2 Karl Marx: Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law. Introduction In: <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm>

It is the relationships of property and rule that determine the orientation of social development. Markets, the law, and state institutions are not neutral instruments. But they can be reshaped and redesigned in accordance with the prevailing property and power relationships. Precisely this is the policy of neoliberalism. It extends capital-dominated markets, oriented towards quick profit, into all areas of life; it reinforces the claims to profits from highly concentrated wealth and strengthens the rights of the stockholders in relation to the work force; it privatises among other things knowledge and the right to use genetic potential. Everything is supposed to serve the interests of capital.

To fight even a few of the worst evils of contemporary financial market capitalism – from poverty and war, to social insecurity and underdevelopment of the educational system – deep-reaching changes in the relationships of property and power are inevitable. This requires the weakening and the pushing back of those property structures on which the predominance of capital in the end rests. This includes a much stronger influence of workers and all employees and other democratic forces on the use of property in the interest of more social security and good education for all, and of the preservation of nature and peace.

The struggles of the social movements of the 19th and 20th century had already seen germs of the development of the new in the bosom of the old society. A socialist society will emerge inside and in conflict with the old society or not at all. Neoliberalism wants to stifle these roots of a new society, tear them out, and destroy them. To neoliberalism, the struggle against the social state is, at the same time, a struggle against socialism. And it knows why. The left, by contrast, fights to strengthen the germs of the new, to generalise them, to turn them into the predominant pattern of production and life. This is only imaginable in a longer process. Democratic socialism must, therefore, be understood to be itself a transformational process of both continuity and deep breakthroughs.

A socialist society may only form itself around the generalisation of the emancipatory achievements of earlier struggles and by linking them to future tasks. The commitment to the realisation of the unity of social, political, cultural human rights here is the yardstick of left politics. The basic change in the access to, and use of, productive resources, power and property relations, is the necessary consequence.

3) What are the basic features of an alternative property order?

In contrast to the current SPD that has largely banned questions of power and property from its new party programme, a democratic-socialist left must always link reform processes to the struggle for a change in the relationships of property and rule and corresponding changes in the

mode of regulation. Historically, the question of an alternative property order was always a subject of debate – should it be a state economy that is as comprehensive as possible, or self-administered cooperatives, or should it be public control over private property? And where does each of these forms have its advantages and weaknesses in regard to socialist goals?

The programmatic declaration of the new German Left Party (Die LINKE) distinguishes between formal property and disposal/access: "Democratisation of the economy requires submitting the power of disposal over all forms of property to social criteria. We want to lead a broad discussion on how this can be realised concretely. In this context we want to clarify how public property can be extended as the basis of democratic politics and of decent existence and be structured and used in a social as well as in an efficient way."

Extra-parliamentary and parliamentary forces, extended co-determination, pressure from below on the state, processes of bargaining within its apparatuses regardless of who is in power, cases of a shift to the left in the party system and in the whole society can, as a result of great social and political struggles, change the disposal over capital income in such a way that it increasingly deviates from the race to profit-maximisation fundamentally inherent in capital production. Beyond that, the extension of public property and public control in areas where private income has obviously failed to meet social and emancipatory criteria is indispensable. Basic public services and infrastructure certainly belong in this category.

A politics of social justice, trade union struggles for higher wages and humanisation of work, participatory budgets, sustainable environmental legislation, the implementation of strong social rights, and social and structural policy may make possible a development different than that resulting from the unilateral disposal by the owners of capital. In such a process, a change in the character of property itself would take place, such that it less and less and finally no longer predominantly serves the interests of the owners of capital, but those of the workers, the consumers, the regions and of subsequent generations.

A plurality of legitimate interests will have to be brought into a more just equilibrium. Under no circumstances will a universal social owner be able to defend all legitimate interests at the same time. It is not étatisation of society that is the goal, even if an increased role of a democratised state may be a necessary means under certain conditions, but socialisation. The disposal over resources by a plurality of democratic forces seems to us the right way to this socialisation – such that social justice and efficiency, innovation and sustainability, regional development and solidarity, self-determination and social development can be realised simultaneously.

Socialism without democracy is impossible. One feature of alternative forms of a socialist disposal over property is the comprehensive democ-

ratification of all areas of life. What the best possible conditions for the unfolding of human wealth instead of capital wealth are, what a predominantly social as opposed to a predominantly capitalist property structure would be, and how property relations can be shaped concretely – all this can only be determined in a radical process of democratisation. And in that process, democratic deliberation can determine where goods should be created in the public sector, which forms of production and property are the best to produce them effectively and to distribute them in a just way, what concrete forms the state and the law need to adopt to that end.

In the light of global problems, the overcoming of the dominance of capital over economy and society is necessary for survival. If it is achieved, other property relations will have become dominant. And will it then not turn out that socialism is nothing else but the predominance of a property order aimed at individual self-determination and solidarity, social justice, sustainability and peace, that makes possible the most comprehensive and efficient production possible and the just distribution of freedom goods and which uses all means to that end?!

4) The Way to Socialism: Evolution or Clash?

Some unfruitful dichotomies in the discussion come from the fact that some see “only” the possibility of essential reforms, others “only” the possibility of “preparing” a revolution that breaks through to a society beyond capitalism. The real possibility probably consists in facing the complexity of today’s challenges and not reducing them to one or the other. In our opinion, the present era is marked by three conflicts whose weight may under certain circumstances also change very quickly:

Firstly, in the European Union and in Germany, the central conflict is between those ruling forces who want to shape the new financial-market capitalism in a neoconservative way (like Sarkozy in France³ or Merkel in Germany) and those who seek a social and democratic way of bringing today’s financial capitalism more in line with the orientation characteristic of the Scandinavian countries or the Netherlands.

Second, there is a conflict between those mentioned above who are pushing for a social and democratic recasting of financial market capitalism and the radical left who, with good reason, start from the assumption that while social and political improvements in the framework of capitalism must be supported, comprehensive and lasting justice and democracy are impossible without the far-reaching roll-back and final overcoming of the dominance of profit and hence of capitalism.

Thirdly, there are tendencies toward the de-civilising of society and to open barbarism not only outside Europe but in the EU and in Germany. The tendencies include wars of aggression under the leadership of the

³ See in detail: Joachim Bischoff; Elisabeth Gauthier; Sarkozy und die Hegemonie des Neoliberalismus. Supplement der Zeitschrift Sozialismus (12/2007); Michael Brie: Die Linke – was kann sie wollen?

USA and the brutalisation of inter-human contacts. Under certain conditions, this conflict can overshadow all others, and the struggle against it can require the broadest possible alliances.

Four alternative scenarios may result from these conflicts: (1) a de-embedded (i.e. no longer socially regulated) barbaric capitalism, (2) an aggressive conservative and imperialist capitalism, (3) a new compromise of capitalism and the social state and (4) a democratic, social, ecological and feminist alternative.

The left is not an almighty subject that can choose the battles it wants to fight. It may not eschew any of them; it must be capable of entering alliances and to that end must remain capable of forming them. The failure of the German left in 1914 showed what happens when a reform politics makes the struggle against authoritarianism and war recede completely into the background. The defeat in 1933, by contrast, was the disaster to which sectarianism and incapacity to form alliances led.

It has never been possible to predict what breakthroughs, or chain of breakthroughs, can emerge from a given evolution, or how quantitative changes transform themselves into qualitative revolutions. Reforms led to revolution, revolutions enabled reforms. Processes that represent the sharpest break with the past were often negotiated in compromises and took place completely peacefully. The converse has also occurred.

The left can neither decide what conflicts are the principal ones, nor can it determine with whom it must cooperate. It also cannot dominate the agenda, but for the most part only engage in the real battles. There are two things which it can do: First of all, it can establish criteria for its own action – struggle against any form of totalitarian rule and barbarism, struggle against market radicalism, authoritarianism and militarisation as well as struggle for the roll-back of profit dominance and the rule of capital, for the extension of public services, of public, democratic control, and for a social ecological and civil reconstruction of society. These are in our opinion also the criteria for a socialist politics as the order of the day. Secondly, the left must be capable of handling the dialectics of the three above-mentioned challenges (negotiating the conflict between the more conservative and more social-democratic ruling groups, the conflict between the latter and the radical left, and confronting the recent brutalising tendencies of capitalism), dealing with the tension between these three struggles in as sovereign a way as possible. If it fulfils this double task, it will have done what it is capable of – no more and no less.

This context suggests broad alliances and strategic cooperation, the organic combination of extra-parliamentary and parliamentary work, the unity of protest and resistance, a politics for shaping reality, governmental participation and anti-capitalist actions, including at the European level and beyond.

Too often in history, the left has worked below the level of its real capacity, because through its splits and divisions it has torn apart what belongs together – socialist “real politics” as the order of the day, in which the goal of rolling back and overcoming the predominance of the capitalist character of our society is always present and is always linked to and occurs within the struggle for the solution of the most important current problems. Transformation is the unity of quantitative changes and qualitative leaps; it is social change in the long term and with clear goals for the present.

The decoupling of the tasks of the day from the search for an order beyond capitalism, that is the pitting of “revolution” against “reform,” today results at best only in a parody of “revolutionary” politics. It seeks to appear radically anti-capitalist, and still has nothing to offer but empty rhetoric. It divides the forces of those who want to change society starting from the here and now and concrete interests, from those who know that this also requires a comprehensive revolution of property relations and of the economic order. This weakens the left. The left will only be able to win people for a project of overcoming capitalism if it shows that the immediately necessary reform solutions for the most urgent problems require at the same time interventions into the relations of property and disposal over property. Both belong inseparably together: one thing cannot be had without the other. The concrete shape of a possible socialist development follows from the way profit dominance is concretely weakened and finally overcome.

If socialism is understood as the comprehensive democratisation and socialisation of the disposal over property, as the emergence of majorities for another society and as the reshaping of relationships of power and property, this can only happen in a learning process, through experiencing resistance, with reform projects that lead to partial improvements, with the search for projects providing a point of entry into deeper change, and with the opening up of reforms beyond the limits of capitalism, with concrete steps of reconstruction of the property order. For an extended period, this can occur in an evolutionary way but in times of crisis also in a revolutionary way.

Democratic socialism in our understanding is a transformational process of tremendous social struggles, compromises and ever new departures that begin in the midst of capitalism, probably encompass many small and large breaks and, following the left’s vision, usher in a socialist society. And since without overcoming the dominance of the capitalist aspect of contemporary society neither lasting peace, sustainable development, nor social security are possible, the famous dictum still holds: Concrete, real and durable progress in the transformation to socialism or relapse into barbarism!

Translated by Carla Krüger, March 31, 2007

	Reformist view	Orthodox understanding of revolution	Possible positions of a modern socialism in the 21 st century
<i>Basic perception of contemporary society</i>	Market economy	Capitalism	Capital-dominated society (Money – Commodities- more Money: M-C-M')
<i>Socialism</i>	Socially regulated (embedded) capitalism	Society based on common property	Association in which the free development of each person becomes by solidarity the condition of the free development of all (individuality – solidarity –enriched individuality: I-S-I')
<i>Conception of change</i>	Improved regulation of the given	Total break	Extension of non-capitalist elements, tendencies and sectors as well as overall non-capitalist regulations
<i>Overarching goal of change</i>	Civilising of contemporary societies, while maintaining capital dominance	Radical social break with the totality of the relationships of contemporary societies and construction of a completely different society	New mode of production, life and democracy based on the production and just distribution of the goods of freedom
<i>Economic model</i>	Social market economy	Planned economy	Mixed economy with a strong and participatory democratic regulation
<i>Economic regulation</i>	Market-dominance and social-state regulation	Centralised planned economy	Democratic dominance of social guidelines (setting of framework), primacy of social basic rights, preference for local and regional economies (de-globalisation), extended public sector
<i>Main advantage as opposed to pure capitalism</i>	Higher measure of equality, democracy and civilisation	Conscious control of all areas of life and prevention of crisis and catastrophes	Higher measure of individual self-determination and solidary development of all
<i>Basic values</i>	Basic rights of equal participation, but according to the conditions of a capital-dominated society	Equality within a given alternative order	Equal access to freedom goods; self-determination and social security in an order based on solidarity

	Reformist view	Orthodox understanding of revolution	Possible positions of a modern socialism in the 21 st century
<i>Relationship to capital utilisation</i>	Social regulation of capital utilisation	Elimination of capital utilisation and imposition of a pure social economy	Overcoming of the dominance of capital utilisation of economy and society (primacy of social logic over capital logic)
<i>Relationship to property</i>	Social obligation of private property	State property	Decommodification of the goods of freedom including labour; extension of cooperative forms, especially in the area of indispensable goods and services; subjugation of private property of means of production to social target criteria
<i>Social force of change</i>	Alliance of the organised working people and the reform-oriented forces of capitalism	Workers (and peasants)	Middle-lower strata alliances
<i>Most important form of political action</i>	Negotiations on the basis of an independent trade union and centre-left parties (corporatism)	Preparation for the revolution	Construction of broad alliances (economic, social, political, cultural) as the basis of independent action and of negotiations
<i>Understanding of democracy</i>	Representative democracy	Power by the people, exercised by a vanguard	Participatory democracy
<i>Relationship to globalisation</i>	Global governance	Socialist internationalism on the basis of the agreement between the interests of all the exploited	Coupling of deglobalisation and alternative rules of solidary cooperation from the local to the global level
<i>Peace policy</i>	Civilising of the main powers and imposition of an order based on international law controlled by these powers	Elimination of the causes for wars by the elimination of capitalism	De-militarisation, overcoming of poverty, exclusion and foreign domination in the framework of a transformation strategy

On Economic Democracy

Michael R. Krätke

Throughout the world there is consensus around the idea of democracy as the one and only viable concept of a good order. However, that consensual view remains restricted to the realm of politics. A good society today is conceived as a mix of political democracy and ... a capitalist market economy. In this view, capitalism is seen as complementary to democracy, but clearly distinct from it. A capitalist economy is not necessarily perceived as a democratic order in itself; it can be undemocratic or democratic, as long as it goes together with a democratic political order that will counterweigh, even outweigh, the despotism of capital and free markets.¹

Social movements throughout the world, old and new, and the left in general, are deeply convinced of the intrinsic value of democracy. But the restriction of democracy as a principle and as an order to the realm of politics and politics alone is not generally embraced on the left. On the contrary, changing the societal order and changing the world economy, the world of the markets and the rule of capital, is regarded as a democratic process, even the highest possible achievement of democracy. Democracy as a process involves the quest for, and the conquest of, power as well as the use of political power, state power in particular, as the primary lever to change the structure of society and to overcome capitalism as an economic order. Today, on the left nearly everybody agrees that the transformation of capitalism into a good and just economic order will only be possible through democratic means. At least in Europe and North America the left has given up all aspirations to benevolent dictatorship, even for short transition periods.

The anti-capitalism of the social movements and the left in general today is skeptical of the new capitalist world order and in particular of its neoliberal message. Implicitly, sometimes explicitly, today's anti-capitalist movements refuse the claim that the free market itself constitutes an economic democracy – and the best and only form of economic democracy that is or could remain viable. In criticising the structures of contemporary capitalism, today's social movements focus on the rising power of the financial markets. With respect to the tremendous power of contemporary financial capital, they have revived an ancient debate: whether or not capitalism and political democracy are indeed reconcilable, whether they can and will be compatible in the longer run. If your answer to this old question is no, if you see capitalism as it actually is, as a threat to, rather than as prerequisite or stable base for, democracy, and if you hold

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¹ Cf. Dan Usher, *The economic prerequisites to democracy*, New York: Columbia University Press 1981. Usher's book exemplifies well the conventional, liberal view: there is no democracy without capitalism.

democracy to be more important for a good society than capitalism you have a clear political argument against capitalism, one that can easily become an argument in favour of another economic order, economic democracy: In order to preserve democracy, we must get rid of capitalism and replace it, if possible, not just with something nicer but with something that is and will be compatible with political democracy – that is economic democracy.

The concept of economic democracy

Inevitably, and just like socialism, communism and anarchism, economic democracy is both a political and an economic concept. As a political concept, economic democracy not only indicates a higher degree of state intervention into, and state control of, economic processes – democratically chosen and legitimised governments have done that already for ages in many parts of the world. It does not mean somewhat more elementary rights for workers, not even in an extended way, including the incorporation of worker's representatives into the official political decision-making process.² If that were all that economic democracy means, countries with a strongly entrenched corporatism like Austria or the Netherlands would have been considered fully fledged economic democracies for many decades. However, economic democracy indicates not just a form of workers' self-government on the level of the shop floor or of the firm – although workplace democracy and shop-floor self-government remain indispensable elements of any concept of economic democracy. Rather, when we speak of economic democracy, we are in fact addressing a large variety of power relations pervading the whole structure of the economy and influencing every single aspect of society and society's economic life. We think of rights and duties, of controls, and of checks and balances that can provide counterweights to illegitimate private and public economic power. In the end, and completely in line with today's anti-capitalist, anti-globalisation movements, we are also talking about an economic order for the international economy, an order that could effectively deal with global catastrophes, with the wealth and poverty of nations, and with the exploitative structures of the world markets. This, the concept of a democratic world economic order, is still the weakest link in the chain of contemporary anti-capitalism.

Since the early 1980s, and in particular again since the Great Transformation of 1989-90, a worldwide debate on models for a feasible or viable "democratic socialism" has re-emerged. Democratic socialism is meant to present an alternative to both capitalism in its various forms and to all forms of a centrally planned, state-run "socialist" economy that have dramatically failed in the former Soviet bloc.³ Although the debate is largely restricted to academe, its relevance is immediately ap-

2 As with Germany's "co-determination," which gives workers' representatives the right to participate in decision-making at the level of the board of directors – of course not in every sector but only in certain, selected areas of the private economy. Even in its reduced and crippled form, workers' "co-determination" is fiercely opposed by capitalists and managers whose despotism is at stake. Some of the more enlightened capitalist despots, of course, have learned to live with it.

3 For a survey of left analysts who took their leave from any concept of central macroeconomic planning, see Christopher Pierson, *Socialism after Communism. The New Market Socialism*, Cambridge: Polity Press 1995.

parent if we consider the largest contemporary socialist experiment, the Chinese effort to build and preserve something that is still officially called a "socialist market economy."

The debate is largely between models of (economic) democracy. Michael Albert's model of a "participatory economy" provides just the most recent example.⁴ The issue is a feasible economic alternative to capitalism, an economic order that would be no less efficient, but much more equitable than its historical predecessor. An alternative that would be desirable and acceptable in terms of basic democratic values: equality, liberty, self-government and participation.

It is not self-government (or self-management) in the workplace which provides the most important bone of contention in the actual debate between different models of economic democracy but rather the democratic nature of the planning and coordination processes on the macroeconomic level (where many firms, many branches, whole regions and countries, even the world economy, are concerned). In view of the bad repute into which central state planning has fallen, the debate hinges essentially on one crucial question: What, if anything, will be the role of markets in the new economic order? Is some kind of "market socialism" feasible and desirable, an economic order in which markets do not rule but are re-embedded or "socialised," put and kept under societal control and run by democratic political bodies instead of anonymous "market actors"?

It is easy to see why the feasibility or desirability of workplace or firm-level democracy stimulates little debate: There is simply enough evidence to demonstrate that workers' cooperatives can run firms as effectively and as efficiently, if not much better, than private entrepreneurs or capitalists and their hired managers: As a rule, they have lower supervision and administrative costs, lower rates of absenteeism, and lower turnover of the labour force than private capitalist enterprises. Cooperation, workers' self-management and participation on the work-floor actually increase productivity.⁵ Democracy – that is the right to govern and to organise one's own activities, together and in accordance with all the people directly involved – on the level of the workplace, works. It works if there are rights that actually give the people on the work floor a voice and power of discretion which they lack in the "normal," strictly hierarchical labour-relations prevailing in both the private and the public sector today. Such rights are not even inevitably linked to individual or collective ownership of the firm (or the firm's assets, its productive resources). In fact, there has always been a variety of forms of workers' cooperatives, just as there have been different forms of worker's co-determination in private capitalist enterprises.

Economic democracy could be restricted to the elementary right to elect one's own managers (be they individual managers or the members of a workers' council) or it could go as far as the right to be permanently involved in all relevant decision-making on the level of the workplace

4 Cf. Michael Albert, *Parecon. Life after capitalism*, London – New York: Verso 2003.

5 See the evidence provided by a detailed study of the largest complex of workers' cooperatives in Europe, the Spanish cooperative Mondragon: H. Thomas / D. Logan, *Mondragon: An Economic Analysis*, London: Allen & Unwin 1982. Already in the middle of the 19th century, British trade union reports on workers' cooperatives confirmed that they actually worked more "efficiently," that is had less "management costs," and far less "administrative costs" than comparable private enterprises had. When Marx praised the higher efficiency of workers' cooperatives in 1864/65 (in the manuscript that was later to become volume III of *Capital*), he was drawing on evidence provided by the trade union reports.

and/or the firm. Unfortunately, there is a problem here: The structure of work, the inequality of jobs and qualifications, the hierarchy of jobs, which is due to the high levels of specialisation in modern work organisations, cannot easily be overcome. This very structure undermines the democratic principle of “one person – one vote” because it renders the experts or specialists in any field inevitably more important, hence more powerful, than the laymen or the non-specialists.

So we run into the old Lenin problem: The cook should run, if not the state, at least the kitchen, but can she? Is any cook or group of cooks able to run the kitchen without ruining the meal? One can think of devices like job rotation or a redesigning of the jobs in order to flatten the hierarchy of knowledge, responsibilities, experience and hence “expertise”. One can imagine a structure in which knowledge, expertise and discretionary power are systematically de-coupled so that the philosophers don’t rule. Neither should the bureaucrats or the professional politicians. Instead, councils organised according to the age-old practice of a jury of laymen could do the job.

The problem of macroeconomic planning

We run into even more trouble if we dare to imagine some kind of democratic planning procedure on the macroeconomic level. Nobody denies the necessity of careful planning – all large and small firms do their share of it. But there is much discussion of the salient questions (a) what should be planned, (b) by whom, and, last but not least, (c) how should such macroeconomic planning be democratically organised?

Planning has a bad name today, although it happens all the time – budget planning everywhere in the public sector, long-term production and investment planning in all larger corporations. But the macroeconomic planning institutions that do exist in one guise or the other in many countries (central banks, even central planning bureaus as in France or in the Netherlands) do not in fact have any authority over individual firms or branches. Hence, their planning is pointless where it is not meant to instruct the firms belonging to the public sector (as, for instance, in the case of the French ‘planification’).

All of this is to be changed radically in any form of “democratic” economy: Not only will basic rules of governance be imposed on individual firms. The self-governance of workers’ collectives will also be subjected to some control and guidance from above, legitimised by democratic decision-making on governance / management rules on a higher (societal) level. What is more, all sorts of basic economic activities, producing, consuming, saving, investing, de-investing, selling, buying, crediting, marketing etc., will no longer be merely a private affair but will instead be thoroughly politicised. In a democratic economic order, basic economic activities have to be

legitimised, the rule of “market forces” challenged, and individuals and collectivities empowered: Instead of the “markets” (in practice a way of indicating private makers and rulers of particular markets), producers and consumers, all stakeholders, should deliberate, negotiate and eventually decide on the direction and course of economic developments.

Of course, not everything can or should be planned; firms and workers’ cooperatives should and would retain a large degree of autonomy in their day-to-day affairs. But there is a lot of agreement with respect to the crucial importance of investment decisions – on the level of firms, branches, and regions. Because investment decisions – on the level of the firm as well as on the societal level – do include decisions on innovations, decisions on new products, the use, and/or the development of, new technologies, the restructuring of whole industries, the opening of new firms or the closing down of others. Generally speaking, four tasks are involved in the business of macroeconomic investment planning: (1) to decide on the overall size of the social investment funds; (2) to decide on investment priorities among extant alternatives; (3) to decide on either major and minor innovations (regarding the risks and chances involved and concerning both products and production processes) or on the issue of initiating or terminating certain kinds of economic activities; (4) to decide on success and performance criteria for firms and branches. Obviously, decisions (2) and (3) together determine the path of “growth” and “development” of the economy as a whole. Accordingly, the most important basic right that citizens have to gain in any democratic economic order will be the right to participate in collective decision-making on accumulation and investment.

Models of economic democracy are based at least on some sort of social control of net investment. On the societal level, they require a form of democratic decision-making, using one or another form of representative democracy and involving producers, as well as consumers and the state, as representing “general interests” like environmental development or the interest of the next generations. The allocation of extant investment funds (today between 5 and 12 % of GNP in the advanced capitalist countries) will not be subject to the discretion of private owners, capitalists or their hired managers, but to collective decision-making by bodies of elected representatives of all people involved in and concerned with the economic reproduction process. In a democratic economic order, individual firms or corporations will have to contribute to the societal investment funds by means of taxes regularly paid and levied on their net profits. In order to make investments, they will have to apply for the means of investment granted as credits; they will have to submit individual investment plans for approval according to general standards established by the public bodies which are actually in control of the societal investment funds. A system of public investment banks will act as intermediary between the society – or its representative bodies – as the owner of general investment

funds and individual firms (including the workers' cooperatives) as temporary users of parts of these funds. Such a minimal system of democratic control and planning of course needs particular institutions – investment planning councils and public investment banks – which will operate under the control of the general representative bodies (councils and /or parliaments) responsible for all kinds of political decision-making.

At the other extreme, we would have to imagine an economy where everything is under public, democratic control and every single economic decision is taken by all people affected by them. Accordingly, consumers will have to decide on their needs and demands and to make their preferences known to the producers. Workers' cooperatives (firms), on the other hand, will have to provide the necessary cost-information for several production alternatives. Finally, decisions about what to produce, when, where, how and at what cost, will have to be taken in an interactive process where individual consumers (or larger communities of consumers) are negotiating with individual workers' cooperatives (or larger groups, like cooperative corporations). The crucial question remains whether or not and to what degree market relations and competition between producers (the autonomous firms or workers cooperatives) can and should play a role in this process – and if so, whether they could be kept under democratic control. With respect to this salient problem of how to fit an element of "market socialism" into a democratic economic order, it has been suggested that markets could be effectively "socialised".⁶ By embedding markets within particular institutions which organise and supervise the actions of all the market actors, it might be possible to create transparency, to regulate competition and actually "govern the markets".

The history of capitalism provides many examples of sustained efforts to "govern the markets" which were quite successful – certainly in the case of the Newly Industrialising Countries. As a rule, the states and state bureaucracies organising and governing the markets could hardly be characterised as "democratic".⁷ Autocratic regimes dominate the annals of the Newly Industrialising Countries of the 19th and 20th century. For a viable form of economic democracy, more is necessary than just the political will and power to push in the direction of economic 'development'. On the contrary, a vital economic democracy would be compatible with low(er) rates of economic growth, and would be based on qualitative common goals of 'development' such as could be defined in organised public debates. Of course, a democratic economic order which politicises all macroeconomic issues, hence requiring much more sophisticated arguments and legitimisations, would be all the more difficult to manage for the policy makers.

This is linked to the question of the scope and scale of "market socialism": whether or not there should be a labour market, a capital market, a market for natural resources. In the socialist / communist tradition, there is the strong inclination either to abolish or severely to restrict such

markets. "Socialised" markets providing democratic control and decision-making regarding market processes would provide an alternative. Because such markets would be run and controlled by public supervisory and regulatory bodies, principles of democratic decision-making could be applied. Many such agencies or bodies exist today. These are what are known in current jargon as BINGOs, that is NGOs with a strong business orientation, actually formally organised and institutionalised business communities that are beyond the reach of democratic control and act as gentlemen's clubs which network among themselves. To replace them by democratically organised, legitimate public bodies would be easy and even necessary once the private capital-owner and entrepreneur has been removed from his central place in the economic life of society. In the new context of "socialised markets", the public bodies would have to establish norms, standards and rules for the market participants – price norms, wage norms or remuneration norms as well as product or quality norms and production norms (as regards, for instance, energy consumption, environmental effects, health and behavioural effects). With the addition of a strong element of collective, democratic decision-making on investments (as outlined above), socialising the allocation function of the market and even socialising the "entrepreneurial" function, along with the promotion of innovations and of "new combinations", we would be very close to a fully-fledged democratic economic order.

