The Radical Left in Europe

The Radical Left
in Europe –
Rediscovering Hope

2019

transform!
europe

Edited by
**Walter Baier, Eric Canepa
and Haris Golemis**

MERLIN PRESS

Contents

Preface

This volume, the fifth in the series of yearbooks published by transform! europe, is appearing in the year of the European Parliament elections. Few people in Europe have heard of the *Manifesto of Ventotene*, and most who were aware of the summit that Hollande, Merkel, and Renzi held on the island of Ventotene in the summer of 2016 in honour of the *Manifesto* do not know that it was written by anti-fascists imprisoned on the island, notably by Altiero Spinelli, a member of the Italian Communist Party. And fewer still realise that Spinelli and his Federalists protested at the 1957 founding event of the European Economic Community, calling it a 'monster' having nothing to do with their ideas. Gabi Zimmer, chair of the GUE/NGL group of the European Parliament, introduces the project calling for the left in Europe to critically reappropriate the *Manifesto*, and Luciana Castellina argues that a vision of European unity compatible with Spinelli's original idea is still worth fighting for. At the same time, she proposes a reconfiguration of the notion of European citizenship as a 'multiple citizenship' adequate to the realities of migration, much in the spirit of Otto Bauer's 'personality principle'.

Unfortunately, at the time of this volume's release it is nearly certain that the extreme, nationalist, and racist right will substantially increase its presence in the new European Parliament, mainly at the expense of social democratic parties, in line with what has already happened in a number of EU Member States. Gavin Rae, in his article on political developments in Poland and Hungary, two countries governed by coalitions of the extreme and populist right, concludes that the only conceivable barrier to the forces of darkness in Central and Eastern European countries is the radical left, something which can be said of Europe as a whole. However, the necessary but insufficient condition for the efficacy of the transformative left is its self-reinvention, for which it needs to look back to its past and recent history, reestablishing the hegemony of class discourse, and improving its theoretical and ideological tools. The *transform!2019* yearbook offers contributions to this process.

Both Frigga Haug and Eva Brenner consider the kind of poetic catharsis needed to pierce through the present reality, to see it and situate oneself in it in order to emerge from passive common-sense acceptance of that reality and its illusory assumptions – in order to become active subjects of history, of change and self-change.

Haug argues that for women to become a transformative force – that is, agents changing the social totality – they must consciously master the contradiction of entering the realm of wage labour, leaving behind precisely the realm 'outside' it that gave them the moral status of being beyond and above the competitive aggression of capitalist society, which is what bestowed on them the quality of being a transformative force in the first place. This will require new mixes of apparently irreconcilable emotions, selflessness and deep desire for emancipation, aggression and softness, a contradiction addressed by Brecht.

Whether or not in traditional female roles, women produce and reproduce their lives, the society, and the world, and thus their own oppression, an insight which is incompatible with the 'victim–perpetrator' thesis.

In a similar aim, in this case with a view to activate theatre audiences, the Viennese theatre director and theorist, Eva Brenner, chronicles the process of reviving and dramatising *Thus Died a Party*, Jura Soyfer's[1] novel fragment about the collapse of the Austrian Social Democratic Party. Brenner and her experimental-political theatre group Fleischerei have been developing this work since 2006, bringing it to a great number of sites, above all district town halls, involving large numbers of local residents, with the notable participation of Vienna's immigrant population, in a context of appropriating twentieth-century cultural and political traditions – especially the achievements of Red Vienna and the culture of early political avant-garde artists who were largely ostracised by postmodernism. Through the techniques of 'transformance', the performances aim, in a way similar to Brecht's alienation effect, especially in his teaching plays, to draw the audience out of passivity and make them active, thinking subjects of history.

The Hungarian historian Tamás Krausz develops Lukács's concept of a third way beyond Stalinism and capitalist restoration, working with Lukács's and Mészáros's theory of the possibility of development alternative to the status quo – of a *tertium datur*. He explores the reasons for the rise of Stalinism and tracks the history of proposals in the ex-socialist countries of Eastern Europe to socialise state property – that is, to pose the question of real ownership – and reconstitute the communist movement's original unity of democracy and the economy, thus reconnecting radical democratic demands with the working class. In so doing he sketches the attempts at reviving social

self-organisation in Hungary and Czechoslovakia as well as the development of a Marxist theory of social formations alternative to mechanistic Stalinist theory in various centres within the eastern bloc countries.

On the basis of the historic discussions by Luxemburg, Lenin, Bauer, and Renner of nation-states, nationalism, autonomy, and federations Walter Baier provides a framework for understanding false and unnecessary contradictions between the restoration (or construction) of democracy on the national level and the European level today. Analogously to Lukács's *tertium datur*, Austro-Marxism's development of the principle of 'national-cultural autonomy' and the 'personality principle' offers an alternative to the polarity of ethnic secession, on the one hand, and denial of the ongoing importance of nationalities and nation-states, on the other.

Klaus Busch chronicles the frustration of various attempts, from Barroso to Macron, to establish a substantial EU budget, pointing out the current dim prospects of this due to widespread suspicion of the EU among Europe's populations and the influence right-wing populism now has over many European governments. On the other hand, even if there were no epidemic of right-wing populism, it is unrealistic, as Baier indicates, to expect Europe's populations to favour expanding the EU's powers before it is transformed from being a largely technocratic apparatus with very limited democracy into a functioning democracy.

Clearly, social transformation will require modernised, inclusive forms of class struggle and trade-unionism. This need – along with recent examples in which such new approaches have been successfully implemented – is laid out by Bernd Riexinger and Jane McAlevey.

Bernd Riexinger, co-chair of Germany's Die LINKE party, presents his concept of 'connective class politics' – based on an inclusive class-wide approach opposed to a guild conception. The concept indicates a politics of worksite-wide cross-group solidarity in which core staff and subcontracted workers call for everyone to be on permanent staff, in which industrial workers support the struggles of educational workers or hospital employees, workers prevent the deportation of their work colleagues or neighbours who are immigrants and refugees, and in which organisations of the unemployed work with trade unions. Class, Riexinger insists, matters. Workers need to understand that the owning class wields enormous class power over the state, the media, etc. Knowing whose power they really have to deal with helps workers see that their opponents are not immigrants. Moreover, this kind of solidarity has already produced successes. It is a solidarity that also applies across national borders – the opponent is the firm paying low wages, not the co-worker from another country. Riexinger proposes as a

key demand that can galvanise this kind of politics the struggle for a new Standard Employment Model, one that overcomes the gender pay gap and discrimination against immigrants, that more highly values work in the care professions – and that utilises the greatly increased productivity of labour for a better life. Key concrete demands would be a short fulltime of 30 hours a week, with no blurring of worktime – and the extension of democracy into the factory and office. The understanding is that this can only be achieved by a combination of workplace and non-workplace struggles, that is, by political pressure, and it requires the legalisation of political strikes.

Jane McAlevey points out that the Occupy and Indignados protests or anti-austerity protests in the US and across Europe in 2011 did not succeed in breaking austerity. But something positive has been learned from past efforts, as the participants in this volume's roundtable on the legacy of the Social Forum movements attest. McAlevey makes the case that 'super majority strikes' – exactly in Riexinger's sense of connective class politics – that is, strikes that organise all workers in a workplace, for instance teachers, janitors, cafeteria workers, bus drivers in schools, along with the residential communities that workplace serves – rebuild working-class power in a way that is demonstrably more sustainable than the results of even very large protests . This does not mean that major popular protest waves cannot wrest concessions, as recently witnessed by the French *gilets jaunes*. Still, it can be argued, union organisation tied to worksites including permanent staff can preserve accumulated militancy for longer periods. The flagship example of a galvanising super-majority strike, even from a European perspective, is the West Virginia educational workers' strike, and for this reason we have decided to publish McAlevey's extensive and dramatic narrative of this process of self-learning. In recent years there has been an accumulation of organising successes in sectors where primarily women do work in areas that involve 'care', for instance education and nursing, for these sectors have a high potential for connecting to communities outside the workplace.

In this context, Rossana Rossanda's reflections on Italy's Hot Autumn of 1969 – and the accompanying document of a discussion that year among Fiat workers – provide a window onto what can be seen as the most spectacular attempt in a core capitalist country after the Second World War to politicise workers and transcend the limited corporatist character of much of the labour movement. From the vantage point of the West Virginia education workers' strike, the innovations in Turin in 1969 – among them the breaking down of the barriers between blue- and white-collar workers as well as the neighbourhood councils, with their housing and healthcare activism – have taken on even more relevance for today's labour movement.

The organising of precarious workers in the higher-education sector is a special problem. While they are wage workers, they are also compelled to meritocratically and competitively advance their careers. Peter Ullrich deals with the problem of the academic precariat in Germany, the subjective and objective barriers to organising but also the attempts made between nationwide unions and precarious teaching staff to connect to each other. As consciousness spreads of the plight of teaching staff in institutions of higher learning the same connections are being made across Europe and the US.

Given the level of labour and social mobilisations, a party connected to them can, in certain circumstances and under certain conditions, also advance these struggles when participating in government. How to participate, and when and how not to, is considered by Adriano Campos and Alda Sousa, as they draw lessons from the experience of Bloco de Esquerda in Portugal, which has helped the movements to grow rather than muffling them. Importantly, the mobilisation of Portuguese teachers has been a part of this success. Bloco's experience shows that a realistic assessment of the balance of forces can make it possible to push through some government policies benefitting working people.

Social transformation can today no longer be conceived outside the context of the enormous movement, wide variety of projects, considerable body of theory, and, most dramatically at the local level (the 'new municipalism'), impressive impact of the new appreciation of the commons, which is an ongoing interest of our yearbook.

Alexandros Kioupkiolis and Theodora Kotsaka propose that the commons be the core of a radical left strategy, but beyond this their analyses and proposals differ. Kioupkiolis believes that a commons politics, especially at municipal level, based on bottom up participation, offers a way to overcome what he sees as 'the political frailty, the vertical hierarchies, the personalism, and the impoverished imagination of leftist populist parties in Europe'. He stresses participatory democracy and collective governance as a collective common and proposes various 'institutional devices such as lot, rotation, limited tenure, increased accountability, and the casual alternation of participants in collective assemblies' in order to eliminate 'the divide between rulers and ruled, experts and the lay people'. Viewing cities as potential 'incubators of anti-hegemonic change', he refers to the promising examples of several initiatives mainly in Spanish municipalities, chiefly in Barcelona.

Kotsaka also looks to the municipal level in her hopes for Western societies' transition towards the commons, citing citizens' participation experiences in various European cities (Ghent, Bologna, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Naples, Lille, Madrid, and Bristol) and in Montreal, Canada. However, she stresses

the importance of the state as a 'regulator in productive transformation towards commons' and promotes the idea of 'Public Commons Partnerships' instead of the overused Public Private Partnerships, which have been applied even to public goods like water or health, causing unconscionable damage to societies. To enforce commons-based policies she advocates achieving hegemony in part through political alliances like that of the Progressive Caucus in the European Parliament, which consists of MEPs from left, green, and social democratic parties.

2018 and 2019 have marked the anniversaries of very significant historical events – 1968 and 1969 throughout the world, the 1999 'Battle of Seattle' symbolically signalling the beginning of the 'anti-globalisation' movement, and two events of great importance for the Greek left, the origins of the Greek Communist Party in 1918 and its internal split in 1968. Krausz, Castellina, and Jiří Málek address the ambivalent heritage of 1968 and counter the many myths that have grown around it. In Krausz's view, the large Italian and French communist parties could not react to the events of 1968 because their theory was disconnected from practice and they had no real alternative for a non-hierarchical anti-capitalist economic programme beyond neo-Keynesianism; similarly, in the East, neither the new left nor the old communist parties had an economic programme that could have provided a real alternative to capitalism. In his view, 1968 collapsed in the West because the students' demands were not conceptually connected to an alternative *economic* system.

As Castellina points out, neoliberalism could absorb many of the students' cultural demands. Nevertheless, contrary to the current mainstream conception of the student rebellion, its demands were understood by its protagonists, especially in France and Italy, but also in Germany and the US, as expansions of the critique of capitalism. The unprecedented, though very partial, prosperity created by the post-war boom and social contract, with much greater possibilities for higher education, produced a large stratum of proletarianised intellectuals, who contemplated an unalienated, fulfilled life, that is, the fundamental aspects of human emancipation such as Marx and Marcuse imagined, which material development made possible but which was still blocked by capitalist social relations. But, Castellina explains, it was difficult for the student rebels in the West to feel much enthusiasm for their counterparts in Prague, partly because they were under the spell of the Chinese criticism of the Soviet bloc, which they saw as pacifying Third-World anti-neocolonial rebellions, and in part because they suspected that economic liberalism was behind the Eastern European rebellions.

In his contribution, Jiří Málek contends that the Prague Spring,

an alternative non-capitalist project that ended with the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact troops in August 1968, was part of a process underway in his country already by the early 1960s. Although in fact some of the reform ideas developed by Eastern European economists at this time did ultimately go in the direction of increased marketisation, 'anti-communist or markedly anti-socialist concepts were marginal and lacked any major resonance in society'; what the people wanted was 'socialism with a human face'. As in Western Europe, in Czechoslovakia the unprecedented prosperity and availability of higher education raised the horizon of demands to include a vision of happiness similar to that being expressed in the West; the demand was essentially liberation from Brezhnevite state socialism and a revival of socialism in the way Lukács intended.

1968 was also the year of the split in the Greek Communist Party (KKE). In his article on the history of the party, the centenary of whose founding also occurs in 2018, Tasos Trikkas finds similarities between the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 and the stance of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) during the split in the Greek communist movement in February of the same year. The CPSU stood against one side of the split: the renewal communists who founded the KKE-Interior, a short lived Eurocommunist party, which, by way of various political formations deriving from it, is considered one of Syriza's predecessors. The position the CPSU took against a communist party having 'socialism with democracy and freedom' as its vision – one of the many 'friendly interventions' of the CPSU and its allies in the internal affairs of the KKE – was made within the context of Brezhnev's policy of 'limited sovereignty' that led to the Prague invasion.

In a roundtable moderated by Haris Golems, veterans of the World and European Social Forums – Yiannis Almpanis, Mátyás Benyik, Raffaella Bolini, Judith Dellheim, and Chistophe Ventura – agreed that the anti-globalisation movement launched in 1999 with the 'Battle of Seattle' was one of the most important turns in the radical social left's 21st-century history. Yannis Almpanis in part bears out McAlevey's point about protest movements, in that 'everything we fought against has been imposed even more aggressively because of the crisis'; it 'was born as a cry' but 'perished without a word' because it could not convey a political perspective. As a result people are now facing a choice between globalised financial power and nationalist populism. However, all participants in the roundtable agree that the process provided an invaluable experience in learning to cooperate and strike a compromise between those who thought of the Forums as merely an 'open space' and those who saw them as decision-making bodies

that could also plan action, despite differences; as a result, lasting political ties were created, which in some cases, notably in Greece and Germany, led to the founding of radical left parties with real weight in national politics. Moreover, as Christophe Ventura emphasises, the experience played a crucial role in refreshing the critique of neoliberalism, articulating social and environmental issues with democracy, as well as leading to Occupy, the Arab Spring, Podemos, etc., although the WSF and the ESF did not become political subjects that could challenge capitalism globally and in Europe. Connecting past anti-globalisation experience with the present, Ventura believes that what is needed today is 'a mass democratic movement at the national level', at the same time trying to 'build international connections and permanent spaces and tools, [since] nothing progressive can happen in Europe without a rupture in one or more countries.'

From its very beginnings, capitalist society has always presented emancipatory movements of labour with the dilemma of a two-tiered working class divided between a core and a relatively precarious under-stratum. In colonial settler states the line of division could be articulated along ethnic lines, which also is generally the case in contemporary Europe and North America, where one of the lines has run between a comparatively 'indigenous' group and more recent arrivals, that is, 'immigrants'. At the core of the left's identity is domestic and internationalist solidarity among the oppressed and the goal of unity of action. In the era of neoliberal globalisation, the hyper-marketisation of all areas of life, the whittling away of the welfare state, the dismantling of protections for labour, the 'empire of chaos' to which the Third World has been subjected, and the resulting mass migratory waves – all this has occurred contemporaneously with the transformation of the mass social democratic parties of Europe's labour movements to become vehicles of the neoliberal transformation. Thus an increasingly insecure and fearful European working class has been without the benefit of mass internationalist parties of labour. The vacuum has, in part, been filled by the radical, chauvinist right. The problem has in addition been complicated in Europe because of the 'post-democratic' 'technical' financial governance of the EU, which enforces neoliberal policy under the banner of international values opposed to nationalism, whose effects produce increasing inequality that feeds nationalist impulses. The radical left has reacted to this in a variety of ways, certainly in the overwhelming majority of cases with strong solidarity for the immigrants, though with varying degrees of strategic acumen and connection to a social base. In extreme cases, this results in a moralistic position without strategic mediation and without connection to a base beyond a left milieu; the other extreme is a narrow orientation to

one's own national welfare state. But these extremes are minoritarian, and the great majority of the radical left does not fall into them. In addition, the impact of immigration also has to be considered in terms of the specifics of Eastern and Western Europe; but however that may be, these specifics cannot be an excuse for the left not to fight the right, adopting its discourse and politics against immigrants and refugees.

In our series of country reports Ľuboš Blaha, a leading figure in Slovakia's SMER party, criticises Western 'neoliberal progressives' for their 'globalism' and focus on post-material issues, which he believes can only alienate the still existing left electorate in his country. Gavin Rae, for his part, writing from Poland and analysing the right-wing developments in Poland and Hungary, counters the standard liberal argument that a putatively normative liberal democracy there is being threatened by authoritarianism from the left and right; the cause cannot be the decline of a liberal centre that hardly ever existed but is rather the decline of the left. Rather than seeing an immanent nationalism and anti-immigrant racism in these countries' working populations – as a sensibility that might be thought to require the muting of anti-racist internationalism in trying to reach them – Rae demonstrates that the policies of the right-wing governments have created and fomented a great deal of the current chauvinism and that only a revitalised internationalist left can challenge it.

Hans-Jürgen Urban, Executive Member of the Steering Committee of the German metal-workers' union, IG Metall, attempts to distil the essence of the debate inside Die LINKE and within Europe's radical 'mosaic left' and social movements, between proponents of 'open borders' for immigrants and those whose primary concern is the protection of the indigenous European working classes and their welfare states. In searching for common ground between the two positions, he sketches what an inclusive and internationalist kind of class politics might be, much in the spirit of Bernd Riexinger's connective class politics.

Social Democracy in Europe and the world has paid a high price for its adherence to neoliberalism. It is an irony of history that precisely the leading Anglo-Saxon countries, which were long considered the most backward in terms of large system-critical parties of the working classes, have recently presented the most hopeful developments on the horizon. With the return of the social question in the US and Bernie Sanders's immense popularity as an open socialist, there is a progressive and democratic socialist left with electoral strength within the Democratic Party that is exerting serious pressure on the leadership. And in Britain, Europe's largest party, the Labour Party, is now led by Jeremy Corbyn who comes from the Bennite Labour

Left and is supported by a stunningly rejuvenated and radical base. It has therefore become a social democratic party that has sharply distanced itself from neoliberalism. This has created, for the first time, real possibilities for the continent's radical-left parliamentary and extra-parliamentary forces to talk with a large radical-left parliamentary partner organisation in Britain, which now has a new interest in working out alternatives to the current neoliberal makeup of Europe together with other left forces on the continent, a development strongly supported by transform!europe. Jon Trickett, Labour MP from West Yorkshire, is closely involved in this new networking. He speaks with Stelios Foteinopoulos of the Labour Party's previous policies that led to major losses of its working-class electoral base and discusses current thinking in the party about how to activate its mass base and incorporate it in decision-making processes, how to 'turn it outwards' to build links to the communities, and how to operate a major structural, cultural change in the party, such that it can defend itself from the tremendous counterattack the elites are sure to mount against Labour in the event of its electoral victory. Its programme and its benefits to the working population must be discussed and understood by millions of people if they are to understand and vote for these radical transformative changes and rally to the party when it is attacked.

Heinz Bierbaum provides an overview of the state of Europe's radical left, particularly with a view to this year's European Parliament elections, in which it will largely present itself in the form of three, most probably competing, Europe-wide electoral alliances. Although there are vast areas of programmatic agreement between the three main Europe-wide electoral contestants of the radical left, the Party of the European Left (EL), European Spring, and Maintenant le Peuple, there is unfortunately friction between them. Moreover, trade unions are not active at the European level, and the European Trade Union Confederation has next to no organisational impact. Still, the sum of the radical left's parts is not unimpressive, and the electorate in general has by no means penalised it until now in the way it has Europe's social democrats, with the exception of course of Britain's Labour Party.

Another new source of hope in Europe is the Christian-Marxist dialogue proposed by Pope Francis to Walter Baier, the coordinator of transform!europe, and Alexis Tsipras five years ago at a meeting in the Vatican, and intended to bring together all who would resist capitalism's dehumanising processes and become politicised subjects of history. This has led to the ongoing DIALOP project, whose summer university held its first session at Hermoupolis, the capital of the Greek island of Syros. The common ground arrived at has been formulated in the Manifesto of Hermoupolis, which we are publishing here along with contributions by

Michael Löwy, who discusses the origins of and rationale of the project, and Nikos Xydakis, who points to the parallels between Marxist and Christian orientations towards a better world and between left dissidents and historic Christian heretics.

When all is said and done, we can, despite all problems and setbacks, only concur – looking at the increasing social misery caused by the present social order and the existing resistance mounted under the most adverse conditions – with Czech Marxist philosopher Josef Heller's words cited by Jiří Málek, that 'even if it is temporarily in abeyance, the project of socialism and communism is neither criminal nor definitively finished; it still has huge potential for development'.

Finally, Joachim Bischoff, in his ongoing annual economic surveys for our yearbook, analyses the economic slowdown and return of the economic and financial crisis.

The transform! europe network was established in 2001 during the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre by a small group of intellectuals from six different European countries, representing left research institutions or journals, who wanted to coordinate their research and educational work. Today transform! consists of 34 member organisations and observers from 22 countries.

The network is coordinated by a board of nine members, and its office is located in Vienna. transform! maintains a multilingual website and publishes a continuously growing number of reports, analyses, and discussion papers on issues related to the process of European integration.

We would like to thank all those who have collaborated in producing this volume: our authors, the members of our editorial board, our translators, our coordinators for the various language editions, Luciana Castellina and Eva Himmelstoss for their extensive facilitation in several aspects of this issue, and finally our publishers, especially The Merlin Press for the English edition.

Walter Baier, Eric Canepa, and Haris Golemis

NOTE

1   Soyfer, the most notable literary representative of Red Vienna, remains largely unknown outside Austria but has in the last twenty years become firmly established as the leading literary figure of the period. He was born in 1912 in Kharkov, Russian Empire, and died in 1939 in Buchenwald concentration camp. His remains were sent to the United States where he is buried at the Hebrew Free Burial Association's Mount Richmond Cemetery, New York. His Dachau Song, with music by Herbert Zipper, is internationally famous.

Becoming Subjects of History –
Art, Theory, and Politics

Contradictions in Marxist Feminism[1]

Frigga Haug

My title does not indicate an intention to find errors in Marxist Feminism but rather to understand contradictions as making change possible. The approach is a dialectical one that does not involve some high-flown mesmerisation but which, with Marx, indicates a method that 'in its comprehension and affirmative recognition of the existing state of things, at the same time also, the recognition of the negation of that state, of its inevitable breaking up', 'regards every historically developed social form as in fluid movement, and therefore takes into account its transient nature'.[2] So, in what follows I will try to show and understand how the individual elements contradict each other in the real movement within society. To work this out is essential for us as feminists in any attempt to develop our theory and politics.

Our theses: Marxist feminism as a transformative power

I want to recall the *12 Theses* proposed at the first two large International Marxist-Feminist conferences (in 2015 and 2016),[3] theses which we revised during the discussion and which we still continue to revise, using them as a standard against which we measure our projects aimed at broadening the consensus; we want to critically continue writing them as a joint manifesto being constantly developed and elaborated. In the beginning, we stated that to connect Marxism with feminism would change, enrich, and vitalise both. This is the orientation of the present article; put differently, I am discussing what gives us hope that Marxist feminists can represent a transformative force.

It is to these postulates that I refer in the following roughly outlined theses:

1. Marxism and Feminism are two sides of a coin, but the coin itself requires transformation. Feminist Marxism adheres to Marx's legacy, and thus to the significance of the analysis of work in the form of wage labour and as the driving force of the labour movement. However,

in its attempt to also put the remaining female activities at the centre of the analysis, Marxist Feminism goes beyond the paralysing attempts to conceive domestic and non-domestic activities either as completely one and the same thing or, vice versa, as completely separate (as in the discussion on dual economy and domestic labour), and poses the fundamental challenge of occupying and further developing the concept of the relations of production for feminist questions.

2. Here (as with Marx and Engels) two forms of production are assumed, those of life and those of the means of life. By analysing the two together it is possible to examine specific practices and how they interact. This opens up an enormous field of research, in which the different historically and culturally specific modes of domination – as well as the possibilities for change – must be investigated.

3. It is clear that gender relations are relations of production, not something else added to them. All practices, norms, values, authorities, institutions, language, culture, etc. are coded in gender relations. This assumption makes Feminist Marxist research as fruitful as it is necessary.

Women as an illusionary commons

On what grounds do we argue that we as Marxist Feminists, or that the claims we make, have nothing to do with the essentialist assumption that women are the 'better beings', which is what the enemies of feminism accuse of us?

The practices attributed to women worldwide and on which we pin our hopes are those resulting from our concrete care for life. This is not only true biologically for the nine months it takes for a new human being to grow inside a woman's body, nor is it merely true for the phase of breastfeeding, the nutrition provided at the beginning of life. It is also true for the care of those growing up, of those who are ill or handicapped, and of the elderly – of all those who without support would not be able to survive in the usual everyday struggle of existence. We call these the *caring practices* in which women are active as an 'illusionary commons'. These are doubtless activities that will outlast different social formations and will also remain in the perspectives of a transformed non–capitalist society. They are glorified in norms and values and ascribed to the female being as motherliness, helpfulness, selflessness, which usually are not sold at the market, thus as behaviour that also exists even if unpaid; but if these practices have entered the realm of wage labour, like the work of nurses, kindergarten teachers, geriatric nurses, etc., they are badly paid with a low exchange value, precisely because of their similarity to everyday female life, which makes them appear 'natural'.

Currently, they are at the centre of political struggles in Germany where we have a crisis of the nursing professions. As far as this behaviour, as unpaid work, fills an entire life, it amounts to self-sacrifice and the renunciation of personal development. The reward consists in social esteem, which does not inquire into the costs it has for the individuals. But this moral recognition is at the same time a denial of the equality that underpins wage labour. For the individual women in different societies this relation manifests itself in myriad forms of marginalisation, non-recognition as human beings, and repression, even to the point of rape and murder. In reality, our hope to use these practices of women to take steps towards an alternative society therefore stands on tenuous ground.

First contradiction

One fundamental contradiction that confronts us is expressed in the fact that to become a transformative force one would first have to do away with the female virtues and practices; like men, we would have to send ourselves into the competitive or even revolutionary struggle. Women would thus have to adopt the modes of behaviour that are common in capitalism, the transgression of or disrespect for which was the reason why we could be counted on to act as a transformative power in the first place. This contradiction has been repeatedly dealt with in literature by Brecht (*The Seven Deadly Sins, The Good Person of Szechuan*) and also by Heiner Müller (*Zement* 1972).

In his play *Zement,* Müller depicts in stark woodcut-like lines a revolutionist who comes home as a husband who expects his wife waiting for him as his sexual possession, and in charge of caring for the child and the beauty of their home, but no longer finds her this way when coming home now. The woman herself has become an active revolutionist and sent the child into a home because she no longer had time for it. She has to care for the many hungry children in need in all homes and not just for her own child, and she organises the women to do this. The man insists on taking his own child out of the home, 'so that it does not die' like the others, to repossess his own home, wife, and child, while she withdraws: 'I was stupid. Our home was my prison.' And finally she achieves freedom. 'I did not shed a single tear for this detritus. My home is the executive committee, my work. There, in the canteen, is where I eat my meal.' The property relations have been radically changed and likewise their glorified forms.

Traditional feelings

We are a bit perplexed in the face of our feelings, which seek out consent, before the ruins of a long tradition of labour struggles. The songs still ring

in our ears, *Brothers to the sun, to freedom…*, *There stands a man like an oak …*, *Awake, you working man…*, *This is how we stand, one brother for the other, full of earnest strength…*, *Who mines the gold? It's the working men, the proletariat*, etc. Also in pictures and symbols we come across the callous, clenched fists of working men, in short the manual labourers 'who can stop the wheels', etc. Our stirred feelings attempt to resist the urge to condemn the behaviour of the woman who sent her child to a home in order to be able to make revolutionary speeches herself, as cruel, stepmotherly, and heartless. Only later do we notice that this judgement stems from our unquestioning acceptance of a division of labour within which the 'normal' formation in the context of capitalist competition selects those who win against others and where women's strengths derived from our female practices, strengths that we wanted to call on for the transformation of society, have been relegated to the shadowy realms of forgetfulness.

Provisionally we lack both the imagination and the strength of feelings corresponding to it, and also the theory that can go further, to imagine and stand up for a society in which the division of labour affecting the genders so differently would be arranged in a different way; or we do not dare to think of this division of labour in ways other than in diametrical oppositions, such as soft or hard, friendly or antagonistic, loving or hating. It is necessary to continue working this out.

Learning from Brecht

Bertolt Brecht is one of the poets from whom feminists can learn a lot, among other things, how to deal with contradictions. In his *Flüchtlingsgespräche (Refugee Conversations)* he has the worker Kalle provide the information that searching for a country in which 'love of one's country, thirst for freedom, kindness, and selflessness' are not required, nor are their opposites, the mere 'not giving a shit about one's country, beatified servitude, savagery, and egoism, but that it is precisely those virtues that are needed which the revolutionaries had started to get rid of in the first place: namely, 'extreme braveness, the deepest thirst for freedom, the greatest selflessness, the greatest egoism.[4]

Brecht's message is baffling in a number of ways. First, because he places the attitudes that are usually ascribed to male heroes (love of one's own country and thirst for freedom) and those usually attributed to female heroines (kindness and selflessness) side by side, in order to say goodbye to all of them. What he is looking for is a country where none of these virtues is required. In examining our desires Brecht shows that it is not enough to simply negate them. Nor is it enough to establish a prioritised list to

supposedly make it easier for us to bid farewell to the bad attitudes such as beatified servitude, savagery, and egoism in order to reach the promised land of the good virtues. Some of these attitudes are required in their extreme forms if we want to reach our desired goal of socialism. We need a strong and egoistic desire in order to want socialism for ourselves, if we are to develop the force necessary to effect a radical change. And with this the last of our familiar solutions to these issues is also called into question, namely the distinguishing of means and ends. This had allowed us to think of the means as hard and difficult and to cover up all problems if only the objective remained untouched, shining brightly, pleasantly, and unblemished. But the unusual connection Brecht proposes, for example of egoism and selflessness – which we could adopt, consequently thinking of braveness and cowardice as connected, or kindness and harshness, and thus upset our customary ways of thinking and feeling – now shows us that we, in our search for the strengths of women as a transformative power, must open up our own feeling and thinking for discussion and change; this means that we also have to re-examine what is considered weakness in a new light if we want to form a different picture of transformation. The terrain of our research as the foundation of our politics becomes richer if we call into question what we are used to thinking of as belonging together and consequently also try out all kinds of new alliances in our thinking, as for example when we recognise that it requires courage to understand that cowardice is vitally necessary in many situations, that conscientious objectors are possibly acting heroically and that peace is something that has to be fought for. At the same time what we are used to thinking of as firm ground becomes shaky, as we are forced to doubt everything and to constantly start from the beginning again.

The second contradiction: construction and deconstruction

Those of us who are old enough to remember the emergence of the Second Women's Movement can still picture the many assemblies and the accumulation of complaints through which we as women started to become aware of our common experience of repression. The crucial turn, which also took place internationally, came with the 'victim – perpetrator' thesis. In the form of a short essay, this was the call to enter the path to liberation from a different point, not presuming that an entire sex, all women, were victims of men or, later, of conditions, but rather to assume that women as human beings also produce their own lives, that is, that they must have themselves walked the paths that ultimately lead to their oppression. This thesis triggered a fierce debate (essentially within the organisations closest to the labour movement), which lasted for more than a decade and led to expulsions

and new formations and to the redefinition of what had previously been regarded as weakness and as strength in both of the movements concerned.[5]

For me this collision led not only to a personal crisis but above all to the further development of collective memory work, which involved the socialist groups of the women's movement right from the start. It concerned everybody who was moving towards the goal of women's liberation, no matter how vague their involvement and positions. There was a brief moment of shock in which we realised that women's politics could not, contrary to how it was usually understood, mean liberating the other repressed women while the liberators themselves were already on the safe side of liberation – a moment in which we realised that we ourselves, like all the others, had, in our socialisation, also accommodated on specific levels and had given in to compromises, had constructed ourselves as subjugated beings. After this realisation, there followed the laborious but joyously taken path of researching ourselves, understanding ourselves as the object of research – as subject and object in one person. It was necessary, in essentially two steps, to arrive at another idea of the subject: first, to grasp the concept of the subject as already indicated by Louis Althusser, based on the literal meaning of the Latin word, that is, understood as the product of subjugation[6] and, in the next step, to surpass it in the process of acquiring the capacity to act collectively, to acquire agency. We began to struggle productively with many of our contradictory emotions: curiosity and shame, deception and revelation, love of truth and the instinct to cover up, pain and joy. In short, we set out collectively to discover ourselves as historical persons within history.

Memory work

Memory work as a method of tracing women's self-construction and self-production with the aim of greater agency through knowledge of our own subjugation, of the paths not taken, the search for alternatives that could have been chosen, became a cultural practice for many. The second book, *Sexualisierung der Körper* (1982), was published in English as *Female Sexualization* in 1983, thus paving the way to the international reception of this method of research, which crossed the boundaries of the academic disciplines by combining biography, discourse analysis, psychology, and politics at the same time and included the individual work of all participants. Of course, memory work never became part of the mainstream feminism, which one can hardly call a liberatory science. Memory work has been practiced in sixteen countries for almost four decades now, always leading to further knowledge.

Entering history

At root, memory work is a contribution to women entering history as *subjects*. We are using this contested term *subject* as a necessary form in which women must enter history, not only as subjugated but as acquiring responsibility, and search, among many disciplines and accumulated knowledge, for a language that we can recognise as describing ourselves. Literature as a condensation of experiences is one of the storehouses which we want to make use of. In her acceptance speech for the Büchner Prize (*Büchnerpreisrede*,1980), in a rapid journey through the huge number of historical forms of women as mediated by literature, Christa Wolf finds vivid words. Rosetta stands for the female persona in history,

Rosetta, and that is her fate, lives, invisible to herself, without a language, without a reality [...] She becomes definable as that which she is not. She allows herself to be robbed of history and to be deprived of a soul, a mind, her humanity, her responsibility for herself. And allows herself to be given into marriage. She serves her husband, bestows his progeny on him, has to believe him.[...]. Rosetta allows herself to be deprived of her rights, to be silenced, to be deprived of her mourning. her joy, of love, of work, of art. She allows herself to be raped, to be prostituted, to be locked away, to be made mad, allows herself, as Rose, to be mistreated and exploited, and this 'doubly'. She allows herself to be forced to give birth. Allows herself to be forced to abort her children. Allows her gender to be analysed into non-existence. She gets caught in the nets of helplessness. Becomes a nag, a slut, a vamp, a homebody. As Nora she leaves the doll's house. Finally, as Rosa, she starts to fight. But then she is beaten to death, thrown into the canal. As the persecuted woman she, finally, has equal rights with the suppressed and persecuted man.[7]

I have quoted Christa Wolf at some length to suggest how much we can gain from literature, but also to show how much we have uncritically swallowed from belles lettres in terms of possible women's forms, of reality, without protesting seriously, indeed feeling compassion at the wrong places, shedding tears of sympathy when anger and indignation would have been much more appropriate. This reminds us of how much we have already accepted, with false emotions, false consideration, and false respect preventing us from considering other serious possibilities and alternatives. With memory work too there is the issue of how individuals, even when they are in a collective, can work out who they are in such a way that they enter uncharted territory.

We must recognise – and we have up to now insufficiently considered and analysed this – the fact that a precondition of each process of renewal is the destruction of the old and familiar, that each process of construction is at the same time one of painful and unfamiliar destruction.

Re-reading Marx and Luxemburg[8]

We would only have had to allow ourselves to take in and feel Marx's prophetic words more clearly, words that many of us know by heart. In the *Communist Manifesto* he writes,

> All fixed, fast-frozen relations, with their train of ancient and venerable prejudices and opinions, are swept away, all new-formed ones become antiquated before they can ossify. All that is solid melts into air, all that is holy is profaned, and man is at last compelled to face with sober senses, his real condition of life, and his relations with his kind.[9]

On closer reading one recognises that this is not a matter of the logic of 'on the one hand and on the other hand' or 'first this and then that' but that an inner connection is being indicated here: development requires a break with the old form as a precondition of the new. In a similar way, Marx depicts the introduction of science into production not as a mere impoverishment of the workers, although he characterises scientification as a complete separation of mental labour from manual labour, accompanied by the subjugation of the workers and the assignment of science to a 'numerically unimportant class of persons'.[10] He derives his 'sober' view from the analysis of the fate of labour and its historical critique in political economy. He shows that the 'abstract category "labour", "labour as such" […] the point of departure of modern [political] economy, is first seen to be true in practice'[11] with the formation of bourgeois society. I am quoting this here, because it is of fundamental importance for us to know how to deal with development, with contradictions, with crises and ruptures, how to use them as means of knowledge and thus to understand how they can enable us to act in terms of theory and practice. In *Capital* (especially in the chapter on *Machinery and Modern Industry* in Volume One) Marx elaborated in great detail on how working people became 'indifferent' (*gleichgültig*) towards the specificity of work, which practically reduced them to mere owners of labour power to be deployed.[12] Earlier, in 'The Method of Political Economy', in his discussion of the forms of value, he uses the same concept of 'indifference' or 'irrelevance' to demonstrate the dynamics of development which has to be understood as movement. There he says,

The fact that the specific kind of labour is irrelevant presupposes a highly developed totality of actually existing kinds of labour, none of which is any more the dominating one. Thus the most general abstractions arise on the whole only with the most profuse concrete development, when one [phenomenon] is seen to be common to many, common to all.[13]

By labour Marx here does not merely intend people's necessary mediation with non-human nature. Rather, he is more specifically referring to the fact that this occurs under conditions that do not necessarily require domination but, on the contrary, make horizontal socialisation possible – his choice of the words 'gemein' and 'gemeinsam' (common) can surely be read as foreshadowing commonwealth. The optimistic expressions 'highly developed totality', 'none of which is any more the dominating one', 'common' are embedded in a sentence with the ambiguous word 'irrelevant'(Gleichgültigkeit) as subject. I call the clash of descriptions of misery with expressions denoting preconditions of future commonwealths a *crisis arrangement*. Development is thought of as a break with old forms. People who have lived in the old forms may now come into still greater misery. But at the same time Marx insists on the old forms having prevented development. From the ruins of the old forms something better can be built. This construction is not deterministic. It leaves open whether people grasp the conditions and act constructively, and also the question of what political practice we should encourage.

Once on to this kind of configuration of problems, you will find it in many important sections of *Capital* and in the *Grundrisse*. When dealing with the development of productive forces Marx mentions obstacles, for example, when the carrying out of tasks is tied to human skills, the guild rules are 'shackles', or the 'traditional stagnation in some very definite kind of labour'[14] hinders development. In the same way – and here we come to the question of gender relations and their contradictions – Marx writes that 'custom, morality, family ties', the old social forms, appear as 'obstacles' while at the same they provide protection to individuals as their 'last resorts'; they are the 'sole remaining safety-valve of the whole social mechanism'.[15] This limitation, this rescuing shackle causes liberation to be experienced as a catastrophe, as when dams burst. The breaking of the old forms presents tasks of reorganisation, conditions that must and can be grasped, but not liberation itself. This connection can also be found in Marx's *Capital*:

However terrible and disgusting the dissolution, under the capitalist system, of the old family ties may appear, nevertheless, modern industry,

by assigning as it does an important part in the process of production, outside the domestic sphere, to women, to young persons, and to children of both sexes, creates a new economic foundation for a higher form of the family and of the relations between the sexes.[16]

Marx arranges the categories in such a way that our spontaneous sympathy, our emotions and desires, are addressed such that we side with the old forms, which means that our involvement on the side of liberation from the old forms at the same time requires a farewell to what has become dear to us, to tradition, to parts of ourselves. Acting on these propositions is extremely difficult, all the more so that a ready empathy with the old is just as much a part of being in the mainstream as a fashionable espousal of the new. But as long as we remain within the old forms we will not be free of the contradictions, which not only afford a better knowledge of the driving forces but are at the same time distressing. As Marx says concisely and pointedly: '[…] the historical development of the antagonisms, immanent in a given form of production, is the only way in which that form of production can be dissolved and a new form established.'[17]

Rosa Luxemburg takes up and further develops the constellation found in Marx that makes it possible to grasp crisis as an opportunity for development. She repeatedly uses the language of the *Communist Manifesto* to strikingly depict the catastrophe of war, for example in her brief text *Trümmer* ([Ruins], 1914):

But it is not only physical goods that every war destroys, not merely material cultural values. It is, at the same time, an irreverent attacker of traditions. Old sanctuaries, venerable institutions, devotedly repeated formulas are thrown onto the same heap of ruins by its iron broom on which lie the remnants of used canons, guns, kitbags, and other war rubbish.[18]

In the pathos-filled introductory passages to *The Crisis of Social Democracy* she uses the following words to describe bourgeois society after the war:

Business thrives in the ruins. Cities become piles of ruins; villages become cemeteries; countries, deserts; populations are beggared; churches, horse stalls. International law, treaties and alliances, the most sacred words and the highest authority have been torn to shreds. Every sovereign 'by the grace of God' is called a rogue and lying scoundrel by his cousin on the other side. Every diplomat is a cunning rascal to his colleagues in

the other party. Every government sees every other as dooming its own people and worthy only of universal contempt. There are food riots in Venice, in Lisbon, Moscow, Singapore. There is plague in Russia, and misery and despair everywhere.[19]

But it is not this 'witches' Sabbath' that she takes as the real 'catastrophe of world-historical proportions',[20] but the fact that, in the midst of this anarchy, 'International Social Democracy has capitulated'. What a call to us today!

Provisional conclusions

The productive discussion of contradictions within Marxist Feminism and the re-reading of Marx and also of Luxemburg assigns us new and widely ranging tasks of research. We had mostly been focusing on naming the institutional conditions and relations within which women in history remain a marginalised species and, applying the method of memory work, had put primary emphasis on our collaboration, our production of ourselves as subject creatures, with the goal of becoming generally capable of acting concretely politically to work together towards a culture of change. This step, too, was very productive both for the individuals and the respective collectives, resulting in books and concrete knowledge of the process, which went far beyond subsequent postmodernism's mere proclamation that 'woman is a social construct'. Memory work is a school of language and of writing, of perception, and at the same time, a method to trace the threads that tie individuals to the social and, conversely, keep them there.

But what is it that follows from the contradiction that it is exactly the attitudes and practices that we need for the transformation of society into a more humane alternative which underlie the division of labour between the sexes, with its marginalisation of women but also the desired practices?

In building a socialist society, Lenin once proposed that 'any cook[21] should be able to run the state', and Brecht objected that this 'obviously required another state and another cook'. The attempt to socialise the caring practices, with all of 'society organised like a single factory' at the beginning of the socialist experiment of the twentieth century did not lead to a humanisation of society.

The attempt to achieve equality between the genders within capitalist conditions – that is, with all the mostly unpaid caring practices that had previously been carried out in the form of the family transferred to waged labour and, correspondingly, subject to labour struggles, strikes, and walkouts – brought movement into the familiar relations. The nursing crisis, which, true to capitalist-imperialist tradition, is being tackled by 'people

imports' from poor countries, and strikes in all the social professions (from nurses to teachers and professors) represent a challenge for the state but also encourage investment-seeking capital to carry out the privatisation of these social services to profit from previously unpaid work by reorganising it. This process is still ongoing and at any rate is deepening the division within society between the classes that can afford such private services and the majority of the population, including a part of the middle classes, which increasingly can no longer afford them. The contradiction requires shifting to another level where caring work is no longer allocated according to gender or concentrated among individual groups of people but becomes general. This requires a reduction of the necessary waged work for everyone so that every person has enough time for the caring, friendly, and loving practices and services for our fellow humans. And this in turn requires another way of dealing with time and work for the social whole and each individual.

With the second contradiction we took another step by applying what we had long thought of in abstract terms as applied to our feminist questions, namely that each process of construction is also one of deconstruction. The stubborn survival of the family, as a form we recognised as reproducing women's repression, shows that it was not possible simply to abolish it, that the reproduction of the human species could not simply be shifted to the societal level. This ultimately forces us to study those forces that undergird our remaining in these forms, with our love of the familiar and the old, even if those forms are brittle, and mere ruins of the previous form of the family, as is still seen in the real existence of 'single parents'. It seems that it is individual people who guarantee the emotional support of the old, as a last resort when society turns out to be a cold wasteland.

If women's isolation is an obstacle to their amalgamation, which is a prerequisite for any transformation, and if at the same time individuals are emotionally tied to the old forms in highly contradictory ways, then let us start to study how the knots that keep individuals in the old forms are tied and need to be cut, and which elements of the new that are already found in the womb of the old forms need to be strengthened – that is, how the collective can be made into a new home against the private form that exists at the costs of the individual.

Provisionally, it seems to us that the idea of moving towards the *Four-in-One-Perspective*[22] may be a political solution that productively carries forward both contradictions elaborated here. The Four-in-One-Perspective is a proposal to link to political intervention the familiar division between caring reproductive unpaid work and necessary paid work, as well as the development of individuals, their learning, and the development of their

artistic skills. Here too, further research and insightful political will are necessary to press ahead with this.

translated by Hilde Grammel

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Bosch, Herbert, and Jan Rehmann, 'Ideologische Staatsapparate und Subjekteffekt bei Althusser', in Projekt Ideologietheorie (eds), *Theorien über Ideologie*, Berlin/West: Argument-Verlag, 1979, pp. 105-29.

Brecht, Bertolt, 'Flüchtlingsgespräche', *in Bertolt Brecht, Große kommentierte Berliner und Frankfurter Ausgabe* 18, Frankfurt/M: Suhrkamp, 1989-.

Haug, Frigga, *Der im Gehen erkundete Weg. Marxismus-Feminismus*, Hamburg: Argument Verlag, 2015, pp. 69-113.

--, *Die Vier-in-einem-Perspektive. Politik von Frauen für eine neue Linke*, Hamburg:Argument Verlag, 1980.

--, *Sexualisierung der Körper*, Hamburg-Berlin: Argument Verlag, 1982.

Luxemburg, Rosa, 'Trümmer', in *Rosa Luxemburg Gesammelte Werke*, volume 4, Berlin/ GDR: Dietz, 1974.

Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Collected Works*, New York: International Publishers, 1975-.

Müller, Heiner, *Zement* (1972), Berlin, 2011.

Wolf, Christa, 'Büchnerpreisrede', in Christa Wolf, *Die Dimension des Autors*, Berlin-Weimar, 1980; Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1987.

NOTES

1   I want to thank Hilde Grammel for her help in translating my German text.

2   Karl Marx, *Capital*, volume one, in Marx and Engels, *Collected Works* (hereafter MECW), vol. 35, New York: International Publishers, 1996, p. 20.

3   See <https//marxfemconference.net>

4   Bertolt Brecht, *Gesammelte Werke*, volume 18, p. 304.

5   Most of the newspapers, journals, indeed even institutions, do not exist in the same form now; the main features of the debate are documented and summarised in my 2015 book, *Der im Gehen erkundete Weg. Marxismus-Feminismus* [The Path Made by Walking. Marxism-Feminism], pp. 69-113.

6   On this see the adoption and critique carried out in the framework of the ideology theory project: *Theorien* über *Ideologie*, chapter 6, 'Ideologische Staatsapparate und Subjekteffekt bei Althusser', AS 40, *Argument*, Hamburg, 1979, pp. 105-129.

7   Christa Wolf, *Die Dimension des Autors, Essays und Aufsätze, Reden und Gespräche, 1959-1985*, Darmstadt and Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1987, pp. 161 f.

8   The following presentation of Marx's way of dealing with contradictions draws on a contribution that I wrote more than three decades ago on the centenary of Marx's death. As the volume *Aktualisierung Marx* (Berlin 1983) is no longer in print I am here using a part of the arguments developed there, since they have lost nothing of their validity.

9   MECW, vol. 6, 1976, p. 487.

10   *Capital*, vol. 1, in MECW, vol. 35, 1996, p. 423.

11   Karl Marx, 'The Method of Political Economy', in MECW, volume 28, 1986, pp. 41.

12   And see Marx, *Capital I*, p. 69-70.

13   Marx, 'The Method of Political Economy', MECW, vol. 28, pp. 69-70.

14   Marx, 'The Method of Political Economy', p. 42.

15   Marx, *Capital I*, p. 504.

16   Marx, *Capital I*, p. 492.

17   Marx, *Capital I*, p. 491.

18   Rosa Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, volume 4, Berlin: Dietz, 2000, p.10

19   Luxemburg, p. 52 f.

20   Luxemburg, p. 53.

21   Editor's note: The gender of the word 'cook' is feminine in the German translation of Lenin and in the quoted response by Brecht.

22   See Frigga Haug, *Die Vier-in-einem-Perspektive. Politik von Frauen für eine neue Linke*, Hamburg: Argument Verlag, 2008.

A Theatre of Self-Emancipation – Jura Soyfer On Stage in Contemporary Vienna

Eva Brenner

What lay outside was foreign. The district where they were born and grew up, the splendid, loud, teeming worker neighbourhood was stiffly silent in the January mud, because military vehicles were rumbling through the streets. Thecity that was called 'Red Vienna' was a shy, almost hostile, a foreign city. The city felt forgotten, deserted, and very lonely.[1]

Ever since 2006, the collective of the Viennese experimental political theatre group FLEISCHEREI (_mobil) has been working on musical and dramatic interpretations of the novel fragment 'Thus Died a Party' by Jura Soyfer (1912-1939). The political dramatist, poet, journalist, and documentarist of Red Vienna (1918-1934), largely unknown outside of Austria, has often been called the 'Austrian Brecht'. He has left behind an extensive oeuvre of so-called 'Mittelstücke' – a form of political theatre that arose as a new genre in the Viennese cabaret of the 1930s, mixing elements of folk theatre and magic acts – political essays, poems, calls, sketches for the Social Democratic Party, and the novel 'Thus Died a Party', which could only be salvaged in fragments. Literary historians consider it one of the most important literary-political documents of Austria's inter-war years (1919-1939). The 27-year-old Soyfer, after a brief meteoric career, met his death in the concentration camp of Buchenwald.

The long-term work on Soyfer's 'Thus Died a Party Die', which conveys a complex historical panorama of the inter-war years, was developed in several successive phases and more than ten versions with about a hundred performances in a variety of stagings using different titles – 'Under Unpropitious February Skies', 'Then Close, Much Closer', and 'A Foreign City!'). These were presented in almost half of Vienna's 23 districts, and

each performance consisted of several locations in open spaces, ranging from theatres to district town halls, schools, and adult education schools, cafés, and restaurants to the University of Vienna, a former Nazi bunker, and the Jewish Theatre of Austria.[2]

The novel as a textual basis

After the prologue, which goes through the events from 1919 to 1932 in quick motion, the external action is concentrated in the last year of the First Republic. The first six chapters – two of which have only come down to us as outlines – are set in the first three months of 1933, which sealed Social Democracy's fate. The weeks before Hitler's victory in Germany on 30 January, the Nazis' victory celebration in Vienna, the Social Democrats' counter-demonstration on 11 February, the railway workers' strike on 1 March, the resignation of the three National Council presidents on 4 March, the violent obstruction of the 15 March session of parliament, the banning of the Republican Militia (Schutzbund) on 31 March – the documentary 'action' comprises all of this. The second part begins after a considerable time lapse and deals with temporally less specific processes in the summer and fall of 1933 and finally in January 1934. The document ends abruptly about fourteen days before the February Uprising.[3]

Jura Soyfer wrote his incomplete realistic historical novel under the direct influence of the socio-political tensions of the early 1930s. He deals with the causes and consequences of the failed revolt of 12 February 1934 and the increasing rigidity of the Austrian Social Democratic Party (SDAP) of the 1920s and 30s, its bureaucratic ossification, and the political stagnation that was coupled to creeping corruption, the isolation of party functionaries, and the downplaying of the fascist danger. The initial pathos of the SDAP's political slogans is drowned out by almost religiously coloured hopes of salvation, tending to downplay the rightward shift, while the still young democracy headed towards its demise and Austrofascism, which in the end sealed the 'death of the party'. Moreover, specifically the lack of support for the revolutionary workers essentially led to the brutal defeat of the February Uprising by the Austro-fascist Dollfuß–Schuschnigg regime (1934-38). As the well-known Soyfer biographer Horst Jarka puts it:

> These 125 pages are the most effective representation of the agony of the First Republic that we find in all of Austrian literature. As regrettable as it is that the work remained a fragment, Soyfer's penetration of politics and psychology, atmosphere, and historical events so forcefully represents the conditions that led to the catastrophe that the depiction of the catastrophe

itself, although it would probably have been the dramatic climax, could have hardly done better in deepening an understanding of its causes.[4]

Although Soyfer's realistic political novel follows the course of political events it is characterised by a creative intent that allows history – for Soyfer that of the most recent past – to be experienced as a many-layered drama that drifts towards catastrophe. Political and literary concerns interpenetrate.[5]

The author

Jura Soyfer was born on 8 December 1912 in Kharkov, in the Russian Empire in a family of well-to-do Jewish industrialists who fled from the Bolshevik Revolution to the suburbs of Vienna in 1921. At the age of fifteen he began to study history, art, literature, and the socialist classics and became a Marxist and in 1927 joined the Association of Socialist Middle School Students. He soon was active in political cabaret in the ambit of the Social Democratic Party, and from 1931 on he wrote weekly political satire for the *Arbeiter-Zeitung* (Workers' Newspaper) as well as articles for Politische Bühne (Political Stage), a socialist newspaper connected to the Red Players group. His approach to drama was close to Brecht's 'epic theatre', which in contrast to bourgeois drama and its embrace of identification, empathy, and illusion seeks to convey historical and political knowledge and insight through 'alienation effects', that is, by a dialectical distancing style of acting, stage design, and commentaries. In 1938 Soyfer was arrested as he tried to cross the Austrian border into Switzerland, brought to Dachau and later Buchenwald concentration camp, where he died of typhoid fever the day after his release was granted, on February 16, 1939.

Soyfer and Red Vienna

From his early youth Soyfer participated in the cultural and political conflicts of Red Vienna, that often glorified epoch of democratic breakthrough, revolt, and artistic exploration in which artistic and political activism interpenetrated. It was a historically unique and universally admired socio-cultural experiment carried out by Austria's labour movement, which could never again be built upon, not even after 1945. From today's viewpoint Red Vienna appears isolated as one of the last humanist periods in Austrian history, carried by a vision of an egalitarian society beyond class struggle, scarcities, and exclusions. But these were unfulfilled hopes.

The dramatisation

The staging concept was not oriented to showing 'real' characters, even if historic models did influence this epic; for example a central episode is

dedicated to the pioneer Austro-Marxist thinker Otto Bauer. Nor was it the intention to translate the worker milieu and the revolutionary mass movements – that is, to represent 'revolution' on the stage. The dramatisation could not and did not want to do more than theatrically work out excerpts of the fragment and follow the sketchiness of the novel in its broad depiction of the personalities involved.

From the dramaturgic point of view, the performance was intended for very diverse performance locations and occasions, in which the succession of scenes in short episodes, songs, and choruses presented the panorama of the downfall of a party, articulated through the concrete experiences of the protagonists with typological character traits, their desires, illusions, and mistakes. In this text there are no heroes, the historical-political theme is conceived collectively, and political processes are displayed exclusively via poetic-cabaret depictions of the behaviour and mistakes of the characters in order to reveal historical-political conflicts. Accordingly, the (inner) party intrigues and power plays of the dramatis personae take shape via satirical exaggeration, and the figures are recognisable as prisoners of their time.

The point of departure was the principle of Environmental Theatre, that is, a joint arrangement of public and action in an open space, in this case made up of loose rows of chairs occupied by the public on the model of train compartments, with a great deal of the action playing out in and around the Austrian Railways and its trade unions. In this way, the public is spatially directly included and becomes an organic part of the happening. Moreover, while they act the performers have index cards in their hands with texts, a makeshift solution to deal with scarce resources and short rehearsal times but which convinced the public as a legitimate aesthetic measure. It pointed to the fragmentary character of the work and signalled a Brechtian 'alienation effect', that dialectical method of 'de-alienation' of 'epic theatre' that demands a historical distance between the reality of acting and the material, which is to make possible a clear-headed insight into the represented reality and lead the spectator to change the world after enjoying the theatre. As Brecht's contemporary, Soyfer too felt committed to this method of distancing, even if he deployed other means, such as Viennese folk theatre or cabaret-style exaggeration of characters and action. The index cards were retained in all subsequent performances and represented a conscious stylistic means of translating literature to the stage.

Jura Soyfer not only recognised the humanist dimension of the theatre, which otherwise subsists silently, as it were, in its dramatic forms, but in view of the fascist threat to everything human he always tried to raise it to the level of consciousness of

the issues. [His texts give us an idea] of the richness and greatness Soyfer could have
brought to the renewal of Austrian literature, if he himself had not fallen victim to
this threat.[6]

A look back at the production, 2006–2015

The first performance in December 2006 was commissioned by transform!europe, the foundation and think tank corresponding to the Party of the European Left (EL) and took place on the occasion of the International Otto Bauer Conference in the Great Hall of Vienna's Architekturzentrum in the Museumsquartier. But the project soon grew beyond this stage and developed into an (almost) full-evening performance with a dramaturgically polished structure, a choreographic and musical execution that alternated with dramatic monologues and dialogues.

Soon the group was invited to show a public rehearsal in the Flakturm Arenbergpark in Vienna's Third District at the invitation of the art project 77 Positionen – 'FAKTUM FlakTURM' (directed by Markus Hafner and Marianne Maderna), which by the very uniqueness of the space – a former Nazi anti-aircraft gun tower (Flakturm) – lent the project an eerie dimension. This was followed in March 2007 with an excerpt of the performance with the title 'Robert Blum, the Outsider' in the Jewish Theater of Austria with the inter-cultural Singaporean actress Sun YAP in the framework of the International Jewish Theater Festival TIKUN OLAM / Repair the World. In 2008 a new version was created as a contribution to the local FESTIVAL Kultur.Herbst.Neubau on the theme of Revolution, and between 2011 and 2015 several district tours in twelve of Vienna's districts brought to the project wholly new sectors of the public not used to theatre. Taking into account the architectonically specific atmosphere of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century historicism in these districts' town halls (primarily governed by the Social Democrats), there emerged a series of impressive stagings in which the public was invited on a journey through time and space as it wandered through the spaces.[7]

New version for the eightieth anniversary of 12 February 1934

In 2014, a new version was proposed as a contribution to the commemoration of the February Revolution and tried out for a premiere in Vienna's Kulturcafé Siebenstern as well as for succeeding performances in adult education centres and district town halls in Vienna. This afforded an opportunity to evaluate the original version, tapping new political insights to hone the performance politically and performatively. Eight years after the first performance, when the period of Red Vienna had appeared like a distant memory to us, the political situation heated up with the 2008 financial crisis. Suddenly the press

was no longer reacting only to the corruption scandals of political parties – including the Social Democrats – but minds were newly inflamed by fear of cuts in social services, fundamentalism, and social polarisation, recalling the social dislocations depicted in Soyfer's novel.

At that time Walter Baier, economist, adviser and coordinator of transform!europe, wrote a contribution to the programme folder in which he characterised the final workers' revolt before the Second World War in the context of international interests: 'The uprising through which the Austrian working class defied the Austrofascist dictatorship was of European significance. One year after Hitler took power in the German Reich it showed the example of an armed resistance to the establishment of a fascist regime. Afterwards, many of the defeated Schutzbund militia took part in the defence of the Spanish Republic. Moreover, Austria's downfall in March 1938 can only be understood in terms of the defeat of the labour movement in February 1934.'[8]

The outsider Robert Blum

In reaction to the changed political situation, the structure of the staging was reorganised, provided with new songs and choruses, in which, in contrast to the site-specific 2011 performance in which the public followed the action through various spaces, the action was concentrated in one open space. The scenes of the worker couple were cut to the benefit of the outsider figure Robert Blum who has a special dramaturgical position in the novel and whose name points back to the historic revolutionary of 1848.[9] In contrast to the other figures drawn in a cabaret style, this secret protagonist of the novel has a complex biography. He embodies the lower-level conscientious Social Democrat functionary and social loser who is disadvantaged by nature (physiognomically), who fails in everything, and is the object of other malice and rejection. This figure of the 'foreigner' is filled in with more detail and serves as an example of the masses' structural anti-Semitism. Blum is denounced, lands in jail, develops schizophrenia, and in surreal monologues conjures up the impending collapse of democracy.

Inclusion of the Blum scenes had become possible because a new actress was available and allowed us to focus on the ramifications of the theme of 'exclusion', on which we wanted to take a stand. Here Jura Soyfer functions as a sensitive seismograph; with Robert Blum the spectre of the Holocaust appears, which is all the more astounding as these sketches come from the early 1930s when hardly anyone could foresee what was coming over the historical horizon.

New musical settings of the Soyfer songs by a musician duo from Africa

and Latin America served to actualise the traditional workers' songs (among them, 'Wir sind die Arbeiter von Wien') with an intercultural 'soundtrack'. In addition, special events completed each of the performances – after each one there was a discussion with historic witnesses such as the Spanish Civil War brigadist, trade unionist, and participant in the 12 February 1934 uprising Walter Stern, the Auschwitz survivor Rudi Gelbard, and the curator of the exhibition in the laundry room of the Karl-Marx-Hof, alternating with Soyfer song evenings and screenings of the documentary film *Der Schatten ist lang, Jura Soyfer und seine Zeitgenossen* [The Shadow is Long: Jura Soyfer and his Contemporaries] (Eva Brenner, 1993, DOR Film).[10]

Three levels of performance were put into relief: the musical composition, the public's narrative function, and the focus on the Robert Blum figure. The other figures remained the same and were played by the old ensemble. New additions were amateurs from the community, who were entrusted with the revolutionary mass scenes and choruses. The chorus repeatedly intervened in the play and referred to historical narrative texts, and further commentaries were read by the public. The involvement of the workers' chorus opened the platform for deeper interaction and discussion with the community; recitation and action developed at the coffeehouse tables of the locale, at the bar counter, at the entrances and exits, and a spare use of changes of position and movements, as well as dances, songs, and group activities drove the action forward. Excerpts from a film produced for the staging in Karl-Marx-Hof and photographic material from the film *Der Schatten ist lang* were projected on the wall. Choruses with waving red flags, choreographically realised demonstrations and marches gave living expression to Soyfer's enthusiasm for Red Vienna, which brought out all the more sharply the farewell song at the end and the disillusion at the failing of the party. Jarka writes:

> Soyfer's positive identification with the 'party family' explains the extent of his embitterment at the fact that this magnificent organisation of the international labour movement, the SDAP, had foundered – and, as he implicitly realises, through its own fault, through its misguided politics. For Soyfer, his turning away from the party is only the final consequence of his left-oppositional critique, and he applies this analysis to the party's prehistory.[11]

Scenario: 'A Foreign City!' 2014[12]

Overture: Film 'Im Karl-Marx-Hof 2012' (funeral procession of the ensemble), with SONG 1: 'Das Lied des einfachen Menschen' [The Song

of the Ordinary Person] (recitation/voice)

SCENE 1: Self-portrait of the neo-Nazi Franz Josef Zehetner

REPORT 1/2: Battles in the streets of Vienna

SONG 2/RAP: 'Telegraphen-Chanson'

SCENE 2: Portrait of the trade-union leaders Dworak/Dreher

REPORT 3: March of the Nazis

SCENE 3: Portrait of the party functionary Robert Blum

SONG 3 and 4: 'Sturmzeit' 'Auf, auf ins ferne Indien' [Away, Away to Far Off India]

SCENE 4 (video): Dialogue of the worker couple Käte Haider and Franz Seidel

SONG 5/RAP: 'Ballade der Drei' [Ballade of the Three]

SONG 6: 'Das Dachaulied' (recitation/voice)

SCENE 7: Dworak-Dreher Dialogue (Moral Cowardice)

CHORUS: Text fragments 'Otto Bauer' – Workers' Chorus/Ensemble

REPORT 4: Strike of the Railway Workers

SONG 7: 'Wir sind die Arbeiter von Wien' [We Are the Workers of Vienna]

SCENE 8: Blum in prison 2 / Traum, Ich-Spaltung und Befreiung [Dream, Split Ego, Liberation]

REPORT 5: Social Democracy caves in

SCENE 9: Dissolution of Parliament (ensemble)

SCENE 9A: Otto Bauer wavers

CODA: A Foreign City (weapons search) – Workers' Chorus/Ensemble 'Lied von der Erde' ['Song of the Earth] (parallel to video film at beginning)

SONG 8/RAP 'Matrosenlied' [Sailors' Song] (end, Ensemble)

FLEISCHEREI

In 1998 the interdisciplinary troop of freelance theatre workers – which had been founded in 1991 as the Association PROJEKT THEATER/Wien - New – opened an experimental laboratory for theatre and performance and rebuilt an open space with a glass roof into a multi-functional white box space. Its goal was to create a small fixed theatrical ensemble and – with continuous training, borrowing methods from Brechtian 'epic theatre', especially the *Lehrstück* model of the early 1930s, and post-Brechtian avant-garde theatre, including the canon of the US avant-garde, theatre improvisations on the model of the Polish theatre visionary Jerzy Grotowski,

and the socio-cultural and theatre-pedagogical work of the Theatre of the Oppressed – introduce a long-term development of internationally networked theatre and performance projects. These were communicated in workshops, concerts, exhibitions, and art and discussions of art and politics.

In the course of a few years the STUDIO became an established phenomenon in Vienna's theatre landscape. Its synthesis of inherited methods developed new working formats such as ambitious 'marathon performance cycles, immigrant cooking shows, street theatre, refugee projects, and political discussions on the local Viennese television station OKTO.tv – with the goal of thinking through and bringing together avant-garde political formats.

A policy turn was introduced by the Social-Democrat-dominated so-called 'Wiener Theaterreform' in 2003 in whose wake the group lost 60 per cent of its funding from the City of Vienna. Looking for a new home base the troop moved into a former shop location, the FLEISCHEREI, and politicised its work. After the sudden death of its mentor and curator Peter Kreisky and further budget cuts the FLEISCHEREI had to close and the group accustomed itself, with the concept of a FLEISCHEREI_mobil, to a radical new positioning with new cooperation in Vienna's peripheral districts. The beginning of the Jura Soyfer Long-Term Project in 2006 occurred at FLEISCHEREI's high point. It was not to be until 2018 that a new fixed locale could be found. The art factory brick5 in the inter-cultural fifteenth district of Vienna provided the ideal framework for new community theatre projects, whose outcome in 2018 was *Flüchtlingsgespräche* (Refugee Conversations) based on texts by Brecht and in 2019 by Herbert Marcuse, Pier Paolo Pasolini, and Peter Weiss.[13]

> *When the theatre left the theatre – this phrase can be read as the creed of the tendencies of the 1960s and 70s and indicates the direction in which the theatre, at the crossroads of art and political progress […] opposes revolt to the passivity of the individual in society […]. The politicisation of theatre was paralleled by the demand for social change and brought art out of its isolated, ineffectual ivory tower.*
> Brigitte Marschall[14]

Transformance (2011–2018)

In the course of the nomadic phase of its work (in the streets and in public space) the basic features of a new performance genre crystallised, which were codified in a series of *transformance* manifestos. Following the dictum of the avant-garde artist Joseph Beuys that 'every person is an artist', *transformance* requires performance at the interface of political performance and social-

critical activism. *Transformance* advocates diversity, pluralism, participation, reappropriation of the 'political' in theatre, the reconquest of public spaces, and the development of new funding models, that is, a redistribution of resources from top to bottom. Decentralised community work, art in public space, and the creation of new work formats are the focuses of 'transformative' theatre work.[15]

It was in this context that the group tested the contemporary efficacy of Brecht's *Lehrstück* model and that of the Theatre of the Oppressed, created by the Brazilian theatre visionary Augusto Boal, for which theatre represented a 'rehearsal for the revolution'. Any serious political-theatre work has to be able to draw on historical models, re-evaluate them, and adapt them to contemporary needs. With the *Lehrstück* Brecht expanded the concept of 'epic theatre', and set into motion a self-reflexive political–pedagogical acting process, in which the separation between 'protagonists and observers', and the 'politicians' and 'philosophers' (theory and practice) is transcended. Playing theatre or *Lehrstücke* means collective artistic exercises for purposes of the self-understanding of the players and the spectators as co-actors. The performers are not only learners but 'producers' and the actual 'protagonists' of the theatre – Boal calls them 'spectactors'.[16]

Socio-theatrical projects work against the lack of education and knowledge of languages, social exclusion, the rightward shift, and radicalisation, especially of the youth. Starting from historical concepts of political theatre, integrative theatre projects draw in those marginalised groups which suffer from growing xenophobia, intensified anti-foreign legislation, and cultural ostracisation. An example of successful integration of the avant-garde into the community is the signature project AUF ACHSE ('on the road'), which has been in development since 2009, an annual site-specific street theatre in cooperation with artists, immigrants, refugees, small business owners, and neighbourhood people.

In 2010 the AUF ACHSE project was awarded the prize for international exchange of the IG Kultur Wien. For months, artists of the theatre, in parallel workshops with target social groups, worked on an intercultural theatre procession with colourful scenes, songs, dances, and dialogues, which ended with performances in stores, pubs, schools, galleries, and other locales. People from the community were invited (at no cost) to immigrate, join in, and have a say. These performances at the city periphery are a perfect example of how experimental theatre that originates in the cultural contexts of the artistic elites can contribute to the development of the communities and make the city's multiculturalism visible.

Résumé – from Brecht to the avant garde and back to Brecht and Soyfer

The long-term experiment with Jura Soyfer's novel fragment signals a milestone in the process of our appropriation of twentieth-century cultural/ political traditions – especially the achievements of Red Vienna and the culture of earlier political avant-garde artists who were ostracised in the era of postmodernism. It brought into play comprehensive research of our own cultural-political roots – in a kind of catch-up historical education, which is sorely missing in schools, universities, and art academies, and insisted on the self-conception of participating artists as political creators of theatre.

It became clear that theatre is in a position to accomplish more than just communicate political content, present interesting ideas, gain subsidies and pay wages to artists, which at least keeps the infrastructure of the independent scene going. We recognised our civil-society role in the alternative theatre scene and our historical bridging function between the generations. From then on, in the context of the 'transformance' genres, what has counted for us is to (re)awaken new utopias, broadly discuss the failure of Social Democracy, which is becoming a concern today throughout Europe, constructively deal with the programmatic deficits of the independent theatre scene, to not be discouraged in view of the ongoing budget cuts in cultural policy, and to continue struggling for a contemporary political theatre. The practical remembrance work in terms of a neglected epoch of our history can, mediated through theatre, be a substitute for the lack of political education in schools and serve as a guide to civil-society engagement in the coming political confrontations.

With the results of the Soyfer theatre project and the nearly hundred performances in a good half of Vienna's 23 districts, each with a different, heterogeneous public, we succeeded in anchoring Jura Soyfer's life and work in the mainstream. Up to the 1980s he was marginalised as a 'communist' author,[17] and a Soyfer Renaissance began to appear only in the wake of the 1968 movements. Today, his plays are present in small, medium-sized, and large stages, his texts have been newly set to music, and he is acknowledged by scholarship and the media. We can quite rightly say that Jura Soyfer has become part of the dramatic canon.

For us, getting closer to the public, the education of the public, is no aesthetic, empty slogan, but an activity that has long been practised by each individual author, each actor, from performance to performance. To explore and change the public! Where this will and practice is missing it is not revolutionary proletarian theatre that develops but pseudo-revolutionary ineffectual intellectual affectation. […] How do we come up

with a more precise designation for the nature of our theatre? By understanding that our spectators are a constantly developing stratum that stands in a continuous reciprocal relation with its theatre. We can arrive at a fruitful definition of socialist partisan theatre by the dialectical observation of the public![18]

NOTES

1   Jura Soyfer, 'So starb eine Partei', in Horst Jarka (ed.), Jura Soyfer, *Das Gesamtwerk. Lyrik, Prosa, Szenen und Stücke*, Werkausgabe, Vienna, Zurich, Munich: Europaverlag, 1984, p. 214. In English translation: *It's Up To Us! – Collected Works of Jura Soyfer*, translated and edited by Horst Jarka, Riverside CA: Ariadne Press, 1996; see also Horst Jarka, *The Legacy of Jura Soyfer 1912 - 1939: Poems, Prose and Plays of an Austrian anti-Fascist*, Montreal: Engendra Press, 1977.

2   See <www.experimentaltheater.com>.

3   See Soyfer, *Das Gesamtwerk*.

4   See Horst Jarka, *Jura Soyfer, Leben Werk, Zeit*, Vienna: Löcker Verlag 1987, p. 515.

5   Jarka, *Jura Soyfer*, p. 380.

6   Gerhard Scheit, *Theater und revolutionärer Humanismus. Eine Studie zu Jura Soyfer*, Vienna: Verlag für Gesellschaftskritik, 1988, p. 36.

7   See <www.experimentaltheater.com> for information and videos.

8   Walter Baier, commentary on the performance, 7 January 2014.

9   See <http://davidkultur.at/artikel/robert-blum-demokrat-der-ersten-stunde>. Robert Blum – the publicist and deputy to the first German parliament, which met in 1848 in Frankfurt am Main's Saint Paul Church – was the democrat of the hour. He is seldom remembered today, although he was a champion of the young democratic movement in Germany and Austria and one of its first political victims.

10   See *Regiebuch von Eva* Brenner, Produktion Jura Soyfer 2014, Archiv Projekt Theater.

11   Jarka, p. 405.

12   See *Textbuch erstellt von Eva Brenner,* Produktion Jura Soyfer 2014, Archiv Projekt Theater.

13   See <www.experimentaltheater.com>.

14   Brigitte Marschall, *Politisches Theater nach 1950*, Vienna, Cologne, Weimar: Böhlau 2010, p. 457.

15   See Eva Brenner, <TRANSFORMANCE> Manifesto 2011-2016, <www. experimentaltheater.com>, Archiv. 'TRANSFORMANCE aims at providing alternatives in the form of culturally, socially, and economically transformative workshops of democracy as concrete action loci for applied utopias. […] In view of today's multiple crises, what is needed is the creation of multi-faceted, pluralist workshops of democracy, which open doors and indicate new paths in order to give people courage and bring them together. What needs to be built are centres of "local artistic supply", […] new spaces for learning and action, which are open and flexibly usable, multi-disciplinary, inter-cultural, and transformative. Friendly places that are both "red" (communal, socially participatory, emancipator) and "green" (ecologically sustainable). It is a matter of reconquering public spaces and giving people courage to break with the system of hierarchies and mutual exploitation, through a life in creative action and interaction. Only together and solidaristically can we construct a better

world and find a way out of the crisis! LET US FIND "COMMON GROUND!'"

16   See Florian Vaßen, in Rainer Steinweg (ed.), *Brechts Modell der Lehrstücke. Zeugnisse, Diskussion, Erfahrungen*, Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp, 1976; Daniela Michaelis, *Assoziales Theater und Friedenserziehung in der LehrerInnenbildung. Eine theoretische und praktische Grundlegung zu einer ganzheitlichen Form der Friedens- und Konfliktarbeit*, Frankfurt a.M.: Lang, 1994; Rainer Steinweg: *Lehrstück und episches Theater. Brechts Theorie und die theaterpädagogische Praxis*, 2nd edition, Frankfurt a.M.: Brandes & Apsel, 2005.

17   He, as many other of his comrades-in-arms who were disillusioned, left the Social Democratic Party and after February 1934 joined the Communist Party of Austria.

18   Soyfer, *Das Gesamtwerk*, Prosa, p. 238.

Challenges for Left Strategy

Searching for Alternatives:
An Interview with Tamás Krausz

interviewed by Róbert Nárai

Róbert Nárai: *In the 1960s, György Lukács – under the slogan 'back to Marx!' – called for a 'renaissance' of Marxism within Eastern Europe. Your political and theoretical work is very much an answer to this call. Could you begin by telling us about what this renaissance entailed?*

Tamás Krausz: To understand the nature of this renaissance we have to understand the many important questions that the Hungarian uprising of 1956 raised for the anti-Stalinist left across the world. I will only touch on what is relevant to the impact it had on those of us inside Hungary and Eastern Europe more broadly.

After the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU), following the investigations of the phenomenon of Stalinism, many people began to realise the sharp contrast between our own situation and the historical and social conditions that led to the Russian Revolution and its emancipatory goals.

In regard to Lukács on this question, he deduced the 'limitations' of the Russian Revolution from the 'non-classical nature' of the revolution and Soviet development. This was not merely a matter of the limitations posed by its 'semi-peripheral' economic and cultural conditions, 'unequal development', its authoritarian traditions, nor the hostile encirclement of the Soviet Union within the global system. But rather it was a consequence of the disintegrating conceptual unity of the sphere of production and economy on the one hand and that of democracy on the other hand. This is despite the fact that in 'Eastern-European' Marxism (including its Soviet variety) the question of political democracy had been understood in relation to the economy, accumulation, and the mode of production since Plekhanov (and in fact since Marx). It was seen as an intrinsic feature of the economy and mode of production. At a later period, István Mészáros conceptualised this

condition as 'substantive democracy'. Here, democracy is not an isolated political demand within the revolutionary wing of the Marxist tradition, but is also, at the same time, a working-class economic demand.

Following 1956, the deepest immediate issue that every current of anti-Stalinist Marxism had to address was how this unity, the unity of the economy and democracy that existed in the early years of the Russian Revolution, could be recovered. To all those on the anti-Stalinist left across the world it seemed that the workers' councils of 1956 were institutional attempts at re-establishing this unity. This was in fact what was at stake in the theoretical work of Lukács, a 'minister of the 1956 revolution', and numerous other thinkers throughout the 1960s and 70s; though under the influence of events in 1956, Hungarian party officials, with Kádár at the helm, were – naturally – thinking in terms of another paradigm. While Lukács associated the workers' councils of 1956 with the Russian workers' councils of 1917, the official party stance characterised the councils as counterrevolutionary forces. In 1956 the theoretical problem of the loss of this unity became a practical question.

Marxists from a wide range of perspectives sought to forge a kind of 'third way' – a 'tertium datur' as Lukács put it – between the preservation of state socialism and the restoration of capitalism: a way back to a Marxist politics that could lead to authentic socialism. It emerged from the correspondence between István Mészáros and Lukács that Lukács raised the question of tertium datur after 1956, claiming that Stalinism could be left behind without restoring capitalism.

In the West, the problem was that after 1968, theoretical thinking was disconnected from practice, since, among other reasons, no real socialist experiment had been possible in the absence of large revolutionary parties; and the large Italian and French communist parties were unable to react to the events of 1968 in a revolutionary way – they could not lead the masses, and they had no alternative anticapitalist economic programme. In Eastern Europe, genuine Marxist thinkers had to break with the legitimating ideology of Marxism–Leninism. Neither the revolutionary new left nor the old Communist Parties had an adequate economic programme that could have provided an alternative to capitalism.

In Hungary, the sinologist and philosopher Ferenc Tőkei, and Lukács and his followers (later referred to as the 'Budapest School'), were chewing over the same theoretical questions as the Praxis circle in Yugoslavia, and others in Poland and elsewhere. These thinkers had broken with the ideological approach that saw history as a mechanical product of blind necessity, one which bound the interpretation of history within the confines of abstract

theoretical models. This break was an important development both in terms of the theory and historiography of Soviet history.

One of the main issues of debate in the theory of history concerns the alternative nature of historical development, which is to say the possibility in history of a development alternative to that of the already existing reality, as Lukács argues in his *Ontology*. Practically ahead of all others, Isaac Deutscher raised the fundamental historical question regarding Soviet development, that of the 'great breakthrough', namely the 'revolution from above' (forced collectivisation, intensive industrialisation, the introduction of a planned economy, etc.), that is, was there any alternative to it? The question was especially relevant in Eastern Europe at the time, because it seemed as if the 1960s would produce some radical alternatives. Later, at the time of Perestroika, it was only natural that the same question arose once again. From the perspective of our subject, the new Third Party Programme (accepted at the 22nd CPSU Congress in 1961) is important, since it defined 'communist society as the system of social self-organisation'. Though Khrushchev's reforms were out of sync with the theory, they nevertheless opened up the possibility of socialist thought engaging with more philosophical issues. Thinkers in the East could outline the future socialist perspectives, albeit only in theory, detached from the concrete practical tasks. I am referring particularly to the theoretical groundwork for the concept of the 'alternative' in Lukács's *Ontology*.

In the *Ontology,* Lukács based his argument on Marx's well-known idea, 'Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please; they do not make it under self-selected circumstances', proceeding to add: 'For there are no alternatives that are not concrete ones; they can never be separated from their *hic et nunc.*'

These alternatives 'give rise to causal chains', while the actors in every concrete historical situation have to consider the options concretely. As we know, alternatives do not merely exist but rather are actively brought into being. Lukács illustrated this point with Lenin's role in the Revolution of 1917. An intrinsic factor permitting the solution to 'resolve' a particular historical situation is the degree to which individuals – and society itself – are able to recognise the possibility of alternatives.

Whatever our evaluation of the historical significance of the Hungarian uprising might be, one matter is indisputable: it did not leave the general future of the Soviet and Eastern-European regimes unaffected. It was not possible to avoid raising the question posed by Trotsky: 'What is the Soviet Union, and where is it going?' Khrushchev's famous speech at the 20th Party Congress, the Hungarian 1956, and 1968 all invalidated the Stalinist theory

of social formations (the mechanical chronological progression of changes of social forms: ancient, feudal, capitalist, to communist), which had served to equate socialism with Stalinism and render the search for democratic socialist alternatives impossible. As a result, and not independently of the rise of the left in the West and the positive effect of the anti–imperialist/anti–colonial struggles, of course, the future of socialism had to be rethought on a global scale as well. All this was an important part of the 'renaissance of Marxism' that Lukács was calling for.

RN: *So the theory of 'state socialism', namely a critical theory of 'actually existing' socialism – grounded in the theory of social formations – fit into this attempt, as you put it, to 'rethink the future of socialism' from your Eastern European perspective?*

TK: Yes, that is quite correct.

Until the 1960s, theoretical perspectives in the West were determined by debates and concepts drawn from work done before the Second World War. Between 1929 and 1941, the notion of *state capitalism* as a theory describing Soviet development was most popular among Western leftists, and even Marxists, who of course were not members of the official communist parties and were also detached from the Comintern tradition. However, it is for the most part the uni-linear template that fit well with the 'vulgar-materialistic' atmosphere of the period, which assumed the chronological sequence of five social forms (primitive communism, ancient slave society, feudalism, capitalism, and communism), following one from the other, in a mechanical and pre-determined fashion.

In Eastern Europe, and especially Hungary, Poland, and the Soviet Union, there was no notable influence of the theory of state capitalism on circles of 'critical Marxists': it could not be adapted to Marx's theory of social formations, since it is simply impossible to describe the Stalinist system as a profit-oriented economy, as a capitalist market economy, in which on the basis of private ownership accumulation is carried on in the interests of a 'state bourgeoisie'.

In 1947, Tony Cliff reformulated the theory of state capitalism (and a whole movement came to be organised on its basis): it pitted the question of ownership against the question of power. The Marxian social–formation theory reconstructed by Ferenc Tőkei – in a philologically credible manner – aimed, among other things, to supersede such theories. The problem of the *nature of the Soviet* system necessarily led to the question of social formations *as a whole*, which essentially concerned the way in which state, private, and communal (collective) ownership are related to each other. In order to change the existing division of labour in the long term, you need to

change ownership *and* power relations.

The Hungarian Marxist philosopher András György Szabó reconstructed Marx's terminology in order to conceptually define the essence of the 'state-socialist' system. Three fundamentally different positions were formulated in the debate stimulated by his work.

The first position was that state socialism as a system originated in Stalinist development and its downfall would be the consequence of its own internal contradictions. In essence, it was a modernisation experiment. The supporters of this position see no real difference between capitalist and Stalinist attempts at modernisation.

The second was that the old state-socialist system, in spite of all its failures, was a development that could be continued, and repudiating it would serve the prevailing capitalist power structure in its ideological claims to legitimacy; therefore, the fundamentally positive elements of this past had to be protected in order to preserve the anti-capitalist tradition. The collapse would be a result of imperialist intrigue and betrayal.

The third position was that state socialism was the product of a particular historical constellation, and as such it should not be repeated. Its downfall was caused essentially by internal factors, but a number of cultural–intellectual and social achievements were amassed in the course of the development of this system, which certainly constitute a heritage worth preserving for the future. We can list among these, first of all, the theoretical and practical tradition of weak but existing social self-government, self-organisation, and the defence of the lower classes. These are the traditions which the 'revival of social self-organisations' in the 1960s, especially in 1968, helped develop and deepen.

The concept of state socialism refers to an irreconcilable contradiction.

On the one hand, the old state socialism could not 'disconnect' from the world–capitalist system, with its global division of labour. It came into being dependent on the centre region, and continued its existence partly dependent on it, in some historical periods even having been under threat of (military or economic) liquidation from this environment.

On the other hand, the state-socialist system eliminated the profit-producing society, the accumulation of private capital, and the capitalist structure based on the money and market economy. State socialism undoubtedly worked as a politically and socially-motivated system for the extraction of surplus labour. In state socialism, in addition to the expropriation of the bourgeoisie and its economic and financial institutions, the capitalist market economy was substituted by various forms and institutions of state planning and distribution. A new specific class society came about (still to be

explored in terms of social history) determined by the traditional division of labour. But in this society, according to the Constitution, state property was by definition neither inheritable nor open for sale or purchase; it belonged to society in principle.

Throughout its history one might say that state socialism as a system, basing its legitimacy on its revolutionary origins, continued an ideological war (of a rather changeable and paradoxical kind) with the capitalist market economy and the privileged bureaucracy, whose upper echelons disposed of state property.

Through this ideological war the regime only conspired to hide what was really important, namely that in spite of its anti-capitalist features, it upheld a whole range of social inequalities and hierarchies that are also typical of Western societies. But whatever name the system is given, the fundamental problem from the start concerned how to socialise the state property brought about through the nationalisation of capitalist property and capitalist assets. Despite its being called communal in the Constitution, state property held under state socialism in fact had the character of bureaucratic state ownership. After the change of regimes, the liberals also considered state property to be social property, which had to be privatised.

The alternative that we put forward is a self-governing, democratic socialism, which is diametrically opposed to the traditional state as a structure.

RN: *Moving on to 1968: how did the events of the Prague Spring – not to mention Germany, Italy, France, the United States, and so forth – have an impact on what was taking place politically and intellectually in Hungary at the time?*

TK: First we need to point out that 1968 collapsed worldwide because it had no vision and practice for an alternative economy. This gap was filled by neoliberalism later in the 1970s. The demands for liberty, gender equity, and human rights were not connected to a practice of a non-hierarchical and non-exploitative economic system. 1968 had little to say concerning wage labour as the official left parties could not think beyond the neo-Keynesian model and they lacked a real socialist programme – as I pointed out above. Thus neoliberalism could appropriate the heritage of 1968, absorbing many of its demands, while preaching the free movement of capital as opposed to the welfare state.

Moreover, the 'world revolution' of 1968 meant two basic things for Eastern Europe: economic reform and the occupation of Czechoslovakia. Both distanced us from socialism, rather than bringing it closer, but both took place under the banner of socialism. In the official Communist Parties in the East the 'dogmatists' and the 'revisionists' fought with each other,

the first trying to further 'centralise' bureaucratic control, while the second supported market-oriented reforms. The revisionists had varying success in Eastern Europe but in the end they always found a compromise in order to stay in power and prevent any real socialist democratic experiment.

In this regard Hungary reflected the fundamental contradictions. Economic reforms followed, meaning a transformation of the command economy, decentralisation, and the introduction of material interests and market incentives. But at the same time political reforms were stalled and 'socialist democracy' emptied out. Lukács tried in vain to inform the world that economic reforms in themselves, without the democratisation of production and consumption, the establishment of a needs-centred economy, and the participation of the producer classes, would pave the way for the establishment of a bourgeois transformation, the 'consumer society', of the return of capitalism. In contrast to this development Lukács put forward the 'tertium datur', namely the search for a non-Stalinist, non-capitalist alternative, in his book written in 1968, *Demokratisierung heute und morgen* in which he revived the historical experiences of workers' councils and direct democratic control.