The preservation of some market elements, thus combining "economic democracy" and "market socialism", might at first glance seem awkward, even compromising the whole project of a new economic order in which society would again be in charge of its economy instead of being dominated by it as in capitalism. However, markets, even highly regulated ones, have some advantages: They can avoid the endless and inconclusive interactive battles among conflicting individual interests. Market outcomes could be accepted as temporary solutions to actual conflicts between particular and legitimate economic interests. However, in a democratic economic order markets could never be the ultimate authority responsible for the final settling of conflicts. Because markets are blind and deaf, because 'market failures' occur everywhere, and because markets are seldom 'efficient', any concept of 'market socialism' should strongly rely on correctives to the market built into the system as a whole. There should always be the possibility of appeal against market outcomes, an appeal to a higher, that is political authority, an authority able and empowered to re-launch public debate and democratic decision-making on any clash of economic interests. An economic democracy would indeed be time-consuming. One of its prerequisites would therefore be a reasonable reduction of working hours for all.

The present debate on democratic socialism and a feasible form of economic democracy is haunted by the failed experience of highly centralised state planning in the so called "socialist countries". Can failure

6 Cf. Diane Elson, *Market socialism or socialization of the market?*, in: *New Left Review* 172, 1988, pp. 3 – 44.

7 Cf. Robert Wade's account of the experience of developmental states in Asia in: *Governing the Market: Economic Theory and the Role of Government in East Asian Industrialization*, Princeton: Princeton University Press 1992.

then be avoided by democratising the planning process? In principle it can. But what form of decision-making, what form of participation is needed in order to make the planning process effective. Nowadays, socialists are inclined to think that the technical problems of central planning can be overcome thanks to the greater computer power that we have at our disposal. Based on the internet as a new device for the exchange and distribution of information as well as for decision making, Michael Albert has conceptualised a participatory process that is both highly inclusive – giving everybody a voice of his own – and interactive. Although it appears to be quite time-consuming, it looks very simple: We need to know what people want? We just ask them. We need to know what costs are linked to those desires? We just ask them.⁸ But how do we decide afterwards on priorities if we do not suppose a basic condition of “very rich abundance” where every single desire can be fulfilled regardless of cost? Obviously, we need a negotiation process, but we also need to decide. How do we decide on such matters? By a simple majority of votes, by qualified majorities, or by other rules of collective decision-making? In any case, the first act of institutionalising a democratic economic order would always imply a collective decision on how to decide in economic matters. How do we organise planning as a process that makes it possible to learn from mistakes and avoid dead-ends and crises? Inevitably, there will at times be clashes of economic interests. How do we assess and weigh them? Which economic interests should prevail once the power of capitals has been abolished as the quasi-natural base of economic decision-making? Even if we are bound to accept everybody’s economic interests as equally important, not all interests are of the same kind. What might be a vital concern for one will appear as a marginal question for some one else. Hence we need a rule (or rules) to decide between economic interests of different urgencies and range. As regards empowerment and participation in economic decision-making, one might imagine the application of a rather Rawlsian rule: To empower those (perhaps even give them the power to veto and block collective decision-making dominated by others) who are directly bearing the brunt of the collective decision at hand, even if they are a small minority – for instance, those people who will lose something vital to them, like homes, jobs, skills, or environment, because of the economic change at hand, should be given an opportunity to veto and force the majority to rethink and renegotiate the matter.

Strategy and strategies

Socialist transformation strategies were always based on the conviction that we would find the elements, the basic ingredients with which to build the new economy in the capitalist economies as they have devel-

8 Cf. Michael Albert, *Op. cit.*, pp. 128 e.s.

oped up to now.⁹ Actually, we still see elements, even islands, of economy democracy, in the capitalist world economy today. We see them in the worldwide cooperative movement (with more than 800 million people involved on a world-scale), we see them in the various forms of organised solidarity and self-help in many parts of the world, which appear in many guises. In some parts of the world, even in some European countries, the “social” economy still provides work and a living for many people. The cooperative movement is very much alive around the world, including more than 800 million people in its rank-and-file worldwide. In the Europe of the 15, we currently count about 135,000 cooperatives with more than 84 million members, providing jobs for about 2.7 million people. This may not seem very impressive considering the majority of the producers’ cooperatives are very small (about 4.5 to 5% share in overall employment in countries like Spain or Finland), although their market shares are much larger (18 – 35% in retail trade and health care, 55 – 83% in agriculture, in various European countries). If we take the whole of the “social” economy (including not only cooperatives but various kinds of non-profit organisations) we get much larger employment shares (from 8.2% in Italy to 16.6% in the Netherlands).

The left should propagate and support such alternative and more or less non-capitalist forms of economic life and use them as a cornerstone for its long-term transformation strategies. It is necessary to rebuild the previously existing alliances between social movements like the cooperative movement, the trade unions and the political parties of the left. In strategic terms, it makes a great deal of sense to support and promote the “third sector” in all capitalist countries and to try to formalise the “informal economy”. Workers’ rights have to be extended and strengthened, alongside consumers’ rights. The social movements and the unions and the political parties of the left have to engage in struggles over public investment, reclaiming and regaining the public realm where decisions on our common or public wealth (in terms of public goods and services) are made. The left has to re-engage in debates on economic reforms and large-scale economic experiments in socialist countries – China’s hazardous road towards “market socialism” being by far the most important topic. It has to rethink the economic and societal order which lies beyond capitalism and which it aspires to achieve. If it fails to do so, reforming capitalism and making it viable or less destructive would be the only option left. If, on the other hand, it succeeds in reappraising economic democracy, it would have some strong reasons to rebuild an alliance with the millions of people already engaged in the “social” economy and the cooperative movements in Europe and elsewhere. What is more, it would regain the rationale for a radical reformist strategy of regulating and even governing the markets – entailing sustained efforts to democratise (hence “socialise”) the institutions that are actually ruling different kinds of markets today.

9 That is, essentially, the gist of Marx’ concept of a ‘scientific’ socialism: If we cannot find the material, moral and intellectual elements to build a new economy and society within the framework of actually-existing capitalism – although in disguise – all our efforts to overcome capitalism will indeed be futile. Of course, we must not only find such elements but we must use them in order to “build” a new society. Cf., Michael R. Krätke, *Jenseits des Kapitalismus. Oder wo die kapitalistische Entwicklung über sich hinausweist*, in: Marcus Hawel / Gregor Kritidis (Hg), *Aufschrei der Utopie*, Hannover: Offizin Verlag 2006 – 163 – 183.

Red and Green: The Ecosocialist Perspective

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The earth's ecological crisis has reached a decisive turning point with the phenomenon of climate change, a fateful process that is accelerating much more rapidly than predicted. The accumulation of CO₂, the rise in temperature, the melting of the polar ice, drought, floods: everything is happening very quickly, and the scientific assessments, while the ink is still drying, are already superseded, and perceived as too optimistic. Observers are increasingly inclined to the higher levels in the predictions for the next ten, twenty, thirty years. One must add that the official climate balance sheets do not take into account certain dangers, insufficiently studied, but which could provoke an uncontrollable runaway warming of the planet: for instance, the 400 billion tons of CO₂ for the moment imprisoned in the permafrost, this frozen swamp which extends through Siberia. If the Arctic ice is melting, why not the permafrost? Above a certain temperature increase – six degrees for instance – would the planet still be inhabitable for our species?

Who is responsible for this situation, without precedent in human history? It is human activity, answer the scientists. The answer is correct, but a bit too simple: human beings have been living on earth for thousands of years, but the concentration of CO₂ in the atmosphere has become dangerous only in the last few decades. As Marxists, our answer is: the culprit is the capitalist system. Its absurd and irrational logic of infinite expansion and accumulation and its productivism obsessed with the search for profit at any price are responsible for bringing humanity to the brink of the abyss. As John Bellamy Foster recently wrote, "the planetary ecological crisis is increasingly all-encompassing, a product of the destructive uncontrollability of a rapidly globalising capitalist economy, which knows no law other than its own drive to exponential expansion".¹

How should we react to this danger?

Partial reforms are completely inadequate: the failure of Kyoto illustrates the impossibility of meeting the dramatic challenge of global warming with methods of the capitalist "free market", such as the "emission rights stock-exchange". Not to speak of the pseudo-technical solutions, such as the so-called "bio-carburants" which use food grain to fill up the hungry oil tanks of cars and generate, in their production process, as much CO₂ as they are supposed to spare in comparison to gasoline.

What is needed is the replacement of the micro-rationality of profit by

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¹ John Bellamy Foster, "The Ecology of Destruction", *Monthly Review*, vol. 58, n° 9, February 2007, p. 7.

a social and ecological macro-rationality, which demands a veritable change of civilisation. That is impossible without a profound technological reorientation aimed at the replacement of present energy sources – responsible for global warming – by “clean” and renewable ones, such as wind or solar energy. The first question, therefore, concerns control over the means of production, especially decisions on investment and technological change, which must be taken away from the banks and capitalist enterprises in order to serve society’s common good.

Socialism and ecology—or at least some of its currents—share objective goals that imply a questioning of this economic automatism, of the reign of quantification, of production as a goal in itself, of the dictatorship of money, of the reduction of the social universe to the calculations of profitability and the needs of capital accumulation. Both socialism and ecology appeal to qualitative values – for socialists, use-value, the satisfaction of needs, social equality; for ecologists, protecting nature and ecological balance. Both conceive of the economy as “embedded” in the environment – a social or a natural environment.

Ecosocialism is an attempt to provide a radical civilisational alternative founded on the basic arguments of the ecological movement, and of the Marxist critique of political economy. It opposes to capitalist destructive progress (Marx) an economic policy founded on non-monetary and extra-economic criteria: social needs and ecological equilibrium. This dialectical synthesis, attempted by a broad spectrum of authors, from James O’Connor to Joel Kovel and John Bellamy Foster, and from André Gorz (in his early writings) to Elmar Altvater, is at the same time a critique of “market ecology”, which does not challenge the capitalist system, and of “productivist socialism”, which ignores the issue of natural limits.

According to James O’Connor, the aim of ecological socialism is a new society based on ecological rationality, democratic control, social equality, and the predominance of use-value over exchange-value. I would add that these aims require: a) collective ownership of the means of production, – “collective” here meaning public, cooperative or communitarian property ; b) democratic planning that makes it possible for society to define the goals of investment and production, and c) a new technological structure of the productive forces. In other words: a revolutionary social and economic transformation.²

Marx and Engels themselves were not unaware of the environmental-destructive consequences of the capitalist mode of production; there are several passages in *Capital* and other writings that point to this understanding.³

Moreover, they believed that the aim of socialism is not to produce ever more commodities, but to give human beings free time to fully develop their potentialities. To this extent, they have little in common with “productivism”, i.e. with the idea that the unlimited expansion of production is an aim in itself.

However, the dominant 20th-century interpretation of Marxism – based, it is true, on some passages in both Marx’s and Engels’s writings – held that the goal of socialism is to permit the development of productive forces beyond the limits imposed on them by the capitalist system. According to this approach, socialist transformation involves only capitalist relations of production, which have become an obstacle – “fetters” is the term often used – to the free development of the existing productive forces.

Instead, we suggest that socialists take inspiration from Marx’s remarks on the Paris Commune: workers cannot take possession of the capitalist state apparatus and simply make it serve their purposes. They have to “break it” and replace it by a radically different, democratic and non-statist form of political power.

The same applies, *mutatis mutandis*, to the productive apparatus: by its nature, its structure, it is not neutral but is at the service of capital accumulation and the unlimited expansion of the market. It is in contradiction to the needs of environmental protection and the health of the population. One must therefore “revolutionise” it, in a process of radical transformation. This may mean discontinuing certain branches of production, for instance, nuclear plants, certain mass/industrial fishing methods (responsible for the extermination of several marine species), the destructive logging of tropical forests, etc. (the list is very long). In any case, the productive forces, and not only the relations of production, have to be profoundly transformed – to begin with, by a revolution in the energy-system, the replacement of the present sources essentially fossil fuels – responsible for the pollution and poisoning of environment, by renewable ones: water, wind, sun. Many of modernity’s the scientific and technological achievements are of course precious, but the whole productive system must be transformed, and this can be done only by ecosocialist methods, i.e. through democratic planning of the economy which takes into account the preservation of the ecological equilibrium.

The issue of energy is decisive for this process of civilisational change. Fossil fuels (oil, coal) are responsible for much of the planet’s pollution, as well as for the disastrous climate change; nuclear energy is a false alternative, not only because of the danger of new Chernobyls, but also because no one knows what to do with the thousands of tons of radioactive waste – toxic for hundreds, thousands and in some case millions of years – and the gigantic masses of contaminated obsolete plants. Solar energy, which never captured the imagination of capitalist societies, not being “profitable” or “competitive”, would become the object of intensive research and development, and play a key role in the building of an alternative energy system.

Entire sectors of the productive system need to be suppressed or restructured; new ones have to be developed, under the necessary condition of full employment for the whole labour force, with equitable

2 John Bellamy Foster uses the concept of “ecological revolution”, but he argues that “a global ecological revolution worthy of the name can only occur as part of a larger social – and I would insist, socialist – revolution. Such a revolution (...) would demand, as Marx insisted, that the associated producers rationally regulate the human metabolic relation with nature. (...) It must take its inspiration from William Morris, one of the most original and ecological followers of Karl Marx, from Gandhi, and from other radical, revolutionary and materialist figures, including Marx himself, stretching as far back as Epicurus”. (“Organizing Ecological Revolution”, *Monthly Review*, 57.5, October 2005, pp. 9-10).

3 See John Bellamy Foster, *Marx’s Ecology. Materialism and Nature*, New York, Monthly Review Press, 2000

salaries and work conditions. This condition is essential, not only because it is a requirement of social justice, but in order to assure workers' support for the process of structural transformation of the productive forces. This process is impossible without public control over the means of production, and planning, i.e. public decisions on investment and technological change, which must be taken away from the banks and capitalist enterprises in order to serve society's common good.

Socialist planning is based on democratic and pluralist debate, at all levels where decisions are to be taken: different propositions are submitted to the concerned people, in the form of parties, platforms, or any other political movements, and delegates are accordingly elected. However, representative democracy must be completed – and corrected – by direct democracy, where people directly decide – at the local, national and, later, global level – between major options within questions such as: Should public transportation be free? Should the owners of private cars pay special taxes to subsidise public transportation? Should solar energy be subsidised in order to compete with fossil energy? Should the work week be reduced to 30, 25 or less hours, even if this means a decrease of production? The democratic nature of planning does not contradict the deployment of experts; however, their role is not to decide, but to present their views – often different, if not contradictory – to those of the population, which can then adopt the best solution.

What guarantee is there that people will make the correct ecological decisions, even at the expense of giving up some of their consumption habits? There is no such "guarantee", other than the wager on the rationality of democratic decisions, once the power of commodity fetishism is broken. Of course, errors will be committed in these popular decisions, but who believes that the experts do not themselves also commit errors? One cannot imagine the establishment of such a new society without the majority of the population having achieved, by their struggles, their self-education, and having accumulated their social experience and a high level of socialist/ecological consciousness, and this makes it reasonable to suppose that errors – including decisions which are inconsistent with environmental needs – will be corrected. In any case, are not the proposed alternatives – the blind market or an ecological dictatorship of "experts" – much more dangerous than the democratic process, with all its contradictions?

The passage from capitalist "destructive progress" to socialism is an historical process, a permanent revolutionary transformation of society, culture and mentalities. This transition would lead not only to a new mode of production and an egalitarian and democratic society, but also to an alternative mode of life, a new ecosocialist civilisation, beyond the reign of money, beyond consumption habits artificially produced by advertising, and beyond the unlimited production of commodities that are useless and/or harmful to the environment. It is important to emphasise

that such a process cannot begin without a revolutionary transformation of social and political structures and the active support, on the part of the vast majority, of an ecosocialist programme. The development of socialist consciousness and ecological awareness is a process in which the decisive factor is people's own collective experience of struggle, from local and partial confrontations to the radical change of society.

Some ecologists believe that the only alternative to productivism is to stop growth altogether, or to replace it by negative growth – what the French call *décroissance* – and drastically reduce the population's excessively high level of consumption by cutting in half the expenditure of energy, by giving up individual homes, central heating, washing machines, etc. Since these and similar measures of draconian austerity could well be unpopular, some play with the idea of a sort of "ecological dictatorship".

Against such pessimistic views, socialist optimists believe that technical progress and the use of renewable sources of energy will permit an unlimited growth and abundance, so that each can receive "according to his needs".

It seems to me that these two schools share a purely quantitative conception of – positive or negative – "growth", that is, of the development of productive forces. There is a third position, which seems to me more appropriate: a qualitative transformation of development. This means putting an end to the monstrous waste of resources by capitalism, based on the large-scale production of useless and/or harmful products: the armaments industry is a good example, but a great part of the "goods" produced in capitalism – with their built in obsolescence – have no other purpose but to generate profit for the large corporations. The issue is not "excessive consumption" in the abstract, but the prevalent type of consumption, based as it is on conspicuous appropriation, massive waste, mercantile alienation, obsessive accumulation of goods, and the compulsive acquisition of pseudo-novelties imposed by "fashion". A new society would orient production toward the satisfaction of authentic needs, beginning with those which could be described as "biblical" – water, food, clothing, housing – but including also the basic services: health, education, transport, culture.

Obviously, the countries of the South, where these needs are very far from being satisfied, will need a much higher level of "development" – building railroads, hospitals, sewage systems, and other infrastructures – than the advanced industrial countries need. But there is no reason why this cannot be accomplished with a productive system that is environment-friendly and based on renewable energies. These countries will need to grow great amounts of food to nourish their hungry population, but this can be much better achieved – as the peasant movements organised world-wide in the Via Campesina network have been arguing for years – by a peasant biological agriculture based on family-units, cooperatives or collective farms, rather than by the destructive and anti-

social methods of industrialised agro-business, based on the intensive use of pesticides, chemicals and GMOs. Instead of the present monstrous debt-system, and the imperialist exploitations of the resources of the South by the industrial/capitalist countries, there would be a flow of technical and economic help from the North to the South, which would not require – as some Puritan and ascetic ecologists seem to believe – that the population in Europe or North America “reduce their standard of living”: they will only get rid of the obsessive consumption, induced by the capitalist system, of useless commodities that do not correspond to any real need.

How can we distinguish the authentic from artificial, false and makeshift needs? The latter are induced by mental manipulation, i.e. advertisement. The advertising system has invaded all spheres of human life in modern capitalist societies: not only nourishment and clothing, but sports, culture, religion and politics are shaped according to its rules. It has invaded our streets, mail boxes, TV-screens, newspapers, and landscapes, in a permanent, aggressive and insidious way, and it decisively contributes to habits of conspicuous and compulsive consumption. Moreover, it wastes an astronomic amount of oil, electricity, labour time, paper, chemicals, and other raw materials – all paid by the consumers – in a branch of “production” which is not only useless, from a human viewpoint, but stands in direct contradiction to real social needs. While advertisement is an indispensable dimension of the capitalist market economy, it would have no place in a society in transition to socialism, where it would be replaced by information on goods and services provided by consumer associations. The criteria for distinguishing an authentic from an artificial need, is its persistence after the suppression of advertisement (Coca Cola!). Of course, during some years, old habits of consumption would persist, and nobody has the right to tell people what their needs are. The change in the patterns of consumption is a historical process, as well as an educational challenge.

Some commodities, such as the individual car, raise more complex problems. Private cars are a public nuisance, killing and maiming hundreds of thousands of people annually on a world scale, polluting the air in large towns – with dire consequences for the health of children and older people – and significantly contributing to climate change. However, they correspond to a real need: transporting people to their work, home or leisure. Local experience in some European towns with ecologically-minded administrations, show that it is possible – with the support of the majority of the population – to progressively limit the share of individual automobiles in circulation to the advantage of buses and trams. In a process of transition to ecosocialism, where public transportation – above or underground – would be vastly extended and free of charge for the users, and where pedestrians and bicycle-riders would have protected lanes, the private car would have a much smaller role than in bour-

geois society, where it has become a fetish commodity – promoted by insistent and aggressive advertisement – a prestige symbol, a sign of identity – in the US, a driver’s license is the recognised ID – and the centre of personal, social or erotic life. It will be much easier, in the transition to a new society, drastically to reduce the transportation of goods by trucks – responsible for terrible accidents and high levels of pollution – replacing it by the train, or by what the French call *ferroustage* (trucks transported in trains from one town to the other). Only the absurd logic of capitalist “competitiveness” explains the dangerous growth of the truck-system.

Yes, the pessimists will answer, but individuals are moved by infinite aspirations and desires that have to be controlled, checked, contained and if necessary repressed, and this may need some limitations on democracy. However, ecosocialism is based on a wager, which was already Marx’s: the predominance, in a society without classes and liberated of capitalist alienation, of “being” over “having”, i.e. of free time for personal accomplishment through cultural, sports, play, scientific, erotic, artistic and political activities, rather than the desire for an infinite possession of products. Compulsive acquisitiveness is induced by the commodity fetishism inherent in the capitalist system, by the dominant ideology and by advertisement: nothing proves that it is part of an “eternal human nature”, as the reactionary discourse would have us believe. As Ernest Mandel emphasised: “The continual accumulation of more and more goods (with declining “marginal utility”) is by no means a universal and even predominant feature of human behaviour. The development of talents and inclinations for their own sake; the protection of health and life; care for children; the development of rich social relations (...) all these become major motivations once basic material needs have been satisfied”.⁴

This does not mean that conflicts will not arise, particularly during the transitional process, between the requirements of environmental protection and social needs, between ecological imperatives and the need to develop basic infra-structure, particularly in the poor countries, between popular consumer habits and the scarcity of resources. A classless society is not a society without contradictions and conflicts! These are inevitable: it will be the task of democratic planning, in an ecosocialist perspective, liberated from the imperatives of capital and profit-making, to solve them by pluralist and open discussion, leading to decision-making by society itself. Such a grass-roots and participatory democracy is the only way, not to avoid errors, but to permit the self-correction, by the social collectivity, of its own mistakes.

Is this utopia? In its etymological sense – “something that exists nowhere” – certainly. But are not utopias, i.e. visions of an alternative future, wish-images of a different society, a necessary feature of any movement that wants to challenge the established order?

4 Ernest Mandel, *Power and Money. A Marxist Theory of Bureaucracy*, London, Verso, 1992, p. 206.

The socialist and ecological utopia is only an objective possibility, not the inevitable result of the contradictions of capitalism, or of the "iron laws of history". One cannot predict the future, except in conditional terms: in the absence of an ecosocialist transformation, of a radical change in the civilisational paradigm, the logic of capitalism will lead the planet to dramatic ecological disasters, threatening the health and the life of billions of human beings, and perhaps even the survival of our species.

To dream, and to struggle for a green socialism, or, according to some, a solar communism, does not mean not fighting for concrete and urgent reforms. Without any illusions regarding a "clean capitalism", one must try to win time, and to impose, on the powers that be, some elementary changes: the banning of the HCFCs that are destroying the ozone layer, a general moratorium on genetically modified organisms, a drastic reduction in the emission of greenhouse gases, the development of public transportation, the taxation of polluting cars, the progressive replacement of trucks by trains, tough regulation of the fishing industry, as well as of the use of pesticides and chemicals in agro-industrial production. These, and similar issues, are at the heart of the agenda of the global justice movement, and of the World Social Forums, a decisive new development which has permitted, since Seattle in 1999, the convergence of social and environmental movements in a common struggle against the system.

These urgent eco-social demands can lead to a process of radicalisation, on condition that one does not accept limiting one's aims according to the requirements of the capitalist market or of "competitiveness". Each small victory, each partial advance, can immediately lead to a higher demand, to a more radical aim.

Such struggles around concrete issues are important, not only because partial victories are welcome in themselves, but also because they contribute to raise ecological and socialist consciousness, and because they promote activity and self-organisation from below: both are decisive and necessary pre-conditions for a radical, i.e. revolutionary, transformation of the world.

There is no cause for optimism: the entrenched ruling elites of the system are incredibly powerful, and the forces of radical opposition are still small. But they are the only hope for halting the catastrophic course of capitalist "growth".



32/10

Lajos Kossuth

News from Somewhere: Participatory Budgets and Social Transformation

Javier Navascués.

"The only alternatives to our method that I can conceive are these: first that we should choose out, or breed, a class of superior persons capable of judging on all matters without consulting the neighbours; that, in sort, we should get for ourselves what used to be called an aristocracy of intellect; or, secondly, that for the purpose of safe-guarding the freedom of the individual will we should revert to a system of private property again, and have slave and slave holders again. What do you think of these two expedients?"

William Morris. *News from Nowhere or an Epoch of Rest.*

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What is the value of Participatory Budgeting (PB) for a strategy of social transformation? Is it a mystification aimed at keeping people busy apart from what really matters? Or is it, on the contrary, a step forward on the path to overcoming domination? Since the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) in Brazil launched the first internationally known PB process in Porto Alegre in 1989 a lively debate has been developing around the transformative scope of these experiences. When the left-wing 'Petistas', up to then hegemonic in Porto Alegre, lost the elections in 2004 the debate took on a new dimension; how valuable were these experiments if they could not even prevent the right from winning the local election?

Suspicion has grown since the UK Minister for Communities announced that the British Government was ready to 'devolve power' to people at the local level turning PB into a generalised practice in the country. It is not the first time that legitimisation of local governments' financial shortcomings has been laid on the citizens' shoulders in Europe. Some notorious examples can be found in Germany and other places. Sometimes even well meaning left-wing ruled local councils have tried to develop new forms of local democracy through these procedures with very meagre results in terms of enhanced participation or even impact of people's desires on local policies. Frustrated expectations and cynical assessments of the real processes can be found almost everywhere.

Nevertheless I will make the case in this article that PB can be a transformative policy not only in Latin America but in the context of large European cities, and that it is both a worthwhile and challenging endeavour for a left party in government, provided the effort is bold enough. My appreciation rests on my own experience in Seville, a city of 700,000 people in the south of Spain. Since 2003 Seville has been governed by a coalition of the social-democratic party – PSOE – and the United Left – Izquierda Unida. Although the PSOE has the majority in government, IU was able to introduce the PB in the coalition programme. At first, its scope was only the decentralised part of the city budget, but since the last elections held in 2007 the local government has committed itself to submitting to the PB process the whole budget by the end of the term ending in 2011.

The PB in Seville is a direct offspring of the Porto Alegre process, although with some variations due to obvious different social and political circumstances. In a nutshell, the idea is that local government has made the political commitment to leave the allocation of part of the city's expense budget in the hands of an autonomous and self-regulated citizen instance ruled through direct democracy principles and procedures.

After four years we can look at the process as a new form of collective action which basically consists in reclaiming for citizens the power to decide on issues traditionally reserved by the government, a course of action which is somewhat paradoxically supported by the government. In this sense it is different from the kinds of political intervention traditionally supported by the left such as mobilisation or action to push for demands through elected representatives. It also differs from pure forms of 'social' self-management either disconnected from, or in cooperation with, the state. Moreover, it is not traditional 'revolutionary' action: assaulting (even in a partial way) the state. The question is how to characterise this new form of collective action?

The Intrusion of Democracy

I would define these participatory democracy experiences consisting in reclaiming the right to take part directly in the state's decisions as an *intrusion*. That is, a break with the practice of the division of political labour between those who represent and those who are represented. This is a crucial point concerning the material structure of the capitalist state as I will try to explain later.

This attempt at shifting decision-making from the state institutions to a larger public space is one of the most characteristic features of globalisation, both on the part of the powerful and on the part of those who resist. The exercise of power within globalisation combines the formal

and hierarchical mechanisms of the state(s) with other more flexible and ad-hoc arrangements such as consensus-building, delegation, partnerships, ... Those taking part in these arrangements are not necessarily states or state-based institutions. We can acknowledge this new geometry of power as a structural characteristic of the new phase of globalisation. That is why explanations relying on raw superimperialism on the ghost of a diffuse but omnipresent post-statism do not suffice to account for the current reality.

Neoliberal governance does not make the state redundant; it redefines its role. The state is no longer just materialising and reproducing the balance of power between social groups within a concrete territory in a concrete historical moment. It is now forced to share these decision-making spaces with some non-state agents giving away sovereignty and simultaneously excluding other agents for the same reason: it is no longer the sovereign any. Nevertheless in the last analysis decisions are enacted through (the possibility of resorting to) the legitimate monopoly of violence held by the state. We are confronted with a more flexible form of state, but it is always an asymmetrical flexibility, within ever changing but selective frameworks¹.

This selectivity is in any case a matter of class, for it can be explained to a very significant extent in terms of the priority of the logic of profit and capital accumulation over any other logic. Thus, current conflicts in the course of globalisation appear as if they were taking place between the (global) market and (national) state, but they really are between capital and society through state and also on the battleground of a wider public sphere. That is why democracy is in crisis. Aristotle said that what makes democracy different from oligarchy is not the law of numbers but whether power is held by the poor or the rich². In capitalism democracy is the struggle for putting life and its needs before profit and accumulation. The secular struggle for universal franchise since the time of the popular vote made sense as far as it was the same struggle to impose labour and social regulations on the liberal state.

It is not by chance that both forms of contemporary democratic collective action, the anti-globalisation movement and modern participatory democracy, emerged contemporaneously. Seattle, the mobilisations against WTO, etc. on the global scale and the vindication of participatory democracy at the local level are the forms that democratic struggles have taken in our time. In the flexible but selective framework of contemporary balances of powers we can discern the difference between two kinds of public sphere: an oligarchic public sphere (beyond the state but comprising it) and a democratic public sphere (also beyond but comprising the state).

Both modern democratic movements intervene in a widened public sphere but with reference to the state. The anti-globalisation movement in some sense organises traditional protest action vis-à-vis the state but

has also tried to develop constructive action through the process of the WSF and its regional counterparts. The movement for participatory democracy is reclaiming not only the capacity to define the 'common good' but also the right directly to implement concrete decisions in ways that offer an alternative to the traditional workings of the state.

"The working class cannot simply lay hold of ready-made state machinery ..."

The material instantiation and active reproduction of social relations through its own structures is an enduring characteristic of the capitalist state despite all the mutations capitalism has undergone. The state 'levers' are precisely those mechanisms which are responsible for the reproduction and reinforcement of these relations in the political sphere. Two of these levers are in my view essential to understand the challenges posed by participatory democracy. These elements form part of what Poulantzas called the institutional materiality of state³.

First comes individualisation, the breaking up of society into a collection of atomised human beings. Social relations are decomposed through modern 'bourgeois' law in relations between formally equal individuals with their legitimate interests, legitimate as far as they remain private interests. For example, the state recognises the rights of salaried workers as such and those of their employers, but these rights become codified in order to reconcile them, ignoring the fact that salaried workers are what they are because employers exist and vice versa. This is as if exploitation did not exist. Once these rights are recognised and codified they are hierarchically subject to *general interest* which can only be legitimately interpreted by the state. Obviously, in class-divided society, general interest is also subject to selective asymmetry precisely through these codes. If democracy is the movement of the people from below to overcome the burdens imposed on their lives by the existing relations of power, the movement for democracy must be *autonomous* from the state to avoid the limits set by this codification. Otherwise, it will remain constricted within these boundaries. The autonomy of the people from below is the condition of democracy.

What is the aim of this autonomy? Overcoming the *division of labour*. The division between intellectual and manual labour is the other lever of state mechanisms I want to focus on. A non-reductionist interpretation of this concept can easily work out the homology between the power of capitalists and managers in the workplace and the power of the state. An homology due to the role of technology – objectified social power, dead labour which has been appropriated by the capitalist – subjecting living labour to the role of *raison d'état*, the superior knowledge of the state of what is and what is not the *public interest*.

1 This concept of 'selective asymmetry' is very similar to that of Bob Jessop's 'strategic selectivity' (*The Future of the Capitalist State*, Cambridge, Polity Press, 2002). Of course, I am responsible for any misunderstanding of his point of view.

2 Aristotle. *La Política (Politics)*. Justino de Azcárate (transl.). Madrid, Espasa Calpe, 1997

3 Nicos Poulantzas. *State, Power, Socialism*, Verso, London, 1980.

The division between intellectual and manual labour in the management of *common affairs* is much older than capitalism. It is rooted in the first appearance of class societies. But a rationalistic, functional and 'scientifically' based administrative science is the product of bourgeois society. Not only in a metaphorical sense but in a very real one. Classics of bourgeois republicanism such as Madison and Sieyès⁴ argue openly in favour of representative democracy against direct democracy, and base their arguments on the virtues of division of labour in the *world of business affairs*. Whatever the mystifications later constructed to justify this option, representative democracy was the natural way to organise public management in a society based on salary. The struggle for taking part directly in public decision-making on an autonomous basis, the core of the struggle for participatory democracy, is the *negation* of this division of labour.

Upholding this division of labour within the democratic movement is the negation of the whole struggle's basic aims. The British labour movement defeated itself by endorsing the Fabian affirmation: 'We have little faith in the 'average sensual man'. We do not believe that he can do much more than describe his grievances, we do not think he can prescribe his remedies ... We wish to introduce the professional expert.'⁵ This way the emancipatory project surrendered to its very enemy by accepting social engineering. Needless to say, this also occurred with the authoritarian turn of the Russian Revolution and the theory and practice of the *leading party*. Both are examples of what Poulantzas called the 'techno-bureaucratic statism of the experts'⁶, a common feature of Stalinist and social-democratic state-worship, something very neatly criticised by William Morris in his *News from Nowhere*⁷, an anti-utopia written to counteract the influence of 'technical solutions' to the 'social question' in the 19th-century British labour movement.

That is why it is not enough to control the state levers, as Marx explained in the *Civil War in France*. Not even building new 'proletarian levers' will be effective. The solution lies far beyond these measures. The whole idea is what Marx himself called 'the reabsorption of state power by society as its own living force instead of as forces controlling and subduing it'⁸. Or to say it in Poulantzas' words '*Transformation of the state apparatus tending towards the withering away of the State* can rest only on increased intervention of the popular masses in the State (...) through their own initiatives within the State itself'⁹

Autonomy and Collective Knowledge

In my view, the transformative value of PB experiences stands in direct relation to the degree to which they promote the autonomy of citizenship and question the key division of labour between rulers and ruled, giving rise to a new form of collective knowledge on common interests.

In the case of Seville, taking into account the limits of time and scope, advances and withdrawals can be assessed in relation to these two issues. Concerning autonomy, the first step is the 'constitutional' process, the political decision to make it a self-regulated process. An idea imported from Porto Alegre, "autorreglamento" (self-regulation), was the key to the people's ownership of the process. Principles of solidarity and social justice and procedures to implement these principles are codified and periodically directly revised by the people in the applied statute. It should be pointed out that these regulations also stipulate the framework for the relations between the process and the local authorities, thus avoiding subordination of the former to the latter.

The very existence of these self-established rules, and practical compliance with them, are the keys to avoiding clientism, which is an endemic problem for popular-movement autonomy. On the other hand, the rules stipulate in great detail how popular Assemblies and all the instances of the PB are to be chaired by citizens, not by public officers, and how the public infrastructures and resources can be used by citizens when needed.

The framework for relations between local authorities and technical staff and the instances of the PB is one of the clues. Building this framework was not unproblematic. At the very beginning in 2004 a conflict arose between the District Councils and the corresponding instances of the PB. By March 2007 a decree was passed by the local government in which it committed itself to fulfilling the 'determinations approved by the citizens' assemblies in the self-governing rules' and instructed all of the staff to 'comply with these rules'. Between these two moments a long history of debate and shared learning took place not without struggles. During this period several procedures were established to ensure that the local government would be fully accountable to the Assemblies and to provide for scrutiny by the chosen delegates of the whole process of public spending.

Regarding division of labour, the process was able to question the traditional functionally oriented way in which local government is organised. The 'business-as-usual' administrative procedures are made transparent and then questionable by the people, both in terms of form and of content. Public managers are forced to negotiate with the people over how things are done. Practical knowledge balances technocratic knowledge. The educator is being educated.

Forging alliances strengthens autonomy, and citizens become collectively more competent. Sectoral agendas gain force in the territory based Assemblies, winning support and raising questions which otherwise would have remained within minority groups. The appearance of deliberative instances with citizens and public workers deliberating together on a horizontal basis creates the possibility of breaking the monopoly of local government as the interpreter of collective needs.

4 Yves Sintomer. *Le pouvoir au peuple. Jurys citoyens, tirage au sort et démocratie participative*, La Découverte, Paris, 2007

5 Beatrice Webb. *Our Partnership*, Longmans, London, 1948.

6 Poulantzas. *Op.cit.*

7 See the introductory quotation.

8 Karl Marx. *The Civil War in France, First Draft*. 1871. In *Collected Works, Marx/Engels Internet Archive* (marxists.org) 1993, 2000.

9 Poulantzas. *Op. cit.* Emphases in the original

In this way the process opens itself to research on new issues: the agreement on gender parity opens the question of how the politics of time might make the right to participate real. All the collective bodies rotate and all delegates can be revoked. Nobody can hold a mandate twice. The process is open to a broader concept of citizenship: children under legal age, migrants whatever their legal status, ... are given full rights of participation.

As a result, a collective process of knowledge and power-building begins to develop. Citizens are more competent and knowledgeable, and so more confident. Autonomy grows, bringing together groups and people from outside and inside the local state. Further questions arise from this cross-fertilisation between practical, vital experiences and more intellectual and technical understanding: what are the criteria for appraising the estimated cost of a programme or a public work? How should public services be deployed to guarantee access to everyone?

'He who is not busy being born is busy dying...' A Brief Excursus on the Question of Political Parties and Participatory Democracy

Obviously the advances that I have been describing up to now are only partial and limited. However, they afford a glimpse of what could happen if participatory democracy is allowed to develop. But this introduces more challenges.

One of the most urgent is the need of change within political parties. Political will is a must if participatory practice is to continue without being denaturalised. Seville, Porto Alegre and many other cases show that a bold, rigorous and self-critical commitment from the government side is indispensable. That implies that political parties also make a choice.

Left parties born out of the workers' and democratic movements of the 19th and 20th centuries were then constituent parts of those movements. They were rooted in them, and they tried and were able to represent them in and against the state. But at present they inhabit a sort of hybrid space, between state and society, if indeed they have not been fully absorbed by the former. Participatory democracy challenges them to decide between statism and autonomy.

'Freedom consists in converting the state from an organ superimposed upon society into one completely subordinate to it; and today, too, the forms of state are more free or less free to the extent that they restrict the "freedom of the state"'. This is not a liberal assertion. It was said by Marx in his Critique of the Gotha Programme¹⁰ and is rooted in a clear understanding of what statism is, an idea that seems to have been forgotten by left parties. It can be said more loudly but not more

10 Karl Marx. *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, 1875. In *Collected Works, Marx/Engels Internet Archive* (marxists.org) 1999.

clearly. The first political task of parties, from outside but also from within, is just that, to place a limit on state freedom.

The second challenge for the parties is to be able to resist becoming 'states' themselves. This brings back the question of the division of labour, that is, the urgent need of serious measures against bureaucratisation and professionalism, measures aimed at direct democracy and other much needed organisational and cultural changes. The debate is old enough, dating at least to 1872, but today it is more urgent than ever. The traditional model of left party, today a pale shadow of what it used to be, does not fit with participatory democracy.

If this is so, what remains for parties to do today? Politics and ideology, ...which in itself is plenty. Society is not homogeneous. Just like the state, it is criss-crossed by all sorts of contradictions and political projects, some of them only different, others mutually exclusive. The main role of political parties in participatory democracy is precisely to politicise it, to avoid its banalisation. But in a sense they need to be born again. And to paraphrase Bob Dylan's song, political parties which do not engage in being born will be very busy dying.

Intrusive Democracy, Turning State to Commons

Participatory democracy practices are consistent with social transformation to the extent to which they deny the operation of the 'levers' of class state. Contemporary capitalism blurs the former clear-cut frontiers between state and civil society, but this had always been occurring. The secular history of democracy is the history of the successive blurring and widening of these spaces, the history of the building of autonomy and of intrusion. The decay of democracy has to do with the fragmentation of the popular layers and further co-optation of some fragments within the corporatist state structures. Today's plural societies lend themselves easily to being managed 'democratically' by the state through sociological categorisation into 'sectors': women, migrants, the elderly, ethnic groups ... The democratic movement needs to build a common identity and agenda with this plurality¹¹. Autonomous democratic practices vis-à-vis the state are the way to reinvent democracy as the intrusion of the poor.

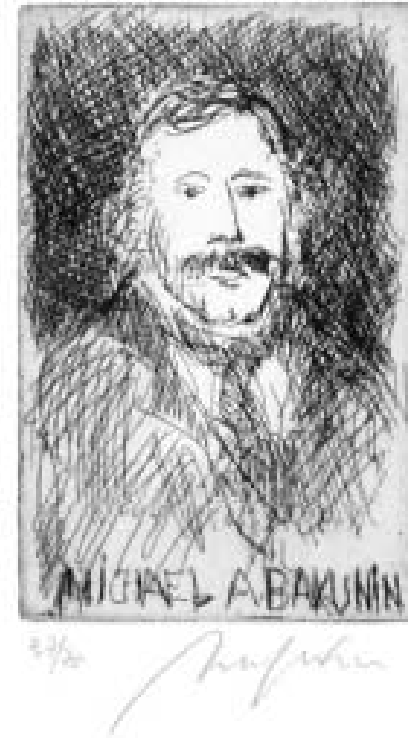
Is participatory democracy a technique for social control or is it an empowering process? It can be both at the same time. A minimum of political will and autonomy are required. The rest comes with practice: overcoming divisions, mutual knowledge feedback, common-interest identification and collective project-building.

Only a social practice of conscientious regulation of the way social life is managed will make the elements of a new society emerge. Cooperating is the only way to learn how to cooperate. The development of

11 Something that brings up the question of identity politics and the way the state manages emancipatory demands, as pointed out by Balibar (*Communisme et citoyenneté. Réflexions sur la politique d'émancipation à la fin du XXe siècle*, Actuel Marx, n. 40, 2nd quarter 2006)

planned cooperation to meet common needs is the basis of the future expansion of the 'commons'. New capacities will develop as the new society develops. But a necessary condition for the emergence of these new capacities is to begin moving forward, even in distorted, precarious and insufficient steps.

Is there any way other than participatory democracy to provide for the common needs? Is there an alternative path to prevent bureaucratisation and specialisation? What should we wait for? It can be argued that the highly populated and complex societies of the 21st century cannot work as a permanent assembly, as a global Athens, but who is proposing such a thing? We can only propose, and it is quite enough – in order to avoid well-known mistakes and search for a process that can overcome the state as a separate entity from society – to move in the direction of regulated society. This process is not a ripe apple which will fall into our hands. Hard struggles are required to make possible new ways of organising life in common. Naturally, many obstacles must be removed. But there is no sense in postponing participation on the eve of the new society because participating is the only way to give birth to those human beings who will imagine and build that new society.



Michael Bakunin

Building a "Socialism of the 21st Century"

Participatory Democracy in Latin America:

Leo Gabriel

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It has become fashionable nowadays to associate the student and youth movement of 1968 with the worldwide attempt to build a political culture of a new kind; but very few bear in mind the qualitatively different impact this outburst of subjectivity had on the political developments in the North and in the South and East. While in the North – the US as well as Western Europe – the 1968 movement shaped an overall criticism of the institutionalised societies as such and a radical critique of the upcoming "consumer-societies", in the South and in Eastern Europe it gave way to a kind of revolutionary impulse against the existing order, whether ruled by party hierarchies or military dictatorships.

According to Eric Hobsbawm, this movement erupted precisely at a time when the economic and military race between the East and the West, the capitalist and the communist world, still existed, and just before the repressions and the oil crisis of the 1970s brought the world powers back to their old stagnant and petrified identities.

In Latin America, however, these events opened up "pre-revolutionary windows" exposing the hidden structures of a society which wanted radical change but did not very well know how to go about it. In most countries, various "revolutionary vanguard" approaches seemed to offer the only possibility of overthrowing the existing power structures deeply rooted in colonial histories and contemporary empires (above all of the United States of America). With the exception of Nicaragua, this strategy turned out to be a political-military failure which led to an enormous loss of human life without bringing about the necessary changes in the political and economic power structure.

However, in Latin America the 1970s and 1980s witnessed still another phenomenon. Underlying the power struggles of classical political parties and military confrontations, a great number of locally based social movements of peasants and slum dwellers, of workers and indigenous peoples, of refugees and landless, emerged and grew on the regional and national level – frequently with the active support of non-governmental organisations from the North. In the shadow of governments, political parties, traditional landowners and modern transnational companies, a process of emancipation took place, hardly noticed by

the traditional left. Articulated in relatively small units in which women and young people quite often had a bigger say than community leaders possessing formal authority, a real grass-roots democracy was developing within the communities as a mechanism of self-defence against the increasingly violent impositions of landlords, political parties and military/paramilitary actors.

This "survival-democracy", which has been described so many times by development-aid personnel, priests and some eloquent representatives of the grass-roots-societies themselves, like Rigoberta Menchu, Domitila Chungara and others, was spreading in the mountains of Guatemala among the million or more internal refugees, and in the camps in Mexico and Costa Rica, but also in the *bananeras* and mines of Panama and Colombia. To the south, they formed even bigger and stronger organisations, as in Ecuador, Peru and Bolivia, calling themselves "trade unions" or networks of peasants, landless and indigenous organisations.

Disregarded by political analysts and left parties, which frequently saw them as "transmission belts" for their own power games within the traditional concept of nation-state (seeding divisions among communities and socially engaged activists), millions of people and hundreds of *peoples* found ways to live with each other. Only some radical social anthropologists like Guillermo Bonfil Battaglia, and publicists and filmmakers like Gordian Troeller and Orlando Xena, saw this phenomenon as the rise of a new democratic political structure – democracies with much higher standards, with regard to the political participation of individuals and the networking capacity of communities, than those of the orthodox left (and of course also of the right).

Despite the novelty and diversity of these forms of participatory democracy which developed during the 1970s and 1980s throughout Latin America (including the Caribbean), they were branded as "communist" – not because they supposedly reflected a Marxist conception, but because the political and military power brokers in and outside the military governments thought this would be the best way to get rid of them. However, with the documents of Santa Fé and the Washington Consensus, they were recognised as a greater threat to the established order than the traditional left and immediately subjected to the most violent military and paramilitary repression throughout the continent.

Among the main facilitators of this new kind of participatory democracy (whether or not this was their conscious goal) were priests and nuns, but also a great many Catholic lay people. Through their efforts – from the time of the CELAM (Latin American Conference of Bishops) in 1968 in Medellín, Colombia – to go back to the roots of Christianity they became a living example for that proliferation of communal practices without which neither the revolutionary processes in Central America nor the contemporary changes in the governments of Bolivia, Argentina and Brazil would have been possible.

A particular irony of history had it that due to their success and impact in creating relatively strong civil-society-networks and social movements by way of preaching the "Gospel of the Poor" they became victims of their own hierarchical structure within the Catholic Church, a church which could not accept the end of the colonial missionary era. Like the patriarchs of the orthodox communist regimes, the patriarchs of the Catholic Church denied the political realities which, without much difficulty, could have brought about a renewal of their petrified institutions.

The Rules of the Game: the Practice of Participatory Democracy

In the tradition of the Latin American resistance movements, participatory democracy is a political practice arising from diverse cultural contexts much more than a "model" or a theory. It is a method rather than a goal in itself, which developed long before the breakdown of 20th-century "actually-existing socialism".

If we consider the political structures which developed, often underground and subject to heavy persecution, in the cities and rural areas of Latin America and the Caribbean in the 1970s and 1980s, we see – despite very different articulations – some common features:

1) The mechanisms of Participatory Democracy (PD) emerged mainly in relatively small social environments like villages or neighbourhoods. This is, on the one hand, due to the enormous pressure exercised by the centralised post-colonial powers such as the military, the Catholic Church, political parties and sometimes even the leftist guerrilla organisations; on the other hand, it is also due to their promotion of some development-theories long putting forward the slogan "small is beautiful" (Leopold Kor and others) as its ultimate premise.

Although the size of a community does not automatically determine the level of democratic behaviour of its members, it is a very relevant factor. Anybody who has observed a Social Forum or any other assembly will have noticed that it is much easier for people to participate in smaller than in larger groups.

2) PD, as it unfolded in Latin America, is always based on a common identity which may be an historical or a geographical one or an identity moulded by common interests or collective struggles. Consequently, the territorial dimension of PD is important. The identity is nearly always related in some way to "space", even if it is a totally open space or a virtual space. Even the biggest miners union – COMIBOL in Bolivia – derives its identity from the individual mine employing a relatively small group of miners. There might be a university protest of more than a hundred thousand students, but every participant goes on behalf of his or her school which symbolises his or her specific identity.

3) It goes without saying that PD must start with an open discussion process that does not discriminate by either gender or age. Much more difficult is the question of creating the subjective conditions in which everybody has not only the right to speak, but also the will and opportunity to do so.

This is precisely the moment where the art of a moderator (facilitator) comes into play, a moderator who is not suspected of wishing to manipulate or monopolise a discussion. While in traditional societies this role is often given to the elders, in the more modern societies there are often "experts" (whatever this may actually mean) chosen because they are thought to be more neutral and intelligent and thus more able to adapt to new situations.

4) Even if the participatory decision making process (PDMP) invests a particular person with the capacity to speak on behalf of a common decision, it does not delegate to that person the power to make decisions. This is also the reason why in the indigenous communities (but not only there) the principle of consensus generally prevails over the principle of majority, for a majority decision theoretically implies the existence of two spokespersons: one who reflects the majority and the other the minority in order to prevent deviant opinions from simply being neglected and ignored.

5) The only way to feel represented in a PD structure is by feeling that the "leader" or spokesperson will not make decisions on his or her own. This is the reason why in a PDMP the leaders always consult with their communities before they decide on a given proposal.

This implies a horizontal structure of the decision-making process. Since the superior level is not considered to be an entity of its own the structure has the character of a network and not of a pyramid where the superior level acts on behalf of a lower level.

6) The ultimate goal of such participatory processes is to guarantee a maximum degree of autonomy in decision-making, which means avoiding, as far as possible, dependency on outside factors. Self-reliance and social responsibility are the key concepts which should inform the assembly in any stage of its development, from proposals to conclusions.

It would be an illusion to think that all of these principles are being honoured at any given time in contemporary discussions within the different organisations of civil society. On the contrary, with the exception of people and organisations having a strong cultural heritage of solidarity, one or another of these precepts are continuously being violated. What is important, however, is that these principles are generally upheld even if often disregarded in practice. In this sense PD was more a code of conduct than an ideology. In Latin America everybody understands that PD is not a closed system, not a ritual, like the representative systems generally accepted everywhere, but a learning process which eventually

leads to what was the idea of democracy at the dawn of history: the possibility of the people and peoples deciding for themselves.

In this process of emancipation there are still many obstacles to overcome and many bridges to be built. Some obstacles should be dismissed, like the idea of individual leadership which nearly always gains ground when the question of political power is involved. The central dichotomy's intrinsic dialectic is: on the one hand we need to face the question of power in order to put the necessary changes into practice; on the other hand we have to stick to the logic of resistance where the practice of PD was born and is still being upheld.

Within this dichotomy of the logic of power and the logic of resistance we also can situate the question of a so-called "Socialism of the 21st Century". In this respect we have to bear in mind that this concept is not so much a question of form but of political content. If 20th-century socialism grew out of the European tradition based on the concept of the nation-state in the aftermath of the French Revolution, the idea of a Socialism of the 21st Century is developing within the framework of contemporary Latin America history.

This is so not only because Hugo Chávez was one of the first who dared to use this symbolic metaphor but because democracy is at stake and it must be of a different sort than the one used and misused by the neoliberal governments and its transnational actors. To imagine that it is today enough to bring about change simply by waiting for the next elections is as much an historical mistake as Mikhail Gorbachov's idea that he could save socialism simply by installing mechanisms of Western European and US-American representative democracy. If we talk about Socialism of the 21st Century we must go back to the roots. And these roots are not just the writings of Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, Vladimir Ilich Lenin, Rosa Luxemburg and others; they are found far beyond the 19th century and far beyond European history. They grow wherever people and peoples gather to resist the existing unjust and undemocratic (dis)order dominated by a handful of central powers. We must learn this lesson of resistance from those who are deeply rooted in their culture and history.

Participatory Democracies in the Rise of Anti-liberal Governments after 1989

The participatory mode of action and collective decision-making suddenly became very important for the development of a political strategy when in 1989 three events shook the world:

- the breakdown of the Soviet empire which had exercised a considerable influence on the traditional Latin American left and the national liberation movements in Central America.

- The defeat in the Nicaraguan elections of the Sandinista government whose democratic practice had seriously deteriorated by the end of the 1980s as a consequence of the war.
- The invasion of Panama by the United States, which became a training ground for new military technologies that could and eventually would be used in any country of the Third World which resisted.

For the popular movements which had resisted for decades and sometimes even centuries, this moment was felt as a serious defeat. The hopes for political and economic help from outside suddenly vanished, and those civil society organisations who considered themselves part of a worldwide (revolutionary or non-revolutionary) process became orphans with an unknown destiny.

It was a time of endless discussions within the parties of the Latin American left which suddenly understood that their strategies had to go beyond the narrow boundaries of the nation-state. In 1990 the *Foro de São Paulo* was founded on the initiative of the Brazilian Workers Party (*Partido dos Trabalhadores – PT*) as a gathering of more than 50 left parties and social movements. Using as a model the open alliances which had led to the success of the PT in Brazil and the increasingly important social movements all over the continent, the *Foro de São Paulo*, together with the national liberation movements of Central America, started to propagate the concept of a "movement-party" (*partido movimiento*) calling (at least theoretically) for a radical democratisation of their own party structures.

The Indigenous Movement and the Building of a Cohesive Political Structure

On the other hand, the indigenous movement, which had survived for centuries within the national states, suddenly gave signs of unexpected vitality as 1992 approached, the year of the 500th anniversary of what some called the "Encounter of Cultures", and others "500 years of Resistance". In fact, the importance of the *Movimiento 500 años de Resistencia Indígena, Negra y Popular* cannot be underestimated. Not only because the indigenous organisations of Mexico, Central America and the Andean countries became aware of their importance as a political factor, but also because they represented a new hope for all the many non-indigenous movements which had been orphaned after 1989.

Repeatedly, subjects like the principle of consensus and the abolition of all kinds of "vanguardism" were highlighted during the controversial discussions between indians (proud to be known as such) and mestizos. And although it would still be some time before the Zapatista rebellion emerged, there were already the seeds of a form of democracy which not

only included the freedom of the individual, but also the right of self-determination for all the communities and peoples of the world: autonomy.

In relating the concept of autonomy to the development of PD in Latin America, we have always to remember that this concept is the result of an infinite number of social, political and cultural struggles for the rights of individuals as groups, communities and peoples. It was only relatively late, at the beginning of this century, that the concepts of regional autonomy and PD reached the government level with a series of strategic decisions taken after the defeat of several revolutionary attempts to seize political power: in Brazil, Argentina, Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador, to mention only those cases in which the social movements were able to effect a change of government.

Neither Luíz Inacio da Silva "Lula" nor Nestor Kirchner, Hugo Chávez, Evo Morales or Rafael Correa could have won their respective presidencies without movements and parties which had evolved according to the unwritten guidelines of PD. They would never have won without the activists of the Landless Movement (MST), of the Piqueteros, of the Cocaleros and the rebellions of the indigenous people. Even if Hugo Chávez may in this context be seen as the exception confirming the rule, since he created his own mass-movement after being elected, there is no doubt that his coming to power was also a result of the social uprisings in the aftermath of the Caracazo in 1988.

But it would be a methodological mistake to look at contemporary Latin American history only considering those countries where political change has occurred at the government level. The case of Andrés Manuel López Obrador in Mexico is more than paradigmatic for a development which might soon be followed by Carlos Gaviria in Columbia and several other figures in Central (e.g. El Salvador and Nicaragua) and South America (e.g. Paraguay).

Since the 1994 Zapatista Rebellion, Mexico has been the site of small and large confrontations carried out by social movements which grew in local and regional struggles in Guerrero, Oaxaca, Morelos, Chihuahua, Veracruz and many other areas. Unlike what happened in other countries, the movements in Mexico were divided on the question of whether to support López Obrador, the candidate of the PRD (Partido de la Revolución Democrática), who lost the July 2006 elections due to a major fraud perpetrated by the ruling PAN (Partido de Acción Nacional) and the traditional PRI (Partido de la Revolución Institucional), with the help of the Bush Administration.

López Obrador lost the election although his candidacy was supported by a huge mass movement, not because the Zapatistas and others did not give him their support, but because his own movement was too hierarchical and lacking in PD. Since the elections, his party has been split between the more or less corrupt party bureaucracy and the "movement-people" whose first goal is the democratisation of Mexican society.

A new Participatory Model in Venezuela

A somewhat different case is Venezuela, considered by some the motherland of Socialism of the 21st Century. As already mentioned, here it was the government and not an autonomous movement which induced a sort of grass-roots-democracy to consolidate the new political structures of the regime. It is probably too early to know if these structures will come to power in the not distant future. But it is certain that the different concepts which found their way into the constitutional proposals which were narrowly defeated in the December 2007 elections were meant to introduce, for the first time in history, several mechanisms of PD at the constitutional level:

1) The new constitution would have established the Councils (*Consejos*) as a decision-making territorial entity which would control – and if necessary counteract – the hierarchies of elected authorities.