To put it in Lukácsian terms, the 'alternative' in any part of Eastern Europe involved three abstract possibilities of development. The preservation of the status quo was one of the possible courses of development; the second was the restoration of capitalism; the third being the transformation of the system towards socialism. All three possibilities were manifestly at work in the events in Czechoslovakia, the 'new economic mechanism' in Hungary, the Solidarnosc movement in Poland, as well as in the Yugoslav transformation. In a latent form, of course, the alternative was present in the Soviet Union as well, even if Khrushchev did not understand it. Yet twenty years later, the period of Perestroika made it clear that these triple possibilities of development were not equally likely.

RN: *In what way was your own work in this period – the 1970s and 1980s – a response to this conjuncture?*

TK: In the 1970s and 80s (as a young historian) I was engaged in exploring the viable (humanist) elements of Marxism with many of my colleagues. Most of all I worked with Miklós Mesterházi, who went on to become a scholar at the Lukács Archívum, on the Bolshevik reception of the early Lukács; with Tütő Lászlóval I tried to reconstruct Lenin's concept of socialism, and then the concept of socialism in Trotsky; but in general I was interested in the Soviet development of the 1920s and the reasons for the rise of Stalinism. By 1989 all of this led me to believe that I understood the theoretical, political,

and moral message of Lukács's *tertium datur*. The questions I was dealing with were inextricably linked to my attempt to reconstruct a viable, humanist Marxism.

RN: *And so the unity of these concerns led, on the one hand, to the establishment of the journal* Eszmélet*, and on the other, to the opposition within the Hungarian Socialist Party (MSZP)?*

TK: To understand the formation of *Eszmélet* one has to understand what happened to our renaissance. Most of the Marxists coming from the Lukácsian tradition eventually arrived at a liberal acceptance of, and even support for, the change of regimes, having worked their way through communal socialism and workers' self-government. However, at the beginning of the 1980s, in the introduction to their book with the eloquent title *Dictatorship Over Needs*, Agnes Heller, Ferenc Fehér, and György Márkus, already an émigré, wrote: 'We, all three, are convinced that the world needs more, not less socialism than it has today.'

The same year, in their book of 1983, *A szovjet típusú fejlődés marxista szemmel* [*The Soviet Type of Development from a Marxist Perspective*], György Bence and János Kis proposed that the demolition of the cement walls of state-ownership should be succeeded by community and group ownership, and workers' self-government. Then, in the mid-1980s, after the movement for workers' self-government suffered a defeat in the Polish labour-union Solidarity, a sudden drop in the number of those thinking about the realisation of wage-workers' interests as socialism, as a *tertium datur*, could be felt in Hungary as well. At this point, another, a different attempt to prepare the philosophical, historical, and, in part, political grounds for the *new self-governing socialism* in the womb of the old system led to the creation of the Hungarian journal *Eszmélet*, which was supported by a civil organisation called 'Left-wing Alternative Association'

The first issue of *Eszmélet*, published at the beginning of 1989, made reference to the similar attempt by István Mészáros ('eszmélet' means consciousness) and other distinguished Hungarian intellectuals to establish a journal of the same name in 1956, in the spirit of an anti-Stalinist and anti-capitalist tradition. Thoughout his life we maintained a friendly and fruitful relationship with István Mészáros who unfortunately passed away recently. In retrospect, even under the old system, but in a more liberal climate, György Aczél, a leading cultural politician, also supported the creation of this Marxist journal, because by then a liberal and a nationalist journal had also been established.

Eszmélet, a unique organ in 1989 within Eastern Europe, is still in

existence thanks to our vast international connections. At the beginning of the 1990s, many well-known figures of the European radical left appeared in our publication and spoke at our events. As a starting point, our journal had been concerned with conveying and developing the main achievements of our theory of social formations. One of our contentions was that during the transition there would be no dawn of a 'good capitalism', and we rejected the ideologies that legitimated such views; instead, we based our perspective on the humanist, socialist project as an alternative at the level of theory.

In terms of translating these theoretical perspectives into an orientation toward real-world praxis, we built up an independent platform within the MSZP in 1989-90. In the old 'state socialism', the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP) did not have an organised left; all that existed were the 'dogmatists' and 'revisionists'. The former's orientation was based on the status quo, while the latter arrived at the standpoint of the restoration of capitalism, but both trends were opposed to the democratic transformation of state socialism. As I have already mentioned, Lukacs's students, such as János Kis or György Bence, were initially committed to Lukács's project, but in the 1980s, under the banner of liberalism, they became the main advocates of capitalist restoration. They came to believe that democracy and capitalism were synonymous. We of course did not fall into this trap.

RN: *How did the Marxist theory of social formations inform your analysis of the transition? How did it differ from the other dissident currents at the time?*

TK: Eastern Europe is an area with a very specific conjunction of semi-peripheral gentry capitalism and autocratic traditions: in the definition of the historian Emil Niederhauser it extends from the Baltic region, through Poland and Hungary, down to Croatia. This 'belt', which he refers to as 'Central Eastern Europe', is clearly delineated from the three other sub-regions of Eastern Europe: the Russian-Ukrainian-Belorussian ('Eastern Eastern Europe'), the Balkans (without Croatia and Slovenia) , and 'Western Eastern Europe' (the Czech Republic, Croatia and Slovenia), which is the most 'bourgeoisified' region.

The theory of social formations was essential in our analysis of contemporary world history, and this methodological background certainly played a role in the prognosis that a group of historians made, even in a small country like Hungary, that on the basis of this theory, the *restorative changes of regimes* of 1989-91 would not lead to the celebrated 'catching-up' to the West that the ideologues spoke of.

It was clear that the 1989 project of 'catching-up' development was nonsense in the theoretical sense, and served only political goals, much like

the later phantasmagoria about the 'end of history'. In a large part of the Eastern European region, including of course Poland and Hungary, 'catching-up' and the whole project of a bourgeois democracy was doomed to failure from the very beginning. We argued that the new, oligarchic (we called it 'nomenclatura') capitalism can only function through the maintenance of authoritarian regimes in line with Eastern European-Russian traditions draped in nationalist robes – even under European-American patronage. The statement that Russia in 1917 lacked the social preconditions for a bourgeois democratic transformation is spectacularly confirmed by the fact that even now, in the nearly 30 years since 1989, no such regime could be established in Hungary. It was evident for us even in 1989 that it is impossible to build a bourgeois democracy without a democratic bourgeoisie. It is impossible to create a democratic bourgeoisie from above, by the state. The transitology and modernisation theory and terminology, let alone the various concepts of totalitarianism, always contain – overtly or covertly – several old and new characteristics of subordination to the global capitalist system.

Historians cannot be surprised at the formation of these authoritarian regimes which have been historically determined in the region, both from a national and global perspective. The intellectual 'return' of these regimes to the historical antecedents of the interwar era, to the cult of Horthy, in a completely different world and social structure is not at all paradoxical. For Eastern Europe then and now is defined by its semi-peripheral position in the world-system.

Already at the beginning of the twentieth century, system-critical historiography could not imagine 'catching-up' on a capitalist basis. Lenin was right when he underlined the plundering and parasitic character of modern capitalist accumulation. 'The epoch of imperialism', he wrote, 'is an epoch in which the world is divided among the great privileged nations which oppress all the others.' However, the local ruling classes and privileged groups are also interested in the maintenance of this world order. In spite of the great economic and social changes over the past hundred years, capitalism has failed to solve any of its major contradictions, which may lead to the destruction of humankind.

In a structural sense, contemporary debates about the concept and nature of neoliberal capitalism remind us of the polemics that were conducted one hundred years ago (regarding the accumulation of capital, the end of capitalism, the elimination of crisis under capitalism, the modes of management of capitalism – i.e., Stalinism, fascism, New Deal – the characteristics of imperialism, Kautsky's theory of ultraimperialism, world government, etc.). I think a historian who deals with global history cannot

avoid these debates. The essence of Marxism is to scientifically describe the structure and the exploitative system of capitalism and to work out ways to move beyond it.

Therefore 1989 as a 'conservative revolution' should have been foreseeable, and its reactionary nature fit all the specificities of Eastern European development. Like Isaac Deutscher, or Lukács in his time, Marxist circles did not press for an immediate destruction of the state socialist system in 1989 because we predicted that the change of system would result in the oligarchic, ethno-nationalist 'gangster capitalism' typical of the semi-periphery of the global system. In 1989–90 we saw our main task as protecting and representing the cause of labour's self-defence, the formation of workers' councils.

And yet the socio-political substance of the change of regimes was misunderstood, misinterpreted by many even on the left in the West, from radicals to social democrats. It is widely known that our friend Ernest Mandel actually felt the fever of a new socialist revolution in 1989 though, it must be added, he later had the courage to re-assess his position. The most typical narrative explained the events as a 'rectifying revolution' – this was what Habermas was arguing – which carries the people back from a failed experiment to the world of bourgeois democracy. 'Transitology' – the main paradigm that dominated the literature in the 1990s – advocated a 'catching-up development' which for the Eastern European masses and politicians meant 'catching up' with the Western European levels of consumption and material prosperity once they implemented Western European types of political institutions and 'introduced' capitalism in the region. This was, of course, illusory.

'Catching-up development' has been criticised for its theoretical shortcomings by many critical thinkers who have pointed out the ideological and teleological implications of this 'theory'. The assumption that Eastern Europe can catch up with the Western European capitalist countries economically and socially proved to be fundamentally wrong. One can indeed argue that in some respects the West has become 'Easternised' (in terms of the shrinking of the welfare state, a growing precariat, and the appearance of ethno-nationalistic and populist political parties)

What we could observe from Budapest to Moscow and from Moscow to Warsaw in proximity to the events, evidenced that there was a ferocious battle unfolding between various factions of the local elites and global representatives of capital around the redistribution of power and property, over the head of society. Already in 1989, we believed that all of this could lead at best to new types of ethno-nationalist authoritarian regimes

descending on the region.

The regime-change elites all wanted to make us believe the opposite, and to do so specifically in regard to two related questions: One was pushing the notion that the question of ownership was not important, as workers are only interested in good wages. The other concerned democracy. They introduced the rule of law, but placed employment under the control of capital. They killed the first move with the second. We were sure of two things, nevertheless, and this knowledge we deepened over time: the question of ownership is the question of questions, because it simultaneously concerns both production and consumption, unemployment and exclusion on the scale of society as a whole. Capital is not afraid of occupied spaces and occupied streets but of occupied workplaces. Here capital can accept no compromise – either concerning worker-ownership, workplace occupation, or self-governing democracy. And all of this was justified by the asinine ideology of catching up with the West, without even bothering about the fact that it was Stalin who had originally come up with this idea. That is all that need be said about who had illusions about what.

We never forgot that social self-government has a rich historical store of experience regionally and globally, and it is no coincidence that capital and the state repeatedly had to repress such experiments. We believe that humankind can find no other way out of this system of incurable structural crisis under the rule of capital. The task we had set out to accomplish so many years ago, though under changed conditions, still stands before us here.

The second issue concerns how capitalism still underperforms old state socialism in a number of countries in many respects, which inevitably contributes to its discrediting in the eyes of the people. Quite when all of this will come to boiling point cannot be foreseen. Without any favourable external conditions, for example, an upturn in social and working class struggles throughout Europe and elsewhere, no significant change can be expected in our region.

RN: *What were the political lessons you and your comrades drew from this internal fight within the MSZP? These sorts of questions have recurred time and time again throughout the history of our movement. For example, the debates on 'entryism' in the Trotskyist movement; the question of whether revolutionaries should enter the British Labour Party now that Corbyn is at the helm, which expresses a certain politicisation taking place amongst a layer of people in British society; whether it was correct for revolutionaries to intervene in the Syriza project, and so forth?*

TK: I believe that there can be no 'resurrection' of the left without European and international cooperation. Venezuela, Brazil, Greece, etc. – their experiences show us not only that socialism cannot be created in isolated countries, but even capitalism as a universal mode of production is not really possible in an isolated country. Great Britain is no exception. The breakup of capitalist private property will hardly be on the agenda for a Labour victory. Without changing property ownership and the control over the movement of capital, serious change cannot happen.

We all know the history of the British Labour Party – there has been a left and a right throughout its history – but revolutionaries have learned from history that this party is unable to develop socialism in Great Britain. I mention here just three main reasons for this. The first is the Labour Party's extensive intertwining with the bourgeois state and the large groups of social democrats in it who are committed to the current order. Second, the Labour Party has no alternative anti-capitalist economic programme – it merely promises to 'reload' the welfare state. Third, the collapse of the Soviet Union removed the historical challenge of a socialist alternative, which weakened the position of labour in the core countries as well. Nevertheless, political and organisational strength can be gained for workers' self-defence against capital and the state if there is a Labour victory. Therefore, the dilemma for revolutionary organisations, the dilemma of 'outside or inside', always arises in times like these when there is a shift to the left.

Since the system change in Hungary, this dilemma no longer exists, since the MSZP has gradually become an appendage of the state and capital, and there is no situation that could purge those politicians from the party whose 'livelihoods' are dependent upon being such an appendage. When the MSZP was formed in autumn of 1989, its objective was still democratic socialism, because at that point in time our anti-capitalist platform was very strong. We were then gradually dislodged from the organisational centre, and the party leadership (under Horn) embarked on restoring capitalism, accomplishing the turn to neoliberalism and entering NATO. Things turned even worse after Horn, and the war criminal Tony Blair became the explicit model for Ferenc Gyurcsány. Neoliberalism is now inscribed into the soul of the MSZP. Under a left-wing banner, it pursued a right-wing austerity programme that ultimately undermined its legitimacy among working people and created the conditions for the two-thirds parliamentary majority that Orbán achieved in the 2010 elections. Germany's and Austria's social democratic parties exemplify many of the same devolutionary tendencies.

The overriding lesson we learned from our battle within the MSZP was that without working-class people, without a social base in the class,

without social movements, and so forth, a serious revolutionary organisation is impossible. During the transition and into the 1990s, working-class consciousness and political activity was declining, not rising. In the Kádár regime the working class had a real chance to be part of the middle class: they could buy flats, build houses, be the owners of weekend cottages, and purchase durable consumer goods. Undoubtedly, the exclusion from the political sphere reinforced material and consumer values, which led to the erosion of the propagated revolutionary consciousness. In the 1990s there was a gradual impoverishment of the bulk of the socialist working class; this, however, failed to translate into political action, thanks to the former de-politicisation of the working class and the lack of political parties that could organise the workers. In addition, almost all politicians believed in the 'catching-up development': that the Eastern European new capitalist societies could 'catch up' with the consumption levels of the advanced Western countries. This illusion contributed to the lack of working-class activism after 1989.

Let us be clear: it is not the old Communist Party that needs to be re-established; instead we need work on the defence of labour and social opposition to capital, as this is the right terrain for the battle. And here by the term 'working class' I refer to the absolute majority of the population, those working for wages or who are unemployed, exactly in the same way as Marx understood this. A new party can only be born out of a new labour movement.

We never accepted the privatisations of public services and nationalised industries, and I left the Left Platform in the beginning of 2009 because I understood that we could not fight for our position any longer. Everything was buried under neoliberalism. I never gave up my criticism of the privatisations and of oligarchic capitalism; I was an independent thinker in this respect. I understood that the MSZP as a force of the left was finished. The Hungarian Socialist Party is a bourgeois party of the centre. Today it resembles many of the former 'social democratic' parties: hollowed out bureaucracies with no roots in the working-class movement.

RN: *What do you see as new about the Orbán regime compared to the regimes that came before it?*

TK: International conditions have played an important role in the formation of this regime. Both the EU and the USA have persistently taken a paternalistic attitude in criticising Viktor Orbán's government for its anti-democratic, authoritarian political moves, its concentration of power, its open anti-Semitism and anti-Roma sentiments. However, they have never attacked its legitimacy, since the government maintains a low budget

deficit, pays back debt as scheduled, and gives large-scale tax exemptions to multinationals. The majority of the population does not know about this since much of the media is controlled by Orbán. We should understand that the Orbán regime is the embodiment of the new populist far right, which is capable of implementing restrictive neoliberal policies under the banner of anti-globalist ideological campaigns, and which stresses the defence of European 'Christian values'.

By now it is well recognised that the Eastern European and Soviet system change was inseparable from the neoliberal restructuring of the global capitalist system and from the new forms and challenges of multinational capitalist power. The solution of the 'communist reformers' to the Soviet Union's inability to compete economically and militaristically against the West was to 'integrate' into capitalism with the help of the core Western countries. A regime like Orbán's is the ultimate logical consequence of this.

The main aims of the state in the beginning of the socialist period were the elimination of the national bourgeoisie and the abolition of private property. It was illegal to trade state property. The new system acts in the opposite direction. While in 1987 the democratic opposition still spoke of 'mixed ownership', by 1990 all major political forces supported full-scale privatisation.

This first era, which was mainly dominated by the socialist-liberal coalition, established the first 'generation' of native capitalists. Fidesz at first presented itself as a critic of the ills of privatisation but it soon became evident that they merely wanted to create their own bourgeoisie. They continued to privatise communal services, land, and other types of property in favour of the new bourgeoisie, which the government has itself created.

The newly introduced bourgeois class has flourished in the Fidesz era since it first got its capital from public funds; it has an especially parasitic character. Under a nationalist banner and with the help of the upper strata of society, certain groups of the renewed power elites are today trying to make their privileges inheritable, thereby avoiding competition with foreign capital and the protest of Hungarian society. Fidesz only criticised liberal capitalism insofar as the liberal bourgeoisie was connected to foreign capital or other political forces (social democrats or liberals). It has no objection to the strengthening of its own bourgeoisie; in fact, its present policy has been targeted at the creation of a loyal 'service class', which happens to be bourgeois. As a result, it has restructured the system of distribution and deepened and widened the social-cultural inequalities of society. The same can be seen across the region: in Ukraine, Latvia, Bulgaria, Belarus, and Romania.

We are not surprised at the authoritarian turn taken by the regimes in Eastern Europe since the new oligarchic capitalism can only be maintained through authoritarian means. As I have said, one cannot build a bourgeois democracy without a democratic bourgeoisie. *Eszmélet* developed several prognoses for this already by the time of the regime changes.

The new ruling class pinned its hope on Orbán's 'Christian-national' government: it represents their values, social interests, and poor culture, while privileging their capture of budgetary resources. These layers of the new ruling class specifically fell back on government support because they did not know how to discipline the constantly growing masses of unemployed and impoverished workers. In other words: how can an impoverished society be restrained and disciplined under a recurring economic crisis?

The social-liberal coalition that governed prior to Fidesz from 2002 to 2010 had no solution, oscillating as it did between old-fashioned 'routine' neoliberal economic policy and propaganda based on EU gobbledegook. Hence their political representation lost its base, and it dissolved into a shrunken group of irrelevant 'survival' politicians. While the far right (Jobbik) gained strength, the 'Christian-National' coalition of Fidesz and the Christian Democratic People's Party won the 2010 elections on a super majority mandate that allowed them to enforce their own 'solution' to the nation's problems. Since then, Jobbik has changed its image to downplay its racism, its anti-Semitism, and violent hostility to the Roma. Subsequently, Fidesz has shifted to the right to pick up the votes of the far-right in the 2018 spring elections.

In Hungary and other Eastern European countries, those in power soon came to understand the need to introduce an authoritarian regime which would hollow out the parliamentary form and political-party system. They promised undisturbed mechanisms of governance to both the European leadership and the Hungarian public in return for European legitimation of their so-called 'system of national cooperation'. Everyone who could or would not fit into such a framework came to be considered an enemy of the nation: communists, atheists, liberals, Jews, Roma, and foreigners and all of their supposed 'patrons'. The anti-Semitic campaign against György Soros is a classic example of populist demagogy comprising the 'struggle' against multinational capital, as is the fight against refugees and migrants symbolising national self-defence against 'aliens'. Nevertheless, it is very doubtful that Orbán will continue to block immigrants from entering the country; ten per cent of working-class youth have left Hungary in a very short space of time. Capital needs new cheap labour and thus refugees. This will in turn decrease the price of the labour force. Many believe that it is the

'liberals' and 'socialists' who are bringing the immigrants in, but in reality it is capitalism that produces immigration by uprooting people in and outside Europe, while the bloody wars of the US and NATO produce refugees.

The elections in April 2018 demonstrated the conservative, backward nature of the country, with Fidesz winning two-thirds of parliamentary seats. The nationalist party stoked the fears of the poor strata of the population in rural areas with populist, far-right anti-migrant propaganda. In Budapest, the anti-Orbanist opposition won, but in the absence of any real left-wing opposition.

RN: *Despite the dire situation you have described, there have still been sparks of resistance to the Orbán regime. For instance, the protests against the closing of the Central European University (CEU), the struggles of public sector workers, the fight against the closure of the Lukács Archive. What opportunities do you see for resistance in the coming period?*

TK: The closing of the Lukács Archive symbolises the profound hatred of Marxism and socialism. Not long ago the statue of Lukács erected after 1989 was demolished. The struggle to protect CEU has also been lost. Political liberals have no real social roots in Hungarian society.

The main political question in Hungary at the moment tells you a lot about the severity of the situation. On the one hand, you have those liberals and social liberals who want to collaborate with Jobbik against Orbán; on the other, there are those who think this is insanity. The former orientation totally discredits 'progressive' forces, and from this perspective it logically follows that they do not have any kind of economic programme that can challenge Orbán.

The mainstream liberals and 'socialists' speak only of political and juridical problems, they speak only about the 'restoration of democracy' in Hungary, but for the majority of people in Hungary, democracy is about social, economic, and political rights and practical possibilities. The most the 'socialists' can speak about is some kind of neo-Keynesianism, which I believe is impossible within our historical conjuncture and in the region. In Hungary and elsewhere in Eastern Europe, people feel that the 'oppositional parties' are not proposing any serious alternatives, much like everywhere else in the world. In Eastern Europe the social democratic vision of a new 'welfare state' is nothing but a shallow utopia lacking any material and social basis. In Eastern Europe the welfare state was – state socialism. Do we really want to go back to it?

Another decisive question is whether a 'New Left' emerges with the strength to challenge the hold of mainstream liberalism on our region. The

best grassroots organisations deal with the problem of poverty; but how can they defend this society against capital, against the state, and so forth? These small organisations are very important, but they do not have a political party. And because the poorest stratum of society will not vote, these organisations do not have enough social weight to have a meaningful impact on politics. However, they are morally, politically, and, in every sense of the word, very good, potentially anti-capitalist, organisations. But there is little practical experience to demonstrate that the precariat can be organised at all. Historical experience suggests that the subproletariat in its ultimate despair may support any political force that exhibits strength and promises support (as with the rise of ethno-nationalistic, right-wing populist parties).

RN: *Could you tell us a bit more about these organisations?*

TK: Unfortunately, the anti-capitalist and anti-systemic organisations and networks are deeply divided among themselves. One can distinguish three currents: the Hungarian United Left or Magyar Egyesült Baloldal (Mebal), which brings together groups such as Attac Hungary, Foundation Hungarian Social Forum, etc. Most of its initiators and activists are Marxist intellectuals, mainly of an older generation. The members and supporters amount to a few hundred. As is the case with similar groups in Western Europe and Russia, this network is not, for now, concerned with the founding of a political party but focused on social projects that are meant to serve the protection of the lower classes. The other key task of the anti-capitalist left is to spread the idea, theory, and practical tools of social self-defence against capital. In public statements, Mebal emphasises its rejection of the foundation of new political parties under current conditions, because it considers it impossible for the radical left to get anywhere close to parliamentary representation without significant financial means and infrastructure, and especially without widespread popular support. I repeat: According to Mebal, a leftist turn can only be imagined if the question of property is placed at the centre of the struggle; we need to start a fight for the legalisation of communal property forms, productive-economic self-governance, which goes beyond market relations.

The second significant current is the party Green Left (Zöld Baloldal). The Green Left was formed in 2009 as an association of the Hungarian Workers' Party of 2006 (Magyarországi Munkáspárt 2006), a member of the Party of the European Left, and other groups; from 2009 to 2015 it was a member of the Greens – European Free Alliance. The party has never managed to cross the electoral threshold.

The third camp in the anti-systemic left consists of anarchist and anarcho-

communist groups, which compete amongst each other. These groups attack both the state and any traditional form of political organisation. They embody the idea of the left as political subculture. Happenings reported in the liberal press are more important to many of them than mass action. The representatives of this camp see themselves as anti-fascist and anti-racist.

All these groups are part of the region's anti-capitalist traditions, which through the self-organisation of society want to disconnect themselves from capitalism. Those traditions can be traced back to 1905, 1917 and 1989-1991 in Russia and the Soviet Union, to the years 1945-1947 in Eastern Europe in general, to the Yugoslav experiment, and later to the workers' wing of Solidarnosc in Poland and the self-organised workers' councils and workers' committees in Hungary in 1956 which strove for the socialisation of state property. Under the pressure of the neoliberal global order and capitalist restoration in Eastern Europe, however, it is hardly possible to powerfully reconnect to these radical experiments of self-organisation. Nevertheless, even today, years after the insurrection of 1956, the Hungarian state expends a great deal of energy in disowning the memory of 1956. A propaganda campaign as has never before been seen, alongside mega-conferences at universities, are spreading the Fidesz programme of 'national understanding' and the message of legitimising the current system. At the same time, since 1989 the tradition of the workers' councils of 1956 is being either completely concealed or falsified. This is more evidence for the extreme weakness of the labour and trade union movement still 25 years later. Nationalism is the best and most effective weapon against socialism. We can see it in the light of all historical experiences.

RN: *So despite the weaknesses you have identified, do you see a possibility that things could take a turn for the better for the left?*

TK: The key question is whether or not it is possible in today's situation to build up 'organised centres' of anti-capitalism. This is not about building a bureaucratic apparatus. These 'centres' are the self-organisations of producers. The idea of a network-like organisation, which already appears in Lenin's writings, has a certain genius to it, both in an ideological-theoretical and a practical-political sense, for it searches out the weak points of the capitalist system. The network to which I am referring includes features of a voluntary organisation during the process of creating workplace-based and neighbourhood-based social communities. The real anti-capitalist content comes when human communities are organised in the field of production as well. This is the essence of the Russian revolutionary experience: namely, anti-capitalism and the change of property relations.

We should not conceive of parties as political parties but as aids to create an anti-systemic alternative. The bourgeois parliament is unfit to realise any kind of alternative socialist vision. Whoever does not understand this will understand little of the history of the past century. The fundamental goal of the party that I refer to is the advocacy of a social development that is organised from below. Bourgeois democracies maintain the rule of the various elite groups, but the party should represent the remaining 80% of the people and advance the new society. This is impossible in a bourgeois parliament. It is the lesson of the Russian Revolution for today.

Over a hundred years ago the purely political revolution (without an economic and social revolution) – which in our days is no longer possible – started out from such an 'organised centre'. Today capitalist exploitation in Europe is organised in a different way, the crisis has a different structure; therefore, the 'organised centres' also need to take on a different shape from those in Lenin's time. It is likely that 'civil movements' will replace the political organisations that grew detached from the producers: new movements, which are organised for the solution of concrete economic and political-power issues in local and wider contexts. There is a general declining trust in party officials who are paid regular salaries for their work. Without a wider social self-organisation the total destruction of humankind could become a realistic scenario. A powerful anti-capitalist movement without a labour movement is impossible. In a situation in which capital and the state effectively keep social movements away from the workplaces, comprehensive attempts at organisation involving the sphere of work would be of particular importance.

However, the most complicated problem is that today's anti-systemic organisations are not reaching the young workers and have not even given top priority to this. The capitalist organisation of labour has been fragmenting the organised resistance of the working class, and its consciousness has been effectively manipulated by the ethno-nationalist and racist propaganda eclipsing the outlook of socialist class struggle; moreover, capital intends to form new military zones worldwide, which always result in destruction and mass flight. These masses are being configured as the new enemy: as Orbán stated recently at the inauguration of a monument: 'our main enemies are the migrants, the Soros-plan and Marx'. The 'Soros-terv' ('Soros Plot') alleges mythical global forces, which seek to destroy European civilisation through the settlement of migrants in Europe. From Trump to Orbán, in defence of capital, there is a great variety of 'new' images of the 'enemy'.

RN: *You mentioned Lenin, which brings me to my final question: you have claimed that 'the main elements of Lenin's Marxism are relevant even today'. Could you elaborate on how Lenin's Marxism is relevant to the political conjuncture today in both Hungary and elsewhere?*

TK: I believe the main ways in which Lenin can 'speak to us' today can be briefly summarised as follows, under the rubric of the class struggle against nationalism and capital:

The challenge for today's left is the constitution a new social subject, independent of liberalism, within the dispersed masses of working and oppressed people. It is unavoidable that the left will have to do the painstakingly hard work of developing large-scale organisations from very small ones, combined with developing a radical socialist programme, both at the local and global level. The work of Lenin is indispensable in this regard. It is impossible to build such a left within a small country in an isolated manner. Without anti-capitalist, anti-systemic traditions there is also no internationalist movement as we learn from the intellectual heritage of Lenin.

I also believe it is of the utmost importance that the left restores the political and moral credibility of Marxism, since many people in the former socialist countries identify the 'left' with the upper strata of society. It is all the more urgent because thanks to this mass disillusionment, many workers are joining the far-right political forces.

An important element of Lenin's political and moral integrity was the courage to take a stand against the system, to go against every injustice, every crime that this system inflicts upon people.

Last but not least, Lenin is relevant in terms of the need to create a link between revolutionary intellectuals and the working class (bridging the gap between theory and practice). This is crucial in conceiving the transition to a world 'beyond capital' (István Mészáros), as there is no solution within the capitalist framework. Poverty, inequality, unemployment, environmental destruction, war, and genocide are inescapable aspects of this barbaric system. Lenin is the 'theoretician of practice' (as Gramsci put it) – his 'actuality' consists in raising these problems to the level of a political resolution in the organisational form of the revolutionary party. This, however, took place in the era of revolutions. For our conjuncture we too have to prepare for a new revolutionary era, because it will not come about by itself. We should not be afraid to be accused of 'utopianism' for holding onto such a framework. One thing is certain, however: the key to the 'leap beyond capital' lies not in the alienated sphere of bourgeois politics and its violence and treachery

but in bringing revolutionary politics into the sphere of production, into the sphere of everyday life. Lenin would say we must not only Occupy Wall Street, but the factories and our workplaces as well. Realising this goal, as I have already mentioned, will require much hard work and sacrifice. Within our present conjuncture, recognising the opportunities that allow us to start breaking down the divide between revolutionary intellectuals and the working-class movement, that is where the 'alternative' is situated, and the possibility that a new 'renaissance' of Marxism will be born. I of course am not conceiving of such a revival in a deterministic, teleological sense; history, rather, is an alternative process in which socialism has great chances because there are no other real alternatives to capitalism. This is the reason why Marx is so reviled in Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, in the absence of a socialist perspective humankind might face total self-destruction. This is also a realistic alternative.

Luxemburg, Lenin, Bauer – The Left and the National

Walter Baier

With bitterness and incomprehension Rosa Luxemburg observed the nationalist upsurge accompanying the disintegration of the European multinational states in the wake of the First World War: 'Right now nationalism is a trump card […].' 'Mouldered corpses from hundred-year-old graves, filled with new spring fever – today is Walpurgis Night on the nationalist Bald Mountain',[1] she wrote, while a European order emerged from the rubble of the war, which twenty years later would fall apart in a still greater catastrophe.

After 1945 the magic formula for restraining wars and nationalisms was *integration* (at first in the framework of two competing social models, but after 1991 on the basis of victorious capitalism). Yet, all optimistic rhetoric invoking a 'post-national age'[2] to the contrary, we can see today that Europe is by no means done with the 'national question'. In fact, the financial and economic crisis, and still more the neoliberal and authoritarian policies with which governments and the European institutions confront them, have resulted in a loss of legitimacy for integration. Since these phenomena were not expressed in a Europeanisation of the 'social conflict' they were articulated in the growth of nationalism.

Every generation has to work with its own concepts to deal with the problems confronting it. But in doing so there is a risk of the historical dimension being lost to view, as when the term racism becomes naturalised in Europe to characterise the tendency of societies to seal themselves off and exclude others, although the fact that the decrease in family aid for Eastern European EU citizens enacted by Austria's right-wing government has met with broad approval from the electorate shows that people who see the welfare state threatened by Afghan, Syrian, and Iraqi refugees are also not inclined to share it with Slovak, Bulgarian, or Romanian labour immigrants.

Racist prejudice, colonial arrogance, and nationalist egotism comprise the symbiotic sides of a social pathology. In order to understand it in its different expressions from country to country it is not enough to subsume it under a general term; what is required is an analysis of the specifics.

Eric Hobsbawm (1917-2012), the British historian with old Austrian roots, deemed it appropriate to recall at the beginning of his study on *Nations and Nationalisms* 'the first noteworthy attempt to subject the issue to a dispassionate analysis': 'the important and under-appreciated debates among the Marxists of the Second International on what they called the "national question"' involving 'the best minds of the international socialist movement – and they could boast some of the most brilliant thinkers – [who] tackled this problem: Kautsky and Luxemburg, Otto Bauer and Lenin, to name only a few'.[3]

But the historical context was different then. Europe's crisis today is not the result of a war but of the adjustment stress that societies are experiencing. The arrival on Europe's shores of people fleeing miserable conditions of life is a symptom of a worldwide upheaval perceived in our countries as if through a camera obscura. While the EU with its 500 million inhabitants appears to be overstrained with the integration of 4 million refugees, the real problem is that after centuries of colonialism and neocolonialism the 500 million have to integrate themselves in a world that will soon be inhabited by 10 billion people whose basis of life are threatened by climate change and who are demanding their share of prosperity.

One can imagine Rosa Luxemburg's incomprehension in the face of today's debates on immigration restriction and closed borders. What would she think, hearing the word 'cosmopolitanism' once again being used disparagingly in connection with adjectives like 'elitist' and 'privileged'?

The two extremes in the debate

Certainly, Rosa Luxemburg's position in the contemporary debates was particular and represented one extreme among the possible answers to the 'national question'. To the young socialist movement of her native country Poland, partitioned among three reactionary great powers, she gave this advice in 1908: 'Social Democracy is therefore called upon not to realise the right of nations to self-determination but only the right to self-determination of the working class, of the exploited and oppressed class: of the proletariat.'[4]

Rosa Luxemburg's socialist-cosmopolitan vision went even further. She objected to the concept of 'national–cultural autonomy' in which Austro-Marxists saw the solution of the national antagonisms of the Danube Monarchy, by approvingly quoting Kautsky: 'When socialist society

provides the masses with an education, it also gives them the ability to speak several languages, the universal languages, and therefore to take part in the entire *international* civilisation and not only in the separate culture of a certain linguistic community.'[5]

Rosa Luxemburg was no moralising dreamer. She derived her position from the economic tendency of development she discerned in contemporary capitalism. Certainly, her vision of a 'final amalgamation of the whole of civilised humanity within one language and nationality'[6] can be taxed with utopianism, but not without recognising the great credit she deserves for having indicated a universally united humanity as the direction in which socialists think of the future.

Rosa Luxemburg's cosmopolitanism clashed with V. I. Lenin who, hoping to use the national question as a crowbar to demolish Tsarist autocracy, formulated the counterposition according to which the core of a socialist understanding of equal national rights was 'the freedom to secede, the freedom to form an independent national state'.[7]

Luxemburg and Lenin – cosmopolitanism and the unconditional right to form a state made up the two extreme points of an axis around which all theoretical and practical attempts at a solution of the national problems, regardless of the vocabulary they used or use, turned up to the present day.

In this regard, with his concept of 'national-cultural autonomy' aimed at realising equal national rights while maintaining a multinational state, the Austrian Otto Bauer occupied a middle position. To Luxemburg, with whom he politically agreed in rejecting a Polish national movement and whose economic arguments he even viewed as fundamental for a scientific consideration of the Polish question', he objected that 'there is a good deal more that scholarship has to say on the Polish question.[8] […] What should rather be investigated is how the intellectual being of the people, their opinions, desires, and ideas, have been altered by the changed conditions of production.'[9]

The intensity of the polemics between the greats of the socialist International can easily distract us from their common theoretical foundation. They recognised, for one thing, that nations represented more than ideological mirages for legitimising an existing state or the struggle for such a state and that they were elements of the historically given social and political reality.

But what is a nation?[10] For Karl Kautsky, the nation was essentially based on a linguistic community. Stalin, in his work published in 1913, *Marxism and the National Question*, undertook to 'exhaustively' define the complex phenomenon in two lines, namely as 'a historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory,

economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture. […] It is only when all these characteristics are present together that we have a nation'.[11] As the antithesis of Stalin's scheme, Otto Bauer's definition is often cited, according to which the nation can be 'defined as a community of character that has grown not out of a similarity of fate, but out of a community of fate'.[12] Much has been written on the merits and weaknesses of this definition. Remarkably, hardly any attention has been paid to Bauer's own relativisation of it in the preface to the 1924 edition of *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy*, according to which: 'The focus of my theory of the nation in fact lies not in the definition of the nation, but in the description of the process of integration out of which the modern nation has developed.'[13]

The second point on which the socialist theoreticians agreed is on giving precedence, following Marx and Engels, to the class struggle above the national struggles. In Rosa Luxemburg this results from the overall system of her thinking, as was clear from the above-quoted passage in which the only right of self-determination that counted for her was that of the working class. Lenin, in hundreds of remarks and in revolutionary practice, demonstrated that the right of nations to self-determination written into the programme of his party was something to which he only accorded an instrumental role in the power struggle with Tsarism.

'The Nationalities Programme of the Left'

For the Austro-Marxists, the most complex relationship was that between the national and social questions; in Otto Bauer's words, they viewed national antagonisms as 'transformed class hatred'. For Bauer it came down, as Norbert Leser accurately writes, to 'clearing away the national struggle in order to create room for the class struggle'.[14] However, if the nation was not a chimera but a social reality, clearing it out of the way could not be limited to illuminating or deconstructing something that was illusory; rather it demanded practical solutions to institutionally regulate the coexistence of diverse nations.

With this in mind Austrian Social Democracy established its own nationalities programme in 1899, about which Rosa Luxemburg noted with satisfaction that in it 'the clearly laid out plan for state policy' provides 'a test for the practical solution applied by the party of the proletariat to these difficulties'.[15]

The Nationalities Programme decided in Brno is identified with the concept of 'national-cultural autonomy' developed by Bauer and Karl Renner, according to which each nation should have the right to regulate

its cultural, linguistic, and religious concerns in self-governing bodies to be created.

This is not the place to exhaustively describe Austro-Hungary's complex national relationships. Their complexity is comparable to today's European problems. The paradox was that the nationalities whose conflicts dominated domestic politics ever since 1848 did not exist as constitutional subjects.[16] The multinational state was composed of a conglomerate of dynastic acquisitions ('Crown Lands'), which in turn were inhabited by nationally intermixed populations. Consequently, any democratic reform, the introduction of universal, direct, and equal suffrage as well as the attempted or successful realisation of equal national rights on the basis of the *territorial principle* ('one nation – one territory'), gave rise to very destructive quarrels between the nations and, in the Crown Lands, between majority and minority populations.

The Social Democrats reacted to this obstacle with two innovative ideas for democratising the state. One, the *personality principle*, as a substitute for the territorial principle, was to anchor national rights as rights existing regardless of place of residence. National self-governing bodies, which would exist alongside a parliament elected by universal, direct, and equal suffrage, were to represent all communities of one and the same nation scattered throughout the different Crown Lands. This was the federal state of nationalities. To put national-cultural autonomy into practice, Renner provided for decentralising the Empire, which would transfer the power of the Crown Lands to largely autonomous districts with populations as nationally homogeneous as possible, which he assumed would considerably defuse the debilitating strife around school languages and administrative posts.[17]

But this finely chiselled plan to save the supranational state became obsolete the moment the Emperor decided in 1914 to force the cohesion of his Empire through war. While Renner continued to work on his concept until the end of the war, by 1917 Bauer brought himself to the realisation that a democratic solution of the nationalities problem by now was only possible by recognising the right of what had been Austrian nationalities to now found independent states.[18] On this basis he wrote the *Nationalities Programme of the Left* – still in opposition to the party directorate but which was adopted by the party shortly thereafter. The recognition of the right of the nationalities to self-determination by Social Democracy, which emerged as the strongest party in German-speaking Austria, arrived too late to permit Austro-Hungary's transformation into a federation of independent states, though it was a precondition for the relatively peaceful manner in which

the Empire disintegrated. But the late revenge of the Habsburgs was such that, as Bauer and Renner had predicted, the nationalities question was not solved by the formation of nation-states but only displaced, and the problem of majorities and minorities in the new states further smouldered and then exploded in the conflagration of the Second World War.

The fact that Luxemburg, Lenin, and finally also Renner and Bauer, started from more or less identical theoretical premises but derived very different strategic implications from them suggests that their differences, even if formulated ideologically, were mostly motivated by the differing contexts of their activity. Lenin, who wanted to smash an autocratic state, and Bauer, Renner, and Luxemburg who despite the differences among them wanted to come to power in their states through a democratic road.

The old dilemma in a new form

It is apparent that our left is facing the dilemma of deciding between the capitalist integration of Europe and the capitalist nation-state. Some parties prefer to address this issue citing Rosa Luxemburg's logic of a socialist cosmopolitanism while others cling to an absolute claim to national self-determination and independence based on the right Lenin espoused in the specific context of the Russian Revolution.

In his 2011 article for *transform* the Greek political scientist Gerassimos Moschonas called for 'elementary strategic coherence'. 'Either the left opts for a European strategy and manages the political consequences; or else it opts for an anti-Union strategy (leaving the Union, restoring national sovereignty) and copes with the resulting consequences. […] What is incoherent (in fact: deprived of strategic reason) is to opt for a "European" strategy (meaning seeking solutions at the European level) and continuing to use discursive schemes inspired by the insurrectional model; or to opt for a "return to the nation" and claim to be representative of universalism and the world proletariat.'[19]

Moschonas is right in demanding honesty and consistency in the political debate. Nevertheless, the problem is more complicated, and it is not easy to meet the difficult challenge of the Sermon on the Mount, 'You should say "yes! yes!" or "no! no!"; everything beyond this is evil'.

Today the political consequences of the failure of the governments and EU institutions to deal with the capitalist crisis are evident; and clearer and more serious still is their strategy of using the situation to make austerity policy yet more authoritarian. Neither trade unions nor social movements were able to impede this. At the political level Syriza's attempt to realise a democratically legitimated, anti-neoliberal alternative in the framework of

the nation-state was smothered. With this, the illusion that Europe's rudder could be made to change course by the coming to power of a left party in a small, economically overpowered country was brought down to earth, onto the cold terrain of the facts, that is, of the economic and political relation of forces.

The neoliberal elites are paying for the betrayed hopes of integration with the rise of the nationalist right, and the left is paying for its illusions with the growth of Eurosceptic tendencies. Can it be that there is a connection between the two?

To make oneself into a defender of the current European Union is impossible. Changing it within the framework of its treaties and institutions does not look promising. But neither is the counter-proposal credible of renationalising the handling of European problems, that is, delegating them to the 27 national governments that are still the main perpetrators of the failure of EU institutions. What is to be done?

To begin with, it is useful to review the actual intricacy of the problems that can be seen as national.

- The rivalry between Germany and France for hegemony that is flaring up due to Germany's export-driven growth model;
- but also conversely: Germany's and France's dysfunctional claim to a common leadership role in the Europe of 27;
- the chasm opened up by the financial and economic crisis between the economic centre of Europe and the regions, which are degraded to being a periphery;
- the economic, political, and cultural differences between Western and Eastern Europe;
- the intensified disintegrative phenomena in several multinational states of Europe;
- the integration of new national communities that have formed due to immigration and the rightward drift of the indigenous populations.

How can we then prevent national conflicts from once again becoming ways of displacing unresolved social problems?

A couple of conclusions

The first conclusion is that respect for national sovereignty does not stand in opposition to a democratic integration but is its precondition. Although the welfare states, tax systems, labour laws, consumer protection, and the educational and health systems depend on the global contexts, they are still constituted on the level of the nation-state. Any progress in raising European standards and every European initiative for shutting down tax

havens should be welcomed. But this is not the EU's essential vector. With the Treaty of Lisbon neoliberalism was anchored as the basic norm for the European Union. Fighting off the resultant reshaping of states by using all means available through a nationally constituted democracy is neither anti-European nor nationalistic.

The financial waterboarding that brought the Greek government to its knees in July 2015 not only contradicted European solidarity but was at the same time a massive intervention into the national sovereignty of an EU Member State.

It is understandable that socialist parties can decide to weigh the strategic option of exiting the euro or the EU. No one has the right to object to this as long as parties who propose exit for their own country accept the fact that other parties may regard the opposite strategy as being correct for their countries.

Self-determination is not a metaphysical abstraction. It is one thing when Cypriots, Greeks, and the Portuguese defend their right to self-determination, and it is another thing when in France and Germany the cry of national sovereignty is raised. What in the first case is an act of self-defence is in the second a chauvinistic slogan. This of course does not mean that chauvinistic claims only arise in large states, as the nationalist right-wing governments of Central Europe show.

The second and most important conclusion is that we in large and small countries alike have to prohibit any borrowing from nationalism and populism. Just as one cannot initiate alcohol withdrawal by visiting Munich's Oktoberfest, so too we cannot talk ourselves into believing we can defend the solidary social state by desolidarising with refugees and immigrants.

Viewed realistically, the influence of left parties on the continued existence of the euro and the EU should not be overestimated. But we should also abandon any illusion that the left could draw benefits from the disintegration of the EU. From today's vantage point a plausible scenario would not seem to be a dramatic collapse but a torturous, protracted deterioration, such as Austria–Hungary experienced before the First World War. National antagonisms, crippled institutions, ineffectiveness, and above all an obstructed democratisation are not ingredients for a left breakthrough in Europe but for Europe's relapse into nationalism and authoritarianism.

Finally, we should critically re-examine our strategy during the economic crisis.

Initiatives to Europeanise the conflict were certainly begun, but they never took on a dimension that could have relevance for power politics, and the chief responsibility for this lies with the indecisiveness and inner

conflicts of the European Trade Union Confederation, which ought to have been at the head of resistance against this major attack on the rights of wage dependents.

The high point of the political struggle against austerity was reached when Alexis Tsipras took office, which united Europe's left less through action than in the high expectations created. In reality, Syriza stood alone against the unanimous power of international finance capital, the most powerful state of the EU, and Europe's mainstream media. Absolutely no social democratic government came to its aid, and in no country was it possible for left pressure to bring about a change of policy.

There are two opposed interpretations of Syriza's defeat: One is the betrayal thesis whose defenders apparently do not see that it is only keeping alive the illusions that dominated the left from the very beginning; on the other side is the perception that an assessment of the relation of forces today shows that the proclaimed goal of bringing down the Troika was never realistic and that if there had been a realistic consideration of the opportunities and risks the negotiations might even have had a better outcome. If we take this argument seriously we would still have to explain how it could be that more or less all of Europe's left took positions that in only six months turned out to be unrealistic.

But how can we imagine any change at all in the relation of forces in Europe? Nobody disputes the importance of the struggle in the extra-parliamentary, extra-institutional arena in which Europe's left can develop power beyond its institutional anchoring. But where does European civil society find its institutional counterpart to which it can address its demands? There is also no question that the relation of forces within the states is decisive and that accumulated strength there can at a critical point penetrate the European level. Does this mean that an anti-neoliberal breakthrough has to be delayed to that great day on which there are left majorities in sufficiently many and sufficiently large countries? Is the message then that we have to deliver to Europe's peoples that until further notice nothing is achievable beyond a variant of 'neoliberalism with a human face', which Greece's and Portugal's governments are attempting? Is that the gist of the Greek lesson that we have to swallow?

Obviously, there is a component missing in our strategy, namely the mechanism by means of which extra-institutional pressure and changes in the national relations of forces can be transformed into European policy. This missing piece, indispensable for a transformative strategy, is a functioning democracy. Here the most serious error that many pro-Europeans commit is to imagine that a European democracy can only exist by dismantling nation-

state democracies. It is a fatal mistake because the powers that the EU has claimed for itself are not subjected to a parliamentary process at a higher level but disappear into a web of national and European technocracy and thus as a whole lead to a reduction of democracy.

At the European level, democracy requires that power be relocated: from the meeting rooms, in which the heads of state and ministers trade off alleged national interests behind closed doors, to a parliament in which parties present their differing programmes in full view of the public in competing for government responsibility. This would be a parliament selected through universal, direct, secret, and equal elections and endowed with the power to enact laws, pass budgets, guide monetary policy, and choose an executive. It does not make sense that we whose political grandparents won universal suffrage for the working class in the nation–state through decades of long struggles should now content ourselves in Europe with a half democracy and a half parliament.

To the launching of a debate on how a European democracy can link national self–determination to transnational democracy the objection is made that precisely this is the bone of contention with those who want to see less Europe and who although they do not want to see less democracy nevertheless do not want to see more democracy. But the argument is unsound, for the demand for democracy can also underlie a left position that opposes any further expansion of the EU's powers until these are realised under democratic conditions. This would, for example, add an additional dimension to opposition to the militarisation of the European Union, an issue around which the left is united.

Why then should those who prioritise the national orientation in their strategy see those who are fighting for a democratisation of the European Union primarily as ideological opponents and not political partners? And the same can be asked of the latter's attitude towards the former.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Amin, Samir, *Eurocentrism. Modernity, Religion, and Democracy: A Critique of Eurocentrism and Culturalism*, New York, 1990.

Bauer, Otto, *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy* (edited by Ephraim J. Nimni, translated by Joseph O'Donnell (Minneapolis and London, 2000).

Cohn-Bendit, Daniel and Guy Verhofstatt, *Für Europa. Ein Manifest*, Munich, 2012.

Hobsbawm, Eric, *Nations and Nationalisms Since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality*, Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991. German edition: *Nationen und Nationalismus. Mythos und Realität seit 1780*, Frankfurt am Main.

Lenin, V. I., *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination (1914)*, Collected Works, vol. 20, pp. 393-454.

Leser, Norbert ,1968, *Zwischen Bolschewismus und Reformismus*, Vienna.

Luxemburg, Rosa, 'Fragment über Krieg, nationale Frage und Revolution' (1918), in: *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 4, pp. 366–373.

Luxemburg, Rosa, 'Nationalitätenfrage und Autonomie' (Abdruck des Artikels von 1908), in idem, *Internationalismus und Klassenkampf*, Munich, 1971, pp. 220 – 78; 'The National Question and Autonomy', in Horace B. Davis (ed.), *The National Question – Selected Writings of Rosa Luxemburg*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976

Menasse, Robert, *Der Europäische Landbote: die Wut der Bürger und der Friede Europas*, Vienna, 2013.

Moschonas, Gerassimos, 'The European Union and the Dilemmas of the Radical Left', transform 9/2011, <https://www.transform-network.net/publications/yearbook/ overview/article/journal-092011/the-european-union-and-the-dilemmas-of-the- radical-left/>.

Renner, Karl, *Das Selbstbestimmungsrecht der Nationen in besonderer Anwendung auf Österreich*, Leizpig; Deuticke, 1918.

Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, <https://www.marxists.org/reference/ archive/stalin/works/1913/03a.htm#s1>.

NOTES

1   Luxemburg, ‚Fragment über Krieg, nationale Frage und Revolution‘, pp. 367 f.

2   Typical of this viewpoint are Cohn-Bendit/Verhofstadt, *Für Europa Ein Manifest* and Menasse, *Der Europäische Landbote: die Wut der Bürger und der Friede Europas.*

3   Hobsbawm, *Nationen und Nationalismus. Mythos und Realität seit 1780*, p. 12.

4   Luxemburg, 1971, 'Nationalitätenfrage und Autonomie', p. 263.

5   Luxemburg, 1971, p. 248.

6   Luxemburg, 1971, p. 289.

7   Lenin, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, p. 422.

8   Bauer, *The Question of Nationalities and Social Democracy*, p.362.

9   Bauer, p. 362.

10   For a critique of Euro-centric theories of the nation (including those of Marx and Engels), which cannot be elaborated here, Samir Amin's study is indispensable: Samir Amin (1990), *Eurocentrism: Modernity, Religion, and Democracy – A Critique of Eurocentrism and Culturalism.*

11   Joseph Stalin, *Marxism and the National Question*, chapter I.

12   Bauer, p. 101.

13   Bauer, p. 17.

14   Leser, *Zwischen Bolschewismus und Reformismus*, p.254.

15   Luxemburg, 'Nationalitätenfrage und Autonomie', pp.222 f.

16   Renner, *Das Selbstbestimmungsrecht der Nationen in besonderer Anwendung auf Österreich*, p. 34.

17   Renner, p.74.

18   One aspect of Otto Bauer's human and political tragedy was that while he had recognised the right to self-determination of all peoples of the Monarchy he could only conceive of this for the German-speaking Austrians as union with Germany. This was prevented in the peace negotiations of St. Germain by the Allies, specifically France,

but implemented by Hitler's Germany. Even in this instance Bauer's position remained ambivalent. Renner even brought himself to the point of greeting the 'union'. In my view, one of the strangest of the many paradoxes in Austria's political history is the fact that the most important theorists of the national question twice, as party leaders, failed their own state in the application of their theory.

19   Moschonas, 'The European Union and the Dilemmas of the Radical Left'.

The Issue of Immigration – A Crucial Test for the Mosaic Left?[1]

Hans-Jürgen Urban

The concept of the mosaic left repeatedly turns up in discussions about left consensus. It has emerged within the classic question of what constitutes 'left' in the context of contemporary capitalism and who is the subject to which left ideas and hopes are addressed.[2] Long before the considerations dealt with here, the mosaic left's efforts at revitalisation were motivated by the weakness of left politics. As has often been analysed, the left has increasingly taken a beating in the transition from national welfare-state capitalism to globalised financial-market capitalism. Today the setback its politics has suffered appears to discredit 'even the very paradigms with which such politics had traditionally worked'.[3]

The mosaic left as an idea and perspective

A mosaic left cannot accept such a constellation. It seeks to combine within a collectively acting subject, actors who are connected through their fundamental criticism of capitalism and interest in strategies of social transformation. Clearly, this depends on a robust culture of discussion that promotes strategic controversy and at the same time civilises it, subduing its potential for division. Mosaic-left alliances were spurred on by this readiness to conduct controversial debates in a climate of mutual recognition in the interests of creating a new capacity to act. Occasionally, this created the spirit of a fresh start. We could see this for example in the anti-TTIP and Ceta protest movements or in the establishment of institutional loci for left discussion such as the Institute for Solidary Modernity.[4]

Actually, issues like flight and immigration, as well as activism to oppose society's shift to the right, should stimulate the consolidation of a nationwide political alliance. Internationalism and anti-fascism have always created a sense of identity for the left. And that the anti-human rights immigration policy of the government coalition needs to be countered by a left alternative

is felt even in the political centre of the social spectrum. Thus the left ought to use this tailwind to position itself self-confidently.

The immigration question: the endurance test of the mosaic left

But for now it does not look as if the left will be able to pass this test. As if in a burning lens all the lines of division within the social and political left come together in the debates about flight, immigration and the shift to the right. Conflicts around programme and strategy have been carried out with particular acerbity within Die LINKE.[5] The inner-party confrontation around immigration and welfare-state policy has been smouldering for some time now but escalated sharply at the last party congress. The media has perceived Sahra Wagenknecht, co-chair of Die LINKE's Bundestag group, as the figurehead of one of the camps, while Katja Kipping, co-chair of the party, has been identified as the protagonist of the other camp. The first accuses the other side of wrong priorities whose effect is to abandon the losers of neoliberalism to the right-wing populists. And the others answer that this analysis and the political strategy resting on it are racist and have to be combated.

The chasm within the party appears deep. But this is so not only there; in the left in general, beyond parties, the immigration question is evidently creating little consensus and much divisive tension. The conflict flared up again recently on the occasion of a call for 'Solidarity Instead of Homeland' that very quickly garnered more than 15,000 signatures.[6] The centrepiece of the call was a morally emphatic statement against society's rightward shift and the wish to counter it with a loud avowal of solidarity. But the subtext of the message was aimed at the controversy within the party. At the same time it ignited the conflict within the non-party left, which was manifest in the heated debates in social media in the aftermath of the call.[7]

The situation is serious. The mosaic left is in danger of being smashed by the immigration issue before it has even constituted itself. If the prospect of a mosaic–left force is to survive then it is imperative to search for the essentials of a left immigration policy capable of building consensus as well as agreeing on a new culture of discourse.

Immigration is doubtless a key issue of our times to which the left must find an answer – and this apart from the question of how many refugees are annually making their way to Europe. The immediate causes of the migration and refugee movements lie in wars, political dictatorships, and ethnic and religious warfare. But the deep structure of most conflicts lies in the international social relations characterised by an obscene and continually deteriorating unequal distribution of income, wealth, and general life opportunities.

The global economic order cuts off large parts of humanity from the possibility of a life worthy of human beings, while the populations of the welfare societies of the capitalist centres benefit from a bonus in the form of a 'geographic benefit', which opens up other prospects of life to them.[8] If those on top in capitalist societies benefit from a class bonus, which guarantees them income, wealth, and general life advantages by dint of their social position, then a perspective of justice that moves from a nation-state to a global outlook must take account of the privileges based on belonging to specific regions and their societies. These relations divide people in analogous class positions into privileged and discriminated. And it is just as evident that postcolonial structures as well as imperialist intervention on the part of the capitalist centres is stabilising this division up to the present day.

Right-wing populism and the silence of the left

It is clear that more people today want to realise their right to a good life, denied them in their countries of origin, in the world's prosperity zones. From a human-rights perspective it is not an alleged flood of immigration that should agitate society but the question of what happens to people who cannot make it in a Fortress Europe that is sealing itself off in a continually more aggressive way. But the right-wing populism of the political centre being pushed by Bavaria's CSU with muted sympathy in the ranks of the CDU is a deliberate political-cultural derailment without parallel in post-war history. What is being proffered as the 'master plan' for immigration policy[9] resembles a screenplay of activism staged to impress the camp of right-wing voters. Instead of opening legal paths of immigration for people in need, they are consigned to mortal peril in the Mediterranean or the terror of a criminal people-trafficking industry. Anchorage, reception, and transfer camps before or at Europe's borders, or questionable 'transfer procedures' testify to the readiness of allegedly civilised societies to facilely cancel the basics of asylum, immigration, and the human rights of refugees. And by criminalising initiatives such as Lifeline, which simply rescues refugees through sea rescue missions, European governments are squandering their last vestiges of moral capital.

For the political right, to the right of centre, the moral self-discrediting resulting from refugee policy supplies a permanent source of energy. Right-wing populism, seconded by government policy, can be understood as a regressive and staged rebellion against the social, political, and cultural havoc wreaked by capitalism's neoliberal transformation. It is regressive because its narrative propagates a path leading to a societal condition that falls below the achieved standards of political democracy and cultural diversity. This rebellion

against capitalism is staged in the sense that it does not touch capitalism's relations of property and distribution. With it, right–wing populism has for some time now formed itself as a social movement that includes people from all social strata and in which a professionalised ideological right–wing elite fulfils important orientation functions.[10]

On the other hand, traditional left social reformism appears neither able nor willing to put forward progressive politics to answer the need for protection from deprivation and for a modern collective identity. The neoliberalisation of this social reformism and its orientation towards a cosmopolitanism of the middle and upper strata have greatly reduced its feeling for the life situations, interests, and fears of the losers of neoliberalism. Right–wing populism takes advantage of the representation gap to which this has given rise and calls upon insecure individuals as subjects of a national movement that is exhibiting a new spirit of resistance. In this process right–wing populism is encroaching on the rhetorical and political preserves of the left. In a socially opportunistic way rightist strategists are trying to snatch from the left the 'crown jewel of the social question' and to redefine it as an insider–outsider conflict between Germans and immigrants.[11] In expropriating the mosaic metaphor, the model of a 'mosaic right' has been created, aimed at creating a modular, right–wing 'aggregate milieu'.[12]

By contrast, the left is in danger of splitting over the immigration question. It is not easy to reconstruct the contending positions fairly and authentically, for there has been too much use of subtexts, insinuations, and associations, with substantive questions reduced to personal ones. If we reconstruct the logic of the argumentation and the points of collision, separated from individual personalities, in order to distil their potential for a commonality within a mosaic–left perspective, we will see that the controversy, if abstracted to ideal–types, is essentially shaped by two contrary positions.

Human-rights universalism versus welfare-state solidarity?

One position is based on a human–rights universalism that revolves around a right of all people to a good life in the places they choose to live in the world. It corresponds to demands for a human right to unrestricted immigration and for a world without any borders ('open borders'). Its political self–conception as well as its concrete political demands are dominated by the interests of all people who, for whatever reason, have left their home countries and seek their future in Europe. This alignment is accompanied by an unconditional antiracism. It is dominated by narrative interventions that are sustained by a global cosmopolitanism and a normative ethos of creed. To a great extent it foregoes discussion of economic, social, and political–cultural frictions or the

possibly limited capacities of the destination countries to absorb immigration. This universalism has its greatest support in parts of the globalisation-critical movement, professional aid organisations, and scholars and activists with a postmodern socialisation from the post-autonomous-libertarian milieus of the capitalist centres.

By contrast, there are positions that argue from the perspective of the national welfare states of the capitalist centres. They revolve around the traditional guiding principles of social democracy and social-state solidarity. Their focus is above all on the potential or real consequences of unregulated immigration on the labour markets and social security systems of the destination countries. While these positions reject limitations as regards asylum and flight, free labour immigration is also rejected. Voices of this milieu see themselves mainly as advocates of the precarised population groups in danger of social declassing in the destination countries. They warn of intensified dumping competition and forced precarisation of the conditions of work and life as well as of the overstrained social-state institutions. Lately, this rather immigration-sceptical positioning has been complemented by pleas for local patriotism and the preservation of local identities.[13] It is principally anchored in some sections of wage workers, traditionally left-reformist intellectuals, as well as in the tendency within Die LINKE that calls for a 'left collective movement'.

Both positions can claim for themselves lines of reasoning that are perfectly worthy of discussion within a pluralist left. Moreover, alongside personal antipathies and political struggles for hegemony the sharpness of the confrontations results above all from confrontational supercharging and deficiencies, which superimpose different arguments and make agreement difficult.

The open-border position impresses with its empathy for the refugees and the readiness to pose with normative élan the great contemporary problem of immigration. But its indifference to the economic, social, and cultural preconditions for this universalistic solidarity is astonishing.

Human-rights universalism is too facile and simplistic when it ignores questions of the economic or social foundation of a solidary immigration policy or the increasing fears for the future that the losers of globalisation in the destination countries have – or actually considers these fears to be tantamount to a right-wing rejection of solidarity. The always resonant inside-outside axis of conflict is good for very little in either its right or left version. There is no alleged flood of immigration from abroad that is bringing social misery, political terrorism, and cultural alienation to Europe or Germany, as is claimed by the right with the conscious use of lies and

distortions of reality; nor is it inadmissible to think of the interests of wage dependents in the destination countries, as well as distributional and cultural conflicts in the providing of resources, as problems worthy of discussion. What is completely unacceptable is the gesture of moral infallibility with which some interventions by the no-border faction are presented. If the mere addressing of the efforts made in the destination countries to secure the subsistence of the refugees is called a racist definition of the problem then intellectual ignorance triumphs over a left consciousness of problems.

However, focusing on social-state solidarity and the plea for a more functional immigration policy also suffers from misorientations and omissions. Certainly it does not suffer from the other position's blindness to the material and cultural aspects of solidarity. And it is true that references to the rootedness of people in local and regional identities have their place in the debate. But a simple plea for local patriotisms quickly results in an analytically constricted perspective leading to a dead end. This is so not only because people, with their 'plural identities',[14] are perfectly capable of combining a mental anchoring in localities with a universalistic value orientation to the global level. A local-patriotic view of the social state and immigration simply lacks a consciousness of the epoch-making character of the immigration question and a human-rights-oriented empathy for the refugees. And the strict differentiation between asylum and flight, on the one hand, and labour migration, on the other, runs the risk of underestimating the dramatic social situation of those who are fleeing to Europe 'only' for social reasons.

In short, the argument fixated on the social state, although it has its material justification, is, if it stands alone, simply too cold for a social left that wants to create a power to intervene in a highly emotional debate. Moreover, it sometimes puts up with grey zones in its positions, which are, rightly, seen on the left as not discussable. And where one gets the impression that rhetorical overlap with right-win populist narratives are not considered unwelcome for the purpose of winning back defected voters, normative integrity is damaged, without which a left alternative to xenophobic politics can neither be developed nor credibly communicated. Without principled opposition to the right the left can have no credibility, and without empathy for refugees there is no left solidarity.

Social class politics and left internationalism

Is it possible to formulate a common mosaic-left perspective by bringing together the rational and progressive elements of the contending positions? Not to try would be irresponsible. Society's rightward shift is of historic

dimensions. And the failure of the left to reach consensus around an immigration policy would also be historic. In what follows seven crucial points of a possible position will be formulated in the hope of making the debate more objective and bringing us forward.

First: The starting point of a mosaic-left position must be unconditional solidarity with the people who are fleeing to the affluent societies of contemporary capitalism. The unearned privilege of being born into a region of the world in which a considerable degree of welfare could be wrested from capitalism must not turn into a walling-off mentality against those whom the right is representing as a danger to this privilege.

Second: As important as the attitude of a 'clear stance' for refugees and against racism is, it has to be backed up by a critique of capitalism and a corresponding politics. The credibility of the confessional pathos of that stance depends on whether the economic, social, and cultural bases for a universal solidarity can be created – and whether it is possible to correct the relations of production and distribution that have distributed income, wealth, and life opportunities according to capitalist property relations and make ever more population groups in the centres into losers of globalisation.

Pointing to indispensable class redistribution does not serve to reject on principle any contribution by workers and the middle classes to the financing of a solidary immigration and integration policy. This could result in a sort of 'normative demanding too little' ('normative Unterforderung – Jürgen Habermas) and underestimate the existing willingness to practice solidarity. Still, collecting solidarity fees from wage workers certainly cannot be the core task of a left redistribution policy, especially not after almost three decades of neoliberal redistribution from the bottom to the top, and also not in view of the fact that the burdening of the economy by the costs of immigration has up to now been marginal and that it promises future advantages through more labour power and less skill shortages. The defence of a location bonus is just as inexpedient as the struggle against a class bonus is indispensable.

Third: Since it is precisely about the welfare state that opinions differ on the left, we have no choice but to reach an agreement on the role of welfare-state institutions and policies. The very popular defamation of the vestiges of the national welfare state in the post-autonomous-libertarian milieu is no help. Social policy intervention into the capitalist relations of production and distribution are not blockades but preconditions for founding normatively based solidarity. Far-reaching institutional transformations are indispensable for this, for example the reconstruction of the social security systems and their opening up to people who have not been able to participate as domestic contributors or taxpayers to the financing of the social state. This

boils down to a relativisation of earning- and equivalence-based social-state entitlements and a valorisation of needs–oriented minimal insurance.

No less important are the bridges to social fields indispensable for the social integration of the refugees. This applies both to labour markets and education and social security systems. Expanded investment here in social infrastructure at the municipal level is vitally necessary. Here too the material recognition of the refugees and the defusing of distribution conflicts between benefit recipients – whatever their nationality and ethnic origin is – presupposes correctives to the distribution of added value.

Fourth: At the same time, defence of the human right to a good life should not mislead people into suspecting that any conceivable model of regulated immigration is racist. The debate is risky and requires always being conscious of the danger of becoming the unwilling accomplice of an inhumane walling-off policy. But thinking about normatively and socially responsible immigration regulation is not only legitimate but necessary in view of the complexity of the issues.

This kind of thinking should not shrink back from working out a position on the tension between open borders and the feasibility of financing the welfare state. It is a tension that increases when through immigration the number of people who (have to) compete for a given social budget grows. 'The social only works on the national level' is the message of a neoliberal nationalism that constructs an antagonism between a humane immigration policy and financeable social systems.[15] But in a world of social inequality and global migratory movements, pinning the social to the national is not only ineffective; it almost inevitably ends in restrictive policy recommendations like closed borders. But this is reactionary and inappropriate for a mosaic-left position. For one thing, the political economy of the welfare state also offers other options. Potential immigration-related financing problems can, for example, be defused if there is successful integration of the immigrants into the labour market and if former benefit recipients become revenue-generating producers of added value – and, above all, if the social budget, in line with the normatively justified needs, is increased by a corresponding taxation of profits, wealth, and high incomes. 'Close the borders', is the right-wing answer; labour market integration and a redistributive policy that gets the requisite resources from the right place – these should be the essentials of a left answer.

Unfulfilled emancipatory tasks in capitalism

Fifth: There should also be consensus that a restaging of the antagonism between class and recognition questions is below the advanced level of debate

that has already been achieved. Here a mosaic-left positioning can benefit from impulses from the intersectional approaches in social research and from US feminism.[16] Who would deny that the cultural- and recognition-theory approaches to questions of power and domination have enriched the critique of capitalism? More strongly than political-economy-fixated approaches, they have laid bare the hidden mechanisms and dimensions of oppression, devalorisation, and exclusion. And left recognition politics rightly insists on the emancipatory interests of women, immigrants, people of colour, as well as members of the LGBTQ communities as being essential elements of left politics. Unconditional antiracism is one of these elements.

The problem begins when we forget that it is still in *capitalist society* that these emancipatory tasks are being posed, and that capitalism can absorb the challenges of the emancipatory movements in these areas and make them work for itself; therefore the jettisoning, so loved in the modern left, of the question of capitalism and class, already leads us astray on the analytical level, for without considering this question we cannot understand the movements and why they change. Right-wing populism can hardly be understood if deprivation, devalorisation, and lack of representation are left out of the picture. People are not born racist; they are made into racists. And whoever wants to change this has to deal with the 'ensemble of social relations' (Karl Marx) that shapes this problem. That recognising these 'real reasons' for 'embitterment and indignation' as starting points for counterstrategies means neither sympathy nor justification for right populism ought to be clear by now and require no further explanation.[17]

Sixth: A politics of recognition informed by class politics therefore does not underrate the lines of division that develop around gender, sexual orientation, or ethnic origin and combine with social discrimination. But at the same time it addresses the bulk of the refugees as members of a global class of those who work and live as wage dependents. And we should be looking for commonalities within that class in terms of life situations and interests as the basis for solidary politics. We should not be discouraged by the need to bridge over the sometimes deep social and cultural divisions between domestic wage dependents and refugees. Here we especially need the trade unions. While recognising cultural differences, attractive offers to take part in trade-union struggles need to be formulated, and transmitted to those who have reached the labour markets and work sites of capitalist wage labour. Otherwise, the danger is that the refugees will be pushed into a subproletariat where possibilities for a good life are blocked and demeaning dumping competition is promoted.

What is needed is inclusive class solidarity

Inclusive class solidarity, however, must also pull in those who (cannot) participate in gainful employment, for example because of language barriers, the lack of professional qualifications, or traumatic flight experiences. They too must have an unquestionable right to material subsistence and social integration, and they must have representation. Above all, class integration of this kind must not be thought of as the inclusion of mute and passive individuals. The paternalism omnipresent in debates on immigration stabilises the victim status of the immigrants and perpetuates their incapacitation. What is needed are strategies for the self-empowerment of the refugees through their inclusion in struggles for social interests. The goal is not well-meaning welfare but the social integration of subjects who gradually achieve autonomy through solidary associations representing interests.

Seventh: It is very irritating that left immigration debates have up to now largely gotten by without an adequate internationalist dimension. There is an indispensable need for a new, left internationalism that does not forget refugees. Cooperative support for local self-organisation initiatives in many regions of the world are appropriate starting places for this.[18]

Reference to removing the causes of flight are among the fig-leaf arguments of right-wing critics of immigration aimed at justifying the closing of borders. On the other hand, this does not change the fact that the struggle for rights and dignity cannot simply begin once people have survived the torture of the criminal human-traffickers and reached the borders of the fortresses of prosperity. Or is it really unimportant for left politics that the life conditions of many in the countries of origin are being destroyed by the centre's interventions, through geostrategic power politics, through the destruction of the natural bases of life by forced fossilism, and by the stoking of religiously or ethnically defined power conflicts? It is precisely the left that in the struggle for free movement should not forget the right of being able to stay at home. Whether perceived as a right to their homeland or as the right to freely choose where they live, this can in the end only be decided by those concerned.

For a mosaic-left culture of discourse

A preliminary conclusion: A mosaic-left strategy of global class solidarity shares with the no-border position a human-rights-based universalism and a solidarity with the refugees based on it. But it rejects the attitude of moral infallibility and does not deny the requisite exertions faced by the destination countries. In terms of the social-state-solidarity position it accepts the reference to the economic, social, and everyday-cultural preconditions for a

normatively based solidarity, but criticises an analytical reduction of this, as well as political ambiguities and emotional coldness in the face of the causes of flight and the destinies of individuals. And it connects this to the demand for a comprehensive social reform that opens up the traditional social–state structures resting on citizenship status. In this way it places universal ethics on a political-economy foundation.

With this kind of positioning, many essential problems are neither addressed nor solved. What distribution–policy successes have to be achieved in order to make possible the material resources of a policy of open borders? Which discourses, and how are they to be organised, in order to secure society's consent and counter right–wing attempts at instrumentalisation? And: Is there a tipping point even for solidary immigration societies at which the normatively based postulate of the greatest possible openness of borders begins to overstrain the societies' capacities of absorption? If so, where is this point, and how could it be pushed farther away?

If we want to debate these questions with the aim of reaching a mosaic–left agreement then agreement on a new culture of discourse is first necessary. In this, care has to be taken especially in using the racism cudgel. It is not an appropriate tool in striving for analytical penetration and a strategic coping with this key task of our time. This is not an appeal against clear standpoints or for lukewarm tolerance for nationalism or xenophobia. Racism, including renascent everyday racism, has to be called racism and fought as such. But where it begins and ends and what proposals for solving problems really wind up being close to racism is something to discuss, not to decree.

Also indispensable is cooperation with critical social research. From it we can above all hope for evidence-based knowledge aiding the search for mosaic-left policies. It is not applause for easily accepted commonplaces that is advisable but a principled critical attitude in the face of quick answers. If even social scientists participate in saying that the search for the social and ideological driving forces of right-wing populism is tantamount to relativisation, or even quiet sympathy for inhumanity, this discredits not only their own profession. Participation in a normative rigorism that answers complex social question with emotional avowals instead of with theoretical and empirical research would be equivalent to betraying the premises of critical science. And the self-demolition of critical social research is really the last thing that a mosaic left striving for a political power of intervention needs.

Postcapitalism as a perspective?

A mosaic-left immigration policy thus has to answer a variety of analytic, normative, and strategic questions. A clarification here would not be amiss: Grounding left immigration policy in class means more than posing the social question and advocating more social-state benefits. Class politics rests on the goal of empowering people in similar situations and with similar problems to take up solidary practices. And class politics from the perspective of those who work and live dependently on wages has at its centre the capitalist relations of property, domination, and hegemony as the structural blockades to social emancipation – for welfare-state citizens and for immigrants. It brings together and encourages those on whose backs the whole thing rests to take up a politics for transforming these relations.

An immigration policy founded on class politics must thus also reappropriate the prospects of transformation in a new sense. In many places people are critically questioning the future viability of capitalism. But this is hardly happening in the immigration debate. A good argument can be made that sustainable success against right-wing populist authoritarianism and for a good life for refugees and the indigenous can hardly occur within the structures of contemporary capitalism. The dynamics of financial-market-driven capital accumulation will constantly generate social precarisation and cultural devalorisation; the relations of property and power will continue to block the needed redistribution of resources; and political democracy will remain fragile and endangered by authoritarian attempts at solving crises.

If this assessment is accurate then the debate about a mosaic-left immigration policy must be widened to include the perspective of a postcapitalist society.[19] Postcapitalist transformation as the condition for the possibility of comprehensive solidarity. The left should debate this in order to come up with some good answers to the related issues – self-critically, argumentatively, and solidaristically. In other words, as a mosaic left would do.

NOTES

1   This article was originally published in German in *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik* 9/2018 <https://www.blaetter.de/>.

2   See Hans-Jürgen Urban, 'Stillstand in Merkelland: Wo bleibt die Mosaiklinke?', *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik* (hereafter as *Blätter*) 7/2014, pp. 73-82.

3   Terry Eagleton, *The Illusions of Postmodernism*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1996, p. 1.

4   See <www.solidarische-moderne.de>.

5   Martin Reeh, 'Linkspartei nach Leipzig: Auf zum letzten Gefecht?', *Blätter* 7/2018, pp. 9-12.

6   'Solidarität statt Heimat. Ein Aufruf gegen Rassismus in der öffentlichen Debatte', 19 June 2018, <www.solidarische-moderne.de>.

7   The Institute of Solidary Modernity did not act as a mosaic-left mediating agent but more like an instigator of conflict that deepened the divisive trenches of the internal party controversy, transmitting them to the discussion taking place outside the party.

8   Branko Milanović, *Die ungleiche Welt. Migration, das Eine Prozent und die Zukunft der Mittelschichten* [The Unequal World: Immigration, the One Per Cent and the Future of the Middle Strata], Berlin 2016, p. 11.

9   Horst Seehofer, *Masterplan Migration. Maßnahmen zur Ordnung, Steuerung und Begrenzung der Zuwanderung*, 22 June 2018.

10   Hans-Jürgen Urban, 'Kampf um die Hegemonie. Gewerkschaften und die neue Rechte', *Blätter* 3/20018, pp. 103-112.

11   Götz Kubitschek, 'Markenimitate, Kronjuwelen, Seehofer, Wagenknecht', *Sezession* 17 June 2018, <www.sezession.de>.

12   Benedikt Kaiser, 'Mosaik-Rechte und Jugendbewegung', *Sezession*, 21 April 2017, <www.sezession.de>.

13   For example, Wolfgang Streeck, 'Ein Weltbürger ist nirgendwo Bürger', *Die Zeit*, 21 June 2018, p. 40.

14   Amartya Sen, *Die Identitätsfalle. Warum es keinen Krieg der Kulturen gibt* [The Identity Trap: Why There Is No Culture War], Munich, 2007.

15   Rainer Hank, 'National sozial', *Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung*, 15 July 2018.

16   For example, Nancy Fraser's current interventions. See Nancy Fraser, 'From Progressive Neoliberalism to Trump – and Beyond', *American Affairs*, 4/2017, pp. 46-64.

17   Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, 'Der schwarze Spiegel: Soziale Bewegungen von rechts', *Blätter*, 6/2018, pp. 101 f.

18   See Thomas Gebauer and Ilija Trojanow, *Hilfe? Hilfe! Wege aus der globalen Krise*, Frankfurt a. M., 2018.

19   As a basis for discussion see Klaus Dörre, 'Neo-Sozialismus oder: Acht Thesen zu einer überfälligen Diskussion', *Blätter*, 6/2018, pp. 105-115.

Counter-Hegemony, the Commons, and New City Politics[1]

Alexandros Kioupkiolis

In the years 2011 to 2012, history appeared to be 'born again'[2] in the Arab Spring, the 'squares movement', and the global Occupy. Several years later, a gloomy picture has re-emerged throughout the world. The global hegemony of neoliberalism remains firmly in place, while reactionary right-wing politics is on the rise. The scenes of democratic uprisings and the glimpses of egalitarian democracy and popular aspirations to progressive change in countries such as Spain and Greece seem to be consigned to a remote past. A gradual normalisation of the crisis has taken hold in many countries. But the looming ecological catastrophe, the popular disaffection with elitist politics, and the devastating consequences of neoliberalism for equality and democracy remain our historical horizon. More than ever, it is time to act. But it is also time to take a step back, to rethink, and refigure our strategies for social change.

In tune with several activists and advocates across the world, the present argument holds that the 'commons' outlines a horizon of historical transformation which is already in motion, in fits and starts. Since the dawn of the new millennium, from the Bolivian Andes (for example, in the water war in Cochabamba from 1999 to 2000) to the US (for example, in the case of Creative Commons licences) and Southern Europe (for example, in the Italian city regulations for urban self-management) the commons have arisen as a historical alternative to both neoliberal capitalism and defunct socialism or Leninist communism.

Crucially, a commons-based politics could counter the rise of nationalist populism by advancing a progressive way of tackling social dislocation and alienation, restoring solidarity, collective ties, and common welfare. Moreover, alternative commons harbour a radical emancipatory ideal, a visionary pragmatism, and an accent on massive, bottom–up participation,

which hold out the promise of overcoming the political frailty, the vertical hierarchies, the personalism, and the impoverished imagination of leftist populist parties in Europe, from Podemos to Syriza and Mélenchon.

The following discussion attempts to sketch out the new paradigm as well as indicate the lack of an adequate political strategy of transition and counter-hegemonic struggle for the commons. To start plotting such a strategy, we will draw on the 2011 cycle of mobilisations and the latest pro-commons politics in Spanish municipalities. The aim is to explore how powerful counter-hegemonic praxis could be pursued in ways which recast hegemonic politics in the direction of alternative commons – horizontal self-government, equality, sustainability, plurality, openness, and sharing.

The commons as an alternative world

The commons comprise goods and resources that are collectively used and produced, and fairly shared. There are actually many different genres of common goods across the world, from natural common-pool resources (fishing grounds, land, irrigation canals, etc.)[3] to common productive assets, such as workers' cooperatives and digital goods, open source software, and Wikipedia.[4] All of them, however, involve shared resources, which are managed, produced, and distributed through collective participation in ways that contest the logic of both private/corporate and state/public property.

Could the dispersed practices and communities that are currently formed around a diversity of commons add up to a world-changing force? Some enthusiastic champions of the digital commons have asserted that this is already happening. Other, more politically-minded thinkers, such as Hardt and Negri, have laid out political conceptions of the commons which map pathways towards a global transformation. But in all these cases the shallowness of strategic thought is conspicuous.

To begin with, over the last decade or so, a large body of thought and action has shifted attention from the 'commons of nature' to the 'immaterial' commons of culture, information and digital networks.[5] Technological change has given rise to new modes of production, which reinvent and expand the commons as a culture of co-creation and sharing outside their traditional bounds of fisheries, forests, and grazing grounds. Digital commons remake a wide variety of fields in their image, from music to business, law, education, and science, following the logic of the open, plural, creative, and participatory commons for mutual benefit. Thus, already in 2005, Michel Bauwens envisioned a new form of society, 'based on the centrality of the commons, and within a reformed state and market'.[6]

Prominent champions of the digital commons, such as David Bollier,

Yochai Benkler, and Michel Bauwens, share a techno-legal and economic fix when they consider transitions in the direction of the commons. Technology, economic practices, and the law are the main themes in their scenario of epochal change. In recent years, an awareness that the techno-economic and legal paths come up against overpowering obstacles has been significantly growing among their ranks.[7] Hence, they place increasing emphasis on the 'partner state,' on social movements, and on assembling counter-power by crafting parallel institutions of the commons, such as the 'Chambers of Commons.' Still, the techno-economic and legal steps are accorded pride of place, and the political comes second. However, working on the regulatory framework is not enough if we lack the political agents and the political practices which could reconstruct state structures and economics in the face of neoliberal elite opposition and bureaucratic resistance.

Pro-commons political theory has not done much better in working out a political strategy for social change. To give just one example, Hardt and Negri have devoted their 2012 *Declaration* to thinking about historical transition, political strategy, and the forging of counter-hegemonic alliances for the commons. They now argue that a democratic society grounded in open sharing and the self-management of the 'commons' will have to knit together coalitions between the defenders of such a project and a variety of groups in struggle – workers, unemployed, the poor, and students – in which autonomous singularities interact with each other, transform, and recognise themselves as 'part of a common project'.[8]

Moreover, Hardt and Negri[9] have foregrounded a certain dialectic between movements and 'progressive governments' in Latin America as an exemplary instance of the 'institutionality of the common'. Democratic decision-making unfolds here in plural processes of transparent and flexible governance, which ally effective counterpowers with autonomous, long-term political developments. In an apparatus of open and plural self-government, radical movements hold on to their organisational and ideological autonomy. They maintain co-operative and antagonistic relations with governments, which programmatically sponsor the same project. They wage common battles against various hierarchies. But they turn against their allies in state administration and the ruling parties when the latter regress into old practices of domination. This relation between movements and parties/governments thus enacts a type of *disjunctive conjunction* which marks a rupture with the hegemonic subsumption of social movements under a centralised party.

Finally, in their latest book, *Assembly*,[10] Hardt and Negri identify three roadmaps for the transformation of ruling structures: 'exodus,' which withdraws from dominant institutions and creates miniature new ones;

antagonistic reformism, which grapples with existing institutions in order to modify them from within; and hegemony, which seeks to take power in order to directly install a new society by 'overthrowing the existing institutions and creating new ones'.[11] They point to the limits of each and argue for their combination: taking power should serve to carve out space for autonomous practices and for the slow, long-term transfiguration of the dominant institutions.

Yet, their propositions involving 'disjunctive conjunction' and how this might avoid the bureaucratisation of movements and the failure of leftist governmentality, as well as their reflections on a 'three-faced' political strategy, remain sketchy and underdeveloped. Their weakness here is not new, for they have held on to a leitmotif of their political theory ever since the *Multitude*[12] (2004): for them, the key is to be found in the actual ability of the multitude to organise their productive lives and their forms of cooperation in 'immaterial', i.e., social, networked, and affective labour. What crucially matters, in their view, and directs political developments, is the economic basis of labour and transformations that occur within it. Immaterial labour today 'demonstrates the necessary political capacities. And in the biopolitical context, social organisation always spills over into political organization'.[13]

Counter-hegemonic politics

The political thrust of a Gramscian take on the commons would have a different emphasis: The principles of the commons could reorder dominant structures only if social renewal on the ground – communities of the commons, new, open technologies, and so on – is embedded in a larger political movement contesting hegemony: in a *historical bloc*.[14] A comprehensive historical bloc brings together a multiplicity of social resistances and political struggles, economic projects, and productive activities that attend to social needs, and a new collective identity, a common political programme, values and critical ideas. All these elements are organised through the cohesive force of a committed political organisation.

To put together such a popular front, political actors need to weave organic bonds with social sectors in their everyday life, seeking popular outreach and conducting a sustained 'war of position' in civil society and the state, in a way that bridges micro- and macro-politics. Political activity immerses itself in the micro-level of everyday social activities and groups, engaging directly with social relations and subjectivities so that they morph into a new collective identity and political orientation. At the same time, a common political platform connects the multiplicity of micro-political

processes, draws up a coherent political plan adapted to an entire social formation, and wrestles with macro-structures of the state, the economy, culture and so on.

However, to harness a Gramscian strategy of hegemony for commons-oriented reform in our times, core elements of Gramsci's thought should be critically revisited, beginning with his centralising party and moving on to working class politics.

Class inequalities have skyrocketed in our epoch of neoliberal hegemony. The middle classes are being increasingly impoverished, while the global expelled population – poor, workers, unemployed, precarious, dwellers of shanty towns – counts in the billions. Still, the 'working class' today does not constitute a unified mass that can furnish the basis for majoritiarian political identities and mobilisation.[15] Social differentiation and fragmentation, the pervasiveness of individualist values, the decline of industrial labour in developed countries, and the growth of precarious labour and the service sector are some of the factors which account for the actual failure of the *majority* of working people across the globe to become politically articulated as the 'working class,' to bond together and strike back as 'workers.' Moreover, the politics of democratic commons needs to devise new patterns of effective organisation that break with the centralised party, and are attuned to the horizontalist, pluralist, and egalitarian spirit of the commons.

Another hegemony for the commons

Recent democratic activism, such as the 2011 squares movement and the 'municipalist' politics from 2015 onwards, provide important insights, which can help us to reimagine counter-hegemonic politics around a commons vision.

Let us begin with leadership, which is synonymous with hegemony. Historically, it has carried a connotation of top-down direction of the 'masses' by individual leaders, authoritarianism, and paternalism. Contemporary collective action has addressed issues of asymmetrical power by, first, recognising its presence and, second, by seeking to institute forms of explicit leadership which do not entail domination but contribute to the collective sharing of skills, knowledge, and responsibility. Developing 'another leadership' implies essentially a 'growing attempt to be *clear, conscious*, and *collective* about leadership'.[16] It involves an endeavour to wrestle reflectively with power and command, to mitigate their authoritarian implications as far as possible, and to experiment with diverse schemes of collective 'leadership from below.' Contemporary communities and movements often also opt for 'differentiated leadership', which is based on differing intellectual qualities,

capacities, and interests. Crucially, they tend to rotate the tasks which need to be allocated, such as public speaking duties or coordinating roles, in order to transform them into power- and knowledge-sharing experiences.[17]

Second, representation lies historically at the core of Gramsci's hegemonic politics, which elevates the Party to the modern Hegemon. In contrast, the 2011 democratic mobilisations, from the Arab Spring to the Spanish Indignados, tended to oppose political representation, along with party partisanship, fixed hierarchies and ideologies, and professional politicians.[18] The Indignados and the Occupy assemblies indeed claimed representation by speaking in the name of the people. But they challenged the sovereign forms of political representation in liberal democracies, which establish a 'permanent and institutionalised power base'[19] releasing political representatives from the immediate pressures of their constituencies. The 'square movements' of 2011 took aim precisely at this institutionalised separation and the sovereign rule of representatives. They set out, instead, to open up the political representation of the people to ordinary citizens. The very choice of public squares and streets to organise popular assemblies highlights the will to publicity, transparency, and free accessibility of political power to all.[20] Moreover, in order to preclude the monopolisation of authority by any individual or group, the assemblies in 2011–2012 enforced binding mandates and alternation in the functions of spokespersons, moderators, and special working groups. They set strict time limits for speakers, and they used rotation and choice by lot to decide who is to speak in public.