2) This control would extend to all spheres of social life, particularly also to economics, where the Councils would be able to approve or reject municipal budgets. This idea, which was first implemented in Porto Alegre, Brazil, from 2001 the cradle of the World Social Forum, has in the meantime become common practice in many countries of the world (including in Europe).

3) One of the biggest attacks on neoliberal practices would have also been a new definition of property, which establishes a differentiated system of social responsibilities (not state control) of enterprises at the same time as it promotes the expansion of producer and consumer cooperatives.

4) And last but not least, the constitution would have ratified the practice of a "revocatory referendum" (*Referendum Revocatorio*) allowing a certain percentage of the electorate to demand a vote confirming or dismissing every elected authority in the middle of his or her term.

Summing Up

PD in Latin America has deep roots in the colonial and post-colonial cultures of resistance. After the breakdown of the traditional socialist alternatives, regional and inter-regional structures of indigenous, social and other civil-society movements, which developed quite rapidly in the 1970s and 1980s, became the basis for various electoral options grounded in a common practice of PD and regional autonomies.

In a broader perspective, the left governments which have taken power in some of the continent's most economically and politically important countries could develop and implement a form of Socialism of the 21st Century grounded in the different articulations of society and not only in the nation-state, substituting the traditional mechanisms of so-called democratic representation through a diverse structure of PDs.



Der Tod als Weichensteller

Reading Beauvoir

Marlene Streeruwitz

The young woman, who wants to write an essay on Beauvoir tells me, she would not enjoy reading her. "It really gets you down," she says. She looks at the table and pushes the microphone back and forth. She says this sullenly. A bit defiantly. And hurt.

First of all, we have to ask how it is that a text written in 1949 still is able to provoke this level of resistance today. This resistance itself confirms the validity of "The second Sex". It is clear that this text confronts the young woman with truths she does not, or cannot, acknowledge. Otherwise she could have historicized this text and shut it away within itself. She could analyze the text instead of finding herself analyzed by it.

And then again. I have sympathy with the resistance of this young woman. Consider the effort needed to work through and come up with a halfway secure point of view on the complex connections of epochs and cultures brought together in words like "women", "women's movement" or "feminism". Then a young woman has to do the hard work of registering the historical reality of mysogyny and then she has to learn to relate this to herself. To this is added the problem that truths about women is not part of the obvious curriculum. The truth about the history of women is being transmitted in special spaces. Feminist studies or gender studies. The universality of mysogyny is unbearably condensed into this split between women's and general history. The history of one's own gender in this condensation then has to be processed as trauma. Resisting this process is all too understandable.

At this point precisely the complexity of the interconnections conditioning the situation itself begins to take effect in a new way. The

question is in what environment will a young woman do this work of learning. With what aids. With what impediments. Is this work accomplished with others or in isolation. The culture in which the young woman lives always has either a strengthening or a weakening effect. The efforts of the young woman have to be measured against that.

And then. This process of working through history on the role of gender. This process should be a mutual effort of all genders. But that is precisely what the young woman cannot count on. It is left up to the women to learn to bear the burden of their history. This is a necessary process. Without a knowledge of this history it is neither possible to imagine a future nor to shape a present. Without historical knowledge there is no supposition of freedom. But the burden is double for women, for they have already had to let themselves be culturally derived in every single definition by the man. No hegemonic religion and hardly any sociology offers a definition of woman per se. Even this young woman has to see herself as the other in order to be able to explain her situation. Added to the derivation from man in the description of woman's existence in the present is the historical derivation as victim. So the attempt to brush aside the burden of this realization. This attempt is all too understandable. Men, as the subject of history, are allowed the tool of suppression in this case. Woman as the double object of her past and present. It is then not surprising that someone reacts with wounded feelings. The wounds suffered are real and painful. Beauvoir then is made responsible as the messenger of truth for the pain of truth. – The history of the liberation of women as the history of

their unfreedom is marked by cultural differences and an all displacing asynchronicity.

"Well. It is a game and everyone clearly knows the rules." This sentence occurs in a 1932 work of English light fiction. It refers to the fashion of this period which reverts to the emphatically feminine of the late 19th century. People danced in clothes which were disguises. The young women in evening dress, with trains and bodices, are in the view of the novel's author not in danger of wanting to give up their newly won independence through this fashion. The English author Dorothy Sayers can, in her depiction of English society, rely on young women being aware of their situation and having already opted for independence and finding their happiness in so doing. In English light belle lettres, such a thing can casually be supposed as self-evident.

In respect to French society Simone de Beauvoir takes a wholly different view. In 1949 she describes exactly the opposite in *The Second Sex*. The rules of the game are not known to women. They cannot be known by women. They are communicated to women unconsciously. Women's dependencies are inserted into culture in an unrecognizable way and can only be unearthed by a conscious act of questioning. Beauvoir assumes that women are trained to stay girls in the form of a narcissist dependency to which they then adhere all their lives. Prey and the wifely construct the poles between a woman's life spent in a continuous present. A construction of the self as a positing of freedom is possible and desirable for a woman. Under the given circumstances success cannot be promised. Happiness plays no role in this concept.

The possibility for a woman to conceptualize herself is determined by her culture and her place in it. In 1932 the Englishwoman Dorothy Sayers is able to watch in a relaxed fashion young women making their own independent life's solutions. And let us remember. Since the 18th century English literature has taught us how capitalism affects gender. The first thing

that is decisive for a person is how much she possesses. Gender decides the fashion of expression. In this literature we read endless considerations of who can marry whom, on the basis of who possesses what. Morality only governs the way the genders deal with each other. Unions will be decided by possession. These societal rules form everyone's point of reference and are the construction underlying the societal narrative. The rules are known. Self-positing may take place.

In 1949 Catholic bourgeois France. In this society Simone de Beauvoir can only locate women as the derived other. Though there is a separation of church and state, the church reigns in the private realm and formulates gender first as sons and daughters. Before consciousness can be developed metaphysical illusion has invaded the future. Women themselves pass on their own hollowness in the raising of their daughters. The mother's instruction "be like me" is the first commendment of the perdition of bourgeois Catholic daughters. Societal conventions complete what families begin. The temptation to rise through being the accomplice of the man is always there, undermining a woman's refusal to be the other. A woman's "we" never emerges within a conscious knowledge of the situation. Why then should a woman resist the temptation of subservience. Especially if she has borne children and so fell into an additional dependency.

If we then turn towards the historic model of our own culture and look at Austria in the year 2007 in order to explain the resentment of the young woman who wants to do the interview about Simone de Beauvoir, our analysis will bring to light that we have no rules at all, because there is nothing we could call the societal and therefore there actually should be no men. Where there is no society, there is no culture and therefore no narrative of rules. Men also do not know the rules. Therefore if men in this country turn up again in tail coats and know ex-

actly how to tie a bow tie, we should worry that they may once again become cavaliers and fall back into 19th century chivalry. This could mean that one won't get a door gleefully slammed in one's face, because many an Austrian man believes impolite behaviour would be an act of liberating women.

Never could a work of light fiction be able to leave the objects of its observation, in such a friendly way, to their own devices as in the English example. However, how is it that there are men, although there is no society that can generate a culture in which one can find a description of what a man is, how a man should be. What expectations and desires describe a man. Austrian history after 1918 has never led to a commonly shared self-conception. The emergence of a self-image was always impeded by the struggle over the power of definition of what society should be. Society was at best confused with class nostalgia. But, if there is no positive description of a signifying unit such as "man", then the definition in a Catholic tradition can always be based on the negative description of the other. This is always the first step in racism, as is well known. The lack of societal description of man is in this country compensated in a double way by the othering of woman. The European, Western, Christian negatively derived description of woman is what creates the definition of man in the first place and is in turn, through a reflexive process, applied, with new force, to woman.

The young Austrian woman is right to look at this in a defiant way. Reading Beauvoir opens up to her a societal view of woman's tragedy in a decadent, but firmly constituted society. From this analysis the young Austrian woman has to draw her own conclusions about her post-fascist, hollowed out society, a part of whose elite continues today to press for implementation of the fascist mission of turning back the clock to a time before the French Revolution. However, the small possibility that exists for this young

woman to posit her transcendence lies precisely in deriving her civil rights from this revolution. Only on the basis of the definition of the rights of the person to liberty is the subject thinkable in the first place, the subject that "concretely posits herself, through conceptualization, as a transcendence." If the young woman arrives at this point in working through her emancipation, then the English example comes into play again, this time as the grand narrative of neoliberalism, behind which the fascist opposition to the Enlightenment can take on a new life. This opposition feeds on neoliberal globalization's need to declare war on autonomous thinking and working. This narrative asserts a universality of rules, as in the 1932 example. The rules of the game referred to there are asserted globally but are only applicable locally and so are not transferable. A dense net of such rules veils neoliberal society's emptiness. The attempts at copying Academy Awards evenings for example are painful exhibits of this emptiness.

Most profoundly, these apparent transfers of rules encroach on the definition of gender. Meanwhile, in the finishing processes of neoliberal schooling pragmativ half-knowledge and precarious work conditions completely destroy the possibility of individualistic self-positing.

The young woman would have to socialize the results of her personal cultural work without being able to relate this to the societal. She then has to submit these results to some sort of community to wrest a remnant of freedom for herself. But first of all we would like to see this young woman in a secure situation through a paid job and then, and only then, we can ask the question of how her transcendence as a woman might look.

The world has seen no social progress, only transformations. Radical transformations and through them radical restrictions. Precisely for this reason, reading Beauvoir's work is indispensable. So the introduction to *The Second Sex* represents something like a baseline for an in-

dispensable conceptualization. It is a luxurious conceptualization that nowadays could no longer be thought in the same way. And precisely because so much has changed and because autonomous thinking has been impoverished through a violent framework and the impossibility of earning one's living. Precisely for this reason we need to turn to the richness of her conceptualization. Nothing can replace experiencing the resonance of Beauvoir's voice in one's own thinking. Nothing can be more precious than the sensing of the congruence of epistemological interests. Nothing is more inspiring than listening to this rigorous and stern voice.

No theme has more dominated the last 30 years' discussion than that of the women's movement. And while the discussion was carried on tempestuously it redundantly did not progress or even lead backwards.

When today I take a specific brand of pantyhose out of its package, I find the firm's product image. In a brief visual history I am told how a woman is determined. A large picture shows the woman's upper body clothed in a bodystocking. From the picture she looks at the observer. Challenging. A small image shows her with a bustier. The woman gazes out from the picture invitingly to the left. In a still larger photo a white body and a sulky glance toward the right. The penultimate picture is small and the woman is crouched on a step with her buttocks prominently featured. Her face is in shadows and she looks searchingly behind her. In the last picture it is only the lower body that is shown. The straight leg up to the hip on high heels. The pray is laid out for the hunter's gratification.

These pictures are intended for women. It is always breathtaking how much the internalized gaze of the man within the woman can be counted on as a matter of course. One of those guys who are so comfortable holding forth on all subjects would say that we don't have to take this seriously. But. For the young woman this is a self-evident part of what she is to understand as culture. And. In its self-evident na-

ture, advertismement is the true successor of the Catholic church, and in this the rules remain within the unknown unconscious. This would be good grounds for mobilizing all of our vigilance and strength to insist that deprecation cannot be communicated in so self-evident a way.

Men? They need to read Beauvoir. With neoliberalism's dissolution of societal relations, they will not be able to be differentiated from women. In neoliberalism there is once again first money and then gender. The middle class of the 1932 example has long ago been sacrificed. This crosses with the present non-societal struggle of the different camps and with neoliberalism's disintegration of the subject. At the intersection of this vacuum the male will also be dissolved. The cute athletic chaps in the frozen-food ads, mirroring an underwear ad with naked women. These cute chaps are merely the avant-garde, covered by now only with swimming trunks, of an evolution which by now next to money only recognizes the beautiful naked body as currency. This is reminiscent of the education of women to become the eternal narcissistic girl. And what does this mean? Look it up in Beauvoir.

Marlene Streeruwitz studied Slavic languages and literature and art history in Vienna. Since 1992 her plays have been presented in numerous cities. Her first novel "Verführungen", for which she was awarded several prizes including the Mara-Cassens-Preis, appeared in 1996. Streeruwitz is considered one of the most politically active contemporary German-speaking feminist authors. Her works include:

- Verführungen ((1996)
- Sein. Und Schein. Und Erscheinen. (1997)
- Können. Mögen. Dürfen. Sollen. Wollen. Müssen.
- Lassen. Frankfurter Poetikvorlesungen (1998)
- Lisa's Liebe. Three-part novel (1997)
- Waikiki Beach. Und andere Orte. Die Theaterstücke (1999)
- Jessica, 30. Novel (2004)
- Wie bleibe ich Feministin. Die Streeruwitz-Methode. Essay (2008, not yet published)

<http://www.marlenestreeruwitz.at>



1. Mai-Demonstration der Arbeiter 1848

From a Two-party to a Multi-party System

Deliberations and Realignment in the Greek Party System After the September 2007 Elections.

Immediately after the September 2007 elections, the Greek political scene witnessed an unprecedented wave of deliberations and realignments. The eruption of an open crisis in the Pan-Hellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) became a central issue. The crisis has been smouldering since 2004, when that party lost government power after being in office for eleven consecutive years. This crisis has swept the whole two-party system of government that has been dominant in Greece from 1977 onwards, a period when the two main party poles, the "centre-right" New Democracy (ND) party and the "centre-left" PASOK party, were crystallised.

The Crisis of Greek Bipartisanship as a Crisis of the Political System

Since early 2007, two trends have appeared, beyond any "logical" expectation: on the one hand, the tendency by a great part of the electorate to move away from the two governing parties and, on the other hand, a tendency to support those parties which stand outside bipartisanship. Political opinion-polls registered a particularly intense disregard for the political system and its effectiveness. This was a sign that the electoral absorption of public discontent by the two big parties would be highly improbable. Thus, in the September 2007 elections a 6% decline in support for the two ruling parties¹ was recorded (from 86% to 80% of the electorate), while abstention rose by approximately 3.5% (of the population eligible to

vote).² In other words, approximately 10% of the electorate broke away from the electoral influence of the two big parties.³ This trend continued after the September elections, peaked during the following months and is now estimated at about 65% of the electorate, which is without precedent in the post-1974 electoral history of Greece.

At first sight, the crisis of bipartisanship is an expression of the political weakness of the two governing parties. ND has begun to experience the wear and tear that stems from its conduct of government affairs, a conduct that has been registered as "anti-popular", "inconsistent" and "ineffective". PASOK is characterised by an unprecedented "lack of a clear and distinct political profile" that results in the weakening of its position in the party system. The crisis of the Greek two-party system is therefore based on the crisis of the two ruling parties, but is also a broader phenomenon. Essentially, it is a crisis of the post-1974 political and party system, currently locked into a state of total weakness. It does not produce any results, either at the level of (established) state policies, or at the level of social needs. It can neither find avenues of consensus, nor create any clear, competitive (party) poles. It would like (rhetorically) to maintain regulatory policies at the level of state administration, but is unable to achieve this, having surrendered extremely vital spaces of "reform" practice to the market. It has failed as far as the nucleus of contemporary governance is concerned: the regulation of the relations and the boundaries between the state and private economy.

In addition, the current state of the two-party system is a result of the crisis of the socio-electoral alliances of the two ruling parties (of the centre-right ND and the centre-left PASOK). Their evolution since the mid-1990s as cartel parties forces them to position themselves vis-à-vis today's dominant political antithesis of public space / private interests in favour of the latter (or to not position themselves at all). This fact aggravates their internal contradictions, strengthens social disapproval, while it creates the terms for the distancing of large parts of society from their traditional representations. The more the public space retreats in favour of private interests, the more the role of the ruling parties is disregarded and their competence decreased, given that they can neither articulate, nor guarantee any kind of "social balance" or "social contract". Their political (and social) utility is constantly reduced.

Bipartisanship was strengthened and stabilised after the 1980s in Greece because it was founded on two distinct political plans for Greek society and two distinct social-electoral alliances. It was founded on the existence of two "parties", i.e. of two different mergers of political programme / social motion, as these were expressed by the liberal, pro-European ND on the one hand, and by the socialist PASOK of redistribution and social equality on the other. This difference was expressed in the electorates of the two parties, with ND representing the alliance of the bourgeois and upper-middle classes, and PASOK representing the alliance of popular and petty-bourgeois social strata. The decrease of one party added to the strength of the other, and vice versa. The period from the end of the 1970s until the mid-1990s was the period of the "polarised two-party system". After 1996, the convergence of the ruling parties around the basic strategies of (neoliberal) governance and the character of "cartel party" changed the form of the two-party system from "polarised" to "converging". The shift of PASOK from "social democracy" to "centre-left" as well

as the adoption of the basic strategies of neoliberal governance by that party, together with the electoral strategy of ND for its expansion to the middle-class and lower social strata, contributed decisively to this change. The ideological distance of the two parties diminished dramatically, while their electorates ceased to be clearly distinct from one another. After 1996, PASOK became more "bourgeois" and ND more "popular".

Thus, today, the decline of the power of the one party entails a decline in the power of the other. The crisis of the one drags along the other. The reason is the removal of the programmatic differences between the two ruling parties, as well as of the differences in the character of their cadres and the functioning of the party; the two parties are treated as "one party". Bipartisanship was a useful political tool for the functioning of the political system as long as the two parties were "different", i.e. articulated different social demands by different social groups. Today, the utility of bipartisanship is called into question, resulting in the dramatic decrease of the approval rates for the two ruling parties.

For these reasons, the current crisis of bipartisanship will not be absorbed easily by the two ruling parties. In fact, we are at the beginning of broader changes in the form of the parties and the party system, as well as in the nucleus of the political relations of representation. This is the essential difference between the current period and previous ones. Previous (coincidental) crises of the ruling parties were not linked to the wider political system and its political tools, unlike today's situation.

Electoral Stagnation and Declining Trends for PASOK – ND

The victory of the centre-right ND in the September 2007 elections had long been anticipated. However, the clear superiority of ND vis-à-vis PASOK (reflected in the approval ratings regard-

ing party image, governing ability, individual expectations and leadership image), did not prevent ND's electoral decline by approximately 3.5% of the valid votes (reduced from 45.5% in 2004 to 42.1% in 2007). ND's image of superiority vis-à-vis PASOK is still registered in polls today, but at lower levels. The greater problem for the centre-right government is that, through its second electoral victory, almost all the reserves of public opinion consensus that it enjoyed after 2004 have been consumed. Today, the centre-right government shows some acute tendencies of decline; while it maintains a lead over PASOK, its voting rate is estimated at approximately 36-37%. The party thus tends more and more to reach the electoral limit of 35% that corresponds to the core of the traditional right in Greece, which means that its electoral and social alliances have severely decreased. Under conditions of the structural crisis of bipartisanship, carrying the burden of the (unavoidable) government wear and tear and the full responsibility for the economic and social problems of governance, it seems extremely unlikely that the ND can rise above this electoral limit. Its most powerful – and perhaps sole – weapon remains the still intact image of Prime Minister Karamanlis.

The picture is much worse for the other traditional pole of bipartisanship, PASOK. Today, this party is characterised by: a) a vague social alliance, expressed electorally in an "amorphous multi-collectivism" without a solid "social base", b) a vague political and programmatic profile in society, and c) a problematic image of its cadres, especially at the middle and local levels. Nowadays, PASOK is in a state of transition without a defined end. It would need programmatically to redefine its social alliances, clarify its political profile and renew its cadre ranks. This triple transition occurs in the context of a significant decline of the old party model that impedes and slows down the process of coming out of the crisis. It presents a picture of electoral collapse with voting rates

below 30%, while its traditionally strong organisation shows signs of dismantlement.

The Political Forces Outside Bipartisanship and the Critical Rise of the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA)⁴

The crisis of the political system and its ruling parties strengthens all other political formations, i.e. the Popular Orthodox Alarm Party (LAOS) on the ultra-conservative right, the Communist Party of Greece (KKE) and SYRIZA on the left, and the Greens in the "centre-left". The sum of the "small" anti-bipartisan forces currently approximates 30-35%, reflecting a constantly rising trend. KKE is estimated at 9-10%, SYRIZA at 15%, LAOS at 5%, and the Greens at 1.5-2% of the electorate.

In essence, the party system tends to become trisected between ND, PASOK and "other party preferences" at an almost equal rate. This tendency was observed during the September 2007 elections in the large urban districts of the country (1st and 2nd districts of Athens, 1st and 2nd Piraeus districts, 1st Thessalonica district, etc.) where the social strata with more critical stances toward bipartisanship, i.e. young employees in the private sector and the youngest segment of the electorate (up to 45 years old), live.

Among the smaller parties, SYRIZA possesses the greatest dynamics for two reasons: a) because, through its movement-based radicalism, it has for the first time succeeded in outflanking KKE from the left side of the political spectrum, as well as in becoming the recipient of the political and "cultural" protest of broad social strata of young employees in the new private sector; and b) because it has succeeded in benefiting from the structural crisis of PASOK and in becoming a pole of attraction for the social forces that leave that party. This part of the political spectrum has expanded greatly within the polit-

ical scene; this new breadth, combined with the fact that this part of the spectrum is manifesting ideological coherence for the first time in its history, equips SYRIZA with a significant social and electoral potential. Compared to the other "small" parties, SYRIZA is more closely linked, in ideological and political terms, to the social strata that flee bipartisanship.

The rise of SYRIZA was first recorded in quantitative surveys in April-May 2007. Before then, its election results had reached the typical level of 3.5-4 % of votes, which was movable both upward and downward; in general, it seemed that SYRIZA was not a "solid" political force, even though it did not face the risk of being shut out of the Parliament. The elements that changed the scene not only for SYRIZA but also for the whole party system were the popular mobilisations against government efforts to allow the founding of private universities (a policy that both ND and PASOK supported), and the extremely important ideological effects that these mobilisations had for the whole electorate. Through these mobilisations, a large segment of Greek society realised that the questioning of the concept of "public good" and of the free access to it (ranging from education and social security to health and public venues) constitutes a systematic policy by the dominant political system that eliminates social rights and intensifies economic and work pressure. In the qualitative surveys that were conducted in May-June 2007, participants spontaneously referred to the case of education and private universities in order to describe the new social cleavages and the "polarisations" surrounding them.

That SYRIZA would get approximately 5% of the votes in the September 2007 elections was clear even before July 2007. The rate of increase of its influence was so strong and qualitatively solid that, if the elections were conducted two months later, SYRIZA would have received 6-6.5% of the vote. The rise of SYRIZA currently observed in the polls was to a certain extent anticipated in the previous period. Due to voting

inertia or "electoral psychology", the additional electoral approval was not expressed (coincidentally) in the ballot-box; however, this approval rate today constitutes its electoral "starting point".

After the September 2007 elections, the landscape of the whole party system changed dramatically. The latent and explosive levels of criticism vis-à-vis the two-party political system were released. ND is tending to exhaust the reserves of public consensus, PASOK is passing through a period of unprecedented identity crisis, the protest vote is enlarged, and this "protest" expresses various demands and characteristics. SYRIZA has sky-rocketed and doubled its electoral audience because it constitutes the political and ideological entity that is most compatible with those social groups that seek to react and mobilise: employees in the new private sector with a relatively high level of education and specialisation, who are informed about social and cultural developments, concerned about the political and ecological environment and willing to discover a new social and political activism. This constantly expanding political field – also manifested in the non-urban periphery – is not addressed by the existing political system.

The movement of voters towards SYRIZA is not a mere political movement from one party to another; it should not be understood as a narrow transfer of other parties' old voters. It reflects deeper developments within Greek society, big segments of which are searching for a new political representation, in terms of social identity.

At the same time, the forces of both KKE and (the ultra-conservative) LAOS appear stable, with a tendency to rise slightly. The more the "pool" of social protest against the political system fills, the more chances these two parties will have to broaden their influence based primarily in the lowest, popular ("poor") social strata, the rural population and the older age groups. Finally, a notable development in the

political scene involves the Greens. Despite being characterised by great fluidity, the Greens are beginning to register a systematic electoral presence. The persistence of the centrifugal tendencies in PASOK may increase the electoral dynamics of this political field which, according to "conventional" political terminology, is probably positioned in the "centre-left" and may therefore become an unexpected competitor for the leading opposition party of PASOK.

Can the dominant political system react?

A party system cannot remain fixed forever. It is time for the bipartite party system to change, since it has proven to be ineffective and deadlocked as regards the interests either of society or of capital. Neither the electoral laws of reinforced proportionality, nor suggestions for a German-type "grand coalition" can save it. The reason for this is that the Greek political elites lack a strategy to balance regulation between the state and capital, even though such a balance is necessary for the exercise of public policy. Subjugated to the (not always long-term) interests and the "ideological givens" of capital, the elites are cut off from the active society that is beginning to explore modes of expression not only outside the ruling parties, but also in many cases outside the concept of traditional politics and its institutions.

Despite these difficulties, the mechanisms of power will probably explore new paths for building up political and social consensus in the context of a "multi-party institutional axis", in order to exercise direct rule and obstruct an uncontrollable political growth of the radical social left. Two contrasting processes will unfold in the coming months: on the one hand, an attempt to re-arrange the official political scene (possibly involving the breaking-up of the two ruling parties, starting with PASOK, in order to achieve the creation of an "institutional governmental

axis"), and, on the other hand, an attempt to build a social left front (possibly involving the participation of large sections of the "social PASOK"). The curtain has only just risen in the Greek theatre of political re-arrangements.

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Notes

- 1 The term "ruling party" refers to both of the bipartisan parties (ND and PASOK). However, it should not be conflated with the term "governing party", i.e. the party that is in the government (ND) (translator's note).
- 2 The estimated average *actual* abstention in the parliamentary elections in Greece is approximately 4.5% of the electorate during the period 1974-2004. Great interest in politics (a constant characteristic of Greek political culture in the post-war, post-civil war period) and the legal enforcement of mandatory voting have contributed greatly to this high rate of participation. The estimated *actual* abstention in the 2007 elections is approximately 7.5%-8% of the electorate.
- 3 From 1977 onwards, the (two-party) sum of ND and PASOK in the parliamentary elections was the following: 1981: 84%, 1985: 88%, 1989 (1): 84%, 1989 (2): 85%, 1990: 85%, 1993: 86%, 1996: 81%, 2000: 87%, 2004: 86%, 2007: 80% of the votes.
- 4 The Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA), founded in 2004, is an alliance of left-wing parties and organisations. Although it is not a single, unified party, SYRIZA represents an ambitious attempt to coordinate the electoral presence and political activities of the radical left in Greece and has been warmly received by numerous, non-affiliated, left-wing individuals. Two of its participating parties, AKOΑ and Synaspismos, are also members of the European Left Party (translator's note).

Germany's New Nationwide Party: Die LINKE

In summer 2007 the Left Party/PDS merged with the Electoral Alternative for Labour and Social Justice (WASG) to form a new party – Die LINKE.

At present Die LINKE has about 71,900 members, of whom 28,181 are women. The proportion of women in 2007 was about 39 %, as against 45.3 % in 2004.¹ This still gives Die LINKE a higher proportion of women than any other party represented in the Bundestag. It is a cause for concern, however, that in the case of new members this proportion only amounts to 25.3 %.

What is remarkable is the incipient shift in the East-West distribution of party membership. The proportion of members in East Germany fell in the space of a year from 75 % to 71 % of the total, while in West Germany it rose from 21 % to just under 29 %. This was due to an increase of 5,629 members in the West and a loss of almost 3,000 members in the East (mainly through death).

In 2006 the age structure of the Left Party was as follows: The proportion of those under 30 was 4 %, that of members aged between 31 and 60 was 28 %, and that of those over 60 was 68 %.² However, although there are signs of an increase in the proportion of young members, it is still too slight to ensure an unequivocal rejuvenation of the party's active base, which is one of the main challenges facing Die LINKE as a membership party.

Germany's Die LINKE is a pluralist party and must remain so. When its parent party, the PDS, was founded it consisted of four main groupings: a) those who belonged to the founding generation of the GDR, such as Hans Modrow and most of the older party members; b) representatives of the intellectual reformist wing of

the SED, like Bisky and Gysi, who still provide Die LINKE with much of its political leadership today; c) pragmatic reformers, who now constitute Die LINKE's local-level party functionaries and elected officials in East Germany and mostly belong to the "Forum of Democratic Socialism" grouping; and d) orthodox socialists, who are organised into the Communist Platform and the Marxist Forum. The latter's position in the new party has been strengthened by the emergence of the "Anticapitalist Left" (AKL). New elements within the new party are the "Socialist Left", a strongly union-oriented current, and the "Emancipatory Left", a successor to the New Left and autonomous movements. All these currents are marked by the East-West divide. The resulting pluralism is currently the cause of vigorous inner-party debates.