Participatory democracies eliminate fixed divisions between rulers and ruled, enabling anyone who so wishes to take part in political deliberation, law-making, and administration involving collective affairs. Collective governance and representation become in principle *common*, an affair of common citizens. As distinct from Rousseauean democracy, however, sovereign power is not exercised by the assembled demos in its unified totality. Institutional devices such as lot, rotation, limited tenure, increased accountability, and the casual alternation of participants in collective assemblies work against the consolidation of lasting divides between rulers and ruled, experts and lay people.

Finally, unity, the formation of a collective identity, and concentration of force make up the backbone of hegemonic politics.[21] In recent years, egalitarian movements have also made such hegemonic interventions in order to alter the balance of forces. This, again, is illustrated by Occupy Wall Street and by the Spanish and Greek Indignados. They converged around common ends, practices, and signifiers (such as 'the 99%' and 'the people'). They centralised the co-ordination of action in certain 'hubs' (such

as Puerta del Sol in Madrid). They sought to reach out to broader sectors of the population affected by neoliberal governance. They voiced aspirations to deep socio-political change (for example, 'real democracy'), and they confronted dominant structures of power with vast collections of human bodies and networks.

However, these civic politics combined hegemony with horizontalism, and effectively gestured beyond hegemony insofar as they turned the scales in favour of plurality, egalitarianism, and decentralisation through new modes of unification. To begin with, *diversity* and *openness* became themselves the principle of unity in horizontalist mobilisations such as Occupy Wall Street. 'We are trying to build a movement where individuals and groups have the autonomy to do what they need to do and pick the battles they need to pick'.[22]

Open pluralism has been persistently pursued through a multiplicity of norms, practices, and organisational choices. The construction of *open spaces of convergence* for collective deliberation and coordination stands out among them.[23] Openness and plurality are further nurtured by a certain *political culture* which dismisses dogmatic ideologies and strict programmatic definitions in order to appeal to all citizens in their diversity.[24] This culture elicits tolerance, critical respect for differences, civility, generosity, a relaxed atmosphere of debate, and an affective politics. It nourishes relations of care and love among diverse people who struggle in common despite their differences.[25]

The *network form*, widespread in democratic action today, is also crucial. 'Distributed' networks enable a loose coordination among different groups and individuals, which need not subordinate their distinct identities to an overarching collective identity or a hegemonic agent; yet they are nested in the same web of communication and they act in concert. New organisations, such as the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* in Spain, illustrate how a more coherent organising core can link up with a loose group of diverse agents who participate to different degrees, constituting an open 'network system' that allows for plurality and resists strong centralisation and fixed hierarchies.[26]

Finally, *pragmatism* facilitates modes of convergence and common identity which sustain diversity and openness. A heterogeneous assemblage of agents and practices can more easily cohere around practical objectives rather than around group identities and definite programmes or ideologies. In this way, collective action can avoid the fragmentation of 'identity politics.' Acceptance of empirical 'messiness' and hybridity, a flexible approach oriented to concrete problem-solving, an open mind and reluctance to

take universal, dogmatic positions constitute a pragmatic outlook that can 'depolarise' strategic choices, supporting broad pluralist assemblages in the interest of the many.

Cities as incubators of counter-hegemonic change

However, massive civic engagement that sought to reconfigure counter-hegemonic politics along these lines in the years of the crisis has failed to reshuffle the decks of power. Spain and Greece are just two dramatic examples.

Any effective politics for expansive commons would need to powerfully engage state and market forces in order to relax their daily control on social majorities, but also in order to halt environment degradation and defend or recover public goods for the commons. Strategies of exit and prefiguration, through which civic initiatives devise their own alternative institutions in the interstices, or 'outside', of dominant systems, can only be one part of the larger equation. For a vast range of resources and infrastructure, from energy grids to internet, transport, water, health, and education, or large-scale means of production, it is either infeasible or unreasonable and environmentally disastrous to put in place other, parallel structures. The vexing challenge thus remains to put major social resources under collective control for the common benefit and for the sake of our planet, reclaiming them from neoliberal governments, predatory private interests, and state bureaucracies.

It was precisely in order to get leverage on the centres of political and financial power that democratic unrest turned towards existing or new parties of the left, such as Syriza and Podemos. These promised to operate as conveyor belts of popular demands in an oligarchic political system. By 'occupying representation', such political agencies could facilitate social mobilisations, making the state apparatus amenable to their influence and cancelling repressive policies.

A fundamental insight to be drawn from the failures of leftist governmentality in recent years is that the *sustained* mobilisation of popular forces is one of the few potent weapons that progressive governments can enlist in counteracting the concerted powers of neoliberal elites. In addition, there are two crucial corollary lessons. First, that effective bottom-up control of political leaderships is necessary to prevent the potential autonomisation of leaderships that yield to neoliberal elite pressures and systemic constraints. Second, that a self-directed and extensive popular participation in decision-making is the way to advance the real democratisation of (un)representative regimes, which otherwise remain in the hands of old and new elites. The expansion of popular self-government should be primarily an effect of

autonomous grassroots processes rather than of top-down initiatives, which typically result in popular indifference or clientelist relations.

It is within this constellation of problems and challenges that we need to situate several citizens' initiatives and platforms that were convened from 2014 onwards in Spain (and, in different ways, in Italy) and aimed at wresting control of institutional power at the city level. They all opted for hybrid schemes in order to sustain grassroots activity on the one hand, and to pursue centralised coordination, electoral politics, and institutional intervention on the other. By contesting municipal elections in 2015, they aspired to promote commoning and participatory self-governance in the city.[27]

Realising that social change was effectively blocked by established institutions and the elites commanding them, a multitude of social movements and political actors in Barcelona, Madrid, Zaragoza, Valencia, and several other cities in Spain that had occupied the squares and organised social networks in recent years, set out to 'take back' the institutions. Their objective was to advance a new, participatory model of local government and to initiate redistributive and sustainable policies. It is the crucial *proximity* of local government to the citizens that enables collective municipal platforms to take social change from the streets to state institutions. Although the autonomy of municipal authorities was curtailed in the years of crisis, city institutions are still the closest to citizens and their demands. At the same time, they maintain varying degrees of control over important social goods, from land to transport, housing, the health system, education, energy, and water, which they have come under increasing pressure to privatise, commodify, or subject to austerity cuts.[28] The city is therefore a central site of struggle around common goods.

The 'confluencias' cobbled together in 2014-2015 were broad alliances of movements, parties, and ordinary people, who collaborated as individuals converging on common objectives beyond ideological differences, fostering open collective participation. They established a city-wide platform of political interaction, in which citizens from all walks of life could join the process in open assemblies and have a say in the nomination of candidates and the drafting of a commons-centred political programme. The new scheme of political organisation was based on a network of different spaces of decision-making and participation, both online and offline, coordinated by a common group of elected members and an executive board.[29] The aim was to expand civic initiative and involvement beyond electoral campaigns to include the implementation of policies on the municipal level.

In sum, the political strategy of 'democratic municipalism' today consists

in enhancing direct citizens' participation in municipal government, where civic engagement can be most meaningful and effective, by supporting candidacies and city administrations that are directed by the grassroots. It is also intended as a project that will replace corrupt political elites, reduce top-down rule from national or regional centres, challenge neoliberal policies, reclaim common goods, and combat class, gender, ethnic, and racial domination.

The politics of contemporary municipalism intends to keep one foot in established institutions and one in the streets. But in its more radical version it has claimed to fundamentally be a politics of ongoing civic activity, which would generate new demands and projects, partake in the creation of policies, monitor institutional practice, demand full transparency in public management, and even enter into confrontation with municipal governments. Furthermore, the municipalist approach seeks to 'feminise politics', not only by insisting on the political parity of the genders but also by promoting the symmetrical distribution of power away from specific individuals and groups. Feminisation moreover involves a politics of concern with everyday problems, which are addressed by ordinary, non-expert citizens in their neighbourhoods, as well as a politics of sharing responsibilities, human fragility and care for other people and the environment. Finally, the new municipalism seeks to forge a world-wide network of municipalist movements for local and global ('glocal') change, with a view to establishing federal structures in which power would emanate from grassroot self-government.[30]

Now, three years later, the balance sheet of 'municipalismo' in Spain is a mixed one. In Barcelona, the landscape remains more open, dynamic, and promising, with social movements directly lobbying the Ada Colau administration while also promoting autonomous activities throughout the city, which likewise exert political pressure. By contrast, in Madrid, the new mayor championed by the coalition of 'Ahora Madrid' refused to recognise it as a legitimate collective actor, splitting it into contending factions and pushing activist sectors into direct conflict with the municipal government (FC 2018: 46-47).[31]

In general, a process of institutional adaptation and incorporation has set in, blunting the original radicalism of municipalist programmes. New bureaucracies and media figures have emerged, isolating the 'new governments of change' from the main pillar of their 'new politics,' the civic grassroots of municipalismo which could serve as a counterweight to institutional domestication.[32] In all cities, the 'municipalist wager' has faced several hurdles. First, local power still depends on the vertical power of the

state, leaving little room for a real self-organisation of the people. Second, the complexities of local administration and power relations were not analysed in detail. As a result, the attitude towards them was often determined by a binary logic of 'inside' or 'outside,' which assumed that the institutional is omnipotent and that those outside it are 'pure.' What appears now to be more useful and constructive is the development of *hybrid spaces*, which challenge the model of the market-state.

For the most radical democratic sectors of 'municipalismo', the main objective remains to revive the political culture of 15 M and to reconstruct municipal administration through plural and inclusive processes of popular self-government, which could open up cracks in the dominant institutions. Two different approaches to municipalist politics have thus crystallised: one fostering practices of 'counterpower' and 'real democracy,' and another seeking mainly to better 'manage' the local institutions. The current failures of the urban strategy in Spain can be traced back to the very structure of representative institutions, which enable elected representatives to exercise power independently of their bases, and to the absence of a real 'municipalist movement' with an autonomous organisation. Lacking this, and powerful broader coalitions, the institutions and existing party organisations are bound to absorb and vitiate grassroots initiatives.

The political horizon of the commons

In a time of neofascist abberations, imperial neoliberalism, and apparent impasse, the commons have gained salience as the nodal point of an emergent political imaginary and constellation of forces. The commons uphold and renew what is best in the egalitarian traditions of modernity: social self-government, collective property, freedom in equality, solidarity, inclusion, openness and creativity, and care for the environment. At the same time, they can resonate beyond the historical left, unencumbered as the commons are by the darkest pages of radical politics in modernity.

Since the turn of the century, diverse proponents of democratic agency have outlined an alternative counter-hegemonic strategy which is akin to the commons and seeks to achieve the necessary aggregation of forces, cohesion, leadership, and universal agency, without succumbing to the logic of fusion, top-down leadership, and 'realist' power games. Grounded in prefiguration and in bottom-up power, counter-hegemonic politics could guide the whole process of transformation from below, advancing the political logic of the commons: horizontal participation, sharing, diversity, openness, sustainability, and care. Such strategies of 'another politics' mix horizontalism and verticalism with a clear emphasis on the former, combining

heterogeneous spatialities and temporalities. They are anchored in the here and now of this world with its urgent needs and its ordinary people. Yet they are also oriented to new horizons of freedom, plurality, openness, and equality, which relate to the long term and require arduous processes of reflection, struggle, and invention.

Cities, for the reasons we have pointed out, are a central site for these alternative strategies.

Recent experience from the new 'municipalist politics' in Spain and Italy suggests the need to sustain new schemes of 'dual power' or 'disjunctive conjunction,' not only between grassroots participation and political platforms with representatives in city governments, but also within each pole. To build autonomous foundations of collective power, people should construct alternative institutions of the commons, wherever this is meaningful, and they should self-organise and multiply civic initiatives of social reconstruction and empowerment. But without losing their primary focus on independent self-activity, actors in these processes should also partake in political alliances which can open up dominant institutions to people's power, democratise the political management of public goods and divert resources to the commons.

Parallel to this disjunctive conjunction in the grassroots, the political platforms themselves should be likewise split into two, between representatives in formal structures of government, on the one hand, and the majority of participants, on the other hand. Ordinary members should remain intent on keeping alive the connection with social majorities outside institutions, and they should uphold the decisive function of collective decision-making in the municipal assemblages. They should closely monitor representatives, keeping them firmly in check and aligned with the collective will arising from the plenary assemblies of the municipal coalitions. Without offering any foolproof guarantee, this double split at the bottom and the top is designed to anchor real power in popular participation and creativity at every level and to construct effective relays of bottom–up influence through which the popular will can direct decision-making in the political system and push successfully for its wider opening to social majorities, enacting a strategy of inside/outside and against institutions.

Such city-based politics can scale up to address national and international power by federating and networking municipalities and movements in order to exercise strong pressure on higher scales, while maintaining a solid anchorage in local participation.

All this is already occurring at an incipient stage both in Europe and across the world. It is up to us to refashion hegemonic politics along these

lines, which could foster a progressive egalitarian populism for the common good(s) where traditional and new left parties have failed. If large numbers of people actually get involved, city politics re-organised in disjunctive conjunctions and broader networks could help to aggregate and amplify the power of the many against the entrenched rule of the few, and thus promote the common good by toppling neoliberal hegemonies.

NOTES

1   Part of the research for this paper was funded by the European Research Council (ERC) under the Horizon 2020 Research and Innovation Programme. See *Heteropolitics.net* for more information on the Research Project.
2   Alain Badiou, *The Rebirth of History*, transl. G. Elliott, London & New York: Verso, 2002.
3   Elinor Ostrom, *Governing the Commons*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.
4   Nick Dyer-Witheford, 'The circulation of the common', <http://goo.gl/riWQt4>, 2012; David Bollier, *Viral Spiral. How the Commoners Built a Digital Republic of their Own*, New York & London: New Press, 2008.
5   Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of networks. How social production transforms markets and freedom*, New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 2006; Bollier, *Viral Spiral*; idem, *Think like a commoner: A short introduction to the life of the commons*, Gabriola Island: New Society Publishers, 2014; Michel Bauwens, (2005) 'The Political Economy of Peer Production', *CTheory*, <http://www.ctheory.net/printer.aspx?id=499>, 2005; idem, 'Should we worry about capitalist commons?', <https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/should-we-worry-about-capitalist-commons/2011/03/23>.
6   Bauwens, 'The Political Economy of Peer Production'.
7   Michel Bauwens and Vasilis Kostakis, *Network Society and Future Scenarios for a Collaborative Economy*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014.
8   Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Declaration*, New York, 2012, p. 107.
9   Hardt and Negri, *Declaration*.
10   Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Assembly*, New York: Oxford University Press, 2017.
11   Hardt and Negri, *Assembly*, p. 277.
12   Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitude. War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, London: Penguin, 2004.
13   Hardt and Negri, *Multitude*, p. 279.
14   Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, ed. and transl. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith, London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971.
15   Nick Dyer-Witheford, *Cyber-Proletariat. Global Labour in the Digital Vortex*, London and Toronto: Pluto Press, 2015; Guy Standing, *The Precariat. The New Dangerous Class*, London & New York: Bloomsbury, 2016.
16   Chris Dixon, *Another Politics. Talking across today's transformative movements*, Oakland: University of California Press, 2014, p. 186.
17   Dixon, *Another Politics*.
18   David Graeber, *The Democracy Project. A History, a Crisis, a Movement,* London & New York: Penguin, 2014.

19   C. Fred Alford, 'The "Iron Law of Oligarchy" in the Athenian Polis … and Today', *Canadian Journal of Political Science / Revue canadienne de science politique,* 18,2 (1985), p. 305.

20   Ernesto Ganuza and Héloise Nez, 'Among Militants and Deliberative Laboratories: The Indignados', in Benjamin Tejerina and Ignacia Perugorria (eds), *From Social to Political, New forms of mobilization and democratization, Conference Proceedings*, Bilbao: University of the Basque Country, 2012.

21   Gramsci, *Selections from the Prison Notebooks*, pp. 152-53, 181-82, 418.

22   Naomi Klein and Yotam Marom, 'Why Now? What's Next? Naomi Klein and Yotam Marom in Conversation About Occupy Wall Street' *The Nation*, 9 January 2012, <http://goo.gl/vL1H7f>.

23   Ganuza and Nez, 'Among Militants'.

24   Bernard E. Harcourt, 'Occupy Wall Street's Political Disobedience', *The New York Times*, 13 October 2011, <https://opinionator.blogs.nytimes.com/2011/10/13/occupy-wall-streets-political-disobedience/>.

25   Dixon, 'Another Politics'.

26   Rodrigo Nunes, *Organisation of the Organisationless: Collective Action After Networks*, Leuphana (Lüneburg): Mute/Post-Media Lab, 2014; Simon Tormey, *The End of Representative Politics*, Cambridge: Polity, 2015

27   Barcelona en Comú (2016) 'How to Win Back the City en Comú', <https://barcelonaencomu.cat/sites/default/files/win-the-city-guide.pdf>, 2016.

28   Observatorio Metropolitano [OM], *La apuesta municipalista*, Madrid: Traficantes de sueños, 2014, pp. 106-109, 135-37.

29   Ciudades Sin Miedo (collective) *Guía del movimiento municipalista global*, Barcelona: Icaria editorial, 2018, pp. 47-51, 71-75.

30   Ciudades Sin Medio, pp. 6-11, 33-37, 113-115; Observatorio Metropolitano [OM], *La apuesta municipalista*, pp. 143-155.

31   Fundación de los Comunes [FC] (eds) *La crisis sigue. Elementos para un nuevo ciclo político*, Madrid: Traficantes de sueños, 2018, pp. 46-47.

32   FC, *La crisis sigue*, pp. 37-39.

Commons Transition and the Role of the State – A New Question for the Left

Theodora Kotsaka

Introduction

In what follows two principal arguments will be developed. Even though the discussion of the commons has become increasingly dynamic, reaching ever wider audiences, the applied commons policies remain fragmented and operate almost exclusively on a small scale. In order to expand its scale, the appropriate institutional and legal framework must be determined, and this cannot be addressed without taking seriously the role of the state as regulator. The left is the crucial political actor in this effort, but its discourse about the commons has mainly been a defensive one, for example the defence of public services and of the right to land or water. It is time to enrich this discourse by the understanding that commons analysis truly 'goes with the flow' since it takes seriously the change of the production model in the framework of the knowledge-intensive economy and digitalisation.

As a result of structural changes, one way of producing economic value today is through immaterial goods such as research, knowledge, information, etc. It is an evolution with serious implications for capitalism. Commons theory claims that for these types of goods to flourish, features such as openness, networks, and P2P (peer-to-peer) modes of production are essential. That is the parameter which makes it possible for commons analysis to contribute to answers – from a social emancipation perspective – that deal with technology, artificial intelligence, big data, biotechnology, etc. These are central issues of our time, and we need to admit that the left is rather confused about them.

Some definitions are necessary since people often define the commons by whatever they consider to be a 'good thing or idea' from their personal perspective. Misunderstandings also often arise concerning the operational

tools of the commons economy, such as the social economy or P2P modes of production, with the assumption that they are identical. The left frequently has hazy notions of the distinction between the commons and the public.

Definitions[1]

Commons are a shared resource which is co-governed by its user community, according to the rules and norms of that community (the protocol of resource stewardship). The category includes gifts of nature (water, land, etc.) but also shared assets or creative work (language, information, culture artifacts, etc.). **P2P** – peer to peer, people to people, person to person – a relational dynamic through which peers freely collaborate to create value in the form of shared resources, circulated in the form of commons. P2P expresses an observable pattern of relations between humans.

Inclusive by nature, commons as applied policies can enable grass-roots political participation and contribute to social empowerment and emancipation, which is the most important political deliverable in the process of commons transition.

Where are we in terms of commons transition?

Commons transition is not a promised paradise. It is a process based on certain values that under the given situation and balance of power makes it possible to deliver emancipatory results while societies transition towards the commons.[2] It also makes it possible for the left to accomplish a necessary renewal of its narrative. At present in the western world the main examples of this process are found at the municipal level. Cities and peripheries like Ghent, Bologna, Amsterdam, Barcelona, Naples, Montreal, Lille, Madrid, and Bristol, along with several others, are creating spaces, institutions, and structures for citizens to manage affairs that most directly concern them.[3] They are increasing transparency, enabling participatory budgeting, facilitating the creation of social care co-ops, turning empty lots into community gardens, co-creating skill- and tool-sharing programmes, and more. All of this has been known for some time now as the 'New Municipalism',[4] a movement of citizen-led municipal coalitions that has achieved excellent results in electoral and political terms.

Commons operate more comfortably at a small scale, and consequently we can easily find examples at the local level. But when shifting to the national level, things become harder.[5] Greece provides an interesting example involving applied commons policies at the national governmental level. In 2015, a board was created at the General Secretariat of Coordination with the task of researching, defining, and enforcing the most appropriate applied commons policies in different sectors. However, it soon became evident

that there were cases in which, even if all the administrative obstacles were overcome and the political will existed to enforce such a policy, the institutional framework was unable to adjust. For example, there were cases in which a free license for hardware was needed, and even though GPL (General Public License)[6] covered the software, for hardware there was no equivalent. In looking for the appropriate lawyers to work on the issue a second fundamental problem came to light: Lawyers are educated in preserving and creating new enclosures, not in protecting commons. They are educated to 'enclose' for the interest of private profit, not to 'open' for the benefit of society.

The importance of the state as a regulator in productive transformation towards commons is at the core of the whole process. The commons transition plan mainly relates to the *partner state* model and the construction of the respective legal and institutional framework,[7] an issue to which we will return below, after an analysis of the particularities of the current production model.

The change of production model – an opportunity for the commons economy to play a leading role

It is important to bear in mind that there are two kind of commons: material, such as land and water, and immaterial, such as knowledge or digital common goods. Analytically, they need to be approached with different tools. There are fundamental differences having to do with their essential nature. With material common goods it is clear that when one person uses them another cannot. If I drink one glass of water its use is exclusive and another person cannot drink it. The process is inverted for immaterial commons: The greater the number of people that use a language, the richer and more important it becomes. Use by one person does not exclude use by another; rather, use by another is presupposed. The more people use digital commons like Wikipedia or Linux, the more important they become. And the value they produce corresponds to the number of people that use them at the same time.[8]

This difference is very important, not only in defining a convincing strategy for promoting commons transition but also in order to understand the changes that are occurring in the production model and consequently in the value production process. In commons theory these changes are referred to by the term 'value shift'.[9] There appears to be a growing consensus among those dealing with the theory of the commons that a new value regime must be invented. This shift is characterised by an increased capacity to create common value through commons-based peer production and other

practices of the collaborative economy. The key to the process is a shift away from extractive models and practices, which enrich some at the expense of the others, to generative value models and practices, which enrich the communities and resources to which they are applied.

There are two ways, two different strategies, to construct a commons narrative, both of which are necessary for communicating commons arguments not only to the public in general but also to opinion leaders, policy makers, politicians, bureaucrats, regulators, etc. Networking is presupposed in order to be able to have applied policies as well as an institutional framework that will enable commons economy. One line of thought in commons literature emphasises that humanity had been practicing commoning since its birth. In fact, its very existence has to do with the managing of resources as a common good. Fisheries, water, forests, and land were managed for ages by rules that took into consideration environmental protection and preservation for future generations. Those rules were inseparable from the traditions, myths, and culture of each community. Protection of the welfare state, the managing of taxation for the public interest and not for the multinationals' profit, public services and resources managed as a common good – all of this is a crucial part of the discussion of commons theory.

However, my argument is that this aspect of the discussion – whose fundamental importance I take for granted – has mainly a defensive character that can be crucially enriched if we add or stress (depending on what our goal is in each instance) a more dynamic parameter, one that shows that it is commons analysis that 'goes with the flow'. Capitalism was born into feudalism.[10] It was a long-term process of a change of production model that took several hundred years. Technological and social evolution also changed the process of value accumulation. The commons narrative today stresses that something analogous is happening in recent decades to the framework of the capitalist economy. Technological and economic evolution is occurring, resulting in a new system of value production mainly related to knowledge and information.[11] In recent years we have arrived for first time in human history at the point at which sectors of the economy that involve immaterial goods – mainly technology, big data, information, science, culture, and even emotions – have become more productive for the economy than sectors involving material goods.[12] The biggest five companies up to the mid–2000s were in the oil, pharmaceutical, and bank sectors, which was in the tradition of classical capitalism. Today the five biggest companies are Apple, Google, Amazon, Microsoft, and Facebook. Apple has reached a financial value of a thousand billion dollars. This is epoch-making and gives an idea of the extent of the shift that has occurred.

This new system under construction can acquire one of two different forms: that of cognitive capitalism, which will renew itself on the basis of new enclosures and extractivism, generating profits from collective intelligence and giving nothing back to society – or it can take the form of an intensive knowledge economy, which, with the appropriate institutional arrangements, will contribute to a process of social emancipation.

An important advantage of the argument based on the change of production model is that while commons transition 'goes with the flow, capitalism is restricted by its structural contradictions. The point is that in order for knowledge and information, as immaterial goods, to maximise value production there are some important presuppositions. Knowledge and information needs to be open and to circulate freely in order to produce maximum results, having the most brains possible involved. By contrast, capitalism by its nature constantly requires new enclosures in order to maintain itself. Knowledge and information enclosures reduce the amount of value that can be produced and are self-destructive for the capitalist economy. By contrast, the commons and P2P economy are connected to openness as one of its fundamental presuppositions. P2P modes of production are best adjusted to this type of evolving economy; they maximise the benefits of networks amongst peers and enable maximal openness and circulation. Commons economy goes with the flow – and that is an argument that a bureaucrat or a policy maker can feel obliged to accept when presented effectively.

Ethics and values are certainly important features in the discussion around commons, but in political terms they cannot be the leading operative concepts. People cannot be persuaded to embrace commoner values based only on their moral appeal. At the same time we also need to stress that at this historical moment capitalism is destructive of value production, which is bad for markets If that argument gets communicated effectively there is an opportunity to start having applied policies that will withdraw parts of the market from capitalism, which is the most decisive step in a struggle against it. The reason that it is important to convince a majority of the populations is that commons and P2P economy need a broad consensus and political alliances in order to start multiplying after one decade of discussing 'What is commons?' and practicing it in small scales and in local communities.

Having this kind of escalation of the commons as a strategic target, we need commons-oriented applied policies, we need licenses protecting commons like GPL, we need cooperative banks,[13] we need Public Commons Partnerships (PCP),[14] and we need a partner-state approach. Being able to enforce these kinds of applied policies presupposes political alliances and the

requisite political hegemony. It is an argument that takes into consideration the change of production model that can be a precious asset in that effort.[15]

Furthermore, the argument about the efficiency of commons-oriented policies[16] in the framework of knowledge-intensive economy becomes even more obvious when we come to the question of labour. Capitalism is facing another serious contradiction in that regard. For example, 'be creative' has been one of the slogans used by big corporations that are involved in knowledge, information, design, research, software, and other immaterial goods. However, creativity is not something that a worker or employee can force him or herself to do. It is not a matter of discipline. You cannot force yourself to be creative in order to pay your bills because it simply does not work that way. On the other hand, commons-economy and P2P modes of production provide an effective answer to that type of contradiction. The Fordist model with its clear divisions between labour and non-labour time does not fit into the framework of the knowledge- and information-intensive economy.[17] An employer simply cannot measure effective and non-effective labour time because creativity cannot be fitted into that type of measurement. As with identities throughout human history, personal and professional spheres are interrelated. It is not possible to measure effective labour time, as the most productive idea may cross a cognitive worker's mind while brushing his/her teeth. Or the most important networking having impact on an investment may occur during a music festival. Technology and information have relativised the need, in producing value, for labour of the type we knew.[18] It has blurred the dynamics between labour and wages. And the state of things is so unstable that the coming wave of robotisation is being delayed because current social infrastructures cannot handle the consequences.

Openness and enclosures in the knowledge-intensive economy

Trying to describe some of the key features of knowledge-intensive economy and its relation to the new model of value production brings us to – among other things – open source, open data, open design, open culture movements. This is where we find a new vision that was decisive for the rebirth of the commons discussion of recent years, related to the digital commons of design, of knowledge, of software, and of culture. Along with Wikipedia and Linux there is a myriad of free/open source projects – from 3D printing to open food data policies[19] – highlighting the emergence of technological capabilities that reshape the economic and consequently social environment, as the functional principle 'design global, manufacture local'.[20]

However, 'openness', P2P, and commons cannot alone protect themselves from corporate greed. For example, IBM has turned to Linux, and giant

private companies use Android without giving anything to the community in return. Bottom up innovation is vitally linked to new institutions and new rights. In human history communities have repeatedly had to defend their rights to land, natural resources, crafts, language, culture, etc. Today we need an equivalent effort for science and information, a new principle against new enclosures. With a lack of an appropriate legal framework and institutional stewardship the more open and accessible data are, the more this works in favour of the big market.

Due to the technological changes of the last decades we have arrived at a production model that is delivering maximum profits through research and innovation, mainly in industries such as software, biotechnology, the pharmaceutical industry, nanotechnology, or artificial intelligence. Contrary to the neoliberal myth, none of these technological revolutions would have occurred without the leading role of the state. In many cases, from internet to nanotechnology, it has in fact been the state, not the private sector, that has had the vision of strategic change, daring to contemplate the creation of a new technological opportunity, making the large necessary investments and enabling a decentralised network of actors to do the risky research and allow the development and commercialisation process to occur in a dynamic way.[21] What is new is that in knowledge-intensive economy when production and management of knowledge, research, and information are controlled by private actors there is typically market failure due to the enclosure effect. The private sector makes decisions on investments on the basis of a short-term horizon, driven by short-term profit expectations.

During the 1980s the distinction between basic research (discovery) and applied research (invention) was abandoned – which was another effect of the neoliberal era. That meant that algorithms, the human genome, plants seeds, GMOs, etc. became objects of patentability. The road was open for the market to privatise not only knowledge but also living things (biopiracy). In order to defend our societies from this neoliberal greed, the commons movement needs to be reinforced by certain institutional arrangements. The social outcome of research and innovation depends on the intellectual property-rights system and the legal framework of research. Developments – especially in areas such as biotechnology, big data, or artificial intelligence – can lead to an emancipatory development for society or to a collective nightmare. Both paths are open and waiting for us.

Knowledge production and research planning are too crucial for our societies to be left to private speculation. The state must intervene mainly by financing and organising basic research. The agreed on principle has to be that the results of research, in order to be fruitful and generate profits, should

be free, open, and treated as a common good. This logically implies a certain division of labour between private and public. The private sector should be linked to applied research in large laboratories of large managerial enterprises, while the public sector should take responsibility for fundamental research and guarantee that humanity's basic knowledge is treated as a common good.[22]

An example of a commons-oriented applied policy in the field is Open Educational Resources (OER).[23] Researchers, teachers, professors, and institutions share their knowledge and educational material by putting them under a Creative Commons license and making them available in an open and functional Public Reserve free for people to reuse, revise, remix, and redistribute. In an era in which education is one of the primary victims of austerity policies, institutional arrangements of this kind can be part of the solution.

If we want to avoid the future to which cognitive capitalism is leading us, we need to focus on the relevant institutional framework. At this point, policies to establish commoning can prove very useful, such as GPL[24] or Creative Commons. We need public – commons partnerships, instead of the overused public – private partnerships that have been applied even to public goods like water or health, causing unconscionable damage to societies. A general partner-state approach and strategy and appropriate legal forms of common ownership and stewardship are new emancipatory tools that the left should have in its toolkit. There needs to be a targeted, proactive, entrepreneurial state, able to take risks, creating a highly networked system of actors harnessing the best of the private sector for the national good over a medium- to long-term horizon.

With these kinds of policies it should be possible to reduce the damage done by the monopoly of intellectual property and patent systems.[25] The information economy erodes the market's ability to balance prices since markets are based on scarcity whereas information is abundant. Capitalism's defence mechanism is to create monopolies – the giant high-tech multinationals – on a scale that has never been seen in the last two hundred years. What is more, there is the idea of the positive externalities of globalisation that restores system balance as a positive counterweight to the negatives, an idea similar to the 'invisible hand' that presides over the market. Open knowledge circulation is considered one of the most important of these. However, if knowledge gets captured, as happens through patents and intellectual rights in cognitive capitalism for short-term private profit, then the result is a reduction of value production, and the system is forced to destabilise itself.

What political strategy for commons transition?

At the same time during the last decade there has been a spontaneous expansion of the cooperative economy and P2P production. A dynamic grassroots activity is occurring that expresses the reaction of societies to austerity, especially in southern Europe. It is not a product of policy enforcement by some political power or party, and it certainly would seem to be an opportunity for the left, which is supporting some of these efforts at a grassroots level.

Almost undetected by the capitalist economy's logistics, several fragments of economic life have started to move on the basis of a different structure, creating a net: parallel currencies, time banks, carpools, local exchange systems, food cooperatives, cooperatives, and self-organised spaces with a variety of uses, such as self-organised kindergartens, are being multiplied every day without being noticed by the economists and accountants. In most cases, as has happened in Greece, they are the result of a collapse of the previous structure caused by the crisis. Very often people are practicing commoning, solidarity economy, or P2P without even knowing it. For official economics these kinds of activities are mostly not considered to belong in the category of 'economic activity'. This is a crucial point. These practices exist because they are able to respond to specific social problems in times of need. They are functional because they operate according to contemporary structures and values that in the commons and P2P economy are fundamental, such as openness, free time, sustainability, networked activity, or sharing of resources (material and services), etc. Also very important is the idea of shifting the focus of struggle from ownership – the cornerstone of capitalism and the legislative environment based on it – to management. Commons movements place the emphasis on the right to use and the right to have access to a resource, not on its ownership.

New forms of ownership, new forms of lending, new types of legal contracts: a new entrepreneurial subculture has been created, but we are still at the point of trying to describe it by terms such as 'commons' or 'P2P production'. The important question is: In what ways is capitalism going to be affected by these evolutions? In a system that needs constant expansion in order to maintain itself the removal of economic sectors offers an ominous prospect. Wikipedia, for example, deprived the advertising industry of 3 billion US dollars. It can be an alternative, but only if these small-scale structures are going to be nourished, fostered, and protected as part of a political plan and official applied policies. At least in their initial stages. And this presupposes a radical change in our mindset about technology, ownership, and labour.

Early examples of the partner-state approach can be found in some urban practices such as the Bologna 'Regulation on Collaboration Between Citizens and the City for the Care and Regeneration of the Urban Commons'[26] or several policies of the Barcelona en Comu citizen platform.[27] The Bologna Regulation, which allows engaged citizens to claim urban resources as commons and declare their interest in managing them, is based on an article of the Italian Constitution.[28] After an evaluation procedure, an 'accord' is signed with the municipality specifying how the city will support the initiative with an appropriate mix of resources and specifying a joint 'public-commons' management. In Bologna itself dozens of projects have been carried out, and more than 140 other Italian cities have followed its example. The key is the reversal of the logic, which now becomes: the citizenry initiates and proposes, the city enables and supports.

As neoliberalism through the last decades used and expanded a pre-existing formalised institutional structure and a legal framework that supports it, we need to construct our own institutions that will support the commons paradigm in order to expand it and protect it from capitalist enclosures. The creation of local institutions that will protect commons-oriented enterprises and make it possible for the people working in them to make a decent living can be crucial – institutions like a Chamber of Commons that will manage open licenses, such as PPL or copy SOL, and support the P2P and cooperative economy. It will protect and reinforce openness in the same way that capitalist institutions support the private and the closed. It will provide the institutional opportunity for those who are involved in the social economy, for public administrators, those who implement policy, and entrepreneurs to exchange ideas and propose reinforcing policies. Assemblies of commons that bring together, at the local and national levels, citizens and commoners who maintain common goods can also be very useful, as can a commons-oriented entrepreneurial association, as well as an international association that will connect the existing commons-oriented enterprises in order to share expertise and articulate a common voice.[29]

Global and local coalitions between political parties (left, greens, social democrats, or parties like the Pirates, on the model of the Progressive Caucus in the European Parliament) that have included commons in their agenda, can formulate a Commons Discussion Agenda that is necessary for coordination. At any rate, surely in any list of the more promising issues in terms of political alliances, the commons would be among the first. It is the political parties that are the logical agents to fight in the European Parliament and national parliaments for the necessary legislative adjustments on the level of constitutional and private law, such as legal forms of common ownership

All of this is related to administrative participatory mechanisms that also can, and should, be institutionally enforced, like participatory legislation or participatory budgeting.[30]

NOTES

1   Definitions taken from the P2P Foundation, *Commons Transition and P2P: A Primer*, Amsterdam: Transnational Institute, 2017.

2   For further reading: <http://commonstransition.org/>.

3   Luca Calafati and Neil McInroy, 'Local government & the commons: The time has come', Progressive Economic for People and Place (PELS), 19 November 2017, <https://cles.org.uk/blog/local-government-the-commons-the-time-has-come/>.

4   Vicente Rubio-Pueyo, *Municipalism in Spain: From Barcelona to Madrid, and Beyond*, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, New York Office, December 2017.

5   The FLOK project in Ecuador is an example at the national level, <http://floksociety.org/2014/06/18/2601/> and <http://floksociety.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/06/Press-Release-Final.pdf>.

6   The GNU General Public License (GNU, GPL, or GPL) is a widely used free software license that guarantees the user's freedom to run, study, share, and modify the software. The license was originally written by Richard Stallman of the Free Software Foundation (FSF). The GPL is a 'copyleft' license, which means that derivative work can only be distributed under the same license terms. GPL was the first copyleft license for general use. More about GPL at <https://www.gnu.org/licenses/quick-guide-gplv3.html>.

7   On the partner state, see <http://wiki.p2pfoundation.net/Partner_State>.

8   On the concept of value creation in commons economy see Michel Bauwens and Vasilis Niaros, *Value in the Commons Economy: Developments in Open and Contributory Value Accounting*, Heinrich Böll Stiftung and P2P Foundation, 2017: <https://www.boell.de/sites/default/files/value_in_the_commons_economy.pdf?dimension1=division_ip>.

9   In the relevant discussion in economic theory there is no one answer about what value is, nor about what determines it in contemporary capitalism. Where individuals and societies are willing to direct their energy and efforts varies amongst cultures, regions, and ideological and social groups within a society and throughout historical epochs. In labour value theory, what determines value is to be found in the objective sphere (reflecting a quantity of labour, energy, capital, resources, etc.). On the other hand, mainstream neoclassical economics (the marginal-utility school, Austrian economics, etc.) poses value as located in the subjective sphere, based on a simple correlation of individual desires or a conscious collective decision and social contract.
     In commons, open, and contributory systems, many contributors co-create value as a commons that can be used by all those who are connected to networks. The problem is that the income is generated by a fraction of the contributors connected to the marketplace. The capitalist value regime rewards 'extractive' production and consumption activities. Issues such as the free labour of digital workers and social media users, the non-recognition of care work, and the ongoing ecological degradation of the planet's resources are interlinked to the dominance of a system based on extractivism. See Bauwens and Niaros, p.3.

10   Eric Hobsbawm, *Introduction to Karl Marx, Pre-Capitalist Economic Formations* (New York: International Publishers, 1964), pp. 20-27. Gerald A. Cohen, *History, Labour, and Freedom*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, p. 3.

11   Yochai Benkler, *The Wealth of Networks: How Social Production Transforms Markets and Freedom*, New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 2007.

12   Nikos Smyrnaios, *Internet Oligopoly: The Corporate Takeover of Our Digital World*, Bingley, UK: Emerald Publishing, 2018.

13   For example <https://bankofthecommons.coop/coopshares/>.

14   An applied example of Public Commons Partnership (PCP**)** can be found in the port of Capri: <http://labgov.city/thecommonspost/the-port-of-capri-public-private-commons-partnership/>. For more on Public Commons Partnerships see <http://wiki.p2pfoundation.net/Public-Commons_Partnership>.

15   It is certainly encouraging that policies of this sort were part of the electoral campaign of Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party, and it is even more encouraging that commons, P2P, and cooperative-economy applied policies are being loudly articulated in the public sphere of a country that religiously followed Ms Thatcher's TINA dogma for decades. See, for example <https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/corbynstays/pages/329/attachments/original/1472552058/Digital_Democracy.pdf?1472552058>.

16   Such as P2P modes of production, cooperative economy, openness, etc.

17   Francesca Bria, 'Theoretical Framework on future knowledge based economy', D-CENT: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281600183_Theoretical_Framework_on_future_knowledge-based_economy>; Carlo Vercellone, Francesca Bria, Andrea Fumagalli, Eleonora Gentilucci, Alfonso Giuliani, Giorgio Griziotti, and Pierluigi Vattimo, 'Managing the commons in the knowledge economy', D-CENT: <https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281600183_Theoretical_Framework_on_future_knowledge-based_economy>.

18   On the new dynamics of labour, see Trebor Scholz, 'Platform Cooperatives: Challenging the corporate sharing economy', Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, New York Office, January 2016.

19   <http://www.milanurbanfoodpolicypact.org/> , <https://food.opendata.ch/>.

20   Vasilis Kostakis, Vasilis Niaros, George Dafermos, and Michel Bauwens, 'Design global, manufacture local: Exploring the contours of an emerging productive model', *Futures* vol. 73, October 2015, pp. 126-135. Several examples can be found at 'Sustainable models for shared culture', case studies and policy issues by CONSERVAS/Xnet, Barcelona; Stichting Kennisland, Amsterdam; World-Information Institute, Vienna; and by National Hellenic Research Foundation/National Documentation Centre (NHRF/EKT), Athens.

21   There are certainly plenty of examples of private-sector entrepreneurial activity, from the role of young companies in providing the dynamism behind new sectors (for example, Google) to the important source of funding from private sources like venture capital. But this is the only story that is normally told. Silicon Valley and the emergence of the biotech industry are usually attributed to the geniuses behind the small high-tech firms like Facebook or the plethora of small biotech companies in Boston or Cambridge in the UK. However, the algorithm that led to Google's success was funded by a public-sector National Science Foundation grant. Molecular antibodies, which provided the foundation for biotechnology before venture capital moved into the sector, were discovered in public Medical Research Council (MRC) labs in the UK. Many of the

most innovative young companies in the US were funded not by private venture capital but by public venture capital such as through the Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) programme.

For extensive research into this issue accompanied by specific policy proposals see Mariana Mazzucato, *The Entrepreneurial State*, Demos 2011: <https://www.demos.co.uk/files/Entrepreneurial_State_-_web.pdf>.

22 As data shows, there is a strong argument for the extreme importance of the EU's policies in this area, since Europe generates more scientific output than any other region of the world. Europe is the leading economy in terms of public investment in science, research, and innovation. Even though its population is only 7% of the world population, 20% of global R&D and one-third of all high-quality scientific publications come from Europe. See <https://ec.europa.eu/info/research-and-innovation/strategy/support-policy-making/support-national-research-and-innovation-policy-making/srip-report_en#sripreport2018overviewandfindings>.

23 In the following map it is possible to find the OERs in different countries: <https://oerworldmap.org/resource/>. For a definition of OER see <https://wiki.creativecommons.org/wiki/What_is_OER%3F>. In 2017 new legislation proposed by the Greek Ministry of Education aimed not only to facilitate OERs but also to provide motivation to researchers, teachers, and professors to contribute to it. According to the legislation, projects in the fields of education, research, culture, and technology should also have OERs as a deliverable – see the *Greek Official Gazette*, 'Organisation and function of university education, regulations for research and other provisions', FEK A' 114/04.08.2017 (in Greek).

24 See <https://www.gnu.org/licenses/gpl.html>.

25 It is significant that in Greece it is the Industrial Property Organisation that has prepared and proposed to the Ministry of Finance a body of legislation that will soon be debated in the parliament concerning: a) compulsory licenses for reasons of public interest (e.g. health), b) registry of open patents, and c) technology pools.

26 <http://www.labgov.it/wp-content/uploads/sites/9/Bologna-Regulation-on-collaboration-between-citizens-and-the-city-for-the-cure-and-regeneration-of-urban-commons1.pdf>.

27 <https://barcelonaencomu.cat/sites/default/files/win-the-city-guide.pdf>.

28 Article 118, paragraph four: 'The State, the Regions, the metropolitan cities, the provinces, and municipalities favour the autonomous initiative of the citizens, whether as individuals or in associations, to carry out activities of general interest, on the basis of the principle of subsidiarity.'

29 The institutions referred to are described at Transnational Institute (TNI) and P2P Foundation, Commons transition and P2P: A Primer, March 2017, <https://www.tni.org/en/publication/commons-transition-and-p2p>, pp. 42-43.

30 For a policy recommendation on the economic and political framework that could be useful in that effort see Bauwens and Niaros, *Value in the Commons Economy*, chapter 3.

Labour, Precarity, and Organisation

Connective Class Politics
as an Inspiration for the Left

Bernd Riexinger

At 44 million, the number of wage dependents in the Federal Republic of Germany is greater than ever before in its history, and, if only for that reason, it is an important frame of reference for left, progressive politics. The society of work has not run out of work, as has been repeatedly predicted. On the other hand, the 'jobs miracle' vaunted by the government has been tied to precarisation and an expansion of the low-wage sector from the very start. With subcontracted work, job contracts by project, the employers' circumventing of collective agreements, and real and pseudo autonomous labour, the world of work is split, with many lines of division running through it. The concept presented here of a connective class politics is aimed against the divisions and weaknesses among the employed and their trade unions.

A new definition of solidarity

What is at stake is a new definition of solidarity and the connecting of diverse groups and interests among the employed and unemployed aimed at constructing a political bloc that stands for progressive politics in the 21st century. The concept of connective class politics proposes a new regulation of labour and a realisable vision of human and democratic relations of work. This does not involve abstract concepts but rather concrete projects built on existing struggles and experiences as well as concrete demands and goals for an overall plan.

Left class politics does not accept division, fragmentation, and precarisation as a given. Its task is to work out and formulate the common interests of wage dependents and forge solidary alliances. In strikes and labour struggles we have seen that educators, sanitary workers, streetcar drivers, cleaning women, kitchen help, care-givers, even at times doctors, office staff, and both Germans and immigrants, have gone out into the streets for a common

cause, have discussed problems together and shown cross-groups solidarity. But we have to go beyond this snapshot of solidarity and develop a politics that contributes to making it normal for core working staff and subcontracted workers to stand up together for the hiring of the latter as permanent staff; that those with permanent jobs engage together with the temporary workers for the abolition of temporary contracts; and that the unemployed, minimally employed, or those forced to work part time struggle for a new norm of working hours together with those under permanent stress and suffering from the blurred boundaries of work time – new working hours in which some work less hours and some more but in which everyone can live from their labour. Those employed by Amazon, in the IT branches, in care services, in educational professions, postal workers and newspaper delivery people, and all other stressed groups must recognise that the same causes are responsible for forcing them into jobs that make them sick – so that they reach the conclusion that they have to combine forces to demand good work. We need a politics that makes it normal in workplaces and society at large to outlaw discrimination based on skin colour, gender, religion, origin, sexual orientation, as well as physical or mental handicaps.

This definition of solidarity also requires that industrial workers support educational workers or hospital employees when they are struggling for better wages and more adequate staffing – because they and their families want good healthcare and good education for their children. Thus diverse groups in their neighbourhood need to go into the streets together to demonstrate against exorbitant rents, and gentrification and for affordable housing. As an illustration, in a school in Nuremberg people recently prevented the deportation of refugees who perhaps were their work colleagues or co-residents in their neighbourhood.

Why 'class'?

Why do we need the concept of class for this? Isn't it enough to speak of wage dependents and solidarity? Doesn't class struggle rhetoric scare people away? Isn't it antiquated in the 21st century to still think in class categories? It goes without saying that my position is not: Go out and explain things to people so that they can finally understand that they belong to a class and should struggle as such. Class consciousness arises through experiences and their conscious processing. We can contribute something important to this. The class concept is not just a semantic question but a contemporary political one. The concept only makes sense if we posit that there are various classes, which have different interests within society, which exert influence on the political decision-makers and the various institutions, and

which have different degrees of economic and political power. This means that the interests of wage dependents as well as those of the unemployed and pensioners have to be asserted in the face of other classes in society, especially against the class that disposes of economic power and knows how to use it well in order to exercise political power.

As soon as people formulate their interests, for example in terms of higher wages, good working conditions, affordable housing, or local public transport and organise to realise them, they come up against the decided resistance of other classes and protagonists. Capital attempts through all of its means to prevent higher wages or shortened working time, and the redistribution of work and its more just organisation. To this purpose it uses its political influence, for the most part successfully, just as it also does to pay very little or no taxes. It puts political representatives under pressure with the threat of moving production abroad, investing less, and destroying jobs. Or the capitalist elites get easy access to political decision-making processes by means of donations, lobbying, or by being asked to formulate the laws that actually ought to regulate them. Entire laws are written by the lobbyists of the employers' associations. This intersection of economy and politics has grown in the last thirty years. Understanding who is impeding the wage dependents from realising their own interests and aspirations, in other words whom they are dealing with when they organise and raise demands, is an essential precondition for successful struggles and initiatives. And this helps them to recognise that the opponent is not the refugees, the unemployed, or the precariously employed. It would be still better to understand that the different class interests are determined by social relations, that is, that they do not so much depend on the will or character of the acting protagonists but rather have systemic causes. But we are still a long way from having achieved this, not to mention the formation of a political will to fundamentally change these relations. Taking steps in this direction of change is the task of a modern and connective class politics.

'Nice-sounding demands', 'a naïve conception of politics', 'reality is completely different', many will object. But these objections overlook the fact that it is precisely in reality that we see examples of successful actions or struggles with connective solidarity. The organising of connective struggles and confrontations transmits the experience of common interests. This applies equally to core staff as well as the precariously employed, to those in training, students, and secondary school pupils, and to parents. And, finally, it applies beyond national borders. Provenance and ethnicity play no role in this. The opponent is the firm that pays too low wages to the ground crew and not the work colleague who happens to come from another country.

Of course, one-off experiences of struggle are seldom sufficiently sustained that they lastingly shape attitude patterns, but they are preconditions for the employed to see themselves as part of a class with common interests even if they rarely formulate it in this way. If people frequently have such experiences in a collegial and solidary interaction with each other it will shape consciousness, political attitude, and attitudes towards society.

In many strikes, demonstrations, and rallies I have experienced educators standing, struggling, and dancing side by side with sanitation workers, nurses with street cleaners, social workers with cleaning women, Turkish salespeople at H&M with German salespeople at Kaufhof. The reaction was always: 'We should do this more often, otherwise we hardly ever come together.' I have seen that co-workers call up these experiences if they do not strike or organise similar actions every twenty years but every two to four years. For the left it is an important task to organise such experiences, in the workplaces and the residential neighbourhoods. How can we tie the single struggles together into a major substantive project? Is there a conception of the future that connects the individual struggles and confrontations in the world of work and can develop an additional dynamic? To this end I propose the project of a new standard employment model.

For another world of work and a new standard employment model

The struggle for a fundamental change in the world of work is the heart of a new connective class politics. We have seen that there are new and interesting struggles and efforts, mostly around single issues or in individual spheres of collective bargaining, to achieve improvements or impede changes for the worse. These workplace and collective bargaining confrontations have always led to successes but could not and cannot as a whole halt the process of precarisation, exclusion, and division. For this it is necessary to change the underlying political conditions – not only to stop the deregulation that has long since been implemented but to implement a new form of regulation.

What would a political project look like that overcomes the division into precarious, unemployed, and core staff and at the same time is able to tie the individual struggles together? How can a mutual alliance of trade unions, social associations, unemployed initiatives, the left in its broadest sense, and other groups be created? In addition, what would a political project look like that develops a class perspective that is up to date and also advances the renewal of the trade unions?

I believe that putting forward the concept of a new standard employment model is an effective way of advancing such a project. What does this admittedly cumbersome expression mean? It builds on the idea that there

once was an (older) standard employment framework. This was not merely an act of (social) state regulation of labour. It was above all the result of the solidarity of the dependently employed, of their organisation into strong trade unions, and of trade-union struggles. Features of the old standard employment model included the continued payment of wages in the event of illness, a pension that ensured a decent standard of living, collective-bargaining contracts that stipulated rising wages, a right to vacation, work times, and working conditions, as well as co-determination in the plant and at the enterprise level. These achievements were the result of trade-union struggles. Sick pay and the forty-hour week were won through strong strike movements of the employed and then taken up by parties and enshrined in law so that they had validity for all of the employed and all enterprises. On this basis there was a state regulation of labour, which together with a strong welfare state protected a large sector of workers against the risks of unemployment, occupational illnesses, or old-age poverty. This was possible based on a principally nation-state-organised capitalism with high growth rates after the Second World War. The old standard employment model was part of a 'compromise' between capital and labour gradually established through conflictual confrontations. It was based on a kind of contract: hard full-time labour with rather rigid and minimally self-determined working conditions (the famed 'back-breaking jobs' and Taylorism) in exchange for social security, increasing prosperity and the prospect that life would improve for the workers' children.

A new class politics needs to build on these – today often lost – achievements under changed conditions and fill them with new life. At the same time it has to go beyond them. It is clear that a new regulation of labour cannot be a return to the old standard employment model, for in many respects it was worthy of criticism; it was overwhelmingly oriented to men and thus supported a family model, which fixed the woman's role as that of housewife, mother, and supplementary earner and the man's as full-time worker. Moreover, lifelong affiliation with a single firm is no longer what many of the employed wish. The life plans and needs of people have changed just as fundamentally as the world of work. A new normal employment model thus does not mean that all workers should work for the same number of hours or earn the same. It is instead about allowing that to become normal which should be taken for granted in a rich country – work for all that is secure, plannable, and permanent, as well as paid according to collective bargaining agreements, socially protected, self-determined, and democratically co-designed.

Good work, good wages, a good life, and democracy

Wages have to be adequate for a good life for all those who are working as well as for a pension that guarantees a decent standard of living and protects people from poverty. Wages should not only prevent poverty but also enable participation in the social wealth created by people's work. The gender pay gap and discrimination against immigrants must be overcome. Care work done with people in education, healthcare provision, care, social work, and work in other areas of social service has value and must be more highly valued. It will constitute a large portion of work in the future.

It must be possible for everybody to plan their future instead of working precariously – social security for all. All people must be protected from the risks of unemployment, illness, occupational disability, and old-age poverty. Various phases of life, such as parenting, continuing education and career change, care periods, and old age must be socially regulated so that greater self-determination is possible within the span of a work life.

Work has to revolve around life and not life around work. A new normal employment model does not mean that everyone would work full time in one workplace throughout their life. Instead of constant stress and the forced pressure of flexibility, work and working time have to be organised such that life and jobs, responsibility for children and time for friendships, social engagement, and leisure can be harmonised. Work has to be so constituted that people do not become ill from it and can stay healthy throughout their entire work life. All of the employed must have a right to the ongoing development of their work and free continuing education without being exposed to the permanent pressure of competition and permanent flexibility.

Today's high rate of labour productivity makes it possible to have well-being and more free time for all instead of constant stress and unemployment for the many and high profits for a minority of owners of capital. We therefore propose a short fulltime as the new normal work time. Working time should be about thirty hours a week – with self-determined customised working times between 28 and 35 hours. Our proposal is calculated to foster a just distribution of the total labour – also between genders. Only by taking steps towards the shortening of long working hours will it be possible to justly distribute wage labour in society as well as care and homework between the genders. The system of structural under-employment, with mini- and midi-jobs, and involuntary part-time would belong to the past just as would be regular overtime and the blurring of work time.

'Dare to achieve more democracy'. This slogan of Willy Brandt needs to be taken seriously again today. Democracy cannot stop at the factory gate or the office door. Democratic co-determination by the employed has been

emptied out and attacked. Increasingly more enterprises are trying to fend off the establishment of factory councils and trade-union organising, in part using criminal methods. A new normal employment model also means that co-determination in the plant and in the enterprise must include all of the employed. The rights of co-determination of each and every individual and of the factory councils and trade unions must be reinforced and expanded.

For a long time now the diverse individual struggles, whether in worksites or in collective-bargaining conflicts, have still not given rise to a political confrontation around a better regulation of the relations of work. The proposed new norm can only succeed on the political level. It is therefore imperative to construct societal pressure to shift the political relations of forces and 'force' the government to act. In an incipient way this succeeded with the statutory minimum wage. Even a conservative chancellor had to back it because a social majority no longer was willing to accept poverty wages. At the same time, the minimum wage shows that improving the situation requires more than just adjusting a screw. Political pressure arises when different struggles are not conducted in isolation but are connected to each other.

Keep the whole in view

The dynamic in the struggle for a new normal employment model emerges when the whole is kept in view. What is needed is to tie the struggle for individual improvements to a societal project for the future, which can be worked on and mobilised and struggled for from various positions in the next ten years. The concept draws on the very concrete interests of the employed and connects them to a new class politics that takes care confront subordination to the economy of capitalism with the economy of the working class. In the process various interests are connected and the horizon of a new relation between work and life is constructed. The determining substantive elements comprise a new regulation model for higher wages and collective agreement coverage as the normal situation. The various forms of precarious work would be abolished and transformed into 'normal' work relations. A model of short fulltime, connected to elective work time, would produce a new balance between life and jobs and thus a new model of well-being. This would also be a central contribution to gender justice. The valorisation of social and one-on-one service work is an important building block for the equal payment of men and women. What is decisive is not only to demand an equal wage for the same work but an equal wage for work of equal value. These questions are connected to regulatory proposals that declare war on constant stress and provide for working conditions that are health-compatible.

In the last analysis there can be no new normal employment model without further rights for the employed and the representation of their interests. Through a democratisation offensive we want to counter creeping de-democratisation in workplaces and pervasive union-busting. The rights of individual workers should be expanded and tied to an expansion of collective co-determination. This also means improving the laws governing strikes to the point of legalising political strikes. Thinking further along these lines, the concept includes concrete proposals for economic democracy, in other words, concrete steps of a transformation going beyond capitalism.

Renewing trade unions

The concept of a new normal employment model is consciously not a vision of long-term change. It involves conceiving of re-regulated labour as a new normality, against which the current conditions are seen as abnormal. Working out the tension between possibility and reality imparts great energy to the project. It is at the same time a proposal for renewing the trade unions. Trade unions must work in a conflict-oriented way and be prepared to fight the rich and the politically powerful, that is, they have to understand themselves as class organisations. This means organising solidarity with all of the employed and unemployed, with the 'indigenous' and 'immigrants', with all genders, and democratically shaping collective-bargaining policy, in collective-bargaining confrontations, and strikes.

With the proposal for a new normal employment model we counterpose a perspective of solidarity to the growing division in the world of work. All groups can rally around the concept: the unemployed, the precariously employed, and precarious autonomous workers, industrial workers, as well as those employed in the public and private service sector. This reinforces the position of the trade unions and their assertiveness. If precarious labour is pushed back or abolished, the low-wage sector dried out, mass unemployment minimised and social security won for all, then a limit will be set on the constant blackmail and the pressure on wages and working conditions, collective agreements, and democratic rights. This presupposes the resuscitation and renewal of parliamentary political representation. Trade unions must not limit themselves to workplace and wage confrontations but must enter political space offensively. Former IG Metall Chair Bethold Huber once said: 'The power of IG Metall is located in the factories, not in the streets'. This needs to be corrected to: 'The power of trade unions lies in the factories and in the streets.' It is precisely young people who will not be enthused by trade unions if they just climb hand over hand from one collective-bargaining round to the next. By contrast, what would be more

convincing is an overarching idea of a better society, at least a better world of work, worth fighting for.

Inspiration and challenge for the left

Regrettably, in Germany at this point there are no societal majorities for a left reform project. There is no left camp capable of acting. Social democracy is in a permanent crisis, once more caught in a Grand Coalition and undergoing a continuous erosion, while the Greens have for some time now been regarding themselves as a reserve force that is there to provide the CDU with the numbers to form a government. At the same time, under the pressure of the AfD, the bourgeois camp is drifting to the right, while the CSU and FDP are looking at Kurz's policies in Austria as an arena for experiment and learning. The big challenge for the social left and Die LINKE is to oppose clear alternatives to this right-wing development and to recruit and mobilise for these alternatives.

Precisely because of social democracy's deep crisis and the rise of reactionary forces we should not let our position slide into becoming a subordinate component of a 'red-red-green'* camp. It is strategically decisive to foreground the question of hegemony. How do we fight offensively for another direction of trade-union development? The social relations of force arise and change not just in parliament but within the relations of production and property and in the social struggles of 'civil society'. In Antonio Gramsci's sense, civil society is not the opposite of the state but its upstream level, its 'front organisations' so to speak. In this sense it is the locus of struggles for hegemony. The separation between party politics, parliament, movement, and citizens' initiatives misses this connection of state and civil society. The use value of a socialist-connective party consists in promoting the emergence of the common interests and goals of the diverse parts of the wage-dependent class. It can and must be a connecting link between social actors and the parliamentary construction of will, of which it is a part. The representation of progressive civil-society as well as trade-union interests in parliament can continuously be connected to driving forward the struggles for better conditions of work and life and above all to enabling people's self-organisation.

The concept of connective class politics serves as an inspiration and challenge on the path to a renewed left culture, as an organisation of the 'whole class' with its many faces anchored in everyday life. This is what I understand by the term connective class politics in the 21st century.

★   Ed. note: 'red-red-'green' refers to an alliance or coalition of the Social Democrats, Die LINKE, and the Greens.

Restoring Working-Class Power – Super Majority Strikes

Jane McAlevey

'*Precarity isn't the major problem in the American labor market. It's that wages are stagnant or worse, benefits are eroding, and much labor is dull, alienating, pointless, and sometimes dangerous. Many people with normal, full-time jobs have a hard time making ends meet, and most households have little or no savings to fall back on in a crisis. Emphasizing precarity only makes workers feel even more powerless than they are.*'[1]

Doug Henwood, *Left Business Observer*, 7 June 2018

The endless debates about which way forward for the working class are a constant distraction from the most urgent need, which is workers organising together to form fighting organisations capable of the most effective type of mass collective action — super majority strikes. The only strategic advantage workers and the working class have over employers and the political elite is their large numbers. To win anything meaningful requires being able to translate those large numbers into sustainable, demonstrable super majorities. For several decades now, at least since Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan delivered severe blows to unions in their respective countries, it has been open season on workers worldwide. Academics and policy makers have argued about how to preserve or restore a decent quality of life for workers, all for naught. The subsequent decades have seen something akin to the 'unmaking of the working class' as unions decreased in size while austerity increased.

In the absence of hitherto unfound solutions, soul crushing desperation is leading to a rise in nationalism and huge swaths of the populations are dropping out of the political and social systems that once undergirded society. It seems Thatcher was being prescriptive, not descriptive, when she infamously declared, '[…] there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families.'[2]

To reverse course on the declining quality of life experienced by so many, and to effectively challenge the rapid rise of nationalism, which is an outgrowth of the many failures of neoliberalism, the top priority for the progressive movement must be organising (mobilising follows) and mass collective action among those workforces which can hold effective strikes.

US education workers in six traditionally conservative states – states that ban strikes and forbid collective bargaining – defied the law and staged massive strikes leading to immediate material and social gains. Upstart new unions like United Voices of the World and the Independent Workers Union of Great Britain have scored a string of wins using a direct-action approach.[3] Most recently, the global walkout by 20,000 Google employees resulted in an immediate change in their terms and conditions of work (one immediate result from the walkout is that they can now engage in class action lawsuits against Google over sexual harassment and gender equity issues).[4]

By using the spring 2018 West Virginia education strike as a case study I will illustrate what is possible for labour, and desperately needed. Before getting to the details of the case itself, some attention to the platform or gig economy seems required. As the opening quotation makes clear, despite consistent and wild hypotheses to the contrary, the vast majority of workers in the US are employed in what we think of as a regular day job (and a miserable one, for most). Yes, this situation is changing, but there is far less change than pub banter or Twitter talk suggests, and these facts matter for clear-eyed strategy.

Anchoring gig fears in evidence

Recent studies, including a June 2018 US Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) report,[5] and a subsequent 30 September follow-up report[6] that went deeper into the specifics of gig work, emphatically show that there is much more hype than reality in the claims that the world of work has radically changed. I am not an economist, and as such my attention to this topic will be the minimal necessary in order to proceed to my main arguments for solutions to stave off the erosion of more fulltime jobs becoming irregular, even more horrible ones — and make real improvements to the quality of life for the working masses.

Two different, and reliably good contemporary US economists have been carefully following the issue of the gig or platform economy: Doug Henwood, publisher of a decades-old newsletter, the *Left Business Observer*, and Dean Baker of the Center for Economic and Policy Research. Both are pro-worker and pro-union economists (though, like almost anyone else, each has his share of criticisms of unions). Each of them has drawn similar

conclusions from diligently pouring over mountains of data. As Dean Baker recently wrote,

> The US experience matters because it is often viewed as the model of a modern deregulated labor market. There are far fewer obstacles to gig employment in the United States than in other wealthy countries. This means that if gig employment is not as big a factor in the US economy as is widely believed, there must be greater advantages to the traditional employee–employer relationship than is generally recognized.[7]

There was so much reaction to Henwood's initial posts about the BLS research that in his follow up posts he went to great lengths to pull together a series of other solid reports. He rebuts each argument activists directed at him on social media, including flawed data that cannot capture the crisis, adding other data including statistics on job tenure, churn, part-time work, multiple jobs, temp work, and self-employment (see notes 5 and 6).

Even if scepticism persists from some readers, I take the view that precarity has always been a central feature of capitalism. Recent books, in particular Guy Standing's book, *The Precariat*,[8] also contribute to the idea that precarity is somehow new. Renowned labour historian Nelson Lichtenstein is as emphatic on this point in labour history — that precarity has always existed — as the two contemporary economists mentioned above are about today's gig economy. According to Lichtenstein,

> I agree with you about precarity being more prevalent than we now imagine during some previous golden age of work stability. And not just in the pre-union era. All those not in the old core of the workforce: women, people of color, those in light industry and services had very checkered work careers. Even coal miners had a lot of down time in summer, not to mention longshoremen, farm hands, garment workers who worked long hours during the 'season' and then were laid off. And even in auto, work was not steady in the union era.[9]

Winning big requires creating crises

Perhaps most importantly, whether or not readers accept these views about precarity or the current evidence around it, I would still be arguing for a return to super majority, all-out strikes as the main priority for progressives today. *Re*learning how to build super majority participation and unity across the working class is essential not just to win better contracts, but also to elect policy makers who might vote for the very policies some activists suggest are

the solution to the platform or gig economy era.

After speaking with Rodrigo Nunes in 2018 I became convinced that this holds for Europe as well. His excellent small book *The Organisation of the Organisationless: Collective Action After Networks*[10] can be read as a companion piece to the present article. He argues, in part, that the anti–austerity protests throughout Europe since the 2011 financial crisis have not led to changes, and that, in fact, the situation in Europe is steadily eroding.

The sociologist and political scientist Frances Fox Piven uses the indelicate term 'spitting in the wind' to describe activists or policy makers prescribing solutions to problems that require more power to win than the movement can presently muster. Calls for a Basic or Guaranteed Income are examples. If the movement is too weak to enforce basic trade union laws already on the books, or stop their erosion, or save core institutions like the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK, or public schools in Sweden (privatised several years ago), then it follows that the movement is *far* too weak to win a *meaningful* Basic or Guaranteed Income. The discussion of it in the US is frustrating since those proposing the idea suggest spending huge resources to win a guaranteed annual income of $1,000 per month – which is far below the poverty rate. It is absurd to fight for a below-poverty wage. No wonder Silicon Valley executives are behind this proposal, for it is far cheaper than proposals that matter far more, like paid maternity leave, a national healthcare system, or any number of basic income supports.

People discussing the Basic or Annual Guaranteed income idea must first determine if they can win it in the heart of Silicon Valley, say, by mustering the power to unionise all the employees and subcontractors, then negotiating across the table to first give all their workers such an annual guarantee that meets a real living income standard in that region. If successful there, then it is possible to start thinking about how to nationalise and internationalise the discussion.

The US now houses several labs or so-called innovation hubs dedicated to coming up with solutions to rising income inequality and declining unionisation rates. Several unions contribute to the financing of these laboratories, notably, the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), with SEIU's David Rolf as the leading proponent of such efforts. The other major backers include hedge fund billionaires and philanthropists. That they use the vernacular of Silicon Valley, focusing on 'innovations', reveals their core motivation to develop strategies for the working class about which the class has absolutely no say and that in no way address poverty, stagnant wages, or a lack of affordable housing or health insurance. It is fascinating that they include Guaranteed Annual Income as 'their' 'innovation,' despite

the fact that famed union leader Walter Reuther, long-time president of the United Auto Workers (UAW), developed the idea and won it across the negotiations table in the auto sector seventy years ago.[11] It seems those calling for innovation believe they are smarter or more capable than all who have preceded them in devising solutions to the issue that has confounded the working class since the dawn of capitalism.

Part of what makes traditional collective bargaining so effective is that workers themselves go to the negotiation table to decide how they best see fit to redistribute their boss's money, not clever 'innovators' who do not work on the shop floor themselves. Workers themselves, in a democratic fashion, are better able to solve the inequality crisis than the super wealthy of Silicon Valley and their handful of labour allies. None of the innovations, including the Guaranteed Annual Income, offer a solution to the root of today's income inequality crisis, which stems from the more serious crisis, an inequality of power. And in this respect it was precisely the power structure of a state that had been voting solid Republican for decades that the educators of West Virginia decided they had to challenge.

The West Virginia education strike

All strikes are protests, but protests with a very specific ability to create a crisis for employers. Most protests these days are not strikes and most do not create a crisis for the owner class.

In his 1950 book, *Strike Strategy*, John Steuben asks, 'What is a strike?' His answer: 'A strike is an organized cessation from work. It is the collective halting of production or services in a plant, industry, or area for the purpose of obtaining concessions from employers. A strike is labor's weapon to enforce labor's demands.'[12] I use Steuben's definition and consider so-called symbolic strikes, like the Fight for Fifteen campaign,[13] to be protests, not strikes. This is not to suggest that these protests in the fast-food industry are not welcome; they are, and they are important. But using the word strike confuses people about the central issue of the power to suspend production in order to force concessions. The word 'strike' was used for this protest movement because SEIU sub-contracted the media work for the Fight for Fifteen campaign to a large public relations firm, Berlin Rosen. The firm chose the word 'strike' to market the protest, in the most neoliberal fashion.[14]

By contrast, the West Virginia education workers, 34,000 strong, walked off the job in a nine-day, all-out illegal strike that shut down every single school in the state. At the news of their victory, as thousands of them packed the state capitol on Tuesday, 6 March 2018, they erupted into jubilation, expressing their sense of their own agency: 'Who made history? We made history!'

The strike produced a string of significant victories. It restored the dignity of 34,000 workers, rebuilt the pride of West Virginia's working class, and essentially rebuilt three unions.

First we will outline the basic features of the strike and then look at its most important lessons.

The workers were represented by three distinct unions, and the employers were represented by three separate governing institutions. Ending the strike required all three institutions on each side to agree on a settlement. For those less familiar with strikes or any negotiation, this is considerably more complicated than one union versus one boss, especially in a high-stakes, high-power negotiation playing out in the media.

The worker side

The West Virginia Education Association: This is the state affiliate of the largest union in the US, the National Education Association (NEA), although the NEA is explicit in calling itself an association, not a union, and has never in its over 150-year history been a member of any national federation of workers. However, at the state level, the state affiliates do join state bodies of labour unions. Dale Lee, one of two chief spokespersons in the media throughout the strike, is a former teacher and the elected president of this union.

The West Virginia Federation of Teachers: This is the state affiliate of the national American Federation of Teachers (AFT). The AFT is a much younger union than the NEA, having been founded in the last century. It self-identifies as a union and has long been a member of the various union confederations nationally. Its West Virginia leader, Christine Campbell, was the other chief spokesperson identified in most media coverage.

The West Virginia School Service Personnel Association (SSPA): This is an independent union that exists only in West Virginia. Its membership consists primarily of bus drivers, janitors, cooks, some classroom aids, and an assortment of workers in other non-teaching positions. Although they played a crucial role in this strike, their president, Linda Thompson, was nearly invisible in the media. The person from this union most often seen with Dale Lee and Christine Campbell was the staff-level executive director of the SSPA, Joe White, who had worked as a rank-and-file member in the Logan County Schools. He served as the public face and seeming decision-maker alongside the two presidents of the two teachers' unions.

The boss side

Governor Jim Justice: Justice is a coal baron. By media reports, he is the wealthiest individual in West Virginia. He ran for office in 2016 as

a Democrat and won, garnering 49% of votes, 48,421 more than his Republican opponent Bill Cole who received 42% of votes.[15] At a rally on Thursday, 3 August 2017, less than one year after Trump romped Clinton in West Virginia, 68% to 26%, Justice, standing next to Trump onstage, announced he was switching parties to become a Republican: 'Like it or not, but the Democrats walked away from me, I can't help you anymore being a Democratic governor.'[16] This meant no one trusted the Governor in these negotiations, which added yet another maddening layer of complexity throughout the process. All my interviews made it clear that the unions, which all endorsed him, did not trust him, and the Senate leadership, the most ideologically rightwing body, not only did not trust him but regarded him as a Democrat and wanted to punish him for it.

The House of Delegates,[17] the lower house, has 100 elected members – 64 Republicans and 35 Democrats (and one independent). They played a minor role, barely getting media attention, because they voted to agree to the Governor's settlement on Thursday, 1 March, sending the bill for what they hoped would be a similar vote in the state Senate. The delegates are politically moderate, much like the Governor.

The Senate: These were the lead antagonists, the players in this strike arena who acted like an extremely anti-union employer. It was the President of the Senate, Mitch Carmichael, who forced the strike's extension by declaring, on 28 February, after the Governor reached a settlement, that the Senate would reject the deal.[18] 22 of the Senators are Republican and 12 Democrats. Throughout the conflict the extreme right-wing leaders in the Senate took on the educators explicitly as the voice of Donald Trump in West Virginia.

What They Won

There were five key issues in the strike. These included three workers' rights issues, represented in three key pieces of legislation that were winding their way through the legislative process: an expansion of charter schools (which, in the legislation, took the form of vouchers), a proposal to eliminate seniority, and a paycheck protection bill (aimed at weakening unions by taking away their right to deduct union dues through payroll collection). The two financial issues were the rising cost of healthcare and the lack of a raise in eight years.

For the strikers, wages and health benefits, although they were considered important, were not even the main issues. Of central concern was the quality of education for everyone, endangered by the bill on seniority, which would have replaced qualified with unqualified teachers. Also of great concern

was a bill aimed at disallowing 'official time', which would have made it economically impossible for workers to earn a living who also fulfilled union functions. This so-called 'lost time' has been targeted for elimination by the nationwide right wing.

Respect and dignity were also major aspects of the health insurance issue. Already enacted recent legislation in West Virginia removed organised labour's representation on the Employees Insurance Board. The Board then proposed a requirement that workers wear Fitbit and similar devices to transmit their data, a tremendous invasion of privacy.

In addition, health insurance would have been based on total family income, not the individual worker's, dramatically increasing people's insurance costs.

And there was a stream of indignities, including Governor Justice calling the strikers 'dumb bunnies' at a town hall in Logan County in early February.[19]

By the fourth day of the strike, there were the same 34,000 workers out who walked out on day one. A steady stream of 10,000 a day protested in the state capitol, while others picketed around their schools — many wearing bunny ears. And the parents of 279,899 kids were supporting the strikers and scrambling to find places for their kids to stay. At this point Governor Jim Justice blinked. On Tuesday, 27 February, the Governor sat down and hammered out an agreement. In it, Wendy Peters, president of the Raleigh County Federation of Teachers, said, 'we won on all five stances – everything – which is pretty incredible'.

The settlement included a commitment by Governor Justice to veto all the anti-union legislation, a 5% teacher and school service personnel pay raise (the non-teachers had never won a raise as big as the teachers had) and a mechanism to fix the health insurance crisis. Specifically, the workers achieved the creation of a task force on healthcare that guaranteed organised labour seats at the table (each of the three striking unions appointed a member), essentially restoring their right to govern their healthcare which had been taken away in 2017. The language in the Governor's Executive Order No. 6-18 establishing the healthcare task force[20] dictated that it had to have its first meeting by March 15, which it did, and issue its final report before December 2018. According to Jay O'Neal, a key rank–and–file teacher organiser in the strike, 'Most important, we made it so thousands of eyes will be watching everything the task force does.'[21]

When the settlement was finally ratified by the Senate, the education strikers had achieved the 5% pay raise for all state employees, not only the 34,000 education workers. This occurred six days after the Governor's

announcement, four of them considered strike days in the nine-day strike (education unions do not count weekend days as strike days).

How did they do it?

Today's strategic sectors: education and healthcare

Schools and hospitals are today's factories, with workers who have the skill and ingenuity and sense of purpose in their work to build strong organisations. They also have extraordinary organic relationships with the broader community. In an era when union membership has plummeted, rebuilding it will require mission-driven workers who are deeply rooted in and trusted by their community. Russ Jordan, a minister at Grandview Christian Church, who held a prayer breakfast to support the strike, said: 'The community sees their educators as their leaders. Sometimes their kids' teacher is the only positive force they have in their lives, and the community supports the strike because they understand this.'

In the weeks leading up to the strike, the school workers reached out to religious and other community institutions throughout the state. They raised money to fill backpacks with essential nutritious food that their students would need in the event of a strike and devised a highly effective daily distribution system to feed them. They could not have achieved their victory without the community firmly on their side. Educators, like healthcare workers, have a tremendously powerful, organic relationship with their communities — relationships strong enough to resist sophisticated right-wing attacks.

All workers fighting as one: the industrial model of trade unionism

Chris Toney, a West Virginia school-bus driver from Clear Forks, and president of the Raleigh County School Service Personnel Association, said that before the strike began on 22 February, and each day of the strike, the school superintendent called him to ask whether the bus drivers, cooks, and janitors planned to work. The answer was always no. Toney explains, 'He checked in with me, mainly about the bus operators. If there wasn't going to be bus operators, he wasn't going to have children stranded all over the county standing on roadsides, waiting for a bus that never comes. That's a basic safety issue.' This unity between the teachers – and between teachers and the rest of the schools' workers – was crucial to the fight.

According to Wendy Peters, who worked closely with Toney when the strike votes were taken, 'we opened up the voting to all workers, teachers, and all other workers. We also invited workers who were not union members to vote because we knew we'd be stronger that way.' The strike votes Peters

describes were a structural test, a mechanism to assess strike readiness.

In fact, the idea for creating unified strike votes that cut across all three unions and every type of worker came from the leftist rank–and–file organisers, the group of people I call the 'Facebook Group', which was committed to an industrial model of trade unionism.

According to Chris Toney, 'in the 1990 strike, our union leadership told the members that we were not allowed to go on strike with the teachers. We were not allowed to take strike votes with them'. Toney, like thousands of others, learned the actual facts from the Facebook Group, which was that of course they could decide to strike, and to strike *with* the teachers.

The facebook group created pressure and power from below: The official union 'leadership' followed, rather than led

By all accounts, there was an important groundswell from below, what teacher-union scholar Lois Weiner calls the '[Bernie] Sanders effect' on the grassroots. In an interview on the third day of the strike, prompted by a piece she wrote for *In These Times*,[22] Weiner was the first to alert me to the radicals in the rank and file who in essence created the conditions for the strike. There is a new generation of teachers in West Virginia who were inspired by the Sanders campaign; they are young and understand that their workplaces are a key arena for making lasting change. The reach of these radicals can to some extent be understood by the fact that Bernie Sanders won *every* single precinct against Hillary Clinton in the 2016 presidential primary in West Virginia. Sanders swept all 55 counties, 51.4% to 35.8%.[23] Thus understanding that there are younger teachers who were mobilised by the Sanders campaign is a key to understanding where the impetus for the strike came from.

Some of them decided to launch a study group in the summer of 2017 to educate themselves about how to change their abysmal conditions at work, and to carry on the momentum from the Sanders campaign. Their reading list and study group included my *No Shortcuts*. A few of them, less than you can count on two hands, got in touch with UCORE, a national caucus of rank-and-file educators loosely coordinated by *Labor Notes* with leadership from the Chicago Teachers Union's CORE caucus (the Caucus of Rank-and-File Educators). They wanted to learn as much as they could about how progressive-minded teachers had, almost a decade earlier, won election to take control of the Chicago Teachers Union. By early October, two teachers in the group, Jay O'Neal and Emily Comers, decided to begin a private, 'closed' Facebook group. The membership would be open to all state employees in West Virginia, though individuals who wanted to join would have to be approved beforehand. Up through January of 2018, these

two teachers were the only 'moderators' assessing and deciding who could join the group. 'Our goal was to have a thousand members by Christmas', according to Comers.[24]

Shortly after the Facebook Group (henceforth FBG) was initiated, the state announced it would hold the legally mandated once-a-year public hearing on proposed changes to the health insurance plans of covered teachers housed under the Public Employee Insurance Agency (PEIA). Comers and O'Neal decided their new FBG would push to turn educators and state workers out for this hearing. Hundreds showed up. Many more than past years, according to Christine Campbell and Dale Lee. The PEIA hearing was in November, and that, according to the FBG, is where it all really begins. They quickly reached their Christmas goal of 1,000 people participating in the FBG.

In late January, teacher leaders in the five traditional coal-miner counties with a long history of strikes decided not to wait for a statewide agreement. Instead they voted to hold a one-day strike on 26 January. When they struck thousands poured into the state capital. The strike fuse was lit. Without delay, the FBG began planning for a statewide strike.

The official union position holders, Lee, Campbell, and White, were sensing huge momentum, but they were nervous. The turnout projections from the FBG had been wrong on a previous call for a statewide Martin Luther King Day action on 15 January. Because of this, and because Lee and White had been in the 1990 teachers strike, these union officials decided to perform a structural test and call for a statewide strike vote. This was a sensible decision. And the FBG quickly realised they had to exert a decisive influence on how the vote would be conducted. Their core demand was that the strike vote be held as a single vote, by school, across all three unions — so that the workers would be voting according to an industrial model of trade unionism, not by union, but by school. This was a crucial solidarity-building breakthrough, initiated by the FBG. The results were spectacular as school by school voted overwhelmingly to strike — and strike together.

It was an unintended but extraordinary coincidence that the first day of what has become the historic West Virginia education strike was the very day the United States Supreme Court heard the oral arguments in the anti-union court case, AFSCME vs. Janus — a case widely understood as the biggest structural attack on unions since the days of Ronald Reagan. That a massive, illegal strike broke out that day resonates with the essential story line of why strikes matter. Unionised workers were becoming depressed by the talk of the Supreme Court case and, just in time, West Virginia workers showed what workers could do no matter what any court or law said. When

the workers were united at a 100-per-cent level, with community backing, they could and did walk out.

Creating a crisis

The strike took many by surprise, including the lawmakers, and the media. On its first day, an estimated 20,000 workers bussed and drove to the state capital, creating breathtaking media images in a conservative state and generating the momentum needed to continue the strike. Six days into the walkout, with half the strikers staffing local picket lines and half the strikers going to the state capital to conduct noisy protests each day, the Governor surrendered, offering a 5% raise to teachers and a 2% raise to the cooks, drivers and cleaners. He also offered to drop the proposed changes to the healthcare plans, to freeze all costs, and immediately create a statewide task force on the issue of how to control costs in the healthcare plans. The union officials Lee, Campbell, and White emerged from a closed-door meeting with the Governor and accepted the deal, while making clear that it would have to be ratified by the rank-and-file members. The union officials recommended the members accept the contract offer. The FBG led an immediate call to reject the deal on several grounds; the two most important were that non-teachers should not have gotten less of a raise, and that frozen health insurance was unacceptable – they wanted it fixed not frozen (their chant became, 'a freeze is not a fix').

That original settlement proposal was on Tuesday night, 27 February. The media erroneously reported that the strike was over. But within hours of a settlement being announced, Senate President Carmichael announced on the radio that the Senate did not plan to approve it. West Virginia station WSAZ reported that 'Carmichael speculated that as many as 22 Republicans in the 34-member Senate will oppose Governor Justice's plan'. Wednesday was to be a cooling-off period, with everyone returning to classrooms on Thursday, 1 March. Instead, rolling votes began to spread across the state, in all 55 counties, with workers voting to defy their leaders and continue the strike until the deal got voted on and signed into law by the Governor.

The criteria were that all three branches of state government had to ratify the deal Governor Justice had announced, including a signed Executive Order to the public committing in writing to all the promises he had made the night before. Given the comments from the Senate President and the subsequent actions by the Senate to undo the deal — including voting the deal down several times — this was shrewd and far-sighted.

According to Gary Price, the president of the State Superintendents Association and the superintendent of Marion County Schools, 'school

faculty were gathering across the state and voting unanimously not to return to work until the legislature approved it and the Governor signed it. As I told a couple people, the crisis really escalated because we went from having one work stoppage to having 55 work stoppages in 55 counties because no one knew for sure which direction any of them were going in. It was something that was out of control at that point.'[25]

By Friday, Price had gathered all superintendents across the state for a meeting in the capitol with Carmichael. Their message to him: 'This strike will not end until the package is voted on and signed by the Governor.' It was clear to Price that the superintendents' message was a strong one precisely because the education unions had created a serious crisis. He went on to say that he knew it would not end when, in his own county, 'I heard that one of our little elementary schools – you know how elementary school teachers all are very nurturing, all very kind – that they voted 100% not to return. I knew the whole state was in trouble. I called the state Superintendent of Schools immediately and told him, "hey, this is deeper than we think".'

Despite the union's win on all five of its demands, the media – including progressive media – failed to grasp the magnitude of this victory.[26] Headlines suggested the workers had won by sacrificing the very people they went on strike for: the West Virginia working class. Comers explained in an early morning interview that the pay raises were not being paid for by cuts to Medicaid as was widely reported. She explained that the teachers and the service personnel planned to win corporate tax increases to pay for the long-term fix in the healthcare plan. The only news account that reported this correctly was the local paper, the *Charleston Gazette*, but it seemed to evade social media where the 'at what cost' fake news of the raise as coming from Medicaid proliferated despite the facts.[27]

The interaction effect

Winning the strike required constant interaction between the more militant, leftist FBG group in the rank and file and the officials in the unions. This interaction, from January through to the March settlement, was crucial as the FBG forced the strike, which otherwise would not have happened. It was equally crucial that the FBG led in urging 'vote no' to the first settlement offer; they would never have actually won it from the Senate had they called off the strike and gone back to school. And the union officials were clearly flat wrong in thinking that just because the Governor offered a deal, it would pass the two chambers of the legislature and become law. On the other hand, once it was clear that strikes were in the air, and after the one-day strikes by the coal counties in late January, the union officials

understood they needed to help make what was becoming an inevitable strike actually succeed. The union officials also understood how to negotiate a settlement, deal with the legislature, and, conduct strike business in a way the inexperienced, left leaning FBG could not.

It is crucial that union officials enable and not constrain the intuitions and actions of the rank and file. That the most-quoted union spokespeople, Campbell and Lee, supported the movement from below was a key factor. Certainly, their rank-and-file members consistently voted with their feet, leaving the union officials little choice; nevertheless the officials could easily have created quite a mess. Instead, they listened to the smart rank-and-file educators who were actually leading. This is a crucial lesson of this story – the rank and file's emergence as its own force, and the willingness of the position holders to listen to and back them. It took both components to win this strike, not just one of them.

Comparisons of recent strikes and non-strike protests

Both the West Virginia education strike and the 2012 Chicago Teachers Union strike created an enormous crisis for the power holders, which allowed the working class to win. It is useful to compare recent big strikes, mostly involving women, often women of colour, in the service economy to two hugely popular protest movements: the 2011 statewide occupation of Madison, Wisconsin; and #OWS in New York City. The Wisconsin mobilisation resulted in total defeat; similarly, there was no measurable improvement for the working class as a result of #OWS.

Wisconsin

In February 2011 statewide protests swept Wisconsin, a mostly rural state, demographically white, in which agriculture is the leading sector. More than 125,000 protesters marched in and around the state capital of Madison for several weeks straight. The cause of these magnificently staged mobilisations, successful certainly in terms of media coverage and sheer turnout numbers, was a series of proposals to roll back unions by a newly elected Republican regime controlling all three branches of state government. Of note, the rightwing government in Wisconsin was taking aim specifically at so-called *public-sector* workers,[28] of whom teachers and education workers generally constitute the single largest bloc. Education unions took the lead in the Wisconsin protests. Despite mobilising hundreds of thousands in direct actions, the protestors failed to stop the assault.

When protests failed, the unions decided to challenge Governor Scott Walker by collecting enough signatures to qualify a measure calling for his recall in the 2012 elections. The working class suffered a second defeat

when they failed to win the recall. On the heels of the double defeat, the emboldened Governor went after the so–called *private sector* unions, instituting a right-to-work legal schema. As a result, the union ranks in Wisconsin were decimated, with a more than sixty-per-cent drop in union membership. Just two years later, studies show a spectacular fall in the standard of living.[29]

Though Scott Walker was finally defeated at the polls in November 2018, it was only by a very narrow 30,500-vote margin. And, unfortunately, both chambers of the state legislature retained solid Republican majorities. Thus despite Walker's defeat it will be difficult if not impossible to reverse the many anti working-class policies put in place by him during two full terms of office. One has to ask whether the past seven years in Wisconsin would look this way had the education unions decided to hold a statewide strike instead of massive protests at the capitol.