Regarding the social structure of the new party's membership only vague conclusions can be reached at this point. It is clear that the social structures of the two parent parties were very different. The low average membership contributions in the WASG parent party suggest that its members came from the middle and, still more, the lower strata of society.³ Unlike the PDS, the WASG tended to see itself as a party of workers, above all trade unionists, factory council members and the middle stratum of white-collar workers in the public services. The social structure of the PDS parent party had hardly changed in recent years: 77 % of the members were pensioners, early retirees, or unemployed. Students and trainees made up 3 %, workers 8 %, and white-collar workers 18 %. This compo-

sition permitted the emergence and stabilisation of the PDS as a socially concerned party at the grass-roots level, the bulk of whose members were socially and politically committed pensioners.

In Oskar Lafontaine, Lothar Bisky and Gregor Gysi, Die LINKE has strong leadership personalities who all come from quite different political backgrounds and are perceived as representatives of the all-German Left, i.e. both in the East and in the West. In addition, at both national and regional levels, it has competent policy experts and leaders with many years of political experience in parliaments, trade unions and social movements behind them. Die LINKE has thus become a nationwide political force with exceptional scope for action that is able to exert strong pressure on rival parties.

The Electoral Base

Unlike the other two smaller parties in Germany (Greens and FDP) the electorate of Die LINKE has roots in all social strata. According to the findings of a study by the Friedrich-Ebert Foundation, the social allegiance of its supporters is distributed among Germany's political milieus as follows: 36 % upper, 31 % middle, and 33 % lower class, its supporters in the upper and middle strata being mainly drawn from the critically-minded educated elites and socially concerned members of the educated classes with social-libertarian views. Die LINKE also has many supporters among white-collar workers in the public services or subordinate institutions in the educational and especially the social sectors who are looking to a renewal of the public sector on the basis of solidarity.

If we look at this social stratification of Die LINKE's electorate we can see that it is no longer only a mass party in East Germany, but potentially in West Germany as well. Its nationwide acceptance is confirmed by current surveys: Die LINKE has over 5 % support in all the

West German states except Bavaria, while in Brandenburg, Anhalt-Saxony and Thuringia it is the second strongest party.

Die LINKE has managed to establish itself as the party of the workers, trade unionists and unemployed and of the sub-proletarian strata while also increasing its support among socially aware members of the middle classes. Seventy-five percent of its voters credit Die LINKE with competence in the area of social justice, where it was able to compete successfully with the SPD and, in East Germany, even to surpass it by a wide margin. In the 2008 state elections in Hesse, Lower Saxony and Hamburg it managed to attract a total of 364,000 voters from other parties. Of these the strongest contingents were former SPD voters (+120,000 = 33 % of Die LINKE's total vote) and former non-voters (+65,000 = 18 % of Die LINKE's total vote). There were also 56,000 former Green and 46,000 former CDU voters who decided to vote for Die LINKE. But the 2007 elections to the Bremen state parliament revealed another characteristic trend within the new party: 12 % of its votes came from workers, 13 % from trade unionists, and 21 % from the unemployed.

Who voted for the Die LINKE in the state elections in Hesse, Lower Saxony and Hamburg?

	Hesse	Lower Saxony	Hamburg
Workers	7 %	11 %	10 %
White-collar workers	5 %	6 %	7 %
Self-employed	2 %	7 %	6 %
Pensioners	4 %	6 %	4 %
Trainees and apprentices	4 %	11 %	5 %
Unemployed	16 %	27 %	19 %

Summary of election results by infratest dimap on January 27, 2008 and February 25, 2008

If we look at the decisive issues of the last four state elections, the picture we get of Die LINKE is one of a political force that no longer expresses the justice gap only in East Germany, but also in West Germany, and that addresses

Principal vote-determining issues for Die LINKE's electorate:

	2005 Bundestag	2007 Bremen	2008 Hesse	2008 Lower Saxony	2008 Hamburg
Social justice	57 %	69 %	63 %	60 %	69 %
Employment policy	42 %	33 %	25 %	32 %	31 %
Economic policy	21 %	16 %	17 %	18 %	18 %
Educational policy	7 %	17 %	16 %	11 %	28 %

not only expectations and solutions vis-à-vis employment issues but now also regarding economic and educational policy issues as well.

Transformation of the German Party System

Since the last elections Die LINKE is represented in a total of ten state legislatures in which it has over 200 seats, which is more than the Greens and the FDP have. This has new implications for the municipal elections in coming years, specifically Die LINKE must now consolidate and expand its firm position in municipal politics across the whole country, profiting in so doing from the experience of the former PDS as a "party of social concern".

One of the causes of Die LINKE's emergence lies "in the failure of the SPD, as a social and democratic force, to oppose neoliberalism"⁴. Die LINKE is not a relic of the past, but a necessary consequence of the inner contradictions of neoliberal policy, which ultimately places its own foundations in question. It is a party "which is taking shape within a ... hegemonic crisis of neoliberalism".⁵ Michael Brie points to the following reasons for assuming that its rise will lead to a fundamental change in the party system: first, the SPD and Die LINKE compete on equal terms as regards competence in dealing with such issues as social justice, equality, and bridging the gap between rich and poor. The results of the 2008 state elections in Hamburg, Lower Saxony and Hesse confirm this thesis. Secondly, Die LINKE's positions have broad social resonance: 80 % of the population favour

a poverty-proof basic insurance, while a minimum wage is demanded by a majority of the supporters of all the parties represented in the German Bundestag. The figures are 81 % for Die LINKE, 69 % for the SPD, 66 % for the Greens, 56 % for the CDU/CSU, and even 53 % for the FDP.

"In January 2008, six out of ten people (62 %) regarded the social conditions in Germany as unjust, including an above-average proportion of citizens who had low educational qualifications (72 %), a low household income (70 %), or were unemployed (76 %). In addition, the belief that conditions are unjust continues to be held mainly in East Germany (76 %) and by supporters of Die LINKE (93 %)".⁶

Thirdly, Die LINKE has roots in all three tiers of society. This too is confirmed by the election results, as is the fact that it is above all a successful party of the workers (especially the unionised ones), is more inclined than any other party to represent the unemployed, and – albeit to a somewhat lesser degree – is nevertheless also capable of expanding its support to socially aware members of the middle classes.

The rise of Die LINKE has changed the entire party system in the Federal Republic of Germany. The party system with Die LINKE as a nationwide force has not only become more European but more normal – the parliament has caught up with the times in that it now represents genuine social differences. With the entry of Die LINKE into the state legislatures of two major West German states it is no longer just a question of having different party systems at the regional level. There has been a fundamen-

tal change in the coalition-forming possibilities at the state and federal levels. Germany now has a five-party system.

Previous alliances, such as CDU/FDP or SPD/Greens or others, are not automatically capable of forming majorities; that is, alliances between two parties – a large and a small one – are often no longer sufficient to create a political majority. With the exception of the Grand Coalition between SPD and CDU, three parties are increasingly needed to form political majorities. This marks a change in the ground rules, and Die LINKE will become a strategic force not confined to its own electorate, which will increasingly enable it to bring the socially rooted majority positions it represents into the new political constellations. This realisation is now dawning even on the SPD (if only at the state level) in Hesse, where the SPD's top candidate obviously is still trying to bring into being a minority government consisting of SPD and Greens that would be tolerated by Die LINKE. Something similar occurred in 1994 in East Germany, in the state of Anhalt-Saxony. At the same time, the CDU is trying to form a coalition with the Greens in Hamburg.

For a New Alliance to Change the Direction of Politics

If Die LINKE wants to play a strong role as a nationwide left democratic political force in the long term, it will have to develop as part of a left force with roots in society pressing for a change of political direction. The upsurge in trade union struggles and strikes, the widespread feeling of discontent among the population, and many ad hoc social initiatives like the protests against the G8 meeting in Heiligendamm in June 2007, are a good start.

Die LINKE must initiate projects that are clearly defined, enjoy broad majority support, and are developed jointly with others. They must be projects aimed at more social justice

and democracy, socio-ecological transformation, and an active peace policy while also being attractive for various social strata. To do this, Die LINKE must implement radical but realistic politics by

- waging the struggle for hegemony from a minority position, in order to create social majorities;
- demanding social, democratic and ecological reforms that will bring about a lasting change in power and property relations;
- developing and implementing projects for participatory democracy; and
- operating from its social base to develop long-term projects that would start now but go beyond the present state of society, such as minimum wage, basic insurance, basic income, and reduction of working hours. The long-term projects of a centre-left project must aim at re-making the public sector and gaining control over capital. This includes the rolling back of financial-market capitalism, renewing and expanding the public sector, achieving full employment on the basis of new and different concepts of productivity and growth, top-down redistribution, a shift from the private to the public sphere, an ecological revolution, and the social and peace-oriented reform of the European Union.

It needs clear statements of intent concerning the further development and concrete underpinning of the main points of its programme, particularly in the fields of employment, economics, and social policy. To do this, however, it must mobilise the potential of its various currents by leading them out of the phase of inner-party power struggles for political hegemony within Die LINKE towards constructive co-operation combined with the development of a left culture that lives up to its democratic and emancipatory ideals.

There are majorities in Germany for a democratic, socio-ecological policy; there are historically new pluralist networks of social and political forces that favour such a change of direc-

tion; and there is a party – Die LINKE. These are still only the preliminary conditions for a new politics. They will not be enough in themselves. But for the first time since 1990 there is the chance for a left democratic upsurge in Germany.

Cornelia Hildebrandt



Rosa Luxemburg
Foundation

Notes

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- 2 Oskar Niedermayer *ibid.*, p.16
- 3 Tim Spier p. 59
- 4 Michael Brie: Segeln gegen den Wind. Bedingungen eines politischen Richtungswechsels in Deutschland [Sailing Against the Wind. Conditions for a Political Change of Direction in Germany]. In: DIE LINKE. Wohin verändert sie die Republik [Die LINKE. Whither the Republic?]. p. 269
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The Development and Challenges of the Spanish United Left (IU)

Post scriptum: After this article was written, IU obtained very poor results in the Spanish general elections: less than 4 % of the vote with only two seats. Some of the worst fears have become reality. This puts even more emphasis on the need to find a way out of the current stalemate within IU. A congress will be called in the future. Will it mean a new opportunity for the Spanish left?

The United Left of Spain (IU) was founded in 1986 out of an ad-hoc coalition brought together for the referendum called by Felipe González to ratify the decision to join NATO. The disappointing outcome of this referendum

gave way to the general belief among the left in Spain that an alternative was badly needed to push the social-liberal bent of the Socialist Party (PSOE) government to the left.

After the 1982 general elections, when the PSOE came to power, real opposition to right-wing policies by the socialists have come mostly from the side of unions and the peace movement. The Spanish Communist Party (PCE) was badly affected by its electoral results and splits, a significant part of its cadres had joined the PSOE, and an even larger portion of its rank-and-file had ceased any kind of political activism. The extreme left followed suit. Amidst a

general flowering of isolated desperate struggles the only nationwide actions were carried out by the trade-union confederation (CCOO) against pension reforms, and by the peace and anti-militarist movements against both US military bases and compulsory military service.

Out of this experience and on the basis of certain theoretical discussions, some of them dating from the time of the Civil War and the Popular Front, the PCE devised what was called the Politics of Convergence, which was formally adopted after the 11th Congress held in late 1983. The central point in this new political line was: "Never has the PCE seen itself as the only actor in a transformation process (...). For us this conception of the central role of social movements operates from the very moment that we communists consider the urgent task of facing the current economic crisis and the democratisation of society and the state, leading all the way to the future socialist society in which the real scope of the transformations and the process of substitution of state power by social regulation makes them even more necessary."

This decision occasioned a split led by the former General Secretary, Santiago Carrillo¹, but also produced its first results in the launching of Convocatoria por Andalucía (CA). CA was a strategic alliance built in Andalusia by the regional organisation of the PCE and led by the Mayor of Cordova, Julio Anguita. CA ran the regional elections in 1986 and won almost 20% of the vote although the PSOE retained an absolute majority. Between 1985 and 1988, CA managed to reach a level of organisational deployment well beyond the party's limits both in qualitative and quantitative terms. It was based on a double structure, sectoral and territorial-based. Consensus was the rule although new modes of collective decision-making were emerging. The programmatic content reached a high level of development.

The second result of the new political line was the birth of the United Left (IU) which was

created as an electoral coalition formed by the PCE, the PCPE (a hard-line "pro-Soviet" split from the former), the PASOC (a small split of the PSOE) and other small groups. The newly founded IU ran in the general elections in 1986 and obtained a modest result, although better than that of the PCE in 1982. One year later, in 1987, the outcome of the local elections was worse than that of 1983, but not in Andalusia, something that was seen as proof of the adequacy of the Andalusian strategy.

In 1988, the 12th Congress of the PCE elected Julio Anguita as General Secretary and decided to build the IU as a "fully sovereign social and political movement", far beyond a coalition. It was understood that IU would consist of "collectives and individuals, communists, socialists, and leftists of all origins, committed to a common programme, collectively decided". In a sense, the Andalusian experience was transposed to all of Spain. Not only the political-organisational dimension, but also its strategic goals. Stated very synthetically, these were full employment, sustainable development as opposed to sheer economic growth, the reform of the state and a general democratisation of Spanish politics.

On these premises, IU progressed in the succeeding elections up to 1996, gaining parliamentary seats even in places where the PCE was never able to win them before. The best results were in the 1994 European elections (2.5 million votes, 13.67%) and the general elections of 1996 (2.6 million votes, 10.5%). Those years also saw a major growth in social struggles with two general strikes in 1988 and 1994. In the general elections held in 1993, the IU got 2.2 million votes and 18 seats. Added to the 159 won by the socialists, it would have been enough to establish an absolute majority in Parliament (175 seats were needed). However, the PSOE preferred to negotiate with the Catalan conservatives. Some months before, IU had opposed the Maastricht Treaty in Parliament and that was a strategic issue for Felipe González.

In 1996, IU achieved the best electoral results of its history, but the right-wing Popular Party (PP) won the elections with a relative majority. The political cycle had turned and in 2000 the PP won an absolute majority of seats. The huge mobilisation against the Iraq War and specially the train bombing in 2004 brought the socialists back to power but by then with a declining IU (1.4 million votes and 5.9% in 2000, 1.3 million and 4.96% in 2004).

The Struggles Within IU up to 1996

As early as 1991, during the 13th Congress of the PCE, a struggle emerged between those who defended the need to give the old PCE an "honourable" burial and build a "new left" party out of IU, on the one hand, and those, on the other, who advocated keeping the parties alive within an IU that would not become a party but remain a "political and social movement" with no ideological definition but only a programmatic one. This crisis has to be understood within the historical conditions of the moment: the vanishing of the socialist bloc and the debate within the international communist movement, especially the decisions made by the Italian party who had always had great influence on the PCE.

Although the thesis upheld by those wanting to dissolve the PCE lost, which ultimately led them to leave the party, the struggle continued within IU. For five years, a large part of the leadership of IU, who supported the idea of turning it into a new left party, fought a battle for their positions. They finally founded the Democratic Party of the New Left (PDNI) and remained inside IU until 1997.

The harshest confrontations took place when the moment came to vote for the EMU and the Maastricht Treaty in the Parliament. The PDNI, following the labour unions' criteria, supported a "critical yes". The majority of IU, led by Julio Anguita and the PCE, supported the "no" vote².

The PDNI parliamentarians did not observe the vote discipline and were criticised. Anguita also harshly accused the unions for accommodating to "neoliberal policies".

After the 1993 municipal elections, IU needed the vote of the socialist councillors to appoint the mayors of Malaga and Cordova. The PSOE, probably thinking of the far-reaching consequences of giving these large cities to IU, let the PP appoint the mayors instead. IU retaliated in Asturias where the regional government fell to the PP because the left was unable to coalesce. The PSOE managed to make it appear as if IU were the one rejecting an agreement.

When IU and the PP accused the socialist government of "state terrorism" after two ETA activists were tortured and their corpses found burnt and buried in the cellar of a police station, the PSOE and the PDNI accused Anguita of having a secret agreement with the PP to overthrow Felipe González. The leadership of CCOO (where, analogously to the French CGT or, in the past, the Italian CGIL, the PCE had the greatest influence) supported this accusation. So did the major media, especially the very influential *El País* which actively supported Felipe González and launched a long campaign to discredit Anguita. All these stories are known in Spain as "la pinza", the vice, and persist as a heavy burden on IU.

This debate was to a large extent mixed with, and hidden by, an organisational debate concerning democracy within IU and the role of the PCE and other parties. Apart from those openly advocating the dissolution of the party, in many sections and federations of the PCE the leadership was fully deployed in fighting to gain positions in IU; the party members' activity was limited to rallying behind the leaders in every internal battle. Hundreds of independent activists who had joined IU in the previous years were demoralised and left. This also contributed to exhausting the communist rank-and-file and diminished political debate within the PCE on anything apart from the internal question.

After 2000: The “New” Debate.

The PDNI left IU in 1997, taking with it five MPs out of 22, and joined the PSOE in 2000. Julio Anguita resigned in 1999 after suffering a second heart attack.³ Paco Frutos, Secretary General of the PCE, replaced him as candidate in the 2000 elections. Later Gaspar Llamazares was elected as General Coordinator of IU and ran in the elections as a candidate in 2004.

In office Llamazares has been advocating for a “refoundation” of IU as a red-green political party. Although in the last two Federal Assemblies this proposal was defeated, Llamazares and the core of the leadership supporting him have persisted in the idea of a “post-communist” political force capable of making alliances with the Greens and all kind of “left” nationalists. He is quite clearly following the path of IC, *Iniciativa per Catalunya*, which had been the Catalan version of IU⁴, the only important space in which the PDNI project was successful.

In practical terms Llamazares has supported Zapatero in parliament in the past legislature and very recently he has announced his readiness to join a PSOE-led government after the general elections to be held on March 9. This has caused quite a scandal within the PCE – his former home – and in other components of IU. In the struggle to establish the candidates for these upcoming elections, he has supported non-communists and all sorts of alliances with Greens and left nationalists.

The PCE and other currents have tried to replace him as a candidate, but in the November primaries⁵ he won a majority of 62% although with a turnover of 38%. These numbers are very symptomatic of the current predicament of IU and the PCE: demoralisation of the rank-and-files and a very low level of participation. Whatever the results of the elections may be there is very little political momentum in the organisation.

Some Conclusions

The preceding sketch describes the road leading to the current situation, which can be seen in terms of the clash, at the top, of two strategies with a very limited participation of the grassroots. The first strategy, that of Llamazares, is clearly a continuation of the former thrust of the PDNI: re-founding a post-communist new left. Its foundations would be made up of a somewhat contradictory mix of former leftists turned to identity politics, pragmatic unionists and elected officers paying lip-service to fashionable “progressive” trends, and, mixed in with all this, and causing special confusion, the nationalities that have always been so problematic and typical of Spain. This is a strategy of the top layers because it scarcely is more than a media project and requires no organisation beyond electoral office.

The second strategy, that of the PCE, is not so clear. On one hand, its cultural and ideological principles allow it correctly to criticise Llamazares’s strategy, especially from the “red” side. On the other, it is handicapped in two ways: it cannot escape from the general crisis of old politics, and it lacks a strategic proposal for the current political conjuncture. Thus, the PCE is basically condemned to fight bureaucratic battles on Llamazares’s terrain to win spaces making all sorts of alliances with “third parties” and middle-of-the-road groups. In this sense, it is not very appealing to its own grassroots, especially the more critical sections. The war remains confined to the summit.

Curiously IU claimed to be “another way of doing politics”. What is now occurring belies these claims. In the last years, internal democracy in IU has been at a minimum. Some good principles were indeed established at the beginning, but most of them fell victim to the old-fashioned routines and means that were deployed during the struggle with the PDNI.

In addition, IU had a political discourse which was correct at the time of the implemen-

tation of social-liberal policies and the deficiencies of the Spanish political establishment in those moments. This political discourse was able to organise many activists disappointed by the socialists in the late eighties and nineties and to raise crucial questions related to jobs, social rights, democratic problems with the state and with the idea of becoming European, as well as environmental and peace concerns. Full employment was a powerful slogan. It is no surprise that IU managed to grow on these premises.

Since the PP entered government in 1996 things have changed. Today we have almost full employment, with almost total precarity and 10% migrant labour-force. Destruction of the environment and carbon dioxide emissions sustain the housing boom and thus jobs and consumption. Half the population never understood who Franco was or were too young to remember. They take the EU for granted. A new discourse is needed, all the more urgently now that hard times are appearing round the corner in the form of an economic downturn.

The PCE is initiating a process of reflection on the current model of accumulation, the democratic deficits, and the new problems. This is good as a first step to a renewed political proposal. But in past years most of the organic links with Spanish society have been broken. Of course there are communists out in the society as a whole, but so many years of discussing IU’s problems have turned social reality into a sort of ‘foreign affairs’ for the party. It is urgent to reconstruct this connection. Everyone acknowledges that hard work must be done to restore the communication with real-world people, and this is not easy.

On the other hand, what about convergence? IU is only another stage in a long history of convergence going back to the era of the Popular Front. As this article is being written, nobody knows how convergence will develop in the immediate future. If it survives it ought to broaden. Perhaps the EL, if it gets rid of its ‘interna-

tional-department’ manner and opens up to flexible and participatory activism and programmatic non-sectarian articulation, will offer an opportunity to make an appeal for a larger regrouping. IU’s failures are in no way a reason to abandon the struggle for new democratic ways of convergence in political action, quite the contrary. If we may extract the lesson learned it may be this: IU is failing because it is behaving like a (bad) party, and the party (parties) in IU is failing because it is behaving more like an internal current, not like a party carrying ideology, analysis and social existence.

Javier Navascués



Notes

- 1 The new strategy appealed in many respects to those who had left the party some years before in disagreement with Carrillo and had sought refuge in social movements
- 2 The position was decided in the 3rd Federal Assembly (Congress) of IU in 1992.
- 3 The first one occurred in 1996, during the general election campaign.
- 4 In Spanish communism, Catalonia has always been organised independently of the other regions, in a “fraternal” way. The PSUC, the Catalan version of the PCE, decided to “freeze” itself in the early nineties giving way to IC as a political party. In 1998, a competing political force was created, called EUiA, supported by IU. Since 2003, IC and EUiA have formed an electoral coalition running jointly in the elections. IC now declares itself to be a Green party.
- 5 Conducted through mail ballots!

The Municipal and Cantonal Elections in France

A New Left-Wing Dynamic?

An important feature of the municipal¹ and cantonal elections² in France was a steep rise in the abstention rate³ – in sharp contrast to the 2005 referendum and the 2007 presidential election.⁴ Fifty-four percent of non-voters were blue- and white-collar workers; 39% were salaried employees, professional people or other members of the middle class; and 7% were artisans, tradesmen or businessmen. Thirty-two percent of them had voted for Sarkozy in last year's presidential election and 9% for Royal.⁵ The bulk of abstainers came from the "milieux populaires" and had voted for Sarkozy in 2007 without necessarily being traditionally right-wing voters. During the election campaign canvassers were particularly struck by the expressions of disappointment, not to say indignation, from disadvantaged pensioners (the great majority of whom had voted for Sarkozy) and blue- and white-collar workers (many of whom had expected an improvement in their purchasing power). A survey⁶ taken on the eve of the second ballot revealed that 62% of the respondents desired a change in government policy after the municipal elections.

The poor showing of the ruling parties was unmistakable, and yet a mere nine months had passed since they took office. They lost 38 towns of over 30,000 inhabitants, which has fuelled discussion within Sarkozy's "Union pour un mouvement populaire" (UMP). Sixty percent of the départements are now governed by the left, whereas before the elections the ratio was 50:50. Two départements are ruled by the Parti communiste français (PCF). All in all the left received 51.3% of the votes in the second ballot, as against 44.5% for the UMP and 3% for Mouvement Démocrate (MoDem). Voices were to be heard, especially among UMP mayors who had

been voted out of office, calling on the government "to listen to the voters" and to make the "purchasing power issue" a priority. So far, however, Sarkozy has only agreed to make cosmetic changes.

The new MoDem party did not achieve its electoral target of establishing itself locally as a force to be reckoned with, and Bayrou did not even succeed in becoming mayor of his home town of Pau. The experiment tailored to the modality of the presidential election and Bayrou's ambitions seems doomed to failure in the longer term.

The Front National (FN) emerged markedly weakened, although it should be noted that in many cases UMP candidates co-opted far-right personalities and FN issues (especially law and order and immigration) for their own campaigns.

The main beneficiary of the two elections was the Socialist Party (PS), which gained 55 towns of over 20,000 inhabitants, 169 cantons and an average of 4.3% in the cantonal elections.

For the left – which in France includes social democracy and the forces to the left of it – a very detailed analysis is required. Appearing in a large number of configurations the alliances and collective movements have very different contours. The results reflect the processes of upheaval on the left, which are by no means over and were painfully evident in all their contradictoriness in the municipal elections.

The traditional "Union de la Gauche" (Union of the Left) remains the dominant formation, frequently achieving good results, although the programmes in individual towns were very differently conceived as regards the choice of issues and methods. In this configuration the PCF and the Greens generally find themselves facing what have become stiff odds, which is reflected

not only in the number of seats they win, but also in the character of their alliances, which tend not to involve civil society. Alliances between the PS and MoDem in the first or second ballot were successfully prevented in some but not all cases under pressure from the left. There is an ongoing discussion as to whether forces to the left of the PS should withdraw if MoDem joins the executive or, on the contrary, take part in order to halt the drift to the right.

Although the PCF is generally holding its own in those municipalities where it holds power and remains the third strongest party as regards number of seats,⁷ the gains of the left almost always benefited the PS. In individual cases Socialist candidates prevailed in the second ballot against Communist mayors who had received the most votes in the first ballot, and were finally able to defeat the latter with the aid of some right-wing votes in the second round. The former chairman of the Greens, Dominique Voynet, won in Montreuil in this way. The often violently anti-Communist propaganda generally had little effect, as it had been discredited in recent years by the actions of those who resorted to it. On the other hand, inflexible attitudes and insensitivity to the new requirements of democracy in Communist-run towns were punished in these elections as they had been in the past.

At the same time, many places saw the emergence of new forms of left-wing alliances. This was often due to the rightward trend of PS mayoral candidates or the PS's unjustified claims to hegemony over its partners. Novel left-wing lists, frequently including a high proportion of non-organised concerned citizens, often arose in such cases.

Although the PCF frequently continued in the "Union de la Gauche" under conditions that had become unfavourable to it, it was also involved in a not insignificant number of localities in new experiments involving new forms of alliances organised around left-oriented issues and composed of various sections of the alternative left, including critical socialists and con-

cerned citizens. Such initiatives often gave rise to useful mobilisations. They were not exactly isolated phenomena, although they cannot be described as universal either.

In a number of places "alternative", "anti-liberal", or "radical" lists arose in opposition to the PS, of which a few achieved good results at the local level. The Ligue communiste révolutionnaire (LCR) largely continued its practical approach to presidential elections and, strengthened by the good media ratings for Besancenot as compared to 2001, doubled the number of its own lists in large towns. This time Lutte ouvrière (LO, with Arlette Laguiller) took a constructive part in a large number of PCF-, but also PS-led lists.

A Changed Political Landscape

The wide variety of political constellations in the municipal elections illuminate the diverse restructuring processes taking place on both the left and the right. Sarkozy vowed to put 1,000 personalities with a left-wing background on the UMP's municipal lists. The results were not spectacular. At the same time the alliances formed by MoDem with the UMP or PS, depending on locality, were regarded by 60% of voters as purely opportunistic. Altogether the number of right-left alliances was smaller than announced.

We should not overlook the restructuring taking place in the ranks of the right. As a whole, the right had to accept the loss of 164 cantons. The non-UMP right lost 326 cantons, while the UMP gained 162. The trend to consolidation within the right in the direction of Sarkozy-UMP is thus proceeding apace.

As for the "left", the former "Union de la Gauche" formally continues to exist in many places, as the number of joint PS-PCF-Green lists shows, although it is often accompanied by severe tensions and violent disputes over the PS's attempts to achieve hegemony.

A key question is how to assess these basic tendencies. Do they amount to a strengthening of the bi-polarisation between a liberal-reactionary right and a welfare-liberal social democracy? Is this a further step towards the emergence of a two-party system? Or is the decisive feature the persistence of the left-right divide and/or its reactivation?