#OWS

In the fall of 2011, protestors, many inspired by the size and militancy of the Wisconsin protests and of the Arab Spring, hatched a now famous hashtag protest, #OWS. Occupy Wall Street was an urban-based protest in the largest city in the US, a demographically highly diverse region. Like the protests in Madison, #OWS had an almost obsessive place in the popular imagination. #OWS, like Wisconsin, was extremely successful in *media coverage*. The direct-action focus of two huge marches, and roving protests and skirmishes that moved around the city, targeted the excesses of modern capitalism. Unlike the Wisconsin protests, there were no specific demands in the #OWS effort, and it ended in a whimper when several of the largest New York City unions negotiated a carefully orchestrated retreat from the encampment at Zuccotti Park, adjacent to Wall Street. The unions, concerned about what was going to be a catastrophic end to the Zuccotti Park occupation by the police, facilitated a strategic retreat, enabling protestors to claim victory in something that was highly intangible: 'narrative change.' There were #OWS-inspired encampments in some other US cities, but none lasted long, some had a worse end, and nothing material resulted.

The Chicago Teachers Union strike

In September of 2012, the largest strike in the new millennium before West Virginia took place in Chicago. Chicago is the third largest city in the United States, and very ethnically diverse. The strike was called by the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU), a union that had been radically transformed in 2010 when a leftist-led, rank-and-file teacher movement won a sweeping election for all top posts in the union.[30] The union was facing an extraordinary attack by a powerful new foe, Democratic Mayor and former Barack Obama Chief

of Staff, Rahm Emanuel. At the top of Emanuel's list of objectives, and also of Obama's to-do list, was reforming public education through eviscerating teachers' unions. The bipartisan attack on education unions is now 28 years in the making, if we take the beginning of the charter school movement to mark the beginning of the assault.

Emanuel won the mayoral contest easily riding the crest of the fame he had achieved as national Chief of Staff of Chicago's hometown hero and the US's first black president. Obama made several trips to Chicago to campaign for him, creating sufficient excitement that Emanuel could have done practically nothing and win the election that year. Cocky and confident, Emanuel began what he called his education reform programme, instituting longer school days, and denying the fifth year of a contractual increase the teachers had secured in 2008.

More than merely extending the school day while taking away pay raises, Emanuel was out to break the teacher's union. What ensued was a 100-per-cent all-out strike by 28,000 teachers, destabilising the lives of over 150,000 mostly supportive parents as 400,000 kids had nowhere to go for the seven school days of the strike.

Mayor Emanuel was resoundingly defeated, and the teachers won back the raise he denied them, restoring key elements of their rights under their contract that he sought to eliminate and even strengthening important aspects of their contract. Chicago saw the largest street manifestation it had witnessed since V-Day, completely shutting down all traffic for days – including transit drivers abandoning public buses on the streets and instructing people to walk or take the trains. So popular had the striking teachers become that the head of the union, Karen Lewis, was deemed the person most likely to defeat the Mayor himself in the next election. It was a public relations romp.

In the end, the teachers rebuilt a new union through the strike – and just in time. In 2014, a hedge fund billionaire, Bruce Rauner, won the governorship and pledged to do to unions in Illinois what Scott Walker had done to them in Wisconsin. Four years later Rauner has failed to pass a single anti-union law. He lost his re-election bid in November 2018 to another billionaire, but this time a Democrat who pledged to support public schools and unions.

Conclusion

Super majority strikes, not protests, are apt to rebuild working class power. No matter how big a protest or occupation might be, non-super majority protests or strikes simply do not create a sufficient crisis for capital. They do not force the political elite into negotiations. From recent examples, we

know that withholding labour does accomplish this.

Most unions today in the western core capitalist countries, broadly speaking, need the kind of shakeup seen in the Chicago Teachers Union, or at least a sufficiently organised left force that can make the union officials act as union organisers. We saw this from what I called the 'interaction effect' between the rank-and-file FBG and the officials in West Virginia. Militancy without organisation sufficient to garner super majority support does not work. Militancy with organisational capacity to force union officials, who have normally occupied their jobs for too long, into action can work.

With the spread of strike laws like the one recently approved in the United Kingdom, requiring at least a fifty-per-cent threshold of participation for a strike ballot to be legal, radicals in the ranks in Europe as well as in the US will have to grapple with learning effective organising traditions that make it possible to win when a strike ballot is required. In 2018 in the UK, strike ballots in three unions failed to meet the required turnout threshold to strike: in the Public and Commercial Services Union, PCS (July), Unison (October), and United Campus Union, UCU (October). If progressives in Europe hope to save what remains of the social welfare state, such as Britain's NHS, they must focus more on the fundamentals of organising, not merely mobilising (that is, engaging those who already agree with them). Any real effort to save and improve the NHS will require a highly organised left to borrow strategy from West Virginia, that is, to organise a cross-union, cross-worker caucus that can effectively force all the NHS unions to work together despite their differences, just as the FBG did in West Virginia.

Super majorities, not militant minorities, will need to unify from below to create strikes that can force the political elite to the negotiation arena.

NOTES

1   <https://lbo-news.com/2018/06/07/no-its-not-a-gig-economy/>.
2   <https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2013/apr/08/margaret-thatcher-quotes>, 'They are casting their problems at society. And, you know, there's no such thing as society. There are individual men and women and there are families. And no government can do anything except through people, and people must look after themselves first. It is our duty to look after ourselves and then, also, to look after our neighbours.' – from an interview in *Women's Own* in 1987.
3   <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2018/nov/14/deliveroo-riders-rights-court>, <https://freedomnews.org.uk/breaking-united-voices-of-the-world-union-occupy-ministry-of-justice/>.
4   <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/07/technology/google-walkout-watershed-tech.html>.

5   BLS, *Contingent and Alternative Employment Arrangements* — May 2017, <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/conemp.htm>, and a subsequent additional post by Henwood on 13 June responding to critics of his original post, <https://lbo-news.com/2018/06/13/contingency-a-follow-up/>.

6   *Electronically Mediated Employment*: BLS added four new questions <https://www.bls.gov/cps/electronically-mediated-employment-faqs.htm#questions> to the May 2017 *Contingent Worker* Supplement <https://www.bls.gov/cps/lfcharacteristics.htm#contingent>. These questions were designed to measure an emerging type of work – electronically mediated employment, generally defined as short jobs or tasks that workers find through mobile apps that both connect them with customers and arrange payment for the tasks, <https://www.bls.gov/cps/electronically-mediated-employment.htm>.

7   <http://cepr.net/blogs/beat-the-press/world-development-report-gets-it-seriously-wrong-on-inequality-and-labor-markets>.

8   Guy Standing, *The Precariat: The New Dangerous Class*, London: Bloomsbury, 2011.

9   From a private email correspondence between the author and Nelson Lichtenstein, 18 November 2018.

10   Mute Press, PML Press, 2014, <http://www.metamute.org/sites/www.metamute.org/files/pml/Organisation-of-the-Organisationless.pdf>.

11   <http://reut.rs/1nqwotu>.

12   John Steuben, *Strike Strategy*, New York: Gaer Associates, 1950 – available on line at <https://archive.org/details/strikestrategy00steurich>. This work was first written as a manual in 1923 and, as such, it is in the public domain.

13   Ed. note: the campaign in the US for a $ 15 dollars-an-hour minimum wage.

14   Berlin Rosen is a strategic marketing firm in New York City. They have been paid in excess of $25 million by SEIU to market and do PR for the Fight for Fifteen campaign. It is they, not the workers, who developed the PR strategy and chose the word strike, much in the way that the Gap markets products using peace signs, or other major global corporations deploy images of happy hippies along with anti-war songs and civil rights images in their mass marketing schemes.

15   <https://www.nytimes.com/elections/results/west-virginia-governor-justice-cole>.

16   <http://time.com/4886765/west-virginia-rally-jim-justice-republican-trump>.

17   Only three states —Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia — refer to their lower house as the House of Delegates.

18   <http://www.wsaz.com/content/news/WVa-House-Bill-including-new-teacher-raise-passed-by-Finance-Committee-475461093.html>.

19   <http://wvmetronews.com/2018/02/25/dumb-bunnies-in-wv-teacher-crowds-protest-comment-by-governor-justice/>, and for the entire town hall session: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IslgCtxXNO8>.

20   See Exec Order, appendix #1, <https://governor.wv.gov/News/Documents/Executive%20Order.pdf>.

21   Jay O'Neal, author interview, 7 March 2018.

22   <http://inthesetimes.com/working/entry/20940/west_virginia_teachers_show_how_to_win_power_after_janus>.

23   Sanders carried every county over Clinton in the 2016 primary; statewide, his win was 123,860 - 86,354 – or 51.4% to 35.8%: <https://www.nytimes.com/elections/2016/results/primaries/west-virginia>.

24   Author interview with Emily Comers, 9 March 2018.

25   Author interview, Gary Price, 8 March, 2018.

26   In addition to the *Nation*'s headlines, 'But at What Cost?', Sarah Jones also takes this line on the strike on the website of *The New Republic*: <https://newrepublic.com/article/147307/cost-west-virginia-teachers-strike>.

27   <https://www.wvgazettemail.com/2018_wv_teachers_strike/a-look-back-at-the-wv-public-school-employees-strike/article_c0dcd2db-4017-5bcd-b433-6b3afb6c3d57.html>.

28   In my view, the use of the term 'public-sector' tends to obscure the essential interconnection of the 'public' and 'private' sectors as essential components of one, capitalist system, which uses the public sector as a constant, well-disguised instrument of wealth transfer to boost the bottom line and fortunes of corporations.

29   <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/02/23/business/wisconsins-legacy-for-unions.html>.

30   For a thorough discussion of how the Chicago Teachers Union was transformed, see my chapter on their efforts in *No Shortcuts*.

In Itself But Not Yet For Itself –
Organising The New Academic Precariat[1]

Peter Ullrich

The 'new academic precariat'[2] is in the process of cautiously developing something like class-consciousness. There is increasingly audible discontent at casualisation, job insecurity, non-permanent jobs, and rigid hierarchical structures of dependency – in short, exploitative relations of work and employment. In Germany this has notably been expressed in a number of discussion events, conferences, publications, and in particular new activist campaigns, as well as in the founding of the most diverse local, regional, and nationwide initiatives of these academics.[3] These initiatives see themselves, as does the umbrella organisation Network for Decent Work in the Sciences (Netzwerk für Gute Arbeit in der Wissenschaft, NGAWiss), partly as a 'complement'[4] and in some cases as an alternative[5] to already-existing trade-union activities – most notably the campaigning around the Templin Manifesto of the German Education Union.[6] There are similar developments which are becoming more strongly articulated in many other countries despite their widely varying systems of higher-learning institutions and respective problems, or in international disciplinary contexts, all united in the struggle against the 'precarious mobility', which is increasingly experienced as a cause for grievance.

Against the background of this immense problem it is not surprising that 'resistance is growing in German universities'.[7] In recent years, journalistic reports have repeatedly illustrated this, often with moving personal tales of woe, in which, for example, university lecturers are condemned to work behind coffeehouse counters.[8] But the existing organisational initiatives within the academic precariat have great difficulties in getting off the ground and bringing large numbers of people into the streets. Here we see the profundity of an axiom of the 'rationalist' approaches in protest and movement research, whose dictum Klaus Japp once summarised as follows: 'Grievances are everywhere, movements are not.'[9] In contrast to

what researchers oriented to economistic rational-choice paradigms would suppose, the key to understanding the impediments to mobilisation lies not primarily in the lack of resources for effective campaign work (an absence which of course is a factor) but in the relationship of the objective structures of the field of science to ideologically romanticised self-images and the resultant subjectivities, which are severe obstacles to organisation.

In what follows I will briefly outline the essential structures and developmental tendencies in Higher Education and research as a sphere of wage labour and academic qualification, in order then to ask how they affect the capacity for collective action.[10]

Structural aspects of academe

Three conditions seem decisive for the evolution of the academic arena in terms of wage labour and labour struggles: a) academic capitalism, b) the continued existence of quasi-feudal structures, and c) the *illusio*[11] inherent to the field, which is expressed in individualistic, self-entrepreneurial subjectivities.

The concept *academic capitalism*[12] indicates tendencies to economisation in the university sector, especially the advent of new public-management techniques as governance principles, which in the long term result in the substitution of critique by competition as the mode of scholarly rivalry.[13] At the institutional level this finds its expression in the 'audit university', which, in the competition among universities for rankings, tries to optimise indicators: more students, more external funding, more publications, more applications, more projects. Being able to book these kinds of symbolic profits counts more than knowledge and insights.[14] The policy parameters for this were established in the higher education policy of recent federal governments, which despite the continuous expansion of education, that is, the steadily rising proportion of students in every generational cohort, allocated ever greater portions of available funds via competition mechanisms. This is seen in the competition for funds between institutions of higher learning, especially in the Excellence Initiative and Strategy and increased expenditures in third-party funded research, especially involving the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (German Research Council) as well as the elite extramural research facilities, while the available basic funds for universities per student are diminishing.[15]

Similar mechanisms operate at the level of the employees, especially university educational workers. Various measures, among them an expansion of graduate and post-graduate funding as well as the shamelessly increased importance of third-party research,[16] has made the field much more open for

new educational workers as 'non-professorial academic workers' (adjuncts) in the broad sense, without creating anything approaching adequate long-term prospects of continuing. Due to the Wissenschaftszeitvertragsgesetz (Law on Temporary Employment in Higher Education), which even after its last small reform limits regular activity in research and teaching to six years after completion of studies and six years after the doctorate, and due to the lack of alternative paths of professional development, a professorship remains the only professional goal that enables permanent employment. In comparison to the immense growth in positions for academic or artistic assistants, the slight rise in professorships has to be seen as stagnation.[17] 93% of those who are constantly infantilised as 'the young academic generation' are working under termed contracts, about half of them with contract periods of up to one year, often forced to accept part-time and frequently forced to permanently give up having children.[18] This is the situation that is increasingly seen as scandalous: extreme competition resulting in stress, fear, the difficulty of planning one's life, and the extreme pressure to adapt that underlies the form of existence of the academic precariat as a *precarious mobility*, 'the almost limitless temporal and spatial availability of the academic knowledge workers owing to insecure conditions of employment, which forces them to jump like nomads from one university or research institute to the other, always ready to seize any opportunity without regard for bonds of any sort'.[19]

This form of existence assures the relative success of German scholarship. It is based on the readiness – due to extreme competition for jobs – to perform immense unpaid labour as well as labour made invisible in other ways, which is partly sustained through irregular cross-funding via job agencies, private networks, and third parties, etc. Holding out in this competition supposes, among other things, enormous economic capital or its long-term substitution by social capital.[20] And this competition particularly disadvantages women[21] as well as those who pursue the generally less rewarded feminine-coded (care) activities in teaching, counselling, and consultancy.[22] In addition, there can be further features of discrimination and exclusion, for example regarding origin and residency status.[23]

Conscious political management creates the illusion of competitive allocation of resources in what is de facto only a quasi labour market,[24] while what is really being accomplished is the institutionalisation of precarity. The effects of these excesses of academic capitalism are further reinforced through *quasi feudal structures*, which continue to exist.[25] 'Feudal structures' here indicates those which rest on the personal dependencies of the German patronage model[26] despite their being reshaped by the 'objective'

competition mechanisms of academic capitalism. Today's feudal lords (and, less frequently, ladies) are, in their high-nobility variant, found above all in the top positions of non-university research and as minor princes occupying professorial chairs. The German professorship system is based on the attaching to single persons – all-powerful professors in their small principalities – of all funds and the assistant posts ('prebends') financed from them. In relation to their assistants these professors, apart from the increasing external pressure to which they too are subjected, occupy a twofold power position, namely as bosses with a quasi-employer function and at the same time as supervisors, counsellors and evaluators of work done toward degrees. The careers of employees are thus extremely dependent on the whims of individuals – a gateway, moreover, for more extreme forms of power abuse, which have recently been critiqued on the basis of incidents that have become public, like workplace harassment or sexualised violence.

However, knowledge of the objective power structures is insufficient for understanding the potential for, and obstacles to, organising academic education workers and therefore, not least, processes of the (non-)development of a self-conception as collectively precarised wage dependents: workers. These power structures are largely well known, although they are not always interpreted in the same way; but despite the nascent dissident politics of the adjuncts, they are to a great extent unacknowledged publicly in many fora of academic communication (teaching, conferences, publications, etc.). This is owing to the dominant mode of assigning status in the scholarly arena through reputation criteria, which, along with substantive aspects (especially through the imprinting of a concept or establishment of a recognised theory), are increasingly objectified in quantifiable measurements: in the number and impact of publications, frequency of citations, fundraising success, etc. On the other hand, reflection on one's own precarity neither promotes one's reputation nor procures competitive compensations for disadvantages. On the contrary, it leads to a sense of shame in the face of one's own perceived failure (measured against the constantly visible success of many others). This enables the collective maintenance of the *illusio*[27] that prevails in the field: scholars communicate and behave on the proscenium as if what counted were content, knowledge, critique, the intrinsically motivated search for truth, and a mysterious 'disinterested interest'[28] in knowledge, while the other side (we could call it the university-policy, administrative, and market- and power-related side) is mostly hushed up. This other side especially includes the wage-labour character of scholarly activity, sometimes even its more artisanal qualities (which like many activities of teaching, administration, exams, and the like, have little to do with the genius aura of the lonely

search for truth), irrelevant to the establishing of reputation, and above all the above-described situation of the competition for resources. The acceptance and active reproduction of this field rule, which separates two dimensions of reality from each other, is the cognitive precondition for continuing to conceive of one's own activity as a privilege and fulfilment and thus for accepting the risks of an academic career as a more or less necessary evil.[29]

Agency: conditions for organising

How much capacity there is for awareness, articulation, and activism to change precarious employment in academia can be understood in the context of the conditions described. The familiarisation with competition in academic capitalism has in particular led to a lower aspiration level, thus the readiness to accommodate to termed contracts, part-time, and unpaid overtime, etc. This accommodation includes the well-meant, but too narrowly conceived, and quite frequently articulated rejection of minimum employment standards on the part of those affected, with the aim of at least distributing 'equally' the little that exists. The experience of partaking of the crumbs of feudal prebends along with the vague promise of being one day elevated to the nobility oneself is the lubricant for the *illusion of attainability* of a professorial post as a career goal, even if only a statistically small portion of the aspirants have a chance of achieving it. Another contributor is the great number of positions, prizes, grants, and other tenders made by foundations, state and other kinds of science-funding institutions with formal procedures for selection, which maintain the impression that 'the university system is meritocratic, which is linked to the practices of evaluating the "quality" of work'.[30] And the *rat race*, or better *donkey race*, goes on, 'continually chasing the carrot'.[31]

The interplay between objective structures and their ideological beclouding produces the central problem for collective agency on the part of precarious academic workers: their *low capacity for creating a conflict*. Here too objective and subjective factors can be distinguished, which, however, reciprocally condition and reinforce each other. The following is meant as an enumeration of indicators illustrating the problem of agency:

1) *The level of trade-union organisation is low.* There are no exact figures available, but the experiences of the two largest German Trade Union Confederation (DGB) trade unions in the field are identical in this respect. The stance toward trade unions in a published survey was mostly distant: there is basic agreement about the legitimacy of trade-union activity but otherwise discontent, ignorance, and *de facto* distance.[32] That wage adjustments do occur with a degree of frequency is something

academics essentially owe to professional groups in the public service sector, which are quicker to take strike action, above all teachers. The relative marginality of non-professorial academic workers within the trade unions also leads to their specific concerns playing no role in collective bargaining strategies. Many researchers would certainly forgo wage raises if decisive steps could be taken in the matter of employment security. Making such concerns capable of being part of collective bargaining by developing innovative collective bargaining concepts is unrealistic in the context of the current relations of forces inside trade unions. There is no real strike capacity within academe.

2) *There is a lack of alternative structures for handling conflict.* Organisational structures other than the trade unions are either still in their infancy, only extant in individual regions (for example, mid-level academic worker networking at the federal state level), or are very disparate reactions to specific local conditions. This is true of unter_bau in Frankfurt or the Berlin campaign TVStud for a collective bargaining contract for student employees. In particular, the latter succeeded in getting the two competing unions, the Education Union (GEW) and the German United Services Trade Union (ver.di) to cooperate – which is not something to take for granted since there is in part hostility between them, which leads to organisational egotisms undermining convergences around substantial claims. NGA Wiss has tried to create an overarching networking for all these players.

3) *The conditions of employment themselves are ill-suited to activism and thus impede active representation of interests.* This is essentially true of scholarship in general: the differentiation of knowledge and generalised competition generate a tendency toward the incompatibility of academic careers and more extensive social and political engagement (not to mention care relationships). Its culmination in precarious mobility reinforces this incompatibility, for this kind of mobility impedes spatial continuity and insertion into academic self-governance structures, as it makes anything more than passive participation in elections difficult. The electoral cycles and periods of office are completely incompatible with the contract durations outlined above. It is only thanks to the few who have permanent posts that some non-professorial academic workers' initiatives can continue existence and not only accumulate but retain important inner-institutional knowledge. But this in turn causes a lack of sensibility for the problems of the highly precarious. Even active voting rights in bodies that vote is fraught with problems. Participation is normally extremely low, and many especially precarious groups, such

as adjunct professors or outside lecturers, are legally or de facto excluded (de facto because, for example, there are no communication structures or name lists) from participating in elections, but also from informal decision-making structures (for example faculty parties).

4) *The twofold personal dependencies foster moral cowardice.* Since one's own advancement essentially depends on one's superiors (and not, as in many countries, on collegial organs such as faculty councils), disagreeing with one's superior seldom brings distinction to individuals. In general, it is conformity that is required and encouraged. This is not at odds with what is often a collegial, quasi-friendly or paternalistic social interaction. What is decisive is that through making hiring decisions full professors have the hardest direct power to sanction. Under these circumstances, conflictual, perhaps even juridical, confrontations are about as likely as they are with one's landlord over compliance with the rent ceiling. Consequently, it is immaturity and dependence (which, however, varies widely between different academic disciplines) that are widespread, along with downright fear of articulating discontent politically.

5) *'Homo academicus' is characterised by a self-entrepreneurial subjectivity.* To the extent that scholarship has become a 'career job'[33] the aspirants who want to stay in the system and do not decide to leave it, which usually occurs when it is too late, have had to acquire the appropriate capacities: the belief in meritocratic reward and the capacity for market-compatible self-optimisation required to get it. It therefore always seems rational from an individual perspective to prefer writing a paper by night to engaging in activity that does not further one's reputation, particularly in the organised representation of interests. Scholarly work is, despite the increasing production of bullshit, overwhelmingly perceived as substantively fulfilling and relatively autonomous. Intrinsic motivation is thus very great and so the objective core of this social condition acquires a surface polish that impedes the apprehension of objectively existing precarity.[34]

6) *The group of those affected is internally highly differentiated.* Professional opportunities vary greatly between disciplines. The objective conditions are very different, with unpaid adjuncts teaching at a Hartz-IV level,[35] on the one hand, and junior research group leaders or junior professors with solidly paid positions,[36] on the other hand. Individuals can frequently change between statuses that are (de-)privileged to different degrees. Here it becomes obvious how great the challenge is of constructing a common interpretative and (solidary) action framework in the face of disparate life realities.

7) *The disparities of status and their legitimation within the field impede solidarity.*
    As already said, this applies within the group of mid-level academics
    itself but still more in relation to potential allies. Struggles for good
    work in higher education and research must, if they want to succeed
    and pursue a universalistic ideal, occur in a perspective that transgresses
    the boundaries between status groups. Without student, professorial, or
    other support, the non-professorial academic workers can accomplish
    little. Apart from their typical professional pride, their separation from
    the technical-administrative personnel – who are better organised – is
    very great on the practical level.

8) *The arenas where conflicts are carried out are ephemeral.* The German system
    is hamstrung by the overlapping policy authority of the Federation and
    the federal states (with the former having responsibility for framework
    legislation, and the latter the competence to translate it into practice).
    Each likes to refer to the competence of the other to redress grievances.
    Various initiatives at a lower level that point beyond envisaged, more or
    less non-binding minimal standards have foundered on incompatibility
    with federal legislation or judgements of the Constitutional Court (for
    example, the attempt in North Rhine-Westphalia to create permanent
    jobs through pooling, and the introduction in various universities such
    as Berlin's Technical University of a four way parity).[37] The ongoing
    public discussion of the untenable conditions among non-professorial
    academic workers has been completely without response from the
    relevant department of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research
    as well as from the rectors (who according to surveys are largely happy
    with the extent of termed contracts). Levers of power that could be
    deployed here have apparently been totally non-existent up to now.

9) *The problem of diffusion of responsibility is being repeated at lower levels, in
    particular due to the different degrees to which people are affected.* For example,
    many professors are completely open to better employment conditions
    but – in a way that is rational from the individual point of view –
    disclaim their own concrete scope of action in view of the impersonal
    'constraints' of competition. Here the connection between precarity and
    privilege appears[38] – although professors too are subjected to increasing
    performance pressure and at their level too tendencies to precarisation
    can also be observed. Van Dyk and Reitz[39] suspect that the nonchalant
    passing on of pressure from those on top to those below is felt by the
    professors, if nothing else, as compensation for their own long hard road
    to the top; and, one might add, the fact of their own ultimate success
    is at the same time seen as anecdotal evidence for the essential viability

of this road (professorial *illusio*). This complicates resilient coalitions between status groups.

Outlook

The critical protagonists involved have recently come together in various fora to discuss the strategic consequences of the situation generally seen as difficult. The public-relations work and lobbying of GEW in the framework of the campaign 'Sciences – Dream Job' unquestionably provide a good discursive beginning. But the issue of how pressure can become more concrete is still a matter of dispute. Ver.di's organising initiatives have failed and were discontinued due to the difficulties in organising this base. Some organising initiatives are instead mobilising their apolitical base on the basis of professional honour (as, for example, the Federal Conference of Freelance Language Teachers, which has been attracting considerable attention for some time). With the founding of NGAWiss the vision of an education strike (not only for mid-level academic workers) is also in the air – but largely as a dream for the future since the necessary organisational structures are only slowly emerging. Therefore (or for now) most initiatives are concentrating on mobilising within local, more manageable conflicts in collaboration with existing forces and in various coalitions, aiming, for example, at the introduction of certain standards in individual institutions (as with the 'Non-Temporary Kassel' initiative or the organising of doctoral students in the three extramural research associations and their umbrella organisation 'N^2 – Network of Networks'). Others instead are starting with low-threshold activities such as conducting activating surveys and related publicity work, as for example the mid-level academic workers' initiatives in Dresden and Heidelberg. Many initiatives of non-professorial academic workers or of the 'next generation' within professional associations are similarly oriented to constructing self-conception and to discourse.[40] Others largely limit themselves to internal and less conflict-oriented work within the self-government bodies, based on intimate knowledge of the respective institutions, such as the 'Mittelbauinitiative' of Berlin's Technical University. Their central focus is mostly the question of employment conditions, but this is often also tied to democratisation concerns, as for example in the Junge Akademie's and others' activism for democratic departmental structures[41] or concrete local attempts at implementation at the institutional level and – more radicalised – on the part of NGAWiss (in 2017). Questions of workplace harassment have so far been pursued systematically only by Max-Planck-PhDnet.[42]

All protagonists are striving to raise consciousness of the problems and

develop a capacity to create conflicts, arriving at very different answers corresponding to the disparity of target groups and their institutional environments. We might say that at least the more adversarial initiatives and the growth of articulated discontent can indeed be seen as successes in paving the way from the class in itself to a class for itself. But the road of the academic precariat towards a class conceived in a larger way and towards generalised solidarity is still a long one.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Baumgarten, Britta and Peter Ullrich, 'Discourse, Power, and Governmentality. Social Movement Research With and Beyond Foucault', pp. 13–38, in: Jochen Roose and Hella Dietz (eds), *Social Theory and Social Movements: Mutual Inspirations*, Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien, Wiesbaden, 2016.

Baumgarth, Benjamin, Justus Henke, and Peer Pasternack, *Inventur der Finanzier- und des Hochschulsystems. Mittelflüsse, Kontroversen und Entwicklungen im letzten Jahrzehnt* (Working Paper), p. 135, Hans Böckler Stiftung, 2016.

Bérubé, Michael and Jennifer Ruth, *The Humanities, Higher Education, and Academic Freedom. Three Necessary Arguments*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015.

Bourdieu, Pierre, *Vom Gebrauch der Wissenschaft. FüreineklinischeSoziologie des wissenschaftlichenFeldes*, ed.StephanEgger, Konstanz: UVK Univ.-Verl., 1998; Pierre Bourdieu, *Les usages sociaux de la science: pour une sociologie clinique du champ scientifique*, Versailles: Editions Quæ, 2012

Gallas, Alexander, 'Introduction: The Proliferation of Precarious Labour in Academia', *Global Labour Journal* 9 (2018).

—'Precarious Academic Labour in Germany: Termed Contracts and a New Berufsverbot', *Global Labour Journal* 9 (2018).

Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft, *Templiner Manifest. Traumjob Wissenschaft. Für eine Reform der Personalstruktur und Berufswegen in Hochschule und Forschung*, 2010.

Grühn, Dieter, Heidemarie Hecht, Jürgen Rubelt, and Boris Schmidt, *Der wissenschaftliche 'Mittelbau' an deutschen Hochschulen. Zwischen Karriereaussichten und Abbruchtendenzen*, Berlin: ver.di – Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft, 2009.

Japp, Klaus P., 'Selbsterzeugung und Fremdverschulden. Thesen zum Rationalismus in den Theorien sozialer Bewegungen', *Soziale Welt* 35 (1984): 313–329.

Jovanović, Deana, 'Engaging with Precarity. The Fatiguing Job-Seeking Journey of an Early Career Anthropologist', *Revista de Dialectología y Tradiciones Populares* I.XXIII (2018): 33–38.

Konsortium Bundesbericht Wissenschaftlicher Nachwuchs (ed.), *Bundesbericht Wissenschaftlicher Nachwuchs 2017. Statistische Daten und Forschungsbefunde zu Promovierenden und Promovierten in Deutschland*, Bielefeld: W. Bertelsmann, 2017.

Max Planck PHDnet, *Positionspapier zu Machtmissbrauch und Konfliktlösung*, 14 August 2018.

Münch, Richard, *Akademischer Kapitalismus. Zur politischen Ökonomie der Hochschulreform*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011.

—'Kapital und Arbeit im akademischen Shareholder-Kapitalismus', *Soziologie* 45 (2016): 412–440.

----Stephanie Beyer & Nilgun Massih-Tehrani, *Soziologie als Beruf. Akademische Karrieren zwischen globalem Wettbewerb und nationalen Traditionen*, paper at conference: Soziologie als Beruf. Wissenschaftliche Praxis in der soziologischen Reflexion, Berlin, 26 February 2016.

Neis, Matthias, 'Immer der Karotte nach. Ist die Wissenschaft eine prekäre Profession?', *Zeitschrift für Nachwuchswissenschaftler – German Journal for Young Researchers* (2009), 84–89.

Netzwerk für Gute Arbeit in der Wissenschaft, *Für faire Beschäftigung an deutschen Hochschulen! Forderungen des Netzwerks für Gute Arbeit in der Wissenschaft*, 31 August 2017.

Ohm, Britta, 'Exzellente Entqualifizierung. Das neue akademische Prekariat', *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik* 8 (2016): 109–120.

Peter, Tobias, 'Akademische Entrepreneure. Der homo academicus zwischen Passion, Reputation und Projekt', *Berliner Debatte Initial* 28 (2017): 110–121.

Reitz, Tilman, 'Von der Kritik zur Konkurrenz. Die Umstrukturierung wissenschaftlicher Konflikte und ihre Wissenseffekte', *sub\urban. zeitschrift für kritische stadtforschung* 4 (2016): 37–58.

Rogge, Jan-Christoph, 'The winner takes it all? Die Zukunftsperspektiven des wissenschaftlichen Mittelbaus auf dem akademischen Quasi-Markt', *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 67 (2015): 685–707.

—'Soziale Bedingungen und Effekte der quantitativen Leistungsmessung', *Soziale Welt* 66 (2015): 205–214.

Schmid, Antonia and Peter Ullrich, 'Publish and Perish. Publikationszwänge, selbstunternehmerische Wissenschaftssubjekte und Geschlecht', pp. 228–247 in: Enrico Heitzerand Sven Schultze (eds), *Chimära mensura? Die Human-Animal Studies zwischen Schäferhund-Science-Hoax, kritischer Geschichtswissenschaft und akademischem Trendsurfing*, Berlin: Vergangenheitsverlag, 2018.

Slaughter, Sheila and Gary Rhoades, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy. Markets, State, and Higher Education*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009.

Specht, Jule, Christian Hof, Julia Tjus, Wolfram Pernice, and Ulrike Endesfelder, 'Departments statt Lehrstühle. Moderne Personalstruktur für eine zukunftfähige Wissenschaft', diejungeakademie.de, 2017.

Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), *Hochschulen auf einen Blick*, 2018.

Touhouliotis, Vasiliki, 'Enforcing Precarity. Bureaucratic Machinations, Complicity and Hierarchies of Academic Lives', *Revista de Dialectología y Tradiciones Populares* I.XXIII (2018): 39–46.

Ullrich, Peter, 'Prekäre Wissensarbeit im akademischen Kapitalismus. Kapitalismus. Strukturen, Subjektivitäten und Organisierungsansätze in Mittelbau und Fachgesellschaften', *Soziologie* 45 (2016): 388–411.

—and Tilman Reitz, 'Raus aus der prekären Mobilität', *Forum Wissenschaft* (2018): 23–24.

van Dyk, Silke and Tilman Reitz, 'Projektförmige Polis und akademische Prekarität im universitären Feudalsystem. Zwei Diagnosen und eine Fünf-Jahres-Perspektive', *Soziologie* 46 (2017): 62–73.

NOTES

2   Britta Ohm, 'Exzellente Entqualifizierung. Das neue akademische Prekariat', *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik* 8 (2016): 109–120.

3   Peter Ullrich, 'Prekäre Wissensarbeit im akademischen Kapitalismus. Kapitalismus. Strukturen, Subjektivitäten und Organisierungsansätze in Mittelbau und Fachgesellschaften', *Soziologie* 45 (2016): 388–411; Alexander Gallas, 'Precarious Academic Labour in Germany: Termed Contracts and a New Berufsverbot', *Global Labour Journal* 9 (2018), p. 98f.

4   Peter Ullrich and Tilman Reitz, 2018, 'Raus aus der prekären Mobilität', *Forum Wissenschaft* (2018), pp. 23–24.

5   Alongside occasional activities of the anarchist Freiwillige Arbeiter*innen Assoziation (FAU [Voluntary Workers Association]), it is especially the radical and grassroots-democratic Frankfurt university trade union Unter_bau [substructure] that has drawn attention as an alternative to the existing trade unions. Unter_bau is taking advantage of the scope for collective bargaining in the special case of Frankfurt's foundation-owned university (Stiftungsuniversität) to act as a local trade union, while most institutions of higher learning are federal state institutions and thus labour struggles that confront them need to be carried out at least at the federal-state or at the national level and thus require large-scale trade-union structures.

6   Gallas, 'Precarious Academic Labour', p. 95-98; see also Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft (GEW – German Education Union), *Templiner Manifest. Traumjob Wissenschaft. Für eine Reform der Personalstruktur und Berufswegen in Hochschule und Forschung*, 2010.

7   <https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/akademisches-prekariat-widerstand-an-deutschen-hochschulen.680.de.html?dram:article_id=386078>

8   <https://www.mittelbayerische.de/bayern/oberpfalz-nachrichten/vollzeit-philosoph-teilzeit-kellner-21684-art1358080.html> (visited 2018 September 05).

9   Klaus P. Japp, 'Selbsterzeugung und Fremdverschulden. Thesen zum Rationalismus in den Theorien sozialer Bewegungen', *Soziale Welt* 35 (1984), p. 316.

10   The ideas presented here are an expansion and systematisation of a previously developed account (Ullrich 2016).

11   Ed note: *Illusio* is Pierre Bourdieu's term signifying participants' belief that the benefits promised by the 'game' in which they are playing are real and desirable. For the field to continue to exist as it is, its *illusio* must never be questioned.

12   Sheila Slaughter and Gary Rhoades, *Academic Capitalism and the New Economy. Markets, State, and Higher Education*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2009; Richard Münch, *Akademischer Kapitalismus. Zur politischen Ökonomie der Hochschulreform*, Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011.

13   Tilman Reitz, 'Von der Kritik zur Konkurrenz. Die Umstrukturierung wissenschaftlicher Konflikte und ihre Wissenseffekte', *sub\urban. zeitschrift für kritische stadtforschung* 4 (2016), pp. 37–58.

14   Richard Münch, 'Kapital und Arbeit im akademischen Shareholder-Kapitalismus', Soziologie 45 (2016), pp. 412–440.

15   Benjamin Baumgarth, Justus Henke, and Peer Pasternack, *Inventur der Finanzier- und des Hochschulsystems. Mittelflüsse, Kontroversen und Entwicklungen im letzten Jahrzehnt* (Working Paper), Hans Böckler Stiftung, 2016, p. 44.

16   Statistisches Bundesamt (Destatis), *Hochschulen auf einen Blick*, 2018.

17   Jan-Christoph Rogge, 'The winner takes it all? Die Zukunftsperspektiven des

wisenschaftlichen Mittelbaus auf dem akademischen Quasi-Markt', *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* 67 (2015), p. 693.

18   Konsortium Bundesbericht Wissenschaftlicher Nachwuchs (ed.), *Bundesbericht Wissenschaftlicher Nachwuchs 2017. Statistische Daten und Forschungsbefunde zu Promovierenden und Promovierten in Deutschland*, Bielefeld: W. Bertelsmann, 2017.

19   Ullrich and Reitz, 'Raus aus der prekären Mobilität'.

20   Rogge, 'The winner takes it all?'.

21   Konsortium Bundesbericht; Statistisches Bundesamt, p. 33.

22   Antonia Schmid and Peter Ullrich, 'Publish and Perish. Publikationszwänge, selbstunternehmerische Wissenschaftssubjekte und Geschlecht', pp. 228–247 in: Enrico Heitzerand Sven Schultze (eds), *Chimära mensura? Die Human-Animal Studies zwischen Schäferhund-Science-Hoax, kritischer Geschichtswissenschaft und akademischem Trendsurfing*, Berlin: Vergangenheitsverlag, 2018.

23   Deana Jovanović, 'Engaging with Precarity. The Fatiguing Job-Seeking Journey of an Early Career Anthropologist', *Revista de Dialectología y Tradiciones Populares* I.XXIII (2018), pp. 33–38; Vasiliki Touhouliotis, 'Enforcing Precarity. Bureaucratic Machinations, Complicity and Hierarchies of Academic Lives', *Revista de Dialectología y Tradiciones Populares* I.XXIII (2018), pp. 39–46.

24   Münch, *Akademischer Kapitalismus*; Rogge, 'The winner takes it all?'.

25   Michael Bérubé and Jennifer Ruth, *The Humanities, Higher Education, and Academic Freedom. Three Necessary Arguments*, Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2015, p. 116; Richard Münch, Stephanie Beyer, and Nilgun Massih-Tehrani, *Soziologie als Beruf. Akademische Karrieren zwischen globalem Wettbewerb und nationalen Traditionen*, paper at conference Soziologie als Beruf. Wissenschaftliche Praxis in der soziologischen Reflexion, Berlin, 26 February, 2016.

26   Münch et al., *Soziologie als Beruf*.

27   Pierre Bourdieu, *Vom Gebrauch der Wissenschaft. Für eine klinische Soziologie des wissenschaftlichen Feldes*, ed. Stephan Egger, Konstanz: UVK Univ.-Verl. 1998; Pierre Bourdieu, *Les usages sociaux de la science: pour une sociologie clinique du champ scientifique*, Versailles: Editions Quæ, 2012.

28   Bourdieu, *Les usages sociaux de la science*.

29   Dieter Grühn, Heidemarie Hecht, Jürgen Rubelt, and Boris Schmidt, *Der wissenschaftliche 'Mittelbau' an deutschen Hochschulen. Zwischen Karriereaussichten und Abbruchtendenzen*, Berlin: ver.di - Vereinte Dienstleistungsgewerkschaft, 2009.

30   Gallas, 'Precarious Academic Labour', p. 71.

31   Matthias Neis, 'Immer der Karotte nach. Ist die Wissenschaft eine prekäre Profession?', *Zeitschrift für Nachwuchswissenschaftler – German Journal for Young Researchers* (2009), pp. 84–89.

32   Grühn et al., *Der wissenschaftliche 'Mittelbau'*.

33   Rogge, 'The winner takes it all?'.

34   Grühn et al., *Der wissenschaftliche 'Mittelbau'*.

35   Ed. note: That is, on a workfare basis.

36   Ed. note: For example, € 4,000 a month.

37   Ed. note: Equal representation for professors, non-professorial academic workers, students, and non-academic staff.

38   Gallas, 'Precarious Academic Labour', p. 95.

39   Silke van Dyk and Tilman Reitz, 'Projektförmige Polis und akademische Prekarität

im universitären Feudalsystem. Zwei Diagnosen und eine Fünf-Jahres-Perspektive', *Soziologie* 46 (2017), pp. 62–73.

40   For an overview see Ullrich (2016: 399 ff.); since this work other initiatives have appeared, among them the AG Mittelbau der Wissenschafts- Technik- und Medizingeschichte, the Netzwerk Kritische Kommunikationswissenschaft, a professional group in the Gesellschaft für Musikforschung, and some initial explorations in Japanese Studies. On the other hand, some initiatives have in the meanwhile died out.

41   Jule Specht, Christian Hof, Julia Tjus, Wolfram Pernice, and Ulrike Endesfelder, 'Departments statt Lehrstühle. Moderne Personalstruktur für eine zukunftsfähige Wissenschaft', diejungeakademie.de, 2017.

42   Max Planck PHDnet, 2018 (14 August), *Positionspapier zu Machtmissbrauch und Konfliktlösung,* 14 August 2018.

The Left and the Question of Europe

'Reclaim the Manifesto of Ventotene!'

These are the opening words of a publication containing contributions by some members of the GUE/NGL, the left group in the European Parliament. On the occasion of celebrations in 2017 to mark the 60th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, Gabi Zimmer, Barbara Spinelli,[1] Helmut Scholz, Marisa Matias, Dimitrios Papadimoulis, Martina Michels, Josu Juaristi, Marie-Christine Vergiat, Thomas Händel, Cornelia Ernst, Stelios Kouloglou, Merja Kyllönen, and Curzio Maltese 'called for the *Manifesto of Ventotene* to be used as the basis for a lively and self-reflexive debate'. The signatories of the call have invited left-wing intellectuals from several EU Member States to reflect on the *Manifesto of Ventotene* from today's perspective. Elmar Altvater, Bertrand Badie, Étienne Balibar, Aristides Baltas, L'uboš Blaha, Peter Brandt, Michael Brie, Luciana Castellina, Dimitris Christopoulos, Judith Dellheim, Klaus Dörre, Yannis Dragasakis, Jean-Pierre Dubois, Rainer Land, Gustave Massiah, Boaventura de Sousa Santos, Michalis Spourdalakis, Antje Vollmer, and Frieder Otto Wolf have formulated their visions, thoughts, and ideas, which have been gathered together in an e-book with the title *Reclaim the Manifesto of Ventotene − What Future for the EU?*.[2] This publication is a part of the contribution to a general public debate on Europe and the European Union as a European and global protagonist. The initiators reminded readers that 'the idea of European integration emerged from anti-fascist movements.' The *Manifesto*, whose original title was 'Per un'Europa libera e unita. Progetto d'un manifesto' ('For a Free and United Europe: Draft of a Manifesto'), is a political statement by Altiero Spinelli, Ernesto Rossi, and Eugenio Colorni, antifascists imprisoned on the Italian island of Ventotene during the Second World War. Completed in June 1941, the *Manifesto* was circulated in Italy within the resistance to Mussolini and Hitler. The *Manifesto* called for a radical break with Europe's past to build a democratic socialist Europe.

Gabi Zimmer, president of the GUE/NGL, has advocated the use of the *Manifesto* for left initiatives for some fifteen years now.[3] She intends to carry

on with this project, which she has explained in her answers to five brief questions. Together with Gabi, we at the Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung decided to publish the fascinating text by Luciana Castellina from the ebook. Luciana will work closely with us in developing the project.

Judith Dellheim

Interview with Gabi Zimmer

Judith Dellheim: Long before the Spinelli Group[4] was founded, even at the European Social Forum (ESF), you spoke about the *Manifesto of Ventotene* and tried to win the left over to critically (re)appropriating it. Why was this not successful?

Gabi Zimmer: The demand for another Europe, another EU, which was and still is possible, was at the forefront of the European Social Forums. It is true that left parties have also adopted this demand. However, they have hardly gone beyond stating it as a goal. It has not been possible to lend substance to what this 'other Europe' should look like, how we want to get there, and what political projects make sense in mobilising people for it. The failure of so-called 'state socialism' is still felt today. The difficulties especially of the Eastern European left in repositioning itself against the background of the past are still being misunderstood. Consequently, there is no common understanding of Europe. The *Manifesto of Ventotene* would be of great help through its analysis, the clarity of its language, and its courage in thinking beyond one's own defeats.

J.D.: But what was your conception of a new – now more collective – attempt to 'rediscover' the *Manifesto* in 2017, after Mrs. Merkel's and other VIPs' visit to Ventotene?

G.Z.: I am fascinated at how people in the darkest phase of the last century called up the strength to imagine a future without wars between the peoples of Europe. For them, the new Europe could only be a socialist one. In the parliamentarian group, of course, we feel that we must do more to come out of the defensive, to create broad alliances for social majorities, and, above all, to strengthen solidarity with people fighting for their rights. So there was an immediate support for the idea of (critically) revisiting the *Manifesto*. But I was angered at how the *Manifesto*'s basic idea was reinterpreted by the ruling elites as a justification for, and strengthening of, a neoliberal EU.

J.D.: Did the attempt work? How broad is support in the GUE/NGL for it?

G. Z.: It did in part. We as a group of MEPs had approached intellectuals in Europe and asked them what they thought worth taking from the *Manifesto* today, what they would say to the left to more convincingly present their own history and vision for Europe.

We have received very stimulating answers. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to include more responses from women and, above all, from young people. It is their future that is at stake. Perhaps we can still remedy this, and, as a group, we are now planning to make good this lack at the Left Forum in Bilbao in November 2018.

J.D.: What most surprised you in the reactions to your initiative?

G. Z.: On the one hand, the people we addressed very quickly showed that they did understand the idea of a critical (re)appropriation of the *Manifesto* as a longer-term process. The point is to organise a debate that can bring us further. On the other hand, I was pleased that younger colleagues in our parliamentary offices, that is, our staff, were also interested in the text of the *Manifesto* and the people who wrote it as prisoners. This only reconfirms my sense that we now have to ask young people in particular what they think a left-wing vision for Europe must look like.

J.D.: What are the further plans?

G. Z.: That depends on the participants. We cannot say. It would be great if a debate were to develop that goes beyond a one-off initiative. We wanted to create momentum, but as MEPs we only have limited terms of office. However, even if some of us are not present in the next parliamentary group, there will be opportunities for further involvement in the discussion.

interviewed by Judith Dellheim (September 2018)

A Commitment to Build European Society and Create Agents of Change

Luciana Castellina

If we are to build a European Union better than the one that was born sixty years ago, the most important step would be to free it from the unbearable rhetoric that has accompanied it, preventing any constructive criticism, which is immediately branded as 'anti-European sentiment' and therefore a nostalgic attachment to a world of little nations responsible for all wars.

The first real canard, to the detriment of the European project, was the belief that the project launched in 1957 was spawned by the *Manifesto of Ventotene*, the declaration drafted by a respected group of Italian anti-fascists on the island where they were imprisoned by Mussolini. This text had a significant influence on the drafting of the Italian Constitution of 1948 but no influence at all on the many European treaties. Indeed, at the Community's official baptism ceremony, which took place at the Teatro Adriano in Rome on 23 March 1957, Altiero Spinelli's federalists threw leaflets from the gallery down onto the seats occupied by the authorities, containing the message that they did not recognise the 'monster' that was emerging. And it was the Italian Constitution – which is fairly unique in the West for having imposed strict restrictions on the right to own property and declaring war illegal if it is not to defend against invaders – which posed an obstacle to Italy's entry into the initial embryonic Europe. One of the witnesses to the negotiations at the time, Professor Paolo Elia, a respected Christian Democratic leader, said that it was particularly Germany's Minister of Economic Affairs, Ludwig Erhard, who hoped to exclude our country precisely because of our Constitution. He did not get his way, for if he had it would have been impossible to maintain the myth that the 'monster' was inspired by the *Manifesto of Ventotene*.

Recently, we were forced to witness the umpteenth farce when in August 2016 – during peak holiday season and therefore blocking thousands of tourists for two days – Hollande, Merkel, and Renzi held their solemn summit in Ventotene. Their intention was not to be inspired by the location to engage in critical reflection but to repeat a policy line at odds with what the anti-fascists imprisoned on the island had advocated.

A bit of history could help lend impetus to a movement aimed at changing Europe. We can begin with the dissemination of the *Manifesto of Ventotene*. It would be useful to re-read the text in order to dilute the toxic effects of pro-European rhetoric and demonstrate how different this European Union is from the *Manifesto*'s concept.

Nobody remembers that the first institutional act in favour of European unity was not issued on our continent, but by the US Congress (on 11 March 1947 by the Senate and on 23 March by the House of Representatives) at the instigation of John Foster Dulles, the powerful head of US diplomacy (and brother of Allen, head of the CIA). It is true that this vote was accompanied by the simultaneous launch of the Marshall Plan, a farsighted strategy, which defeated those in the US who out of fear of competition wanted to see a weak Europe. Instead, Washington aspired to reconstruct a Europe strong enough to make a good trading partner and, despite the political obligations

that accompanied the Plan (one of the reasons why it could not be accepted by countries in the East), was good for all. Yet it is also, or rather above all, true that this US vote was one of the first acts of the Cold War, as the project helped build a western bastion which rather than uniting Europe would break it in two. It also meant that the public, still smarting from the war, would have to swallow German rearmament. This was one of the main reasons that drove the left – not only Italian communists and socialists but also a large part of social democracy – to oppose the project for a long time.

In short, Altiero Spinelli is not the father of the EU but throughout his life was ommitted to a different model. We need only read his critical remarks on the preparation of the first Federalist Movement congress in The Hague in 1948. He refused to participate in this congress if the only high-level figure present was Churchill, the inventor of the Cold War, a move that would brand this initiative with the same stamp. Spinelli's supporters reiterated the alternative of staying out of the blocs, a 'third way' for Europe.

There has been no reflection on what was being built in Europe and how it was done, even in recent years. Not even in 2005, when the citizens of two founding Member States, France and the Netherlands, were asked to decide on the new Treaty of Lisbon in a referendum and rejected it. The populations of the two countries were then accused of resurgent nationalism. Undoubtedly there was some truth to this, but it is erroneous to say that their rejection was based only or even mostly on nationalist sentiment.

A committee was then set up to carry out a reflection process. But it did nothing of the kind. Instead, some years later in the Portuguese capital a treaty was pushed through that was almost a carbon copy of the outvoted and awful European Constitution.

It is due to this 'illegitimate birth' – which was never endorsed by the authors of the *Manifesto of Ventotene* – that Europe has never become popular. Indeed, in 1955 when the first blueprint was conceived, almost nobody noticed – the location of the blueprint's announcement was Messina, but certainly not to suggest a sacrosanct desire to open up to the Mediterranean. The reason was more trivial. There were local elections looming, which were of great interest to our Gaetano Martino, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the dreadful Scelba government. (The astonishment in the north at the peculiar location was expressed with particular irony by a Belgian correspondent: 'Why not move the Council of Ministers to Alaska or Tierra del Fuego then?' As for the interest generated by the event, we need only cite the remark by Paul Spaak, charged with preparing Europe's real 'baptism' two years later in Rome: 'public opinion towards us was not hostile, it was indifferent'.)

The rest of the story is well known. From one treaty to another, right up to Lisbon, the embryo's DNA has not changed. Nor has the indifference. The Maastricht Treaty, which is by far the most significant – because it unleashed the legal horror of constitutionalising a specific policy choice, neoliberal policy, thus arming it against parliamentary decisions – was ratified in Italy after a parliamentary debate lasting half a day. The only opposing votes came from members of the Communist Refoundation Party, which actually did little to wage a struggle against the Treaty afterwards; and this despite the fact that they had to deal with the dictate to adopt competitiveness as the Union's overriding principle, thus making any sort of regulation of market forces illegal and introducing substantial limits on the welfare state.

The EU project thus proceeded step-by-step to deliberately destroy any obstacle to full liberalisation. What is worse, it produced a silent but complete acquiescence among a large part of the left, both those in government in their respective Member States and a significant section of the opposition. The only times they raised their voices was to denounce any criticism or counter-proposal as a disgraceful offence against the 'holy European fathers'.

Indifference was so widespread that there was no search – in almost none of the countries and in virtually none of the political groups – for a way to advance proposals that, if accepted, could have made the EU less ugly. Examples of such proposals include several by Jacques Delors himself, for example on including long-term and youth unemployment in the convergence criteria of the Stability Pact as one of the indicators that 'best revealed the difficulties that a country may be experiencing'; or Vredeling's proposal for a directive in which he called for the establishment of factory councils in companies with more than 1,000 employees located in two or more countries, to allow workers facing closures or relocations to benefit from information provided by management boards that were often far-away and no longer direct counterparties to company claims. (This would have been helpful to Fiat workers.) There was also the suggestion by the French economist Jean-Paul Fitoussi to calculate the public deficit minus public investment that could promote economic development.

Let us not forget how the foolish enlargement of the EU to include some 28 countries was also swallowed, a process in which any suggestion of full political union – which was obviously impossible given such a huge diversity of structures – was buried. Rather than seeking new forms of cooperation with the eastern states, they were incorporated pure and simple. Their accession was dictated above all by the attractiveness of these markets and by the readiness of these states to align unconditionally with the rules of liberalism. By arranging their immediate entry into the Union to coincide

with the parallel enlargement of NATO (hoping recently to extend it to the Ukraine), the Union became the cornerstone of Western identity, translated into a string of missile bases.

Even here the left preferred to believe and promote the belief that it could only be selfishness that was attempting to stop all peoples from having their slice of the splendid European cake. Thus they aroused hopeless appetites in countries and regions ready to abandon their original identities to be able to join the 'exclusive club'. (The breakup of Yugoslavia began in this way, without any negotiation as provided for by the Treaty on European Security and only by expanding the people's right to self-determination – exactly that which is considered illegal today with regard to the Crimea).

Is it still possible to salvage the spirit of Ventotene, and is the slogan 'another Europe is possible' that we all continue to proclaim still meaningful? I believe so; in fact I think it is essential that we try. But rather than engaging in discussion over the institutional architecture in order to specify what changes should be made to treaties and regulations – many are already doing this – I would prefer to talk here about us and our left, which although never (or not yet) in government, are not exempt from blame.

Blame, first of all, for not being seriously committed to building a European social and political entity able to change – at the EU level – the current balance of power, form alliances, establish the 'fortresses and emplacements'[5] of hegemony, or to become a key player in political battles, at least as far as possible at the national level where democracy exists.

This 'entity' – and I call it 'entity' and not 'people' or demos in order to avoid the risk of culturalist (or, worse, 'Schmittian') misunderstandings – does not exist; the story of Europe is the story of its nations; our monuments were erected to celebrate victories, which, seen across borders, remind us of disasters. The idea that a shared historical culture exists is also hot air: Christianity generated endless religious wars and the Enlightenment led to further splits. With regard to the famous legacy of Greco-Judeo-Christian civilisation (separation of religion and politics, respect for the individual), this is now the heritage of the whole western world; it is not a specific characteristic of our continent. In addition, we speak 26 different languages and each people is rightly protective of their own.

It is in particular 'intermediary bodies' which are lacking at the European level – trade unions, parties, media, and associations – which in the individual nations ensure greater levels of democracy by acting as channels of communication between civil society and the institutions. These bodies allow the public to make their voices heard and thus influence executive power. It was this sacrosanct reasoning that caused the German Constitutional Court

to declare the Federal Republic of Germany's accession to the European Union born with the Maastricht Treaty inadmissible: because – as Judge Grimm's judgement states – the Basic Law of the country prevents it from joining a non-democratic supranational organisation. A manoeuvre was found to overcome this substantial objection, but the Court in part reiterated its judgement in relation to the Treaty of Lisbon.

These are important observations: we all know that European-wide trade unions exist almost exclusively on paper, operating from a beautiful building in Brussels where they promote interesting studies but do not organise any real joint trade union action. (For example, take basic income – also known as inclusion income, minimum income, and under other names – which is a rallying cry in all European countries; yet I am not aware of anything that has been done to formulate a joint proposal or to fight for this at the EU level). With regard to political parties, I remember when Willy Brandt said that the meeting of the European socialists was the best place to go to read the newspaper. Since then not much has changed: there is hardly any information on what European member organisations are doing in their respective countries. Not to mention the media: there is no real European TV and only a few Member States are involved in the tiny Euronews channel. Each country has its own broadcaster abroad and there is no standard supplement to be included in like-minded newspapers. As a consequence, European public opinion does not exist, to the great benefit of those who hold power. There is only public opinion fragmented in individual Member States, and it is easy to play these nation-based publics off against each other.

Under these conditions it is difficult for Europeans to feel that they are part of a common good that represents a basis for democratic participation. Nor does it make any sense to call for solidarity between Member States and ask that the treaties be changed to abolish the horrible 'no bailout' clause, which stipulates that each country must tend to its own affairs and cannot be called upon to help another country struggling with economic problems. Even if Schäuble does retire we will never manage to change the egregious competition rules that underpin the treaties and represent the very opposite of solidarity unless we first build an actual community.

We must also correct (and this too has been seldom done) the concept of democracy that Brussels has tried to endorse over the years, namely the notion that there is no European people in the European Union, just citizens. Although in the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union, the Union lays down many individual rights (in many cases even more than are provided at national level) it does not, however, include the key right in any democracy: the right to take part in collective decision-making processes.

The complexity of creating a European political subject, in light of the deep differences characterising the nations composing the EU, is exacerbated today by the intense immigration coming from other continents which leads to still further and much deeper ethnic, cultural, and religious heterogeneities. The origin of the racist wave, which is the backdrop to this phenomenon, is undoubtedly rooted in the sense of insecurity caused by the economic crisis and by the inequalities produced by the neoliberal policies that have been adopted after the crisis. It is not surprising that the broadest rejection of immigrants is seen in East European countries - countries that are still undergoing the trauma resulting from a radical systemic change exposing their populations to the harshest form of capitalism.

Much has been said about the immediate measures necessary to tackle the migratory flow and many proposals have been made by those opposing the horrific policy adopted by the EU in this area. However, little consideration has been given to the necessary changes once it is definitively established that these migrations represent, for the most part, an irreversible process (there can be no freedom of movement of capital and goods without freedom of movement of persons). After all, unexpected mobility also characterises European populations nowadays: more and more - generally highly qualified - young people are leaving their country of birth to find a job in another country – in the south of Italy their number surpasses that of the immigrants).

In light of the above, it is necessary to rethink the concept of citizenship by conceiving a notion of 'multiple citizenship' that preserves the persons' own roots while introducing a European dimension, which is tied to the European territory where the person is legitimately living but is not reduced to the citizenship of any of its single nations.

Much more needs to be done to enable people to consider themselves citizens, hence holders of this common good called Europe - perceived as a community of goals, based on its own specific model, and not as a mere geographic/bureaucratic space. This requires, first of all, that the immigrants are called 'new Europeans' and no longer 'third-country nationals', and the consolidation of the idea that Europe is a community.

The term 'common' is also important, because, in this era of globalisation when everyone trades with everyone else, the idea of a common market – which might have seemed like a good idea in the 1950s – is almost ridiculous. Therefore, either we answer a reasonable question – why Europe? – or nobody will take action. Quite the opposite, the illusion of the 'little homelands' is resurfacing.

I also believe that one of the reasons why interest in the EU has further declined is the fact that Europe has lost its uniqueness and we have become

just like any other piece of the global market. I am referring to Italy's post-war national constitution and welfare, based on the non-sanctity of private property and on not demonising the public. I also have in mind the characteristic that Karl Marx ascribed to Europe in the *Grundrisse*: the discreet distance kept by society from the commodification of all aspects of life, guaranteed by the persistence of pre-capitalist entities - such as the rural world, the Church, and the aristocracy - and of their values, which were still active as capitalism developed. These historical factors kept characterising the new society as it evolved, still producing reactionary effects but also avoiding the reduction of everything to a mere marketplace.

In order to demonstrate the accuracy of this Marxian observation, it would be sufficient to think about gastronomy. It is not without reason that in the 1990s we, as the Committee on Culture, Youth, Education and the Media of the European Parliament, recommended that it be used as a point of reference for the definition of a common European identity. During the first big demonstration against globalisation held at the WTO Summit in Seattle in 1999, the notorious symbol of the protest was Roquefort, which was seized as an emblem by José Bové. It symbolised the idea that Europe was proud of its thousands of varieties of cheese even if the market forces were pushing for a homologation: an assembly line for a single anonymous kind of dairy production.

If this model and its values are dismantled, Europe also loses its meaning.

That is why the action we must take to save Europe is entirely political and cultural, rather than economic. Of course, motivating our own activists to fight to build a different Europe is not easy, nor is constructing the entity that this battle may cultivate. The events of recent years in particular would suggest that we should give up the project, with each nation instead looking for a way to save itself. But we should all be aware that, alone, every one of our little countries would drown in the ocean unless it could actually convince its inhabitants to return to a pastoral economy. Although there is still hope of recovering some form of democracy in our era, this certainly will not be done at global level – global democratic institutions are difficult to imagine – but rather only by breaking it down into macro-regions. Despite all, Europe is perhaps the easiest one of these macro-regions to construct, even with all its faults, given that, as Étienne Balibar notes, it is the region richest in social and individual rights, with its embedded history of struggles and revolutions.

Gramsci critically noted that there was a defect common to both the social democratic tradition and the communist workers' movements: statism. That is, an obsessive focus on the control of central power, whether through

parliamentary elections or the storming of the Winter Palace, and at the same time an under-valuing of society's achievement. His criticism remains valid today. This observation applies particularly to Europe, where the left has been most concerned with Brussels while taking very little interest in European society. In my view, it is essential that we focus on European society and commit to building agents of change at this level.

(Summer 2017)

NOTES

1   Barbara Spinelli is the daughter of Altiero Spinelli.
2   <http://www.gabizimmer.eu/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/E-Book_GUE_NGL_
      Ventotene_e-Book-003.pdf>.
3   See Judith Dellheim and Gabi Zimmer, 'No Celebrations on 25 March – After 60 Years
      of the EU, It Is Time to Talk Again About the History of the Union and the Ventotene
      Manifesto', Policy Paper 1/2017, Rosa Luxemburg Stiftung, Berlin <https://www.
      rosalux.de/fileadmin/rls_uploads/pdfs/Policy_Paper/PolicyPaper_1-2017.pdf>.
4   The Spinelli Group is an initiative launched in September 2010, led by Guy Verhofstadt,
      Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Sylvie Goulard, and Isabelle Durant. Its mission is to inject a
      federalist momentum in the political decisions and policies of the European Union.
      Today it gathers more than 110 MEPs supporting this initiative, 44 active members,
      EU experts, NGOs, think-tank representatives, politicians, and academics. The Groups
      Manifesto has been signed by more than 5,000 people throughout Europe (editor's
      note).
5   Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks* (ed. and transl. Joseph A. Buttigieg), vol. 3, New
      York: Columbia University Press, 2007, p. 169 (Notebook 7, §17).

The European Left –
Its Current State and Prospects

Heinz Bierbaum

Europe is still in a deep crisis, economically, socially and politically. Its economic growth is rather moderate and there are wide differences between its countries. This is true in particular ofEurope's South, especially Greece and Italy. One of the most worrying problems is the macroeconomic imbalance between Germany and most of the other countries, an imbalance that creates major economic difficulties and also endangers the common currency, the euro. It is true that there are elements of economic recovery in the EU, but we are still far from the sustainable development we need. And a recovery indicated by some economic figures does not necessarily mean an improvement in the working and living conditions of people. Unemployment is still very high in the EU, in particular among youth, with dramatic percentages in some southern countries; there are large precarious labour sectors, even in a rich country like Germany. This is the consequence of neoliberal austerity policy, which is economically counterproductive and a social disaster. It is a policy that does not produce sustainable economic growth and has continued to exacerbate already deteriorated working and living conditions. In many countries, workers' and trade-union rights have been dismantled. The net result is widespread discontent with European policies, which is particularly clear in the outcome of last March's Italian elections with the victory of the far-right Lega and the populist Movimento Cinque Stelle.

It is not only in Italy that the political situation is rapidly changing. A real political upheaval is occurring whose most significant elements are the rise of the far right and the deep crisis of the social democratic parties. This is very apparent in the case of France where the entire political system is changing. The Socialist Party lies in ruins, but the conservative parties have also been affected. There are new movements, with 'Macronism' on the one hand and France Insoumise on the other. The entire system of traditional parties

is up for grabs, as can be seen in the political developments in Germany where the political landscape has changed drastically. The CDU and SPD are losing large vote percentages, while the extreme right-wing AfD has shown spectacular growth and is now challenging the SPD's position as the second party, facing as it is a profound crisis, which has forced it to reflect on its political strategy. But this is not only the case for Germany. Throughout Europe the social democratic parties are forced to contemplate the reasons for their defeats. The decline of some social democratic parties like those of Greece, the Netherlands, or France is dramatic. It is interesting that the exceptions are the Labour Party in the UK and the Socialist Party in Portugal where there has been a shift to a more left-wing politics. In particular, the Labour Party led by Jeremy Corbyn has a clear left political programme, which differs considerably from the other socialist/social democratic parties. But in the main it has not been the left but the far right that has profited from the fall of these parties.

The rise of the far right in most European countries is the most alarming and challenging problem we are facing. We have to acknowledge that the discontent with and the protest against austerity policy in Europe and its resultant huge social contradictions and economic counterproductiveness redounds first and foremost to the benefit of the right. An additional element is the influx of refugees and immigrants, which the far right exploits, using them as scapegoats. The right is transforming the social question into a national question and the social conflict into a conflict between the poor and immigrants.

The left – a short overview

These far-reaching political changes not only presage risks but also offer opportunities. For now it is obvious that they favour the far right. But there are also opportunities for another politics which is neither neoliberal nor nationalistic and racist. These opportunities have to be seized by the left, which ought to profile itself as an alternative to the neoliberal policies pursued by conservative as well as social democratic governments and at the same time to the nationalism and racism of the right. The failure of neoliberal policies offers the left a chance to promote alternative, democratic, social, ecological, and peaceful policies breaking with neoliberalism. But in contrast to the far right the left and progressive forces are not only rather weak; they are at the same time, unfortunately divided.

In recent years the landscape of the left has changed considerably. The communist parties are losing ground. New political formations such as Podemos in Spain or France Insoumise have been created. The strongest left

forces are in certain Southern, Nordic, and Central European countries. We have a strong left in Portugal, although the Left Bloc and the Communist Party are competitors, making cooperation difficult. Also, in Spain there is a strong left with Podemos and Izquierda Unida and different national groups in the Basque region, Catalonia, and Galicia. Syriza in Greece is still very strong despite the fact that some groups and important representatives have left the party in protest against government policy. However, the politics of the Syriza-led government has created problems not only for the left in Greece but also for the European left, a problem which I will address below. On the other hand, in Italy the left has nearly disappeared, a disaster that has been ongoing for years now. In France there are contradictory developments with the end of the Front de Gauche and an emerging new movement called France Insoumise, the declining Communist Party and new attempts like Générations.s arising out of the ruins of the Parti Socialiste. The Workers' Party of Belgium (PTB) is increasingly gaining ground and becoming a very significant party. Despite some setbacks the Socialist Party of the Netherlands is still an important and relevant force of the left. In Scandinavia, the left plays an important role. In Sweden, the Left Party has grown considerably. In Finland, the Left Alliance is strong while the Communist Party is losing ground. In Denmark, there are several left-wing groups, of which the Red Green Alliance is the most important. In Norway, the Socialist Left Party is the first left-wing party, followed by the Red Party.In Germany Die LINKE has become a stable factor in German politics, with a solid parliamentary group. In Eastern Europe left-wing forces are very weak. There are few exceptions such as the traditionalist Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia (Czech Republic) and the new party The Left ('Levica') in Slovenia, which proved remarkably successful in the last elections. There are other interesting left groups such as Razem in Poland.

In the European Parliament the left parties, with the exception of the KKE, the Greek Communist Party, have formed their own group, the European United Left – Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL). It is a confederal group which comprises 51 MEPs (Members of the European Parliament) from 18 parties along with some independent representatives. The group is politically quite heterogeneous, but united in its strong criticism of the European treaties, and thus of the European Union's structure, and in its perspective of rejecting the dominant neoliberal austerity policy and building another Europe – a democratic, social, ecological, and peaceful Europe. Members of GUE/NGL, MEPs from the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D), as well as Greens - European Free-Alliance (Greens-EFA) are cooperating as a Progressive Caucus. It is a platform for

dialogue and debate aimed at building bridges between progressive allies in the European Parliament and at strengthening the progressive presence by bringing the groups together despite their differences. The Caucus's basic programme is a Green New Deal. In a critical response to the White Paper of the European Commission, it has underlined the need for social justice and solidarity, for democratising the EU, for an economy of recovery and solidarity, for creating sustainable societies, for the political regulation of globalisation, and for peace-building policies.

Some of the parties belonging to the GUE/NGL group created the Party of the European Left (EL) in 2004. The EL is today the biggest and most significant group of left-wing parties in Europe. But not all parties in the GUE/NGL are members of EL and some EL members have no representatives in the European Parliament because they are too small or have had no electoral successes. Beyond the EL there is also another group of left parties at the European level: the European Communist Initiative, which contains 29 communist and workers' parties. It was founded on the initiative of the KKE, which is by far the largest party of the group, with two representatives in the European Parliament. The group does not play a major role in left politics in Europe. Finally, there are the annual meetings of the so-called Modern Left Parties to which the left parties of Scandinavia, Cyprus, Netherlands, and Germany belong. And recently there are new movements in the ambit of YanisVaroufakis's DiEM25 (Democracy in Europe 2025) and Maintenant le Peuple, an alliance between France Insoumise, Podemos, and Portugal's Bloco de Esquerda (Left Bloc).

The Party of the European Left (EL)

The EL currently contains more than thirty member and observer parties. The most significant are Syriza, Izquierda Unida, Bloco de Esquerda, Die LINKE, the Finish Left Alliance, the Danish Red-Green-Alliance, the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia, and the Communist Party of France. Due to political developments in Europe and different European countries, the EL has undergone significant changes since its founding. For example, Italy's Partito della Rifondazione Comunista, one of the founding parties, has suffered divisions and lost importance. Recently, France's Parti de Gauche left the EL in reaction to Syriza, which was accused of carrying out neoliberal policies as the leading party of Greece's government, and because the EL refused to expel Syriza. Even if significant left-wing parties such as the Communist Party of Portugal, Spain's Podemos, the Belgian PTB, the Dutch Socialist Party, the Swedish Left Party, and Ireland's Sinn Fein are not members, the EL is still an important left grouping in Europe.

The EL is not a genuine party; its function is one of coordination. It has several working groups and networks important for its functioning. The EL's Trade-Unionist Network cooperates with another Trade Union Network, called Trade Union Network Europe (TUNE). TUNE, which has existed for over twenty years now, is the only Europe-wide network of left-wing trade unionists. Twice a year it organises a conference on current issues of trade unionism with the support of GUE/NGL and provides a platform for the exchange of experiences with social conflicts. Particularly important is the working group on Latin America, as there is a very close cooperation between EL and the left in Latin America, especially regarding the Foro de São Paulo, the most significant coordinating group of the Latin American left. In addition, the North American working group maintains relations with socialist forces in North America. After its successful foundation and ensuing consolidation phase the EL is now facing the challenge of sharpening its political profile and cooperating with other progressive forces. At the last congress in Berlin, in December 2016, a political document was adopted, which concludes with the following statement:

> The EL itself was built by bringing together forces that come from several traditions. It has been able to move forward thanks to a consensus that has respected its diversity. At the same time, it has become more consistent. There are new discussions in our ranks on the challenges of the new phase underway. We must always work better with the many forces that will not join EL. Taking the actual state of relationships of forces in Europe as a starting point, our party has decided to take the initiatives necessary for entering a new stage in our ambition for the convergence and solidarity of progressive forces. The central issue is one of continuous construction of cooperation with all Europe's progressive forces […]
>
> To achieve this target and be, ourselves, at the service of this ambition, the Party of the European Left propose[s] to all the available forces, in Europe, to build an annual political forum, open to all the political, democratic and progressive forces.[1]

New developments

The EL is not the exclusive representative of the forces of the European Left. As mentioned, there are important left-wing parties that do not belong to the EL. But there are also new developments partly connected to EL member parties. First of all, there is DiEM25, founded in 2016 by Yanis

1   <http://www.european-left.org/sites/default/files/1_-_en_-_political_document_el_-_congress_final.pdf>.

Varoufakis, the former Greek Minister of Finance. Emerging from Greece's disastrous experiences with the Troika this movement was organised in order to democratise the European Union. DiEM25 cooperates with other left groups like Razem in Poland, some Italian, Danish, and Portuguese left groups, and in particular with Générations in France. Alongside EL and DiEM25, a third initiative with the intention of acting Europe-wide is that of Jean-Luc Mélenchon who launched a new European strategy based on cooperation between France Insoumise, Podemos, and Bloco in Portugal. They approved a joint declaration in April in Lisbon with an appeal to break the chains of the European treaties and democratise Europe. 'We urge peoples from Europe to unite around the task of building an international, popular, and democratic political movement as a means of organising ourselves to defend our rights and people's sovereignty.' Mélenchon has dubbed it Révolution Citoyenne. It was also joined by Scandinavian left-wing parties such as Denmark's Red-Green Alliance, Sweden's Left Party and Finland's Left Alliance with the common slogan 'Maintenant le Peuple'. In a common statement on 27 June in Brussels they declared that we are facing ten years of an unsuccessful austerity policy and that it is therefore necessary to build another Europe breaking with the treaties and introducing new rules for a democratic and social Europe. The key elements are the struggle against social dumping and for social rights, the demand for tax justice, the struggle against climate change and for sustainable ecological development, the defence of equal rights for women, the struggle for a democratic international trade policy, for the right of asylum, and for a clear opposition to the militarisation of Europe. In Germany, a new movement, called Aufstehen, feeling a kinship with France Insoumise,was initiated by Oskar Lafontaine and Sahra Wagenknecht. Its aim is to give voice to people who are disappointed by, and unhappy with, the dominant neoliberal policies and their devastating social consequences. Its intention is not to create a new party but to change the social and political climate in the direction of a more social society characterised by solidarity, thus offering an alternative to the rise of the far right.

Towards the European elections

The European Parliament elections are of course important junctures. In the last elections in 2014 the EL presented Alexis Tsipras as a collectively nominated candidate for the presidency of the European Commission. This was very helpful for the entire European left, especially in Italy where a joint list called L'altra Europa con Tsipras was presented, which made it possible to pass the four-per-cent electoral threshold. The political context

of the upcoming elections is different from that of 2014. The EL's majority favours the idea of a lead candidate, but there are also important sections that are against it. The differing strategies among left forces in Europe make it difficult to agree on a common candidate. Finally, the Executive Borad of the EL decided to present Violeta Tomic from Slovenia and the trade unionist Nico Cuéfrom Belgium as its lead candidates. The EL is presenting a common political platform called 'Build a Different Europe'. Its point of departure is the deep crisis of the EU caused by neoliberal austerity policies and the need to overcome it by implementing a political alternative based on democracy and solidarity. 'Future European cooperation should be under the democratic control of the people and not at the service of the financial markets and big corporations.' A new model of economic, social, and ecological development is called for as well as a Europe of rights and in particular a Europe of Peace. The European Treaties are rejectedsince they lay the basis for the fatal neoliberal policies.

In contrast to the last elections, the EL is not the point of reference for all European left-wing parties even if they are members of the EL. There also other initiatives presenting themselves as Europe-wide left groups. DiEM25 is cooperating with other groups under the name 'European Spring' in order to be present in the European elections. European Spring is a coordination of DiEM 25, Générations.s, Razem, Germany's Demokratie in Bewegung, Italy's Democrazia Autonoma, Livre in Portugal, and Alternativet in Denmark. At the core of their programme is the project 'A New Deal for Europe' oriented to labour, sustainable investments, international solidarity, and democratising Europe. And then there is Maintenant le Peuple with its own strategy based on rejection of the European treaties.

Thus we have to take account of at least three different strategies involving not only the coming European elections but also bearing on European left politics as a whole: DiEM25 with its aim to cooperate with different left parties and groups and to create a Europe-wide party named European Spring, Mélenchon with Maintenant le Peuple and its appeal to disobey the European treaties, promoting the 'Révolution Citoyenne', and the EL, which intends to provide a common platform for the entire European left.

Divergences and convergences

The differences in strategy are the consequence of a different analysis and evaluation of European politics and different visions of European left politics. The divergences involve first and foremost the development of the EU and the question of whether progressive policy is possible within the framework of the EU. The EL's political document adopted at the last congress in Berlin

2016 states: 'Although we fight on every occasion to roll back the rationale on the basis of the existing treaties behind national and European political decisions, we are not seeking to adapt the existing framework but to re-found Europe, because it is clear that it is not possible to introduce a policy of social change without breaking away from the treaties that are based on the dogma of free, unfettered competition and on calling into question the right of peoples and nations to govern themselves in a democratic fashion.' All left forces share the conviction that the treaties – from Maastricht to Lisbon – are the basis for the neoliberal austerity policy pursued by the European institutions and the governments of the different European countries. Consequently, all favour a fundamental revision and re-structuring of the treaties. The difference concerns whether the Treaties should be discarded wholesale or not. Since changing them is very difficult there are attempts at interpreting them differently and advancing proposals for progressive policy on the basis of the existing treaties – or, on the other hand, there are proposals to simply disobey them. To present concrete proposals for another European economic and social policy helps create a political climate in favour of changing the treaties.

One of the most discussed issues is the common currency, the euro, and the 'Plan B' proposed by Jean-Luc Mélenchon some years ago. His proposal was followed by several conferences on the concept, and Plan B has become an important hypothesis in the debate over European policy. Plan B makes reference to a so-called Plan A aimed at radically reforming the European Union. The idea is that in the event that such a radical reform is not possible a Plan B would be needed allowing for the possibility of a country leaving the Eurozone and the EU. Plan B is thus seen as a strategy of last resort. Exit was in particular proposed for Greece as an alternative to the neoliberal Memorandum imposed by the Troika. In the end, Greece's Syriza-led government rejected the exit option as too risky. Exit does indeed involve very high risks.

It is true that devaluing one's own currency creates possibilities of recovering competitiveness. However, to do so one needs a well-functioning production system and export goods. The advantages of such a strategy are often overestimated, while the disadvantages (increase in the price for imports and speculation of the financial markets against the national currency) are commonly underestimated.

On the other hand, there are a good many positions on which there is agreement. All left forces agree that neoliberal austerity policy has to be ended and that we need a programme of public investments in sectors important for the future development of the society, that is, investments

in renewable energies, in a new system of mobility, in healthcare, housing, education, culture, etc. Such an investment offensive is certainly incompatible with the Fiscal Compact, which needs to be abolished. A social–ecological transformation of industry is necessary. And there is also agreement that the role of the European Central Bank (ECB) must be revised to make it assume more responsibility for economic development and employment. All forces of the left agree that the financial markets should be democratically controlled, that financial speculation has to be forbidden, and tax havens abolished – and, of course, that the social dimension of European policy should be reinforced, in line with the slogan 'social first', as put forward by the trade unions. The pillar of social rights recently adopted by the European Commission is far from adequate, but it is a first step; it acknowledges that something has to be done. A demand could be the transformation of the social pillar into a binding social protocol. A further very important area of agreement is resistance to the militarisation of the EU. The EL opposes the further militarisation of EU foreign policy and the involvement of the European countries' military forces in external operations as well as NATO's aggressive presence in Europe.

Perspectives

There is thus no lack of common ground for an alternative progressive European policy in building a common platform or a minimal programme. Apart from differing opinions on the role of the common currency, the euro, the substantive political differences are not so great as to impede political unity among Europe's left forces. The major problem is the organisational configurations of the different left forces in Europe and their different political strategies. We are confronted with contradictory developments. The cooperation between the different approaches, that is, European Spring, Maintenant le Peuple, and EL is very weak. Rather than unifying the different forces there is the danger of a divided left. When Varoufakis launched DiEM25 in 2016 there was broad positive response because all agreed on the goal of democratising the EU. With European Spring, however, steps have been taken towards building a transnational party to compete in the European elections next year. It is therefore doubtful that this initiative will strengthen left and progressive forces. Furthermore, the way in which Mélenchon has launched his initiative Maintenant le Peuple and is putting forward his political model is creating problems that could result in splitting progressive forces. This is seen in his demand that Syriza be expelled from the EL due to the policies pursued by Greece's Syriza-led government. This is not the way one should act. Of course, there are differing stances on Syriza's

policies, but even if these politics are strongly criticised it should be done in a serious and solidary way, also taking account of the circumstances under which the Greek government has been compelled to act. It was certainly a political error not to have organised serious discussion of Syriza's policies within the EL, and we must acknowledge that, in general, political debate has been insufficiently developed. That does not mean that there are not still many discussions and forums – in particular concerning Plan B – , but each initiative mainly has its own separate forum. Still, the reasons behind the different strategies have to be discussed within the forums. On the one hand there are strategies still linked to the traditional political parties; on the other hand there are new approaches inspired by left-wing populism and therefore focused on movements rather than parties, which is the case with Mélenchon. He is convinced that the system of traditional parties is in a deep crisis and new political initiatives are necessary, based on the confrontation between 'the people' and the oligarchies. The new German movement Aufstehen shares this perspective. Up to now there has been no serious debate on the underlying theoretical–political concepts. But this is urgently needed because these new movements, although aimed at strengthening left forces, carry the risk of yet another division within the left.

Despite different political positions and political concepts and thus different strategies, it is necessary to make every effort to bring progressive forces together. It is the left's responsibility to be the counterweight to the disastrous policy that reigns in Europe and to the nationalistic and racist shift to the right. Accomplishing this requires first and foremost the courage to work out compromises among each other; however, the left has an unfortunate tendency to divisiveness. In the face of the rise of extreme-right and also fascist forces it is absolutely necessary that the left overcomes its state of fragmentation. To do so it has to tackle its political differences and come together around a common political platform. This does not mean having a unique political position but rather reaching an agreement around some crucial political issues while at the same time recognising important differences. As already said, around the need to build another Europe and institute alternative policies the differences are not so deep. Instead of competing at the European elections it would be necessary to present the left as a force with a common political alternative despite the differences.

The above-mentioned Progressive Caucus in the European Parliament, which comprises different progressive forces and has a common political goal and platform, is a good model. Another opportunity is offered by the European Forum of Progressive Forces launched by EL. In its 2017 Marseille Forum it brought together different leftist, ecological, and progressive forces,

discussing divergences and convergences. It was a first positive step and the spirit felt during the meeting was encouraging. On the other hand, there were also deficits in terms of participation and political programme. Improvements were made last year with the second Forum in Bilbao. The participation was broader, also including representatives of trade unions. And there has been some progress in terms of political content as well. In the final declaration four basic axes were indicated as preparation for the third Forum. The first regards redistribution of the immense wealth produced in Europe for purposes of a new model of social and ecological development; one proposal was to establish new expenditures in Europe to favour a new social and ecological model. The second addresses gender quality with the proposal to develop a concept for gender equality in all spheres of life. The third axis concerns peace and collective security, with the specific proposal to promote a pan-European conference on this issue. The last axis regards democracy with the call for empowering popular sovereignty through the launching of a new charter of sovereign democracy in Europe. The Bilbao Forum was certainly a step forward in building a space seeking fundamental points of agreement between diverse European ecologist, left, and progressive forces to face the offensive of the right and extreme right. These forums can be an important platform for Europe's left – on condition, however, that participation is enlarged to include even more political organisations as well as trade unions and organisations of civil society. But I need to stress that these forums should not turn into another social forum but instead be a political project. If accepted by all the progressive forces such a forum could be the platform not only for the necessary debate between the diverse progressive forces but also a sign that these forces are able to present themselves as a political alternative to neoliberal politics in Europe and the nationalist and racist far right as well.

A broad alliance of progressive forces also has to include the trade unions. At present they play no major role in the debate over left European policy, either in the EL or in other initiatives like Maintenant le Peuple or DiEM 25. Of course, there are attempts to integrate the trade unions, as for example in the European Forums. There have been some meetings, but a real dialogue between the left and the trade unions on a European level is not taking place. Moreover, the European trade union organisations – European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) and its federations – are not engaging actively in the debate on progressive European policy despite their having worked out and promoted concrete alternatives to European austerity policy, for example ETUC's 'A New Path for Europe', which proposes investments in sectors important for the development of society and which could also be seen

as contributing to the social-ecological transformation of the economy. In addition, IndustriAll, the industrial federation within the ETUC, published a document called 'Put Industry Back to Work', in which European austerity policy is sharply criticised and very concrete proposals for an alternative policy made. The European trade union organisations are closely linked to the socialist / social democratic parties while their relationships with the left are rather weak. On the other hand, there is good cooperation between the network of left-wing trade-unionists (TUNE) and GUE/NGL. But the relationship between the political left and the official European trade unions should also be strengthened even though ETUC and its federations are rather more like institutions than trade union movements. Still, their participation is important for building another, a social Europe. There is no alternative because the fight against social dumping, against precarisation of work, and for strengthening the rights of labour and of collective bargaining is crucial for building another Europe.

In conclusion, the European left is at a decisive political juncture. Its future depends on its ability to seize the opportunities offered by the failure of neoliberal austerity policy and the accompanying political changes. A broad and strong alliance of the left, ecological, and progressive forces is needed as a counterpart to neoliberal politics and the nationalist and racist right as well. In view of the many important programmatic positions shared by the different forces, despite the existing differences, this should be possible. On the other hand, the risk of another division of left forces is high. A serious and solidary debate around divergences and convergences and the willingness to cooperate is crucial in order to overcome the left's fragmentation.

The Crises of the EU and Eurozone – National Regression Blocks Solutions

Klaus Busch

The EU and Eurozone are presently struggling on various fronts with problems they cannot solve. On the contrary, the blockades appear to be growing. Among the most important conflicts are:

- Great Britain's exit from the EU, which will possibly occur in spring of 2019 in an unregulated way, that is, without an accord;
- The growing refugee crisis in which the EU has failed to implement an obligatory distribution mechanism despite the EU's authority to do so;
- The debate that has been ongoing since the high point of the euro crisis of 2011/2012 around the necessary reforms for stabilising the Eurozone, which has (for now) collapsed with the EU Summit of 13 to 14 December 2018;
- The breakdown of democracy and constitutionality in Poland, Hungary, and Romania without these states being forced by the EU to halt their march towards becoming 'illiberal democracies'.

In its history the EU has repeatedly had to deal with setbacks. But even after serious ones, like de Gaulle's 'policy of the empty chair' in the mid–1960s or the collapse of the first Economic and Monetary Union at the end of the 1970s, it was always able to get back on the path of integration, decisively deepening it. The passing of the Single European Act in 1987 and the treaties of Maastricht (1993), Amsterdam (1999), and Nice (2003) brought a 'Golden Age' of integration to the EU with decided political and economic progress. However, the failure of the EU Constitution Treaty in 2005 ended this upturn in the integration process, and no new breakthrough has occurred ever since. Instead, the EU finds itself at a dead end in many arenas.

The key cause of this stagnation of integration can be found in the growing trend to right-wing populism, which has experienced an upswing

especially due to the austerity policy implemented after the Great Financial Crisis of 2008/2009. The politics of re-nationalisation has called forth Brexit, impeded a solidary distribution policy in the framework of the refugee crisis, enables no important progress in the reform of the Eurozone, and is the key driving force for Poland's PiS and Hungary's Fidesz.

The surge in right-wing populism

The austerity policy implemented in many EU states as a result of the Great Financial Crisis has entailed considerable economic and social costs. Growth rates were low, there were heavy cost-saving measures in public budgets, unemployment in part rose steeply, there were cuts in the social security systems, the labour markets were further liberalised, and the trade union's power of intervention into the collective bargaining system greatly weakened. In some countries there was a marked rise in right-wing populism, which was closely connected to these economic and social costs of austerity policy. This is true of Italy, France, the Netherlands, and Austria, while due to its more favourable economic and social framework Germany witnesses a growth in the right-wing populist AfD that was much smaller in comparison to the rest of Europe. I Italy and France, austerity policy led to a high level of unemployment, and in both countries a large part of the population understands their countries' economic problems as being caused by European economic policy as influenced by Germany and is thus particularly susceptible to the arguments of right-wing populist parties. But in the Netherlands and Austria too the social hardships caused by austerity policies have contributed to dissatisfaction with the governing parties. In Austria the budget deficit was reduced by 3% from 2010 to 2016 and in the Netherlands even by 5% in the same time period and transformed into a slight surplus. In both countries, as a result of this policy, it was especially the social democratic parties that were punished in parliamentary elections in which the right-wing populist parties were strengthened.

Several causes have been responsible for the rise of right-wing populism. Five contributing factors are particularly relevant: the economic development of the country, the development of social inequality and the way in which it is perceived, the political stability/instability of the state, the immigration and refugee question, as well as a historical-cultural factor.[1] These factors have variable weight in different countries. Using the example of Italy, the EU country most dominated by populist parties, we can clarify the importance of individual factors.

Of the five contributing factors of right-wing populism, two – the socio-economic crisis and the crisis of the system of political parties – are seen

more strongly in Italy than in the countries mentioned. Italy has shown continuing economic stagnation, with unemployment after the great Financial Crisis reaching the above-average high rate of 11-12%; and the unsolved banking crisis has continued to weigh on the country up to the present day. Italy's traditional (*pentopartito*) party system collapsed under pressure of the corruption scandals (*tangentopoli*) at the beginning of the 1990s, which opened the door for the three right-wing conservative parties (Forza Italia, Lega Nord, and Alleanza Nazionale), which ruled under Berlusconi's leadership from 1994 to 2011, though with some interruptions, in a total of four cabinets.

It is part of the country's tragedy that these right-wing governments not only proved to be incapable of solving the country's socio-economic problems but also foundered – as had the previous party system – on scandals (tax evasion, corruption, and Berlusconi's sex scandals). The Movimento Cinque Stelle (M5S) benefitted from the ruins of Berlusconi's system, garnering 25% of votes for the Chamber of Deputies in the 2013 parliamentary elections. It is true that M5S insists it is neither right nor left, but in the European Parliament and in questions of the refugee crisis this party stands on the same line with the right-wing populist Lega (Nord) and the Fratelli d'Italia. Political instability characterises Italy in the EU context more than any other country. Alongside the socio-economic crisis this is the central reason for the importance of right-wing populism in the country. After the March 2018 elections, a populist government composed of the Lega and M5S came to power.

In explaining right-wing populism in Eastern European EU countries, for example in Poland, the above-mentioned causal factors play a central role. In Poland the radical transformation process of actually-existing socialism into capitalism not only produced winners but also many losers. This social inequality in the country corresponds to a regional inequality – above all Poland's east and southeast have developed less strongly than the northwest and southwest of the country. And it is in these economically disadvantaged regions that the nationalist, Eurosceptical, and anti-immigration PiS, which came to power in the 2015 parliamentary elections, has its strongholds. The PiS addresses voters who have done less well with the radical structural break, are unemployed or in danger of becoming so, find less job possibilities in the countryside, and/or have been less well prepared for the structural transformation due to their skill levels.

The regional elections of summer 2018 have further confirmed this division in Poland. While in the north and southwest, parties have won that advocate a Europe-friendly, cosmopolitan, and democratic Poland, the

PiS in the east and southeast has asserted its power, which has continually diverged from the EU especially due to the party's transformation of Poland into an authoritarian state in which the executive subjugates the media and the judiciary. The deep division of the country also became highly visible at the centenary commemoration of Poland's independence in the autumn of 2018.

National regression and refugee policy

The rise of right-wing populism has also led to an aggravation of conflicts over immigration in the EU. Although due to the massive policy of sealing off Europe – with the toughening of the asylum law, an intensification of deportations, the EU-Turkey Agreement, the expansion of Frontex, and reinforcement of cooperation with Libya – there has indeed been a clear reduction of refugee numbers, nevertheless the decisive questions of the unequal refugee pressure on EU countries and the implementation of the resolutions on distributing refugees to unburden Greece and Italy have still not been resolved. The Visegrad countries refuse to participate in the distribution of the refugees, and Italy especially is complaining of being left alone by the EU.Conflicts are also arising from secondary immigration and the implementation of the Dublin System.

The European Council's June 2018 Summit decided on measures that contain a further intensification of Europe's walling off (through the reinforcement of Frontex and Libya's coastguard), the establishment of 'disembarkation platforms' in third countries (the barracking of immigrants apprehended in flight to clarify their status), and the establishment of 'internal centres' in the Member States (barracking of refugees to clarify their status and the introduction of measures for resettlement and new settlement 'irrespective of the Dublin Reform').[2]

Even if by these resolutions the EU is increasingly adopting a right-wing populist immigration policy whose compatibility with international law is questionable and which violates those human rights to which the EU has committed itself in many legal documents, this policy will hardly lead to a solution of the conflicts between the Member States. For there has been no clarification of which states in North Africa are prepared to establish 'disembarkation platforms', nor of which states are prepared to accept the refugees brought from these 'platforms' into the EU, nor has there been a decision on which states are to construct the 'internal centres' and which are prepared to participate in the resettlement measures emanating from these centres – because the principle of voluntariness prevails, which the EU has accepted in order to be able to come to any resolutions in the first place.

Italy has backed the resolutions of the Summit but will, in implementing the Summit measures, in all probability very soon find itself in exactly the situation it justifiably regarded as unbearable before the Summit.

With the recognition of the voluntary principle the EU has legitimised the unconstitutional comportment of the Visegrad Countries and in the last analysis taken away its capacity to act in the case of conflicts between Member States. Countries will continue to have unequal shares of the burden, and not all states will participate in the distribution of immigrants from North Africa or from the 'internal centres' of individual countries. This means that with the tendency to re-nationalisation the underlying problems between the Member States will remain, which the June Summit originally said it wanted to resolve.

Nor did the October/December 2018 EU Summit find a way through these contested questions. There is unity around the question of expanding Frontex's personnel, although significantly more slowly than what the European Commission recommended. There is to be further work on the Common European Asylum System (there are seven legislative proposals for this), and the establishment of an asylum agency and common repatriation guidelines.[3] The Commission's attempt to accelerate the consultation on a Common Asylum Law by separating out the question of a common distribution system from the overall legislative package foundered on Germany's resistance despite support from Austria and the Visegrad Countries.

The failure (so far) of the European Monetary Reforms

Since the problems with the EMU became blatantly obvious during the euro crisis in the years after 2010 the EU has intensified its discussion of a reform of the euro structure.

In 2012 the Barroso Commission presented a blueprint for EMU reform, which contained the following important elements: the introduction of an economic government that was to have authority in anti-cyclical fiscal policy, the issuing of Eurobonds, and the establishment of a debt liquidation fund to enable a common European debt policy. In these plans the European Parliament would be given the authority to democratically control economic management. However, the tendency to national regression that became visible, at the latest, in the 2014 European Parliament elections made it clear that these reasonable but far-reaching reform plans would come up against massive resistance. The reform debate then petered out and was only revived in 2017 by new proposals from the European Commission and France's new president, Emmanuel Macron.

These current plans of the Commission, which are nowhere near as far-

reaching as the Barroso proposals, essentially contain a somewhat enlarged EU budget, which includes funds for combating asymmetrical crises as well as for the promotion of (neoliberal) reforms in individual EU countries, though not providing for transfer payments from the EU to these Member States. Moreover, the Commission wants to transfer the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) into a European Monetary Fund and complete the banking union through a common European deposit insurance and a backstop of the Single Resolution Mechanism fund.

Emmanuel Macron's own proposals are far-reaching, although the details of his plans were not formulated. Macron's concern is essentially for a markedly larger EU budget and an independent budget for the Eurozone, which is to be capable of combating crises and stimulating investments.

At a German-French Summit in Meseberg at the end of June 2018 Germany did not much accommodate France. In the concluding statement – to Macron's disappointment – much remained unclear and was left to more thorough formulation on the part of the bilateral working groups preparing for the December 2018 Summit.

Germany's more restrictive approach regarding EMU reform has been outdone within the EU by a group of eight states led by the Netherlands (three Scandinavian, three Baltic states, and Ireland). After a meeting in the spring of 2018 they announced a clearly negative stance towards more funds for the EU. Before the EU's June 2018 Summit this group, now expanded to twelve countries (with the addition of Belgium, Luxembourg, Austria, and Malta) and designated the 'Hanseatic League', issued another public statement, declaring its strict rejection of an independent euro budget.

The 'Hanseatic League', which opposes a deepening of the European integration process, includes numerous countries – Belgium, Denmark, Sweden, Finland, the Netherlands, and Austria – in which right-wing populist parties have enough weight to strongly influence their countries' political climate. In some of these states (Belgium, Denmark, and Austria) they are now in governing coalitions.

Since unanimity is required in all questions of the reform of the EMU and the future Medium-Term Budgetary Framework (MTBF) it already became apparent before the June Summit how minimal the chances of success are in the upcoming negotiations for Macron's longer-term plans but also for the less ambitious demands of the European Commission and even Germany's restrictive conceptions.

In the end the Summit – of which it has already been said in EU circles that it is the last chance before the May 2019 European Parliament elections to pass the reform plans for the EMU and show the public that the EU is

capable of action – came to nothing. In an arid declaration on 29 June[4] the Euro countries declared on three-quarters of a page that all questions of the reform of the EMU were still being worked on for the December Summit.

But the chances of success for the December Summit were no better in the following months. On the contrary, since the election of Ralf Brinkhaus as Chair of the CDU/CSU Bundestag group the Eurosceptics in the party became still louder, rejecting both a bigger EU budget and a stabilising function in the budget. France's Finance Minister, Bruno Le Maire, already cautioned Germany against constantly citing domestic political reasons in delaying euro reform, warning that if there are no reforms there will soon no longer be a Eurozone.[5]

Finally, in November France and Germany presented a proposal for a Eurozone budget, which however had several defects. For instance, this budget was to become an integral component of the EU budget on which all 27 Member States would have to agree. The Member States of the Eurozone would then supplement this budget with additional contributions whose extent and mode of distribution are still to be determined. On the basis of a programme to be established, the euro countries could then request subsidies for investments and projects that promote the convergence and/or competitiveness of the Eurozone and/or contribute to its stability. This proposal is generally seen as an initiative intended to help France's president save face. In reality, neither its content nor its range is comparable with Macron's farther-reaching 2017 plans. Germany's hesitation has, since the summer of 2018, led to France's disgruntlement, and the common proposal now being presented is intended to appease Macron.

Nevertheless, even this modest proposal has not gotten off to a good start, as the Netherlands, Austria, and Italy have expressed reservations. The spokesman of the 'Hanseatic Club', the Netherlands' finance minister Wopke Hoekstra, said he could not see the sense of the proposal.

At the meeting of the finance ministers of the Eurogroup on 4 December 2018 that prepared the 13-14 December Summit the German-French proposal was already picked to pieces. The Report to the European Council stated that there could be further negotiations on a Eurozone budget to *improve convergence and competitiveness* but that no unity among the Member States could be produced around such a budget for the *stabilisation of the Eurozone*.[6]

At the Euro Summit on 14 December 2018 this stabilisation function was finally laid to rest. In the Summit statement it is no longer even mentioned.[7] Instead, there is to be further work on a budgetary instrument for convergence and competitiveness. The statement affirms: 'It will be part

of the EU budget, coherent with other EU policies, and subject to criteria and strategic guidance from the euro area Member States. We will determine its size in the context of the MFF.[8] The features of the budgetary instrument will be agreed in June 2019.'[9]

Even in relation to this instrument everything was in the end left open, since the decision on its financial scope is to be decided in the context of the MFF at a later time, and by unanimous agreement.

Further resolutions of the Euro Summit relate to the ESM, which will not – contrary to what the Commission asked for – be converted into a European Monetary Fund but is to undergo further extensions. Thus it has been assigned the role of a 'backstop' in the context of the Single Resolution Mechanism Fund, although only if 'sufficient progress has been made in risk reduction, to be assessed in 2020'.[10] There is to be further consultation on the reform of the ESM Treaty in the summer of 2019.

Ultimately, the December Summit sounded the death knell of the centrepiece of all EMU reform proposals, the macro-economic stabilisation of the Eurozone. Since 2011 debates on reform have occurred in two large waves. The first began with well founded far-reaching proposals (by Borroso and van Rompuy) for removing the structural deficits of the EMU but was quickly snuffed out by the nationalist tendencies that became visible in the 2014 European Parliament elections. The second, already markedly weaker, wave set in with the reflection paper of the European Commission in the spring of 2017 (sixty years after the Rome Treaties). And these plans, concretised in December 2017, went aground as well, although they had in the meanwhile received clear reinforcement through the proposals of France's president Macron. And this time too the cause of failure is the rightward shift that can be seen in the upswing of right-wing populism in certain parliamentary elections within the EU. The Eurosceptical forces, which have by now conquered the centre of society in many EU countries, are causing all attempts at a so urgently needed deepening of the integration process to fizzle out.[11]

NOTES

1   See Klaus Busch, Joachim Bischoff, and Hajo Funke, *Rechtspopulistische Zerstörung Europas, Wachsende politische Instabilität und die Möglichkeiten einer Kehrtwende*, Hamburg: VSA, 2018, pp. 182ff.

2   European Council, <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-9-2018-INIT/en/pdf>, Brussels, June 2018.

3   European Council, <http://data.consilium.europa.eu/doc/document/ST-17-2018-INIT/en/pdf>, Brüssel, Dezember 2018.

4   General Secretariat of the Council, Euro-Summit Meeting (29 June 2018)- Statement <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/media/35999/29-euro-summit-statement-en.pdf>.

5   <https://www.wiwo.de/politik/ausland/bruno-le-maire-frankreichs-finanzminister-fordert-von-deutschland-mehr-tempo-bei-reform-der-euro-zone/23145490.html>.

6   Eurogroup Report to Leaders on EMU Deepening, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2018/12/04/eurogroup-report-to-leaders-on-emu-deepening/>.

7   Euro Summit, <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/meetings/euro-summit/2018/12/14/>.

8   Multiannual Financial Framework

9   Euro Summit.

10   Euro Summit.

11   By contrast, on the margins of the Summit, it proved possible, against all expectations, to contain the budget conflict between Rome and Brussels. Salvini and Di Maio, who in grandiose speeches sought to pick a quarrel with the financial markets and the Commission, have since become subdued. The zero growth of Italy's economy in the Third Quarter of 2018, the negative effects of the higher rate of interest on the budget and investments, the refusal of the Italian public to buy a large amount of Italian state bonds, and the growing internal criticism of the government's economic course have left their marks, and the government is allowing the deficit goal to sink from 2.4% to 2.04%. Brussels could therefore forego its announced deficit procedure against Italy. In this, the events in France also played a role: after Macron's concessions to the 'gilets jaunes', which allowed the deficit to end up at 3.5%, Brussels did not want to add to the many negative events (Brexit, blockades to refugee policy, and reforms of the Eurozone) yet another massive conflict. But the problem is still with us and will return in the course of 2019 and especially in 2020.

Anniversaries

Assessing the Anti-Globalisation Movement and the Social Forum Process

A Roundtable of Activists from Five European Countries

On the twentieth anniversary of the 1999 'Battle of Seattle', the event marking the beginning of the so-called anti-globalisation movement, the Editorial Committee of the *transform! europe* yearbook organised a discussion with five activists of the World Social Forum (WSF) and the European Social Forum (ESF) processes, coming from various EU countries. These were **Yannis Almpanis** (Greece), **Mátyás Benyik** (Hungary), **Raffaella Bolini** (Italy), **Judith Delheim** (Germany), and **Christophe Ventura** (France). The discussion was moderated by **Haris Golemis** (transform! europe)

Haris Golemis: The new form of radical politics which came with the anti- or alter-global movement and the Social Forums process did not fall from the sky. It was created by social movements' activists located in various countries. So, let's start with an examination of the link between the national and the European/world level by reviewing the national organisational forms of participation in this transnational movement. To better understand this link, it would be interesting if you could refer to possible ideological and political differences and/or clashes among the various groups within the national alliances.

Christophe Ventura: The roots of the alter-globalisation movement in France are in the founding of Attac-France in 1998, following a commitment made by *Le Monde Diplomatique* in late 1997, two years after the big wave of social protests in France in 1995 and during the Asian and the Russian financial crises. Attac was one of the protagonists of the WSF, which in 2001, in Porto Alegre, launched the idea that social movements could organise regional Social Forums in various countries. Following the choice of Paris as the venue of the Second European Social Forum in 2003, Attac proposed to other French organisations a concrete process for organising it. A body

called the French Initiative Committee consisting of 350 organisations was established and started formally functioning in December 2002. Apart from Attac-France, the Initiative Committee included trade unions, youth and women's organisations, human-rights organisations, movements of unemployed and precarious workers, and NGOs. For the sake of brevity, I will mention only some that I still remember after many years: a) Solidaires, FSU and SUD, the international department and some federations of the CGT (but not the CGT itself), the CFDT Transport Union, activists from Force Ouvrière (FO), b) Les Amis de la Terre (The Friends of the Earth), c) the left currents of the Catholic organisations Crid and Coordination Sud, d) La Ligue des Droits de l'Homme-LDH (the League of Human Rights), which was very active during the Paris European Social Forum but less so afterwards, h) La Marche des Femmes (the Women's March), and, last but not least, i) the movements of the 'sans' ('without') – 'sans papiers' ('without papers'), 'sans droits' ('without rights'), 'sans logement' ('without shelter', homeless) – which were very active in the movement despite their criticism of some decisions of the Initiative Committee, etc.

The Initiative had an Executive Committee, consisting of 10 to 15 representatives of the main organisations, which dealt with daily tasks and held regular meetings open to anyone who wanted to participate. This small group was responsible for organising the Initiative's various events in France, for preparing our presence in the WSF and the ESF, and for making proposals on general strategy. As a result of this process, hundreds of local Social Forums were created in several regions, cities, and small towns in France. After the Paris ESF, these Forums – some of which still exist today – played a key role, initially for the reconfiguration of the social movement and later of the radical left in France. This is a very important but not adequately studied phenomenon.

There were many ideological clashes among us at the time. We belonged to organisations, movements, and networks which had different political convictions and belonged to different political traditions. Relations with the activists of political parties were also difficult because, according to the Porto Alegre Charter, parties were 'officially' not allowed to participate in the Social Forum processes. The problem was solved by allowing them to participate in the French Initiative Committee as individuals or members of other entities, but not as members of their parties. This was clearly elegant hypocrisy!

Participants in the alter-global movement in France had to draw up their roadmap, organise and/or participate in events at the French, European, and international levels, and of course take care of the funding of these

activities. The responsibility for the participation in events rested with the ESF Assembly, and the level of participation in it was very high. Of course, not all organisations had the time and the money to participate in various preparatory meetings, especially outside France, and as a result the real power in the Initiative and its Executive Committee rested with the groups that could do so: Attac, Solidaires, CGT, FSU, LDH, CRID, and a few others. Within this small group, we managed to build relations of trust despite our differences. Our key principle was consensus in all decisions. While the leadership of the process was in fact composed of representatives of big organisations, those who were not in the 'inner circle' could also influence it, through articles in newspapers, analyses circulating in the internet, local actions, public interventions, etc.

Mátyás Benyik: In Hungary we had decided that the organisational format for our participation in the anti-global process would be similar to that of the WSF and the ESF. So we formed the Hungarian Social Forum (HSF), whose main founding actors belonged to four groups: a) Green organisations, b) activists who were members of, or were connected to, the Workers' Party, i.e., the former Communist Party, c) progressive left organisations like Attac-Hungary, which had many international connections with sister organisations in other countries, mainly in France, and d) progressive trade-unions, like the Metal Workers' Union. The HSF had a Coordination Committee comprised of representatives from the different organisations; its decisions were made only by consensus.

At the beginning, everything went quite well and all of us were optimistic that the experiment would succeed. Things started to go wrong after the Paris ESF because of the problem, known to all of you, with Simó Endre, a HSF member who at that time was attempting to cooperate with people connected to Fidesz, the Hungarian right-wing populist party. A little later, there was another dispute, with the Greens; we from Attac tried and managed to keep them in the HSF until the 2006 Athens ESF, after which the movement against neoliberal globalisation weakened.

There were, of course, ideological differences and clashes between the different groups of the HSF. Attac-Hungary had differences with the activists of the Workers Party, some of them very Stalinist, but also with the activists from the Greens who were soft anti-communists and aimed at reforms within the capitalist system. Before going to the WSF and the ESF we made decisions in the HSF on our priorities and strategy for the events, and regarding our representatives in the working groups responsible for the preparation of the Forums. Before the Assemblies of the Movements we

also met to prepare for building closer cooperation with activists from other countries with whom we shared similar ideas regarding the movement.

Raffaella Bolini: In Italy, there were three different periods of the alter-globalist movement, each one with its own organisational model. The first period was before and just after the mobilisation against the G8 Summit in Genoa, in July 2001. We were very fortunate because the beginning of the alter-global movement in Europe was closely connected to the preparation of the Genoa mobilisation. The first organisational model of a common space for diverse Italian groups was the Genoa Social Forum. This coalition was large enough not to coincide with anti-systemic forces; it was radical but not anti-capitalist. Today, at least in my country, many organisations as well as the people in general know that the system in which we are living is a complete disaster, but at that time, in 2001, globalisation was presented as a wonderful thing. At that time it was extremely radical to take a stand against the 'dream of globalisation'. The Genoa Social Forum was de facto 'anti-systemic', even if within it there were many organisations that were only against the negative aspects of neoliberal globalisation.

The Genoa Social Forum consisted of various progressive and left organisations of civil society, like Arci of which I was a member, Attac, which in Italy was rather small but very dedicated to the movement, and many others. From the trade-union side, the more radical organisations and groups were present: Cobas, Sin-Cobas, and FIOM-CGIL, as well as the radical wings of CGIL, the big leftist confederation. Other participants included the social centres, collectives of the 'disobbedienti', which were very big at the time, as well as some Catholic organisations devoted mainly to the issue of global justice in the Third World. Following a discussion among the social actors, the political party Rifondazione Comunista was accepted into the Forum. The main centre-left party, at that time called the Democratic Party of the Left (PDS), not only did not participate but explicitly opposed it. However, many of its members were in Genoa and also took part in the World Social Forum.

The second period runs from the Genoa mobilisations until 2003. It was a period in which many local Social Forums were created in Italy, mainly due to the Genoa events, but also due to the emergence in 2001 of the WSF. Following the second WSF in Porto Alegre and in order to prepare the First European Social Forum in Florence (2002), the Genoa Social Forum was consensually dissolved and a new coalition formed, the Preparatory Committee for the Florence ESF, which included CGIL but also the other moderate trade-union confederations, and a greater number

of organisations, as well as political parties. The coalition became even broader in the preparation for the 15 February mobilisation against the war in Iraq, with the participation of peace and anti-war organisations like the Committee 'Fermiamo la guerra', which did a magnificent job.

The third phase was when the movement started to decline. Then, in order to preserve our unity in the international framework we created the Italian Coordination for the World Social Forum, which was active until the 2015 Tunis WSF after which it was dissolved.

Since our coalitions were large and broad there were many differences amongst us, but through all these years we managed to function in a consensual way. Common experiences had created a climate of trust and confidence among the various organisations' activists involved in this adventure. This immeasurably helped us in having a united presence internationally in the great majority of instances.

Judith Dellheim: In Germany, one can also distinguish different phases of the movement with different organisational structures in each one of them. When the WSF process started, there was great interest on the part of many social movements, ecological movements, movements of solidarity with the Third World and with refugees and immigrants, anti-poverty movements, peace organisations, but also some trade unions like the Teachers' Union, and NGOs like ATTAC-Germany which was one of the main participants. At that time in Germany, there was great sympathy for the alter-globalisation movement, especially after the first ESF in Florence, which was a great success. We managed to form a relatively broad national coalition, which organised three local Social Forums in Germany and prepared our participation in the ESFs and the WSFs.

Interest started to decline when the so called anti-systemic groups and activists joined the process at the Paris and mainly at the London ESFs in 2003 and 2004 respectively. An additional reason for the decline of interest was that during that period another process had started taking place in Germany: the creation of Die LINKE, a party resulting from the fusion of the PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism) with WASG (Labour and Social Justice-The Electoral Alternative), a splinter group from the SPD. This second process also attracted the interest of some Trotskyist groups that had been involved in the Social Forum process since the Florence ESF. Activists from all parties and groups involved in the new social movements became very active in Die LINKE, a development which was good for the new party but which increased scepticism regarding the ESF process on the part of activists from trade-unions and social movements. As a result, the German coalition shrank and lost its initial broad political base, becoming gradually a

small group of activists that finally ceased to exist, while the cooperation, and in some cases even communication, among various protagonists vanished. This was very frustrating.

Yannis Almpanis: First of all, I would like to say that a very long time has passed since the events under discussion, and the period that started after the end of the last 2010 Istanbul ESF was so politically dense in Greece that it did not let us reflect on the Social Forum process. Therefore, my short presentation should be considered a retrospective narrative and not a comprehensive analysis.

The organisational instrument through which we took part in the anti-globalisation movement was the Greek Social Forum (GSF). Its main participants were activists from left collectives as well as non-aligned activists. It is interesting to note here that the political forces that comprised the GSF later became the backbone of the party Syriza. In this respect, the GSF was a laboratory for the unification and restructuring of the Greek left. It bridged forces that belonged to very different political traditions of the labour movement. It was also the vehicle for the return to left politics of a great number of progressive citizens who in previous decades had withdrawn into their private spheres as well as for the politicisation of many young people. The Greek left had never previously created an opening that was so movementist and social in character. However, the GSF did not manage to become a broad forum with society-wide appeal.

The Greek Socialist Workers' Party (SWP) participated in the European and World Social Forums, but not in the GSF. Both at the national and the international level our relations with its activists were always tense, due to their rampant sectarianism and patronising attitude. Outside the GSF, other forces of the extra-parliamentary left, such as the New Left Current, which is now linked to the SWP through the coalition of ANTARSYA, as well as of anarchism, including a large and confrontational Black Block connected to similar groups in other countries, also mobilised against globalisation.

Within the GSF, there was a sincere effort on all sides to search for a minimum framework in which everyone could recognise himself or herself. As for us, the Network for Political and Social Rights, we tried to make this minimum as radical as possible, something that was not at all easy. Generally speaking, I think that it is hard to find other examples of good will on the part of political and social forces with such deep ideological differences, which could compare with what the participants in the Greek anti-globalisation movement were able to achieve. Strong and durable ties were forged in the process, like mine with Haris Golemis.

However, I have to say that there were really no substantial political and ideological discussions either in the Greek or in the European and World Social Forums. That is, we never seriously discussed a radical plan to confront globalised capitalism or a common set of demands that could lend perspective to the movement. In the name of unity we created superficial and declaratory political frameworks, while in the name of action we undervalued the need for a robust analysis of the new conditions.

H.G.: In both the WSF and the ESF there was a difference between those who wanted them to be 'open spaces' for the exchange of views (with the 'movement fundamentalists' of the WSF International Council also insisting on excluding political parties) and those who wanted them to be more political and radical. What was and is your view on this?

R.B.: In Italy, in the past, before Genoa, we did not have parties in coalitions of social movements. They supported the coalitions, but from outside. In 2001, in Genoa, it was the first time after decades that there was a change in this rule and Rifondazione Comunista was accepted as an equal partner. So, in the Social Forum processes we were not against the presence of political parties – but of course we expected them to adopt a non-hegemonic, non-instrumental approach to the movement and to show full respect for the social protagonists.

Concerning the debate on 'open space/space for decisions', we tried from the outset to convince friends from other countries that we should not endorse either of the two extreme options: that is, we should perceive the Social Forum neither as a totally open space in which participants have endless discussions without any action, nor as a political organisation, a sort of Central Committee of the global movement. We believed that there was a third option, to follow the open-space method without imposing anything on anyone, but at the same time not to prevent some forces from searching for more points of convergence that might lead to common action.

Although it was difficult for the 'extremists' of both sides to accept the Italian proposal, in actual practice the movement tried to find a solution based more or less on this logic. In the WSF this happened through the creation of the so called Assembly of Social Movements, which was a space for those groups which wanted not only to discuss among themselves but also to decide on various common actions through consensus. In the Florence ESF, the final meeting of the Assembly of Social Movements was very important; it made it possible for us to officially launch the global mobilisation against the war in Iraq, which took place on the 15 February 2003, with 110 million people in the streets. I have vivid memories of Bernard Cassen strongly

protesting this method at the time, viewing our decision for the mobilisation as a 'distortion' of the WSF spirit.

For a number of years this arrangement (an open space WSF and an Assembly of Social Movements for reinforced cooperation) worked. However, after a time, despite the efforts made by some delegations, including the Italian one, the experiment ran aground: on the one side, the 'official' WSF (that is, its International Council and the people responsible for the organisation of the event) did not fully adhere to the principle of giving visibility to the agendas of various issue-based assemblies, seminars, and workshops; on the other side, the Assembly of Social Movements was hijacked by a group of social–movement activists who began using it as if it was their own political space.

J.D.: The WSF was a very innovative instrument, but we were not able to use it. On the one hand, this inability reflects our weaknesses, and, on the other, it explains why the movement eventually declined. The idea of the WSF not as a political force but as a common space for learning, analysing our experiences, discussing alternatives, and agreeing on common activities was the result of rethinking our many past defeats, advantages, and disadvantages. It reflected our need for something new, for a new approach that would allow us to come and act together. Unfortunately, however, in Germany and in Europe, especially in its Western part, the WSF and all other Social Forums were regarded by some forces as spaces to be occupied and used to convince others to think and act as these forces wished. And this approach was derived from the necessary tactics to be followed at the national level. So, we did not use the Forums to learn and build alliances and in that sense we missed a great opportunity to change ourselves in a constructive way. This, moreover, had a negative influence on the work we were doing in the ESF for the 'Charter of Europe for Another Europe', which was a great idea.

I believed at that time and I still hold the view that as many party members as possible should participate in the Social Forum processes and bring their experiences back to their parties, so that they can be critical and self-critical partners of other broader coalitions. At the same time, I believed that the question was not how radical the forces participating in the WSF and the ESF were but whether they could improve their own political culture and that of the whole left in order to overcome past shortcomings. Since, as I have said, there were groups that did not share this view, clashes could not be avoided. And these clashes prevented the enlargement of the Social Forums and finally led to their decline.

Y.A.: I think that the term 'fundamentalism' for those who opposed the presence of political parties in the WSF and the ESF is too extreme and,

in any case, I do not believe that this issue was so important. In my view, the Social Forum activists had to answer two major questions: a) how to give a permanent organisational form to a spontaneous movement mobilised against international summits, such as those in Seattle and in Genoa; and b) how to form an organisational structure without a territorial reference.

The two issues were intertwined and the Social Forum could not find a solution for either of them. When it was riding the crest of the movement's wave it had some vitality and created events. Seattle gave birth to Porto Alegre, Porto Alegre to Genoa, Genoa to Florence, Florence to the 15 February 2003. Then, things became harder. The Forum was not able to become a 'trade union' of the anti-globalisation movement. At the same time, its global character excluded newcomers from the centres of decision-making or those who belonged to organisations lacking financial resources. It is indicative that the discussions of the International Council concerned, and were intelligible only to, a very small number of people.

Obviously, not all participants were likeable. We should not delude ourselves. Even in the best moments of the movements, idiots remain idiots, careerists remain careerists, and sectarians remain sectarians. But there are also many others who, within the movement, change and improve both as human beings and as political subjects.

M.B.: In both the WSF and the ESF, there were different views regarding their identity as open spaces of dialogue, as well as on the issue of the participation of political parties. Since the process in Hungary began mainly with green and environmental organisations, the preference was for open spaces and for excluding political parties from the Forums, a position I also shared. This changed later because the question was not so much if political parties should be excluded or not, but what type of political parties could be included. Now I am more in favour of the inclusion of radical left political parties in the Social Forum movement, since we cannot deny that they are very important actors. Furthermore, if the parties' activists hide themselves in various organisations they will enter the process in any case, but in a Trojan horse. It is much better if they are present in a direct and transparent way. Of course, this contradicts the Porto Alegre Charter of Principles, but this Charter should be modified and updated. The inclusion of political parties can politicise and radicalise the WSF, something very important mainly in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, seeing as after the systemic change of the 1990s people have been depoliticised and there is an urgent need for political education to help make them aware of the new exploitative situation.

In the CEE countries the main issue of concern for the activists was and still is the advance of the far right and populist parties and the presence of authoritarian governments and leaders. In this part of Europe leftists have been and still are sensitive on this issue, and fortunately there have been and are movements and activists in the West sharing the same concern. Organisations and groups critical of the system have always been cooperative, while environmental groups could not be because they do not understand the wider political reasons for world grievances. Therefore, a big challenge for us was and still is how to involve these groups in a radical movement. This happened during the mobilisations against the war in Iraq, when we marched together with them and other strata of Hungarian society in a massive demonstration which took place in Budapest.

C.V: Having been in the foreign affairs committee of Attac in France since the late 1990s along with Bernard Cassen, Christophe Aguiton, Pierre Khalfa, and Sophie Zafari, activists you all know from the alter-global movement, I had the privilege to be present in all World Social Forums except the one in India, but also in all European Social Forums. Due to this experience, I strongly support the view that there were crucial differences between the ESF and the WSF.

The ESF had a political objective: to build a European social movement able to challenge the neoliberal order in Europe in terms of politics and policies, struggling against the political parties, both conservative and social democratic, that were in government at that time in Europe, as well as to challenge the European Union. I believe that the ESF was an attempt to build an entity able to serve this need, to Europeanise the struggles and the movements against the policies of these governments and of the EU institutions. We did not succeed in this aim and we can discuss why, but the ESF had this objective which was completely different from that of the WSF.

But the World Social Forum from its inception has been a space nourished by the Latin American movements. It was a cocktail of initiatives and ideas initially coming from *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Attac, and the Brazilian Committee and it was born at a conjuncture in which left or centre-left anti–neoliberal forces were either in government in some Latin American countries or were close to achieving this goal, as in Brazil. At the same time, there were in the WSF strong grassroots movements, much stronger than ours in Europe, with ten or fifteen years of powerful struggles behind them, which played a key role in Latin American societies. Progressive governments coming to power in various keys countries and strong social

movements in all countries of the region was the configuration and the ecosystem of the birth of the WSF. The WSF was a space, a natural space, for the coordination between these movements, connected with specific links to the Latin American left and progressive left governments; participants in the WSF did not have the objective to turn it into an instrument for the construction of an international political actor. It was more a space to collect and exchange experiences and views. However, on the last day of every WSF a meeting called the Assembly of Social Movements took place in which willing participants debated around preparing a common agenda for mobilisations and campaigns at the international level. This space of action was open to every organisation that wanted to be part of it, and the organisations that did not want to participate were under no obligation to follow the Assemblies' decisions.

From 2005, when the WSF returned to Brazil, some of its founders and a number of eminent intellectuals (Bernard Cassen, Ignacio Ramonet, Samir Amin, François Houtart, Emir Sader, Roberto Savio, Immanuel Wallerstein, and Boaventura da Sousa Santos) thought that the time had come to make the Social Forum process more politically committed and articulated to their regional political contexts. They proposed a 'Porto Alegre Manifesto', which included a set of proposals and strategic orientations (tactical articulations with transformative parties and governments). The idea was to take a step further towards making the WSF something more than a simple space without other perspectives. This initiative led to strong debates within the movements in which each side supported its position with strong arguments, but it did not establish a consensus and so it never came to a conclusion. However, for me it is still relevant, and on this point I agree with Raffaella.

H.G.: What were the reasons for the emergence and the subsequent decline of the anti–globalisation movement and the Social Forum process, and what were its main achievements? Do you believe that this form of action could or should come back again in the future or should struggles be confined to the national state?

Y.A.: Movements erupt suddenly and decline gradually. The 'no-global' movement is no exception. It erupted by expressing the global outrage against neoliberalism. It perished because it was unable to give a political perspective. It was born as a cry; it perished without a word. It certainly marked the politics of an era, but there are no longer many things that remind us of it. Everything we fought against has been imposed even more aggressively because of the crisis. Furthermore, the culture of resistance is very different today. Today it is not possible to stage a mobilisation like a

celebration. There is too much rage, hatred, and despair. Nor can there be a mobilisation based on general unity, as divisions are too deep. Greece is the most extreme example, with Syriza implementing a fierce austerity policy. But the situation appears very different also in the international geopolitical field. In the not-so-distant past, the movement was against globalisation. Today this word tends to disappear from public discourse, even though the policies of the Washington Consensus are still with us and in fact have been imposed everywhere. We now live in the era of Trump and Putin, the era of the chaotic war in Syria, the era of memoranda in Europe, in a Europe where we are facing the overwhelming dilemma between globalised financial power and nationalist populism. In the face of this dipole, there is not yet a convincing alternative from the internationalist left. Though it has been demonstrated that a left policy confined to a nation-state cannot succeed, the nation-state remains the only field for the practice of politics. This is the impasse of the left in this era of despair.

M.B.: The Social Forum process died at the 2010 Istanbul ESF. We later tried to renew it (for example through the events of Florence 10+10, in 2012) but it did not work. It is for this reason that other European initiatives emerged, as for example the Alter Summit. In this framework, I would like to draw your attention to Prague Spring 2, our small network which was established right after the 2008 Malmö ESF. This network was initiated by activists in Central and Eastern Europe together with some colleagues from Austria; it was directed against the populist and far right, which had already started to advance in the CEE region. We concentrated our cooperation around the fight against neo-Nazism and the advance of the far right in Ukraine and in other countries of the eastern part of Europe. The cooperation of CEE movements is very important since in the past European Social Forums the Eastern and Central European movements were underrepresented, with the number of activists participating in them being very small, except at the Forum in Florence and to a certain degree in the Paris ESF. This made us feel that we were not equal partners in the process; moreover, in some cases we were not treated in a very friendly way.

Prague Spring 2 is still functioning, fighting in the spirit of the old Social Forums mainly against poverty and the advance of the far right. Up to now we have had two events, the first Central and Eastern European Forum (CEESF) in Vienna in 2013 and the second CEESF in Wrocław in 2016. Then, after renaming the CEESF the Assembly of Resistances, we had a regional meeting in Budapest in March 2018. In the Social Forums tradition, we are trying to be active also in the global arena, extending our cooperation

to new actors interested in our cause. The Assembly of Resistances, an idea coming from the World Social Forum, is now very lively and interesting for all of us. Presently, we are preparing a regional meeting of the Assemblies of Resistance Movements in Caracas, to project the idea that the key points uniting us are not only relevant in the CEE region, but also in the World South.

The European and international cooperation of movements is very important, especially as regards the burning issues of migration and the far right, whose advance must be halted through international cooperation. We are working very hard to relaunch the anti-war movement aimed at stopping wars which cause great human, economic, and environmental losses. We must fight for peace but also against poverty, especially in the CEE region, whose problems more closely resemble those of the Third World, especially Latin America and Africa, than those of the core countries of the EU. Activists in a small country like Hungary cannot fight alone. We have to seek out allies with whom to cooperate at the European and international levels.

C.V.: I think in the last fifteen to twenty years, the Social Forums process, mainly the WSF, succeeded in producing what it was able to produce; it succeeded as a space, as a process, as a dynamic that was able to refresh the critique of neoliberalism and point out new paths for transforming capitalism by articulating social and environmental issues with democracy to help us think about how the left could be refounded and build a new paradigm. The Social Forums have provided the left and the social movements with a new political and organisational culture. This process consisted of the traditional organisations of the labour movement as well as the new social movements, intellectuals, and middle class activists from different sectors going, so to say, to the source and reloading themselves. I think that the alter-global movement succeeded in terms of building a new framework of theories, practices, and strategies for thousands of organisations all over the world, from political structures to trade unions, NGOs, etc. I also believe that the Social Forum process played a significant role in the emergence of the new wave of protest movements in the post 2008 global crisis times, with the 'Occupy' movements in the US, the Arab Spring especially in Tunisia, and the emergence of new left forces in Southern Europe. Without this movement there would not be Podemos in Spain and various other new anti-systemic organisations and movements in Europe. And, independently of what we think about the policies of the Tsipras government, without this movement there would be no Syriza, and many radical and interesting

developments in various other countries would not have happened.

For all these reasons I believe that the Social Forum process was a success. It certainly did not succeed in what some of us might have expected from it, that is, in becoming a new political subject or a new international movement able to challenge capitalism at a global level. But maybe we asked too much from this movement, maybe we asked for things it was not able to do during the period in which it emerged. In my view, the alter-global movement should be evaluated within a longer-term trajectory, not only within the short period of less than two decades. And I believe that in the long run it will be shown that it was a very important moment in the historical waves of anti-capitalist, anti-systemic movements. It was a step towards what revolutionary or alternative activists should build in the long term.

My view is that the ESF failed for different reasons. First, we were not able to involve the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) in it, mainly because this organisation was so integrated within the EU institutional process that it was not ready to be part of a space too critical towards the EU. Second, we were not able to draw up a strategy of the so-called European movement against the European Union because there were major disagreements among us on this issue and because we were functioning through consensus. We were able to build a discourse based on the well-known slogan 'Another Europe is Possible' or to agree on the need for social and fiscal harmonisation, etc., but we were not able to fight concretely and systematically against the EU institutions and their policies. Certainly, we had difficulties with some small political groups, they played a negative role, but the main problem was that we were not able to offer a common strategy for concrete action at the European level linked to the national level since we were all under pressure from our national agendas. The whole European map was neoliberal, but the rhythms and the levels of resistance were – and still are – different in various countries. They were not, are not, and will not be the same in Hungary, France, England, Belgium, etc. In Europe we can have common adversaries, objectives and strategies, but there are different levels of responses and different tactics which take into account the different national configurations and situations. I think nothing really progressive can happen without the combination of a national rupture (assumed in a cooperative and solidary way with the other European countries) and social movements throughout Europe and the world. In this context, I think that the nation-state is still the main space of political struggle, but not the only one. A rupture at the national level from one or more EU Member States is needed precisely because the EU is an inter-state system. We must have a mass democratic movement at the national level and at the same time try

to build international connections and permanent spaces and tools. This is certainly a difficult and complicated task, but nothing progressive can happen in Europe without a rupture in one or more countries.

The configuration of the World Social Forum process can still contribute to the building of international connections among movements. But it will never again play the central role it did in the past and I am sure that this view is also shared even by members of the International Council itself. That was my conclusion from the last WSF which took place in Salvador de Bahia, Brazil, in March 2018 – that the World Social Forum can remain a space where organisations and movements meet and organise common campaigns, etc., but now this is a moment for representatives, for delegations and not for activists and masses. The WSF and its format belong to the pre-2008 world, the world which existed before the crisis. It was built in order to fight against neoliberal hegemony, the pretentions of globalised capitalism, and US imperialist wars at a time when powerful movements were emerging in Latin America, in the US (Seattle), and elsewhere and were constructing their first linkages at the international level. Today we have to build something new for the post-2008 world, a world of uncertainty and instability. We are facing the end of neoliberal illusion and hegemony, a systemic crisis of globalised capitalism, the development of geopolitical tensions and conflicts everywhere in the world. At the same time, there is no clear alternative to the present system proposed by the left and social movements, no global project for an alternative civilisation and no positive visions. Instead, we have contradictions and defeats in Latin America and disillusionment in Europe, which have fragmented and segmented struggles and movements and have nourished rightwing populists in many countries.

What we need is to find and build new organisational forms and a new discourse adapted to a world where everything is characterised by fluidity, uncertainty, and instability, in which cultural issues like the struggle against various types of discrimination have many more victories than the struggles for economic, social, and democratic rights. This is the present challenge of a renewing Social Forum process.

J.D.: First, I would like to say that in the Malmö ESF we created a network of social movements and trade unions, which later founded the Alter Summit (AS). Unfortunately, after the AS meeting in Athens in 2013, many social movements left the process and what we now have is rather a summit of trade unionists. So, I think that there is nothing we can celebrate. Furthermore, when one looks at the actors involved in the Prague Spring 2 Platform, one doubts if one can really pin ones hopes on it. And it is interesting that some

of our old friends, like Petre Damo who is still active in Romania, are not participating in it. I am not against the Prague Spring 2 network and it would be very good if it continued to organise events and meetings. However, this is not a reason to see it as a starting point for something more broad, really hopeful, and sustainable. The range of participating actors is small and very traditional, but this of course is connected to our common problem.

I would also like to make another remark on what Christophe said about the reasons why the ESF did not achieve its targets, agreeing that the main reason was our inability to develop a common strategy to fight against the European Union. It is true that we were not able to develop such a strategy, and this was our weakness and the reason for our defeat. But, I also don't think that it would be extremely successful and hopeful to develop a strategy against the EU. Regarding the implicit criticism of Syriza, I haven't heard or read a word of self-criticism for our inability to influence our governments' decisions regarding the Greek crisis, especially the governments of Germany and France, the two big EU countries that could have changed the attitude of the Troika towards the Tsipras government. In fact, what happened in Greece is mainly our defeat, the result of an absence of political solidarity. I frequently asked my friends if they were and are really interested in organising effective solidarity action with our Greek comrades and I discovered that this readiness did and does not exist. I can tell you frustrating stories about my efforts on this issue with trade unions, social movements, and even my own party. I think that our main problem was that we were unable to really benefit from the Social Forums, which, along with Raffaella, I consider a very useful political tool. As a result of this inadequacy, we were also unable to develop real solidarity among us and with the weakest, the poorest, and our own political friends, like our comrades in Greece. The fact that the Greek Spring did not become a European Spring and was finally defeated was due to our own ineffectiveness. The Greek tragedy of the summer of 2015 is, to a great extent, our own responsibility.

Regarding the evaluation of the ESFs, I agree with the view that we could have achieved results beyond events and demonstrations, which had broad public visibility. A big question is why the ESF died at the moment of the global and European financial crisis and the crisis of the Eurozone, that is, when it was more urgently needed than ever.

It is true that when the ESF was dynamic and vibrant we could have built networks and new fields of cooperation, like the one attempted later by the Alter Summit. Despite my criticism of its development, I believe that it had good intentions and can be used as a starting point for a new modest effort: to try reconnecting the different actors or agencies.

Finally, I believe that for the large EU countries the state is the main space of political struggle. But this space – and hence the popular struggle – is connected with the EU, Europe, and the world, and this should be clear to everybody. Living in Germany, I know that much of what happens in the EU and in Europe depends on German policies, including what has happened in Greece since 2010. But fighting against German policies is not enough. The point is to fight for a change in the balance of power simultaneously at different levels. Nothing important can happen if we are not socially anchored at the local, national and European levels and if we do not forge sustainable links among activists, organisations, and networks at all levels. This demands another approach to the one we took in the past, but it is compatible with the original WSF idea, and it focuses on human dignity, solidarity, peace, social equality, ecology, common goods, that is, the struggle against the main actors and agencies that destroy or even threaten all of these.

R.B.: At the beginning of 2000, the majority of social actors discovered that we were all together in the same boat, having the same enemies and facing the same dangers from the global offensive of the forces of neoliberal globalisation. I believe that at that moment many activists in the movement thought that the national agendas would disappear and be replaced by global agendas, campaigns, and mobilisations. This feeling imparted a lot of strength to, and interest in, the alter-globalisation movement throughout the world; everybody was searching for global relations and alliances.

Then, mainly after the 2008 crisis, the impact of neoliberal globalisation produced such a strong shock in various countries that the great majority of progressive social and political forces concentrated only on their national terrains in order to prevent a catastrophe for their own societies and fight against the continually rising nationalist forces. That was a big mistake because international solidarity and international alliances are not luxuries for good times; they are needed mainly in hard times. One of the worst consequences of this national closure was the incapacity to understand how crucial it was for the political developments in Europe and the world to have a European uprising aimed at defending Greece against the shameful attack of the EU institutions. At that time progressive Europe had an opportunity to ignite and lead a revolt against neoliberal Europe aimed at transforming it. Unfortunately nothing substantial happened, despite the attempts by some of us, and now the revolt against neoliberal Europe is led by reactionary forces. You know, historical opportunities are like trains: one has to catch them at the right time, otherwise one misses them. The European progressive and

alternative forces missed the train of history, and now we are all suffering in hard times, with obscurantism growing in Europe.

We are facing a paradox. The movement against neoliberal globalisation was strong at a time when globalisation was considered a positive process, and now, when nobody believes anymore that globalisation can bring us development and well being – which should be seen as a major accomplishment of our movement – this criticism of globalisation is feeding racist and reactionary forces. What happened? Certainly, we achieved a lot in terms of increasing public awareness of the effects of neoliberal globalisation and introducing a new political culture in the movement through the method of consensus, which for me was the real 'revolutionary' element of the Social Forum process. The process itself was a genuine innovation with the mutual recognition of different cultures and approaches, the will to understand the other, the permanent tension and search for what could unite us, the respect for that which is smaller and for the 'peripheries' – instead of competition, prevarication, and the use of political force to get the better of the other. It was this method of consensus that initially lent such energy to the WSF and the ESF. And it could strengthen any possible future movement.

However, in most cases in the past we were not able to translate this cultural innovation into political strength. In Italy at least, I believe that we, the movements' activists made a mistake: we did not understand that times were changing and that we should deal also with the issue of providing political representation to the victims of the crisis. We left this issue to the political parties and confined ourselves to social work. But social work without adequate political representation is like Penelope's shroud – inadequate political representation can destroy all the beneficial results of good social work. In Greece, in Spain, and elsewhere there have been experiments of a different kind of relation between the social and the political. Many movements in the Balkans and in the East are confronting the same problem and are searching for ways to solve it. But in Italy, where presently the political left has completely disappeared, it seems that the social actors are still afraid to touch the real problem. And I am really terrified about the next European elections: if intra-left competition and drawing the wrong lines of division (pro-Tsipras and anti-Tsipras, for example) prevail, it will be a disaster for everybody, including social actors. At the same time, it seems that the new movements are not able to use the strength of the anti–globalisation culture to send a message which can reach people's minds, a clear, simple, and courageous message for a real global alternative: de-globalisation and re-localisation against sovereignism and neoliberalism, which go perfectly together as we can see in the case of Trump's policies. But in order to

achieve this the new movements must find a way to overcome the huge problem of fragmentation, which seems to be the rule in the present period.

No common space exists anymore in which all the movements and social actors working on different issues can sit together at least to start a dialogue and exchange information. Even on the most crucial issues – migration and racism – there is no unified common space in Europe. There are links, of course, there are relations, one invites others to one's own events, but there is no common space of convergence. One result of this absence is that we had a lot of 'European Days of Action' promoted by several networks – all of them very weak – but up to now we have not had a strong common mobilisation. Of course each generation has to find its own way, and I hope the present one will find its own, very soon. In the recent period, although the situation is steadily worsening, there are also some good signs. An increasing number of real activists in various countries – those who struggle in nitty-gritty everyday reality – who deal with the lives of natives and immigrants, are searching for connections among themselves and understand that they are working towards the same goals. This was evident in the aid given to immigrants when they were trying to reach Europe through the Balkan route, and now it is happening again with the rescuers of immigrants in the Mediterranean Sea or in the Alps. My hope is that out of all those brave people, who every day confront suffering and death, a strong common European revolt will emerge.

I don't think that the WSF and the ESF can be reborn – each historical phase has its own spaces and tools. We, the ones who built the largest and strongest international coalitions of the last decades, could also be helpful in the new period. First of all, by making available some precious tools to those who want them, like the relationships and the links of the WSF mailing lists. Using them, one can send a petition from the North Pole to social actors in Polynesia. Of course these lists are not updated, but nevertheless they might still be useful, and this is an opportunity that should not be wasted. We could also try to better explain to our new comrades the method we used in our best times in order to bring together different actors who, before knowing each other, were mutually suspicious to say the least. Their duty in our times is to protect Europe from becoming racist and fascist again. Despite the difficulties, despite the weaknesses, when the time come one has to fight. If one is weak, one's priority should be to try to increase one's strength, and what is needed to bring this about is radical unity.

Remembering 1968

Luciana Castellina

When people remember '68 it always seems that they are not celebrating the same event. Memory is dominated either by nostalgia or repression, both having a distorting effect. But this is not always due to the fleeting nature of memory. There is also, on the part of the institutions of power, a willed forgetting, such that, from decade to decade, instead of celebrations we see the staging of burials. Now, at the fiftieth anniversary we are being invited to a triumphal entombment. Occasionally, some of the very protagonists of the movement can be seen among the gravediggers.

Gradually, the scope of the insurgency has been reduced, and its significance impoverished, to the point that it becomes hard to understand how it could have been so generalised and have involved an entire generation in all continents in the same very brief time span.

It is an intentional, a selective operation. The dominant hegemonic power knows how to manage what Gramsci would have called a 'passive revolution' (like others that have occurred in history), which absorbs certain innovations coming out of '68, but only the painless ones, its most meagre side – individualist libertarianism – erasing everything in the movement that was really alternative to the system, and thus dangerous. (In Italy we nowadays mockingly say that '68 has come to mean 'sex, drugs, and rock and roll', a revolt against parents and teachers.)

It is easy to understand why today's youth has little interest in the anniversary – for if this is the image transmitted by the media then this history matters little to them, seeing as, at least in terms of freedom of behaviour, they have already gotten what they wanted.

But this is not the real history. Instead, the novelty of '68 was the attempt to liberate freedom from bourgeois libertarianism's reductive version of it, the effort to plant its roots in the social relations of production and thus in a collective context.

Indeed, we cannot forget that this rebellion originated everywhere in

the great uprisings against the arrogance of power – against inequality, the Vietnam War, and racism in the US – and that the western students' movement was spurred on by the Cuban Revolution and the figure of Che, the symbolic hero of total challenge. This also applies to the US's early '68: the movement born in Berkeley that occurred already in 1964-65. And even the big gathering at Woodstock that followed was not just a concert, although it is true that in the US there was no relation to the working class, not even in 1968 in the occupation of Columbia University. The relationship to the factories, which the students immediately sought in Europe, was thinkable only here where workers were very politicised and dialogue was therefore possible.

Everywhere, it was not only parents and professors that were being discussed but the system as a whole (the capitalist system, a term that has by now disappeared from every commemoration), making it clear that being truly free required a much more radically alternative horizon.

Certainly, '68 varied from country to country, and the currents that crossed with it were different in each case. Nevertheless, there was a strong common nucleus: the idea – even if more perceived than fully developed – of having arrived at the beginning of a new era, the end of a phase of productive development that, in the West, had offered material goods and a significant expansion of education, and, in the Third Word, decolonisation. But there was also the consciousness that precisely this type of development appeared from then on incapable of responding to new qualitative needs that it had made possible. And, at the same time, another form of oppression loomed over the new independent nations: neo-colonialism.

If '68 primarily mobilised the students, then its importance is precisely this awareness, albeit embryonic, in social subjects other than those who had traditionally animated anti-capitalist contestation: the working class. For the students, the material basis of the uprising was the discovery of the contradiction between a vastly expanded educational coverage everywhere and the fact that this now only led to a social location well below the hoped-for status, and that the result of education ended by being privatised. With this a new figure stepped onto the stage – the proletarianised intellectual, the product of an expanded public education system whose social inequities rather than being evened out as hoped were multiplied thanks to new non-codified exclusions.

Movements, precisely because they are in motion, have antennae that the large traditional political organisations do not have, paralysed as they are by their obesity. And so '68 was able to anticipate issues that are now obvious but were then still invisible to the left parties, which in fact met them with

obtuse deafness – issues of the social and ecological waste produced by consumerism, the alienation of labour, social maladies, the privatisation of knowledge, an exaggerated meritocracy, the emptying out of democracy, etc.

It involved an incipient critique of modernity, of progress, which within the horizon of capitalism began to show all of its ugliness, the insight that these problems were not due to a delay of development but to the very development itself.

In this sense we can well say that '68 was not at all an unrealistic movement but rather realistically anticipatory. It emerged in the context of the marvellous 1960s, which were everywhere characterised by new and rich cultural discoveries which de-provincialised the knowledge up to then dominant, when orthodox Marxism was able to encounter US sociology, the Frankfurt School, the British New Left, along with Frantz Fanon and the thinking that arrived from the Third World. In this sense it did not at all involve purely spontaneous motion but was the fruit of an unprecedented process of learning. – '68 was a learned movement.

Today we can make light of the three Ms written on signs carried in demonstrations – Marx, Mao, Marcuse – but we should understand that they had a sense: Mao because beyond the mess created by the Cultural Revolution (about which, however, the movement knew little or nothing) it was in fact necessary to bombard the deaf headquarters of one's own home; Marcuse because bringing to politics a new and indispensable dimension beyond the power of money – the personal, happiness – he brought greater richness to the idea of freedom. Marx because what the movement wanted now appeared possible but impossible within capitalism. (I remember a comment by Marcuse, much cited then, on a passage of Marx from the *German Ideology* in which he speaks of the world to build and says of it that there will be the time and capacity to decorate one's own house, cook good meals, and make beautiful music. The old philosopher of Frankfurt commented that the new technologies had freed Marx's dream from any utopian aspect because a new fully human life was now possible but only blocked by the existing social relations of production.)

One of the useful documents for understanding how the problem of the relation between one's own freedom and that of everyone, therefore the problem of the system, crossed through absolutely all of the movement, as its common core, is the recording of a television programme broadcast by the BBC on 13 June 1968 at the very beginning of the events. Moderated by Robert McKenzie, the network's commentator on foreign affairs, and with the presence of leaders who had just then come to the fore, in almost

all of the countries involved. Here are some of their statements: Daniel Cohn-Bendit, Paris: 'We criticise any society in which individuals are passive, in which they do not have the power to change anything they are obliged to do.' Lewis Cole, Columbia University: 'The students do not believe that the current society can guarantee them an effective right of social choices that would ensure a certain level of freedom.' Yasuo Ishii, Tokyo: 'We are struggling above all for a society in which democracy is not formal, not a society in which the individual is considered abstractly equal to other individuals while this is not the reality, due to economic and social differences.' Karl Dietrich Wolff, Berlin: 'You are wrong if you think that ours is only a student movement because this is not what it is at all; it involves the fact that in our western societies there is a continuous waste of wealth and that they maintain themselves with repressive measures in the factories and schools.' Jan Kavan, Prague: 'From our point of view it was not at all the proclaimed socialist society that we had; it is not a question of the freedom of intellectuals; we are asking for a guarantee of fundamental freedoms not only of the intellectuals but also of the workers.' Dragana Stavijel, Belgrade: 'We are not only demanding our own rights but those rights of everyone, whether students or workers, which are put forward as the goals of socialism, the democracy that we need.' Ekkehart Krippendorff, Berlin: 'The socialist societies have resolved certain basic contradictions inherent in capitalist societies; they have expropriated private property and the means of production; now we have to struggle for their socialisation.' Luca Meldolesi, Rome: 'All university students are rebelling, but you would be wrong if you speak of the student class. When universities were based on the privileges of the class that rules there were no problems, but now many more students are being admitted, and they are being divided, separated, selected. In the universities and in capitalist society this has created a new potential of revolt.' Tariq Ali, London/Pakistan: 'What unites us is the conviction that capitalism is inhuman and unjust.'

Among the participants there was a Spaniard, Luca Martín de Hijas, who limited himself to reminding people that in his country the movement was clandestine, and the 'essential and prioritised problem is thus freedom'.

The analysis – or, if you will, perception – according to which the greater prosperity produced by the successes of neocapitalism had not at all made protest obsolete but enriched it with new content, was in reality, in Europe, the real point of conflict with the traditional left parties, notably the Italian Communist Party (PCI) and the French Communist Party (PCF), still convinced as they were that productive development had to be stimulated within the limits of the social compromise that had been wrested after

the war, and above all still intent on seeking front-like alliances, without seeing that new and diverse social subjects had stepped onto the political stage who had become active in terms of new needs and contradictions. Above all the students, who for quite a while were condescendingly called 'papa's children', that is, impromptu and irresponsible revolutionaries whose relations with the working class the parties tried to block. It was an attitude for which they paid dearly, having thrown away the opportunity to gather up the great alternative impulse that had arisen.

Certainly, although we can find this common core everywhere, the '68 phenomenon did not occur everywhere in the same way, not even in Europe.

In Italy, for example, the assessment of the historic phase – that is, whether the country was still backward and had to complete the bourgeois revolution or the contradictions of advanced capitalism were already dominant and intertwined with the older contradictions – had been a very divisive issue inside the PCI already before 1968. It gave rise to the conflict between the PCI's right-wing current and its left, led by Pietro Ingrao, which in the end led to the expulsion from the party of the group that, carrying the debate beyond what was considered 'acceptable', founded *Il Manifesto* (first, as a journal, then a daily newspaper, and then also as a party, the Party of Proletarian Unity (PdUP), with which, not coincidentally, a large part of the '68 movement merged).

In Italy, the first demonstrations had already begun in 1967 when, one after another, a series of universities were occupied by students contesting a draft reform law – the infamous Law 2314 (which attempted an underhand subordination of university studies to the needs of corporations) – presented by the then Christian Democratic Minister of Education Luigi Gui. The first institution to make a move was the Catholic University of Milan, which was significant because the participation of young people who had grown up in the religious organisations marked by the influence of the Second Vatican Council was quite substantial; in fact, beyond the schools the cathedrals were also occupied.

It happened that while this revolt was at its height, a delegation of the PCF came to Rome for one of the ritualistic meetings with the (disliked) PCI. The delegation, shocked by what was happening, reproached their Italian 'brothers'; 'In our country such a thing could not happen because we have full control of the movements.' This was only a few months before the famous 'French May', which took the PCF by surprise and to which it reacted in the worst possible way – first of all, in the name of its claim to be the only title holder of worker representation, to the point that the CGT,

the Communist trade union, refused to meet with the National Union of French Students (UNEF), the organisation that had requested the meeting to agree on common action against the government. The CGT went as far as to endorse the expulsion from France of the 'German anarchist' Daniel Cohn-Bendit, the most famous leader of the Parisian '68.

Despite the clashes between students and an infuriated trade union, which could be immediately witnessed at the gates of large factories, in Italy as well, the events developed differently in our country. This was because there was another kind of Communist Party and thus also trade union, which in the end opened themselves to the contagion, and it was precisely this reciprocal contamination that allowed the transmission of new forms of struggle and new kinds of demands proposed by the students. In the 'Hot Autumn' of '69, on the occasion of the extraordinary mobilisation triggered by the renewal of the metal workers' national contract, a connection was established. Out of the Hot Autumn there emerged new forms of political, and not only trade-union, representation: the Factory Councils, and the Zone Councils, as well as a series of formations that had staying power and involved technicians and intellectuals, introducing important cultural and organisational changes: Democratic Psychiatry, Democratic Medicine, Democratic Judiciary, and even Democratic Police. And at the beginning there was also a significant parliamentary reflection, which led to the approval of historic reforms: the Workers' Statute, the introduction of a national public healthcare system, the revising of the pension system, and some years later, under the influence of the new feminist movement triggered in '68, divorce and then abortion were legalised.

Italy's '68, less striking than that of France whose capital was paralysed for weeks, lasted much longer, partly because of the organisations of the new left in which it was consolidated already in the beginning of the 1970s and which even entered parliament in 1976, although with a small squad, with the unitary list, Democrazia Proletaria.

But this was also the beginning of its decline because the PCI, which had finished by benefitting from the leftward shift that '68 had imprinted on all of Italian society, chose the deplorable path of the 'historic compromise', an attempt at a subaltern agreement with the Christian Democratic Party, which ended disastrously at the end of the decade. The disillusion, for many the rage, at what was considered the betrayal of this historic left, was one of the causes, certainly not the only one, leading to the dramatic terrorist reaction.

1977, which in Italy was considered by some to be a sort of second '68, led in fact to a new wave of demonstrations in the universities. But the content

of protest and forms of struggle had changed – this was the beginning of the decline and then defeat. On the one side there was the wing of the so-called 'workers' autonomy', whose slogan was 'not for work but against work', which led to very violent clashes and the destruction of any real relationship with the factories. On the other hand, the component of the so-called 'Metropolitan Indians', as the response to further proletarianisation of the students, sought refuge in an existential protest becoming continuously less political.

In France, moreover, it was not only the PCF that was caught by surprise by the movement. Right after the explosion of the University of Nanterre, *Le Monde* wrote that what was involved was a 'new atypical and marginal phenomeon'. Instead, the explosion arrived at the Sorbonne, which paralysed the city for a month – the famous May. Paris was blocked by barricades erected by the students to defend themselves from the brutal attacks of the police. Unexpectedly, a significant part of the population sympathised with the insurgents.

It is still difficult to explain how the French '68 could have spread so quickly and with such force, to the point of also igniting a workers' protest, which the trade union was in the end compelled, despite its mistrust, to legitimise, proclaiming the great general strike of 13 May. Then, one after the other, the occupation of factories located throughout the country began, with assemblies that had several features in common with those held in the occupied universities, irresistibly going beyond the limits within which the CGT would have hoped to keep them. What linked the worker eruption to that of the students was a libertarian component and the idea that the revolution is not only an economic and political matter but also a cultural and moral one, which needs to produce a new conception of work, consumption, and family, which has to generate a new type of relation between human beings. At the centre was the – unprecedented – goal: happiness, made impossible by the system's incivility.

What is characteristic of the French '68 is not only the virulence of the protests (and also its brief duration); rather it is the extraordinary involvement of intellectuals and artists. This existed to some extent everywhere but nowhere to the extent it did in France. In addition, in France, while the student and worker protest was quickly extinguished, with the institutions recovering within a few months, the revolt continued for a long time to animate the political-cultural scene, even if it produced conflicts of no little account among its protagonists: Sartre and the existentialists on the one side, Althusser and the structuralists on the other, to cite sonly the most

preeminent names (Foucault, who was in Tunisia at the time, came onto the scene much later).

Completely different, but enormously important, were the effects of the German '68. It also began earlier, initially due to the reflection launched by many intellectuals gathered around the journal *Kursbuch*, directed by Hans Magnus Enzensberger, and soon enlivened by the SDS student group and by the Jusos, the SPD's restless youth organisation. In this country, anti-authoritarianism was charged with particular meaning because the theme could not but call into question the specific Prussian tradition, militarism, and Nazism. This was the vehicle that led the new generation of Germans to tear away the veil that for two decades had been placed over the shame of the past and to trigger a true, belated but powerful democratisation of the country.

Also different was Japan's '68. It is spoken of very little, although it was a very strong movement. I had occasion to meet with the leaders of the Zengakuren in Tokyo in 1969, being able, with the aid of a password given to me in Rome, to penetrate the universities occupied and defended by handfuls of students armed with bamboo pipes on which barbed blades were fixed. They already knew everything about *Il Manifesto*, although only a few issues of the review had been published, and in the long talks we had they tried to convince me that their country was living through a very particular historic condition. It was an ancient society that had been modernised thanks to an American rape (this was the exact term used) and thus only superficially. For this reason, they said, it was very fragile: An act of violence – a word that they, as dedicated readers of Marx, said in German, 'Gewalt' – would have the effect of a finger tap on a crystal glass: the system would crumble.

Tokyo was under the tragic mantle of the nearby Vietnam War; from the US radio station one heard ceaseless coded announcements for the troops at the front; in the city there were many US soldiers authorised to spend a weekend of rest every month, coming from the frontline, from where corpses also arrived, which were embalmed here and sent home. 'What do you want from us', the Zengakuren asked me, 'that we now start to go along the same road you travelled for a hundred years, first the eight-hour day, then the abolition of piece work, and so on?'

The illusion of having found a shortcut led many of them to embark on the path of terrorism (well before what occurred at the end of the 1970s in some fringes of the movement in Germany and Italy). I was able to participate in some clandestine meetings with the first nuclei of Japan's Red Army and the US Weathermen who were recruiting deserters in Tokyo and

who also ended by taking the route of a disastrous and short-lived terrorism in their own country.

In Japan, the foolish adventure of the Red Army was of brief duration; the last band was wiped out only a few years ago when the few survivors were flushed out of a hidden cabin in the mountains. For their part, the workers were untouched by the movement, and I remember that for a long time, when they wanted to protest, they continued to wear a red armband (I still have one) with the words: 'we are very angry'. It was their substitute for strikes.

And then there was the very different '68 in Eastern Europe. It was less different only in Yugoslavia, where there was some similarity with the West in the occupation of the University of Belgrade, in those days rebaptised 'The Red Karl Marx University'. Elsewhere in the Soviet world the only analogy – and given the different context it could not be otherwise – was a generalised youth insurgence, which gave spirit and strength to a popular protest – silenced after 1956 – against a bureaucratised and anti-democratic power. As we know, everything began in January 1968 when Dubcek took over the reins of the Communist Party and government in Czechoslovakia, launching a new course that stirred enthusiasm not only there but in all countries of the Warsaw Pact. Immediately in Czechoslovakia unprecedented spaces of freedom opened up, which allowed for the contamination with the music, the ethos, and the literature of the '68ers in the West. It was an explosion of hope brutally dashed by the incursion of armed tanks of four Warsaw Pact countries in Prague on 21 August. Effectively stopped by long-haired Prague youth who surrounded the military inviting them to dance with them (Umberto Eco recounts this in a memorable dispatch from Prague), lightheartedly shouting 'Lenin wake up, Brezhnev has gone mad' – partly in disbelief at what was happening, partly because that was the youth culture that reached them.

The target of the invasion was not – as was to be declared by not a few other communist organisations (including the Cuban) – the counterrevolutionary forces but Dubcek's Czechoslovak Communist Party, which in fact already on 22 August held an extraordinary congress, clandestinely.

The theses decided on by that extraordinary assembly, which took place in a factory on the outskirts of the occupied capital, and which luckily reached us in the following months, was published in the first issue of the journal, *Il Manifesto* – founded just a few months after the congress, and precisely because of what happened in Prague. The journal was the result of a division that opened up in the PCI, and which also had other motivations, but was deepened exactly around this issue. The PCI did, it is true, take a

position of vigorous condemnation, in contrast to other 'fraternal' parties, but the CPSU was accused 'for the error' committed, while *Il Manifesto* came to the conclusion that the Soviet system was no longer reformable. The group promoting the journal was expelled from the party and from 1969 was fully involved in the '68 movement – a movement which was very uninterested in what was happening on the other side of the Iron Curtain. It is disconcerting, but it was true in Italy as in the rest of Western Europe.

I still remember, already in the days immediately following the Prague invasion, our astonishment at the absence of reactions, which we observed among a large part of the '68 youth. We communists were upset, but to them the resounding Soviet bankruptcy that took place appeared distant, almost as if it had nothing to do with them. At best, they took up a position equidistant between Dubcek and Brezhnev, suspicious as they were of the new Czechoslovak course, which seemed to them a dangerous rightward shift.

Rudi Dutschke is the only '68 leader who was interested in Dubcek's reform attempt, and in fact he went to Prague in April, a short time before he was gravely wounded by the shots fired at him during a demonstration in Berlin, nevertheless observing that 'there was the risk of a temporary exaltation of bourgeois democratic forces' and of an 'infiltration of anti-socialist ideas'. The position taken after August by SDS (Sozialistischer Deutscher Studentenbund) was similarly hesitant in a document regarding which Daniel Cohn-Bendit was to express self-criticism twenty years later.

In Italy, none of the publications of the new left, including the most astute, from *Quaderni Piacentini*, *Classe e Stato*, to *Nuovo Impegno*, to Trotskyist publications, as well as the groups Lotta Continua and Potere Operaio, grasped the enormity of what had happened. (A document of Potere Operaio Pisano, right after the suicide of Jan Pallach, reaffirms that 'Prague's new technocrats ' (the economists of Dubcek's new course) 'are ruthlessly ransacking western neocapitalist models'. The allusion is above all to anti-egalitarian proposals of the Czechoslovak reformers, while in Italy the movement was committed to the egalitarian struggle in the factories.) As Jiří Pelikán, one of the most famous Czech exiles, recounts, in Rome he was welcomed and helped only by the *Manifesto* group.

In France there was the same mistrust and substantial indifference, which was true of the very strong '68 of Columbia University in New York, heavily suppressed with ca. 800 arrests. In the midst of the Tet Offensive, the Columbia students were primarily interested in Vietnam and in denouncing the Secretary of Defense of their own country, who was using research done at Columbia for an imperialist war.

This does not mean that this distance taken from the Prague drama implied sympathy for the Soviet Union. On the contrary. But criticism of Moscow's regime was taking place on another terrain and in the name of other peoples, those of the Third World. With '68 another new consciousness burst into the foreground – after the Missile Crisis in Cuba the world seemed headed for a relatively tranquil coexistence under the aegis of the Soviet Union and the US, an equilibrium within a capitalist framework. But that was not the reality. Just decolonised, the Third World did not fit this framework, as the Vietnamese resistance was only the most advanced point of a more general upheaval. And to the '68ers the Soviet Union appeared to be one of the two gendarmes that claimed to be maintaining the peace while fighting off any tremor that risked disturbing the framework. Thinking that this tremor could be contained within the meagre framework of the mild reformism of the traditional left became impossible. In this sense it is true that '68 – which almost everywhere contested the status quo imposed by the conception that the two major powers had of coexistence – was 'Chinese', a critique different from that of the preceding generations formed by communist thinking and which traumatically experienced the irreversible crisis of the Soviet model of society.

In this schematic reconstruction of '68 I have not spoken of feminism. This is because, in contrast to what is said in the hagiographic official celebrations, '68 was not feminist. On the contrary, it was still very male-oriented; there were very few women who spoke in the assemblies, and they were usually assigned the more humble tasks, such that they were called 'mimeograph angels'. This does not mean that the movement had no impact on feminism, which had emerged previously although in the context of small groups and grew almost everywhere in parallel and silently, to then explode only four or five years later – through the effect of '68 in the sense that '68, which was born on the wave of a sudden surge of collective subjectivity, gave women the courage to speak up. And yet this speaking up was directed against the organisations that originated in '68, opposing to them the feminist problematic that had remained invisible, up to the point, in many cases, of making these organisations fall apart. It happened in Italy with women's resounding abandonment of Lotta Continua, which was the most deaf to their message; but it also had some effect on *Manifesto*-PdUP, although it had very early on, already in 1969, given space in the journal to feminism's first steps. In the mid-1970s, many women's collectives, even if without rancour, chose the path of a separate political practice.

Celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of '68 in the Aula Magna of the University of Rome's Faculty of Literature, historic cradle of the Roman

movement, Paolo Mieli, an activist of Lotta Continua at the time who then became president of the most powerful publishing group in Italy, which publishes *Corriere della Sera*, said something that is very true. Turning his memory back to that season he spoke above all of how important it was for adolescents to exit from solitude, from the individual dimension, which the movement allowed them to do, and of the joy of discovering the other, of being a collective, of becoming protagonists. Of putting oneself on the line or, as they said then, of 'bringing Vietnam inside oneself'. An existential fact that was one of the common and essential features of '68.

At bottom it was a matter of discovering politics and, with it, the subjectivity needed to practice it. If I were to speak of what remains alive today of '68 and what has died, what remains and what does not remain, then it is precisely that discovery that seems to me to be the most serious loss. Politics is no longer considered happiness. Its meaning has changed, impoverished by a terribly grave crisis of democracy. I think this loss is the worst defeat suffered by '68 – we did not foresee it.

Rita di Leo, an important Italian sociologist, has just written a book for the centenary of the October Revolution, with the subtitle 'From Lenin to Zuckerberg'.[1] Her conclusion is that after millennia of the attempt to construct the political – that is, social – human being we have returned, by way of the 'Khomeinists of algorithm' to primitive man, asocial man – and that nothing is left but to prepare for barbarism. I am less apocalyptic than she is, and moreover I do not hold Zuckerberg to be the sole person responsible. But I am worried.

NOTE

1   Rita di Leo, *Cento anni dopo: 1917 – 2017 Da Lenin a Zuckerberg*, Rome: Ediesse, 2017.

The 1968 Prague Spring – A Socialist Project

Jiří Málek

The following text is meant to convey the way in which I, as an 18-year-old, understood my own political experience of these historic events and how I carried it with me as a 'political legacy' in all my subsequent years of political activity in the Czechoslovak and later Czech radical left. Naturally, the current view of a 50-year-old event is also influenced by the present. But if I am to write about the Prague Spring of 1968, I must write about socialism. Not about how to 'destroy' it, but about how we strived to revive it. Despite the subjectivity, a personal view and experience can sometimes help readers perceive something in a new way.

What kind of world did we live in back then?

Global developments and the clash of two opposing political-power blocs also influenced events in Czechoslovakia. There were prevailing fears of a nuclear war. Key events characterising this era are: 1 May 1960, the USSR shot down a US U2 spy plane (piloted by Gary Powers); this resulted in the cancellation of a Paris summit between representatives of the USSR and the United States. Cuban counterrevolutionaries failed in their attempt to land at Playa Girón during the Bay of Pigs invasion, driving Cuba into the Soviet Bloc. In August 1961, the Berlin Wall was erected and over the next thirty years it became a symbol of a divided world and the Cold War – to this day, I still remember the feeling of being on the brink of war during the so-called Cuban Missile Crisis (November 1962). In 1963, however, tensions eased somewhat with the signing of the first nuclear test ban agreement between the United States and the U.S.S.R. But then another phase of the Vietnam War began with the Gulf of Tonkin incident and bombs began to fall on socialist Vietnam. And the so-called Six-Day Arab-Israeli War took place in 1967 on the 'eve' of the Prague Spring. Growing tensions between the Soviet Union and the Chinese People's Republic culminated in an armed conflict

in 1969. However, the year 1968 was marked by anti–war demonstrations in the United States and the beginning of the Vietnamese Tet Offensive (an attack on US and South Vietnamese forces), which was considered to be a political victory for the 'North' and which ultimately resulted in the US withdrawing from the battlefields of Vietnam.

The Soviet Bloc's (and the USSR's) military concept was not to permit a clash on Soviet territory. It did count on the use of nuclear weapons (analogously to the way in which the United States conceived of its strategy of massive retaliation). Kennedy's modification of US and NATO strategy to one of flexible response also counted on the use of nuclear weapons in a European theatre of war (on both sides). The so–called Khrushchev Doctrine anticipated the possibility of nuclear war but also built up strong conventional ground and air forces within the framework of the Warsaw Pact (WP). In the event of a military conflict, the strategic plan of socialist Czechoslovakia's army (1964) counted on rapidly advancing westward (in tandem with the WP) and on reaching the Rhine River near Strasbourg within eight days in support of a main offensive in the strategic direction of Berlin/Paris. The plan included up to 131 nuclear strikes on NATO (primarily Bundeswehr) forces as well as on towns and communications. To counter this, the deployment of nuclear land mines was prepared in West Germany with the intention of halting any such advance. As early as 1956, 1,200 targets in the Eastern Bloc were identified for nuclear strikes by the American leadership (with 69 targets identified in Czechoslovakia, including urban centres). In 1966, the WP-VLTAVA military exercises took place on Czechoslovak territory (with 80,000 troops participating). The deployment of nuclear weapons was also envisaged within the framework of a strategic 'wargame.' It was anticipated that there would be 252 reciprocal nuclear strikes with a total power of 59 megatons of TNT. (Hiroshima amounted to 13 kilotons of TNT!). Total losses were 'quantified' as amounting to 57,000 soldiers and 2.5 million civilians.

At the time, Czechoslovakia was the only WP state where Soviet units had no permanent presence and which was separately entrusted with WP military objectives, i.e., carrying out an offensive operation without the integration of Soviet units in its ranks. This task, however, began to be beyond the capacity of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in terms of its military, human, and economic resources. From the beginning of the 1960s, the Soviet leadership had been pushing for the permanent deployment of Soviet forces in Czechoslovakia. It is not clear from the documentary records how big a role this played in the decision behind the WP intervention in Czechoslovakia. At the very least, the invasion of Czechoslovakia and the subsequent political

agreement on the placement of Soviet troops was a valuable by-product for the Soviet top brass. And this possibly explains why the withdrawal of forces outlined in the agreements did not occur after 'Soviet'-type socialism had been restored and the political leadership in Czechoslovakia changed. Today, it is a matter for debate whether Czechoslovakia should have defended itself against the invasion by the USSR and other states. And there is also discussion of why the West did not intervene more significantly. The situation was well described by Jan Schneider,[1] citing the opinion of Henry Kissinger on why support was not provided for the Prague Spring of 1968: *'Firstly, the Americans […] observed the Yalta agreement on so-called spheres of influence. Secondly, for the American president it was more important to do whatever it took to travel to Moscow to negotiate on nuclear weapons. And thirdly, they did not want the Prague Spring to be "victorious" and prove the merits of "socialism with a human face". On the contrary, it was essential for them that socialism did not demonstrate any of its qualities in contrast with capitalism.'*

Because pro-socialist attitudes predominated even within Czech society (as detailed below), it is likely it would have been split, and it is not clear at all whether an internal societal clash would have occurred. Shortly after the military invasion of Czechoslovakia, discussion got under way between the blocs, which culminated in the so-called Helsinki Accords.[2] These healed the relations between the two German states, and diplomatic relations were established between Czechoslovakia and West Germany (including the settlement of issues surrounding the Munich Agreement).

While the Prague Spring of 1968 was developing, the so-called May 68 events in Paris were also flaring up. It would require a deeper analysis to shed light on how the 1968 Prague Spring and events in Paris were interrelated or were mutually supportive of each other. I tend to believe that they passed each other by, that they developed concurrently and only marginally influenced each other. The French left (Jean-Paul Sartre, Simone de Beauvoir, Claude Lévy-Strauss, communist intellectuals, existentialists, philosophers, writers like Albert Camus, Elsa Triolet, Louis Aragon, etc.[3]) was known in Czechoslovakia and inspired many of its intellectuals. In the spring of 1968, there were mutual expressions of support and solidarity from both sides. On the whole, Czechoslovak citizens received detailed (and objective) information,[4] but the issues France was dealing with substantially differed from those relevant to our country – in the West it really was not about socialism with any kind of face.[5] Both there and here it was about strengthening the democratic influence of citizens in society. It was about greater 'freedom.'

What is socialism with a human face?

The term 'socialism with a human face' was first coined by Radovan Richta, an economist and the principal author of a collective Marxist study of the social and human contexts of the scientific and technical revolution (1966).[6] The study was one of the crucial impulses behind the search for 'socialism with a human face'.

Growing social tensions in the early 1960s cried out for a solution. The stimuli of growth based on extensive resources had been exhausted. The Prague Spring of 1968 and the Hungarian uprising of 1956 invite occasional comparisons. Together with the East German uprising in 1953 and events in the Polish city of Poznań in 1956, what occurred in Hungary was primarily a clash between the Soviet 'occupation' and Stalinism, on the one hand, and the repercussions of the anti-communist position, on the other. In socialist Czechoslovakia, there were no manifestations of anti-communism. Thus, throughout the entire process, from as early as the first half of the 1960s, anti-communist or markedly anti-socialist concepts were marginal and lacked any major resonance in society. This of course does not mean that citizens had not been seeking ways to move beyond the old Stalinist-administrative and command-economy frameworks (neo-Stalinism). 'New economic and social relationships had already stabilised by the end of the 1950s and subsequently in the 1960s. Some of the fundamental ideals of our communist faith had actually been realised and society had accepted them. There were no longer any private capitalists; the old class and social divisions based on the relationships of private ownership no longer existed.'[7] The socialist concept was accepted by a significant section of the population. Zdeněk Mlynář summarised it as follows: 'Since 1964 […] under the government of Antonín Novotný […] not only in Czechoslovak society, but also inside the Czechoslovak Communist Party and power-political structures, an anti-Stalinist, communist framework of reform had been developing at full speed […].'[8] Solutions were being sought within the framework of socialism. The frequently mentioned fourth congress of the Czechoslovak Union of Writers (1967), undoubtedly one of the key stimuli for reforms efforts, was, despite the way it is commonly characterised today, not a platform rejecting socialism. This meeting of leading Czechoslovak intellectuals came out firmly against Stalinism. It declared Stalinism to be a 'disease that had to be treated.'[9]

This was a reality actually also acknowledged by anti-communist critics of socialism in Czechoslovakia. In their view, the Prague Spring could not succeed because bringing the process of liberalism to completion would mean dismantling socialism and that was not something the Communist

Bloc would accept. They could not imagine and could not even among themselves admit that it was possible to 'improve' or democratise socialism. For them the choice was 'either socialism or capitalism' (Pavel Tigrid[10]). Today they obscure the fact that this was not even a majority opinion in society.

Nowadays there is a more critical view of what the real possibilities for a revival process were. Sociological surveys from the time indicate that, in the event of elections, with or without direct interference from the Czechoslovak Communist Party, the communist candidate would have received around two thirds of the votes. In mid-1968, a survey confirmed that socialism was the clearly predominant concept in the expectations of citizens.[11] Comparing citizens' opinions over time shows that there was a positive shift when it came to trust in the Communist Party: At the start of the year, 16% expressed a lack of faith in the party, 48% said they had not trusted the Communist Party before January 1968 – when Alexander Dubček took office – but that their opinions changed after January. And 21% said they did not believe that it would be possible to ensure the development of socialism and democracy in Czechoslovakia. In the middle of 1968, trust in the Communist Party was generally on the rise (see the cited *Public Opinion Quarterly* survey).

Ivan Sviták was a critic of communism and liberalism as well as a proponent of democratic socialism. With Karel Kosík[12] he was among those representing 'democratic socialism' (as opposed to 'communism'), and his influence among students was very great. Twenty years after the Prague Spring, he wrote: 'Today, we understand that both systems, liberal and communist, contain the same self-destructive forces of industrial society, but that an open system in which power is exercised democratically is capable of managing these problems in an acceptable, albeit far from ideal, way. Today, we also know that attacking any society in the name of an ideology is easier than repairing the real defects that are plaguing the system.'[13]

Another critical view is provided by Josef Heller[14] who considered 1968 to be a political crisis in a system that was the first historic attempt at developing society in a non-capitalist way. His Marxist critical analysis of the stage of socialism he characterised as 'proto-socialism' holds that the professional and social class structure of society in the period of proto-socialism had not changed fundamentally. Consequently, there was no disposable time for non-management workers realistically to be engaged in exercising proprietary functions (as real owners). No class was created whose interests were linked to a new progressive form of social ownership that would become the hegemonic subject of another revolutionary movement

in transition from proto-socialism to actual socialism. His Marxist analysis shows that there could be no genuine transformation to socialism under these conditions.

The leading figure in the economic sphere was Ota Šik. He was the central figure behind a law on enterprises that reflected the concept of employee ownership and elements of corporate self-government. (At the beginning of the 1970s many of these reforms were overturned and his theoretical foundations rejected.) The solution to the economic crisis of the 1960s, which peaked in 1963, did not begin until 1968. From the middle of the decade, the principles of economic policy changed, and elements such as market relationships, price restructuring, autonomy, and greater enterprise responsibility were also gradually introduced. There was also more stress on the link between the results of each worker's labour and his/her remuneration. The first tangible results began to manifest themselves in 1967-69. And it was economic growth in the first half of the 1970s that politically facilitated the 'solution' of returning to a Soviet type of socialism and so-called normalisation without coming into conflict with a decisive majority of the population. The second half of the 1980s was characterised by economic stagnation, resulting in general civil discontent (but even here it was perhaps not so much a question of dissatisfaction with socialism as such but with its 'implementation' by the Communist Party, the communists, and the socialist state.)[15]

1968 was a year in which the economy stabilised and people felt the improvement. Czechoslovak agriculture was already effective on the whole. During the Prague Spring, not one agricultural cooperative (the predominant form of collectivised farming) collapsed. At the same time, however, the methods used in the violent collectivisation of agriculture in the preceding decade were criticised and discussed. The standard of living in villages increased markedly. (This was particularly true for Slovakia, which historically had been generally less well developed.) All of this enabled most of the population to devote themselves more to their interests. It influenced their relationship with reality and it also informed their pragmatic standpoint. It was an era in which people spent time in their cottages (recreational housing in the countryside).

The conditions for active resistance to the cementation of the political situation were at the very least partly eliminated by this development. Most people were not willing to risk their relatively stable standards of living in a direct political conflict with political power. Nonetheless, society was not a monolith. Many of its members had still lived through pre-war capitalism (particularly in very backward areas of the Czech and, above all, the Slovak

countryside). Many people had not abandoned the vision of socialism, even though this vision was badly scarred by the military intervention of the U.S.S.R. and its satellites. Hungarian-style 'goulash socialism' was an attractive model.

The Czechoslovak Communist Party remained a party of the masses. After the purge in 1970, it still had 1,217,000 members (in a population of 14.4 million). However, in reaction to the crushing of the Prague Spring alone, around 150,000 people left the Communist Party, 320,000 were expelled or erased from the membership lists (a less severe recourse), which amounted to 28% of the original membership base. Even after 1970, a significant portion of the population still had a socialist orientation, although the level of conviction among them could vary widely, even among communists.

Developments after 1970 also led to a growth in the number of those who rejected socialism ('communism') per se. A number of people emigrated. (More than 80,000 Czechoslovak citizens left after 1969, and a further 140,000-150,000 people had departed by 1989. Around 40,000 people had emigrated after 1948.) Many left because they did not agree with the political system, but in subsequent years they also left for economic reasons or because they could not realise their dreams. There was also a small group of active opponents of the regime who were forced by the state to emigrate. Other citizens retreated into their own private realms and only did the bare minimum in terms of their obligations to society. Nevertheless, it is very inaccurate to say without more detailed analysis that those who rejected socialism constituted a homogeneous majority of the population.