Both the question and the answer have to be seen in more complex terms, however. The fact is that the two main parties, UMP and PS, account for 60% of the cantonal councillors. The trend to consolidation in favour of the two main parties is often interpreted as progress towards a two-party system. Thus the results of the municipal and cantonal elections seem to reinforce bi-polarisation.

At the same time there have been, albeit to a limited extent, cases of changing sides between left and right. Often, however, clear-sighted, left-oriented forces within the left have managed to uphold the left-right divide and use it as a mobilising factor.

On the left the landscape is highly fragmented. The claim to hegemony of the PS and its political orientation are being resisted by various more or less influential forces. On the other hand, the proportion of French people and PS sympathisers who would like to see a PS-MoDem alliance has decreased markedly in the last three months.⁸

Also in need of analysis is how the problem of social fragmentation at local and municipal level was dealt with. A comprehensive study would be of great interest. Good results were achieved by innovative left candidates, who managed with the aid of pluralist lists to mobilise democratic, constructive and solidarity-based forces while at the same time presenting themselves as competent mayoral candidates. There were interesting attempts to overcome the paternalist attitude toward the inhabitants of the "banlieues", and to forge on the basis of a more class-oriented attitude a new solidarity between the inhabitants of the "cités populaires" and

critically-minded sections of the middle class with the involvement of the younger generation. At the same time, the municipal elections showed once again that poverty and social insecurity, far from "automatically" leading to left-wing electoral choices, in not a few cases can be exploited by right-wing and influence-peddling mayors or in isolated cases by municipal lists as well.

To sum up, it may be said that although a general re-alignment of the political landscape is under way, it has not yet progressed very far, as may be seen from the extremely contradictory picture presented by the municipal elections.

Prospects

The discussions on what political line the left will adopt in the future will soon be in full swing. The consistently left forces are increasingly confronted with the question as to whether it is possible to develop an independent left-wing dynamic, which does not exclude alliances with social democracy as long as their own activity is not subordinated to it.

The debate on political line is raging within the ranks of the left. The many efforts within social democracy to take its lead from the (right-wing) centre, have met with staunch internal resistance. In the municipal elections traditional PS voters discreetly supported often open and unambiguously left-wing projects when the opportunity presented itself. Also, in February, the number of PS deputies in parliament and the Senate, who, in opposition to the official line, spoke in favour of the democratic demand for a recent referendum on the EU Treaty, was higher than expected. Thus the losses of the right cannot just be simplistically regarded as successes of the PS and its welfare-liberal-oriented representatives.

The LCR will presumably continue to work toward the formation of an "anti-capitalist party". How far the LO will continue its new policy of

seeking broad left-wing alliances is still unclear. The key question at the PCF congress in late autumn will probably be whether the main aim should be to rally left-wing-oriented critical forces in favour of an alternative solidarity-based project. It will also be crucial to see how PCF forces can be activated for this purpose in everyday discussions, and what this would mean for the structure of the party. Although there is more discussion of the political significance of the PCF having more than 13,000 seats in elected bodies, a coherent overall view of how to combine participation in elected bodies with a consistent strategy for changing society is still absent. Another unresolved question is how under today's conditions one can be part of the left while simultaneously developing the capacity for a left-wing dynamic that is independent of social democracy. Within the PCF, however, one cannot exclude the possibility that there will be a resigned attitude: will the "future" lie in being an appendage of the PS or in increasingly egocentric isolation? A recently proposed "compromise", which would block the necessary innovative action, would also be counter-productive.

The next stage will be the 2009 European elections, for which preparations will soon have to be made. The question of rebuilding a transformative left will soon be back on the table.

Turbulence on the Government Side

It is clear that Sarkozy did not take the warnings of the past months seriously. His use of the "question of purchasing power", which he articulated in terms of "work" and "performance", has damaged his political image, notes Stéphane Rozès.⁹ However, Prime Minister Fillon's ratings remain high, which indicates that there is still no left-wing alternative on the political scene.

The turbulence is violent and will probably come to a head with the emergence of a global

financial and banking crisis. The fact is that only a fundamentally different logic in economic and social policy can enable us to find constructive answers to the key question of "purchasing power", i.e. wages. The speedy progress being made in the dismantling of the labour law, the 35-hour week, the solidarity-based social security systems, and public services and structures, is making the situation worse, and it is now clear to everybody that the "work more to earn more" formula is not working.

Sarkozy and his government are preparing a second "wave of reforms",¹⁰ albeit under conditions less favourable than those of mid-2007, first because of the lack of political room in the current crisis situation, and secondly because of massive disillusionment¹¹ and the appearance of new protest movements. "Nicolas Sarkozy – Président du pouvoir d'achat des milliardaires" (Nicolas Sarkozy – President of the purchasing power of billionaires) – this slogan seen on a home-made banner¹² during a demonstration aptly expresses the growing mood.

The "individualisation" of social relations is well under way: individual property, personal success, privatised social security, individualised wages, etc. In concrete terms this means, for example, passing the costs of health care on to the patients (retention of up to 50 Euros a year), whereby it is not the healthy who pay for the sick, but patients who pay for patients. Meanwhile the first steps are being taken towards "flexicurité à la française" as part of the gradual dismantling of the labour law and the French social model, which is described as being too "protective". However, resistance has prevented deregulation going as far as Sarkozy would have liked. Yet despite the resistance movements the trade unions find themselves in a complicated situation. On the one hand, it is hard for them to pick up on all the individual aspects of the "waves of reforms". On the other, they are under simultaneous pressure from the employers' association Medef and the government: Either a speedy agreement must be

reached between management and labour, or an even tougher law will be passed in short order. And tough new political battles over the pension reform, the "social value-added tax", are looming on the horizon.

The main areas of resistance concern wages as well as the working and living conditions of employees, and these conflicts are now increasingly breaking out in the private sector. The spectacular success of the strike by supermarket employees (especially the check-out cashiers), which affected 80% of the stores of Carrefour, Lidl, Auchan, Champion and Intermarché, is revealing a new reality. Such a massive movement in the highly diversified private sector, where collective action has always been very hard to organise, is a clear indicator of the rapidly growing disillusion. In those social categories in which decreasing wages and underemployment increasingly put employees under pressure, Sarkozy's "work more to earn more" had no doubt raised certain hopes that have now been dashed. Thus, for example, in a supermarket in Portet-sur-Garonne 350 staff won the applause of customers by spontaneously demonstrating and shouting "Sarkozy, arrête ta comédie!" ("Sarkozy, cut the comedy!") – which, however, is far from automatically meaning a turn to the left.

Individualisation is also running into problems in industry. Management finds itself compelled to be extremely cautious on the topic of "salaire au mérite" (performance-related pay), as it causes great discontent, and by rapidly worsening the mood of the workers also impairs their efficiency.¹³ With rising inflation, which according to INSEE mainly affects fuel, heating, housing and food costs, there is less willingness to accept as the only answer overtime and reduced working hours without wage adjustment.

As for the public sector, it is highly appreciated by 70% of the French people, although they do tend to complain, especially in rural or suburban areas, of having too little and unequal access to it.¹⁴ Thus the job cuts in education are

meeting stiff resistance.

Further areas of conflict are deportation policy, housing, the "Attali Report" and its consequences, the planned constitutional amendments, the reform of the justice system, European policy, basic freedoms, relations between church and state, educational curricula, the destruction of the public media and support for the arts, foreign policy and, of course, what to do about the financial and banking crisis.

The vision of society represented by Sarkozy is wearing thin. The foundering of home-owners has buried the notion of the stakeholder society. The vaunted "méritocratie" has turned out to be a boomerang. The individualisation of social relations is increasingly revealed as social regression for the individual and ultimately for (almost) all concerned.

The political, social and ideological situation is unstable. The last presidential election is glaring proof that disappointment does not automatically result in a switch (alternance) to the left, but that the right-wing option can also function as a rupture. Even if the municipal election results constitute penalisation of the UMP¹⁵ and offer a good point of departure for all the left parties, one fears that these results will once again be taken to be "reassuring" and that the vital issues affecting our future will be relegated to the background.

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Notes

- 1 These elections were held in all 36,000 municipalities.
- 2 Each département is divided up into cantons, whose elected representatives form a "conseil général" in each département. This time half the cantonal seats were up for re-election.
- 3 At 33.46% the abstention rate on March 9 was the highest for a municipal election since 1959.
- 4 84% participation rate in the presidential election
- 5 CSA-Dexia survey of March 9, 2008
- 6 BVA – Orange – *L'Express*, March 12/13: "French opinion poll on the eve of the 2nd ballot".
- 7 PCF mayors in towns of over 3,500 inhabitants: 183 (2001) – 176 (2008). Cantonal elections: a total loss of 10 conseillers généraux, 9.8% (2001) – 9% (2008). loss of the presidency of the Conseil Général de Seine St. Denis (Paris area), gain of the presidency of the Conseiller Général de l'Allier (Central France).
- 8 Against an alliance: 55% in March 2008 / 44% in December 2007. PS sympathisers: for an alliance 58% in December 2007, 51% in March 2008. Mo-

Dem sympathisers: 54% December, 46% March. Source: BVA – Orange – *L'Express*, March 12/13: "French opinion poll on the eve of the 2nd ballot".

- 9 Stéphane Rozès, *Humanité*, March 8, 2008
- 10 On developments in France up to October/November 2007 see: Joachim Bischoff/Elisabeth Gauthier, *Sarkozy und die Hegemonie des Neoliberalismus*, supplement to the 12/2007 issue of the periodical *Sozialismus*.
- 11 58% of French people now rate Sarkozy's economic policy negatively, and 39% consider it positive (Jérôme Sainte-Marie, BVA, quoted in *Le Monde* 1/25/2008).
- 12 Photo in *Le Monde*, 24/1: "Nicolas Sarkozy – President of the purchasing power of billionnaires"
- 13 According to a study by SRM Consulting, based on hearings in large enterprises, *La Tribune*, January 24, 2008
- 14 IFOP survey, November 2007, *La Croix* January 24, 2008
- 15 The 2004 regional elections were clearly a punishment for Chirac, though this did not translate into a success for the left in 2007.

The Italian Left *Before* the Elections

The precipitous fall of the government and consequent early elections (April 13 -14) caught the Italian left's unification process in midstream. The process, officially launched at the convention of the Estates-General of the Left and Ecologists on December 8th and 9th, 2007, is still far from having the features of a real political project, and farther still from completion.

As a result, the construction of a unified left (called the Rainbow Left) now faces a decisive test: the early – too early – political elections.

The immaturity of the process also makes its prospects uncertain and its character ambiguous, as reflected in the ways in which the leaders of the parties and movements involved, and the left in general, perceive it.

The two extremes that give the process this uncertain character are on the one hand the re-

duction to a mere electoral alliance of political forces that would be unable on their own to win enough votes to elect members of Parliament, and on the other the ambition of the political project, which is running in the elections today but intends to continue beyond this and build a new entity of the left. Both these elements are present in the ensemble of political forces that are working toward aggregation, and within each one of them. Their combination creates an underlying ambiguity that only the course of social conflicts and the reorganisation of the Italian political system can dissipate.

I might conclude this brief introduction by remarking that the Rainbow Left is facing the voters from the worst possible position. It would be hard to contest this assertion, not only because the character of the unification process is still

not clear, but also because of the political context of the campaign: the forthcoming verdict on the two-year record of the Prodi government, where all the forces of the Rainbow Left shared responsibility, and the circumstance that the left is running alone, competing instead of being allied with the Democratic Party, the main force that supported Prodi's centre-left government. This is due to an apparent paradox: the Prodi government was felled by the right, when some moderate-centrist groups within the forces that created the Democratic Party withdrew, but in the election campaign the split-off against which the Democratic Party is running is on the left, by the Democratic Party's own choice.

Why is this paradox merely "apparent"? For the simple reason that in the Democrats' choice one can read their intention to recreate a situation of compatibility that had been shattered by the crisis of the Italian political system in the early 1990s.

The crisis of the Prodi government was actually less contingent and sudden than appears at first sight. It was not only the fall of a government; it was the end of a whole political cycle. A new phase has begun, and the result, or at least the result intended by some people, will be to relegate the left to the sidelines and create a weak alternation between two centre-leaning formations, the neo-centrist wager which is the real objective of the powers that have operated over the long period of the crisis. In short, to put an end to the Italian anomaly.

These trends and the lengthy coagulation of crisis factors do not make the rush – the leap – any less traumatic. The goal is precisely to cause a splash-down.

For the Italian left, this campaign is thus an important test that comes at what may be the worst possible time, partly because of the immaturity of the unification process and partly because of the political context.

Two contradictory critical elements are in play: on the one hand, widespread protest in the most advanced movements and in left public opinion

against the government's record, hence against the left's part in it; on the other, the siren song that urges voters to cast a "useful vote," meaning the alleged need to vote for the largest party in order to prevent the victory of the right.

These two elements have contrary motivations. The first claims that the left was too yielding, too subordinate to the Democratic Party (in sum, that the left had to face the crisis after it had acquiesced in choices to which it ought to have reacted in a very different way). The second objects to the isolation in which the left is facing the election (it matters little that the decision to isolate the left came from the Democratic Party); because the electoral system assigns the majority of seats to whomever wins the relative majority of votes, people are supposedly forced to vote for the party with the best (albeit minimum) chances of beating the right.

In a less superficial analysis, the contradiction between these two elements may turn out to be merely apparent. The dichotomy between unity and autonomy is the same contradiction with which the various forces of the left have wrestled in recent years, making different choices that have sometimes led to violent divisions.

The Record of the Government

It seems impossible to have a sensible discussion about what to do next without discussing openly, in a truth-seeking spirit, the record of the two years of the Prodi government and the left's part in it. This was no small experiment. For the first time ever, all the parties of the left – from the two Communist parties to the Greens to the new socialist left (born as a split-off from the Democrats of the Left, the party which, together with other moderate-centre groups, formed the Democratic Party) – took part and held a decisive position in the nation's government. What was supposed to guarantee this coalition was a pact among the political forces that had formed the Union, among them

the labour movements and forces that had taken the lead in the extraordinary struggles waged during the previous five years, the years of Berlusconi's government.

This pact had taken the form of a highly detailed and structured platform that the leaders of the coalition had very emphatically presented and signed in public. There was a great deal of ironic comment on the length of the Union's 2006 platform, more than 270 pages. The length was said to be due to the vague, or, rather, the contradictory nature of conflicting proposals. In reality, nothing could be farther from the truth. The Union's platform was a true compromise among different approaches along a line that could be called "European reformism." It called for a foreign policy more independent from the United States, with withdrawal from Iraq as the first step; modification of the worst aspects of precarious labour, a policy for redistributing wealth and penalising earnings from speculation, the introduction of civil rights, starting with those of unmarried couples, and new legislation on citizenship rights, starting with immigrants.

Aside from withdrawal from Iraq, none of the other issues were resolved by concrete government action. The idea of the government's sensitivity to the movements was contradicted by the facts. The largest demonstrations during these two years not only did not succeed in influencing the government; they came up against a stone wall. There were three major events: the demonstration in Vicenza against expansion of the U.S. military base, where the whole population turned out against that choice; Gay Pride, the largest demonstration demanding recognition of fundamental rights, including recognition of different forms of cohabitation; and the demonstration by over a million people against precarious labour and for new legislation that would eliminate its most hateful aspects. The parties of the left not only participated in these demonstrations; they were among the promoters. Yet the results were dis-

appointing, if not totally nil. A wall went up and the government proved undoubtedly to be far more sensitive to the influence of the powers that be: the employers association (Confindustria), on labour and social security issues; the Vatican, on civil rights and the secular state; the U.S. government, on the new military base. The parties of the left did not yield on the principles involved, but each time – in one instance under the threat of the government's losing a vote of confidence – they swallowed the bitter pill and re-introduced the challenge on a different terrain. Eventually, after the idea of a comprehensive review of the government's achievements had been announced, the crisis arrived, created by the right explicitly to undo the political situation created by the 2006 election results.

In analysing these two years, we must also take account of the country's overall situation, characterised by a latent economic crisis that was amplified by events related to the financial troubles in the U.S.; and its social condition, which has not improved since the five very hard years when the right was in power. This unhealthy state of affairs erodes people's confidence in the very possibility of change.

Without a critical judgment of this experience, the process of unifying the left has no future. What is needed is a deeper reflection that – in this case too – uses contingent events to evaluate structural tendencies.

The result would be an evaluation that sees the birth of the Italian Democratic Party and the consequent split-off of the left as strategic events in a phase – the phase of an attempt at eliminating the possibility of compromise with the left and its demand to put an end to compatibility with neoliberal policies.

In this sense, the parties of the left should consider their autonomy – including running alone in the election campaign – as a strength rather than a punishment, a choice of phase rather than a passing episode. But the left as a whole and the individual parties have not gotten over their grief. They still bewail a past (even

the recent past of the Union) that is no longer, and they have a hard time propelling themselves into the new phase. They do not understand that autonomy is now the challenge they must win to survive. From this standpoint too, the unification process involves differing if not actually contradictory issues that need to be resolved.

The Unification Process

To better understand the underlying rationale of the unification process, we need to analyse the different political cultures involved and the paths taken in that direction in recent years by the political forces that are now the leading players in the Rainbow Left: Communist Refoundation (PRC), the Greens, the Party of Italian Communists (PdCI) and Democratic Left (SD).

Let us consider three elements: the alliance formed by the PdCI and the Greens for the 2006 general election; the birth of SD, formed by the left wing of the Democrats of the Left on the birth of the Democratic Party, as an experience connected with European socialism; and the experience of the European Left, promoted by the PRC.

In the general election of 2006, the PdCI and the Greens ran on a joint slate. This slate achieved a fairly satisfying result, about the same as the sum of the two parties' votes for the Chamber of Deputies, but it was clearly marked by a state of necessity: how to win the percentage of votes required to elect senators. This goal was so evident and explicit that it never crossed anybody's mind to consider the experimental alliance as a common base. The two parties continued to exist independently, with no reference to that experience. Frankly, we can consider this reduction to a mere electoral alliance as a possible extreme outcome of the ongoing unification process. In other words, the failure of the unification process as a political project. The fact that no political force on the left is proposing such a mere electoral alliance

today as a model is a sign of people's awareness that more surely has to be done.

The second element I shall consider here is the birth of SD. One might object that what we have in this case is not a process of aggregation but the exact opposite: part of the Democrats of the Left split off when faced with the choice of joining forces with the major centre party, the Margherita, in the new Democratic Party. But this is not actually true, mainly because SD decided not to form a real party but to remain within a more general political movement. A rather odd act, according to its promoters: a "biodegradable" movement that would be willing to dissolve itself in the construction of a new leftist party. From the standpoint of political culture, SD clearly wants to be part of European socialism and inherit the government culture of the Italian left and its strong ties with large trade-union organisations.

Lastly, the PRC – the party which more than any other has operated in the framework of the relationship between politics and movements – initiated the most innovative unification process, within the trajectory of the Party of the European Left. Though the European Left still has evident shortcomings and limitations, it is a novelty in Europe. It is aggregating multiple forces – alternative leftists, communists, left socialists, critical environmentalists – that have chosen a common path as an alternative to neoliberalism and war, with no fixed ideology but within a concrete politics of close cooperation with the movements.

The PRC was among the political forces giving birth to this new force of the alternative European Left. As noted above, this project proceeds along a more complex path of political-cultural innovation aimed at building a new left in Europe that would be an interlocutor with a reborn left throughout the world (e.g. the so-called Latin-American laboratory), within a longer trajectory of the movement of movements.

In Italy, the aim was to give shape to this process through an original experience of build-

ing a unitary path intended to bridge the gap between politics and movements, and thus build a new public space for politics, in part by undermining the prevalence of the party form of organisation. In the singular Italian experience, the European Left represented the possibility of creating a relationship among the political groupings of the alternative left, in this case the PRC, the movements, and various associations that have formed national and territorial networks: the feminist network, the network of social centres and antagonist groups, the environmentalist network, groups that operate for the construction of a movement and are grouped in the Forum for 21st-Century Socialism, left socialist experiences aggregated around United on the Left, other experiences similarly in the area of the new experiences of emerging cultures, and so on.

It is perfectly clear that these three paths differ in their nature and are in some ways opposed to each other. The experience of the European Left is the opposite of an electoral alliance, but it expresses a political culture advocating the left's autonomy from government, and an idea of relations with the movements that is quite different from the government culture which the SD movement essentially takes to be the identity of the left.

The transitional moment in which the Italian unification process now finds itself is that of enabling the cohabitation of differences within a new project that does not try to cancel them out, but gradually reaches a synthesis among them.

The starting point should be precisely the multiplicity of experiences and political cultures, but with no thought of either merely juxtaposing them or (the opposite error) yielding to the illusion that they can be cancelled out in the alchemy of hardly credible and likely ineffectual fusion processes.

The decisive issue is back on the table, and requires each and everyone of us to question ourselves in a participatory process. The real key in implementing the unification process is to be

open to participation, to cease feeling like owners of political parties that summon associations and individuals to engage in the process but do not make them equally empowered protagonists. In this sense, the opening of the European Left, beyond the limits of this particular experiment, is a fruitful innovational stimulus because it considers the form of political action to be an essential part of the content of the reform of politics.

To conclude more optimistically than I began: the Italian left is indeed facing the elections at the worst moment, but for this reason it should actually consider the election as simply a moment of transition. Whatever the outcome, the elections should not call the unification process into question. We are, however, called upon to relate to the process without engaging in tactical manoeuvres, in petty calculations of advantage, but rather to be oriented toward the long road of the construction of a new left. An innovation that rejects the shortcuts of a unification process that would merely annex or dissolve different cultures instead of truly altering both the contents and the form of politics.

This is a decisive transitional moment. There is, moreover, great need of the left in Italian society, and a great desire among the powers that be to obliterate it; in other words, to prevent the political representation of social conflict (which cannot be eliminated). We are still in time, even considering the current conflict and the challenge of the early general election, to frustrate that desire.

The project that the Italian left is presenting at election time – the Rainbow Left – is the necessary one, but it is not yet sufficient. This is the real test facing the whole left – the political left, the social left and the movements.

Walter De Cesaris



Giving Notice to Neoliberalism

The Lessons of Health Care Union Resistance in Finland and Canada

Jyrki Katainen, the Finnish government's current Finance Minister, made an infamous promise to voters during the last elections: to address the crisis affecting the Finnish public health care sector – the main concern of Finnish voters. More particularly, he promised to raise the salaries of trained nurses "significantly". Kokoomus, the National Coalition Party was elected on the basis of these promises which the Finns feel have been broken. TEHY, the union of health care workers, fought long and hard, resorting to exceptional measures to make the government honour their promises. The union's labour struggle brought into the open the hypocrisy and contradictory discourse of neoliberal politics and their advocates. The debate over the legitimacy of the unions' demands and chosen methods of collective bargaining became highly symbolic and fierce; it went to the core of what is at stake in the current downsizing and overhaul of the Nordic welfare state and how it affects in particular fields in which women predominate.

TEHY's Mass Resignation

The following news report by the main Finnish newsdaily, Helsingin Sanomat (HS) sums up the labour conflict involving TEHY and its resolution: "The council of Finland's Union of Health and Social Care Professionals (TEHY) unanimously approved a settlement proposal put forward by the mediation board set up to resolve the labour conflict, in which over 12,000 nurses had threatened to resign en masse on Monday night. The decision thus averts a situation that had caused alarm and fears that the country's

health service would be more or less paralysed. The nurses have struck a deal bringing wage increases ranging from 22% to 28% over a four-year agreement period. This will amount to between € 350 and € 650 a month over the four years. There will also be a "Christmas bonus" of € 270. The wage increase will apply only to TEHY members. The Commission for Local Authority Employers (KT) has also given its unanimous approval to the contract, while warning that it will inevitably cause municipalities to tighten their local taxation. KT's head of labour market affairs, Markku Jalonen said he believes that the agreement will force one municipality in four to increase the tax percentage. He also warned that customer charges for public sector health care services would increase.

HS also reported that with approval of the deal from both sides preparations need no longer go ahead for the implementation of measures called for by the recently-passed patient safety legislation. The law, voted on by Parliament earlier, would have allowed local authorities to compel some of the nurses taking part in the threatened industrial action to stay at work in order to perform tasks considered vital for patient survival. The TEHY staff, consisting of a variety of employees besides the trained nurses, has enjoyed a broad measure of popular support for their demands, in spite of public worries over the possible fallout from the planned mass resignations. All is well that ends well, one might assume from the corporate perspective.

The HS analysis of the threat of mass resignation by the trained-nurses focus group is a most telling example of media bias, that is, the blatantly one-sided reporting of issues that are of

extreme importance for female workers, the fields in which they dominate, and the entire future of the welfare state. It epitomises at the same time the other strategies used by those in power to subject vulnerable unions or employee groups to the corporate perspective. The TEHY "deal" is now seen by leftist and many other analysts as a "pyrrhic victory"; the final contract is so complex and contingent on ambiguous, contextually shifting interpretations that many fear no real gains will have been made at the end of the day (four years from now).

Because women, more than men, have been conditioned to internalise the ethics of care, sacrifice and flexibility as a "naturalised" essence of femininity, they are also more vulnerable to labour manipulation, misleading promises and bully politics. They also have less negotiation power and resources than the male-dominated fields, with their much stronger unions.

As the cited HS report reveals, the corporate interpretation foregrounds the costs of the nurses' demands as a future burden for taxpayers, as if other union demands did not have the same impact. Instead of the article voicing solidarity with the legendary low salaries of women in jobs labelled as "calling professions", it lends support to the politics of blaming the victim, i.e. questioning the legitimacy of the labour struggle on the basis of public reaction (patient security) and the consequences of the increases on municipal budgets. Why did it not focus instead on the government's right-wing priorities: deficit cutting in a context of unprecedented economic growth, a thriving economy and numerous breaks given to corporations and the wealthy?

The media have in the main given the impression that TEHY made major gains even though the key issues (lack of staff, burnout, poor working conditions) were not addressed at all, and even the salary increases are tied to the demands of productivity, something that merely reproduces and aggravates the existing problems. Massive layoffs are condoned by the gov-

ernment in the name of "competitiveness" but the nurses' mass resignation led to prompt legislative action and was outlawed. When corporations closed factories, created mass unemployment and threatened the well-being, working rights and health of its staff, the government was passive; nothing could be done. Both measures reflect the interests of the corporate agenda.

The HEU Labour Struggle

The strike by over 40,000 hospital and long-term care facility workers in British Columbia in 2004, as well as the many other labour actions flowing from adjustment programmes and "restructuring" in Canada, likewise epitomise the tensions between corporate-identified governments and rights-identified workers. They are telling examples of public-sector unionists struggling to defend themselves and the services they deliver from employers and of a government intent on reorganising the public sector on neoliberal lines.

However, as in the case of TEHY's action, the workforce being overwhelmingly made up of women and people of colour, its demands were quickly labelled as unreasonable and impossible to meet. This is well in line with the differential treatment of women-dominated fields, resulting from centuries of practices that have regarded male employment as more important, with women's work functioning as a form of reserve or collateral labour and a more easily dispensable resource (Wichterich 2000). In Canada, the Hospital Employees Union (HEU) has one of the more left-wing leaderships in the Canadian labour movement. This means that the resistance was militant and that the labour activists would not give in easily to the corporate agenda. Still, in 2004 the B.C. government managed to end their strike by legislative order, echoing the harsh measures adopted by the Finnish government in 2007.

The Canadian Labour Struggle and Bill 29

In 2002, Minister Campbell's liberal government passed the infamous Bill 29, The Health and Social Services Delivery Act. It allowed for extensive privatisation as well as the elimination of transfer of services without consultation. It also made it illegal for health care workers to discuss alternatives to privatisation with their employers, and it enabled the closing of hospitals with two months notice. In a direct attack on unionised workers, it stripped key provisions from the Health Services and Support Facilities Subsector collective agreement that covers members of HEU along with members of nine other unions with a small presence in hospitals and long-term care facilities. It also added new provisions: workers lost their strong "no contracting-out" protection as well as successor rights that had helped higher-seniority workers avoid unemployment. Retraining and job placement rights were cut, along with the Health Labour Adjustment Agency, a body responsible for assisting laid-off workers, which had been established as part of the Health Accord signed under the previous New Democratic Party (NDP) provincial government. Employers were given the power to move workers between hospitals and to temporary assignments at distant workplaces. This bill was blatantly biased in favour of health-care managers and private sector contractors and has been viewed as "the most severe government intrusion into collective agreements in Canadian history".