In 1968 less attention was devoted throughout society to questions of forming a political system based on democratic principles. It was somehow assumed that it would be enough to debate, to express various opinions in the media, to abolish censorship, and to not fear prosecution for one's opinions. But the political system and its transformation were crucial to the subsequent direction of society. How should the Communist Party define itself under the new conditions, but most importantly how should it carry out its role in practical life? How should non-communist parties be integrated into the socialist system; how should social organisations (trade unions, youth groups, professional associations, etc.) work in a new way? The Communist Party had a privileged position (in every socialist country), but also a social responsibility. This was where developments outpaced theoretical considerations. Many reformist steps were not based on theoretical deliberations and analyses, but on an immediate reaction to emerging social realities. The theoretical works of Zdeněk Mlynář were

beyond the ken of people who had subscribed to the left-wing concept of 'democratic socialism' throughout the previous fifty years. Mlynář wrote:

> […] the statement that the ideal of socialism in this society continued to operate as a positive goal and the spontaneous efforts of the people is necessarily part of an objective characterisation of the situation. People, however, wanted to 'revive' reality, to make it resemble their own ideals. Naturally, this creates a difficult situation for a realistic governing policy, because ideals by their nature are interpreted in their own way by various social groups and individuals. Moreover, in doing so, they end up absolutising various unilateral points of view while forming their own convictions and visions for general problems. It is a much more difficult situation than encountering in a similar social atmosphere not a governing policy but an oppositional politics striving for a share in power or to take it over completely, for this kind of politics is a positive factor at such a stage in that everyone is dissatisfied in society and it is not so problematic that everyone is presenting somewhat different solutions. Oppositional politics will redirect its efforts by using the general discontent with society as a force that enables it to defeat the ruling ideas, but only after it *has to* deal with contradictions between various interpretations of the ideal in society and its own conception. However, the government policy that is implementing reform *must* proceed in such a way that in the course of reforms it resolves the main contradictions while simultaneously maintaining general support. Despite the complexity of the situation, in 1968 the reformist efforts of the Czechoslovak Communist Party could be based on a spontaneous movement and could rely on its overall positive, socialist nature.[16]

Today's prevailing interpretation of the Prague Spring of 1968 is based on the idea that it involved a 'revolt against communist power.' The reality was interpreted differently by Mlynář (writing in 1975): '[…] the huge authority and majority support enjoyed by the political leadership of our reform in 1968 also ultimately facilitated serious mistakes in the political process, […] in practice these were outweighed by the effects of this support so that, despite complications and difficulties, compounded by their own mistakes, they still demonstrably remained the leaders of political power in the country, practically without any realistic competing alternatives on the part of any political groupings'.[17] Today, the primary policy document of that year, *1968 – An Action Programme*, receives scant attention. It formulated the move towards 'socialism with a human face' for both the Communist Party

and society as a whole. The party strove to actively influence the reform process, but at many moments during the course of 1968 it found itself in a difficult situation. In Mlynář's words:

> This created a contradictory situation within the Czechoslovak Communist Party in relation to reform: on the one hand it was accepted with hope and high expectations by a large majority of party members, but on the other hand all the mistakes of the political leadership, of which there were plenty (particularly the extension of provisional arrangements, the so-called 'provizorium', and increasingly coercive influences on the pace and content of reform that were moving in a radicalising direction), made things markedly more difficult for the party's functionaries and mass membership 'down below', where concerns were growing as to whether further developments would unleash revanchist moods and tendencies that could have impact on communists 'on the ground' […]. These concerns were not justified, however, for all the reasons already cited regarding the nature and intensity of the main individual contradictions at play in the reform: they could, of course, be understood as necessarily occurring side-effects. They did not signify resistance 'down below' to reform among communists; they only pointed out the desperate need for their effective political regulation.[18]

In the summer of 1968, some important communist reformers came to the fore among those who demanded that more and more steps be taken – as expressed in the *Two Thousand Words Manifesto*.[19] This resulted in a stiffening of resistance in the USSR's leadership and the entire Soviet Bloc to the steps implemented by the Czechoslovak leadership and a heightening of the tense atmosphere in Czechoslovak society.

The *Manifesto* expressed concerns about a possible emerging counteroffensive from conservatives. It urged the development of a people's movement that would support the appointment of Alexandr Dubček as party secretary and push this development towards a more thorough democratisation […]. This is emphasised here as the 'method of applying political pressure in daily life' – pressure from below as a means of defence and counterattack, which would breach the hitherto insurmountable barriers of Stalinism. This called for strikes, demonstrations, a civic boycott of conservatives, and the creation of certain kinds of civil commissions and action committees […] it broached the need for a 'people's court' to deal with supporters of the old attitudes, while the concept of a 'reactionary' itself had to be clarified on the spot according to the principle that 'several

people would assemble', elect a chairman, keep a proper record, publish their findings, demand a solution, and nobody could be shouted down.'[20]

This is where reality outpaced political objectives, and the Communist and state leadership found themselves in an even more complicated situation to which they were incapable of finding an effective solution. At the upcoming Extraordinary Congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party, there was a majority of delegates who were pro-reform, but there were also other kinds of demands being made, for instance that included calls to commemorate the lynchings in 1956 in Hungary of rank-and-file communists.[21] Developments also prompted fears among those who may have been in favour of reform but who realised how further progress would also be determined by opinion in the other socialist countries and that it could even result in a return to a yet worse form of neo-Stalinist practices.

Even though it was not totally obvious in Moscow at the end of the 1980s, it is clear in retrospect and from the words of Mikhail Gorbachev[22] that various concepts of the 1968 Prague Spring had made their way into the circle of reformist Soviet communists working on 'perestroika.' As Gorbachev said, 'the reform began as an effort to emerge from economic stagnation and not as an attempt at pluralism. Afterwards, however, the new circumstances influenced developments in many ways. The logic of perestroika confronted us with the need to develop democracy and this clearly gave rise to the issue of political pluralism. We first had to recognise the pluralism of opinion.'[23] This also opened up the issue of a political system based on democratic socialism as was the case in Czechoslovakia in 1968.

Mlynář's conversation with Mikhail Gorbachev took place in 1994. In my opinion, it continues to have general relevance today in many respects – in terms of the risk of a military nuclear conflict, the need for international cooperation and for overcoming ideological approaches, and the need to promote a multilateral world. On the other hand, I do not think they were right in concluding that social democracy is the best way of systematically contributing to a 'better world' and that you pass through social democratisation on the road to democratic socialism.

What can the 1968 Prague Spring tell us today?

Today, many historical events are expediently exploited, primarily for contemporary political and propaganda purposes. In our society this helps to foment anticommunism. A second, and these days even more pronounced, tendency involves commemorating the Prague Spring of 1968 through the lens of the Warsaw Pact invasion of August 1968, which primarily, and sometimes exclusively, emphasises the role of the Soviet leadership, which

is now being modified as the role of 'Russia'. The military action of the states of the Soviet Bloc (with the USSR naturally playing the dominant role) has been transformed into a form of 'Russian communist imperialism'. However, documents have confirmed that besides (only) some members of the Soviet political leadership, the main instigators of a military solution included the communist leaders of East Germany, Poland, and Bulgaria. It appears that Leonid Brezhnev tried for a long time to find a 'non-military' solution (which he subsequently succeeded in doing in Poland with General Wojciech Jaruzelski's imposition of martial law in 1981).

There is no space here to deal with the period of so-called normalisation in 1970-89. This stage, however, is a 'bridge' from 1968 to the 1990s and the defeat of European actually-existing socialism. It was also an internally complex and multi-layered period with various stages, certainly profoundly marked by the Prague Spring. It is a fact that in its research during the entire twenty years (up to 1989) the local theorists' milieu avoided analyses of the principles discussed and partially introduced during the Prague Spring. The theoretical 'foundations' of the Prague Spring were not subjected to scrutiny or critical expert analysis. They were at most ideologically rejected and discredited. The so-called *Lessons Learned from Crisis Developments*[24] was considered to be the only correct appraisal, and it became the determining document from which it was impossible for anyone to deviate, at least formally.

Over time, primarily in the economic sphere, some systemic considerations returned, with certain concepts being dealt with for the first time, when ways were sought to overcome economic stagnation, and the 'old' instruments of directive control had no effect. Paradoxically, greater attention was paid to bourgeois theories. Those who engaged with them and who were supposed to be against contemporary capitalism subsequently made up the vanguard of the transformation from socialism to capitalism. This new elite pushed ahead with the so-called Washington Consensus and strictly rejected pursuing in any way the ideas of the Prague Spring. Since citizens were not calling for capitalism in November 1989 (see note 15), and for fear that they would turn to a socialist alternative, the elites sought to derail any discussion of a 'third way'. People who had been pushed to the margins for twenty years were socially rehabilitated after 1989; some were even given official posts (for example, Alexander Dubček became the speaker of parliament), but to all intents and purposes they were not permitted to take up key positions where a new strategy for society was being formulated. The Prague Spring of 1968 – a project to revive the vision of socialism as a real alternative to capitalism that would overcome its basic deficiencies – could not complete its work.

Unfortunately, the tanks of the Warsaw Pact also rode roughshod over the search for alternatives to capitalism, including democratic socialism. After the end of the Cold War, the left-leaning public believed that overcoming a bipolar world would automatically also lead to overcoming social injustice and unjust inequalities. A 'window of opportunity' had opened up for the European left in terms of how to modify capitalism with the aid of democratic socialism. One of the leading personalities of the 1968 Prague Spring, the economist Ota Šik, evaluated it as follows in September 1989, at an international seminar at the University of St. Gallen:

> Based on the summary […] I have come to the conclusion that socialism in its basic principles based on Marxist-Leninist ideology has completely foundered and has no future. Nonetheless, this conclusion does not necessarily mean that the only alternative to 'actually-existing' socialist developments has to be a return to the capitalist system. In other words, it does not mean that capitalism is flawless and should not be reformed. The serious deficiencies of the capitalist system persist to this day: long periods of mass unemployment, periodic economic crisis, large, unjustified differences in pensions regardless of work performed, the concentration of private resources enabling individuals to wield powerful influence without democratic legitimacy and depriving a large portion of the population from having access to capital, the economy, etc. Marxism-Leninism tried to remove these defects in a way that was wrong, but this does not mean that these defects simply cannot be removed. As a scientist, I absolutely cannot reconcile myself to the idea that such systemic defects cannot be prevented.[25]

Unfortunately, this opportunity was not used – either in the West or in the East. With few exceptions, the left-wing movement in the East collapsed, and in the West, instead of fighting for democratic socialism the only fight for several decades now has been a defensive battle and the effort to create a 'better capitalism,' often with little success. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the concept of 'democratic socialism' has not become one of the realistic alternatives that could overcome contemporary neoliberal capitalism. Social democracy and socialists have become resigned to their 'socialist' role of managing the Nordic welfare state (which had been expected of them by, for example, Mikhail Gorbachev, Zdeněk Mlynář, and Ivan Sviták). The European radical left did not come up with a widely accepted progressive vision and so, instead of fighting for the future, we are, if anything, battling for political and civic survival. The fumbling efforts of the radical left in

practically all the countries of Europe could also be a consequence of the fact that the vision of an alternative to capitalism has not been irrigated by the living water of new ideas and creative searches. This is perhaps where the Prague Spring of 1968 and its socialism with a human face could be a source of inspiration.

I would like to conclude my text with the words of Josef Heller,[26] my fellow traveller in political and human terms, with whom I walked the path of left-wing causes for almost fifty years:

> The culmination of our analysis cannot only be an appreciation of the heroic battle waged by the revolutionaries and reformers known to history who – even though they did not know what role they were fulfilling or what they could achieve – 'stormed heaven' in a manner similar to Jan Hus and Jerome of Prague, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Gracchus Babeuf, Maximilien Robespierre, Jean-Paul Marat, Louis Antoine de Saint-Just, the utopian socialists and later Blanquists and communards, not to mention Russian, Soviet, Cuban, and other revolutionists. First and foremost, there must be an appreciation of an entire generation of honest working people who tied their destiny to overcoming capitalism and who consciously or unconsciously created an alternative and did not succumb to the enticements of bourgeois ideology but on the contrary sacrificed the best of their lives for an ideal of socialism. However the social processes involved turn out and whatever their impact, these dedicated rank-and-file activists should not be seen through the lens of accusations levelled at them by the bourgeoisie or by the Stalinists; an attempt at understanding the socialist past, including the Prague Spring, does not result in contempt for their life's work. On the contrary, this knowledge should be a source of optimism and a confirmation of the fact that, even if it is temporarily in abeyance, the project of socialism and communism is neither criminal nor definitively finished; it still has huge potential for development.
>
> Somewhat at variance with the dry language and style of an academic treatise, we cannot end […] in any other way than with a verse of the old workers' song, which sounds ever so utopian today:
>
> 'Even should we all fall, new warriors will arise, we'll keep the red flag flying here.'[27]

NOTES

1   Jan Schneider, a dissident and signatory of Charter 77, publicist, and security analyst. He worked in the intelligence community after 1989. Jan Schneider: 'Co nebylo řečeno k padesátému výročí' [What Was Not Said About the 50thAnniversary], *!Argument*,

30 August 2018, <www.casopisargument.cz/2018/08/30/co-nebylo-receno-k-padesatemu-vyroci/>.

2   *Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (1975)*

3   A book by Louis Aragon and André Maurois, *Histoire paralèlle des États-Unis et de l'U.R.S.S.* [A Parallel History of the U.S.A. and the U.S.S.R.], published in Czech as *Souběžné dějiny USA a SSSR*, Prague: Mladáfronta, 1966, was a sort of textbook history of the USSR and Stalinism.

4   See, for example Klára Janovská, *Revolta ve Francii v květnu roku 1968 a její ohlas v soudobém českém tisku* [The Revolt in France in May 1968 and the Response to It in the Contemporary Czech Press], Prague: Charles University – Faculty of Social Sciences, 2008.

5   Even though at the time election results in France had a very strong left-wing component – the right-wing UDR-RI coalition came first with 43.65% while the French Communist Party (PFC) was in second place with 20.02% (although this was a decline of 2.5% compared with the 1967 elections)..

6   Radovan Richta et al., *Civilizace na rozcestí – společenské a lidské souvislosti vědecko-technické revoluce* [Civilisation at the Crossroads – the Social and Human Contexts of the Scientific and Technical Revolution] (a collective work), Prague: Svoboda, 1966, 2nd edition in 1967, 3rd expanded edition 1969.

7   Zdeněk Mlynář, *Mráz přichází z Kremlu* [A Frost Is Coming from the Kremlin], Prague: Mladá fronta, 1990, p. 58; original edition 1978 as: *Nachtfrost: Erfahrungen auf dem Weg vom Realen zum menschlichen Sozialismus*, Frankfurt am Main: Europäische Verlagsanstalt, 1978. Zdeněk Mlynář, a Czechoslovak Marxist politician and communist functionary, was a distinguished theoretician of the political system under socialism. In 1968 he was the Secretary of the Central Committee of the Czechoslovak Communist Party. He was later expelled from the party. He was a signatory of Charter 77 and was forced to emigrate to Austria (where he worked as an academic and professor). He was a graduate of Lomonosov Moscow State University, where Mikhail Gorbachev was his fellow student.

8   Mlynář, 1990, p. 81.

9   Fourth Congress of the Czechoslovak Union of Writers, Prague, 27-29 June 1967: [written record of proceedings], Prague, 1968, p. 27 – quoted from Tomáš Nykodým, *Teoretické základy Šikovy reformy a jejího selhání* [The Theoretical Foundations of Šik's Reform and Its Failure], Department of Economic History, University of Economics, Prague.

10   Pavel Tigrid (1917-2003) was a Czech politician, writer, and journalist. He was one of the representatives of Czechoslovak anti-communists in exile (in Paris, he published the magazine *Svědectví* [Testimony], which had a big influence on the Czechoslovak (Czech) dissident milieu). He collabourated with Václav Havel (under whom he served as culture minister). The leadership of socialist Czechoslovakia considered him to be the most dangerous exponent of the anti-communist resistance in exile. One fact that is often mentioned (and has never been refuted) is that he received long-term financing from the CIA.

11   *The Public Opinion Quarterly*, Vol. XXXIV, Spring 1970, No. 1: Question: Would you prefer Czechoslovakia to abandon further development of socialism and enter the road of capitalist development? For capitalist development 5%; for further socialist development 89%, no opinion 6%. Question: Considering present developments […]

how much confidence do you have in the Czechoslovak Communist Party? Absolute confidence 11%; confidence 40 %; neither for nor against 33%; no confidence 12%. Question: Do you believe that the Communist Party is a political power able to ensure the development of socialism and democracy in your country? Yes 52%; don't know 27%; no 21% .

12   Karel Kosík, was a Czech neo-Marxist philosopher. His most famous philosophical work, *Dialectics of the Concrete* (1963), presents an original synthesis of Martin Heidegger's version of phenomenology and the ideas of Karl Marx. He is a sharp left critic of modern society.

13   An open letter to the European socialist parties (June 1989), quoted from Ivan Sviták, *Cesta do Evropy* [The Road to Europe], Prague, 1991. Ivan Sviták lived in exile in the United States. After his return (1990), he never stopped promoting democratic socialism while also being harshly critical of the new, neoliberal conditions. He became involved in left-wing politics and was elected as a deputy of the last Czechoslovak parliament (until the breakup of Czechoslovakia) as a radical left-wing candidate for the Levý blok *(Left Bloc)* grouping (1992). He died in 1994.

14   Josef Heller, *Socialismus a Pražské jaro* [Socialism and the Prague Spring], <https:// nestalinsky-marxismus.webnode.cz/news/j-heller-socialismus-a-prazske-jaro/>.

15   Results of a sociological survey from the autumn of 1989 – survey based on 1107 people throughout the country conducted from 9 to 12 December: Opinions on the Direction of Further Social Development in Czechoslovakia: Our society should develop:

- in a socialist way   41%
- in a capitalist way   3%
- something in between   52%
- it's all the same, I can't say   4%

Dragoslav Slejška, Jan Herzmann, et al., *Sondy do veřejného mínění* [Surveys of Public Opinion] (spring 1968, autumn 1989), Svoboda, 1990.

16   Zdeněk Mlynář, *Československý pokus o reformu - analýza jeho teorie a praxe* [The Czechoslovak Attempt at Reform – an Analysis of Its Theory and Practice], INDEX Společnost pro československou literaturu v zahraničí *(Society for Czechoslovak Literature Abroad)*, Fördergemeinschaft tschechoslowakischer Literatur ausserhalb der Tschechoslowakei e. V., Cologne, 1975.

17   Mlynář, *Československý pokus*.

18   Mlynář, *Československý pokus*.

19   <www.ludvikvaculik.cz/index.php?pid=56&sid=37>.

20   Vojtěch Mencl, Miloš Hájek, Milan Otáhal, and Erica Kadlecová, *Křižovatky 20. století, Světlo na bílá místa v nejnovějších dějinách* [Crossroads of the 20th Century – A Light on the Blank Spaces in Our Most Recent History], Prague: Naševojsko, 1990.

21   1968 was only twelve years after what in Czechoslovakia was commonly considered a counterrevolution in Hungary. In my view it was a veritable civil war with casualties on both sides, but in Czechoslovakia it was the deaths among communists (for instance the lynching in Köztársaság Square, where a Budapest party committee was located) that were more widely known. The rebels included anticommunists, former Horthy supporters, workers, students, reform communists, and many others; the defenders of the communist regime were communists (among them some who had experienced Horthy's dictatorship), partisan fighters in the anti-Nazi resistance, and other active Nazi opponents, communists from the time of the Hungarian Soviet Republic

(1918), workers and the rural poor, etc. In 1957 in Czechoslovakia a brochure on the Hungarian 'counter-revolution had been published, describing these attacks. Consequently, a genuine fear existed in Czechoslovakia not just among communists but among 'ordinary' people. Moreover, Czechoslovakia had longstanding problems with a Hungarian minority in southern Slovakia, which also contributed to this fear. Hungary had been one of the defeated countries in the war, and the Soviets viewed it that way.

22   Mikhail Gorbachev and Zdeněk Mlynář, *Reformátoři nebývají šťastni – Dialog o 'perestrojce', Pražském jaru a socialismu* [Reformers Are Not Happy – A Dialogue On 'Perestroika', the Prague Spring, and Socialism], Prague: Viktoria Publishing,1995.

23   Gorbachev and Mlynář.

24   *Poučení z krizového vývoje ve straně a společnosti po* XIII. sjezdu KSČ [Lessons Learned from Crisis Developments in the Party and Society After the 13th Congress of the Czechoslovak Communist Party], a Czechoslovak Communist Party document from December 1970, approved by the 14th Czechoslovak Communist Party Congress (May 1971) – it influenced political practices until 1989.

25   <www.sds.cz/docs/prectete/eknihy/sd/sd01_03.htm>.

26   Josef Heller (1947-2018), a Marxist philosopher, teacher, and political analyst for the Communist Party of Bohemia and Moravia. He formulated the theory of proto-socialism (together with František Neužil). Quoted from Josef Heller, *Socialismus a Pražské jaro* [Socialism and the Prague Spring], <https://nestalinsky-marxismus.webnode.cz/news/j-heller-socialismus-a-prazske-jaro/> – he completed the text less than a month before his death in January 2018.

27   Original lyrics by Connell:' Though cowards flinch and traitors sneer / we'll keep the red flag flying here.' This internationally adopted song was given many different texts in different countries. The text here is a translation of the Czech words.

The Students' '68 and Workers' '69 – Conflicts and Joint Action in the Italian Experience

Rossana Rossanda

1968 will long be remembered, in all of Europe; it was commemorated this year on its fiftieth anniversary and will doubtless continue to be in future years – though above all as a student-movement anniversary. Yet at the time a workers' revolt was also touched off in Italy, exceptional in many respects within Europe, triggered by the expiration in 1969 of sectoral contracts for several categories of the union federations.

In France too, the student movement tried to establish a relationship with the workers' struggle that had exploded in the same period, but the mobilisation was interrupted by the negotiations carried out by the largest left trade union (the CGT) with representatives of industry, leading to the so-called Grenelle Agreements concluded without consulting the growing movement.

In Italy, by contrast, the movement of struggle was supported to the very end by the, generally united, trade unions, leading, though not without discussions on content and method, to a package of achievements still in force for various trade categories, as well as to an important package of new laws passed in Parliament (the Workers Statute, the National Health Service, pensions reform, etc.).

The students movement certainly exerted an important influence on the radicalisation of the workers' struggle. Already in April 1968 a big assembly was held in Milano joined by students coming from practically all over Italy to discuss how to involve the factories in the struggle that had begun in the universities. The first contacts were made with the younger workers, which began to swell the ranks of the pickets. A few months later another meeting in Venice's Faculty of Architecture took place where it was decided that the occupied universities should became the place were students and workers

would assemble. And in this framework a discussion was launched on the necessity to extend the spectrum of demands to include no longer just wages but the whole human condition of the worker, health, rhythm of work, etc. From then on, for almost all of the 1970s, Turin, the Italian Detroit, became a place of pilgrimage for students.

That year saw the growth (and in some cases the founding) of extra-parliamentary groups – called 'new left' – with influence not only amongst the students but on the young industrial manual workers (the new type of the 'mass worker', of scant politicisation but much combativeness, often new immigrants from Italy's South), which thus immediately created a conflict between them and the trade union cadre who had formed in the first and acute struggles of the preceding decade. In particular, the group of Lotta Continua (the most spontaneist of the new left, with a significant Catholic presence in its ranks) accused the union of acting as a brake on the movement. In reality, the impetus from below was undeniable and contributed to radicalise the trade unions themselves, in particular the stratum of older cadre who had experienced the struggle of the preceding years. Their experience on the ground became highly valuable in the following years.

The movement produced new types inside the factories – above all the 'delegate of the homogeneous group', that is, representing the workers of a specific assembly line, who was characterised by full knowledge of the work structure in the factory and who thus constituted a considerably more direct representative than members of the union's Internal Committees (C.I.). Not all the new left groups had the same position on the delegates: Lotta Continua, for instance, accepted the idea of the delegate but rejected any representational authority, with the slogan 'we are all delegates', which would have impeded the forming of factory councils, the most precious of all the innovations, being the political organism expressed directly by all the workers, without the mediation of the trade-union structure seen as too distant. The Manifesto group instead fully supported the mandate of the delegates in order to build the factory councils which played a much wider political and not just trade-unionist role, involving also the white-collar workers traditionally reluctant to join in with blue-collar workers.

This deep change in the forms of struggle and of organisation opened up a broad debate between the groups of the workers and within the group of the new left. The accompanying transcript of a colloquium of shop delegates at the Mirafiori Fiat plant in Turin, from *Il Manifesto – rivista*, January 1970, affords a rare opportunity to listen in on one such discussion. It is important, among other things for understanding the relationship between us (*Il Manifesto*), Pietro Ingrao, and Bruno Trentin, then close to the left

wing of the Italian Communist Party (PCI), the so-called Ingrao tendency, and Secretary of the FIOM (Federation of Metallurgical Employees and Workers, the union of the mechanics/metal workers of the CGIL union confederation) and then in later years General Secretary of the CGIL.

The difficulty of understanding each other was only natural between those who, as in the CGIL, aimed at building a complex trade-union movement able to last a long time and, on the other hand, those who, with the revolutionary rhetoric of overthrowing the bourgeois state, etc., aimed at strong and immediate results even if limited. The debate continued through all of the 1970s with obvious effects on the discussion within the PCI. This also led to very harsh disputes between the CGIL and the movements on the nature of the platform of demands, which often, especially among those to the left of the PCI, led to prioritising egalitarian wage demands, around which certain groups – in particular Potere Operaio (Workers' Power) whose leader was Antonio Negri – agitated, projecting it as by far the principal demand. It is in this context, in particular around the issue of wage equality, that the already difficult relationship with Bruno Trentin, who was a leading figure not only in the trade union, broke down.

The role of the councils became even more significant in the following years when the workers realised that their lives were also determined by housing conditions, healthcare, education, as well as by the court system and they were able to spread their sphere of action beyond the factory gates into the residential neighbourhoods. As a result, along with the factory councils, 'zone councils' were created, with the help of new forms of organisations created by a wave of radicalised intellectuals: Democratic Medicine, Democratic Psychiatry, Democratic Judiciary. and even Democratic Police. With the platform of the Metal Workers' Union FIOM adopted in 1972 a very significant conquest was made: 150 hours a year of paid free time each year for the worker to study, not to aquire a better qualification for his work, but to become more educated. In fact, for a long period of time the strength of workers resulted in genuine dual power in the factories.

If we can say that, with the 1970s, forms take shape to the left of the ex-PCI, along with some phases of unified combat between the three union confederations – experiences that are very rare or inexistent elsewhere – and thus new scenarios of battles in factories, as well as the syndicalism of the councils, with its protagonist, the 'delegate of the homogeneous group', it is a fact that we also see, at the end of the decade, the decline of the Italian Communist Party. And also the formations to its left, which die out together with it. With the end of the century the dense complex of extra-parliamentary groups, which thought to take advantage of the PCI's

weakness, ended by disappearing. Actually, it was the presence and strength of the most important communist party of the West that constituted the very possibility of their existence. It was only the PdUP (the Party of Proletarian Unity, the party wing of Il Manifesto) that stayed afloat, but, in the mid-1980s, at the invitation of Berlinguer, it returned to become part of the PCI, while the others, incapable of standing up to the right-wing offensive, ended by dissolving themselves.

The inheritors of the great florescence of formations to the left of the PCI have persisted in the sphere of debate of ideas rather than in political activity. These involve significant fringes deriving from *Quaderni rossi* (the review of the left wing of the Socialist Party, then the PSIUP, Italian Socialist Party of Proletarian Unity) as well as some major exponents of Italian operaismo (workerism)[1] – aside from Negri, in particular Mario Tronti who although he is the most authoritative theoreticion of operaismo has had a completely different political trajectory because for years he was not only a member of the PCI but also a parliamentarian of the PD, even in the last legislature.

NOTE

1   Editor's Note: A tendency represented by such figures as Antonio Negri, Mario Tronti, and Alberto Asor Rosa. Its outlook was anti-statist and focused exclusively on the workers' subjectivity, and its central tactics included the refusal to work, sabotage of the factory, calling in sick, etc.

A Colloquium at the Mirafiori Fiat Plant

We had a first discussion with a group of Fiat workers on what the delegates were experiencing. This is not a representative 'sample' of the opinions of all the delegates in the factory but just the beginning of a discussion we think it important to have in the next issues of Il Manifesto. *The participants in this 'roundtable' were members of the FIOM[1] and FIM,[2] whose party affiliations are PCI [Partito Communista Italiano] and PSIUP [Partito Socialista Italiano d'Unità Proletaria] and some who are not members of parties. They are:*

Carta, Mechanics/Engine[3] I, Shop Floor[4] 28, team delegate,[5] Shop Floor Committee;[6] Guzzardi, Mechanics I, Shopfloor 24, in charge of Shop Floor Committee; D'Adami, Auxiliary Division,[7] team delegate, Shop Floor Committee; Alioto, Mechanics I, Shopfloor 23, team delegate, Shop Floor Committee; Veglia, Body Shop,[8] Shop Floor 28, delegate, assembly-line expert,[9] Shop Floor Committee; Gaudenti, Auxiliary Division, team delegate, Shop Floor Committee; Mulas, Mechanics I, Shop Floor 23, activist of the Shop Floor Committee; Furchì, Mechanics I, multi-transferred team delegate;[10] Calì, Mechanics I, Shop Floor 41, transferred delegate.[11]

QUESTION: How were the delegates created?

CALÌ: We created the delegates, as a direct expression of the workers. Then the union tried to make its own thing out of them. The first experience we had was in the Auxiliary division – we felt the need for someone to convey the opinion of the whole work team and not just the union.

GAUDENTI: The moment we went from the external struggle to the internal one we realised the need for an organisational tool inside the shop. That's how the business of the delegates arose.

CARTA: We held our first delegates election in the grinding department because here there was more impetus for it in so far as many had never

been allowed to move up into higher categories,[12] whereas among the turners, who had all received the 'bonus' and higher salaries thanks to the merit raises,[13] there was a certain amount of absenteeism, and they therefore had more difficulty in grasping the importance of the delegates.

GAUDENTI: The delegates, and we're now about 400, appeared in different ways from shop to shop, but in general we can say that they have all resulted from the internal struggle. Thus, while for example at the presses they first appeared in May, in other shops, like mechanics, the delegates have come afterwards because here the internal struggle arose only much later.

VEGLIA: At the body shop this is the way it went. In March, when I arrived at Fiat, the situation was really paralysed. They all still had the barracks in their heads where they had done their military service. The ferment began in May. The situation suddenly became explosive, with protracted strikes for many days. The union – for the most part non-existent in the assembly lines – was continually marginalised. The struggle was a spontaneous one in the fullest sense of the word – the strongest went on strike – and it brought to light some particularly capable workers who would otherwise have remained in shadows. It's at this point that the need for delegates arose.

ALIOTO: After the June agreement, we saw that the category promotions stipulated by the agreement were not established equitably. Fiat tried to divide the workers' front by imposing unilateral assignments, and the union didn't know the workers on an individual basis. This led to the need to create an organisation that would establish category promotions – this is how the delegates arose.

GUZZARDI: The first delegate to be chosen from Mechanics was, I think, in my team, and this happened as soon as we knew that this instrument existed in the Auxiliary division. The workers perfectly grasped its importance: a representative that remains in the team, without 'detachment', as happens for the members of the C.I.,[14] holed up in their offices. But with us they arose later, in October, during the struggle for the contract, because here the workers are less politicised, as they consider themselves privileged in relation to the other departments, even if in recent years many young people have entered who contributed to developing the new discourse. With us too

it was the need to control the category promotions that stimulated the appearance of delegates.

FURCHÌ: In the May-June struggles the delegate has been a matter of decisions made by the workers, not something that fell from the sky as an abstract demand imposed by the union and by some groups.[15] While in Shopfloor 13 and in the presses[16] the struggle grew in a savage way without any traditional organisation supporting it, workers felt the need to find a new organisation strong enough to resist Fiat's attacks during a low ebb in the struggle. For this reason the team delegates arose from the struggle itself.

GAUDENTI: As far as we can say, in essence, it is that – despite the difference between individual shops – the team delegates have always appeared not because there was any instruction to 'create delegates' but as an authentic spontaneous need of the self-organisation of the base, because they appeared to be necessary.

QUESTION: Up to now we have spoken of the team delegates, those elected directly by the workers, generally before the June agreement recognised, that is, institutionalised, a certain number of delegates in the body shop designated by the unions: the 56 assembly-line delegates, who are called experts in the agreement. What is the difference between these experts and the team delegates, what is the relation of the one to the other?

VEGLIA: The union pushed forward with the negotiations for the delegates, which were then achieved with the June agreement only at the assembly lines of the body shop, and who were called, restrictively, delegates. On 26 June, with the agreement signed, a delegate was established for every 1,000 persons for each of the four unions, which meant one for every 250 workers. All the other delegate workers were left out. I, personally, and many others like me, maintained that rather than accepting a delegate of this type it was better to reject him. Because there was the risk that these 56 delegates could castrate, that is, immobilise, all of the natural delegates who in the meantime had been elected by the teams. And, since the base wasn't prepared it could easily be dominated by the expert-delegate, which would be a very arbitrary form of representation, and, what's more, this representation had to be divided among the four unions. In this way, each delegate ended by reflecting his union and not the workers. Thus the FIOM delegate already had a mentality of struggle – but a struggle waged from above, outside any initiative of the base – while the SIDA[17] delegate, for example, acted

as if he did not exist. Each delegate thus took on the physiognomy of his union. If his union was immobile, he was immobile too.

QUESTION: *Did the union designate the expert by choosing him from among the list of names of team delegates, or did the team delegates meet and themselves elect the expert?*

VEGLIA: It depended on each instance. In my case, for example, I was designated by the union (the FIOM), but both I and the union were concerned to ask the other team delegates if they agreed, if they were happy with this choice; otherwise I would have turned it down. Naturally, in some cases things didn't go this way because the fact that the delegates have to represent all four union with equal weight limits the workers' autonomous choice, who cannot elect amyone they want but have to respect the proportionality for which the agreement provides – which is a proportionality that precisely does not correspond to the real base but is imposed by an agreement from above.

QUESTION: *If the base had been able autonomously to elect the delegate-experts would this have resulted in a preponderance of FIOM and FIM delegates, because they are more militant?*

VEGLIA: It's not that automatic, especially because you have to bear in mind that in Fiat as a whole, but especially on the lines, the percentage of unionised workers is very low. For this reason, most times the unions had to end up by accepting as their own designations the candidacies of workers that had nothing to do with them but who had been elected by the base. Still, every union has its strongholds. And there are also strongholds of the SIDA and UIL,[18] especially in those divisions where it is easiest for the foremen to exert pressure. Thus the base is also not homogeneous, and there are still large grey zones. But it is certain that in some cases the workers found themselves with a delegate-expert designated by the union without knowing how this happened. Still, in general, at least as far as my shop is concerned, this has been the designation mechanism: the four or five team delegates met and accepted the delegate-expert proposed by the FIOM and by FIM. For the other unions things didn't occur as clearly, and there has been some contestation, just as there have also been some cases of a worker nominated as a delegate-expert who didn't want to be one, although he had by now been nominated. In fact, while substituting team delegates is very easy – if one isn't working out well he is told that he has to go, and another one is nominated – for the delegate-experts the situation is

a little more difficult. As a matter of fact, up to now nobody has told a delegate-expert to step down. This is exactly what the limits are of the delegate-experts.

CARTA: When the experts were elected, on the basis of the June accord, it turned out that some of the people nominated were not capable of fulfilling the functions provided for. And then it became counterproductive. With the team delegates elected directly by the workers these problems are minor because everyone knows whom they are electing, we know the person, he's a natural delegate in effect.

VEGLIA: But we should not make a distinction between the delegate-expert and the team delegate. For example, I'm a delegate-expert, but I try to make all decisions together with the team delegates, as if, although I'm an 'expert' and thus recognised, I were one of them. I try essentially to affirm that there's no difference of role between one and the other and that it's only management that wanted to establish this arbitrarily, limiting the number of delegates and their functions. But seeing as a mentality persists among the workers that is partly legalistic, many tend to automatically attribute greater power to the delegate-expert than to the team delegate. For this reason we ought to make one of our next objectives the recognition of all the team delegates, to make them equal, also formally, to the experts. We have in fact seen that recognition does not per se mean a limitation of their function.

QUESTION: Are you all in agreement on this objective of recognition for all team delegates?

ALIOTO: Not all of us. I am. Without it we would have transferable delegates due to the boss's reprisals – we would have non-recognised ones – and protected ones – the recognised ones.

D'ADAMI: It's absurd to think that the boss will concede more power by recognising all the delegates whom we want. The battle has to be waged not in order to be recognised by the boss but to prevent him from retaliating by transferring us. To not let us be transferred depends on the team's strength, not on recognition. If the team is weak, the delegate won't be able to stand up even if he's recognised on paper. And then if he is recognised he's also bound by a series of limitations imposed by the agreement – while the delegate ought not to have limits on his functions.

FURCHÌ: If all delegates were to be recognised, the struggle wouldn't be advanced in this way. When he doesn't have recognition the delegate has more space.

GAUDENTI: The problem isn't to struggle for recognition, because the boss will never recognise a countervailing power, however embryonic, in the factory. This doesn't mean that we reject the recognised delegates, because it's not necessarily so that they have been integrated into the system at the start: it's up to us to prevent them from becoming a substitute for permanent conflict, a mediation. For example we've used the 56 recognised assembly-line delegates. When we have the others we'll try as well to give them a conflictual and not a negotiating function.

FURCHÌ: The problem is to fight so that when the delegate is recognised he isn't integrated.

GAUDENTI: The delegates appear more or less spontaneously, and the boss tries to use them, institutionalising them, asking that they be nominated by the union and not elected by the workers, limiting them with a thousand rules. He has to be prevented from doing this. With the delegate-experts of the June agreement we largely succeeded in doing this. Recognition or non-recognition is a false alternative. We shouldn't make a fetish of recognition, but also not undervalue it. The problem is that the delegate not be bound to the legality accepted by the union and that he respond only to the base.

QUESTION: What function did the delegates fulfil in these first months?

VEGLIA: According to the agreements, the delegate-experts must only take care that work times are respected, check the presence of the workforce in order to proportionately lower the production quantities provided by the *bolla*[19] if there is a lack of workers, and impede management's attempt to recoup production if production interruptions are due to accidents.[20] However, to enforce compliance with what they ask, they can't call the base into question but have to limit themselves to requesting the intervention of the C.I. In fact, it's the latter that ought to act to put things in order together with the shop foreman. In reality, however, people shouldn't wait for the C.I. to intervene; rather, people should act in direct opposition to the foreman of the division. The delegate says: today we're making thirty less cars and there you get a duel between the delegate and the division foreman. Sometimes, especially at the beginning, it happened that the delegate found himself alone or was only followed by a few people. Then things changed, and little by little

the workers began to all leave the lines to support his request. Today it is difficult for a division foreman to dare suggest production greater than the workforce or the accidental shutdowns allow. There was a moment at which the division foremen tried to ignore the presence of delegates; then they saw that they couldn't do this and they sought to get along [with the workers]. Now we're in a third phase: the division foreman is afraid of coming into conflict with the delegate. Naturally, I'm talking about delegates who function [as delegates].

GAUDENTI: The conflicts between the delegate and the division foreman have generally occurred over respecting the *bolle*. But there have been cases, for example at Shop 13, where the delegates went further and imposed a true and proper reduction of the scheduled production: for example, they decided together with the workers to make 100 pieces less in relation to the *bolla* and they made 100 less pieces even if the workforce was complete.

Here, essentially, there was an example of offensive and not purely defensive action as elsewhere.

VEGLIA: In the body shop, on the other hand, action has been purely defensive because here the worker is more unstable and less experienced politically and in terms of trade-union work. He's starting at zero. But here too we can say that the aim of management and of the moderate part of the union – to suffocate [the ferment] – has completely failed: the delegate-experts in fact have not simply been the enlargement of the C.I., they have not been a purely negotiating element. Also in applying the union norms, they've made possible a transition to other forms of struggle: not a discussion between them and the division foreman but the immediate cessation of production. So the delegate-expert has generally remained a natural delegate of the base, closely connected to the workers.

GUZZARDI: As for the non-recognised team delegates (who for now are the only ones existing outside of the body shop), they have fulfilled a function above all related to checking on the category promotions. After all, they've arisen precisely to answer to this need.

CARTA: I'm a delegate, and I think that my task is – soliciting participation and pressure from the base – to prevent the union from being instrumentalised. But the base can also say stupid things; it's up to the delegate to act as a filter; and to create the conditions for the union to really act like a union. And this is another important point. Because

it's true that there is a lot of talk now about unity, but in the shop divisions the unions are divided, with many faces. The delegates have to work on the psychological level, preparing the workers for the struggle, making sure that everyone's present in the assembly and not, as often happens now, outside playing cards, and so decisions are made that the others don't support.

QUESTION: From what you're saying it looks as if the delegates have fulfilled essentially a trade-union type of function. In your opinion, what is the difference between the role of the delegate and the trade-unionist?

FURCHÌ: It's exactly here, around these distinct roles, that there's been a certain discussion with the union. We have fought for having the delegate in so far as we've seen him as someone who didn't limit himself purely to controlling the agreements or proposing sectoral demands. Someone, therefore, who in the assemblies would develop a more general, political, discourse and – at least prospectively – would point to the creation of a new organisation of power. The delegate is not only the person who deals with minute demands and controlling production but he brings the political argument into the factory, to the base, through a specific unified rank-and-file organisation. This was the aim we set for ourselves. The limit of the June agreement on the delegate-experts is exactly this – that it has established the delegates in the assembly lines of the body shop, that is, precisely where the delegates have never been requested, and if they were there they fell from the sky, tied to precise functions that had been fixed a priori. So we had the politicised delegate and the depoliticised delegate, that is, accidental ones because they didn't come out of consciousness and a decision taken by the base.

GAUDENTI: I don't agree. The delegate is not the political vanguard. The delegate is the expression of the organic grouping of the workers and arises as a function of a certain type of internal struggle. For this reason his role, at least directly, cannot be a political one of connecting the factory, at the societal level, with the neighbourhood committees, etc. Up to now this has been done by the political vanguards, which, after all, have always existed at Fiat, even if very minoritarian; while the delegates are not this, they are something new, just as the slowdown of production that has been achieved for example by the delegates of Shop 13 is something new. If the delegate were the political vanguard he wouldn't have arisen spontaneously the way he did. The vanguard is not spontaneously created by the working class, as its immediate need.

The delegate appeared because he was functional to a form of self-organisation for which the workers felt a need. So much for what we have today. The matter is different if we discuss how the movement could develop tomorrow. Does this mean that the delegates, for now, have remained enclosed within action of a purely trade-union sort? Perhaps yes, but this still involves a new trade-unionism, a type of very advanced rank-and-file unionism. The prevailing recommendation within the union has been, for example, to give the delegate quite precise functions, such as controlling work time and category promotions; yet even now he tends to deal with all the problems of the team, that is, all the problems of the workers' conditions – from dirty bathrooms to the slowdown of production. Certainly, this is all still union action, but it no longer goes through the institutionalised and traditional channels of the union because it directly and immediately involves the base.

FURCHÌ: The trade-unionist, in essence, expresses the negations-related side of things, he bargains, makes compromises. By contrast, the delegate expresses the permanent conflict; he is not bound to respect the agreement signed by the trade-unionist.

MULAS: In my view, the value of the delegates is in the educational role they can play. Let me give you the example of how things have gone with us, at Mechanics. As Guzzardi said, in Mechanics many young people have recently arrived after a great deal of displacements. I myself arrived at Mirafiori after having been at Grandi Motori and the Stura firm. This injection of youth has been very important; they pushed for the introduction of the new figure – the delegate – and helped make him effective. We sought a dialogue with the older comrades, including those from 1944; we spoke of the past and a kind of solidarity was created. The old timers tried to tell us things and we them. This created a new reality. Before this at Fiat, things had evolved to the point where the foremen at Fiat constantly demanded ever more production each week. It was then that the agreement on delegates was made by the trade unions. We were called 'experts'. But the workers said to themselves: this is a scam. The workers always think of the worst, especially the old workers. Because, they said, if there's a delegate who goes to speak with the division foreman he can easily be used. And so they didn't trust this. Then the young people were appointed along with the older ones who had experience, who weren't afraid. And they learned. What was said in the assemblies? We can't accept constant increases of production. Some asked: and what can we do? Then the most resourceful ones said:

let's organise for a struggle within the factory; it will be more difficult for there to be scabs because they'll be afraid. In fact with internal struggle there are pickets and scabs are afraid and stop working. Because a scab is a coward and is afraid of the mass. So in the assemblies, after the picketing, people began to understand that we needed someone who understood more and had more courage. There were very few, let's admit it. Those few people came forward during the assembly and said: we can't give in because if we do the boss will become stronger than before; we can't repeat the mistakes of the past; everyone has to speak with the workers closest to them, etc. In sum, there was a process of humanisation – collective solidarity. And this was the most important aspect of the struggle: speaking to the workers in such a way that even the simplest among them could understand the reasons for the struggle. In the past the trade union said: let's strike, etc., etc., and people went on strike. But they never proceeded with educating the workers. Educating the consciousness of the workers, whether this is explaining things he doesn't know or explaining the meaning of the power of industry (Fiat's acquisitions, monopoly, and what this means, etc.). This too was explained, and this is why there was so much participation. This is what the function of the delegate is: education. So the important thing has been taking up the microphone and speaking with people but speaking with simplicity, explaining the why of things, not just the technical aspects of struggle; because workers have had always been suspicious of those who didn't explain everything.

CARTA: Thanks to the delegates we succeeded in speaking about politics in the factory. We laid bare the politics of the external institutions. With the workers the delegates have a relaxed intimate relationship because it comes out of daily work contacts. The delegate hears everything every day. And, make no mistake, the base expresses itself. It's up to us delegates to hear them and interpret what they say, and to connect the base to the vanguards.

QUESTION: *Do the political vanguard and the delegates coincide? What relations exist between them?*

CARTA: Not all the delegates are in the vanguard, even if it is true that all of the vanguard are delegates.

GAUDENTI: To be more precise we could say that the delegate expresses the average level of the base that elected him. If there's a

team of scabs then the delegate is a scab. Because the team also makes big mistakes.

CARTA: And then there are teams who can't even manage to come up with their delegate. In my shop we're three delegates and we need six.

FURCHÌ: The delegate is already in the vanguard or at least he should be. But, the way I see it, between delegate and vanguard there is complete fusion only where the shop committees have arisen. But we'll talk about this later.

QUESTION: *Maybe this will be clearer if we now look at the experience of the Council of Delegates, which was formed in September in Mirafiori. How and why did the Council emerge?*

VEGLIA: Coming back after vacations there was the strike of the 32, which Fiat used as a pretext for layoffs, thus provoking an early start of the contract struggle. At exactly this point the union took the initiative of convening all the delegates to discuss the contract struggle. Instead, after the first meeting, everyone decided to continue to meet at least once a week. That's how the Council of Delegates emerged at Mirafiori.

QUESTION: *Who participates in the weekly meeting of the delegates?*

VEGLIA: Delegate-experts, team delegates, and whoever wants to. It's a discussion that takes place with everybody at the same level, recognised or not recognised, simple workers.

QUESTION: *What's discussed in the Council?*

VEGLIA: Already before this there was a push to bring the external struggle inside, but we would never have succeeded if we hadn't had the Council. So this was the first result of the Council. The second gain was having brought the *articulated strike*[21] to the body shops. We would never have brought the whole union onto this terrain if we hadn't had the Council. Without the Council, what's more, we wouldn't have gotten the principle accepted of the articulated struggle shop by shop, or at least team by team. Not that we completely succeeded, but still the principle got through.

GAUDENTI: The Council of Delegates is a mass instrument. It is not the union *attivo*[22] of the organised workers nor the rank-and-file committee understood as the voluntary organisation of the vanguard. It groups together all the team delegates and the activists. With the establishment of the Council, during the contract struggle, we accomplished a leap: the team delegates came out of their isolation, which would have inevitably

led them to have a purely union function. Instead, in the Council, thanks to the connection to the broader vision that they had acquired, they accomplished a political leap and began to discuss and decided general problems as well. And it is also a political leap even if the problematic remains a union one, as it has remained during this contract struggle. Within the Council there have been battles especially to transition from the external to the internal struggle, and they saw the moderate part of the union reluctant to take this line. If there was a transition to articulated struggles, this was due to the big debate and big push that came from the Council. The prevalent problem has not been that of the forms of struggle (pickets, assemblies, the entrance in the factory of trade-unionists, etc.), and this wasn't difficult to develop. What has proven more difficult is the question of socialisation, that is, the relation of factory to society, the connection with neighbourhood struggles, with the other sections of Fiat, and the other factories. All of this business didn't go over very well, even if there has been a big battle over it. The Council, at any rate, has reproduced the limits of the contract struggle, which, because it is the most important category of struggle did not on the whole go beyond corporatist limits because it was not able to connect itself to the outside, to completely involve society.

QUESTION: *But you said that there was a big battle. Do you mean that there was an attempt at greater politicisation, and with what propositions?*

GAUDENTI: For example, on the problem of prices and of solidarity with the striking workers. There was a part that tended to see the struggle as pressure on the institutions; from this comes the request for financial subsidy on the part of the City Council, putting a lot of weight on the alignment of forces forming around the problem, for example. Another part, on the other hand, tended to see the problem of prices as a terrain on which connections could be built with external forces, for example with the neighbourhood committees emerging in defence of the strike and where people brought their utility bills to send them back unpaid to the sender, and so forth. Beyond this, a discussion developed over the demand for price reductions, always being organised on the basis of the neighbourhood. And proposals emerged that were even too advanced: going into *supermarkets*, buying stuff and then refusing to pay for it. But these were isolated proposals; they weren't a general problem facing all the Council. And then we shouldn't ignore the fact that in connection with these problems there was the reproduction in the Council of the polemic between the parties, between the PCI, the

PSIUP, and the purely trade-union forces. We shouldn't forget that in the Council there is a minority of delegates who express the positions of their respective parties.

FURCHÌ: Why did the delegate emerge? Before it happened we didn't have clear notions of what a delegate could be, but all of us were conscious that it should be something different – not opposed to – the union, critical of it and of its institutions. We thought the delegate would have been integrated into the union structures if he didn't have the space to move with a certain autonomy. During the contract struggle and precisely through the experience of the Council the delegate did in fact exhibit many limits but also essential merits: capable of carrying the struggle forward that had begun in a backward way – traditional, external, within the company – with very incisive forms of action. Initially, this time as well, the unions, during the strike, said, as they had in the past: 'external strike', which for a great number of workers inevitably meant everybody go hunting and fishing. Instead, what would have been needed is to make workers realise that the strike is not an occasion to go fishing but a moment of struggle. And the delegates have been an important tool for giving the workers this consciousness that the struggle has to be brought inside the factory. Around this the biggest clashes were with the union (or at least a part of the union) and the most heated discussions in the Council. There was discussion of how to respond to Fiat, which didn't want to pay inactive hours, for example. Then there was discussion ad nauseam of how to organise ourselves after the contract. And so the idea penetrated the workers – and this is a new situation and also a result of the Council – that the struggle wouldn't end after the contract. As to the specifically political argument pursued in the Council we can say this, I believe: that before it people talked about minute demands, and the interest of the workers in this was rather limited. Then people began to speak of general problems, of politics. And I have to stress that before this politics was never discussed in Fiat. By contrast, for example, at the last meeting of the Council we spoke of what happened in Milan.[23] Then, during the struggle, people talked of the exit of the workers from the factory – the workers who organise themselves and go out, in their blue overalls, through the city streets and openly cry out that they want the slice of power they've won. This happened with the demonstration at the Salone dell'Automobile and with the demo at the Union of Industrialists. This is already politics.

GAUDENTI: We said that the Council of Delegates should not be an

organism of union consultation nor a branch of the C.I. But to not limit itself to being one of these two things requires that the Council be put in a position to autonomously manage its own choices. That is, it has to be endowed with its own instruments: for example, a newspaper, the possibility of auto-convening (this has up to now not been provided for), its own chairmanship in the meetings (now it is always the trade-unionists – and mostly external functionaries – who introduce, regulate, and conclude the debate). As we see, there's still a long way to go.

VEGLIA: Another big limitation of the Council is this: When the delegate went to the Council he always spoke in his own name or at most that of his division. That's why in every meeting there were 40 or 50 interventions that by force of circumstance – Saturday afternoon we only have a few hours at our disposal – were limited to a brief call for some form of strike. The assembly drowned in a sea of diverse calls. So it always turned out that the final decisions, the mediation between all the positions expressed, was in the hands of the unions. This is why there was the need to go to the Council with a smaller number of interventions that could transmit the point of view not only of one's own team and division, but also of a shop. To respond to this need there was a decision to create a rank-and-file organisation that would discuss matters first at a shop-floor level to then go to the Council with a decision already made by at least 20 or 30 delegates. And so the Shop Committees arose. For now there are six of them but they're developing rapidly. Essentially, while at first the delegates and the Council served only to fulfil a function of exerting pressure on the unions, now, with the Shop Committees, a qualitative leap has happened – a decision-making structure of the delegates is being created.

QUESTION: *How does the Shop Committee function?*

VEGLIA: It's formed by the team delegates. But we are proposing to open it to normal activists as well. There's a preliminary meeting at which a previously chosen problem is discussed. (For now, inevitably, we're dealing above all with the contract struggle.) Then the committee works out a draft plan of struggle and brings it to the team for discussion. Then it meets again and specifies the plan: all the signatures are added and it is presented to the Council. Naturally, the proposal has much greater force because it's the expression not of a single delegate but of the whole shop.

QUESTION: *Has the discussion in the Shop Committees also been prevalently on the forms and content of the contract struggle?*

VEGLIA: It's difficult to say because the Shop Committees have been established too recently and only in the last phase of the contract struggle, which therefore took up a lot of their time. On the other hand, as to the Council we can say that some general topics have been dealt with. For example: there's been discussion of the 19 November strike, of the incidents in Milan, and of the death of the police agent Annarumma.[24] In the Shop Committees there was a lot of discussion about establishing a single, new union that is not a middle ground between the existing ones.

ALIOTO: The Shop Committee serves to break through the isolation of the individual teams; we all felt the need for contact, for coordination, and so we created the Shop Committee, which unifies the team delegates.

FURCHÌ: The Shop Committee discusses both general problems as well as particular ones – even those that could involve only a single worker. For example, we discussed how to rotate everyone so that the unsalutary operation, which had always been performed by one and the same person, would be performed in turns. It's a way of saving the life of this worker.

VEGLIA: Rotation is an important problem and there's a lot of discussion of it. One of the ugliest aspects of assembly-line work in fact is being condemned to repetitive work. Working on the lines is mental suicide. Everyone ought to rotate in the course of a day so as to perform several different operations on the car. The Shop Committee has to be a tool for abolishing compartmentalised work.

GAUDENTI: Also, the Shop Committees are a means of stabilising the delegates. At the peak moments of the struggle there is the delegate, and he functions; then he's de-activated. Now we have to pay attention to the post-contract period. After the meeting we created handwritten communications and pinned them to the bulletin board to let the others know what we discussed. We also posted communiqués on things external to the factory: on a fascist attack that occurred at the factory gate, on what happened in Milan, etc. But, above all, the meetings of the Committee serve to specify what we want to have discussed at the Council of Delegates, to establish the agenda, the proposals.

GUZZARDI: But we shouldn't forget that the boss hasn't given up using repressive measures: At Shop 24 of Mechanics the Shop Committee had existed for a month but collapsed because of eight layoffs that affected

it. We succeeded in having the layoffs taken back, but there was also a certain ebbing – some of the laid off people didn't want to come back, and other delegates who had not been laid off got frightened. But now we've re-established the Committee, though now there are also delegates who espouse conservative positions.

ALIOTO: After the November repression there has been a halt in the creation of delegates. But then there was an upswing, thanks to the struggle. The problem is what happens after the contract; how do we defend ourselves from an increase in production, how do we equip ourselves to respond to repression.

VEGLIA: The post-contract period is going to be really hard. Everyone knows this. We need the Shop Committees for creating a permanent rank-and-file organisation able to react to the coming attacks, to construct a countervailing power in the factory to make the will of the rank and file have impact, a focus of strength to impede the unions' eventual slippages, a tool for connecting us to society.

NOTES

1   Federation of Metallurgical Employees and Workers, the union of the mechanics/ metal workers and employees of the CGIL union confederation.
2   Ed. note: The FIM is the metal workers' federation of the Catholic trade union confederation CISL. In the late 1960s and early 1970s it was innovative and radicalised and was a major factor in the founding of a united metal workers' federation, the FLM, in 1973.
3   Ed. note: Meccanica. This is the division in which the metal workers worked on engines and other parts.
4   Ed. note: Officina
5   Ed. note: Delegato di squadra.
6   Ed. note: Comitato officina
7   Ed. note: Ausiliare
8   Ed. note: Carrozzeria
9   Ed. note: Esperto di linea. 'Expert' was the name given to union representatives who fulfilled a technical, as opposed to political, function. By contrast, the team delegates and Council of delegates comprised people from the newly arrived strata, mostly from Southern Italy and mostly not union members. They were directly elected by the workers and thus had a political mandate.
10   Ed. note: Delegato di squadra pluritrasferito. Management traditionally struck back at activist workers by moving them to other departments. In this case, the delegate had been transferred several times. There was even a department called Officina Stella Rossa (Red Star Shop) where management tried to quarantine Communists in the 1950s.

11   Ed. note: Delegato trasferito

12   Ed. note: Codified categories of skill, 5 being the lowest and 1 the highest. Equitable promotion to the higher category was a contended issue.

13   Ed. note: Aumenti di merito

14   Ed. note: Commissione interna. The Internal Committee was the older structure relating only to union members as a committee of the trade union within factories.

15   Ed. note: That is, the new left groups.

16   Ed. note: le presse, that is, pressing hall – workers of the Mechanics/Engine division were situated here.

17   Ed. note: Sindacato Italiano dell'Auto, founded in the 1950s, later renamed FISMIC, was a company union.

18   Ed. note: There are currently three major unions in Italy. They are class-wide (that is 'confederal') industrial unions on the model of the US's CIO, internally articulated into craft categories. They are distinguished by their political outlooks. By far the largest one, the original union from of which the others split off, is the CGIL, with a communist and socialist heritage. The CISL is the Catholic union, and the UIL the social democratic union. In 1947, after his trip to the US, Prime Minister Alcide de Gasperi broke with the Communists and Socialists, thus ending the government of national unity, and the social democrats split from the Socialist party and left the CGIL – in which the Socialists always remained – and formed the UIL. The CISL also originated in the same year under US pressure in the context of the launching of the Cold War.

19   Ed. note: bolla – the document communicating the company's work instruction.

20   Ed. note: And thus the fault of the company rather than the workers.

21   Ed. note: In Italy at this time an alternative was invented to protracted strikes involving all workers at once. To take the burden off workers – who lose pay when they are on strike – the novelty was to have a relay of different workers going out for, say, two hours at a time in different positions. If well planned this could paralyse the factory. This does not exist in, for example, Germany or the US. It was one of the most important inventions of Italy's '69 movement.

22   Ed. note: The 'attivo' is the assembly of the core activists of the union in the plant.

23   Ed. note: The demonstrations at the Automobile Show and before the Union of Industrialists – see below.

24   Ed. note: Antonio Annarumma was hit by a piece of iron thrown by unidentified individuals in the course of a demonstration with fierce clashes between demonstrators and the police.

1989 and its Consequences
for Russia and Germany

Erhard Crome

History does not experiment. What comes to light in historical struggles is always the material and political forces, ideas, programmes, and perspectives that have already been created in each historical constellation. Declaring some conflicts to be tragedy and others farce is certainly justified from the point of view of a world-philosophical interpretation, but doing so leaves out of consideration the reality that all cases involve victors and vanquished, victims and perpetrators, and the closing of one historical path and opening of another. Those who subsequently raise themselves to the status of winners of history are often those who fall far down at the next turn.

History not only was open but it is and remains open. At some points this is especially manifest, namely when those who have so far ruled can no longer do so in the old way, and those who have been ruled no longer want to be ruled as before, and all this suddenly becomes visible. In German history, the 4 and 9 November 1989 were moments of this kind.

The point of departure

Thirty years after 1989, the official political viewpoint is still trying to create the impression that with 'really existing socialism' an evil enemy was driven off, one that had come from outside. But had not the idea of creating a completely different society that breaks with capitalist relations in reality been generated by these very same relations?

The 'old world' of Europe perished in the First World War. This was the great dramatic event of the twentieth century. Russia's October Revolution was a social-historical process that logically emerged from the carnage of this war, which claimed the lives of more than ten million people. Well before it the general intellectual expectation of the international labour movement was that the terrible destruction and devastation that a European war would cause would end in a great catastrophe, which would push bourgeois society

into the abyss. From this perspective the First World War appeared to be that awaited catastrophe called forth by capitalism and its imperialism from which there could only be one way out: 'socialism'.

From the communist standpoint, analysis arrived at this conclusion: 'It was inevitable that the imperialist policy of the "Great Powers" should sooner or later bring them into collision. Indisputably, the game of grab played by *all* the "Great Powers" was the real cause of the war.' '[…] the war could not fail to be a world war,' because 'the Powers were intimately connected by the ties of a world-wide economic system': the conclusion is 'Chaos or Communism. The revolution as it develops becomes a world revolution for the same reason that the imperialist war became a world war.'[1] The history of the twentieth century turned out differently. The world revolution did not occur, and actually existing socialism was at first restricted to the Soviet Union. But the Russian Bolsheviks, once in power, were not ready to roll in their flag and go home; they defended their power with all means. At the behest of Lenin, they abolished Russia's elected parliamentary representation. And so the forswearing of winning over a numeric majority within one's 'own' population became inscribed in the established Soviet power and thereafter every established power of the communist type. The revolutionary party transformed itself into the omnipresent state party. Actually existing socialism finally took on the form imprinted on it by Stalin and after the Second World War was extended to other countries in Eastern Europe.

Soon after Russia's October Revolution Rosa Luxemburg, while insisting on the Marxist position of the 'dictatorship of the proletariat', nevertheless emphasised that 'this dictatorship must be the work of the *class* and not of a little leading minority in the name of the class'. And this is precisely what she accused the leaders of the Russian Revolution, Lenin and Trotsky, of: the elimination of democracy, which would lead to the 'smothering of political life in the whole country' and finally to a dictatorship, not of the proletariat but of 'a handful of persons'.[2]

Kronstadt – the sea fortress, port, and garrison city near Petersburg, which was Russia's capital up to 1918 – was home mainly to workers, and thousands of soldiers and sailors were stationed there who had actively supported the October Revolution since 1917. There, in March 1921, the first workers' uprising broke out against the exclusive rule of Lenin's party due to the lack of participatory rights: If the goal were rule by the workers then it should be the workers themselves that should rule. The uprising was crushed and declared to be 'counterrevolution'.

The justification for 'actually existing socialism' in Eastern Europe was

always an ideological one. At its core was the promise that the 'socialist' world would be fundamentally different from that of capitalism, with a greater level of self-determination for people and a greater productivity of labour. In the framework of the party-type shaped by Lenin and later by Stalin, the former did not just fail to be achieved but a systematic control and suppression of individuals was established. An expression of this was the millions of victims in the system of penal camps.

Despite this, the hope for a better world persisted among a substantial part of the population, which was the condition of socialist construction in the early years, in the expectation of a higher productivity of labour, which would create a better life. Since the 1950s this has been turned around: Direct controls over people were reduced, but the attainment of a higher productivity of labour receded ever further into the distance. If the economic gap between actually existing socialism and the developed countries of the West was reduced up through the 1960s, it then widened in subsequent years. The credibility of the original promises decreased, the longer 'actually existing socialism' continued to exist.

The lack of democratic conditions criticised by Rosa Luxemburg remained the main problem for the societies of 'actually existing socialism'. The first uprising after the constitution of the 'socialist camp', as it was then called in the context of the Cold War, broke out on 17 June 1953 in the GDR. Here too it was above all workers who revolted. Since the victory over fascist Germany had occurred only eight years before, with Germany divided and under occupation law, this rebellion was put down by Soviet troops and designated a 'fascist putsch'.

In June 1956 there were strikes and protests in Poznań, Poland, which caused the Polish party to change its policies. At the end of October in Hungary a popular uprising broke out, which was put down at the beginning of November, once again by Soviet troops. In 1968 the leadership of the Communist Party in Czechoslovakia made an attempt to democratically open up society, which Moscow's leadership answered in the context of an invasion by a part of the troops of the Warsaw Pact.

At the beginning of the 1980s, strikes and unrest spread throughout Poland, but the Soviet leadership no longer felt it could intervene militarily. It had enough problems by then with the invasion of Afghanistan, which had just occurred, and could not be certain of how the situation in Poland might escalate. The Polish government then tried to regain control of the situation by declaring a state of emergency but in the end failed. The state faced strong oppositional organisations in Poland supported by the Catholic Church. The opposition could not take power because the other side could

call on the military and its weapons; but they, once again, could not restore their power to what it had been, as their popular support was no longer there. In this situation leaders on both sides agreed to strike a compromise. In summer of 1989, the 'Round Table' was a synonym for the handing over of power on the part of the state party of the Communist type to an elected government, first in Poland, then also in other countries, in the end including the GDR.

Although perestroika and glasnost in the Soviet Union did not produce an amelioration of the situation, it was able to change the foreign policy of the Soviet leadership under Mikhail Gorbachev. Soviet troops were no longer available to protect the power of the 'fraternal parties'. The developments in Poland had also shaken the bases of power in the other communist state parties of Eastern Europe. The group of reformers governing Hungary since 1988 wanted to increase the country's room for manoeuvre within European politics and assumed that German unification would lead to 'the Russians' leaving Hungary as well.

The jewel in the crown

The GDR was 'the jewel in the crown'[3] of the Soviet power structure in Europe. In this respect it was no accident that the Berlin Wall fell after the changes in Poland and Hungary had been completed. But its 'path to Europe', that is, away from Soviet dominance, was freed up after the fall of the Wall. For this reason the developments in the GDR in the autumn of 1989 played a key role in further developments in Europe.

Although the head of state, Erich Honecker, still believed after 1 May 1989 that the mass participation in the May Day demonstration in Berlin was in support of his policy, the situation rapidly changed. Municipal elections, held on 7 May 1989, were seen as falsified. This remained an open wound in the SED's system of rule, which up through the turning point ('Wende') could not be healed.

The accelerated wave of exits from the GDR in the summer of 1989 via Hungary and various embassies of the Federal Republic was characterised in a commentary in the party newspaper *Neues Deutschland* on 2 October, which Honecker had personally asked to have inserted, to the effect that there would be 'no tears shed' for those who leave. The answer in the Leipzig Monday demonstrations were cries of 'we're staying here', which were connected to demands for freedom of expression and reforms. From then on public expressions of the popular will became ever stronger in demonstrations. The massive use of force, still used on 4 October against demonstrators at Dresden's central railway station, and also on 7 October,

the national holiday, in the capital Berlin, put a heavy burden on those participating in the scheduled Monday demonstration on 9 October 1989, in Leipzig. Despite the widespread fear of police deployment, around 75,000 people took part, and the use of force was avoided. After this, demonstrating became a de facto right of citizens.

The peaceful demonstration and rally in Berlin's Alexanderplatz on 4 November 1989 drew about 700,000 people. With the lawyer Gregor Gysi's help, Berlin theatres had legally announced the event.

The crack that ran through society was also a crack that ran through the SED and the other parties of the GDR. It is therefore no surprise that German leftists coming from the GDR still cite these events today. They had played a role in those confrontations. The actress Steffie Spira brought the 4 November rally to a close, citing the famous lines of Brecht's 'In Praise of Dialectics', and dialectically reasoned that flag ceremonies at schools should be things of the past and that the Politburo should resign. In her diary notices of those days she writes of the preparation for the public rally: 'They're giving me the swan song role', but only, she adds, 'because I speak with a bit of humour and quick-wittedness.' Spira had entered the KPD in 1931 and remained after the 'Wende' in the PDS. The standpoint of her criticism was not the rejection of the communist ideal but that the SED leadership had betrayed it, and she spoke at the rally not although, but because, she saw herself as a communist. The highpoint of all the demonstrations had been reached.

The flooding of the borders

The SED leadership under Egon Krenz tried to stabilise the situation, but the political pressure in the country grew. From 8 to 10 November 1989, the SED's Central Committee met to discuss the situation. The new communication style was seen in the way Politburo member Günter Schabowski, reported in the evening press conference on the results of the CC meeting and answered journalists' questions. Thus, at the famous press conference of 9 November 1989, carried live by GDR television, Schabowski communicated 'coincidentally' that the SED top leadership had decided to pass a provision 'permitting permanent exit, that is, leaving the Republic'. Then he read out the new travel provisions. When would they become effective? 'Right now, without delay.'

The news programmes of West German television, which could be seen by most GDR citizens, carried this communication during the news show 'Tagesschau' at eight o'clock in the evening, featuring it as its top story. At 8:15 the first Berlin residents began to gather at the border crossings, eight

to ten people at Sonnenallee, twenty at Invalidenstraße, and about fifty at Bornholmer Straße. By about 9 o'clock there was already a crowd there; the first people were 'controlled' to be allowed into West Berlin at 9:20. At about 10:30 controls were no longer possible due to the size of the onrush. 'We're flooding now', the commander in charge of the Bornholmer Straße crossing, told his superiors.

The responsible Politburo members, ministers, and generals who also took part in the CC meeting were not in any way alarmed and worried as they had been when the wall was built in 1961, but instead they rested at home after the strenuous Central Committee session. The officers on the ground had no orders and decided not to use force, as indeed it had not been used in any of the demonstrations since 9 October. But to open the gates it was not enough that people pushed against them; somebody had to open them. Nevertheless, the Berliners had pushed open the gates without waiting for permission from the authorities. In the ensuing period the 'we are the people' became 'we are one people'. No shot was fired on 9 November 1989. Europe's post-war order, which had seemed so firmly established, collapsed. Socialism, in the way that it had developed in Europe since 1917, was at an end. It was the wrong answer to the questions posed by actually existing capitalism. Indeed, these questions were not settled but were opened up again in a new way in the 21st century.

The Soviet factor

An Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance existed between the GDR and the Soviet Union that aimed at 'eternal' assistance.[4] Apart from the fact that the governing communists of both countries (of the Brezhnev-Honecker generation) were trying to establish a quasi-religious, transcendental relationship to history, which rested on the basic conception of the irreversibility of a development from 'capitalism' to 'socialism', this treaty actually also had to have a legal force, since legal formalities of policy were always part of the calculations of communist rule.[5] In the eventful months of 1989/1990 nobody in either the Soviet Union or the GDR cared about this. The lax attitude towards law in general, which was also a characteristic of 'socialist international law' and left its stamp on the history of international legal relations within the 'socialist camp' from the very start, also determined the approach of the political protagonists of the Wende period. This particularly applies to the representatives of the communist nomenklatura, especially in the Soviet Union. It goes without saying that opponents of the system in the months of the radically changing GDR – and the politicians of other parties who slipped out of the 'leading role' of the

communist state party and tried to govern the country after the March 1990 elections with a view to bringing the country into a unified Germany – did not accept the 'law' established by the communists.[6] The end of the GDR cannot be analysed without considering the context of its coming into being and the particularities of its mode of existence, and without discussing it from the perspective of the politics of Soviet hegemony.

In disregard of the eternity clause, German unification had already been contemplated quite concretely in 1987 or 1988 in Moscow without consulting the GDR leadership, if one is to believe the subsequent autobiographical accounts of leading participants. Now one might object that all of this was simply the turning of the tide away from the assertion of special international and international-law relationships among the countries of actually-existing socialism, which had served Moscow's control of the Soviet empire, and towards the recognition of general norms of international law, which came down to human rights, civic freedom, liberal democracy, and capitalist market economy, which the protagonists saw as civilisational progress. One might further say that it was not to be expected that a group of communists (the Soviets under Gorbachev) would treat another group (the German communists around Honecker) in an especially accommodating way, considering how Stalin had persecuted Trotsky and Bukharin, or Walter Ulbricht had persecuted Paul Merker in the GDR. Here, however, it was not a question of death and prison but, on the contrary, the demolition of the Berlin Wall, and Gorbachev did not have Honecker shot but only wanted to see him pushed out of office. This was succinctly expressed in the much-quoted sentence of Gorbachev in Berlin: 'He who comes too late is punished by life'.[7] Nevertheless, the liquidation of the Soviet empire had power-political components that were no different from those of its creation: the empire has interests, not friends.

Up to the mid–1980s – Gorbachev's assumption of office and the beginning of perestroika in the Soviet Union can serve as caesuras – there had been a multiform structure of relations between the states of the Soviet sphere of influence. The structure had been held together multilaterally by the Warsaw Treaty Organization (Warsaw Pact) and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon). There was a web of bilateral 'friendship treaties', which also had special alliance clauses. Meetings of general secretaries, various department secretaries of the central committees, of prime ministers, of foreign ministers, and other ministers appeared to form a dense network of political coordination. Nevertheless, these relationships were far from having embodied a 'new type' of fraternity or creating 'new forms'.

Since the 1950s a process took place, at first imperceptibly, in which

the powers of intervention in other socialist countries that Moscow, as the hegemonic power, had curtailed, and the room for manoeuvre of the ruling 'new classes'[8] of some of the other countries grew. Despite the incomparably greater economic, military, and other resources of the Soviet Union, the CPSU leadership had to gradually accept the qualitative equality of the other party leaderships, which had the same ideological, political, and economic claim to power in regard to each state and its international relations. Four factors should be emphasised in this context:

First, Moscow forfeited the ideological power of interpretation; it was not only the confrontations with Tito and Mao and the inner developments in the 'socialist community' which contributed to this but also those within the world communist movement. Santiago Carillo, then General Secretary of the Spanish Communist Party, in his speech at the Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties of Europe in 1976 in Berlin, compared the communist movement with early Christianity and its sufferings. This 'allowed a connection between scientific communism and a sort of mysticism of victimhood. We became a kind of new church with our martyrs and prophets. For years Moscow, where our dreams began to become a reality, was our Rome. We spoke of the Great Socialist October Revolution as if it were our Christmas. That was our infancy. Today, we have grown up.' He expressly emphasised 'that we, communists, have no leadership centre today and are bound to no international discipline'.[9] Erich Honecker had this speech printed verbatim in the GDR because he had promised the West European Eurocommunists he would do so, and because this fitted his attempt to have the SED become the 'second party' (as the party of Marx's and Engels's country).

Second, the close connection between political power, the ideological power of interpretation, and ownership of the means of production in the hands of the parties had consequences in the individual countries. Not only the institutions of the political system, but also – in view of the introduction of the planned economy and the abolition of authentic market relations – the requisite surrogate institutions that were to fill out the planned-economy systems were different in the different socialist countries. In all Eastern European countries the deficit economy remained the natural mode of existence of the socialist economy, which made Comecon cooperation into regular haggling over scarce goods. Actual integration through multilateral settlements could never be achieved. Scarcities, control over property in the national framework, and differing conceptual positions on planned economy and non-market, that is, contractually stipulated, foreign exchange parities, prevented this. In the mid-1980s, for all countries in the sphere

of Soviet domination, including the hegemon itself, cooperation with the West was more lucrative than it was with 'fraternal countries'. 'There is a force more powerful than the wishes, the will and the decisions of any of the governments or classes that are hostile to us. That force is world general economic relations, which compel them to make contact with us.'[10] Lenin said this in 1921 referring to the West's blockade against Soviet Russia. In 1985 it was clear that the converse also holds.

Third, Soviet positions in foreign and defence policy were, likewise, continually more difficult to implement. If the dogma of the international class struggle was originally an essential factor of the self-legitimation of the communist party leaderships, in the age of détente it had long since lost its binding force. In the area of foreign policy too, the other countries articulated their positions more independently – this also applied to the GDR from the 1980s, especially in its relations to the FRG.

Fourth, still more reticent was the support for the Soviet Union's Third-World policy. If the GDR still tried to profile its own support for the 'anti-imperialist struggles' in Cuba, Nicaragua, or Ethiopia, countries like Poland or Hungary increasingly rejected Soviet policy in this area, which was moreover connected with military conflicts in various parts of the world.

The empire bows out

In the manner of a Russian matryoshka doll, the Soviet empire had many forms. Internally, as the smallest matryoshka, there was Russia, which was always treated by the Moscow leadership as a power base. When CPSU First Secretary Nikita Khrushchev had the idea of giving the Russian CP its own central committee, as the Ukrainian CP and the CPs of other socialist counties had, this became one of the reasons for his removal in 1964; some political forces in Moscow today use this as an argument for exonerating Russia from the responsibility for the past in the other former Soviet republics and to declare it as, so to speak, the first victim of Bolshevism. The second doll was the Soviet Union in its territorial–political form up to its collapse, which appears in the literature as the so-called 'inner empire'. Here the Moscow leadership had direct access to all resources and decisions. The third level was the 'outer empire' in Eastern Europe, that is, the group of states tied to the Soviet Union and dominated by it, which were independent in the above described sense. Their resources could be commanded only partially by the Moscow leadership, above the heads of the 'new classes' in those countries. For Moscow there was the additional problem that it could not derive the hoped for economic benefits from these economically often more highly developed countries. Even if it was possible in individual cases to set

certain prices in a way favouring the Soviet Union, nevertheless as a whole the subsidies or costs of keeping the countries within the Soviet sphere of domination surpassed the derived benefits.[11] The fourth doll was the attempt to project Soviet power and Soviet influence in the Third World, that is, to use the countries freed after the collapse of the imperialist colonial systems as a resource in the bloc confrontation with the West. Here the economic cost-benefit calculation was still more problematic for the Soviet Union than it was in Eastern Europe; in the end it was dragged into a number of regional wars. The war and defeat in Afghanistan marks the beginning of the end of Soviet world power ambitions.[12]

If world-revolutionary approaches were central to Soviet foreign policy after 1917 (and the world-revolutionary thinking still customary articulated in the 1970s should not be confused with a world-revolutionary foreign policy in practice), then after 1945 the USSR gradually became something resembling a classic great power with global ambitions, standing in the tradition of Czarist Russia. The victory over Hitler's Germany in the Second World War, achieved with enormous sacrifices, brought considerable prestige and increased power, and for Russia (in the form of the Soviet Union) the politically and military strongest position in its entire history, now territorially expanded up to the Elbe. Despite its difficult economic basis, the USSR then allowed itself to be drawn into a global contest – the Cold War – with the USA, which was allied to all the other Western powers. The result of the world-power ambitions of the Soviet leaders was a global overreach, which no longer had any relation to economic capacity. The empire was over-extended.[13]

When Gorbachev entered office in 1985 this was the closing balance sheet of the old, Stalinist-influenced leaders (from Stalin through Khrushchev and Brezhnev to Chernenko) and the point of departure for his transformational policy. However, in this he appears to have established a rather pragmatic relationship to the ideological codes of actually existing socialism. Like no other, he had a mastery of the ideological figures of Soviet Communism; this is why he succeeded, from 1985 to 1990, in thwarting all attempts by the orthodox to bring about his removal. But this does not mean that he possessed a true understanding of the extent and depth of the problems facing the Soviet Union. The accusation of 'betrayal', which is often raised today inside and outside Russia, is off target. His socialisation in the Stalinist corridors of power is what formed him. He was more cultured and eloquent than all other Soviet party leaders, probably since Trotsky. And he was determined to end not only the Cold War but also the dictatorial aspect of the communist exercise of power. This is where his historical novelty

lay. But he apparently knew power in only two forms: as the exertion of force and as court intrigue – not as a factor of rule as such. This clearly led to perestroika in combination with glasnost not creating the consolidation originally intended but only the disintegration not only of communist rule but also of the empire.

The ending of the Cold War would have to be seen as the great and lasting historical achievement of Gorbachev. In the beginning of the 1980s the West German political scientist Ernst-Otto Czempiel developed a layer model of the East-West conflict. He distinguished four levels of conflict: at the lowest level, the original conflict, the contrasting positions on the social, economic, and political order; above this the dilemma of security, that is, insecurity about whether the other side would risk an attack; above this the secondary conflict, the power competition in the Third World; and, finally, the fourth level of derived conflict in the form of the armaments dynamic. Czempiel's findings, which at first appear surprising, that the level of tension – certainly against ideological expectations – stands exactly in inverse relation to the order of levels: the greatest tension is at the level of the arms race, high tension also exists at the level of Third-World competition, still considerable tension at the level of the security dilemma, and the least tension at the original system level.[14]

It is striking that Gorbachev proceeded exactly according to these levels of tension: first, through far-reaching concessions in disarmament talks with the USA and the NATO states he brought the Soviet Union to an offensive foreign-policy position and thus contributed to an opening of negotiations. The reduction of arms burdens was to be the first way to rein in imperial over-extension. The second was the Soviet Union's withdrawal from the conflicts in the Third World. With the USA and the other parties to the conflicts, agreements were reached to resolve the conflicts in Africa, Central America, Cambodia, and finally in Afghanistan. Both visibly contributed to reducing the security dilemma. In the meantime, Gorbachev had announced, not only in connection with allies in the Third World but also with those in the Eastern European 'outer empire', a 'free choice of the path of development', in other words the party leaderships in Eastern Europe should themselves derive their legitimation from their respective populations, with Soviet troops no longer available to ensure their power. It is no longer possible today to say to what extent his assurances that the historical decision 'in favour of socialism' was irrevocable were the expression of a spectacularly wrong assessment or simply 'whistling in the dark'. The empire fell apart in the East. With the Charter of Paris in 1990 the original conflict was also laid to rest: human rights, liberal democracy, and capitalist market economy

were established according to international law as the common binding values of Europe.

Illusions and hard facts

In a systemic sense, the dissolution of the Soviet empire was the second dimension of the fiasco of actually-existing socialism. The globalisation of the world and the generalisation of human rights and fundamental democratic values sealed the fate of the communist project in international relations as well. The separation into a specially created 'new world' proved to be unrealisable. What this in the end means for the people in the countries in question is not yet clear. The ongoing peripheralisation of Eastern Central and Southeastern Europe within the European Union is the expression of the fact that the difference in the level of development was not the result of the communist system but has deeper roots. Actually existing socialism can instead be understood as a failed attempt at making up for the historic lag.

Two factors in Gorbachev's strategy in the 1980s have had especially far-reaching consequences. After the First World War, the slogan of 'proletarian internationalism' was the banner under which the Bolsheviks gathered up the Russian earth. Therefore the Russian Empire did not fall apart under the onslaught of nationalism analogously to the way the Habsburg and Ottoman empires had permanently disintegrated. After the Second World War 'internationalism' was the ideological foundation for the erection of the outer empire as well as for the extension into the Third World. However, the clear-cut relinquishment of 'internationalism' in favour of general human values not only removed from the Soviet area of domination its usual basis in the external forms of the matryoshka but also the inner ones. Already in 1989, the aspirations to independence of Lithuania and Georgia signalled the disintegration of the USSR; in the form of the Chechen War of the 1990s it became evident that this process would not even stop at the Russian Federation. Certainly, a democratic refounding of a greater federation grouped around Russia would have also been thinkable. But for this it was obvious that there were neither the historical and constitutional conditions nor the political will of the national elites.

The other factor was that of nonviolence. The overriding goal of ending the Cold War and the arms race, as well as removing the security dilemma, excluded the use of force against independentist aspirations. The deployment of military force, for example forcibly reclosing the border in the GDR or cracking down on the Lithuanian Parliament would, in Gorbachev's estimation, have meant not only the end of perestroika but would have destroyed all the results of the détente achieved since 1985. In return, the

West promised restraint. During the 1989 Summit in Malta US President Bush senior promised that the West would not take advantage of the Soviet Union's weakened position. In February 1990, then US Secretary of State James Baker ensured Gorbachev that in return for the Soviets' agreement to NATO membership for a united Germany 'there will be a guarantee that NATO will not extend its territory one inch eastward'.[15] It is this promise that Moscow today rightfully regards as having been broken with NATO's eastward expansion.

Thus Gorbachev's policy was based on two premises: that the trimming back of the empire could be halted at a definite point, and that after its contraction the Soviet Union would be treated just as much as a superpower as it previously was. Both proved to be illusions. The protagonists in Moscow were not conscious of this in 1989, and they cheerfully carried on their foreign policy of the 'new thinking', which became a policy of strategic retreat. In the West, both before and after this time, there was and still is a lack of readiness to recognise Russia as an equal power.

The German dimension of the European turning point

Germany is once again a primary factor of political influence in Europe and the world. The basis of this transformed geopolitical position is Germany's economic strength, expressed in the high technological level of important export goods in domains such as automobile manufacture, mechanical engineering, and the chemical industry, as well as in a traditionally high export surplus. In 2017 this amounted to 244.5 billion euros, of which the trade surplus with the USA alone amounted to 50 billion euros.

When the Wall fell and German unification was accomplished, many people in both Germanys had hopes for a good future and especially for a peaceful one. Today German troops are stationed in the Hindu Kush, at the Turkish border, and in Africa, performing the tasks of a 'protection force' in various provinces of Southeast Europe controlled by NATO or the EU, and German warships are cruising the oceans. Germany is once again Europe's central power, it dominates the European Union and has once again become a geo-economic power – based on the EU – with global interests. Hopes for a permanently pacified Germany have been dashed. The chatter about 'more responsibility' for Germany on the part of the former federal president, of various foreign ministers, and of the current Minister of Defence is aimed at promoting the domestic population's readiness for war. The anti-Russian campaign underway since 2014 plays a special role in this process.

It is pure propaganda when Western politicians and journalists today assert that the West is only seeking to extend 'its values', while Russian

President Vladimir Putin only wants to extend his influence territorially in the manner of the nineteenth century. Of course NATO and the European Union represent geopolitical orders. The former is dominated by the US, the second by Germany. Both have been extended to the East up to Russia's borders. (In this respect, this section could have also been headed 'The other empire expands again'.) This involves cooperation and competition. From the US point of view, in light of the collapse of the Soviet Union, an independent Ukraine is the crux of a new geopolitical order in Eastern Europe. Zbigniew Brzeziński, for decades a prominent mastermind of US global strategy, emphasised soon after the collapse of the Soviet Union that an independent Ukraine is 'the geopolitical focal point for keeping Russia in a weakened position'. This must, he insisted, be a core element of a comprehensive strategy of the US and the West in Eurasia.[16]

Admittedly, the Ukraine is geopolitically tied to the EU. The 'political' part of the Association Agreement, which referred to what was at stake in the confrontations around and in the Ukraine at the latest by November 2013, was signed on 21 March 2014 in Brussels and the 'economic' part on 27 June 2014. Comparable agreements were signed with Georgia and the Republic of Moldova. The connection of these countries to the EU has by now been contractually established. But they do not have firm assurances of later EU membership. They thus belong to the outer eastern periphery of the EU's imperial centre, where they are positioned against Russia. After the First World War, Europe's East – between Germany's eastern border and the western border of the Soviet Union or Russia and also between the Baltic and the Black Sea – was the West's cordon sanitaire against the Soviet Union, and after the Second World War that of the Soviet Union against the West; today, once again, these countries are to function as the advance guard of the West against Russia. The expanded NATO manoeuvres in the Baltic, in Poland, and in the Black Sea are the clear expression of this and are endangering peace.

Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel has always invoked 'friendship' with the US but at the same time enlarged the room for manoeuvre for German foreign policy especially in relation to the US. Programmatically, she has stressed that Germany should emerge strengthened from the financial and euro crisis of 2008 and after. Today it is in a dominant, hegemonic position within the EU. In relation to Russia she has always played the human-rights card but has up to now also cultivated strategic cooperation. In 2014, with the aid of US policy – NATO in a certain sense making available the hard military substructure – the Ukraine was detached from Russia's sphere of influence and moved to the EU's, that is, to Germany's. In turn, Russia

took the Crimea, which was greeted in the West by protest, but in the end the West supposed that Russia would be happy to continue to maintain relations with the West, that is, Germany. The subsequent insistence of the Chancellor on sanctions against Russia is symbolically aimed at getting Russia to back down on the issue of Ukraine's transference to the EU's sphere of power.

The new European order is a sweeping historic event. Something has been accomplished here, which Germany failed to attain in two world wars. On 11 August 1914, shortly before the beginning of the First World War, Reich Chancellor von Bethmann Hollweg wrote regarding German war aims in the East: 'We regard as very important the "Insurgierung" not only of Poland but also of Ukraine; first, as a means of struggle against Russia; second, because in the case of a favourable outcome of the war, the formation of several buffer states between Russia and Germany and Russia and Austria–Hungary would be advisable, in order to lighten the pressure exerted by the Russian colossus on Western Europe and to push back Russia as far as possible eastward […].'[17] On its own, Germany was not able to accomplish this through two world wars; with the support of the EU and US/NATO it is now to happen. Here, the words of the Minister of Defence, Ursula von der Leyen, uttered at the time of the Ukraine Crisis, acquire a whole symbolism of their own: 'Always in alliance with our partners. There will never be a German solo action'.[18] Thus it is sufficient if NATO is there in the background. The Ukraine does not even have to be a NATO member to finalise this reorganisation.

The political scientist and Cold War fossil, Christian Hacke, declared shortly after Donald Trump's electoral victory that, for a conflict with Russia, Germany needs its own capability for 'escalation dominance'; for, he said, we do not know whether the US under Trump will continue to support the foreign policy Germany has so far conducted. What does 'escalation dominance' mean? Behind it there are patterns of thinking derived from the Cold War: There is a conflict, one side increases pressure, the other follows suit, the first party then sharpens it again, etc. One can think of this with non–military means, as both sides have done with the economic and trade sanctions since 2014, or the US and the EU, China, and others currently practice with escalating 'punitive tariffs'. But it can also be conceived militarily: NATO stations 5,000 personnel in the vicinity of the Russian border, in response Russia moves three additional divisions to its western border, in the East the West installs 'missile–defence systems' allegedly serving for defence but which are actually part of an offensive nuclear warfare concept, to which Russia responds stationing missiles in the

area of Kalinigrad that can be equipped with nuclear warheads and reach Warsaw or Berlin in a few minutes.

Henry Kissinger, Security Advisor and Secretary of State under US President Richard Nixon, who in the 1970s negotiated the peace accord with Vietnam and the first treaties on strategic nuclear arms limitation, commented that he who escalates must also know how he can extricate himself and de-escalate. This is something that the strategists in the US Senate and those in Brussels in NATO currently do not know in terms of Russia.

To have dominance in escalation means to have the capacity to aggravate the situation without the other side being able to do anything effective about it. The West had this in its Libya War; Russia and China had to look on and do nothing more than protest politically and diplomatically against the breach of international law and the violation of the UN Security Council's resolution. Military intervention on the side of the Gadaffi regime would have created a confrontation with the US and NATO and – thinking the escalation through to its logical end – the danger of a nuclear war. Conversely, Russia has escalation dominance in the Syria War: the West cannot impede the deployments of Russian and Syrian government troops without provoking an open military confrontation, whose consequence would be nuclear war.

But what does Hacke really want? What escalation dominance of Germany against Russia as a nuclear power does he have in mind? He did not say. Berthold Kohler, one of the editors of the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (27 November 2016) let the cat out of the bag: If Trump sticks to his line, the US will leave the 'defence of Europe' (meaning the EU) 'to the Europeans' to an extent not seen after 1945. Let us leave aside for now that Kohler was situating Nazi Germany's war against the Soviet Union in the tradition of the 'defence of Europe', which the US took over in 1945. The conclusion he drew is that not only are greater expenditures on defence, as well as the 'revival of obligatory military service', back on the agenda, but also something 'that is totally unthinkable for the German brain': the question of an independent nuclear deterrence capacity against Moscow. For this the French and British arsenals are too weak. This means the German atom bomb. That this was not a gaffe in 2016, but the thinking of a part of those wielding political influence in Germany, became clear at the latest when the newspaper *Die Welt* recently had Christian Hacke repeat this demand (*WELTplus*, 29 July 2018).

In Article 3 of the 1990 '2+4 Treaty',[19] the governments of the FRG and the GDR reaffirmed 'their renunciation of the manufacture and possession

of and control over nuclear, biological and chemical weapons. They declare that the united Germany, too, will abide by these commitments.' 'The French Republic, the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America' in turn declared in Article 7 the termination of their 'rights and responsibilities relating to Berlin and to Germany as a whole', with the consequence: 'The united Germany shall have accordingly full sovereignty over its internal and external affairs.' 'Accordingly' means 'under these conditions.'[20] With this, German affairs, which were part of the Cold War and of international confrontations since 1945, were in substance definitively regulated. German sovereignty, however, is tied to the renunciation of nuclear weapons and in this sense continues to be conditioned.

Apparently, parts of the political caste in Germany have in the meanwhile begun to sense their own strength again, regarding the '2+4 Treaty' as waste paper that can be flouted. And there it is once again, German arrogance, which led the world into two devastating world wars! However, the idea of a Germany with nuclear weapons is once again a false assessment. In regard to preventing Germany from becoming an atomic power, all the victorious allied forces of the Second World War are once again in the same boot. All four of them.

NOTES

1   Nikolai Bukharin and Evgenii Preobrazhensky, *The ABC of Communism*, Baltimore MD: Penguin Books, 1969, §29 and §34. Emphases in original.

2   Rosa Luxemburg, 'Zur russischen Revolution', in Rosa Luxemburg, *Gesammelte Werke*, vol. 4, Berlin: Dietz Verlag 1974, pp. 362f.

3   Wojciech Jaruzelski, *Hinter den Türen der Macht. Der Anfang vom Ende einer Herrschaft*, Leipzig: Militzke Verlag, 1996, p. 75.

4   In the Agreement on Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance between the GDR and the USSR, for whose drawing up Honecker had travelled to Moscow on 7 October 1975, on the GDR's national holiday, with a large state delegation, Article 1 states that both sides will steadfastly continue to develop and consolidate their relations of not only 'indissoluble' but also 'eternal' friendship and 'fraternal mutual aid' (quoted according to *Neues Deutschland*, Berlin, 8 October 1975).

5   The term 'communist' is used here exclusively as relates to the conception of society and, derived from this, the system of domination, that is, it is used typologically. Here I follow the theoretical distinction between socialism and communism as Peter Ruben developed it against the background of European intellectual history: Accordingly, *communists* are those who want to resolve the social question, the more or less extreme gap between rich and poor, through the expropriation of all important productive property in society and its communalisation; socialists, on the other hand, are those who want to resolve the social question by subordinating capital to the control of the

community; through laws and the state they want to ensure that capital is subordinated to labour and not the other way round. See Peter Ruben, 'Die kommunistische Antwort auf die Sozialfrage', in *Berliner Debatte Intial* 1/1998, pp. 5f.

6   This was seen, for example, in the conscious contempt that important personalities of the de Maizière government showed towards GDR diplomats when travelling abroad (see on this: Birgit Malchow (ed.), *Der Letzte macht das Licht aus. Wie DDR-Diplomaten das Jahr 1990 im Ausland erlebten*, Berlin, 1999). It was the expression of the distance between GDR citizens, who did not feel close to the SED, and the top functionaries, and at the same time of mistrust, feelings of envy, and inferiority complexes. The fatal political consequence of that constellation was that in the process of unification the de Maizière government largely and consciously refused to seek professional advice from GDR institutions. This is the principal reason for the imbalances of the Treaties on German Unification, which are all to the detriment of ex-GDR citizens and which have continued to produce undesirable results for decades, The West German top-level bureaucracy could work out the treaty texts and their 'fine-print details' unperturbed to the benefit of its employers, and the chief negotiator for the FRG, Minister of the Interior Wolfgang Schäuble, concluded the Treaty, as it were, with himself. But ultimately the ignorance of legal policy and arbitrariness that the Soviet side as well as the Federal-German and the GDR Wende-period government displayed in 1990 in the face of the GDR's legal system, was only the reverse side of the 'primacy of politics', which the governing Communists not only had continually preached but also practiced.

7   Spoken in Berlin/GDR on 7 October 1989, quoted in the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 3 October 2004.

8   The term is used following Milovan Djilas, *The New Class: An Analysis of the Communist System*, New York: Praeger, 1957.

9   International Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties, Berlin, 1976. Dokumente und Reden, Berlin: Dietz Verlag 1976, S. 120f.

10   Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 33, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973, p. 155.

11   See Jochen Franzke, 'Imperium unter dem roten Banner. Überlegungen zum Ende der Sowjetunion', *Welt Trends* 6, Berlin, März 1995, p. 69.

12   Franzke, p. 70.

13   Here I am following the analytical concept presented in Paul M. Kennedy, *The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000*, New York: Vintage Books, 1987.

14   Ernst-Otto Czempiel, 'Nachrüstung und Systemwandel. Ein Beitrag zur Diskussion um den Doppelbeschluss der NATO', in 'Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte'. Beilage zur Wochenzeitung *Das Parlament* 5 (6 February 1982), p. 29.

15   Michael R. Beschloss and Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War*, Boston: Little, Brown & Co. 1994; quoted from German edition: *Auf höchster Ebene. Das Ende des Kalten Krieges und die Geheimdiplomatie der Supermächte 1989-1991*, Düsseldorf: ECON Verlag, 1993, p. 245.

16   Zbigniew Brzeziński, *The Grand Chessboard: American Primacy and its Geostrategic Imperatives*, New York: Basic Books, 1997; Quoted from the German edition: Zbigniew Brzeziński, *Die einzige Weltmacht. Amerikas Strategie der Vorherrschaft*, Frankfurt a.M.: S. Fischer Verlag, 1997, pp. 74, 216

17   From a communication of Reich Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg to Heinrich von Tschirschky, German ambassador in Vienna, 11 August 1914, in: Wolfgang Schumann and Ludwig Nestler, in cooperation with Willibald Gutsche and Wolgang Ruge (eds), *Weltherrschaft im Visier. Dokumente zu den Europa- und Weltherrschaftsplänen des deutschen Imperialismus von der Jahrhundertwende bis Mai 1945*, Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1975, p. 79. 'Insurgierung' means incitement and fomenting civil commotion and armed uprisings.

18   Minister von der Leyen in a *Die Zeit* interview: 'Tabus beiseite legen und offen diskutieren, at <bmvg.de>, 21 August 2014.

19   The Unification Treaty Between the FRG and GDR (Berlin, 31 August 1991).

20   <https://www.cvce.eu/content/publication/1997/10/13/2c391661-db4e-42e5-84f7-bd86108c0b9c/publishable_en.pdf>.

The Communist Party of Greece in 2018 – The Centenary of Its Birth and Fifty Years After Its Split

Tasos Trikkas

In the hundred years of its life, the historic Communist Party of Greece (KKE) became the principal target of three fascist and far-right dictatorships. Under bourgeois parliamentary governments it was outlawed for half a century. During the Greek Civil War in which it was trapped, five thousand of its activists were executed by firing squads and many more were killed in mountain warfare. In the Second World War it led an unparalleled, mass popular resistance movement that took on the dimensions of a huge revolutionary campaign for reconstructing Greece as an independent country with authentic democratic institutions that would faithfully reflect the popular will, and with a social organisation based on a broad class alliance between the forces of labour and culture. The following is dedicated to all those who contributed to that campaign. Addressing those who are living today, we pay tribute to those who perished in the struggle.

The Socialist Workers' Party of Greece (1918-1924)

In the family of the Third International parties, the Communist Party of Greece is the 'lastborn'. It was the last communist party founded in the Balkans or, to be accurate, the next to last if one also considers the Communist Party of Albania, which was established in 1941. It was founded in November 1918 as the Socialist Workers' Party of Greece (SEKE) and renamed the KKE in November 1924.

Socialist ideas appeared in Greece in the 1870s and 1880s, when the first groups and political entities were created, some of them with connections to Western European countries. Many years were to elapse before merging them into a single political formation came on the agenda. The trajectory of the Greek labour movement goes back to the end of the nineteenth century, when the first trade unions were established in Syros, Piraeus, and

Athens. In 1914, the 'Federation', a ground-breaking socialist organisation in Thessaloniki,[1] became the soul of a major strike by tobacco workers in Macedonia. The authorities reacted by arresting and deporting two of the organisation's officials to the isle of Naxos. These were the first instances in Greece of deportations of left trade-unionists.

In 1918, the left in Greece consisted of several small, disparate groups of intellectuals inspired by the social ideas that had appeared in Western and Central Europe, of students and of a few craftsmen and workers, each with different 'platforms', an incongruous assortment without a solid base. The labour and socialist movements advanced on separate but parallel paths. A milestone in the history of the Greek left occurred when the separate existence of the groups – which Lenin regarded as detrimental in all cases – came to an end. SEKE was created out of the scattered and heterogeneous groups whose ideological tools were reminiscent of the 'soup of the poor', the metaphor Lenin used to connote a mishmash of ideas, theories, and proposals.

SEKE's birth constitutes a sort of historical paradox. Whereas other communist parties, like the Italian and the French, arose from splits in the former socialist parties[2] in which the revolutionary wings separated from their evolutionary/reformist counterparts, SEKE is the product of a compromise between the Greek 'Bolsheviks' and 'Mensheviks' who put their differences aside to create a single party, the main political actor of the socialist movement in Greece. Instead of a divorce, there was a wedding. It was the implementation in practice of what Eric Hobsbawm said: 'Every communist party was the offspring of two incompatible partners, a national left and the October Revolution. It was a marriage of love but also for a purpose, a marriage of calculation.' In the case of the KKE it was a delayed marriage, considering that in the remote Balkan Peninsula, the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party, a precursor to the Communist Party of Bulgaria, was founded in 1891, about thirty years before SEKE. Social democratic parties also existed in Croatia since 1894, in Slovenia since 1896, in Serbia since 1903, and in Romania since 1909.

SEKE was born at the crossroad between the two 'paradigms' of the labour movement, the social democratic and the communist. While in its founding congress there was reference to class struggle and a salute to the Russian Revolution as 'a world historical event', the party's evolution was not set in stone; it remained open to both possibilities. The flowing river could debouch either into a social democratic channel that was potentially there or into the unchartered waters of a new type of party; SEKE's statute was not binding.

The first intra-party conflict involved entrance into the Third International. Everyone wanted it – apart from some declared 'rightists' – but for different reasons and in different ways. The party's left, especially the youth, demanded a full, 'organic' integration, the centrists (Benaroya[3]) wanted an 'undifferentiated' integration, while the reformists sought only an ideological one. SEKE's first National Council decided to assign to the Central Committee the task of preparing the ground for accession to the Third International. The import of this was to postpone accession to allow the party to catch its breath and gradually come to a consensual decision.

The diversity of SEKE's constituents and the lack of a 'preparatory phase', that is, the lack of a social democratic tradition as well as communication with sister parties in other countries, was to impede its development. The signs of a difficult birth accompanied the party in the journey towards its 'violent maturation'. The adverse conditions had to do with the way in which SEKE was established and also its inadequate relationship to its social reference: the weak, fragmented, disparate working class of a small country with a belated capitalist formation.

Furthermore, several questions which had been discussed and studied in depth for decades within the parties or public spaces of other countries under the influence of socialist ideas – from the question of 'revolution or reform' to that of direct workers' demands – were dealt with for the first time in Greece by the infant SEKE. These issues were dragged along as baggage, as unsolvable problems, in SEKE/KKE's historical journey. From within, from a kind of vacuum, the new party urgently had to launch theoretical processes and find practical solutions and a structured and consistent system of proposals, which in other European parties had matured in successive phases. Also absent in the first years of the SEKE/KKE was a trade-union movement, which in other countries was a school of political struggle for the socialist movement and a storehouse of accumulated social, class experience. And last but not least, the Greek socialists/communists did not participate in the political, ideological, and highly educational debate that took place inside the European social democratic parties around the issue of the imminent First World War.

Lack of experience, inadequate Marxist education, and low educational level characterise the first phase of the Greek communist movement and its party. However that may be, the emergence of SEKE/KKE ended the political monopoly of the bourgeoisie in Greek public life and opened the way to the creation of a party of the working class and its potential allies – the 'underprivileged small and medium-level farmers, and the lower-level professionals and employees', as defined in the documents of SEKE's 1918

founding congress.

Soon after its founding, the young inexperienced party had to face the Greco-Turkish War.[4] SEKE was the only Greek party that opposed the opportunistic military campaign against Turkey, into which Greece was led by the big imperialist countries, organising anti-war actions at the front. The campaign in Asia Minor resulted in a terrible collapse. Greek soldiers laid down their arms, and the generals with their staff were taken hostage by the Turkish army, which burned down the city of Smyrna.

SEKE had, in this chaotic situation, become a sufficiently important political force that King Constantine sent a message to Yanis Kordatos, the party secretary, then in prison, asking SEKE to enter government, 'since the soldiers would only obey the communists'. Kordatos rejected the Crown's invitation. However, the problem was not his rejection but SEKE's general apathy and passivity in those crucial times. Following the catastrophe, panic, turmoil, and paralysis prevailed in Greece, and the regime collapsed. The country was on the verge of a revolutionary crisis. SEKE's leadership, its officials and members, all those who were not in prison for their anti-war action, looked on passively without intervening. Nobody assumed the responsibility of exploiting the conditions for a social upheaval, which seemed to be maturing rapidly.

'Friendly' interventions

KKE was sorely tried not only by the clashes with its political and class opponents. It also suffered heavy blows in other areas and from other directions, which permanently scarred it. It was the victim of a series of interventions coming from the centre of the world communist movement. Both from the Executive Committee of the Communist International (Comintern) – which, in the view of the Greek communist intellectual and activist, Angelos Elephantis, was only communist and international until the 1920s[5] – and from the International Department of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).

It is true that before the cold Stalinist wind began to blow, the Comintern had helped SEKE/KKE to orient itself towards the 'masses' and resist the seductions of a reformism dignified as it was with 'Venizelos's colours'.[6] The 21 conditions of the Comintern[7] did not prevent the KKE from becoming a democratic party in the first period of its life. However, interventions in the 1930s were not really acts of comradely solidarity, with two of them going so far as to appoint the party's leadership, disregarding the statutes and the autonomy of a self-contained, independent party that belonged to the Comintern.

The impression these interventions left on the KKE was very deep. In 1931 a bitter dispute broke out within the leadership between two groups with divergent interpretations of the 'Third Period' policies – the policies oriented to the 'end of the partial stabilisation of capitalism' and the policies of 'class against class' and socialism.[8] Having determined that the prolonged dispute within the KKE was undermining the credibility of this political line, the Comintern rushed to intervene and end the conflict by shutting down the intra-party dialogue and imposing a new leadership with Nikos Zachariadis as Secretary.[9]

The definition of the future revolution's character in Greece was a key issue for the KKE. Would it be a socialist or a bourgeois democratic one? The answer was given, after a very long time, in January 1934 by the Sixth Plenary of the then Central Committee which declared that the character of the revolution would be 'bourgeois democratic with a tendency to rapidly change into a socialist revolution'. It was a declaration that was misleadingly called a KKE decision. In fact, the character of the revolution in Greece was defined by a branch of the Central Executive of the Comintern in accordance with its own unspecified criteria and specifically by its Balkan Secretariat, which composed the decision statement. The KKE's delegation, which was present during the workings of the Secretariat, was only allowed to express an opinion, and its members' request that the party itself should be allowed to deal with the issue was ignored.

At the 1956 Sixth Plenary of the Central Committee held in Bucharest, outside the party's own processes and outside Greece, Zachariadis was removed from the leadership and, with a harsh and specific critique of the party's activities, the politics of the KKE was radically altered. This Plenary was called by an 'International Committee' consisting of top officials from the communist parties of six countries (the Soviet Union, Romania, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Poland), formed on the margins of the Twentieth Congress of the CPSU, which determined its composition and instructed its actions. Zachariadis was made accountable for the 'anomalous intra-party regime', the 'far-left evaluation' of the character of the pursued social transformation in Greece, the cultivation of anti-global and chauvinist (i.e., anti-Soviet) tendencies, and for a long list of other errors. This intervention deprived the KKE of an opportunity to attempt, through its own forces and independent procedures, to exit from the deep crisis in which it found itself after the outcome of the Civil War and to dissect its own mistakes.

Another major external intervention had taken place in June 1924 during the Seventh Conference of the Balkan Communist Federation (BCF), which

focused exclusively on the 'situation in the KKE'. The conference dealt with all the issues included in the agenda of the Third Extraordinary Congress of the Communist Party of Greece scheduled to be held three months later, in September 1924, anticipating its decisions on several aspects of Greek public life as well as internal party life. Even more serious was the following 'warning' of the BCF Conference to the KKE that revealed the real reason for its convention: 'the KKE would commit a major error if it continued dismissing the national revolutionary movement (that is, the Macedonian revolutionary organisation, IMRO[10]). The decision of the Seventh KKE Congress, in 1945, was blatantly focused on the slogan 'Independence for Thrace and Macedonia'. The Macedonian issue was, for many years, a bleeding wound of the Greek communist and left movement, since it exposed the KKE members and officials to extremely grave accusations of 'high treason' and alienated the party from a large section of Greece's population, which considered it 'anti-patriotic'.

The issue of political alliances

SEKE was founded when Eleftherios Venizelos was at the zenith of his power. As the leader of the Greek bourgeoisie, Venizelos was not against the unification of the disparate socialist groups, for he was hoping that a socialist party could be an asset in the country's foreign policy, by enhancing the government's relations with states where social democracy had access to the highest offices. Moreover, he wanted to show that he was in favour of the working class; under his rule Greece acquired a quite progressive labour legislation compared to other countries in the period. But Venizelos did not hide the class character of his policies. He repeatedly explained that his aim was to prevent an alliance between workers and peasants that would constitute 'a threat to capital and the regime'.[11]

Despite class rivalry, Liberals could not be excluded as a potential ally of the KKE against the camp of monarchy and extreme conservatism. However, at the same time, such a possible alliance carried the risk of integrating the subaltern classes in the system. At a time when the Comintern's 'Third Period' ideas were dominant, the outbreak of sectarianism it fostered undermined this fruitful contradiction. Historically, the KKE's relationship with the liberal Centre Union[12] was a 'crucifying problem' for the left, as Ilias Iliou, the President of the United Democratic Left (EDA[13]), put it. The KKE leadership's dogmatism, by continuously reducing the problem to an ideological and class confrontation, hampered the party's ability to deal with it. The EDA, mostly due to KKE pressure, did not come to an agreement with the Centre Union around a realistic 'common programme' against

reaction, based on specific goals.

The 'crucifying problem' was part of the baggage that the KKE dragged along throughout its history. Added to this was the absence or delay of an official party position on extremely significant issues of the post–World War II conjuncture (the Lebanon Pact,[14] the December events,[15] the Civil War,[16] etc.), which was regarded as potential self-criticism. These were issues that lay dormant, mistakes lacking any substantial appraisal of their causes. The common practice of the leadership groups added to the burden – every new leadership 'erased' the deeds of the previous one, avoiding even a political condemnation. These abrupt reversals recycled the problems or maintained them. The KKE appeared to regularly invalidate its own history.

1968: The time of truth

Despite the great difficulties it experienced throughout its life, the KKE hit its stride and became a pioneer in Greece's democratic and social struggles. It tasted the joy of victory and the sorrow of defeat at critical crossroads in the life of the Greek nation. It did wonders leading the movement of national resistance. It got trapped during the occupation by the British imperialists and stumbled into a destructive Civil War, under the cold gaze of the Soviets who were promoting their own statist and economistic interests. At the same time, the KKE fought very hard against the ideology of class compromise, of defeatism in the face of imperialist forces, and against the spirit of subjugation and misery. But it developed a tendency to undervalue the importance of the balance of forces, and this led it into inopportune conflicts and to the neglect of strategic planning.

The KKE marched on a ground mined with past 'deficits' offered as excuses for the distortion of an 'anomalous internal party situation' (a characterisation used by renewal communists to refer to the undemocratic aspect of the KKE) and for its paralysis deriving from its dependence on the CPSU from which it received and adopted, among other things, a shallow, schematic, and dogmatic Soviet Marxism. The climax of all these accumulated burdens occurred when the party was taken by surprise and proved incapable of dealing with the military coup of 21 April 1967. The time of truth had come.

The coup revealed the real content of the conflict within Greece's political system that kept the country disorganised throughout the 1960s. The Greek state of the winners of the Civil War, the palace, the military leadership, the extreme right, and the parastatal organisations were all determined not to hand over power to any other political actor, even one representing a section of the Greek bourgeoisie, that is, the Centre Union. They trusted

no one but themselves. This was the reason why they in fact never really handed power over to the Centre Union, despite its parliamentary majority, and continuously undermined its government until they decided to overturn it in Parliament, in July 1965.

The central contested issue was how long a stalemated balance of forces would last between, on the one hand, the powerful hard right, which had held power for a long period of time, and the Centre Union, which represented the rising cluster of forces of the 'moderate bourgeoisie', and, on the other hand, the indomitable militant left and the mass social movements influenced by it. Destroying this equilibrium would either imply the stabilisation of the system under the complete domination of the extreme right bloc or the opening of a path towards the normalisation of political life in a western-type parliamentary democracy.

In a symmetrical way, the externally appointed leadership of the KKE made every possible effort to keep the other pole of this binary system under its control. However, the Greek communist movement was organisationally divided. The appointed KKE leadership was established outside Greece, while inside the country the communists acted and were integrated within the framework of the EDA, a party guided by the KKE leadership but having gained a significant degree of autonomy. Cut off from the complex Greek reality, the appointed leadership of the KKE was unable to understand the dramatic issues of the conflict inside Greece. It believed that by imposing the de facto legalisation of the KKE it could achieve hegemony within the 'progressive' pole – that is, the left and the centre – of the political system, absorbing the EDA and outweighing the Centre Union, while almost blindly undervaluing the dangers of a military coup.

The military coup finally occurred in April 1967. In the face of this fait accompli, the KKE's leadership now felt free to purge itself, in the Twelfth Plenary of the party's Central Committee, of members regarded as 'revisionist elements'. This was in line with Brezhnev's policy after he succeeded Khrushchev, with the latter's hesitant and limited de-Stalinisation. It was the period of the dogma of 'limited sovereignty' with the neutralisation of resistance in Czechoslovakia, generally in Central Europe, and in Greece and the dominance of the monolithic international centre of the world communist movement.

The political substance of the arguments on both sides of the split was extraordinarily weak. Past and present historical mistakes (the Civil War, but also the period immediately before the dictatorship of 21 April 1967), were not at all addressed. Major events of the party's history remained in the shadows, intentionally or unintentionally neglected by many members

of the party's leadership. The conflict was dominated by procedural issues (the real majority in the party's bodies, the legality of party procedures and decisions, etc.) as well as by declaratory (and apolitical) statements about the need for 'unity'.

The problem was much deeper, but it was frozen by the Cold War just like other relevant problems of the international communist movement or the 'world socialist camp', as it was officially called. The Greek left movement had penetrated deep into the enemy's support base, but it had many weaknesses on its own side. It looked like the Janus of antiquity: one body, two faces – one facing forward, the other backward. It was necessary to both stabilise its conquests behind enemy lines and 'digest' the historical 'loose ends' within, to both clear and assimilate the past after reflecting on common experiences, to solve present conflicts with an honest recognition of differences and an open dialogue. The party had to allow the fresh wind of liberation from a stifling situation blow within it. It had to give the Janus a single face again. At this moment, the dogmatists in its leadership chose to create a split, encouraged by the neo-Stalinist international centre.

The causes of the split were evident: first, the conjuncture, that is, the dictatorship and its consequences, the persecutions, and the not so promising prospects of the resistance; second, the KKE's modus operandi. The dominant spirit of pragmatism marginalised issues having to do with the past. In these circumstances a deeper political reflection was replaced by a superficial political 'analysis' of the conjuncture and the consequent 'tasks' of the party. Another cause of the split was the distinction between 'those who were inside' and 'those who were outside' Greece. The seat and the leadership of the party were outside Greece, and it was there that discussions and confrontations took place and decisions were made. It was thus to be expected that opinions, disagreements, and the grouping of members and officials would first develop outside the country. On the other hand, inside Greece there were scattered party members with innovative ideas in communication with the currents of Western Marxism but who, even when exchanging views on various issues, never violated the spirit of safeguarding the party's 'unity'.

The announcement of a break with the negative aspects of the KKE's historical heritage was made by the party's radio station in Bucharest, the central hub of a power system constructed by the leadership group outside Greece with the support of the machinery of 'actually-existing socialism'. This radio station was occupied by the communists who resisted the section of the leadership that took the initiative for the Twelfth Plenary. The occupation symbolises the major rupture that took place fifty years ago.

That these rebellious communists defied the aspirations of the appointed KKE leadership under the difficult conditions of such a political climate and courageously faced the risk of a split redounds to their honour. They dared to accept the ultimate challenge of restoring and rehabilitating the party and freeing it from the dark side of its history, from all the baggage it kept dragging along with it.

A product of these torturous and difficult efforts was the short-lived party of Greek Eurocommunism, the KKE (of the) Interior,[17] a courageous recognition of, and reaction to, the deadlock of actually-existing socialism, and the flagship of the search for 'socialism with democracy and freedom'. Through a long process of transition and a succession of various political formations, the first attempt to renew the communist and the broader Greek left bore rich fruit in the development of ideas and in terms of new organisations, leading to the present Greek government, which still has the left at its core.

The KKE's century of life is characterised by uneven and tough battles involving proud victories and heavy defeats, as well as a long life in illegality; but also by painful interventions by forces other than those of the opponent's political and class camp – a long journey, many stubborn battles, structural problems linked to the conditions of its birth, and major political blunders, some of them excusable, some not. with an internal life that could be democratic, allowing free dialogue, but which faced many difficulties and obstacles. Loyal to its ideals and consistent in its major choices, the KKE had reached the point where the overwhelming burden of all negative past experiences and the perpetual accumulation of problems were no longer compatible with its advance. It had all become an inextricable knot, a Gordian knot. In February 1968, the communist renewal activists dared to cut it.

NOTES

1   The Socialist Workers Federation or 'Federation' was formed in 1909 in Thessaloniki. Its structure was based on the federative model of the Social Democratic Party of Austria, with members coming from the four main ethnic groups of the city: Jews, Bulgarians, Greeks, and Turks (note by Haris Golemis).
2   The Italian Communist Party (PCI) was founded in 1921 (initially and until 1943 with the name Communist Party of Italy) from a split of the Italian Socialist Party (PSI). The French Communist Party (PCF) was created in 1920 when the majority members of the French Section of the Workers' International (SFIO) created the French Section of the Communist International (SFIC). The SFIC was renamed PCF in 1921 (note by Haris Golemis).

3   Avraam Eliezer Benaroya (1887-1979) was a Jewish socialist member of the Bulgarian Social Democratic Party and a leader of the Socialist Workers' Federation ('Federation') in the Ottoman Empire. He played a key role in the foundation of SEKE and of the General Confederation of Greek Workers (note by Haris Golemis).

4   Also known in Greece as the Asia Minor Catastrophe. Greece was defeated by Turkey in 1922, thus ending a four-year war between the two countries with tragic consequences: around 50,000 dead, 75,000 injured, and 1.5 million refugees, followed by an exchange of populations.

5   Angelos Elefantis, *I epagelia mias adinatis epanstasis. KKE ke astismos ston mesopolemo* (Promise of an impossible revolution. The KKE and the bourgeoisie in the interwar period), Themelio, 1999

6   Eleftherios Venizelos (1864-1936) was a modernising liberal politician of the early nineteenth century. Eight times Prime Minister of Greece, following his decision to ally with the subsequent winners of the First World War he managed to almost double Greek territory with the 1920 Treaty of Sèvres. He is considered one of the early twentieth-century statesmen and is still celebrated in Greece as an ethnarch. His conflict with King Constantine resulted in the so-called 'Schism' in Greek politics between the Venizelists and the Royalists, which lasted many years (note by Haris Golemis).

7   This refers to the very strict conditions for admission to the Communist International, some of them established by Lenin. See <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Twenty-one_Conditions> (note by Haris Golemis).

8   In the analysis of the Sixth Congress of the Comintern, held in Moscow in 1928, world capitalism was seen as having entered its 'third' period of development characterised by the possibility of its immediate collapse. One of the characteristics of this period was the radicalisation of the working classes. The main consequence was the fight against social democratic parties, which were even called 'social fascist', as well as against reformist trade unions (Haris Golemis).

9   Nikos Zachariadis (1903-1973) was a historic leader of the Greek Communist Party and its Secretary from 1931 to 1956. Both his appointment and his removal from the leadership was a decision of the Comintern and the CPSU imposed on the KKE. In 1957 he was expelled from the party and spent the rest of his life in Siberia, where he committed suicide in 1973 (Haris Golemis).

10   The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO) was a national liberation movement of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, initially aimed at achieving autonomy for Macedonia in the Ottoman Empire and later the independence of the Greek regions of Thrace and Macedonia. The party inspired by IMRO in today's Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia is the VMRO-DPMNE; it is against any agreement with Greece regarding the name FYROM (note by Haris Golemis).

11   In 1929, following Venizelos's government proposal, the Greek Parliament voted the Law 'On measures for the security of the social regime and the protection of citizens' liberties', known as the 'Specific Law', which constituted the first instance of the criminalisation of communist ideas in Greece (note by Haris Golemis).

12   The Centre Union (EK) was a Greek party created in 1961 as a coalition of various small centrist parties. Under its leader, Georgios Papandreou, it won the1963 national elections but could not form a government without the support of EDA, something not acceptable to the party leadership. Following its resignation and new elections held in 1964 the Centre Union managed to win an absolute majority in Parliament and formed

a government which lasted until only until 15 July 1965, when Papandreou resigned after a disagreement with King Constantine over Papandreou's wish to become Minister of Defence. Following Papandreou's resignation, the King mandated three centre-right politicians of the Centre Union to form a government. Only the third government of these so-called 'defectors' won a vote of confidence in the Parliament, in September 1966 (note by Haris Golemis).

13   The United Democratic Left (EDA) was established in 1951 two years after the end of the Greek Civil War on the initiative of the outlawed KKE. Formally, it was a coalition of four small left and democratic parties, but its most important officials were either members or supporters of the Greek Communist Party (note by Haris Golemis).

14   The Lebanon Pact was the result of a meeting held in Beirut in 1944, during the German occupation of Greece, between the exiled free Greek government, the Political Committee of National Liberation (PEEA) or 'Government of the Mountain', and representatives of bourgeois parties, the KKE, and national resistance movements active in Greece. Attended also by the British, the meeting drew the road map for the governance of Greece after the end of the war. The Pact was later considered by the Communists as a serious 'right-wing error', since major concessions were made to the bourgeois bloc, which led to a national government under Georgios Papandreou, a favourite anti-communist politician of the British (note by Haris Golemis).

15   The 'December Events' refers to a series of battles occurring in Athens from 4 December 1944 to 5 January 1945 between, on the one side, the forces of the Greek national government and the British and, on the other side, the Communist-led Greek Popular Liberation Army (ELAS). It was a Communist uprising that began after policemen fired on a prohibited demonstration in Syntagma Square, which killed 33 and injured more than 140 people. ELAS's casualties during the December Events amounted to 2,000 to 3,000 dead, with 7,500 fighters and supporters taken as hostages, while on the other side the death toll was 3,000 Greeks and 300 British (note by Haris Golemis).

16   The Greek Civil War began in March 1946 and ended in August 1949 with the defeat of the communist Democratic Army by the forces of the Greek National Army, assisted by the Americans in the final battles in the mountains of Gramos and Vitsi. The toll was huge for both sides. Despite the fact that the Civil War was to a great extent triggered by the atrocities of right-wing gangs against the Communists mainly in the countryside following the December 1944 events, the decision of the KKE leadership under Zachariadis to initiate the war was criticised by a section of members and officials as a serious 'left-wing error' (note by Haris Golemis).

17   In the first months after the split, the 'renewers' presented themselves as *the* KKE, adding the word 'interior' in parentheses: KKE (interior). They felt justified in this because they had the full support of the 'Board of the Interior', that part of the leadership of the outlawed KKE which was underground in Greece since December 1947, the second year of the Greek Civil War. The other side of the split (the so-called dogmatists) considered this title provocative, since it implied that their side was the KKE (exterior), and it was precisely the propaganda characterising them as being directed by foreign powers that military courts used to send many KKE militants before firing squads, accusing them of being spies. For a short while, the leadership of KKE (interior) tried to convince the CPSU and the other CPs, if not to condemn the other part, which in their view was responsible for the split, to at least not take sides in the internal conflict of the Greek communist movement – a futile effort. After their failure, and following

the invasion of Czechoslovakia by the Warsaw Pact troops, the leadership decided to drop the parenthesis from the title. In its Fourth Congress, held in 1986, KKE (interior) decided to change its name to the Greek Left (EAR). This decision resulted in a split, and those party members who left formed the KKE interior-Renewing Left in 1987, later renamed Renewing Communist Ecological Left (AKOA). EAR and KKE coalesced in 1989 and created the Coalition of Left and Progress (Synaspismos), renamed the Coalition of the Left, of Movements and Ecology at its 2003 Congress. Following the decision of the KKE in 1992 to leave the Coalition, Synaspismos became a unified party. In 2004, together with AKOA and some other small parties and groups of the far left, Synaspismos created the Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA), which turned itself into a unified party in 2012 (note by Haris Golemis).

Country Reports

The Challenge Before the Labour Party: An Interview with Jon Trickett

interviewed by Stelios Foteinopoulos

Stelios Foteinopoulos: Before beginning our conversation, I would like to thank you for agreeing to this interview at a very busy time for Britain's political scene. It has been more than three years since a small number of MPs gathered on Westminster's terrace decided that Jeremy Corbyn should run for the leadership of the Labour Party. Today, Labour is the largest party in Western Europe and one of the largest in the world. Given social democracy's current deficiencies due to its liberal economic integration and the reduction of its electorate across Europe, what did the Labour Party do and how did it succeed on such a scale?

Jon Trickett: This goes back to the 1997 Labour government – from 1997 to 2010. By the time we got to the 2005 election, it became clear to me that large numbers of voters were no longer voting Labour. But those Labour abstentionists hadn't yet been converted into pro-Conservative voters. And I wrote a series of articles and critical interventions talking about 'Labour's missing millions' – the missing voters. It did seem to me that unless we shifted our politics and our economics, we might lose the next election, if the Tories managed to reorganise themselves, make themselves more attractive. By the time of the following election in 2010 we had lost five million voters compared to 1970. And the question is, how did that happen. I suppose, to a degree, all governments lose support over time. But it did seem to me at that time that the orientation of that Labour government towards what we call the 'Thatcherite settlement' led to disaffection amongst a significant part of our political base. They moved away from us. Now, this has clearly happened throughout Europe wherever a left-of-centre party in government embraced what we might call neoliberal politics and economics – then its electoral base atrophies.

And when you reflect on it, it could hardly be anything other than that.

Because if you have a party whose electoral base largely is what you might call the popular classes, (manual workers, middle-income earners, people on wages and salaries) – if the policies are not working for the electoral base – then clearly what will happen is that the party will suffer. In some countries the collapse in support has been very, very significant. I felt at the time and I said it in 2005 – so I'm not saying it now in retrospect – that the party needed to reorient fast, change its language, its vocabulary, as well as its policies and its practice in government.

However, we were caught by a whirlwind: the global financial crash in 2008. And the longer-term atrophy combined with the crisis accounts for the 2010 electoral collapse. What then happened is that we had a period of transition under Ed Miliband's leadership. He did not completely manage to break with what we would come to call austerity. We might say austerity is a further twist of the neoliberal knife. Certainly, all of the characteristics of neoliberalism are intensified in a period of austerity.

And therefore it seems to me now looking back that it wasn't possible for that sort of bridging moment of those years (the Miliband leadership years) to lead to a full recovery from the damage that had previously been done.

So, when we got to the defeat in 2015 it was clear that a massive reorientation, a new paradigm, was required. And that's what Jeremy has delivered.

Now, I always had felt that this whole epoch was marked by a kind of insurgent feeling, a sense of anger and alienation amongst those people whose vote we needed. And if we could harness it, it could lead to the renaissance of the party on a new basis. And I think that is what has happened.

SF: Soon after the first leadership contest, Jeremy Corbyn and other longstanding left-Labour MPs, including you of course, understood that a party away from the masses is a party without a historic mission. But for that reconnect to happen old party structures have to be replaced with new ones, more democratic, more transparent, and more accountable to the membership. So, as you already know, a liberal government, when elected, will have to take a lot of decisions every day. Unlike the rule in elite politics, which completely ignores popular debates and opinions, a Labour government will have to find a way to incorporate the membership into a broad participatory decision-making process. Is such a thing possible? And if yes, how can it work?

JT: Well, the first thing is, we've now got, as you said, the largest party in Western Europe, one of the largest in the world. And one of our tasks is to find new ways of relating to that mass membership, and turning that

mass membership outwards, so that it begins to build strong links with all the communities that make up our country. And it's clear to me that apart from, if you like, the theoretical political economy of our party, our policy offer and intellectual framework, there also have to be new organisational paradigms as well.

Because the Zeitgeist is no longer that of the nineteenth-century vertical, hierarchic structures of the kind we saw in many social democratic parties. We inherited them from the latter decades of the nineteenth century and the first decade or two of the twentieth century; they no longer work. So, we're trying to think through and implement changes to the way in which our party functions, and engage with the membership, but without throwing away those elements of the party which are good – and at the same time to rethink how we connect to people in the neighbourhoods as well as in the place of work. And that is an ongoing process. But for me, this structural, cultural change in the party, the formation of the party, is as important, or almost as important, as the transformation of our political positions. And clearly, when we're in government there will be further work to do because so far I've only spoken about the relationship of the party to the wider population.

But there is then another question, a formidably difficult one, of what you do when you enter office, considering that the state structure is also a hierarchy and to a large extent alienating for so many members, for so many citizens. So trying to find new ways of structuring the state itself and changing its culture is a very big challenge. I think we can also look elsewhere, but quite a lot of it will have to be done by ourselves and I'm thinking very hard about this. One of the ideas we have is that of a citizen-led constitutional convention to begin to rethink how people want their communities to be managed, and as far as possible putting power back into local communities – or rather putting power in local communities maybe for the first time – power to make decisions about their own lives. At the end of the day this comes out to the central political question for the left: of agency.

First of all, is the party structure that we inherited an agency which is capable of bringing about change? I say only partly, unless we change it. Secondly, how do we put agency back into the hands of the citizens in new collective forms. So, this question of agency, it seems to me, is really at the heart of what we need to think about.

SF: The Labour Party, unlike the rest of the social democratic parties, has come to the analysis that the working class should be the main driving force of social change and that neoliberalism is not transformable. In this framework, do you think that the European Union, whose institutional and

social structure is the European treaties, can be transformed or not? And why?

JT: Here is a very complex set of questions. Let's be clear. The present conjuncture in Britain is one where the majority of the people came to the conclusion that the Tories' offer of a mild form of reformed European Union wasn't sufficiently convincing for us to stay. Labour offered a much bigger vision of reform. We argue that because of the fact that a very substantial part of our country's trade is within the European Union it will be extremely difficult to disentangle the economic links in the supply chains which have been constructed. But on the other hand, we felt that the way in which the European Union was working was deeply problematic in a number of ways.

But we are an international party, an internationalist party. We thought that the thing to do was to lay before the public a big reform agenda. That wasn't what the public wanted and the electorate resolved that we should leave the EU. So we're now trying, in so far as it is possible, to offer a way out of the European Union, following the indications given by the people, one which doesn't do economic damage and which allows us to build a different, a socially more just country. As to the question of whether or not the European Union itself is capable of being reformed, only praxis can demonstrate whether that is the case or not. But the reforms we wanted were deep-rooted change. And, I think, a single country cannot deliver this. So, we are looking towards alliances elsewhere in Europe with likeminded social and political movements. At present, as you know, there are debates in the House, which have been going on for several days, to define the way in which the country is going. So in a sense you are catching us in the middle of a complex, convoluted parliamentary process.

SF: Yes, I fully understand. To my mind, the European left in general finds itself in a double strategic stalemate. On the one hand, there are those who claim that 'Lexit' is the only way to pave the way for progressive reforms and impose national financial policies. And on the other hand, there are those who claim that the European Union's direction depends on the general balance of power and that therefore the fundamental goal of the left should be to create progressive coalitions within the European framework. Which one of those two projects do you think is the appropriate strategy for Labour?

JT: In the midst of these complex manoeuvres at the moment I don't want to go any further into my personal view on this because I'm a member of a collective leadership. We have our internal discussions and then try to speak with a single voice. I will say though, in response to the general question, that there really are two hugely contesting views of what kind

of Europe we want to create and want to inhabit. Do we want a Europe of internationalism, solidarity, progress, economic intervention when necessary, an end to economic liberalism, the use of state aid when necessary, a democratic Europe where it is possible to change direction if that's what the peoples of Europe want, and looking beyond the European boundaries to the rest of the world. On the one hand, that represents a left project of a major type. I am not sure that this is being properly articulated by the left across Europe or that the left has got a shared vision of this.

On the other hand, there's a completely different vision of Europe, a contending vision, which is dominant at the moment, of a Europe that is driving working people into lower and lower standards, a kind of race into the gutter, which is class-ridden, dominated by corporate policies, rather than a kind of people's or social Europe. It is the kind of debate which needs to be had.

I know where we stand and we can work out our tactics and strategies. It does seem to me – and I've been doing quite a bit of work speaking to other left-wing leaders in the rest of Europe – that there is not yet a consensus as to what our vision of a social Europe would be. And that, I think, is lamentable. It would be better if we had a common view given that capital itself has gone global while labour movements tend to still be captured in national boundaries. That, I think, is a really important matter, and I know that Transform is active in promoting debate on this matter.

SF: Yes. transform!europe participated in this year's The World Transformed events in Liverpool, co-organising two sessions on the cooperation between radical left forces in Europe, in which the Labour Party can play a major role. What is your view of this prospect?

JT: Well, as I've just said, it seems to me that this is almost the central task at the moment, because democratic politics still tends to be contained within national boundaries. This will clearly continue in the foreseeable future. But there is cooperation being organised, for example by transform! europe. I am speaking with all such people, as is Jeremy and the rest of the Labour party leadership. I feel there is much more to be done. The politicians need to be meeting more frequently, it seems to me, to try and work out a way out of the mess created by so many parties to the left of centre, with their managerial, technocratic approach. In the conversations I've had, there is a lot of common ground around fighting back against austerity and delivering a more democratic framework, progressive internationalism, and so on and so forth. Some of the work on this is being done by theoreticians, academics, and intellectuals. But we – practical politicians and the labour movement, the trade unions – have to be thinking about this. A lot of the work has been

sporadic, partial and limited by national cultural differences, and it needs to be pulled together.

SF: Now, let me take you back to the governance question. A future Labour government will have to function against pressures from the old state structures, the dominant ideological system of the UK, and mainly the financial markets. Basically, that means that the capitalist state, acting like a human body, will activate its natural defences as soon as the virus, which is the Labour government in this case, infects it. I am aware that you and other people are working on a number of scenarios. For instance, last month the *New York Times* published stories of wealthy Britons who are already moving or preparing to move their money offshore in fear of a government under Jeremy Corbyn. The question of capital controls is again on the table. Given the existing power structures in the UK, how is Labour going to make its strategy work and deliver results within this framework. Are there any plans B, plans C, plans D?

JT: I think on the whole that this work is being done by John McDonnell, our shadow Chancellor, and maybe you should have an interview with him. I think 'virus' is too strong a word and I don't accept it. But in general terms it's possible there will be what we might call 'headwinds' against the incoming Labour government. There always have been headwinds against every incoming Labour government. The best answer is for us to tell the public, before any election, exactly how we intend to proceed, that our plans are public, that they are authoritative, and that they are credible. I think the idea of having a secret plan isn't going to work. You have to have the proper understanding amongst the millions of people, 'the many', of what we intend to achieve. And we have to show in advance what material benefits they are going to get as well as the way in which we'll bring about national renewal. If our policies are understood in advance, and if there are millions of people who vote for the radical transformative change which we're interested in, then, we think, to a degree that is the answer. It may be the case that a handful of people are trying to take provocative actions. But, John McDonnell has been speaking to people in the City and elsewhere. He tells me he's getting a decent reaction; they understand what we're trying to do. And, he's going to continue doing all that work.

SF: The possibility of state transformation, as you know very well, is an old debate within the left. Is this a viable strategy for the British left today, if one takes into account that the United Kingdom is not a small peripheral country but a country with strong and stable power structures and a strong position in the international division of labour?

JT: You are absolutely right. Britain is one of the wealthiest countries. Democracy is very deeply ingrained in the national culture – which doesn't mean we can be complacent – and our civil society is very strong and stable. I think all of that is important in calculating the balance of forces. I do believe – partly in response to your previous question – that there has been a kind of corporate coup against democracy at the top of the British state, that too many of the instruments of the state have been subject to the will of the most powerful corporations and a handful of the wealthiest people in our society. And that cannot be allowed to continue. That is the reverse of what we want to create. We have at the moment a society which is run for the few often against the interest of the many. And we intend to reverse that direction. So, there will be some institutional changes. And I will give you a small but quite interesting example: the debates about fracking. Essentially, there have been a great number of ministerial meetings with representatives of the part of the capitalist class that is interested in fracking. By contrast, they've had only about a dozen meetings with community groups and only three meetings with the trade unions. I think I am right in saying that there have been well over 130 ministerial meetings with corporate interests. What then happens is that fracking proceeds, and it's damaging the interests of communities all over the country wherever it's happening, while at the same time it's enriching a very small group of powerful corporations. Now that is a small example of what you might call corporate capture of government in the state. We will have to take measures straightaway to change the way in which lobbying works. And in the United Kingdom we have a lobbying act, which actually frees up commercial lobbying, but then it puts a deep freeze on community groups because of the way in which the regulation works. We will have to do the reverse up by empowering civil society and local communities. Because at the moment we have this 'voice and choice' question' Who has voice and who has choice?' Surely in an advanced democracy, we need to create a situation where the many rule, not the few.

SF: So, it's a broader question, isn't it?

JT: Yes, it is. Right across all of our state structures it is true to say that there is really an elite class of people dominating most decisions. Almost every political institution is affected in one way or another.

SF: And that takes me to the final question. Elite-driven politics works hand in hand with the assertion that markets are self-regulated and that people are by nature egocentric and tend to optimise their personal position without common values, and so on. Contrary to what is happening in a large number of European countries, the Labour Party shows that working

people, severely hit by the crisis, instead of turning to nationalism and to misanthropic antisocial views, can actually become a creative force that renews collective ideas and reintroduces the concept of public interest into the agenda. How can this narrative inspire the new generation and influence party structures including the state?

JT: Well, I think you are right in the premise of your question. Actually there are many contending views on the nature of humanity itself. I suppose that you can reduce it eventually to two value systems. One around fear and the other around hope. And fear often triumphs. But fear is a weapon in the hands of those people who themselves are afraid of popular political change because they want to protect their privileges. And of course, the few people who benefit from the current arrangements will always use fear, fear of change, as a way of trying to prevent the outburst of optimism that I believe lies at the heart of the human condition. And the sense that human beings are social in character, rather than private individuals competing with one another as in a Hobbesian world, is right at the core of the different value systems. We believe in cooperation, we believe in enlightenment, we believe in optimism and hope. And everywhere you look, in every community I represent – and, remember, I represent some of the poorest communities – you experience people showing that there are ways of living their lives that are different from the ones which the elite would have us believe are the only ones possible.

I represent 23 villages, and in every village there are people doing things for the good of the community, for the good of humanity, reaching out and helping others in mutual chains of human support. And so everywhere I look what I see is a new society waiting to be born. So, it's there, it's waiting, it just needs the agency to deliver it. So, I suppose I will finish with the old phrase now, but it's an apt one, from Gramsci: everywhere you look there are structures which are dying, or decaying, and losing credibility, and everywhere you look there are human beings.

SF: … waiting to be born

JT: who are full of hope. And that, I think, is what we have to build on.

8 December 2018

Conservative Authoritarianism and the Far-Right in Hungary and Poland

Gavin Rae

I am firmly convinced that the day will come when we will have Budapest in Warsaw. (Jarosław Kaczyński, 2011)

Throughout the European Union (EU), nationalist and far-right parties are in the ascendency. The shift to the right in many Central and Eastern European (CEE) countries is part of this overall trend. In both Hungary and Poland, parties of the conservative right (Fidesz and the Law and Justice Party (PiS)) have tightened their grip on power and are moving their countries in a more authoritarian direction. Furthermore, they have adopted strong nationalist and anti-Communist ideologies whilst, to some extent, co-opting the support of the far-right. This article examines these right-wing governments in Hungary and Poland and analyses the similarities and differences between them.

Neoliberal hegemony

The right-wing administrations in Hungary and Poland, and their leaders Viktor Orbán and Jarosław Kaczyński, are regularly criticised as being populist. This unclear and over-generalised term is used to describe how these governments are introducing a series of reforms that undermine the fundamentals of a functioning liberal democracy. It is contended that they contradict liberal democratic practices as well as the values upon which the EU has been constructed.[1] These governments are seen to be reversing many of the gains of the 'post-Socialist' transition and are aberrations that need to be corrected in order to ensure their countries' further development. Furthermore, it is often argued that the right-wing trend in Europe originates in the East and threatens to infect the more stable liberal democracies in Western Europe.[2]

This liberal criticism of the Hungarian and Polish governments is rooted in

many of the assumptions that underlay the 'post-Socialist' transition in CEE. A new liberal consensus had been created, with large swathes of decision-making removed from the democratic process and the 'independent' institutions of the state strengthened.[3] It was assumed that many social and political conflicts would disappear in this new liberal age and that politics would be constructed around such things as life-styles and individual self-actualisation.[4]

This liberal agenda was most forcibly pursued in the 'post-Socialist' states in CEE. These countries were subjected to extreme neoliberal reforms, which led to their economic de-industrialisation; the dismantling of welfare provisions; the deactivation of large sections of the workforce and the creation of large social inequalities and areas of poverty. Simultaneously, the new political systems were being constructed in a way to ensure that many matters were kept away from democratic debate. This was particularly prevalent while the CEE countries were being integrated into the EU and NATO, as the CEE governments had to maintain a course of reform that was in line with the demands of entering these organisations.

The CEE states were expected to replicate the West and to become 'normal' countries that accepted western values and imitated its political and economic systems. This was seen as an assured path to freedom and prosperity, and any alternative visions were regarded as a diversion from this course. Such thinking placed these countries in a state of dependency and embedded the belief they were inferior to those to their West.[5] The election of right-wing conservative parties in Hungary and Poland was partly a reaction to this state of subordination. These governments cannot be understood simply as authoritarian reactions to liberal democracy; and a straightforward liberal/conservative dichotomy is not an adequate framework for understanding politics in these countries. Rather these conservative nationalist governments are pursuing semi-autonomous political strategies, through implementing programmes of 'cultural nationalism' that signal a partial break from the 'post-socialist' era.[6]

Collapse of the left

The standard liberal argument states that parties of the conservative right have come to dominate politics in Hungary and Poland due to the institutional weakness of the democracies in CEE and the lack of post-materialist values amongst the region's population.[7] Such thinking replicates the view that the democratic liberal centre is threatened by authoritarianism from the left as well as the right. However, in order to understand how the conservative right came to dominate politics in Poland and Hungary it is necessary to

consider the decline not of a 'liberal centre' (that has never had a strong independent base in these countries) but rather of the left.

The Hungarian and Polish left have been dominated for most of the past three decades by two parties: the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party (MSZMP) and the Democratic Left Alliance (SLD). Both of these parties emerged from the ruling parties of 'socialism'; and, after struggling during the early years of the transition to capitalism, they both led governing coalitions in the mid-1990s. Their support peaked in the early/mid-2000s, with the MSZMP winning over 40 percent of the vote in the 2002 and 2006 parliamentary elections and the SLD receiving a similar vote in 2001. Both parties had managed to hegemonise the centre-left in their respective countries and offered the only political alternative to the parties of the right. However, after forming governments in the early 2000s they both pursued *third way* neoliberal programmes and became mired in corruption scandals. At the 2005 parliamentary elections, support for the SLD fell to just 11.3 percent, and in 2015, for the first time in history, the left did not win any parliamentary seats. Meanwhile, the MSZMP vote slumped to 19.3 percent in 2010 and then to 11.91 percent in 2018.

Both Fidesz and PiS were able to fill the political vacuum left by the collapse of the mainstream left-wing parties in Hungary and Poland and help usher in a new era of right-wing dominance in these countries.

Consolidating power

Fidesz was initially created as an elitist liberal party in 1988, with an upper age limit of 35. It took part in the round-table talks that negotiated the end of 'socialism' and became the largest partner in a coalition government in 1998, after winning over 28 percent of the vote in the parliamentary elections. During this period in office the government did not challenge the ruling liberal hegemony and was primarily concerned with maintaining good international relations with the West as the country completed its negotiations to join the EU and NATO. However, by the time the party had returned to power in 2010 it had no longer limited itself to this task. Moreover, for the first time in Hungary's 'post-socialist' history, a party had won a 'supermajority' in parliament, meaning that it was able to reform the constitution. The party identified a coalition of liberals and former 'Communists' as having corrupted the political and economic system and promised wholesale reforms to correct it.

PiS was created in 2001 and led by the brothers Jarosław and Lech Kaczyński.[8] The core of the party's leadership and membership had belonged to the Centre Alliance (PC) formed in 1990. This party was a product of the

so-called 'war at the top', in which radical elements of the former Solidarity movement leadership split from its more liberal conciliatory wing. The Kaczyńskis accused the liberal wing of Solidarity of having betrayed the movement and formed an unholy alliance with former 'Communists'. They argued that this new elite had usurped political and economic power and distorted the new capitalist system through protecting their own interests. This divide, within the post-Solidarity right, was temporarily suspended when a right-wing coalition (Solidarity Electoral Alliance – AWS) led a government between 1997 and 2001, in which PC participated. However, following its electoral annihilation in 2001, the AWS broke up into a number of competing parties, which included the newly created PiS. After the subsequent collapse of the SLD vote in 2005, Polish politics became dominated by two parties from the right: PiS and Citizens' Platform (PO). After briefly leading a coalition government from 2005, PiS became the leading opposition party to the PO governments from 2007 to 2015. PiS identified PO as now also belonging to the country's corrupt elite and promised to cleanse the state after winning power at the 2015 parliamentary and presidential elections.

Economic continuity and change

Despite their anti-liberal and nationalist rhetoric, the Hungarian and Polish governments have generally not diverged from the previous macroeconomic policies pursued in their countries. One of several major contradictions characterising these governments is that although they have at times conflicted with the EU (see below), they remain dependent upon it. Both Hungary and Poland receive some of the highest levels of EU funds and subsidies. This has helped to increase public investment, which has been the driving force of economic growth in both countries, with EU money representing 61 percent of infrastructural spending in Poland and 55 percent in Hungary. Around 9 percent of the EU budget is allocated to Poland, whilst 2.5 percent goes to Hungary (which receives a higher share than Poland in per capita terms.)[9] Moreover, both countries have seen huge waves of outward migration to western Europe since joining the EU. Despite the benefits of EU membership, both countries have been unequally integrated into the European division of labour, via their deindustrialisation after the fall of 'socialism'. The annual outflow of profits and incomes from property is actually higher than the inflow of EU funds, representing on average, between 2010 and 2017, 6 percent of GDP in Poland and 7.2 percent in Hungary.[10]

The present governments of Hungary and Poland can be considered

neoliberal, when this is understood not ideologically but rather in terms of governments that implement policies which primarily serve capital.[11] During its terms in office the Fidesz administration has, for example, introduced a new labour code that curtails labour rights and increases labour flexibility, implemented a flat personal income tax, reduced the corporate interest rate from 14 to 9 percent, maintained strict budget discipline and introduced benefit cuts, and implemented a punitive public works programme which pays an estimated 180,000 workers a monthly salary of little over 150 euro. Meanwhile, although the country remains heavily dependent upon foreign capital, the government has helped to create an internally oligarchical form of capitalism through supporting a state dependent bourgeoisie loyal to Fidesz.[12]

The PiS government has implemented a number of 'pro-social' economic policies, since it entered office two and a half years ago. During its first year in office, PiS introduced a generous package of child benefits (*500+*), raised the minimum wage, and lowered the pension age. The *500+* child benefit had an immediate positive effect. Child poverty decreased, between 2015 and 2017, from 23 percent to 11 percent, with the number of children receiving child benefits rising from 2 million to 3.8 million (although over 3 million children are still excluded).[13] However, the government has failed to reverse the regressive taxation laws in order to redistribute wealth. Moreover, in its attempt to further encourage foreign investment, the PiS government has introduced a new system of special economic zones, available throughout Poland, where investors will receive tax exemptions for a period of 10 or 15 years.[14]

Authoritarianism and democracy

In contrast to their economic policies, the legal and state reforms (in areas such as the courts and media) implemented by Fidesz and PiS significantly break from many previous liberal orthodoxies. These governments have partially abandoned their role as 'imitators' of the West intending to turn their countries into 'normal' countries endorsing western values. By the second decade of the twenty-first century, liberalism was no longer simply an idealised vision of the future in CEE, but had become associated with two decades of 'really existing capitalism' and much of western capitalism's dysfunctionality.[15] In Hungary and Poland the liberal consensus had been upheld within all the major political parties, within academia and the media, and promoted by external international bodies.

Both Fidesz and PiS have challenged liberal democracy in Poland and Hungary by democratically winning electoral majorities. They have

claimed that they are protecting their countries' sovereignty and democracy against (internal and external) elites dominating the institutions of the state. They have then used these democratic majorities to change some of their countries' institutions and remove some of the perceived restrictions that limit their power in government. Liberal critics of the Hungarian and Polish governments have described them as 'illiberal' or 'majoritarian' and working to abolish the democratic checks and balances that preserve a healthy political democracy.[16]

When Fidesz was elected in 2010, it won a two-thirds majority in parliament that allowed it to change the country's constitution.[17] In 2011 a new constitution was approved, after being rushed through parliament with little political consultation. The number of MPs was reduced from 389 to 199 in order to strengthen the political position of Fidesz, and the constituency of the constitutional court was altered to give Fidesz more power. The party has successively strengthened its control over the media, running a huge media juggernaut that includes large areas of the public as well as private media outlets. The Fidesz government has used state money to fund 'information campaigns' (amounting to around US$ 250 million in 2017) on topics such as immigrants, the EU, and George Soros. The Hungarian government has also combined its anti-immigrant policies (see below) with an attack on NGOs in the country. In June 2018 it passed a 'Stop Soros' law that criminalises any individual or group that offers to help an illegal immigrant claim asylum, thus restricting the activities of NGOs working in this area.[18] Around the same time the government implemented a new law that requires foreign universities based in Hungary to also have a campus in their home country (a law that in practice only restricts the activities of the Central European University set up by George Soros).[19]

The situation in Poland differs from that in Hungary, because although PiS became the first party in Poland's modern history to win an overall majority, it does not have the necessary two-thirds majority required to change the constitution. Therefore, although the party has not gone as far as Fidesz in its reforms, it has had to contravene parts of the constitution in order to proceed with them. Within less than three years in office PiS has managed to take almost complete control of the courts, through introducing changes to the National Council of the Judiciary, refusing to publish and abide by Constitutional Tribunal rulings, and appointing its own preferred candidates to the Tribunal. The party has also gained control of the public media and turned it into a political mouthpiece of the government. The funding of NGOs has been centralised, threatening the continued funding of NGOs that are critical of government policies.[20]

Both Fidesz and PiS have strengthened their power within the state and are moving their countries in a more authoritarian direction. This is partly a reaction to the failures of (neo) liberalism in these countries and paradoxically requires that these parties mobilise sections of society to participate in the democratic process. However, the conservative-nationalist governments in Hungary and Poland are not just eroding some of the practices and institutions of liberal democracy but are purposively moving their countries sharply to the right.

Anti-communism

The liberal critique of the Hungarian and Polish governments complies with the common misconception that there is no essential difference between left and right 'extremism'. Such ideas have grown in popularity in recent years, evolving from the theory of the 'twin totalitarianisms' of fascism and communism into the liberal notion that politics should primarily be focused on excluding the extremes of left and right. By adopting a 'symmetric' position towards communism and fascism, the conservative-nationalist right is able to divert attention away from the dangers of racism and the far-right and towards communism and the left.

Anti-communism plays an important role for the Hungarian and Polish governments. To begin with, it is used as a justification for their reforms of the state, based on the claim that an elite rooted in the 'socialist' system continues to dominate the state's legal and political institutions.[21] During the first decade of the 'post-socialist' period, the major political cleavage in both Hungary and Poland was between the centre-left (derived from the former ruling parties during 'socialism') and liberal and conservative parties. However, the collapse in support for these centre-left parties opened up a new divide, with Fidesz and PiS identifying the 'post-communist' elite as now including liberals who had supposedly colluded with former Communists during the transition period. Almost anyone who disagrees with these governments' policies can now be accused of being part of or serving this 'post-Communist' elite.

Simultaneously, these governments have begun an offensive against the symbols and history of the 'socialist' period, in order to delegitimise the whole of the left. In both Hungary and Poland, communist (and fascist) symbols had been illegalised well before the election of Fidesz and PiS. However, these laws have had a limited impact in practise as the symbols are only outlawed when they are considered to be promoting totalitarianism.[22] Both Fidesz and PiS have extended the campaign against 'communism' to the wider left. For example, some monuments commemorating those

who fought against the Horthy military dictatorship and the Arrow Cross regime in Hungary have been removed. In addition, the entire collection of manuscripts and correspondence held at the György Lukács Archive has been taken away and his statue removed from a Budapest park. This atmosphere of extreme anti-communism has led to absurdities such as the right-wing media protesting against a Frida Kahlo exhibition in Budapest (due to her relations with Trotsky) and Orbán threatening to ban Heineken beer in Hungary because of its red star logo.[23] In Poland, a new aggressive 'anti-communist' historical policy has been launched. This has involved removing and changing monument and road names relating not only to the Communist period, but also to the Soviet victory over fascism, announcing that it will remove up to 500 Soviet monuments around the country. This regressive historical campaign has also included attempts to change the road signs commemorating the more than 3,000 Polish volunteers that fought in the Spanish Civil War as well as figures connected to the pre-war socialist movement. The irrationality of 'symmetry' was exposed when a group of extreme neo-Nazis were caught on film celebrating Hitler's birthday and the government immediately declared it a reason to fight against organisations that stand in the traditions of both communism and fascism.[24]

The ideology of extremes, which equates communism and fascism, has been an integral part of the 'post-socialist' political landscape in CEE. It was first deployed by liberals in order to strengthen the political centre and oppose 'extremism' and 'authoritarianism' from the left and the right. However, the conservative and nationalist right are now using it to divert attention away from the growing problem of racism and the far-right and towards the supposed threat posed by communism and the left.[25] The use of anti-communism by the Hungarian and Polish right is part of a broader regressive political turn in these countries and the creation of new perceived enemies of the nation.

Nationalism and the far right

Both Fidesz and PiS have directly used racism as a means to help consolidate their political base. They have taken a strong anti-refugee stance, with both governments refusing to participate in the EU's resettlement programme and take in a quota of refugees.[26] The anti-refugee propaganda of Fidesz and PiS is different from that existing in most Western European countries. First, they both openly use extreme Islamophobic language, which is usually only deployed by parties of the far-right. Viktor Orbán has openly called refugees 'Islamic invaders' and declared that Christian and Muslim communities are unable to integrate with each other. Likewise, Kaczyński and President

Andrzej Duda have argued against accepting refugees into Poland because they may 'carry diseases'.[27] Second, the Hungarian and Polish right have used the refugee issue as a means to claim that they are defending their countries' national sovereignty and cultural identity against outside forces. Whilst the far right in Western Europe tends to focus its attacks on immigrants and refugees living in their countries, the Hungarian and Polish rights claims that they are trying to prevent their countries from becoming multicultural, that they are the last bastion defending what they see as the white, Christian heritage of Europe. Therefore, the right in Hungary and Poland is pursuing an extreme form of cultural nationalism, in which they claim to be not only pursuing an independent course of development from that in Western Europe but actually preserving the core values upon which it had been built. This is extended beyond the question of refugees and multiculturalism to areas such as sexual rights, the family, and religion.

These conservative-nationalist governments have helped to unleash a surge in racism and far-right opinions. However, at the same time, the dominance of Fidesz and PiS has partially marginalised the parties of the far right. The situation of the far right is significantly different in Hungary and Poland, partly due to the divergent histories of these countries. In Hungary the pre-War Horthy Regime cooperated with Nazi Germany and during World War Two the Arrow Cross Party formed a puppet Nazi government. The main Hungarian far-right party (Jobbik) has reached back to the symbols and traditions of the Horthy regime and much of their anti-Semitic and fascist traditions. Three years after the creation of Jobbik, its leader Gábor Vona established the paramilitary Hungarian Guard in 2006 (it was then banned in 2009 after it marched through Roma areas.) The party emerged as the third largest party during the 2010 and 2014 parliamentary elections (winning 16.67 percent and 20.22 percent of the vote respectively.) Although its vote share fell slightly in 2018 (to 19.06 percent) it still became the second largest party in the Hungarian Parliament. Before these elections, Jobbik had undergone a cosmetic change, disguising some of its most extreme views and presenting itself as a 'modern conservative party' that wished to reverse some of the undemocratic reforms of Fidesz.[28]

The Polish far-right does not have the history of fascist and Nazi collaborator governments as a reference point. Rather the right has to look to pre-war nationalist politicians (such as Roman Dmowski), distort historical events like the Warsaw Uprising, and rehabilitate entities such as the nationalist battalions that partly collaborated with the Nazis or paramilitary armies that fought against the Communist government after World War Two. No far-right party has been able to establish itself as an independent force within

the mainstream of Polish politics. However, in 2015 eight MPs, endorsed by the far-right National Movement, entered parliament as part of the Kukiz'15 electoral list.[29] Far-right organisations (such as the National Movement, the National Radical Camp, and the All-Polish Youth Organisation) have become increasingly active in Poland in recent years. One of their major activities has been to organise and lead the annual national independence march on 11 November. This has attracted tens of thousands of participants, many of whom would not directly associate themselves with the far right. This shows how the far right has managed to galvanise support in Poland far beyond its own political base, encouraged by the general move to the right under the PiS government.

Conflict with the EU

Fidesz and PiS have been unable to redress their countries' economically subordinate position within the EU; they remain dependent upon EU funds. Rather, they have attempted to pursue an independent form of conservative politics that has led them into conflict with the EU, which mainly revolves around two issues: First, Hungary's and Poland's refusal to accept an agreed quota of refugees; this has, as mentioned above, been used by Fidesz and PiS to proclaim they are defending their countries' national sovereignty and culture against outside interference. Second, the EU has criticised both countries for violating the rule of law, through their reforms of the state.

At the end of 2017, the EU deployed Article 7 against Poland (the first time this had ever been done against a Member State), which theoretically could lead it to lose its voting rights inside the EU. The EU has accused Poland of using its democratic majority to 'politically interfere in the composition, powers, administration and functioning of the judicial branch'.[30] The EU moved first against Poland, because although its reforms have been less extreme than those in Hungary, it has breached the constitution in order to carry them out, due to its lack of a constitutional majority in parliament. Furthermore, Fidesz is more integrated into the mainstream of European politics as it is a member of the European People's Party (EPP) faction in the European Parliament (PiS belongs to the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) faction), which had partly shielded it from political attack). However, in September 2018, the EU also launched Article 7 proceedings against Hungary, on the basis that it had flouted EU values on issues such as judicial independence, corruption, freedom of expression, academic freedom, religious freedom, and the rights of minorities and refugees.[31]

These CEE countries are now in open dispute with the EU. They refute the accusations made against them by claiming that they are defending

their cultural and national traditions and democratic mandates. It is unlikely that Hungary or Poland will have their voting rights suspended, as both countries have announced that they will veto any attempt to do so. Also, there is a sizeable minority within the European Parliament that has opposed these moves against them, and this minority may well grow after the next European Parliament elections. Fidesz and PiS are part of the wider growth of conservative and far-right parties in Europe, and their relative success is a sign of how the liberal hegemony inside the EU is fragmenting.

United in opposition?

The right-wing governments in Hungary and Poland cannot be understood within a simple liberal–versus–conservative framework. Fidesz and PiS have moved their countries in a more authoritarian direction and have undermined many of the structures and institutions of a liberal democratic system. To some degree, this has been a reaction to the unfair and unaccountable economic and political systems created after 1989. The neoliberal transformation eroded the basis for stable democracies and incorporated the ideologies of conservatism and anti-communism. Liberalism has never been a strong independent political force in these countries. The victory of right-wing conservative-nationalist parties in Hungary and Poland was achieved by defeating the left, which had been subsumed into the neoliberal consensus. This process is not unique to Hungary and Poland. Throughout the EU the centre-left parties are losing support and opening the way for the growth of right-wing nationalist and far-right parties.

This context helps explain why it is impossible to effectively oppose these governments only through a defence of democracy against authoritarianism. Large demonstrations have at times been organised against these governments' reforms, particularly in Poland. However, these have steadily diminished in size, the opposition movements have been marginalised, and the governing parties have maintained strong support in the polls. Some have argued that all parties opposed to these governments should unite into a single bloc. The leading international scholar on populism even proposed that a single electoral alliance should have been formed in the last parliamentary elections to include Jobbik.[32] However, such a strategy reduces the opposition to a small and often privileged section of society and does not address the social frustrations and anger caused by the transition to capitalism. In order to redress this, the left has to rebuild itself as an independent political force that challenges the authoritarian, conservative, and nationalist programmes of the right, whilst also offering a progressive economic alternatives to meet the needs of the majority of society.

NOTES

1   Institute for Global Change. (2018). *European Populism: Trends, Threats and Future Prospects* (online), available at <https://tinyurl.com/yddqlegw>.

2   Such ideas have been popularised by historians such as Timothy Snyder and Ernst Nolte who have argued that Nazism was essentially an imitation of Communism from the east. Snyder now extends such thinking into the modern era, arguing that the conservative, authoritarian politics growing in some western countries have been copied from Russia. (Snyder (2018), *Vladimir Putin's politics of eternity | Timothy Snyder* (online) *The Guardian*, available at <https://tinyurl.com/ycxy3tll>.

3   Frank Furedi (2018), *A Liberal Defense of Populism* (online), The American Interest, available at <https://tinyurl.com/y7dgbqp5>.

4   Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political*, Florence: Taylor and Francis, 2011.

5   Ivan Krastev and Stephen Holmes, 'Imitation and Its Discontents', *Journal of Democracy* 29,3 (2018) 117-128.

6   The term cultural nationalism broadly describes how, in the neoliberal era, developing countries are unable to pursue an independent economic path of development and instead pursue independent policies in the area of cultural and social policies only. See Radhika Desai, 'Introduction: Nationalisms and Their Understandings in Historical Perspective', *Third World Quarterly* 29,3 (2008), 397-428.

7   Institute for Global Change (2018), *European Populism: Trends, Threats and Future Prospects* (online), available at <https://tinyurl.com/yddqlegw>.

8   In 2005 Lech Kaczyński was elected President of Poland, and in 2006 Jarosław Kaczyński became Prime Minister, before PiS lost the parliamentary elections in 2007. In 2010, President Lech Kaczyński was killed, along with 98 other prominent members of the Polish state, in the Smolensk air crash. This opened up a new divide in Polish politics, with many within PiS claiming that this was the result of a deliberate attack, possibly organised by Russia in connection with sections of the Polish secret services. This has provided a new discourse for those seeking to deepen historical revisionism and pursue a more confrontational relationship with Russia. Jarosław Kaczyński's personal connection to this tragedy has deepened his emotional attachment to a section of the conservative right's electorate (Czesław Kulesza and Gavin Rae (2018), *The Law and Justice Party and Poland's Turn to the Right* (online), Transform-network.net, available at <https://tinyurl.com/ycfpovlb>.

9   Steven Erlanger (2018), 'As Poland and Hungary Flout Democratic Values, Europe Eyes the Aid Spigot' (online), Nytimes.com, available at <https://tinyurl.com/y9zr3k7f>.

10   Thomas Piketty (2018), '2018, the year of Europe' (online), Le blog de Thomas Piketty, available at <https://tinyurl.com/y9bt4rgb>.

11   Radhika Desai (2018), 'Neoliberalism and Cultural Nationalism: A Danse Macabre' (online), Academia.edu, available at <https://tinyurl.com/y77jlc45>.

12   Mihály Koltai (2018), 'The economics of 'Orbánism' | *Lefteast* (online), Criticatac. ro, available at <https://tinyurl.com/ybz4oht4>; Zoltán Pogátsa (2018), 'The Political Economy of Illiberal Democracy' (online), *Social Europe*, available at <https://tinyurl.com/yb6oh7zo>.

13   Ryszard Szarfenberg (2018), 'Wpływ świadczenia wychowawczego (500+) na ubóstwo ogółem i ubóstwo dzieci na podstawie mikrosymulacjiwer 1.1', (online) Academia.edu,

available at <https://tinyurl.com/y98yc7w6>.

14   Polandinenglish.info (2018), 'Poland becomes a special economic zone for investors', (online), available at <https://tinyurl.com/yceraa7r>.

15   Krastev and Holmes.

16   The term illiberal democracies has often been applied to these countries. It was popularised in the 1990s in: Fareed Zakaria, 'The Rise of Illiberal Democracy', *Foreign Affairs* 76,6 (1997), 22.

17   The electoral law in Hungary has a strong majoritarian character designed to discourage political chaos. Therefore, for example, in 2010 Fidesz only gained 53 percent of the vote, but won 68 percent of the parliamentary seats. See Péter Krekó and Zsolt Enyedi, 'Orbán's Laboratory of Illiberalism', *Journal of Democracy* 29,3 (2018), 39-51.

18   Reuters (2018), 'Hungary passes anti-immigrant 'Stop Soros' laws', (online) *The Guardian*, available at <https://tinyurl.com/y7xsmmgk>.

19   Shaun Walker (2018), 'Liberal Hungarian university warns Viktor Orbán could force it abroad', (online) *The Guardian*, available at <https://tinyurl.com/ybrst7ch>.

20   DW.COM (2018), 'Poland: Bringing NGOs into the government fold?', DW, 1 October 2017, (online) available at <https://www.dw.com/en/poland-bringing-ngos-into-the-government-fold/a-40768051>.

21   This claim is grossly exaggerated. For example, the average age of a judge in Poland is in the early 40s. See Christian Davies, 'Hostile Takeover: How Law and Justice Captured Poland's Courts', (online) Freedomhouse.org, available at <https://tinyurl.com/y7xcuwus>.

22   Krytyka.com. (2018). Halya Conash, '"Decommunization" Laws: Deeply Divisive and Destined for Strasbourg', (online) Krytyka.com, available at <https://tinyurl.com/ycltam49>.

23   The Guardian (2018), 'Hungary threatens to ban Heineken's red star as "communist"', (online) available at <https://tinyurl.com/n3dg6qo>; Reuters (2018), 'Frida Kahlo exhibit criticised in Hungary for "promoting communism"', (online) available at <https://tinyurl.com/ycj7jmm6>; Róbert Nárai (2018) 'The Destruction of History'. (online) Jacobinmag.com, available at <https://jacobinmag.com/2018/02/lukacs-hungary-archives-marxism>.

24   Gavin Rae, (2018), 'Eastern Europe's Right-Wing Shift Is Not Unique', (online) Social Europe, available at <https://tinyurl.com/ydfgqz8b>; The Calvert Journal (2018), 'Poland to remove 500 Soviet monuments', (online) available at <https://tinyurl.com/ycj55shl>.

25   Adam Ostolski (interviewed by Agnieszka Wiśniewska) (2018), 'Strywializowany antykomunizm toruje drogę faszyzmowi', (online) KrytykaPolityczna.pl, available at <https://tinyurl.com/y9tzgje2>.

26   Both countries were asked to take in a relatively small share of the 160,000 refugees included in this scheme. Hungary was requested to take 1,300 refugees whilst Poland, during the PO government, agreed to accept 7,000 refugees, although the PiS government then reneged on this promise.

27   Harriet Agerholm (2018), 'Refugees are "Muslim invaders", says Hungarian PM Viktor Orban', (online) *The Independent*, available at <https://tinyurl.com/yadutku7>; Aljazeera.com (2018), 'Poland's president warns of refugees bringing epidemics', available at <https://tinyurl.com/ydg5b4py>.

28   András Schiff (2018), 'Hungarians must face their Nazi past, not venerate it', (online)
      The Guardian, available at <https://tinyurl.com/y9huwzbm>; BBC News (2018), 'Is
      Hungary's Jobbik leader really ditching far-right past?', (online), available at: <https://
      tinyurl.com/y6w43yl8>.

29   Kukiz'15 is an electoral list that was created by ex-rock star Paweł Kukiz for the 2015
      parliamentary elections. It is a political formation that is generally on the right and
      often allied with PiS in parliament, although it presents itself as an anti-establishment
      movement.

30   Alice Cuddy (2018), 'What is "Article 7" and why was it triggered against Poland?',
      Euronews (online), available at <https://tinyurl.com/y9kvu9co>.

31   Agence France Presse (2018), 'Parliament initiates steps under Article 7 over Hungary's
      "systemic threat" to EU values', France 24 (online), available at, <https://tinyurl.com/
      ydgqdngx>.

32   Cas Mudde (2018), 'To save Hungary's liberal democracy, centrists must work with the
      far right', (online) *The Guardian*, available at <https://tinyurl.com/yd9jkt8l>.

The Central European Left and Europe – Beyond Liberalism[1]

Ľuboš Blaha

Left-wing political discourse in the Slovak and Czech republics is distinct in many ways and cannot be assimilated to Western European or North American thinking. The crucial difference is perhaps the emphasis placed by the Central and Eastern European (CEE) post-communist left on economic issues, geopolitical realism, and community values. At the same time, respect for other cultures is also felt in the left discourse in Central Europe, particularly in Slovakia and the Czech Republic since our countries, as small semi-peripheral states, are not characterised by the will to politically conquer or ideologically colonise other territories.

The radical universalism of liberal ideologies, which is the result of a long historical struggle for bare survival, is relatively alien to Slovak society. The destiny of the Slovaks was not to change the world but to fight at least for our place in the world. This attitude is reflected in the ethics and values of social scientists and philosophers from this region, and it underpins the left, which is more traditional and communal than in Western metropoles.

This communal sensibility in CEE can result in a more socially radical outlook than in Western Europe, which can be an inspiration for Western Europe where the left is weak and needs new sources of inspiration, as I will try to explain in what follows.

The Central European perspective of the left

In 1989 the process of extreme neoliberalisation began in Slovakia. The left was cornered and unable to defend itself. It had to face not only a right-wing ideological offensive, which, in the name of anti-communism, tried to demonise all leftist thinking, but also the pressure of multinational financial agencies dictating politics in post-communist Europe. The culmination of neoliberal reforms was a radical experiment at the beginning of the 21st century, when the right-wing government in Slovakia partially implemented

the Chilean pension savings model, eliminated progressivity from the tax system, adopting a flat tax, opening up healthcare to financial groups, and privatising strategic enterprises. Since that time, Slovakia's social democratic governments have been able to mitigate some of the neoliberal reforms, but in political discourse neoliberalism is hegemonic.

After the economic crisis in 2008, neoliberalism's hegemony gradually eroded throughout the world, including in Central Europe, and new sources of inspiration, including classical Marxism, antiglobalism, and communitarianism, became more evident in leftist discourse.

The limits of liberalism have been fully demonstrated by the 2015 migration crisis, which has created a profound contradiction between Western European and Central European societies, including their left blocs. Two distinct groups, one liberal, the other conservative, oppose each other, and for several years now both have been maintaining that the key issue in today's world is not neoliberal capitalism, economic and social inequalities, or militarism but cultural-ethical or minority issues. To use Marxist terminology, in discourse the ideological superstructure has completely pushed out the economic base. As a result, the left is losing everywhere because people in Europe have been indoctrinated with a discourse that works for liberals, conservatives or fascists, but certainly not for classical socialists – and not for working people.

The two clear-cut camps created by the debate on the immigration crisis, Islam, and multiculturalism, can be indicated as follows: on the one hand, there are liberal cosmopolitans who 'welcome' refugees, advocate transnational identities, consider borders outdated, and are very likely to refer to ordinary working people with more conservative prejudices as purebred fascists. On the other hand, we have conservative fundamentalists, nationalists, and Islamophobes, who put all Muslims into one basket, all of whom they regard as terrorists, spreading hatred against them, and arguing chauvinistically about the moral, cultural, or religious superiority of a white Christian Europe. This barricade struggle is positional and sharply defined: some are humanists in their own eyes who are fighting for a hippie dream in which we all will love each other regardless of race, religion, or nationality; the others see themselves as patriots who are protecting their culture from the hordes of uncivilised rapists and terrorists.

From my left point of view I naturally reject both extremes. The socialist left should be somewhere in the middle of this dispute, rejecting a kind of radical multiculturalism in which the identity of minorities is more important than the progressive values of the left, but also radical nationalism and its predatory national identitarianism, which devours everything that is

different. The left naturally proceeds from the belief that people cannot be put into one box solely on the basis of skin colour or religious faith and that different cultures and ethnicities should respect each other. This egalitarian belief is reinforced by the historical experience of the anti-Semitism that led to the Holocaust in the twentieth century. Muslims are being compared to Jews during the inter-war period, attacks against them are perceived by humanists as a foreboding of new disasters, and they feel greater need to protect them. Around all this there can be agreement, and it is clear that minorities need to be protected from hatred and lynching. But at the same time, this view cannot irrationally blind us to the real problems arising from multiculturalism, especially when it involves religions that do not respect our egalitarian values.

   This is a boundary beyond which there is no place for celebration of otherness. Because otherness can also be reactionary and hostile to equality and freedom. I am therefore convinced that certain progressive national or European values that we have fought for centuries to uphold, including secularism, the equality of men and women, which limit the reach of religious irrationalism, must not be weakened by tolerance of different religions or cultural traditions. These values must be respected by all minorities, period. Not because the ideal is Fichte's closed state[2] or Kim's North Korea; but rather because in our cultural space we have the right and the duty to protect and promote those progressive values in which we believe and the struggle for which required a huge effort by our ancestors in the region. However, one of our progressive values is anti-fascism, which rightly makes us very sensitive to the need to protect minorities. We have to navigate carefully between the protection of our progressive, secular Enlightenment values and the rights of minorities.

   In the left too there are people on both sides of the barricade. Certain parts of the left are becoming a socialist variant of liberal globalisation, and its adherents, together with right-wing neoliberals, are fighting for a world without frontiers. In such a world, transnational capital can exploit people across the globe without any limitations imposed by national states, but the more social-minded of the globalists add to this neoliberal vision the promise of a brighter future in the form of a global social state or of transnational regulatory bodies.

   Unfortunately for the social globalists, transnational bodies like the European Union often behave like neoliberal tanks blasting away at many social achievements of the post-war era, not to mention how imperially the EU treats the countries on its periphery, or how, in fact, it protects the interests of its own corporations, which despite all its humanist slogans

feed on the suffering of working people in developing countries. At the beginning of the twentieth century, the British social liberal John A. Hobson, in his critique of imperialism, anticipated this development of European integration long before it began. He foresaw: 'a larger alliance of Western states, a European federation of great powers which, so far from forwarding the cause of world civilisation, might introduce the gigantic peril of a Western parasitism, a group of advanced industrial nations, whose upper classes drew vast tribute from Asia and Africa, with which they supported great tame masses of retainers.'[3]

Current radical left criticism confirms Hobson's prediction: the EU's true face is neoliberal, exploitative, and chauvinistic. And there is only this EU with no sign of a more progressive cosmopolitan world order in the offing; whether we like it or not the only visible development is towards the cosmopolitan 'brave new world'. But in the cruel, neoliberal reality in which we live, cosmopolitan leftists never win, while transnational capital continually does. Reality does not allow for the invocation of a cosmopolitan global state. Moreover, this invocation constitutes a dangerous utopia because it is particularly congenial and accommodating to supranational capital, which needs to prevent national states from enacting protectionist measures. But then the question is: With whom does the western liberal left want to fight for cosmopolitan socialism?

Things are even worse when we look at cosmopolitanism in terms of the political preferences of the working class. Paradoxically, despite decades of selling the idea of hyperglobalisation, a more coherent cosmopolitan identity has so far only been created in the upper middle class of traders, artists, some scientists, or elite students of global universities who travel regularly around the world and whose place of birth is just a trivial detail in their CV. On the other hand, those social groups which are traditionally championed by the left, that is, the poorer and lower social classes, usually have no cosmopolitan identity. They are basically tied to their homeland because they have no means, no education, nor real freedom to travel around the world and enjoy the charms of dignified cosmopolitanism.

The political consequences are sad. In the end, the globalised liberal left is turning away from traditional left-wing voters and appealing to the middle class of educated, wealthy, globalised, and mobile people. The problem is that these people are not interested in the economic left. Rosa Luxemburg disgustedly referred to them as the 'parochial democratic progressivists'.[4] Today, the liberal leftists themselves proudly espouse this sensibility. They are willing to advocate at best some limited form of welfare state, but their priorities are different – they are interested in lifestyle, recognition of

minorities, self-realisation, multiculturalism, in short, post-material issues. Their material needs are already satisfied, and the issues of poverty or economic exploitation are of little interest to them. They prefer organic raw food in their favourite cafés to fighting transnational capital.

The more radical alterglobalist left ends in a stalemate – to fight for socialism is a problem if your post-materialist allies are the ones whom global capitalism really suits. And so the priorities and voters of the liberal left are being changed – they are no longer workers or poor employees but urban intellectuals, minorities, gays, lesbians, human rights activists. And so the left devolves into a kind of postmodern activism or social liberalism in which socio-economic radicalism is considered boring. Instead of the interests of the workers or the struggle against capital, this 'left' exhausts itself in struggles for the recognition of otherness, the celebration of diversity, multiculturalism, or the sexual rights of minorities.

At the opposite pole from the socialists, the conservatives and nationalists are of course terrible. Instead of practicing solidarity with poor working people from other countries they spread irrational hatred and fear of them. They ignore the fact that many of the nearly 1.5 billion Muslims who live in the world from Tunisia to Indonesia lead a modern and worldly life just like the Europeans, and they completely disregard the differences within Islam itself, confusing all its branches with religious fundamentalism, Salafism, or jihadism. Muslims represent an abstract, alleged threat more strongly in countries where people have virtually never seen a Muslim other than on summer holidays in Egypt. Unfortunately, these attitudes abound in Central Europe.

Xenophobia can sometimes find particularly fertile soil in regions with barely any experience of immigration, for instance East Germany, not to mention Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic, or Slovakia because people are much more inclined to hate abstract threats rather than living, concrete people. If people live their entire lives in a multicultural society and daily meet people from a wide range of ethnicities and religions they cannot but recognise their good and bad aspects. The less direct life experiences people have with other cultures, the more they are susceptible – under certain circumstances – to xenophobic attitudes. The left in Central Europe should deal more sensitively with this problem.