David Camfield (2006) provides an analysis of the neoliberal background to Bill 29 in which the restructuring of health care in B.C. is understood as an integral part of processes unfolding on a global scale: "broad-based changes in the financing, administration and management of public service delivery" are under way at all levels of the state, not only in Canada but across the advanced capitalist countries and beyond. It is commonly observed that the central thrust of

this reorganisation of the broader public sector is a shift from the welfare state to a new kind of public administration whose "primary objective is the fostering of a globally competitive economy". By "reform", neoliberal decision-makers understand a transition as absolutely necessary because of the "fundamental economic constraint" on governments today.¹

Most of the workers at the centre of B.C. health-care restructuring were members of HEU, which represents over 90% of health support workers in hospitals and long-term care facilities: a broad range of clerical, food services, housekeeping, laundry, maintenance, technical, trades, and patient-care workers, including Licensed Practical Nurses. Camfield points out that it was a mature and predominantly female workforce, whose jobs were very important to them and the other members of their households, which was subjected to these harsh labour measures. The most radical measure that the liberal government adopted, however, (Bill 18) in the wake of the neoliberal attacks against unions across Canada, was declaring the female-dominated, vulnerable fields of health care and schooling to be "essential services", legislating that they would not enjoy the right to strike. This epitomises the contradictory bully politics directed against female-dominated fields. On the one hand, they are declared so "unproductive" (by business standards which should not be applied to them) that they deserve lower salaries. On the other hand, they are recognised as "essential services", but instead of this leading to appreciation it is used to legitimate the annulment of their right to strike.

Finnish labour unions, leaders, politicians and other likely critics of the neoliberal "corpocracy" would do well to heed the developments that resulted from HEU's labour struggle. The HEU and TEHY labour struggles clearly have systemic root causes and are part of a much broader class project for reshaping state and society than is publicly recognised.² The Finnish left is well-advised to follow the example of Canadian

activism that finally led to a victorious ILO ruling condemning Gordon Campbell's government for trampling workers' rights which Canada had pledged to uphold in international conventions. In 2007 the Supreme Court of Canada likewise repealed Bill 29. This was a major victory against corpocracy. Since this victory points to the importance of using international labour-rights instruments, I will elaborate on The UN convention of the ILO-#87-Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize Convention (1948) which was signed by Canada and all 10 provinces in 1972.

Several unions lodged complaints against the government in light of this and other ILO conventions. Although the UN body cannot enforce its rulings, it does have the power to embarrass governments that violate UN standards. It can also exert moral pressure on them to reconsider their actions. The B.C. government seems to have upset the ILO on two counts: (1) the long list of violations it had committed against workers rights and (2) the dismissive attitude it displayed when dealing with the complaints. The appeal to the ILO attests to the power and possibilities of collective resistance and action, as the reply given by ILO proves: "The committee notes that the impugned Acts affected large numbers of employees in the health and education sectors, and imposed terms and working conditions for an extended period of time, i.e. three years. ... Furthermore, they do constitute ... an interference by the authorities in the regular bargaining process, since the government intervened legislatively to put an end to a legal strike (Bill 2) and to impose the contents of collective agreements (Bills 15 and 27)".

The ILO ruled that the Liberal government of Premier Gordon Campbell repeatedly refused to negotiate contracts with the unions and used the legislature to arbitrarily enforce its will. As a remedy, the ILO took the unusual step of asking the B.C. government entirely to repeal one bill. It also recommended major amendments in other statutes enacted by the Liberals to enforce its

will on employees. The international body also called on the government to refrain from such heavy-handed action in the future and to restore "appropriate and meaningful" bargaining with provincial employees. It also strongly condemned Bill 18. Furthermore, Canada was invited to hold "full and detailed" consultations, "under the auspices of a neutral and independent facilitator", to review collective bargaining issues arising from Bill 29. After numerous other recommendations implicitly contesting the temerity of the corporate assaults, the ILO concluded: "When a state decides to become a member of the ILO, it accepts the fundamental principles of freedom of association ... and all governments are obliged to respect fully the commitments undertaken by ratification of ILO conventions".

Conclusion

The lessons from the Canadian labour action should be heeded by Finnish politicians and decision-makers both on state and municipal levels, and above all by those affected by the draconian measures to erode the welfare state. Finnish political life is characterised by a politics of consensus, with the multiparty system encouraging compromises and avoidance of strong conflict. In the context of the aggressive and stubborn corpocracy, one can only hope that this tradition is replaced by strong citizen resistance, critical thinking and mass mobilisations that are more characteristic in my experience of the Canadian system.³ I worry about the measures the Canadian government tried to impose in the field of education, and which Kokoomus, in its copycat mode, may well seek to adopt, in order to prevent any strike action taken by this other female-dominated field (Bill 18).

Another lesson Finland would do well to learn is that HEU is a union whose leaders took seriously the proclamation in the preamble to its constitution that it is "the right of those who

toil to enjoy to the fullest extent the highest standard of living compatible with life within Canada". HEU is exemplary as a union that has not been concerned only with its members' wages, benefits, and working conditions but has a broader welfare agenda. The union's 1958 endorsement of the demand for a comprehensive public health care system was followed twenty years later by its call for taking private long-term care facilities into public ownership, through expropriation if necessary. Women's activism produced a union that at the end of the century was distinguished by a higher level of militancy and political consciousness than most Canadian unions. TEHY and other Finnish labour unions would be well advised to adopt a more solidarity-based and welfare-oriented outlook beyond the self-interest that characterised some of their leader's comments. Corpocracy poses such an unprecedented threat to the gains made by the women's movement that unions cannot afford to compete and envy each others' gains. They need to consolidate their action, mobilise collectively, and create a critical mass with other activists, union members, parties and individuals who wish to give notice to neoliberalism. Otherwise, as is already happening, the winner takes all.

Kaarina Kailo



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Notes

- 1 In 2002, the B.C. Liberal government moved to reduce medical services through the elimination of coverage for physiotherapy, chiropractic, massage and other therapies, making cuts to the Pharmacare programme, closing hospitals and long-term care facilities, cutting services and beds in others, and removing housekeeping work from the home care provided to disabled and elderly people. At the same time, the Campbell government encouraged more corporate involvement in health care (Camfield 2006).
- 2 That the TEHY case is likewise part and parcel of neoliberal politics is not recognized in Finland. The editor-in-chief of the Finnish newspaper *Kaleva* went as far as to challenge such a phenomenon in his review of Heikki Patomäki's book *Neoliberalism in Finland* (2007). However, normally the real global agenda behind the unwillingness to keep the electoral promises has not been revealed in the media.
- 3 As a member of the Kiiminki municipality's education board, I have witnessed the near total passivity of most delegates in the face of the vast and radical restructuring measures, as small quality schools are replaced by more "cost-effective" megaschools and teachers are overworked and coerced into making different kinds of sacrifices.

Utopia – The Explosive Potential of the Present

Frigga Haug combines philosophical conscientiousness and shrewdness with uncompromising farsightedness and passionate visions of the future.

(Judith Butler)

It is time to break free of the false alternatives that paralyse politics and make it boring.

The feeling that things cannot go on like this is shared by more and more people in Europe. And if we are to move beyond vague feelings (that are subject to manipulation), it is necessary to subject current conditions to a careful political critique that is not just a negation of these conditions. Such a negation, by making them the measure of all things, would only allow these conditions to block prospects for new discoveries. It takes courage and intelligence to devise schemes and formulate proposals aimed at liberating and changing society, for the zeitgeist (more a spectre than a spirit these days) dooms us to pure immanence. Utopian reflections, i.e. the realisation that history means being active and able to act, are frowned upon and dismissed at best as unrealistic daydreaming.

If one reads the writings of Frigga Haug, on the other hand, the sense of resignation subsides and a certain confidence begins to be felt. A re-orientation of Marxist and feminist thinking combines theory with strengthening the capacity for a left politics from below, one which puts the representative model of politics in its place. That is why we are designing a fundamental change in the division of labour as a long-term political guideline. What we want to

see is a link between these four areas of human activity: Gainful employment, work of reproduction, cultural work, and political work. Nowadays the organisation of survival, life, cultural development and public activity is split into narrow specialisations and circumscribed spheres of competence, which entails a senseless waste of time and – above all – a profoundly unjust state of affairs which no clear-thinking person possessing a minimum of ethical competence could ever justify. The comprehensive concept of justice as formulated by women assumes that every person can contribute about 16 hours a day to the sum of social productivity and can use this time meaningfully in blocks of four hours each (these numbers are intended as a general guide, not as dogma) for him or herself, for others and the community as a whole. This means first of all reducing the period of gainful employment for everyone to four hours; for the work of procreation and the family this means first and foremost a generalisation: both men and women can and should be able to develop their societal skills; for cultural development this means that each individual will have time to develop his or her various talents and capacity to learn; and for politics this means that everyone can take part in shaping society. The art of politics lies in linking up the four areas, none of which should be pursued at the expense of the others, which would mean a more inclusive politics and fuller lives.

The whole scheme is based on the insight that gender relations are relations of production, so that no system of political economy can be taken seriously if it does not face up to this fact. The historical and theoretical arguments are to be found in the last chapter, which proves in a fascinating logical demonstration that a left without feminism is not sustainable – and vice versa.

Birge Krondorfer

This text is available in both English- and French-language versions:

The Irish Campaign:

A New Version of the French "No" Victory?

In the same week in which the French Parliament ratified the Lisbon Treaty, brutally ignoring the democratic "no" vote of 2005, the Irish Coalition against the EU Constitution (CAEUC), formally launched its campaign against the Treaty. Amazingly, out of the 27 member states, Ireland is the only one organising a referendum on the Lisbon Treaty, which makes the Irish vote crucial not only for the Irish, but also for all of the countries of the EU, and especially, of course, for those who have had their "no" vote ignored, that is the French and the Dutch.

The CAEUC has been preparing this civic debate for two years, since the time the EU Constitution was supposed to be ratified by referendum. The members of the Coalition have profited from this delay by becoming very familiar with the text itself and its precise consequences for Ireland.

Towards a Theory of Gender Relations, in: Socialism and Democracy, No. 31, Vol. 16, winter/spring 2002, p. 33-46

Sur la théorie des rapports de sexe. in: Actuel Marx, Les rapports sociaux de sexe, No. 30, 2001, pp. 43 – 60

And discussions on the above at the authors website.

Frigga Haug:

Die Vier-in-einem-Perspektive. Politik von Frauen für eine neue Linke.
Hamburg Argument Verlag 2008,
348 pages, € 19.50 (D)

At the launch of the campaign on February 7 in Dublin, a leaflet was circulated with all the specifics, that is the references, in the Lisbon Treaty, that demonstrate that the Treaty confirms and deepens the undemocratic and anti-social character of the EU. Compared to the Constitutional Treaty, the provisions on military issues are worse, which is in direct defiance of Ireland's neutrality. This violation of one of the Irish people's fundamental values is a shocking aspect of the Lisbon Treaty on which the Coalition is focusing, with the especially active help of the Peace and Neutrality Alliance (PANA).

The actions they have chosen in 2008 are directly inspired by the French "no" campaign. After the 2005 period, the CAEUC has clarified its left-wing identity. Aware of the conservative rejection of the Lisbon Treaty, they have chosen not to form an alliance with elements of the right. The arguments developed are therefore

directly linked to a progressive assessment of how the EU institutions are at the service of European capitalism, for example the latest rulings by the European Court of Justice (ECJ) on freedom of association and collective bargaining. Speaking at the launch event, Jimmy Kelly, Regional Secretary of UNITE, was very precise in his description of how the ECJ Viking and Laval cases of December 2007 would directly affect the Irish collective bargaining system, as it had prioritised the EU "fundamental right" of free-competition clearly over other fundamental rights to organise and freely to determine the unions' actions for purposes of negotiating collective agreements. The result of the recent merger between AMICUS and ATGWU (T&G), UNITE is a cross-border union, organising millions of workers throughout Britain and Ireland; it is now the UK's biggest union. Regional UNITE's voting against the Lisbon Treaty and helping explain how it contradicts the interests of workers is a crucial feature of the Irish referendum, especially because the Labour Party has been slow to understand the Treaty's real effects on labour. In a quite naïve statement on February 6, before the National Forum on Europe and Ireland's role in it (www.forumoneurope.ie/), Eamon Gilmore, the leader of the Irish Labour Party, was indulging in wishful thinking when he announced that the adoption of the Charter on Fundamental Rights was going to prevent future Vikings and Laval.

Although it is important to note that all parts of the progressive camp have the same point of departure, that is, a negative view of the ECJ rulings and the prevalence of free-competition over labour rights, the CAEUC is correct in offering a precise criticism of the Charter's solution to the problem. As one can read on the CAEUC website (www.caeuc.org/), the "weak and flawed" Charter of Fundamental Rights is one of the reasons why the Irish "should vote no". Invited to speak as a socialist involved in the French "no" campaign, I developed another ar-

gument that we could have used in France if we had to deal with a new referendum, which is about Britain's negotiated opt-out of the Charter. Indeed, the essence of a fundamental rule is precisely that it is not optional. It is deeply enshrined in a given system, such that no one can escape from it and everyone is entitled to be protected by it. Britain's opt-out is not only bad for the British, it is a message intended for everyone, and especially the ECJ, about the precise nature of these rules. The Charter, in reality, is one of "optional rights", not fundamental rights. The implicit hierarchy of EU rules, which make free competition, the rights of corporations and free trade the principal values within the normative system, is therefore not questioned but rather confirmed by the Lisbon Treaty and its amendments.

If the progressive camp agrees on the need for a reversal of this hierarchy, it differs on the reform strategy to adopt for this purpose. The "social-democratic" movement, which is a makeshift way of defining a political family that ranges from Anglo-Saxon Labour to French socialists, including Scandinavian, Nordic, German and other social-democrats, is very divided, as was clear in the case of the French "no" vote, which was decisively strengthened by the socialist votes, and in the less vocal but no less effective social-democrat contribution to the Dutch "no". The division has to do, among other things, with the prospects of renegotiating a better European text. In Ireland, the question is whether the possibilities of achieving a better treaty are helped or hindered by a "yes" vote for the Lisbon Treaty. The answer to that is quite clear: a "yes" vote will close off any sort of debate for a long time to come.

Unfortunately, the media and government have been displacing this interesting strategic debate by a biased and artificial confrontation between "pro-" and "anti"-Europeans, just as the media and government had done in France. It is, of course, easier for the promoters of the Lisbon Treaty to confront extreme right conser-

vative opponents. as we see in France, Denmark, England and many other European countries. In January, one newsdaily manipulated the facts in order to create the impression of a connection between the Irish “no” campaigners and French National Front leader Jean-Marie Le Pen. Fortunately, the attempt failed, as the slander that the “no” groups had invited Le Pen to Ireland proved to be utterly without foundation.

The government is frightened that the same reasons that motivated Irish voters to reject the Nice Treaty in 1992, along with a fair debate now on the goals of the EU and the interests of the great majority of Irish citizens in respect to the actual course of EU integration, might result in a “no” majority against the Lisbon Treaty.

Far from confronting this issue with honesty and clarity, the government and media use deception and disinformation. The explanatory material published by the Forum on Europe is far from neutral, and clearly uses very biased interpretations in support of a “yes” vote. Sinn Féin had proposed a few hundred amendments to this official document, which were overridden by the Forum. The mandate of the Referendum Commission, which included presenting arguments for and against referendum proposals, as well as the fostering and promoting of debate or discussion on them, has been seriously vitiated before the upcoming referendum by removing these functions. The French government had a similar approach in 2005, when it tried to prevent the dissemination of information; however, the public was well aware of the manoeuvre and eventually sanctioned it in the polls.

On March 10th Taoiseach (Prime Minister) Bertie Ahern finally announced a date for the referendum: the second week of June. Three months remain for debate, which is very little considering that the consolidated text of the reformed treaties is not yet available in Ireland, and it certainly will not be sent out to each and every household.

Together with other smaller left-wing parties, Sinn Féin is a pillar of the CAEUC. The party

was instrumental in limiting alliances to the left only, which represents an evolution from their 2005 position. Furthermore, MEP Mary Lou Mac Donald and former head of European Affairs Eoin O’Broin bring a strong competence in European issues acquired from their EP experience. Besides the CAEUC, Sinn Féin has also engaged in a country-wide door-to-door campaign against the Treaty. Sinn Féin Dáil leader Caoimhghín Ó Caoláin questioned Bertie Ahern on whether he ruled out a “Lisbon 2” referendum (there had been a “Nice 2” Referendum). The Taoiseach refused to rule out this possibility. The public reaction to this undemocratic stance will presumably be reflected in the referendum.

On the other hand, disappointment was expressed in the ranks of the Green Party and Labour Youth, two organisations that had opposed the EU Constitution. The Green Party being in the government coalition today, most of its leaders support the government position, although they could not obtain the two-thirds majority of members needed to determine an official party line approving the Lisbon Treaty. Fortunately, former MEP Patricia Mc Kenna is trying to save her party’s honour by being totally consistent with former positions, and by being very active in the campaign. (There are similarly voices from the UK Green Party opposing the Treaty.) Also, although it is known that individual Labour Youth members oppose the Treaty (as is probably the case with some members of the Labour Party itself), the organisation voted in favour of a “yes” position.

As we see, many of the ingredients of the French campaign are present in the current Irish situation, except the notable break with party line by Socialist Senator Jean-Luc Mélenchon and the socialist members of his organisation, Pour la République Sociale. Text and arguments in hand, the Progressive “no” in Ireland is in a situation to lead a civic reaction of the Irish people. With a view to uniting all the left, and only the left, the Communist Party of Ireland,

the Socialist Party, the Socialist Workers Party, the Workers Party and Sinn Féin have made an important strategic decision. Including the anti-war movement, the peace movement, and a strong and regional union, the CAEUC has a direct link with representative social movements. All these factors may lead to a reversal of current opinion polls favouring ratification, although a majority of voters still have not decid-

ed... just as in France three months before the 2005 “no” vote!

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Ratification of the Lisbon Treaty

How it is Playing Out in Different Countries.

The current ratification process of the Lisbon Treaty is characterised by several key features.

In France: First of all, there is the question of democracy. The day after the Parliament’s vote, Nicolas Sarkozy publicly declared that the condition for the acceptance of the new treaty by the other EU partners was that referendums should not take place, either in France or elsewhere. This fear of popular consultation is meant to confirm the reality of exclusion of citizens from deciding on European issues. The effect would be to widen the already existing gap between citizens and Europe, just when a legitimacy crisis is becoming an object of worry. We were unable to establish the referendum because of the conditions Sarkozy imposed, but the anti-democratic strategy could in the future be foiled on several very important issues. There was talk of a “mini-treaty”, but citizens soon understood that the new treaty preserves the main features of the Constitution rejected in the 2005 referendum. The supporters of the Treaty want it adopted without real debate. Under particularly difficult conditions, they could not prevent a mobilisation campaign from bringing up the question of democracy inherent in the refer-

endum, which confronted parliamentarians and political forces with their responsibility. Thus the European debate has been kept alive, and it will be an important issue in the French presidency and in the European elections in 2009.

On the other hand, there is the wish to hide the real content of the current treaty, in a straightforwardly liberalist and Atlanticist continuation of the former treaties, and – in opposition to this – the persistence of important social mobilisations, now also in new member countries of the EU, which make clearer the legitimacy crisis of the European construction process. However, this popular mistrust might fall prey to appropriation attempts by the populist right if we do not succeed in giving a direction to a project – a new founding treaty – involving a social, democratic, ecological and safety model, on a common European level, though being based on the real situations found at the national level.

Taking into account these important commitments and especially the French presidency, the treaty ratification process is proceeding with a compulsory deadline at the end of 2008 for the 27 member countries. Six countries have already ratified the new treaty through their par-

liaments: Hungary, Slovenia, Romania, Malta, Bulgaria and France on February 7, 2008; only Ireland has chosen the referendum path because its constitution requires it to do so.

In **Portugal**, Prime Minister José Socrates announced on January 9 that he was opting for parliamentary ratification, although in the case of the European Constitutional Treaty, he, and the Socialist Party, had been committed to a referendum. In spite of the support of a section of the right wing, this decision weakens his strength, because of very strong mobilisations against the government policy and against European policy (especially against "flexsecurity" and for the defence of the public sector). The main Union, the CGTP-IN, as well as the Portuguese Communist Party and the Left Block, asked for a referendum. The Communists initiated a large-scale campaign of education and mobilisation, which is to reach its high point in a few weeks to coincide with the debate in Parliament.

In **Ireland** the centre-right government decided to hold the referendum in all likelihood in June. Despite strong pressure exerted by the government and the principal political forces within it, like the Labour Party that decreed that there will be no possibility of renegotiating the Treaty if it is rejected by the people, Sinn Féin, the radical left (the Workers Party, the Irish Communist Party, and the extreme left), a part of the Greens, and some unions, as well as the pacifist movement, spoke out against the Treaty, and so did some sovereigntist movements and also, though for completely different reasons, the ultra-catholic fundamentalist forces.

In the **United Kingdom**, after the decision of Prime Minister Gordon Brown not to submit the Lisbon Treaty to a referendum, Parliament started debating it after having, in a first move on March 4, rejected a motion of the Conservatives calling for a referendum (311 votes against; 29 Labour deputies voted for it as did nearly all the

Conservatives; the Liberal Democrats, by their abstention, made possible the success of the Prime Minister's motion to reject the referendum). Meanwhile, on March 12 the House of Commons, by a large majority, consented to ratification. The debate is continuing in the House of Lords. Gordon Brown is politically weakened, but the conservative right, even though it can rely on a majority in the public in favour of a referendum and against the Treaty, does not consider ratification a very important battle. Fundamentally, the Conservatives agree with the exemptions Brown was able to get, especially the non-application in the UK of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. After the rejection of the motion for a referendum, the situation has become more difficult for referendum supporters. Along with the Greens and left wing of the Labour Party questioning the social policies and the militarist excesses of the EU the extreme left and the pacifist movements remain mobilised against the Treaty.

In the **Netherlands** the centre-left government announced on September 21 that in ratification of the new Treaty parliamentary procedure would be respected. Prime Minister Balkenende refers to a memorandum delivered by the State Council according to which the new Treaty would not derogate the Dutch Constitution and that therefore, unlike the case of the European Constitutional Treaty, no referendum was required. This decision, approved by the centrist parties and the Labour Party, which are in government, was called into question by the Socialist Party (SP) which introduced a motion to enable a referendum. For the SP it is unjustifiable not to consult public opinion, as the central content of the treaty rejected in 2005 is still a part of the new one. This bill is supported by the Greens and the social liberals ("Democrats 66").

In **Denmark**, the conservative Prime Minister Rasmussen, who just won the anticipated general elections, rejected the idea of a referendum.

This decision was confirmed by the Danish parliament. The parliament's decision, supported by the social-democratic opposition, is based on a memorandum issued by the Ministry of Justice to the effect that the new Treaty does not constitute a further ceding of sovereignty in respect to the former treaties. The Socialist People's Party, whose support greatly increased in the last elections, and the Red-Green Alliance, which is losing support, opposed this decision in parliament, and so did the "Movement Against the EU" and the far right, which is part of the parliamentary majority but without participation in the Rasmussen government. The government decided to fast-track parliamentary ratification which is now to take place in April. The right even seems willing to make the most of its advantage and is announcing that it is ready to give up the exemptions which keep Denmark out of EU policy in the areas of monetary, defence, justice and immigration policy. A referendum could be organised at the end of 2008 if the Lisbon Treaty ratification goes through without complications.

In **Sweden**, the right-wing government has decided, like the social democrats in the opposition, not to recommend a referendum as the way to ratify the Treaty. The Left Party, along with the Greens, is against the Treaty and in favour of a public ballot and so are sovereigntist movements like the June Movement, but with a different political purpose. The majority of public opinion is in favour of a referendum. The debate in Sweden is vulnerable to the pressure of the conservatives who are governing but dramatically sinking in public opinion, and who want to put the issue of the Euro on the agenda. The social question remains very present (as seen in the last judgments made by the European Court of Justice in the Laval-Vaxholm case). The debate in parliament will probably occur in early autumn. Sweden will assume the EU Presidency in the second semester of 2009 and will therefore participate in the coordina-

tion of the three presidencies (of France and the Czech Republic) succeeding one another starting in July 2008.

In **Finland**, the centre right government, with the support of the conservatives, the Social Democratic Party and the Greens, should not have great difficulties in getting the Treaty ratified by parliament. Only the Left Alliance spoke out for a public ballot (and so did the Finnish Communist Party). Nevertheless, this must be followed by the debate on CFSC (Common Foreign and Security Policy). Finland's neutrality is endangered by its special position within a European defence policy increasingly tied to NATO.

In **Poland**, the debate on ratification just recommenced after the conservative right's decision (Jaroslaw Kaczynski's Party of Law and Justice), now in the opposition, to exert pressure on the law permitting the President of the Republic to ratify the Treaty. The right is demanding that Poland not exit from the protocol granted it when the EU Treaty was negotiated and which excluded Poland from partial application of the Charter of Fundamental Rights. If no compromise is found in Parliament, where a 3/5 majority is required for ratification, a new political crisis could occur, which might even require Donald Tusk's government to hold a referendum. The parties of the radical left remain without great influence. The Polish Labour Party and the movements stemming from the former Union of Labour are against the Treaty on a non-sovereigntist basis.

In the **Czech Republic**, ratification of the Treaty must be submitted to a preliminary examination undertaken by the Constitutional Board. The centre right government and the social-democratic opposition are in favour of the Treaty. The Communist Party of Bohemia-Moravia is the only party speaking out for a public ballot and against the Treaty. In this country, as in other East-European countries, we

see the emergence of social mobilisations against government liberal policies.

In the other East-European countries – **Slovakia**, the Baltic Countries (**Estonia**, **Lithuania**, **Latvia**), parliamentary ratification should not be a problem, as there are no significant left political forces opposing the Treaty, with the exception of the Slovakian Communist Party.

In **Germany**, the constitution does not provide for ratification of treaties by referendum. The Bundestag initiated the debate on the ratification of the Treaty and the CDU-SPD coalition government hopes to complete it at the end of May. Die LINKE, relying on the public's wish to be consulted, submitted to the Bundestag a bill allowing modification of the Constitution. Die LINKE also initiated a petition campaign to organise mass support for a required public ballot and real debate on the Treaty. In addition, Die LINKE is speaking out against the new treaty, as does a part of the social movements, questioning in particular the Treaty's anti-social and militaristic features.

In **Italy**, with the anticipated general elections called for April 13 and 14, the right and centre right parties, as well as Walter Veltroni's Democratic Party, are favourable to the new treaty. The Italian Constitution does not allow a referendum. The Rainbow Left that incorporates Rifondazione Comunista, the Party of Italian Communists, the Greens and the Democratic Left is divided on this issue. The debate on the Treaty, and the European politics involved in it, is absent from the electoral campaign. The Treaty will be ratified by the new parliament.

In **Spain**, where a referendum on the former European Constitutional Treaty has been organised and won by the YES-supporters, the Lisbon Treaty will be ratified by parliament after the general elections won by the Socialist Party. The latter, along with the right, is favourable to

the new treaty and despite the opposition of the United Left, the Communist Party of Spain, and the United Left and Alternative of Catalonia, European issues were absent from the electoral debate.

In **Greece**, the right-wing Karamanlis government won the anticipated general elections on September 16, 2007. But its majority is much narrower now. The right called for early elections in order to implement unpopular reforms (in particular of social protection and public services) which are, in any case, provoking major mobilisations in the country. The result is a very unstable political situation. In this context ratification of the Treaty will be submitted to parliament probably before summer 2008. The right and the socialist opposition PASOK are favourable to the Treaty. Synaspismos and the Communist Party of Greece are against it and demand that Greek citizens be consulted. Nevertheless, they are not cooperating with each other. The future of the Balkans is one of the most debated topics.

In **Cyprus**, the debate on the treaty and its ratification will take the parliamentary route. The Constitution does not permit a referendum. An important presidential election took place on February 8, won by Demetris Christofias, chair of AKEL (Cyprus's Communist Party). AKEL, the most powerful political force in the country and the only one against the Treaty, is going to demand a broad debate in the country, so that people can be informed and discuss the issue before Parliament decides.

In **Austria**, Parliament will ratify, and probably do so before summer. The government, a coalition of Socialists and the right, is very favourable to the Treaty as are the Greens. Other minority forces, such as the Austrian Communist Party, which is working with a part of the social movement, are against the Treaty. They are calling for a public ballot and have initiated a petition for this purpose.

In **Belgium**, the situation is very complicated due to the country's political crisis. Normally, a simple majority in Parliament would be enough to ratify the Treaty, and the main political forces, the Christian-Democrats, the Liberals, the Socialists and the Greens are favourable to it. Nevertheless, the regional assemblies have to approve it as well, which in the context of nationalist tensions between the Flemings and the Walloons (above all in Flanders where the far-right is fanning the flame of partition) might complicate the debate. Personalities from the social movements, supported by the left and extreme left parties in the minority, such as the

Communist Party, have called for a popular consultation.

In **Luxembourg**, the centre-right government had opted for a referendum on ratification of the European Constitutional Treaty. This time, ratification will take place in Parliament. Among political forces, only "The Left" and the Luxembourg Communist Party are against the Treaty and are calling for a referendum.

José Cordon, March 15, 2008
Member of the French Communist Party's European Projects and Issues Committee

The European Welfare Models: Changes, Prospects and Strategies

This is the title of a Transform! workshop to be held in Stockholm on June 13-14. Its aim is to contribute to the analysis of the changes in European welfare states, both in terms of empirical reports and theoretical analysis, that may point to a progressive strategy beyond the welfare state. At the empirical level, we seek information on what occurred in the last 15-20 years, as far as basic features and characteristics of different welfare states are concerned. The focus, however, will be on the theoretical analysis of these processes, as well as the bases for a strategy aiming beyond the achievements of the universal welfare state.

An important cross-border factor contributing to the way in which welfare states have changed may be termed the "negative integration" of Europe. This is meant to indicate the pressure being put on the extant European social systems by neoliberal globalisation and market-led European integration. It is a negative integration resulting in the dissolving of na-

tion-based social systems, without being replaced by European welfare systems (for discussions, see Transform 1/2007).

What have been the social effects of these processes on equality, gender relations, public ownership and so on? Is it correct to say that we are moving toward one European social model? What are the basic features of such a model? Is it possible also to identify elements of a process of "positive integration" of Europe? What are the prospects for alternative linkages between national and European welfare policies? How can the struggle over the welfare state today best be incorporated into a strategy aimed at strengthening broad and progressive social and political alliances, even pointing beyond the universal welfare state? What basic elements of a new radical subjectivity – a new hegemonic force –, directed to transforming the capitalist mode of production and regulation, are possible to identify? These are crucial questions that the workshops' papers and discussions will address.

A point of departure for the discussions would be the categorisation of “welfare regimes” elaborated by Gösta Esping-Andersen (1990). In his famous categorisation, expounding Titmuss’s earlier work (1974), three different welfare regimes were identified; a general/universal, a selective/marginal, and a corporatist model. In his study of “The Three Worlds of Welfare Capitalism”, Esping-Andersen gives examples of the “continental” models by citing France, Italy and Germany (in a tradition going back to Bismarck), and of the marginal by citing the USA. The corporatist (also called the conservative) model, with traditional family values, is tied historically to the church. The state is strong in this welfare system, but normally does not intervene as long as the family can provide the care needed. In the marginal (also known as the “Anglo-Saxon”, “liberal”) model, social security is selective and low-income beneficiaries receive low-level treatment. The state intervenes in a limited way in the market mechanisms, and the model has (especially compared to the universal model) a low degree of redistribution among the population.

It is of great importance empirically and theoretically to analyse how these different models changed in the last decades. This is the premise of the Stockholm workshop.

The Nordic welfare models will be a specific focus. They are of special interest since they express the balance of class interests in a society with a strong social-democratic labour movement. They can be regarded as the most progressive social models resulting from social-democratic power. The Swedish welfare state, with the most egalitarian social structures in the Western world, as regards, for example, class and gender, was the most famous example of what Esping-Andersen called the Nordic or the social-democratic Universal Welfare Regime. Like other welfare models, it has changed in many ways in the last two decades, and it would seem important that the European left analyse and learn from this experience, in order

to elaborate strategies for a future welfare model and the struggle beyond it.

The Case of Swedish “Welfare Capitalism”

In Sweden the Social Democratic Party (SAP) led the government for more than four decades, from 1932 to 1976. This long period of a solid power base made it possible to implement a whole range of social reforms, to build what is often called the “people’s home”.¹ A fundamental part of this social-democratic welfare regime, according to Esping-Andersen and others, was a redistributive tax system which was able to finance a large public sector with universal welfare programmes covering the whole population. Swedish social democracy, supported and pushed by the Communist Party, implemented a sophisticated social insurance system which included more or less the whole population, in order to gain its support for the system and bridge gaps between different classes and segments. In this way, it was, in a Gramscian sense, a hegemonic formation, meaning that social democracy was the dominant actor in the political, ideological and cultural fields (but not in the economic sector).

The model guaranteed almost full-income compensation for child-care, unemployment and sickness. The social democrats built public hospitals and health care, elder care, schools, child-care, new houses, etc. In the late 1950s the labour movement in Sweden also succeeded in implementing a beneficiary pension system, after long and hard struggles against unified bourgeois forces (Olson 1990).

One of the cornerstones of this Swedish model was the social-democratic labour-market policy, based on active measures for full employment combined with a solidary wage policy. The basic feature of this policy was the holding back on the part of workers and unions in high-profit companies and branches of their wage de-

mands in solidarity with workers in low wage branches, who were, on the other hand, able to raise their demands and wages. (Clement & Mahon 1994) In this way the income gaps within the working class decreased and, with full employment, wage earners became a stronger and more united force in the hegemonic struggle with the employers.

In comparison with other countries in Western Europe exhibiting other forms of welfare capitalism, as Esping-Andersen puts it, this welfare model resulted in Sweden becoming the most just and egalitarian society. This applied to class, for example as regards income and living standards, and also in many ways to gender. The universal welfare services (e.g. public child care) and social insurances (e.g. maternity leave) made it possible for women to take part in working life and other public fields. The large public sector and the active labour-market policy meant a very high degree of employment among women as well as decreasing income gaps between men and women.

However, from the beginning of the 1990s the Swedish welfare model has been experiencing huge cutbacks. The public sector share of GNP has decreased from 2/3 to about 1/2 within the last 20 years. In monetary terms this means a loss of about 20 billion Euros per year in public expenditures, which is a great deal for a rather small economy. This has caused problems in the public health sector. The cutbacks have been combined with the market philosophy of “New Public Management” and privatisations, and today big stock companies are important actors on the health “market”. In the elder care sector for instance, the share of private actors has increased from 3 % to 13 % between 1993 and 2000 (Szebehely 2005). The share has been continuously growing ever since. Only 15-20 years ago private entrepreneurs were barred from the health care sector.

There have also been cutbacks in the social-security systems. Full-income compensation no longer exists; today the level is at most 80 % for

unemployment (if one is in the system), sickness and child care. One very important change is the new pension system, established in 1994 and then implemented by four bourgeois parties together with the social democrats. This means that the public pension system is now combined with a private sector with hundreds of pension funds controlled by private banks, insurance companies, etc., among which the employees are free, as they are told, to choose. This new system was implemented by the same, or actually a rather different, social democracy that fought so hard to implement the public pension system in the 1950s.

The fact is also that it was actually the social democrats who in the late 1980s first opened up to private alternatives in the public sector; a bourgeois government in 1991-94 could then go on and amplify an already initiated development. (Montin 1992) Since then this process has continued under social-democratic governments, and it has accelerated under liberal-conservative governments like the present one.

The Post-Fordist Regulation System

When it comes to the theoretical understanding of these processes of change in the Swedish welfare regime, and in other European ones, it makes sense to relate it to the theoretical framework of the transition to a post-Fordist mode of production, accumulation regime, and – especially relevant to the Stockholm workshop and perhaps of most interest – regulation system. How can this theoretical framework help us analyse the changes of the welfare systems? What are the basic relations between fundamental changes of the mode of production and accumulation regimes, and the changes of the regulation systems and welfare models?

The post-Fordist accumulation regime is a concept associated with the “Regulation School” (Aglietta 1979, Lipietz 1988, Boyer 1990). In his path-breaking study, Michel Agli-

etta turns against the equilibrium theory of neo-classical economics, which he finds divorced from reality. Instead of a harmonious, linear development of capitalism, Aglietta sees frequent crises and seeks to find the long-term sources of ruptures in the process of accumulation. This means a long-term perspective beyond, for instance, the scope of Keynes, and especially the concrete policies of Keynesianism aimed at mitigating conflicts and crises for a harmonious development of the mode of production. Aglietta identifies three different simultaneous patterns of capitalist development: paradigms of industrialisation, accumulation regimes and modes of regulation.

These aspects are of course intertwined but the workshop will focus on the third, the modes regulation, which include laws, institutions, culture, behaviours and expectations corresponding to the accumulation regime. The Fordist mode of regulation is characterised by a bureaucratic welfare state on a national basis, social legislation, reformist mass parties, corporatism, and the "Fordist compromise" between labour and capital, with the state as an important helping hand. The Swedish model was perhaps the most notable example of that compromise.

The Fordist compromise aimed at mitigating institutionalised conflicts, with the state in the role of a neutralising factor. It was a hegemonic structure of corporatist negotiations, social state and state intervention (Häusler and Hirsch, 1987). At the level of economic theory, Keynesianism functioned as the theory corresponding to this mode of regulation, and was used as an economic policy to mitigate and counteract the economic trends and crises of the mode of production. As the case of the Swedish social-democratic model showed, this helped the compromise to function and survive (while the unsolved latent conflict of property and capital concentration was left unsolved). The social-democratic model implied a "keynesianisation" of society (Buci/Glucksman & Therborn, 1981).

The 1970s were a time of changes: oil crises,

overproduction, lower profit rates, stagflation, unemployment, rationalisation and automatisa-tion through new technology, and at the same time a period giving rise to radical class struggles. The 1970s meant the crisis of Fordism and the breakdown of the Keynesian mode of regulation. An increasingly transnational mode of production, and a "transnational high-tech capitalism" (Haug, 2001) was emerging. The mode of capital accumulation burst out of the mode of social regulation in which it developed and worked (Häusler and Hirsch, 1987). A structural crisis of the accumulation regime means social and political conflicts and societal changes, a process of searching for a new accumulation regime and social structures.

With this goes a post-Fordist mode of regulation with new forms of organisation of industrial/financial capital on an international level, internationalisation of the concentration processes, globalisation of previous national labour-capital relations, dissolution of the national Fordist corporatism and at the same time a more selective and decentralised corporatism, and a liberalisation and deregulation of capital and capital flows.

These are processes of dissolution of the whole Fordist compromise and hegemonic structure, and it also means fundamental changes of the welfare states. The Swedish case is a clear example of these processes.

Towards a New Social Model?

The transition from a mode of production based on a national Fordist compromise to a post-Fordist mode of production driven by global financial capitalism is important in analysing the changes in European welfare models. And one question is whether this process contributes to the development of a new form of mode of regulation, a European welfare model. The Swedish example shows that the universal model has become weaker, and that elements from the mar-

ginal (and to some extent the corporatist) model are growing stronger. If that is an example of European integration of the welfare model, it is then, from a left perspective, a negative experience for Sweden, considering its class and gender effects. The process of post-Fordist modes of production, accumulation and regulation is an important factor underlying the transformation of the Swedish welfare model. Parts of European integration could also be explained in the same terms: the integration of the internal market and the integration of European policies are signs of new accumulation and regulation systems.

This kind of European integration has contributed to the dissolving of the Swedish universal welfare model. In order to join the EU in 1994, Sweden had to adopt to different kinds of EU regulations e.g. the Maastricht treaty. In order to meet membership requirements Sweden had to shrink its level of public expenditures. Together with other factors like internal political issues, this negative integration led to severe cut-backs in, and damage to, the Swedish social model. To put it in a provocative way: For many European countries EU integration was a kind of rescue after World War II, but for Swedish society it was more disastrous than the war. One has to be aware of this in understanding the Swedish population's negative attitude toward the EU.

The Swedish universal welfare model has been, and still is for many leftists, a progressive example. Should we then try to reconstruct that model in Sweden, and perhaps in other European nations? Is that possible? Should the struggle continue on a national or on European basis? When it comes to the defence of the Nordic universal model, I believe the struggle should be based on the labour and left movements in the Nordic countries. That is where the concrete transformation takes place, that is where the actors have the knowledge, that is where the labour movement has a strong tradition of forming a hegemonic force, and that is the place to fight back. I think that in the post-

Fordist mode of production there still exists a space for "relative autonomy" (Althusser 1971), for example in relation to the construction of welfare institutions. However, I am rather pessimistic as far as the level of that autonomy is concerned, and I do not believe that it is possible any longer, in a global post-Fordist mode of production, to construct a specific comprehensive regulation system like the Swedish welfare model, as different from the other European models was.

Should that lead us to try constructing a Fordist universal welfare model at the European level? (I believe some of the contributions in Transform! 1/2007 pointed in that direction.) Of course it is good and necessary to elaborate European left strategies, including welfare policy. But it is not possible to construct a regulation model based on a new Fordist class compromise when we no longer live in a Fordist mode of production – and the Nordic universal welfare model was based on exactly such a class compromise. The Swedish "historic compromise" was established in a 1938 agreement between the social-democratic trade union and the employers' federation. In this compromise employers got the right to lead and organise the work, while the unions got the right to organise and strike, etc. The very fundamental question of power and property conditions was omitted from the compromise; it was a forbidden and silent question, and it was implicitly understood that these conditions should not be questioned by the social-democratic labour movement. The compromise meant that Swedish society from the early 1930s to the late 1970s showed a remarkable increasing standard of living for the working class, while, at the same time, the fundamental power/ownership interests of big industry were never really threatened. One could say that political and social democracy were achieved, but not economic democracy.

This compromise, which was the foundation of the Swedish model, was only possible in a

specific historic period with specific economic, social and political conditions. When these conditions no longer existed, and the Fordist mode of production was being transformed, the whole compromise began to dissolve. Within the and the labour movement, the class compromise was questioned because it did not seem fair that the solidary wage policy should result in higher profits for the owners of capital. The social-democratic trade union posed the issue of economic democracy, and launched a concrete proposal (Meidner 1978) to transform the economy in the direction of democratic socialism (Sjöberg 2007). When the profit rates fell, capital owners, employers and liberal/conservative political protagonists began to question the compromise on their side, and the employers left the central agreements with the trade union. The Fordist class compromise was an "historic parenthesis" (Ekdahl & Johansson 1996).

A social formation with political and social democracy without economic democracy is a contradiction, which had prospects only during the specific conditions of a Fordist mode of production, accumulation regime, mode of regulation and class compromise. In the long run, social democracy is not possible without economic democracy. For a European left that considers itself socialist, it will be necessary once again to focus on the unsolved social conflict, the property issue. Therefore, the European left cannot aim merely at a universal welfare model but must also pose the issue of economic democracy. In a global post-Fordist mode of production and accumulation regime such a strategy cannot be based on the nation-state. This means that the European left has the task of both defending the welfare systems, and trying to build a new European hegemonic force aiming at a modern democratic socialism. That means moving beyond contemporary liberal hegemony as well as the social-democratic welfare discourse. Working out such system-transformative strategies is what the European left and the

GUE/NGL, among others, should do. Hopefully, the Stockholm workshop can provide these strategic discussions with useful analyses.

Stefan Sjöberg



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Note

- 1 In a famous speech in 1928, SAP chair and later Prime Minister, Per-Albin Hansson, declared that the aim of social democracy was to build a people's home, where no one was left out and where there no longer were divisions between classes and different parts of the population. By the beginning of the 1970s, the social democratic Secretary of Treasury, Gunnar Sträng, thought this had been achieved.

The Attack on the Welfare State in the Name of the Welfare State

Discussion of the welfare state and the European social model has intensified in the last years. This is of vital importance, not only for European workers and citizens, but also in terms of the role Europe is to play in the world.

After World War II, a social contract was established in Europe, founded on four basic values:

- the right to work in life-long jobs based on full employment,
- the eradication of poverty by granting a minimum income and public assistance to prevent social exclusion;
- protection against social risks;
- promotion of equality of opportunity supported by public investments in health care, education, transportation, culture, leisure, etc.

The destruction of this heritage presents new difficulties for all who fight for effective improvements in civil rights or social conditions. Any struggle to defend and to improve the social security systems in Europe is therefore a real contribution to building a new world social and

economic order, with more dignity, justice and humanity.

The public welfare system, universal and solidary, is under strong attack due to intense capitalist globalisation, transformations in labour conditions and in the international division of labour, global competition and the general social and labour deregulation. The pressure for the "Minimum State" and "Minimum Rights" is defining the future of the welfare model.

In Portugal, features of the most advanced capitalist opulence exist alongside the main characteristics of social and economic underdevelopment. Portugal can derive great social benefit from participation in a European Union that resists both the brutality of neoliberal politics and an economy that depends on international speculative financial transactions. This benefit can only exist if Europe compromises and builds into its future the best of its historic civil conquests.

It is generally understood that the Portuguese welfare system is still incipient compared to those of other European countries.

There are several indicators of this: the ratio between social protection expenditures and the GDP is much lower in Portugal than the European average; similarly, pensions and other social payments, as a proportion of GDP, are lower than in most European countries.

The welfare system in Portugal is of very recent origin (unemployment compensation only began in 1975) - it was built in the last 30 years (only after the Revolution of 1974). The low degree of this country's industrialisation led to few and only localised processes of urbanisation and proletarianisation before 1960.

Before 1974, labour organisations were subjected to extreme repression and political parties were outlawed; on the other side, capitalists were organised in corporate structures, in a way resembling dictatorial government, allowing a few families to take control of the Portuguese economy. In the two years after the Revolution, left-wing majorities gave union structures their social and political legitimacy, ensuring the representative rights of workers and launching the basis for a welfare state.

The Portuguese constitution recognised these labour and social achievements, and strategic sectors of the economy were nationalised (the privatisation of these - and other - companies was to start in the 1980s and is still continuing; this includes the health and education sectors, to the benefit of the old families who had controlled the economy before 1974).

The popular conquests achieved after the April Revolution were to be halted by a new balance between the political forces that emerged from the 1976 elections, benefitting two parties (the Socialist and the Social Democratic Parties), which would retain hegemony until today (despite their names, both parties have neoliberal orientations).

In the early 1980s, the Communist Party (PCP), with 41 deputies, and the Popular Democratic Union (UDP), with 1 deputy, were the anti-capitalist forces represented in the Parliament (with 250 deputies). At present, the PCP

has retained 14 deputies and the UDP has joined the Left Bloc (BE, Bloco de Esquerda), which has 8 deputies. Together, these two anti-capitalist forces comprise 10% of the Parliament, not enough to contain the large-scale liberal wave that is being promoted by the two major political parties in Portugal.

The current system reproduces a deeply inequitable social structure (social inequalities in Portugal are the most acute of any country in the EU) and imposes miserable conditions on the people: of the 2.7 million persons depending on social security benefits, 2 million live under the poverty limit (less than € 366 per month). Recent developments in the Portuguese social-security system, promoted by the Socialist Party in government, do not face this problem. On the contrary, some measures were introduced (like a new "sustainability factor" or the lowering of the "substitution tax") to decrease pensions and to increase the retirement age: people have to work more, for more years, to receive less.

Despite the measures enacted by the government, the social security budget shows that the sustainability of the system is not at stake, at least in the short-run, considering the positive results consistently achieved in the last years: € 784 M in 2005, € 706 M in 2006 and € 1148 M in 2007.

The non-contributive and unemployment benefits cannot ensure any sort of emancipation from the labour market: there is no "decommodification" of labour when these benefits only reach 50% of the population in question, with revenues under the poverty limit.

Portuguese industrialisation, based on low labour costs, created new problems within global competition: relocation of foreign companies, higher unemployment, job precariousness and growing informalisation of labour and economic relations. The new European orientation established by the "Lisbon Strategy" legitimises the acceleration of privatisation processes in the EU, stimulating the destruction of Portugal's weak welfare system.

This degradation of social protection has occurred simultaneously with the tendency to growing precariousness of labour relations (2.1 millions, in a total of 5.5 million active workers, have precarious work conditions) and a lack of collective labour contract negotiations, which worsens the social conditions of the Portuguese working class.

In Portugal, where it is easy "to hire and fire" (despite the government rhetoric), with weak social protection and institutional labour representation, union influence has been reduced with the ending of collective negotiations. The imposition of principles of "flexicurity" in the labour market will have dramatic consequences over the living and working conditions of Portuguese workers.

In the social concertation processes, the revision of labour legislation and social security reforms have been agreed between the government, the employers and one of the union structures (General Workers Union (UGT) close to the Socialist Party, the Social Democratic Party and the Popular Party) in general against the positions taken by the General Confederation of Workers (CGTP-IN) linked to anti-capitalist forces and greatly influenced by the Communist Party.

Eighteen to 20% of Portuguese workers are members of trade unions, concentrated mainly in the two major organisations CGTP-IN and UGT. New social movements are emerging now, which are struggling against unemployment, labour precariousness or restrictive and security-oriented immigration policies. Ensuring and reinforcing the sustainability of the social security budget is a basic question. Portuguese society suffered several structural transformations in the last decades, with demographic changes, young people taking more time to enter the labour market, and the early exit of many people from their jobs, as a result of runaway shops, the collapse of traditional industrial sectors or the restructuring of the Portuguese economy.

Portuguese society is changing and we are seeking a new approach to ensure social rights

and the sustainability of the welfare system. To face the current challenges, the welfare system should focus on citizenship rights and seek new financial sources. The current method of calculating contributions to the social system arose in a context of labour intensive industrial organisation. Now, with rapid technological evolution and growing globalisation of activities, the labour intensive industries are losing their importance due to the emergence of work processes based on capital and information. The latter sectors do not contribute as they should to finance the social security system.

In Parliament, Bloco de Esquerda has presented proposals to confront these changes in Portuguese society, with proposals for a concept of social protection based on citizenship and financed by funds from work and capital contributions. Some examples of these measures are:

- adaptation to the technological changes at the enterprise level, calculating the contributions to the system not according to salaries (which penalises the labour-intensive companies), but according to the value added by each company;
- the creation of a Solidarity Fund, with contributions from the large fortunes and capital transactions in the stock market.

These proposals are intended to ensure sustainable coverage for social risks and achieve decent levels of pension, while mobilising Portuguese society and respecting the essential rights of citizenship. The Portuguese welfare system is farther away from this goal than any other welfare system in Europe, and its reform implies not only popular mobilisation in defence of achieved social rights, but also the struggle to conquer new citizenship rights.

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Left Without Work

In April, Left Forum, a Finnish component of the Transform network, published a volume entitled *The Left Looking for Work* (in Finnish: *Vasemmisto etsii työtä*, Like Publishing Ltd.), authored by the research cooperative General Intellect.

The book addresses the changes in capitalist production, which cause change in the content and conditions of work. The book's main thrust is that the left should adjust its thinking to take account of these changes.

Collective working-class identity is disappearing. People do not identify themselves as belonging to the working class even if, in terms of their material conditions and position in the hierarchy, they in fact do. The world has become more individualistic, but the left has not been able to respond to this challenge. Instead, left demands are still formulated in terms of the old Fordist compromise model, the dismantling of which already began in the 1970s.

Indeed, the left defends workplaces more than the workers do. For example, by demanding public support for hiring people who are less able to employ themselves, the left is directly undermining the negotiation stance of other workers. By thus increasing the supply of labour, the price of labour will fall.

Instead, the left should seek options to *decrease* the supply of work. In this way, the negotiation stance of an individual worker would be improved. One method for achieving this could be an adequate and unconditional basic income.

The cultural identity of contemporary workers is not determined by their class relations. Working-class culture has disappeared. People can no longer locate their identity - and certainly not from the shop floor. However, this does not mean that all has vanished into mainstream commercialism. A new kind of subculture is forming in the movements where people come

together by free will. New movements could be the organisational and cultural forms of the new working class.

Migration is where the change in the conditions of production are most clearly visible. Migrants are the most vulnerable to new control mechanisms and power structures. The problem of immigrant labour is not free movement of people, but instead *restrictions* of free movement. These restrictions force migrants to work in the black market and hide from authorities instead of seeking help from them.

The left has almost exclusively focused on wage labour, although an adequate concept of work is much broader. Work includes everything that contributes to the overall production of wealth expressed in the most general terms. One could say that almost everything is work and work is done almost everywhere. Especially domestic work is also work. The traditional impulse of the left to encourage women to enter the sphere of wage labour should be reassessed since it tacitly implies that work done at home is not valuable. Moreover, the emphasis on wage labour ignores the fact that one of the original aims of the workers movement was the liberation from capitalist wage labour.

The Left Looking for Work is currently available only in Finnish, but some highlights of the book may appear in English in a later issue of this journal.

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"1848 – 150 Years Later"

Alfred Hrdlicka

Vienna, September 1, 1998

In his book, Peter Sichrovsky paints a drastic picture of the decades leading up to 1848, the Year of Revolutions. It was the Age of Metternich, whose conservative system in Austria, especially the system of censorship, became the model for all of Europe's rulers. Metternich detested the ideas of the 1789 French Revolution. My extensive cycle of etchings entitled *The Great French Revolution* was published by Edition Hilger a few years ago. It was accompanied by secondary products in the form of oil paintings, hand drawings as well as works in stone and bronze. Even as a child the French Revolution has meant something to me (without my being able to understand all its complexity at the time). I was particularly impressed by the physical appearance of the protagonists of this revolution. My cycle was intended more as a visualisation than an act of partisanship. The etchings dealing with the 1848 Revolution could not match the dramatic nature of those depicting the French Revolution. My preoccupation with this theme was much more of a learning process, for the idea of taking on 1848 originated not with me but was suggested to me by Ernst Amering.

I was not particularly happy to learn in the course of my reading that, especially in Vienna, it was above all the German Nationalists who rebelled against the Metternich system. Paradoxically enough, their spokesman, a physician called Adolf Fischhof, was of Jewish origin. Thus I found it quite fitting that Peter Sichrovsky, himself a Jew and as far as I know a member of the FPÖ, which he represents in the Council of Europe at Strasbourg, should write about these events. Even if all this sounds a bit contradictory, there is something authentic about it. Another



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er phase in my learning process was a visit to an exhibition called *The Fatal Revolution* in Vienna's Jewish Museum. However one may define dialectical thinking, one cannot want constantly to represent events with passionate conviction. And anyone looking at my cycle on the French Revolution will find some things that were also a part of this exhibition: the denunciation of the Revolution! It is the salt in the soup. For me, denunciation is a delight, and an opportunity for contradiction, seldom for denial. For misunderstanding and art go together like ham and eggs. A misunderstanding of a quite different kind and one burdened with a perverse tradition occurred when the soldiers of Prince Windischgrätz mowed down the insurgents in Vienna, for in reality as the henchmen of their oppressors they are destroying the representatives of their own interests. And when I observe the media's maudlin treatment of the

death of the Czar and his family in recent weeks, I wonder if these allegedly so independent reporters and editors can be in their right minds. For the Russian Revolution of 1917 did not come out of nowhere. It was an outburst of hatred directed at a complete system of oppression that did not even bother to claim sympathy with the plight of the masses. And now the people are supposed to mourn the fate of their exploiters? Shed crocodile tears for them eighty years after their demise? The bankrupt Boris Yeltsin performed this feat with enviable histrionic skill. And those in Austria who bewail the passing of the monarchy evidently do not know what the dear old monarchy did to its subjects. One can learn a lot on this from Peter Sichrovsky. My etchings on this subject are perhaps, as I already mentioned, not dramatic enough, but they do try to create an atmosphere. If I, for example, devote three pictures to General Radetzky, the destroyer of the Italian Republic, my intention is to point out that the workers in the 1920s possessed a better political instinct than the guests at Vienna's internationally broadcast New Year Concert, when the latter clap enthusiastically in rhythm to the very first notes of the Radetzky March as befits true republicans. In the Red Vienna of the 1920s the Radetzky March was greeted with catcalls.

Whatever else may have happened in 1848, it was the year the Communist Manifesto was published, and in that year Karl Marx is said to have briefly been in Vienna. It is also supposed to be the first year in which a May Day demonstration was held. The 1848 events also made possible the first performance of Johann Nepomuk Nestroy's political farce *Freiheit in Krähwinkel* (Freedom in Krähwinkel). When one thinks of the historical events that took place in Vienna that year, it seems incredible that they all could have occurred in such a short space of time. There was also a light-hearted side to the events, as things could no doubt also be enjoyable on the barricades. That is why I devote understandable attention to Vienna's Amazons,

also known and denounced as brides of the barricades. Whether they were really deserving of denunciation or not is a matter of interpretation, but we should not begrudge them this tribute.

In conclusion I would like to say that, as in the case of my cycle on the French Revolution, a number of secondary products have appeared in connection with 1848, and no doubt there will be more to come, as my learning process is not yet complete.

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