Phobias of other cultures are of course unacceptable for the left. But the shock doctrine promoted by European technocrats cannot be the answer. To forcibly bring Middle Eastern refugees and migrants into CEE – against the will of the local population and certainly against the will of the migrants themselves – will cause the liberal technocrats to lose popular support for

any more progressive projects, instilling Euroscepticism in people and spreading xenophobic hatred throughout the region, which – whether one is aware of it or not – many realistically thinking domestic politicians still have under control. The tragedy for the Central European left is that various technocratic shock doctrines are often promoted, in a chaotic way, by the Western liberal left, which, despite its proclaimed tolerance and celebration of otherness, consciously or unconsciously regards Central Europe arrogantly, paternalistically, and imperially in the way the centre regards the periphery. Consequently, many traditional social democratic voters in Central Europe have turned towards the extreme right. They have gradually accepted its hate speech and Eurosceptic and Islamophobic codes.

There is no question but that the immigration crisis has weakened the left. A part of the left electorate went over to the liberals, globalists, and greens, another part to the fascists, conservatives, and nationalists. But the core electorate is still there as long as the left's leaders do not fall into one or another extreme. Real leftists do not regard the dilemma between liberalism and conservatism as crucial. They know that the role of the left is primarily to defend the social and economic interests of working people. The socialist issues are the fight against exploitation, the struggle for the welfare state, and the fight against poverty and inequality. In cultural matters the left may be politically moderate and adjusts its attitudes to the degree of development and cultural advancement of its own community, of its own society. This does not mean it should be less progressive but that it has to be anchored. In Saudi Arabia perhaps even the most radical local social liberals will not see gay marriage as an immediate goal but are satisfied with a ban against stoning women as a first demand. Central Europe of course is not Saudi Arabia, but neither is it cosmopolitan London or liberal Amsterdam. Every political contestation evolves from the level of discourse in that society. In cultural matters, the left must always refer to the traditions, stereotypes, and prejudices present in the region. Its cultural politics can never be the imposition of universalist schemes; situated ethics must always prevail. As Antonio Gramsci aptly wrote, 'The active politician is a creator, an initiator; but he neither creates from nothing nor does he move in the turbid void of his own desires and dreams. He bases himself on effective reality […].'[5] I will discuss this in more detail in what follows.

The left must be a realistic alternative, thus neither a liberal nor a conservative extreme. It must be radical in the economic and social spheres, not in culture and ethics. In cultural matters it must not be arrogant but sensitive, anchored, and respectful. In some left circles cultural issues came to the fore only after the revolutionary year 1968, which in the West saw

the beginnings of the post-materialist orientation of the so-called new left. There has been a shift in attention from the 'freedom of the majority' to the 'freedom of minorities'.[6] The truth, however, is that apart from the academic sphere and outside the rich Western European and North American societies, the postmodern left is very marginal. In the periphery the left's main goal has to be the struggle against poverty, exploitation, and material inequality, and everything else has to take second place. Not because the other things do not matter but because working people have to survive and support their families.

The theme of multiculturalism in left theory is relatively new, having never been a key issue in the history of the labour movement. (This is not to say that Marx, was not sympathetic to the Jews or the Slavs; or that the idol of the cosmopolitan left, Kant, in his lesser known works did not see the white race as superior to the black and completely accept the contemporary racist prejudices.[7]) The relevance of the theme depends on the specific historical context. In the history of left politics there is no normative ideal according to which each state's ambition should be to transform itself into a multicultural society in the manner of the American melting pot. The fact that many Western European societies are multicultural is not the result of left-wing social struggles but often of colonial ambitions, wars, and exploits in the Third World – not to mention the utilitarian calculations of Western elites, which, after the Second World War, tried to resolve their labour-market problems.

It is absurd to regard the US as a more left country than Erlander's Sweden merely because the United States is a heterogeneous country of immigrants, and because, shortly after the war, Sweden was a homogeneous nation of white Lutherans. No one doubts that social democratic Sweden was one of the world's most left capitalist countries in this period, while the US is and still is the exact opposite – the bastion of free-market capitalism.

The historical role of the left is to bring together working people in current cultural struggles. It needs to de-escalate the barricade struggle of the liberal and conservative extremes. In balancing the protection of European Enlightenment secularism and the achievements of the labour movement with the protection of minorities the left has to proceed sensitively on the basis of a substantive and rational debate, though often neither of the extreme camps want to participate, with liberals labelling the people holding different views as 'fascists', and the Islamophobes in turn propagating internet hoaxes and spreading hatred and fear instead of discussion.

Leftists in Europe should stop blaming each other and start dispelling the stereotypes the eastern and western lefts have of each other. This is something

that those who have definitively succumbed to one of the extreme positions cannot do; their attitudes are already cast in the form of religious dogmas. But others can still conduct an open and rational debate.

Social radicalism, communitarianism, and patriotism

The key *political* point here is that the left has to return to its roots and again take up the socio-economic issues at whose centre are social and economic justice as well as anti-capitalism; this is true of both the social democratic left and the radical left in their various shadings.

The CEE left is less liberal than its Western counterpart in cultural matters because, while the modern Western left's agenda develops from a rigorous implementation of human *rights*, including social rights, the CEE left instead has its value anchorage in social *protections*, including those provided to citizens by the state when it protects them from the market jungle. Thus the CEE left is, in essence, much more communitarian and less individualistic. This is due in part to its statist history (state socialism held sway until 1989) and to a more conservative culture in which individualism and liberalism were largely introduced by pro-market right-wing movements. The liberal left is truly marginal here – which at bottom is also true of Western Europe – consisting of just a few hundred intellectuals, activists, or journalists. Their presence is amplified because they are often in the media. But most of society does not trust them, especially the traditional left-wing voters. They expect social *protection* from the state and the cooperation of socialist parties with trade unions, a fair labour code, redistribution of wealth, a decent wage, social security, etc. Although the social *rights* agenda can bring left-wing discourse in Central Europe forward, it cannot automatically absorb it. The key values need to be solidarity, community, and equality.

In CEE, the value of solidarity does not primarily depend on the universal validity of declarations of human rights but on belonging to one's own community, concretely a Slovak or European society. The left in Slovakia reflects this communitarian bond and recalls Hansson's concept of *folkhemmet* (people's home) or Erlander's concept of a *strong society*, thus of the Swedish social democratic leaders who wanted to create a home for all Swedes in what was then a homogeneous Swedish nation. If, however, the left does not insist in an era of global capitalism, when neoliberal economic globalisation is eroding the welfare state, that the central struggle is against non-recognition in the economic sphere, then all cultural victories, starting with gay marriages and ending with the recognition of the formal rights of indigenous minorities somewhere in Latin America, will be Pyrrhic victories. In his *Latin America and Global* Capitalism, William Robinson provides the

example of specific Latin American indigenous tribes whose cultural rights governments in Mexico, Peru, Ecuador, and Brazil have recognised after years of minority struggles – while at the same time they have stripped them of their property rights to their historic lands, and these lands have been given over to exploitation by omnipotent transnational corporations. The proud indigenous peoples are now fully recognised culturally – and economically expropriated![8]

Communitarian values are often connected to patriotic feeling, especially in CEE. The category of the nation should be seen openly and analysed historically, which is the basis of the Marxist approach and is inherent in Slovak left political thinking. This had always been done by Slovak Marxists, including Vladimír Clementis or Ladislav Novomeský, whose thinking, together with that of Alexander Dubček and Gustáv Husák, is still the main point of reference for the left electorate in twentieth-century Slovakia.[9] However, among the most famous of Slovakia's left theorists who have published even after 1989 Vladimír Mináč merits particular attention.

Mináč had been very nationally conscious throughout his life, although he had subdued his patriotism for a long time. He was persistently haunted by a fear of the return of the Slovak state and of the outbreak of nationalism and chauvinism that would negate 'all the hard-won values, our history, our culture, and warm humanity'. He pointed to the fatal consequences of the growing nationalist chauvinism and adoration of Jozef Tiso[10] and the wartime clerical-fascist state, which was the obedient satellite of Nazi Germany and urged: 'The young Slovak politics should disassociate itself from what every young democracy must be separated from.' Aware of the spread of militant nationalist anger among the youth, he wrote: 'For dozens of years I have tried to derive from Slovak reality, from Slovak history, personalities, and deeds, reasons for national self-confidence. If this is the result, I have lost my life.'

On the other hand, Mináč staunchly refused to disregard his own nation, criticising the tendency of the youth to shun patriotism and indulge in empty cosmopolitanism: 'The youth has the right to negate and to rebel against all that they consider unbearably old. But they do not have the right to spiritual suicide;' he continued: 'Being open to the world is not the same thing as identifying with it; we are transcending it to confront it, not to show how rapidly we can adapt to it [...]' He thus rejected cosmopolitanism in which he saw only genuine and real 'homelessness', insisting that 'A man without a home is a man without morality; he only listens to the golden calf he has created in his loneliness.'[11] It is patriotism in this sense that is characteristic of the CEE left.

Labelling as 'sleeping fascist' every average citizen who is attracted by the more communitarian values, besides being false and arrogant, opens the door to the real fascists, who are products of the alienation and individualism of global liberal narratives. Uncompromising ideological resistance to the nation-state is a cul-de-sac that can completely destroy the left movements. Unless this resistance is aimed at the great and powerful states it ultimately favours the great powers, which colonise the smaller states with impunity in accordance with their realistic political doctrine of national interests. The black-and-white vision, according to which every national state is per se evil, and all globalisation is good on principle, is ahistorical and non-Marxist.

CEE left patriotism sometimes even questions the character of the European Union. Certainly, the idealist vision of European integration is laudable in itself, but in real politics attractive slogans usually cover the less attractive real motives of great powers. It is plausible, as Habermas proposes, that in the global economy countries need to join forces to form powerful regional units able to resist the force of transnational concerns, but at the same time the resultant transnational technocracies are not dedicated defenders against predatory capital but rather administrators of the interests of the strong players; indeed without direct and constant democratic control, it is hard to expect anything else.

Today few would dream of saying that the integration created by the European Union is a bulwark against neoliberal globalisation; increasingly larger parts of the left view it as an elite project of neoliberal globalisation. Under these circumstances, it is inevitable that there is Euro-scepticism not only on the right, driven by extreme nationalism and conservatism, but also on the left, where fears of a neoliberal, undemocratic, and imperial perspective for a united Europe are growing. The CEE moderate left favoured integration with a view to social citizenship, equality, and cultural identity in a united Europe. The vision was not the 'Latin-Americanisation' of Eastern Europe under the baton of Germany, against which Samir Amin warned.[12]

The key problem for the CEE left is that Western Europe offers a still-existing albeit feeble social dimension, while a realistic alternative beyond the EU calls up images of corrupt regimes run by transnational corporations or Mafioso oligarchies without any regard for civilised progress. The CEE left has so far preferred European integration while struggling for a more social Europe because realistically the alternative would be the standard of living and the social model of Ukraine, Bosnia, and Albania, not of Norway. This is the saddest version of Habermas's thesis: that states without integration cannot defend themselves from the pressure of multinationals or

globalisation. But in CEE it is increasingly evident that even the entire integrated EU is unable to defend itself against globalisation. The choice thus is not between freedom and globalisation but between different variants of neoliberalism – the more European, more civilised version on the one hand and the more post-communist and raw version on the other. However, this pragmatic attitude of the CEE left is not the only alternative, and the stronger the pressure of globalisation is, the less enthusiasm for the European project can be felt among the working masses. In addition, for nations and small states any integration is often associated with the loss of a sovereignty that they have sought for centuries. As Hobson said regarding the colonial nations at the beginning of the twentieth century: 'One thing is to join the federation of independent states in a position of equality and a completely different thing is to be invited to contribute to the maintenance and gathering of ever-increasing dependencies owned by one federalizing state.'[13]

Utilitarian economic considerations indeed may for a time overwhelm communitarian instincts, but they cannot contribute to building an authentic European identity, especially if the benefits of integration are not fairly distributed. Against this background, there is a kind of Euroscepticism on the rise in many EU Member States based neither on conservative nationalism nor chauvinism but rather on economic and social disillusionment. Already by the early 1990s Mináč recognised the structural inequality inherent in the Maastricht Treaty: '[...] there is an advantage for German banks and transnational concerns but the story is quite different for Greek fishermen or French farmers'. But he recognised that 'only a unified European economy can resist a long-united American economy and an always monolithic and strong Japanese economy. We face the very same question again: not what Europe will be in the future but whose Europe it will be.'

But Mináč did not see a viable space for a wider political and cultural unification. At the same time, he pointed out that the very idea of a united Europe derived not from the spirit but from the sword. The great unifiers of Europe were its conquerors – such as Napoleon and Hitler. And now, 'The German banks and big German multinationals are conquering the lost territories country by country, bank by bank, production capacity by production capacity. Again, the point is not what Europe will look like, but to whom it will belong.'[14]

Ever fewer leftists are willing to protect the processes arrogantly described in the propagandistic literature as 'unifying humanity', and they increasingly see through the kind of 'cosmopolitanism' that regards neoliberal globalisation as 'a beautiful new world'. The idea of the 'national' is by now a bugbear in globalisation discourse not because it could be a prelude to Nazism in the 21ˢᵗ century but because for global capital the national state as an economic actor still has the disadvantage of imposing too many barriers and restrictions.

The semi-periphery and prospects for the left

The crisis of the left has several causes. One of them was pointed to by Ralf Dahrendorf when he claimed that the left had become the victim of its own success. The post-war welfare state lifted the poor masses into the middle classes, which in turn began to vote for the liberals because socialists did not defend the interests of their new class position. Dahrendorf even speaks of 'the end of the century of social democracy'.[15]

Western social democratic currents responded to this development by shifting sharply to the right and seeking new priorities in cultural and minority issues. Meanwhile, however, neoliberal globalisation pressures have gradually disrupted European social states, and the middle classes are becoming re-proletarianised. In their new class position, however, they no longer find their programmatic ally on the left, because while they have begun once again to be concerned with the social state, the struggle against exploitation, and the rights of working people, many western left parties have long since abandoned these issues, stubbornly prioritising post-materialist issues. The left has disconnected itself from its traditional electorate, and the extreme right is grabbing it.

Another rift in the left in the advanced capitalist countries has to do with the great inequality between third world workers and peasants and northern workers. Many radical social movements in the north call for a huge redistribution of wealth from the North to the South, which would reduce the standard of living of Europeans or Americans. Or the demand is raised for zero growth so that we do not destroy nature in pursuit of mammon. All these are challenges that, realistically in the EU and the US, are so politically unattractive, at least for low-paid employees, that in putting them forward the radical left has lost contact with its own electorate, which does not share the perspective of radical academics and humanitarian activists and which, whether we like it or not, thinks in the first place about its interests and wants the improvement of its living conditions.

The specific cause of the crisis of the left in Central Europe is the legacy

of the former regime. Over twenty years of heavy mental massaging with primitive anti–communism have deeply harmed the left. You say 'socialism', they say 'gulag'. Propaganda is enough for them; they do not feel a need for discussion. In CEE, perhaps with the exception of the Czech Republic, the left has never had the strength it had in the West. The strong influence of reactionary Catholicism, rural life, weak civil society, historical national wounds, a poorly developed trade-union movement – all of this explains why the struggle against capital in Slovakia, but also in Poland or Hungary, has never played a central role. The Stalinist interlude was largely imposed by force. Lines of conflict other than those between left and right have always prevailed here. With the advent of neoliberal capitalism, the left in Slovakia was able to pull itself together as a force of resistance, but always with ingredients that are alien to the Western left, including more conservative and more nationalistic themes.

Looking at the economic structure of today's world, we see the classic Wallersteinian division into centre, periphery, and semi–periphery. While the states of the centre, that is, Western Europe and North America, have control over the five key monopolies of which Amin speaks – that is, the monopoly over technology, financial markets, weapons of mass destruction, the media, and energy resources – countries on the semi–periphery and periphery are deeply dependent on access to the centre's markets, its capital, and its economic power. Central and Eastern European countries are a typical part of the semi–periphery. We are not completely enslaved as in the developing world, but we are heavily dependent on the centre. This conditions the possibilities for radical political change. Until things change in the centre we can hardly achieve anything substantial in the semi–periphery. An example is Greece, another semi–peripheral country where Syriza did not achieve anything in its struggle with the powerful North.[16]

The question is whether politics in the semi–periphery resembles the political map of the developing world, where, after the Second World War there were not left- and right-wing parties but rather modernising movements that sought to imitate the West by catching up with it; i.e., syncretistic and critically traditionalist movements that tried to combine modernisation with traditional communitarian values in Africa and Asia, for example with Buddhism or Islam; and, in the end, religious fundamentalist movements, which resemble to a great extent the various forms of fascism and clerical fascism in the inter-war period in Europe. Bhikhu Parekh works with this kind of division in explaining political thinking in the developing world in the twentieth century.[17]

Modernists say that an enlightened modern state, despite the traditional

stereotypes of society, should introduce Western liberal cultural and economic patterns. This is the agenda of right-wing and left-wing liberals; we feel it in the whole of Central Europe. Opposing them are the syncretists, or moderate traditionalists, who may take on more or less right- or left-wing forms. They have more respect for the traditional patterns of society: communitarian ties, national customs, and organic elements of solidarity. And the whole political system is being attacked by fundamentalists in the form of the increasingly noisy neo-fascists and neo-Nazis in our region, who are actually able to shake hands with the Islamists – for at bottom they are the same. If we redraw the political map of the semi-periphery in this way, we find that the classic and fully developed contradiction of the right and left outside the centre countries is not completely possible because in the semi-periphery the left lacks the essential prerequisites for attacking capitalism as all the trump cards are held by the Western powers or the countries of the centre.

The very function of political ideologies – especially progressive ideologies – in the semi-periphery or periphery is much weaker than in the countries of the centre. One of the main aims of progressive ideologies is the moral reconstruction of the world. However, such goals can only be set by societies that have a cultural awareness of their potential to change the world. The countries of the semi-periphery and periphery are so dependent on the centre that their goals are far less ambitious: instead of ideological thinking, dependency creates in them a very strong political realism, whose main task is not the promotion of abstract values but the survival of the state/nation/community in the geopolitical and capitalist arena. The particularistic or communitarian character of thinking in the semi-periphery is based on this. It contrasts with the self-confident universality of the countries of the centre. Ideology is a toy of powerful states; weak states tend towards practical thinking.

This does not mean that political philosophy for semi-peripheral or peripheral countries does not make sense. However, it will simply not be a political philosophy that would lead to revolutionary changes in this geographical area; the latter must come from the centre. Unfortunately, the left-wing agenda at the centre has been seized by the urban middle classes which have turned it into petty-bourgeois liberalism; revolutionary left changes are hardly to be expected from it. This requires an insistent criticism of the liberal and postmodern left, which one can in fact hear from radical leftists in Central Europe.

NOTES

1   This article is the author's adaptation of a section of his latest book, *Antiglobalista* (Veda, Publishing House of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, Bratislava, 2018)

2   See Johann Gottlieb Fichte, *The Closed Commercial State*, Albany: State University of New York Press, 2012.

3   J. A. Hobson, *Imperialism: A Study*, Nottingham: Spokesman, 2011, p. 313. For another similar reflection by Hobson see pp. 188–89.

4   Rosa Luxemburg, 'Social Reform or Revolution', in Peter Hudis and Kevin B. Anderson (eds), *The Rosa Luxemburg Reader*, New York: Monthly Review Press, 2004, p. 167.

5   Antonio Gramsci, *Spoločnosť, politika, filozofia*, Bratislava: Pravda, 1988, p. 284. In his philosophy, Gramsci argued for a close relation between left-wing politics or left-wing intellectuals and peoples; as a result of this he came into conflict with Antonio Labriola who conditioned the success of the socialist revolution on the disappearance of backward peasants from the southern parts of Italy. Gramsci, as a native of Sardinia, on the contrary, understood ordinary workers as they actually were without looking down on them; he sought to make the political programme of the Italian Communist Party the programme of a real nation and posited a Marxism with hegemony in real space, not in the dreamlike realms of fantasy (see Gramsci, p.430).

6   See Pavel Barša and Ondřej Císař, *Anarchie a řád v světovépolitice*, Prague: Portál, 2008, p. 246.

7   David Harvey, *Cosmopolitanism and the Geographies of Freedom,* New York: Columbia University Press, 2009, pp. 26-27.

8   See William I. Robinson, *Latin America and Global Capitalism*, Baltimore MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008, pp. 304-9.

9   See for example Alexander Dubček, *Nádej zomiera posledná*, Bratislava: Nová práca, 1993; Lukáš Perný, *Kultúrna revolúcia Laca Novomeského. Ladislav Novomeský o kultúre, umení a politike. Spoločnosť Ladislava Novomeského*, Bratislava 2017; Michal Macháček, *Gustáv Husák, Vyšehrad*, Prague 2017, and others.

10   Jozef Tiso (1887 - 1947) was a Slovak president during the Second World War. He was afterwards executed as a war criminal.

11   See Vladimír Mináč, *Hovory M2 (Druhá časť)*, Pezinok: Formát, 1996; see also Mináč, *Subtegmine*, Bratislava: Perex, 1992.

12   Samir Amin, *Capitalism in the Age of Globalization: The Management of Contemporary Society*, London: Zed Books, 2014, pp. 7-8.

13   Hobson, *Imperialism*, p. 304.

14   Mináč, *Hovory M2*; Mináč, *Subtegmine*.

15   Ralf Dahrendorf, *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: In a Letter Intended to Have Been Sent to a Gentleman in Warsaw*, New York: Random House, 1990.

16   Slavoj Žižek and Srećko Horvat, *What Does Europe Want? The Union and its Discontents*, New York: Columbia University Press, New York, 2014, pp. 20-2.

17   See Bikhu Parekh, 'Non-Western Political Thought' in Terence Ball and Richard Bellamy (eds), *The Cambridge History of Twentieth-Century Political Thought*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010, pp. 553-79.

The Radical Left and Social Democracy in Portugal – Achievements and Obstacles

Adriano Campos and Alda Sousa

2019 is a crucial year. Not only will the European Parliament elections be held but there will be general elections in Portugal in September or October, and they are politically interconnected. No national strategy can ignore the immense changes in the world, in Europe, and in the EU since 2014, which means that these elections will take place in a very different context from that of five years ago. In 2015, the then leadership of Bloco de Esquerda (Left Bloc, hereafter Bloco) approved a resolution drawing the conclusion that the ultimatum imposed on Greece and its political consequences indicates that the left must be prepared to break with the European institutions.[1] In the *transform! 2018* yearbook, Marisa Matias and José Gusmão laid out the thinking behind this.[2] It is only natural that strategies and alliances for European elections would derive from common (or divergent) analyses that also stem from different national experiences.

In the last three years, the very original and unique solution for governing Portugal, a minority government of the Socialist Party (PS) dependent on agreements made with Bloco and the Communist Party (PCP), has drawn much attention and interest. At the same time, there has been room for some misunderstandings and assessments that miss the point (for us, for instance this government cannot be called 'left'). In what follows we will try to evaluate this recent experience, while also dealing briefly with the relationship between Bloco and the PS in different phases since 1999.

From the founding of Bloco de Esquerda to the crisis and 2011 elections

The process leading to the formation of Bloco in 1999 has been explained in extensive detail elsewhere.[3] Nevertheless, we will briefly mention some points relevant for this discussion.

By the end of the 1990s, of all radical left organisations existing in the revolutionary period of 1974–75 only three had survived: the UDP (ex-Maoist, the largest far-left organisation in 1974–75), the PSR (the Portuguese section of the Fourth International), and Política XXI, a 1990s split from the Communist Party. Many others disappeared, in some cases due to illusions and proximity to the PS.

A referendum on abortion took place in 1998. The NO position won by a narrow margin of 50.9% to 49,1%; the turnout was only 31.9%. Defeats often contribute to the disintegration of political organisations, but they may also be an opportunity to learn lessons and build new alternatives. This is what happened in Portugal in the aftermath of the referendum.

The weakness of the radical left then became more apparent, leading to debates within each of the three organisations that later founded Bloco, the central question being: What is the value of a left organisation if we are not able to stop the attacks of the ruling class or to win a referendum on abortion?

Nearly twenty years after its foundation, we believe it is useful to point out some crucial moments of this process, including its 'successes' which rest on some initial choices:

- Bloco was neither a mere electoral coalition nor a fusion of the three organisations behind its formation.
- The challenge was to create *a new political party* as an alternative to the PS and the PCP. A call to launch Bloco ('Starting anew', see box) was signed not only by activists from the three organisations but by hundreds of trade unionists, feminists, ecologists, anti-racists, LGBTI activists, artists, and intellectuals.
- Bloco was not founded on the basis of a priori ideological cohesion but by strong agreement around a programme of political intervention, capable of formulating concrete political proposals and having an impact on society.
- As a result of these initial decisions, Bloco built its own political leadership, which was not a caucus of the three former organisations. It is significant that in its first five to seven years there was an unwritten rule that half of the Mesa Nacional (the national leadership of ca. 80 people) should consist of members who had not been part of any of the three founding organisations. This choice proved very important in integrating different social experiences and political cultures.
- Membership is on an individual basis; there was no collective affiliation of the three organisations. Today Bloco has more than 8,000 members.

Although it obviously incorporates people who had had many years of activism, the majority of today's Bloco members are people for whom Bloco is their first organised activity in a political party.

The appeal that brought together the founding members of Bloco was, at the same time, broad and very ambitious. Since the very beginning, we defined ourselves as anti-capitalists and socialists.

'Starting Anew' (1999)

'Bloco absorbs the great traditions of popular struggle in the country, learning from other experiences and challenges. Bloco renews the legacy of socialism and incorporates the convergent contributions of a diversity of citizens, power, and movements that, throughout the years, have been engaged in searching for alternatives to capitalism. This is the starting point for building a popular, plural, effective, influential, and militant left, capable of rebuilding hope.'

From a political point of view, Bloco, from its inception, proclaimed its opposition to the neoliberal consensus generated by Berlin and Paris, represented by both the PSD (Partido Social Democrata), which in fact is a liberal-conservative party, and the PS in Portugal. These two parties of the 'Centrão' (Centre) have been ruling Portugal since 1976, in turn or even in coalition. They decided Portugal's accession to the EEC in 1986 without public discussion, let alone a popular vote, which was also the case with the Treaty of Maastricht and other treaties. Bloco was to challenge this status quo, and under our influence the question of the European Union took on importance in Portuguese politics well before the years of the Troika.

In the 1999 general elections Bloco won 2.4% of the vote and two seats (Francisco Louçã and Luis Fazenda). According to Portuguese electoral law, this permitted the formation of a parliamentary group and the right to speak in every debate.

With that election, Bloco accomplished a leap forward in national politics. Its parliamentary presence made its proposals widely known and popular. Had we not achieved this electoral result it is possible that Bloco would have disappeared.

From 1999 to 2011 we faced differing political situations. In 1999, the Socialist Party had exactly 50% of the seats (115 of 230) and formed a minority government. In order to have a law approved in parliament, it had to choose between getting votes from the right or making concessions to the left parties. From 2002 until 2005 the right was in office (with Barroso as Prime

Minister), and conflicts were heated on all fronts, reaching a climax in 2003 with the Iraq invasion. In 2005 and 2009 the PS received absolute majorities with José Sócrates; austerity measures began to hit home and privatisations went forward. Bloco combined a strong opposition in Parliament with extra-parliamentary political initiatives, for example a march for jobs across the country.

Resisting the Troika's austerity regime (2011-2015)

In 2011, following the defeat in parliament of Stability Pact 4, Prime Minister Sócrates resigned but first called in the Troika. The agreement was signed with the PS, PSD and CDS-PP (Centro Democratico e Social-Partido Popular). Both the PCP and Bloco refused to meet with the Troika. New elections took place in June, with the right-wing coalition winning and pursuing the most aggressive social policies of the past thirty years, even exceeding what the Troika demanded. This resulted in the impoverishment of a large majority of workers and pensioners via cuts in wages, pensions, and social benefits, tax hikes, and attacks on public services. But it also affected the structure and organisation of the working class, since collective-bargaining agreement contracts went down from covering 1.3 million in 2011 to 300,000 in 2014 (meaning only 6% of the labour force). There were huge popular mobilisations (the largest since 1974-75), which climaxed in a few key moments without continuity, and several general strikes. Between 2011 and 2014, the PS was led by its most right-wing section and barely projected an opposition role.

In these years, Bloco (which had lost eight of its sixteen MPs) faced a very difficult challenge: to maintain a consistent political programme that combined rejection of austerity with the urgency of debt renegotiation, exposing the contradictions of an authoritarian European Union and financial system, all the while taking part in all forms of resistance. At the same time, we were not only part of, but also key movers in broad initiatives on democracy, a national health service, and other issues, which brought together vast sectors of the left (PS, PCP, Bloco, and independents) against the Troika and around alternatives. With the proximity of the 2014 European and then the national general elections, there was enormous pressure on us (both external and internal) to form pre-electoral coalitions with the PS. As the majority of Bloco rejected that choice, some activists left.

Lessons from the Portuguese non-model[4]

It is necessary to explain the conditions for the Portuguese 'non-model', since its circumstances are so particular that no generalisation is possible, and explore the experience of Bloco during the two and a half years of the

government that replaced the right-wing 'Troika Consulate' in Portugal (2011-2015).

October – November 2015: a new political situation and a difficult decision

After four years of austerity and social destruction, the October 2015 elections represented a setback for the government parties – the PSD/CDS coalition received 38% of votes, which reflected a loss of almost one million votes, and the PS experienced a modest recovery (32%). Bloco came third, with 550,892 votes, almost twice its 2011 score. As the two left parties, Bloco (10.2%) and the PCP (8.6%) got almost one out of five votes, and the parliament was faced with two alternatives: a minority government of the right with no allies, except if the PS chose to help it; or a minority government of the PS with a possible alliance with the two left parties – both of them would have been necessary. In brief, the then President of the Republic, Cavaco Silva, empowered the previous Prime Minister, Passos Coelho, to form a new right-wing government, which was defeated in parliament, replaced by a new PS government (with António Costa as Prime Minister) based on two formal pacts, one with Bloco and one with the PCP. So, for the first time ever, the PS was forced to establish an alliance with the left, and the left, also for the first time, accepted being part of such an alliance.[5]

The alliance was preceded by a public call in a TV debate during the electoral campaign by Bloco's spokesperson Catarina Martins, challenging António Costa to drop three essential points of his programme (freezing pensions, creating a new form of easy firing, and reducing firms' contributions to social security). Her clear conditions for a dialogue on a possible future government became a decisive question in the national debate. This was not an electoral trick but a clear response to the needs of the people, and we believe this is how a left party should act to create political change.

After the election, the PS, in order to get a parliamentary majority, was forced to accept these conditions along with others. Both Bloco and the PCP established written agreements for that purpose, neither of them being part of the cabinet.[6]

What the left coalition with the PS achieved

The main achievements of this political process will be briefly summarised in terms of the democratisation measures and the economic and social impacts of the agreement. Then we will discuss the conflicts between the left parties and the government, and how Bloco is presenting its alternative.

a. Improvements in civil liberties

With the new composition of parliament, several laws were passed:

abolishing fees for abortion (a 2007 referendum had legalised abortion, but the right-wing majority government had imposed fees to deter its use), broadening the rights of gay couples, which included adoption, generalising medically assisted reproduction for single women and lesbians, ruling on the conditions for surrogacy, establishing full gender parity in political representation, and authorising the medical use of cannabis. In some cases, Bloco and the PS formed a majority for such laws since the PCP voted with the right-wing parties against lesbian rights, gender parity, surrogacy, and cannabis. More recently, both Bloco and the PS proposed laws to legalise euthanasia. In this case, these initiatives were defeated by only five votes, the PCP again voting with the conservative parties.

The relevance of this agenda is apparent since it pursues a process of democratisation and effectively challenges different forms of oppression.

b. Social and economic achievements

The agreement includes the following measures that were enacted in this period:

- the reversal or limitation of privatisation or concessions established by the right-wing government in public transportation (the national airline and public transportation in the two largest cities);
- new privatisations were explicitly forbidden;
- a 20% raise in the minimum wage until 1 January 2019;
- four public holidays were re-established after being abolished by the previous government;
- all pensions were unfrozen (and keyed to the rate of inflation) and smaller ones were augmented every year by 3-4%;
- the programme of geographic dislocation of public servants against their will was rescinded;
- the collective bargaining process for public servants was re-established;
- the tax on consumption in restaurants was decreased from 23% to 13%;
- giving all children access to a nursery by 2019;
- giving books to all students under seventeen years of age;
- the extraordinary tax imposed on wages and pensions during the Troika period was abolished;
- taxes on wage income were reduced and the tax on large firms increased;
- a new tax on luxury real estate was created;
- foreclosures have been suspended for old or disabled people living in the same place for fifteen years, and the rent law is being revised to protect tenants;
- new rules have been applied for the self-employed that provide services to different firms assuring them social security protection;

- tuition fees in public universities will be reduced by 20% this year;
- the pensionable age will be reduced for workers who started work at a very young age;
- electricity bills will be reduced.

The global effect of these measures in 2016 and 2017, in a favourable context with lower oil prices and better export prospects given the mild recovery in Europe, was a combination of minor growth in GDP (4.3% in real terms, after falling by 7.9% during the recession and austerity period), a sharp rise of employment (plus a reduction of officially registered unemployment from 17.5% in 2013 to 7,4% this year, and a reduction of the public deficit (from –3.1% in 2015 to 0.9% in 2017 and to a prospective virtual zero in 2018), in this case due to the effects of the recovery (which however occurred at the expense of freezing public investment)). In any case, aggregate demand expanded as the joint result of more confidence and improved pensions and wages. Fighting impoverishment had a real social impact. It is a fact that no other European country has pursued these kinds of policies.

Limits of the accord with the PS

Although major challenges are still unmet, such as reducing external and public debt, the fact is that Bloco was able not only to study and present concrete alternatives on such topics but also to force a public discussion around them. Indeed, a report presenting a concrete proposal of debt mutualisation of 52 billion euros was signed by Bloco and the PS, with the participation of members of the government, including the statement that the current European Union budgetary rules are 'unfair and unsustainable'. Still, the government does not intend to act on it nor present any sort of alternative to the European authorities. Getting clarity on the fact that the government opposes a strategy of debt restructuring, even though it was forced to acknowledge the unsustainability of the budgetary rules, strengthens the struggle against the debt.

Other conflicts between the left parties and the government emerged as the budgets were implemented and differences with the PS became more obvious. In all instances, Bloco put forward its views, understanding that building a relationship of political forces requires detailed and convincing alternatives and mobilisations, not just slogans.

Conflicts on finance and banking, and labour laws

In some cases, questions that were not determined by the agreement were included in later negotiations and a consensus was eventually established;

this was the case with the new tax on luxury property and many other fiscal measures in the current budget. However, this could not happen in the case of regulation and management of the financial system and labour legislation due to divergent strategies on these issues.

As a consequence, the left parties opposed the sale of Banif, a small regional bank, to Santander, and that of Novo Banco, which used to be the largest private commercial bank, to Lone Star, a US real estate firm. In other cases, the left opposed special privileges for the banking industry. These conflicts showed why the left parties were right not to accept participation in the government, since there is a huge difference between the views of a centre government, such as that of the PS, and the left on financial and other questions.

The difference between the government and the left on issues of labour legislation is even more consequential, since it is occurring against the background of social struggles. For two years, Bloco discussed a package of measures with members of the government to correct precarious labour contracts and promote jobs with full rights. Some of these measures were approved after lengthy debate, and this reduced the amount precarious independent workers pay into social security and increased the level of social-security contributions the contracting firms have to pay so that these workers can enjoy better pensions when they retire. It was a major victory not only for the left parties but also for the social movement of precarious young workers, which has been the last decade's most militant movement in Portugal.

The issue of the social contract has repeatedly been in the forefront of the national debate. On one occasion, in early 2017, the PS government proposed reducing the social security contributions paid by firms, which the employers applauded. It was the first case of a direct violation of the written agreement with Bloco. The party reacted and rejected the proposal, since it would damage the revenues of the public pension system, and finally defeated it.

Victories: Bloco defeats an agreement between the government and companies

The most important victory for the workers' movement and for Bloco was forcing the government to treat precarious workers in public services – schools, hospitals, etc. – as permanent public servants. This possibility has been extended to more than 30 thousand eligible public-sector employees who applied for the programme.

Precarios Inflexíveis, the most important organisation of the social movement of precarious workers, in which left activists play a significant role, promoted

both a new law, which was approved by parliament and the organisation of the workers themselves, in order to fend off the resistance from the intermediate levels of bureaucracy in public services, such as universities and hospitals, and even the government itself. The process is still ongoing. This is a strategic movement for Bloco, as a militant force for self-organisation and a political actor able to impose the new law.

In March and April of 2018, after suffering defeat on the issue of social-security contributions by firms and accepting the important changes in favour of the precarious workers, the government proposed new changes in the labour laws. Some of the enacted changes were good for workers, such as reducing the number of years (from three to two) for permissible successive non-permanent contracts, or limiting the number of the contracts for short-term temporary work. But some of the government's proposed changes are extremely objectionable: augmenting the trial period to 180 days a year – with no rights and no compensation if one is fired during that period – or establishing the possibility of oral contracts for up to 35 days, mostly for tourist services, but now extended to the whole economy. The trade unions and the left parties are mobilising against these proposals.

A high-level conflict: taxing the subsidy to the Chinese-state-owned electricity company

Our final example of conflict with the government is around the energy issue. Bloco, following its written agreement with the PS government, was able very quickly to implement an important change for poor families: Access to the social rate for energy, at a substantially lower price, was broadened from ca. 50 to 700 thousand families (one in eight families), simplifying at the same time the procedure for verifying income tax declarations and avoiding any bureaucratic obstacles. But the big conflict on the energy question would occur at the end of 2017, when parliament approved a new tax on the power company, worth several hundred million euros, after a negotiation between Bloco and the ministries of finance and economy. However, the government was pressured by the Chinese government – since the 2012 privatisations the Chinese state owns the largest national energy firm – and with the help of the right-wing parties it managed to impose a new parliamentary vote reversing the previous decision. This major political tempest demonstrated how difficult it is to challenge international capitalist interests, how vulnerable the PS is to their power, and also how Bloco ought to pursue its fight for the benefit of the people.

The agreement did not put an end to the social struggle

Whoever argued that the agreement between the left parties and the PS would muffle the social movement or restrict its forms of protest was proven

wrong. Precisely the opposite happened. Since many workers see that the government is more vulnerable to social pressure and that the left parties are their allies, *more* mobilisation is in fact possible.

There is a clear confrontation around social and economic alternatives. In this framework, the leaders of the right-wing parties and the big employers accuse the government of being a 'hostage' of the left, and although they are wrong on who ultimately wields effective power this is their perception of the strength of the movement led by the left. Simultaneously, the lessons of these agreements are a major divisive issue inside the PS itself.

The construction of social action, political protagonism, and alternatives is therefore a key defining task for the left. In this connection we will end by simply citing three current examples. The first involves teachers who are demonstrating and preparing a long period of contestation with strikes from October on.

Our second example is the organisation of different collectives and organisations against oil prospecting and, in general, for a radical change in climate policies. These organisations are particularly strong at the local level and converge in some initiatives, such as the Portuguese-Spanish demonstrations against the Almaraz nuclear plant or the Retortillo Uranium Mine, with a recent victory over the latter in the form of a decision by the Spanish parliament to halt this crime against the environment.

Finally, a third and growing social movement that has been particularly resourceful is the feminist movement, in particular against offensive court decisions that underplay domestic violence and feminicide, and which criticise street harassment and denounce rape culture. These movements are growing as they develop a feminist working class agenda that articulates gender inequality in the context of the rights of productive and reproductive work, as well as the struggle against inequality as a result of capitalist patriarchal society. The feminist movement has mounted some local protests but also large national demonstrations occurring simultaneously in various cities, such as marches against Trump and misogyny and demonstrations on 8 March. These movements are now preparing the 8 March 2019 Women's Strike.

The same could be said of other movements, such as that of tenants against evictions from their homes and against gentrification of the cities or the informal care-workers' associations that are now emerging. In all these cases, Bloco is part of the movements. They represent the actual state of the social struggle – moving sometimes slowly, sometimes explosively, linking up with each other – but, most importantly, bigger and more organised than it was when there were no alternatives.

We insist that we are not presenting Bloco or the Portuguese experience as a model. When mass politics is at stake, there are no models: only a well-rooted capacity of learning and struggling alongside one's own people prepares a party for its strategic choices. Furthermore, we are aware that Bloco still has immense tasks before it. It must change and be more open to representing the social left. It must help create new expressions of the workers' and the popular movement. It must fight tendencies to adapt to institutions and routine. It must organise the education of rank-and-file members and their involvement in social organisations. It must fight sectarian views inside and outside the party. *Still, Bloco is the most important experience and transformation of the Portuguese left in all the four decades of democracy in the country*.

An agenda for social justice

During this short period of the PS government, social movements fuelled political debate and generated new ideas. They also influenced the political framework. One of the consequences is the debate between the two wings of the PS, one pushing for the continuation of social policies and the alliance with the left, the other advocating a style of party and political programme that is Blairite neoliberal and austerity-oriented.

The very contradiction inside the PS proves that there is a political implication for the agreement established with Bloco and the PCP. Feeling threatened by many Socialist voters who favour the alliance with the left – to the point of wanting their own party to be constrained by the left parties – some members of the leadership of the PS decided to challenge the pact with the left at the recent PS congress in June 2018. Some of them went so far as to invoke the example of the neoliberal Third Way, while others stated that the PS should not abandon the pacts with the left. This is indeed a relevant debate over ideas, but we think it is more relevant to understand it in terms of political action since it is the consequence of the left's initiative in toppling the right-wing government. The fact that being or not being allied with the left has become a major divisive issue within the PS congress is proof of the partial success achieved by the left parties. The neoliberals in the PS and the peddlers of the European Union fear the influence of the left and they are right to do so – they know better than anyone that the left constitutes a political alternative with popular support.

As far as Bloco goes, it signed an agreement with the PS in 2015. This imposed a new framework on its activity but did not change the party's goal – *to create a large class movement for socialism*. Steps in that direction are taken at different levels, such as favouring the recovery of the standard of living

of workers and pensioners, creating better conditions for trade unions in collective bargaining, promoting the self-organisation of precarious workers, and taking the fight to the core of the economic and social system.

In this sense, the debate on the future of the National Health Service is nowadays the most heated, since it is a central target of financiers in their battle to whittle away the welfare state, and it involves crucial decisions on budgeting.

This is an area in which the impact of neoliberal views is quite obvious, as what is being advocated is a combination of privatisation of services and extraction of rents to be paid by the public to the private sector. Bloco responded to neoliberalism by proposing a deep restructuring of the health system and did so in the most effective way: António Arnaut – Minister of Health in the late 1970s, founder of the modern national health system as it emerged from the April 1974 Revolution, and honorary president of the PS – prepared a new law together with João Semedo – an ex-MP for Bloco and once its coordinator and a distinguished spokesperson for the party on healthcare questions – for the organisation of the health system, opposing the neoliberal solutions. They published this proposal in a book entitled *To Protect the National Health Service* in December 2017, with huge impact.[7] It was an expression of a political initiative seeking convergences in order to change the landscape of the debates and choices. Bloco presented it in parliament, and while many PS members support it the government opposes it.

In this case as in others, Bloco has challenged and confronted the politics of the centre. In reality, our views on the National Health Service currently do not have majority support in parliament, but we are not defeated. We keep insisting on them. And this is how left politics will win: talking to people who share the same ideas, including in other parties, creating social movement, standing for concrete proposals, and being able to deliver an alternative and not just protest. That is our strategy – we are fighting for the majority on every front.

NOTES

1   <https://www.esquerda.net/dossier/democracia-contra-o-colonialismo-financeiro/37973> (includes link to the English Version)
2   Matias Marisa and José Gusmão, 'The European Union – History, Tragedy, and Farce', *transform!2018* < https://www.transform-network.net/en/publications/yearbook/overview/article/yearbook-2018/the-european-union-history-tragedy-and-farce/>.
3   Alda Sousa, Francisco Louca, and Jorge Costa, 'The Left Bloc (Bloco de Esquerda) in Portugal', in *New Parties of the Left. Experiences from Europe, International Institute of*

Research and Education, London: Resistance Books, 2011; José Soeiro, 'The "Bloco de Esquerda" and the founding of a new Left in Portugal', in Cornelia Hildebrandt and Birgit Daiber (eds), *The Left in Europe: Political Parties and Party Alliances Between Norway and Turkey*, Brussels: Rosa Luxemburg Foundation, 2009.

4   This section is an abbreviated adaptation of a text published in 2018 in <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article5593>.

5   <https://www.esquerda.net/en/artigo/full-agreement-between-socialist-party-and-left-bloc/39543>.

6   See note 5 for the text of the agreement with Bloco.

7   Sadly, both António Arnaut and João Semedo died in 2018.

The Marxist-Christian Dialogue

Manifesto of Hermoupolis

'Politics is one of the highest forms of charity, of love', Pope Francis

We the participants of the Christian–Marxist DIALOP Summer School, considering the cultural complexity of Europe and its challenges (the lack of democratic participation in the decision-making process, the marketisation of social interactions and of human beings, the incapacity to welcome refugees, and the growing individualism and consumerism), see an urgent need for fundamental changes in Europe's social and institutional structure. For this reason, we are addressing the present Manifesto to the people in Europe.

We believe that Europe has to be more than an economy; it has to be a social common. We want an economy that serves social equality, justice, and ecological sustainability.

We believe in *solidarity*.

We believe in *human rights*.

We believe in *democracy* and the *respect of diversity*.

We realise that every concept must be concretely applicable and not consist of empty words. We need to take care of each other as we would ourselves. We need to act together for a shared purpose. We want to explain to every single citizen that solidarity means not following self-interest but searching for the common good. Solidarity is the opposite of competitiveness and greed. Solidarity is a reciprocal engagement, a reciprocal action on the level of the community to achieve the common good. It is an identity of interest that we expand together. Solidarity is the basis on which to fully realise freedom and equality.

We affirm the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 and the value of the European Charter of Fundamental Rights, as having established the highest level up to now of social and political rights in the Union, but, nonetheless, we cannot consider these to be fulfilled. Every person's duty is to declare them, defend them in the face of the institutions, and remind policy-makers of them.

How can we *transform* the problems into solutions?

We are convinced that everyone has the duty to act in co-responsibility (through involvement in movements, collectives, popular associations, think-tanks, etc.) in order to build networks at all levels – local, national, and transnational, for example in the form of Solidary Cities, deliberative processes, or the DIALOP Project, with diverse forms of political organisation.

The Pope indeed calls on us 'to create new forms of participation',[1] through our 'ability to organise and carry out creative alternatives'.[2]

For all these reasons, we propose different responses at various levels: right now, and in the medium, and long-term. Among the many problems we should face, the following issues urgently need to be addressed in order to promote a *universal culture of peace* based on fraternity and sisterhood and the active practice of dialogue:

1. stop military production and arms sales to countries at war;
2. stop climate change – strongly implement the Paris agreement;
3. stop unfair EU trade agreements;
4. stop modern slavery;
5. promote gender equality and stop every kind of abuse and violence (sexual, psychological, and social) against women.

We committed ourselves to these imperatives, encouraging all the participants to do so.

Hermoupolis, 7 September AD 2019

NOTES

1   First World Meeting of Popular Movements, 2014.
2   Second World Meeting of Popular Movements, 2015.

Why A Marxist-Christian Dialogue?

Michael Löwy

During the last few years transform!europe has been participating in a process of dialogue with Christians, more precisely, Catholics. The idea for this dialogue originated in a meeting in 2013 between Pope Francis and two representatives of the Party of the European Left: Alexis Tsipras, then head of the left opposition to the conservative Greek government, and Walter Baier, coordinator of transform!. Since then several meetings have taken place, with the participation of European leftists from Austria, Germany, Italy, Spain, and France; and from the Vatican Mgr. Vincenzo Zani, the Vatican's Secretary for Catholic Education, as well as several representatives of the Focolare Movement. Most of the meetings were held at the Sophia Universitary Institute at Lopiano (Italy), an academic centre connected to the Focolare Movement. Both sides of the dialogue were quite heterogeneous, with a wide diversity of views both among Marxists and Catholics – quite the opposite of 'democratic centralism'.

A recent development is the very successful DIALOP (Dialogue Project) Summer School which took place on the premises of the University of the Aegean, on the Greek isle of Syros, with the support of the Vatican's Congregation for Catholic Education, transform!europe, and the (Syriza) government of Greece. (More information on this event can be found in the web pages of transform–network.net.)

Marxist-Christian dialogues had taken place in Latin America, since the 1960s. There, many Christians absorbed certain important Marxist concepts, while the left – or at least most of it – not only warmly welcomed the Christians into their ranks but also abandoned 'atheism' as a doctrinal basis for left politics. In Europe, the historical and political context is of course quite different. Various forms of dialogue had taken place in the past, but a new situation has been created because of 1) the disappearance of so-called 'really existing socialism', which was often in conflict with the Catholic

Church; and 2) the election of José Maria Bergoglio, as Pope Francis, in 2013.

While on several issues such as family, sexual ethics, abortion, and feminism, Bergoglio has not innovated much in relation to the Church's traditional doctrine, in many other areas there has been a surprising and very impressive change. His criticism of social inequality, the mistreatment of immigrants, and the dictatorial power of finance are some examples, as well as his openness towards Liberation Theology and his support for social movements. A powerful symbol was the canonisation of Mgr. Romero, the archbishop of El Salvador, killed by the military for his opposition to the repression of the popular movements. These and other initiatives are some of the signs of a 'left turn' (to use our terminology), particularly visible when compared with the orientation of the two previous heads of the Roman Catholic Church. A striking example of the new papal discourse is the Encyclical *Laudato Si'* (2015), which deals with the ecological crisis.

For Pope Francis, ecological disasters and climate change are not merely the results of individual behaviour but are rather the result of the current models of production and consumption. Bergoglio is not a Marxist and the word 'capitalism' does not appear at all in his Encyclical. But it is very clear that for him the dramatic ecological problems of our age are a result of 'the machinery of the current globalized economy', a machinery that constitutes a global system, 'a system of commercial relations and ownership which is structurally perverse'.

What are, for Francis, these 'structurally' perverse characteristics? More than anything they are those of a system where 'the limited interests of businesses' and 'a questionable economic mindset' take precedence, an instrumental logic that has the maximisation of profits as its only objective. However, 'the principle of the maximisation of profits, frequently isolated from other considerations, reflects a misunderstanding of the very concept of the economy. As long as production is increased, little concern is given to whether it is at the cost of future resources or the health of the environment.' This distortion, this ethical and social perversity, is not unique to any one country, but rather of a 'global system where priority tends to be given to speculation and the pursuit of financial gain, which fail to take the context into account, let alone the effects on human dignity and the natural environment. Here we see how environmental deterioration and human and ethical degradation are closely linked.'

Other characteristics of the perversity of the system include: obsession with unlimited growth, consumerism, technocracy, the total domination of finance, and the deification of the market. Its destructive logic reduces

everything to the market and the 'financial calculations of costs and benefits'. However, we know that 'the environment is one of those goods that cannot be adequately safeguarded or promoted by market forces'. The market is unable to take qualitative, ethical, social, human, or natural values into account, in other words, 'values that are incalculable'.

Predictably, the Pope's theological orientation met with fierce opposition from the most conservative sections of the Catholic Church. One of the most active opponents is the US Cardinal Raymond Burke, an enthusiastic partisan of Donald Trump, as well as Matteo Salvini. Some of his enemies accuse Francis of being a heretic, or even a disguised Marxist. When Rush Limbaugh, a reactionary US Catholic journalist, denounced him as a 'Marxist Pope', Francis politely refused the definition, but added that he did not consider this an insult, since he knew 'many Marxists who are fine people'. On the other side, Liberation Theologians such as Gustavo Gutierrez – received by the Pope in 2013 – or Leonardo Boff, whom John Paul II and Ratzinger tried to silence, are openly supportive of Bergoglio, whom they see as a legitimate heir to Saint Francis. Next to these two outspoken positions, many people in the Catholic Church are sympathetic to the Pope but unable to share his radical anti-systemic commitment. This was also visible during the present dialogue.

The aim of this dialogue is not, obviously, to 'convert' our partners to Marxism, or (for us Marxists) to become faithful Catholics. Our discussions are not about faith versus atheism, materialism versus idealism, theology versus science, spirituality versus class struggle. It is a free exchange, in which each side tries to learn from the other, and both seek to discover common values, common interests, and common aims. Without hiding our differences, contradictions, and oppositions, the spirit of dialogue from the very beginning has been one of mutual respect, openness, and listening.

Future activities will include a new DIALOP Summer School, at a location in Europe still to be decided. But we would like to develop new forms of common activity: public debates, publications, and, why not, activist social initiatives. There is a common perspective, of strategic importance, on social, political, and moral issues, a perspective based on Pope Francis's statements on key questions for the future of Europe:

1. the rejection of social injustice, inequality and exclusion, resulting from the idolatry of capital, and of the present perverse economic system;
2. the need for radical measures towards an ecological transition, beyond the false solutions of 'emission markets';

3. human fraternity, in opposition to xenophobia, racism, Islamophobia, and other manifestations of intolerance actively promoted by far–right parties and some European governments (Hungary and Italy being only the most obvious examples);
4. hospitality towards immigrants, who should be received in Europe as human beings in distress, as our sisters and brothers, and not left to drown in the Mediterranean as is occurring today.

The Marxists of the European left and the partisans of Pope Francis in the Catholic Church share a strong social and ethical commitment on these issues – in contrast to most European governments and the governors of the European Union. The dramatic situation in Europe, and in the world, requires the coming together of *hominum bonae voluntatis,* that is, people who truly believe in humanist values, whether they consider themselves followers of Marx or of Jesus.

Christians and Marxists –
The Adventure of a Dialogue[1]

Nikos Xydakis

Most of the apparent friction between church and state is fictitious and concerns the narrow interests of the small elite circles jockeying for power on both sides, who have an interest in power and wealth. In fact, the civil society and believers making up the body of the church have little interest in these skirmishes. Rather, the protagonists are the organised Church, the Church officials – though certainly not all of them – along with the politicians – and not all of them either. It is a kind of pseudo-battle between the elites**.** On the other hand, the embrace of church and state is equally undemocratic and contrary to the main traditions in theology. Behind this too there is egotism and a desire to dominate that is deeply undemocratic.

There are quite a few examples of this embrace of church and state in the second half of the twentieth century. Three examples from our region, the Mediterranean, are:

- Italy's Christian Democrats after the Second World War. The Christian Democratic Party collapsed due to scandals arising from its identification with the dark banking activities of the Vatican and the interests of the mafia, leading to an endless series of trials. All of Italian history in the second half of the twentieth century is coloured by this.
- The Opus Dei phenomenon in Spain and the identification of rigid Catholicism with Francoism, the dictatorship of the Spanish far right.
- The Greek experience. In this case, orthodoxy and the church were violently appropriated by the far right: the interwar fascist Metaxas regime and the post-war internecine state that led to the seven-year dictatorship of the colonels (1967-1974), which enforced the official doctrine of the 'Greece of Christian Greeks' (the slogan used by the junta).

These were precursors of the current far-right wave in Europe, with its invocation of 'white Christian nations'. Orbán in Hungary, the ÖVP/FPÖ government in Austria, Kaczyński in Poland, the far-rightists in Germany, France, the Netherlands, Italy, and elsewhere endorse the idea, barely concealing a loathsome anti-Semitism, behind which lies an equally repulsive anti-Islamism.

Dissidents and heretics

The continuous dialogue between the left and Christians is neither new nor surprising, considering that Marxism is modernity's form of an old, informal left – the left of the dissidents, the rebels, and revolutionaries. I believe that we can find analogies, perhaps daringly, with the heretical and dissident movements within Christianity, which appeared as early as the tenth century, in the twelfth century, and later in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

In those epochs they were called heretics and were slaughtered or burnt at the stake for their heresy. These movements share a number of political and social characteristics, including anti-authoritarian and sectarian elements. The Paulician sect, which incorporated Gnosticism into Christianity, the long-lasting movements of the Bogomils in the Balkans, the Cathars, whose roots were in Bogomilism and were massacred in the Albigensian Crusade. And finally, the German Peasant's War aimed against the German princes and the Church of the Papacy as well as against the power of Luther, the new religious leader, under the 'social-anarchist' slogan *omnia sunt communia*. The Catholic and Lutheran princes united against the dissidents and eliminated them.

Returning to the present, a well-known example of the dialogue between Christians and the left is the *compromesso storico* launched by the Italian Communist Party's Secretary Enrico Berlinguer as an attempt to converse with Italian Catholics on reforming Italian society while avoiding civil conflict. The *compromesso storico* was never completed for a number of reasons and proved to be one more fantasy never to be fulfilled. Still, the seeds of this policy of the 1970s, which reached back to the 1960s, continued to exist. In 1963 the Second Vatican Council marked a major effort to renew the Roman Catholic Church and position it in a new way in relation to the contemporary world. However, it failed to produce what the radical theologians of the time had hoped for.

Returning to the Greek experience, we mentioned the far right's misappropriation of the Greek Orthodox denomination during the interwar period. This reached its peak during the 1967 dictatorship. Needless to say,

the Greek far right and its instrumentalisation of Christianity is still present.

On the other hand, there was also an interval – short but of great symbolic value – in the early 1980s when a movement deriving from Greece's radical left, even from anarchist milieus, approached Greek Orthodoxy – the Neo-Orthodoxy Movement. We then saw many young people who came from the left visit the great monasteries of Mount Athos to satisfy their existential and metaphysical quests. The movement influenced the intellectuals and artists of the time as well as a number of progressive young theologians. It had some impact on the radical left but hardly any on the Church of Greece.

Marxists and Hegelians

It is hardly necessary to emphasise the importance of great Marxist and Hegelian thinkers, such as, respectively, Terry Eagleton and Charles Taylor, or the philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre.

Eagleton is a full-fledged Marxist whose turn to Christianity is very honest and profound. The parallel he draws between socialism and Christianity, in their expectation of justice, equality, solidarity, and altruism, is of great general interest.

We might understand Taylor as a Hegelian who analyses the importance of Christianity through Hegel. He speaks of the possibility of a dialogue between socialism and Christianity, not only in his capacity as a philosopher but also as an active citizen. He is a member of Canada's social democratic New Democratic Party, for which he has stood election as a lead candidate.

In *Charles Taylor: Les avenues de la foi. Entretiens avec Jonathan Guilbault* (Avenues of Faith: Conversations with Jonathan Guilbault), Taylor talks of works that helped shape his faith. These are Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Perception*, Hölderlin's poetry, Baudelaire's *Les Fleurs du mal*, Dostoevsky's *The Brothers Karamazov*, as well as a purely theological book, Brother Emile of Taizé's *Faithful to the Future: Listening to Yves Congar*. The latter is quite significant, as Congar was the most prominent theologian of the Second Vatican Council, the one that was never really concluded since its decisions were never implemented. In my opinion its conclusions were so radical and far-reaching that the Roman Catholic Church at that time could not afford to implement them.

De-Christianisation

It is helpful to review Hegelian, socialist, and Marxist approaches to Christianity in light of the great process of the *de-Christianisation* of Europe and the instrumental misappropriation of Christianity by the far right, on the one hand, and of *the new Christianity outside Europe*, on the other. The latter appears with fundamentalist features in Latin America's favelas but also with

significantly more humane and popular characteristics in Latin America as well, the homeland of Pope Frances.

What is the meaning of being religious today? What is the meaning of the promise of the revolution – indeed, the meaning of the lost, betrayed revolution? What is Paradise and what is Hell? The Christian Paul Ricœur says that Hell is a historically obsolete concept today. Hans Jonas goes further in saying that Paradise is also obsolete. The Argentine Jesuit Pope Francis suggests a response one could call more practical: 'Don't just drop coins into the beggars' hands. Touch their hands.'

Minorities

At this point, I would like to contribute my experience of two friends who are Greek clergymen, priests, and confessors.

One of them, Father Antonios, often says that Christians in Greece are a silent minority, by and large crypto-Christians. They are a small minority of religious, church-going people, some of whom are almost embarrassed to openly admit that they are Christians.

Father Antonios, along with my other friend, Father Evangelos, are in a similarly desperate minority within the hierarchy of the Greek Orthodox priesthood. I can imagine them being here today, in this school, teaching on the basis of their lived faith, knowledge, and experience. They are the kind of priests who, alongside their study of the Church Fathers, the great theologians of the East and the West, also diligently study Levinas, Charles Taylor, Ricœur, Alasdair MacIntyre, and Walter Benjamin.

'A bit differently …'

The belief shared by Christians and Marxists in a better world, even if it comes at the end of time, the pattern of rebirth – resurrection, the pattern of messianism, is a pattern seen in the traditions of both Jewish Mysticism and the Gospel.

Charles Taylor views the reality of Christianity in the context of late modernity as a constant and deep transformation, a series of restarts. The primary faith and will of socialism is a belief in a similar restart, a constant transformation of the same kind.

And this recalls the *tikkun olam* of the Kabbalah, a messianic and deeply revolutionary concept: the ability to restore the world, to repair and restart it, not only as old but as radically new, beautiful, and strong.

With this we are entering Walter Benjamin's territory. Studying Kabbalah, the Talmud, and the Hassidic teachers, the mystic and Marxist Benjamin discusses the pattern of the Descent into Hades and Resurrection: everything is destroyed to be reborn again and again. In Benjamin's words:

The Hassidim tell a story about the world to come that says everything there will be just as it is here. Just as our room is now so it will be in the world to come; where our baby sleeps now, there too it will sleep in the other world. And the clothes we wear in this world, those too we will wear there. Everything will be as it is now, just a little different.[2]

Taking the narrative a little further

The expectation of 'as it is now, just a little different' provides warmth for people living within modernity, putting them on the path towards the ever-coming world, following a vector of constant progress in this direction, climbing higher and walking farther. And if people cannot achieve this shift, this displacement, cannot unsettle uniformity by moving a tiny twig, there is always Messiah. This is the reason he is born year after year, to remind us of the coming world, to remind people of the possibility of the other world, to remind us of human weakness and the need for a Messiah. The Nativity is an expectation.

NOTES

1   Talk given at the Dialop Summer School, Syros.
2   Quoted from Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, Minneapolis: The University of Minnesota Press, 1993.

Economic Update

The Return of the Economic and Financial Crisis – Nervous Financial Markets and the Slowdown of the Worldwide Boom[1]

Joachim Bischoff

It is no longer possible to deny that the world economy is growing more slowly now. The global boom lost traction starting in the second half of 2018. As a whole, the global economy had grown in 2017 more strongly than it had in years. Worldwide growth in 2018 amounted to only 2.9 per cent. And the World Bank is forecasting further decline for 2019. The diminishing dynamic will affect entrepreneurial profits. China, whose importance has grown in recent years, is no longer seen as an accelerating factor for the decreasing traction of the locomotive of the global upswing – the USA. Even pro-system market observers and experts are not only worried about the slowdown of growth, which typically diminishes in late-cyclic phases. Exactly at a time in which the economy has gone beyond the peak of its boom cycle, the banks of issue want to 'normalise' their monetary and credit policy. Until recently, an expansive monetary policy was the guarantor of booming security markets and rising real-estate prices. More restrictive parameters are risky for debt-ridden companies, which have for some time now been finding it difficult to attract new funds.

The basis for the upswing ten years after the outbreak of the Great Financial and Economic Crisis of 2008 was the policy of the banks of issue. They were the institutions that, when the crisis broke out, prevented a collapse of the global financial system and stimulated recovery with extremely low interest rates. 'Thanks to central banks' concerted efforts and their accommodative stance, a repeat of the Great Depression was avoided. Since then, historically low, even negative, interest rates and unprecedentedly large central bank balance sheets have provided important support for the global economy […].'[2]

Graph 1: The good years are probably over
Annual rates of change in the gross domestic product, in %
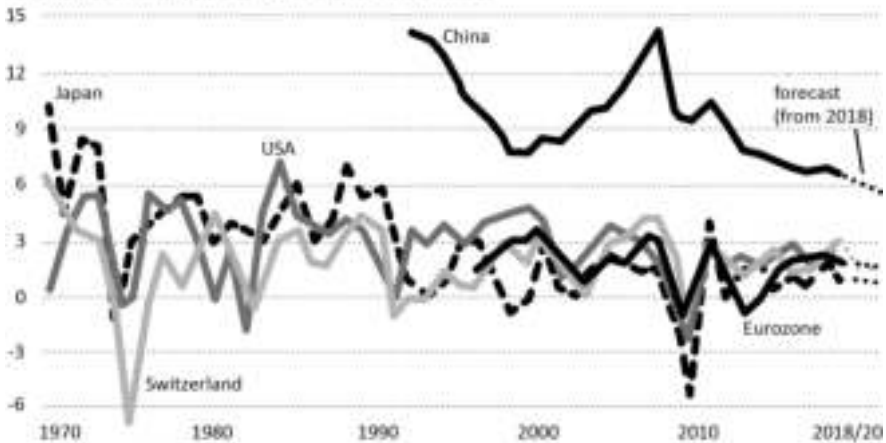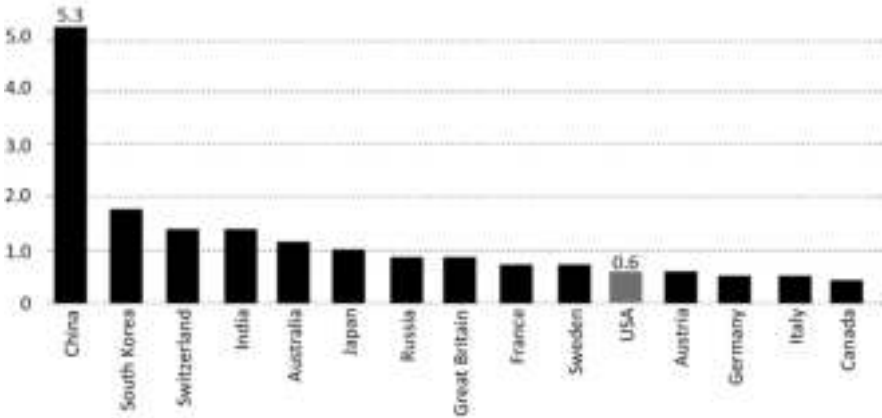

Source: OECD; Neue Zürcher Zeitung

For now, the US economy is still running smoothly. With his radical tax reform, Trump wants to drive growth up to at least 3%. Considering the favourable conditions in the labour market the shopping mood of Americans is hardly surprising. The tax reform provides for lower corporate tax rates and less taxes for the rich. The manifold punitive tariffs and trade disputes have not thrown much of a shadow on the value-added process. Corporate investment is already running out of steam. But it could be strengthened if the customs duty conflict escalates.

The boom in most EU countries is continuing, and even the countries of East and Southeast Asia are showing good growth rates. But global economic growth in recent months is less synchronised. In China too, state expenditure programmes are supporting growth. By contrast, growth is faltering in the Eurozone,[3] Japan, and Great Britain. The less synchronised global upswing evidences clear weaknesses in subareas: While some countries are doing well, the emerging economies – above all Turkey – are showing clear symptoms of crisis. Moreover, risks have recently increased.

There is a paradox: In the midst of an economic upswing broadly supported by investments and trade, the Trump administration is endangering the boom. Part of the paradox is that the voters and supporters of a renewal of US capitalism will have to foot the bill, for punitive tariffs and walls consolidate the deficient productivity. In the US there is no longer any talk of the project of US capitalism's ascent by modernising the capital stock, as in the Lgeislative Outline for Rebuilding Infrastructure in America.

Instead of focusing on modernising the US economy, it is being shifted by tax cuts and punitive tariffs into high speed. With his tax reform and fiscal

Graph 2: The US spends comparatively little on physical infrastructure
Investments in transport infrastructure and its maintenance as % of GDP, as of 2015 or more recently available figures


All sources of financing – includes roads, rail, waterways, seaports, and airports
Source: OECD, Neue Zürcher Zeitung

policy, Trump has stimulated the economy and additionally consumption. His aggressive trade policy rounds off his intervention. But this sped–up economy lacks a foundation.

The current expenditure boom is being followed by an expansion of debt, and the contrasting debt burdens for private households and firms is aggravating the income inequality – both are setting limits to growth. This 'doping' is making it difficult to return to an accumulation dynamic. And it is against the background of this masked weakness of US society that the increased risk of a cyclic crisis has to be seen. The ailing substance is expressed in a chronic downward movement of private capitalist investment (see graph).

Graph 3: Evolution of private net capital spending in the US
1960-2016, in % of GDP
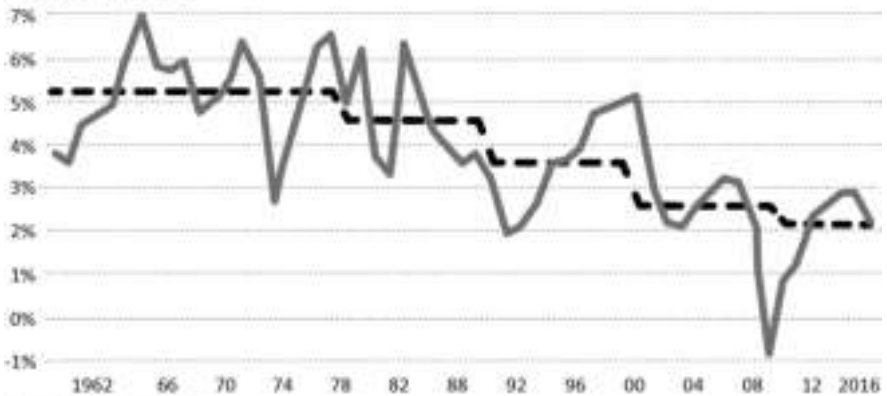
Source: Federal Reserve Bank

With a recession in the US resulting from politically induced instability of the global economy, larger sections of the population would be decoupled from the economic dynamic. The International Monetary Fund, largely in agreement with other institutions, stresses three risks:

- Intensified protectionist measures and an endangerment of the open multilateral trade system could trigger a slowdown of the boom.
- In addition, there is a dangerous potential in the turnaround in interest rates; that is, via a rise in the historically low revenues from the most important state bond markets and the ending of the central bank policy the upward motion could be stalled.
- Despite measures to stabilise the financial system, the possibility of turbulence in the 'overvalued' financial markets cannot be excluded and could trigger a downturn.

In 2018 global growth rates on the whole regained the long-term average levels shown before the Great Financial Crisis. Unemployment continued to fall. In fact, last year was the high point of a steady recovery of the global economy. For the coming two years the prognoses are pointing to a positive growth trend – within a general slowdown – making the current upswing one of the longest of the post-war era.[4] But this good level cannot hide the fact that there are risks and signs of the end of the ongoing economic cycle. Growth in the Eurozone weakened in the first quarter of 2018, and early indicators lead us to expect a slackening industrial dynamic. The flattening in the Eurozone and Japan is at the moment overshadowed by the boom in the US, where the forces of expansion predominate.

Graph 4: The current U.S economic expansion is now the second longest in post-war history (107 months)
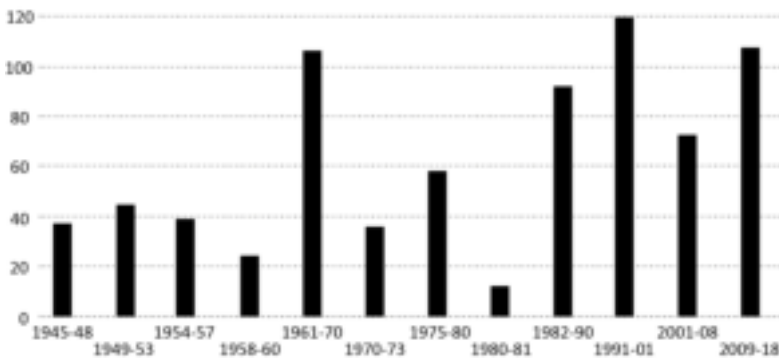
Source: FactSet

A characteristic of capitalism is that in the course of time, with increases of productivity, the economy grows but that this growth is neither continuous

nor even. Years of upswing are redeemed by periods of economic weakness. What happens is: If new investments grow more quickly, then capital accumulation also accelerates; the average length of such a consumption cycle in the OECD area lasts seven to twelve years (see graph); if, in the midst of a boom, demand for investments, which in any case constitute about a fourth of economic performance, suddenly collapses and demand for durable consumer goods simultaneously slackens this leads to great uncertainty, with the potential for a domino effect.

Currently, the industrial cycle is moving towards a crest, and the risks are now considerable. The very loose monetary policy contributes somewhat to cover it up. A minor incident might be enough to make the latent problems come to the surface. In what follows we will glance at the most important axes of instability.

Financial cycle

The soaring global debt has modified the economic cycle. An extreme interpretation would be that there will no longer be boom cycles, only credit cycles, that the traditional models of development have collapsed in the last decade, and that credit cycles move with the monetary policy of the central banks; if the US Fed pushes its interest rates to extremely low levels (and buys assets), then the only purpose would be to induce enterprises and consumers to borrow money and stimulate economic growth. Conversely, if the Fed raises its rates again and sells assets then liquidity falls. The incentive to create debt falls, and the growth impulse disappears. In this view, the credit system and the role of the central banks are overestimated.[5]

In boom cycles, recessions lead to falling market values, since consumer spending and investments decrease, enterprise profits collapse, and the stock prices plummet. However, if a credit cycle prevails, then falling asset values are said to be the cause and not the result of recessions. Just as growing liquidity and debt drive up the prices of asset values, rising interest rates and the depletion of central bank balances squeeze these values – and a recession follows.

According to this view, the financial market actors determine the course of events. The concept of a 'financial cycle' essentially signifies the self-reinforcing interaction between valuations, the perception of risks, the actual risks assumed, and financing conditions. This interaction can reinforce boom oscillations and precipitates into the likewise mutually interrelated developments of loans and asset prices. Due to a series of important changes since the beginning of the 1980s, financial factors have become more important as an influence on boom oscillations. At the same time, inflation
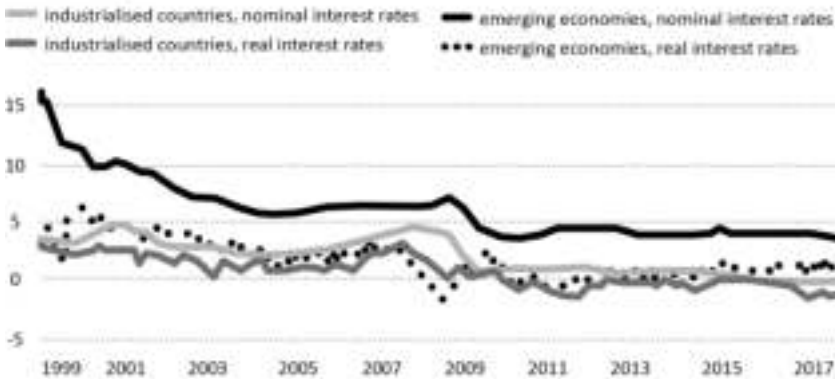
as an indicator of non-sustainable growth has become less important. The cause: the liberalisation of the financial markets and the deregulation of the relations of wage labour and capital. To the extent that insufficient flanking protective measures were taken, the liberalisation of the financial market led to a potential for bigger upswings and consequent downturns in the development of loans and asset prices.

Interest rates and the normalisation of the 'system'

Most economists anticipate a weakening of the boom in the course of 2019. However, they are only assuming a slight cooling down. Nevertheless, there are a few serious warning signs. With their monetary policy after the financial crisis, central banks have massively distorted the bond markets and with it the interest–rate curves. In the period after the crisis interest rates are markedly lower, which limits the possibilities for the central banks to react to a slowdown (by lowering rates and expanding credits) (see graph).

Graph 5: Room for manoeuvre in a future crisis
interest rates, in %

▬▬ industrialised countries, nominal interest rates   ▬▬ emerging economies, nominal interest rates
▬▬ industrialised countries, real interest rates   ••• emerging economies, real interest rates

Source: Bank for International Settlements

The last few years were excellent for entrepreneurs and investors, with considerable economic growth, high stock prices, and low interest rates and risk premiums. After the stabilisation of the global financial system a new normalisation is overdue: 'After the long period of ample and unconventional monetary accommodation that helped economies recover from the Great Financial Crisis (GFC), the incipient policy normalisation in the major advanced economies stands out in important respects. It involves normalising both policy rates and balance sheets; it is highly asynchronous, with the Federal Reserve raising policy rates while the ECB and the Bank of Japan continue with large-scale asset purchases and negative rates […].[6]

This change of trend is a delicate balancing act for global capitalism. A

too rapid normalisation could trigger market turbulence and endanger cyclic recovery – not least because global debt in relation to GDP has continued to rise, and the assessments of asset values on the financial markets are excessive.

Political shocks like Brexit or the election of Donald Trump were well withstood. At the same time, debt, and with it the credit sector, has further expanded (see graph). Modern capitalism cannot survive without a credit system – but the tendency to ever greater debt makes the system more unstable. Thanks to credit, capital that is not being used in one place can be passed on to another place where it can then be deployed productively, with the result that the prosperity of the whole system increases.

Graph 6: Exponential Credit Growth
Outstanding corporate bonds without the financial sector, in trillions $

■ USA   ▦ Western Europe   ■ China   ▦ other industrialised countries   ■ other emerging economies
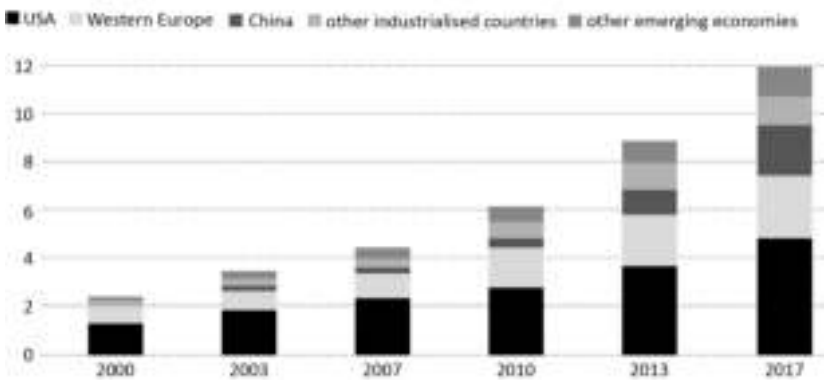

Source: McKinsey

Largely decisive for the hazard potential arising from debt is productive use, thus the expansion of added–value creation. In an environment of rising interest rates, most importantly in the US, and an economic growth that appears to be losing momentum the danger is growing of overstress through debt repayment and of a devaluation of debt securities. A clear picture emerges for the US. The country is in a debt trap. Many of the outstanding government bonds (Treasuries) have been issued at very low interest rates. 60% of them had to be refinanced up to 2020 at presumably much higher rates. But already now interest payment amounts to over 9% of the federal budget – it could rise to 16%.
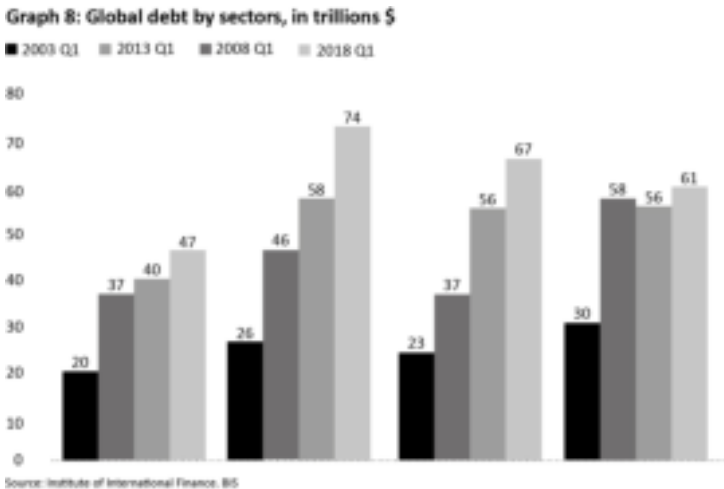
With the public/state–credit and debt policy since the Great Crisis, some things are now out of whack. The weak points of the international financial and banking system could generate a system crash. The large banks are showing a disproportionately high level of debt as well as insufficiently stable sources of refinancing. The losses caused by the crisis quickly became greater and carried over to other markets and countries, forcing the public

sector to intervene.

According to the Bank for International Settlements, the dimension of the asset holdings of the banks of issue in the last nine years in the most important highly developed economies (the US, the Euro Zone, and Japan) grew by 8.3 trillion US dollars – from 4.6 trillion US dollars in 2008 to 12.9 trillion US dollars by the beginning of 2017.

Graph 7: Central bank assets – total
% of GDP
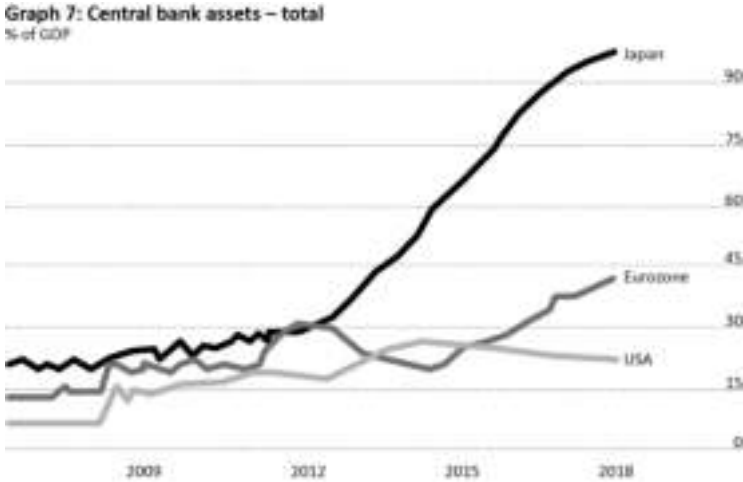
The current dangers include this record–high global debt – above all private debt. Added to this is the pronounced growth of the money supply as a result of the central banks' extremely loose monetary policy. A large part of liquidity has not flown into the real economy but into stocks and other financial assets. The world economy is running on credit, and the increase of debt is precipitating into a relative decoupling of asset prices (securities and real estate) from the real economy. According to the Institute of International

Graph 8: Global debt by sectors, in trillions $
■ 2003 Q1   ■ 2013 Q1   ■ 2008 Q1   ▨ 2018 Q1

Source: Institute of International Finance, BIS

Finance, the total debt of all countries, enterprises, and households increased by 8 trillion US dollars in the first quarter of 2018 to 249 trillion US dollars. The debt increase runs through all areas of the economy – through payment commitments states, companies, banks, and households have mortgaged further parts of the future wealth still to be produced.

Total debt in relation to gross domestic product has risen after a slight fall last year. Despite great efforts to remove weak spots in the global financial and banking system, we can see today that in view of the growing weight of the financial sphere the vulnerability to crisis and instability has become greater. Anti-crisis mechanisms – in terms of both fiscal and interest-rate policy – are presently more limited than they were before the Great Crisis, and the long-term growth potential is lower today among other reasons because policy neglected to deal with the structural deficits. Added to this are increasing protectionist tendencies in the international trade system, which are transforming modern capitalism into a ticking time bomb.

International interest-rate increase

Interest rates in the US are currently pointing upward, and with some delay the other central banks will follow. After years of liquidity glut, the Fed is finally headed towards ending its extremely loose monetary policy. At the end of 2015 it carried out the first interest-rate increase since the Financial Crisis. Further steps followed.

Graph 9: The Fed tightens interest rates
US prime rates in %

Source: Datastream
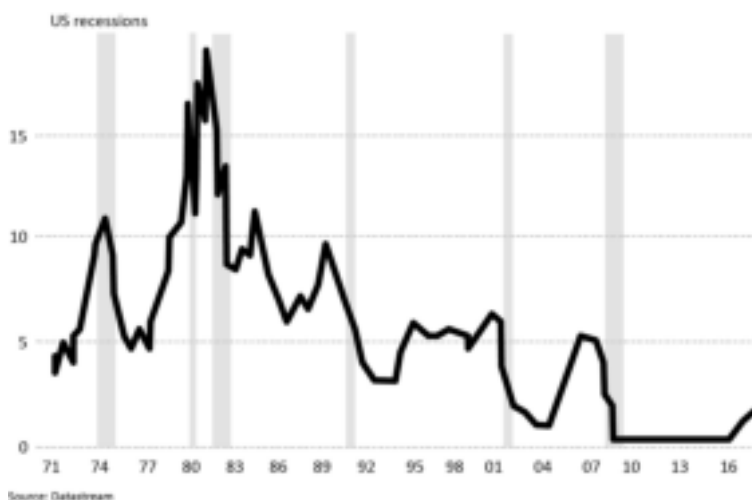
Through the US's expansive tax policy (involving both tax cuts and higher expenditures) the growth phase of the current cycle has been prolonged.

The contribution to growth of the tax cuts passed by President Trump and the newly enacted expenditures has been assessed at 0.8% in 2018 and 1.3% for 2019. Such a comprehensive growth-promotion package in the late phase of an economic cycle is unprecedented. In the post–war period we are clearly seeing a lengthened boom cycle, which nevertheless has gone beyond its peak.

Strain on companies

At first glance, US enterprises seem to have massively reduced their liabilities since the global Financial Crisis of 2008. This means that they do not need to worry so much about the interest–rate hikes expected in this year. But this appearance is deceiving.

Indebtedness of non–financial corporations as a per cent of GDP is an indicator of whether firms are overindebted. If we factor out the financial service providers, we see that the debt figures of US corporations are no cause for optimism. The only reason why they appear bearable now is the current low cost of borrowing.

Graph 10: Debt of domestic US non-financial companies as % of GDP
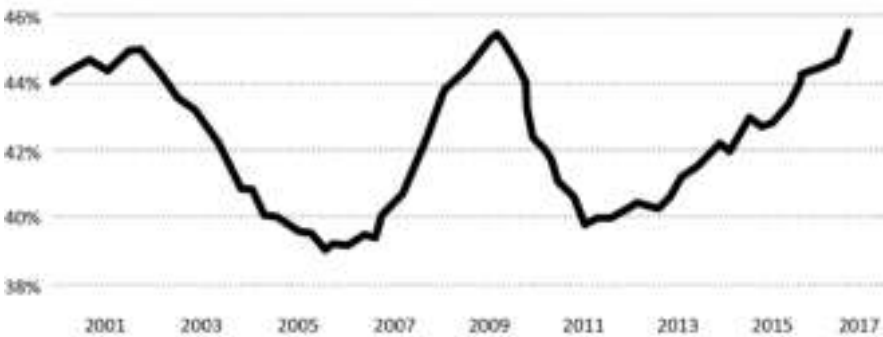
The debt boom setting in for companies once again after the 2008 Financial Crisis will be one of the important fire accelerants in the next upswing. Low interest rates cheapen credits relative to risk–bearing equity capital. They thus lead to a creeping growth of risk – all the more so the more successful the low interest–rate policy is, that is, the more it initiates credit–financed investments.

High foreign-currency debts

Growing mountains of debt and rising interest rates – this is an explosive mixture, above all for the emerging economies whose capital markets have come under stronger pressure.

Graph 11: Foreign-currency debt of the emerging economies
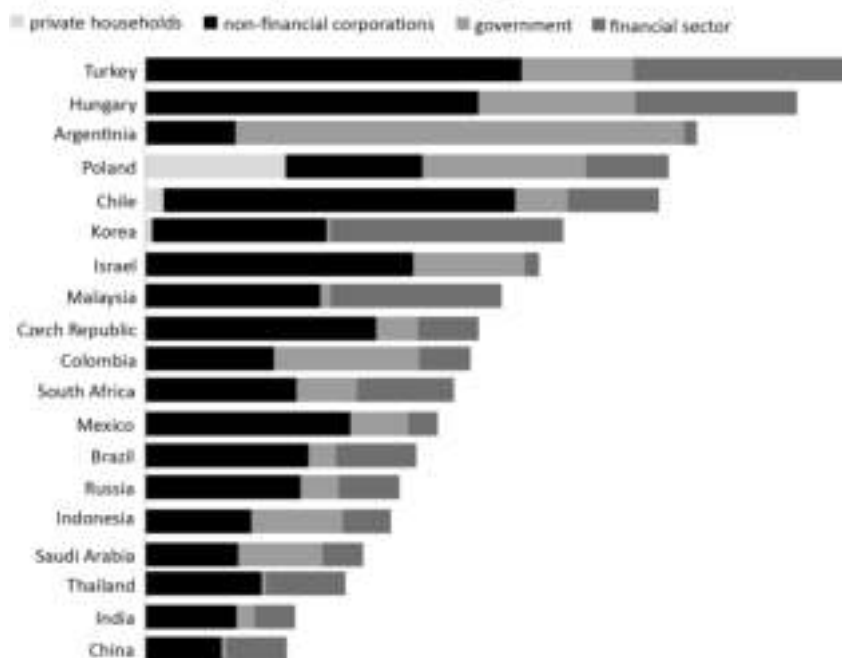
Source: Institute of International Finance. RES

Ever more investors are asking themselves whether the interest-rate premiums for emerging-market bonds are still compensating for the weaker creditworthiness of these countries.

According to the assessment made by the banking association, Institute of International Finance (IIF), Turkey is especially vulnerable with its foreign-currency credits, which amount to more than 70% of GDP. It is especially firms and the financial sector that have become heavily indebted in foreign currencies. This raises the risk of refinancing. New creditors have to be found by the end of 2019 for 47% of the debt incurred in US dollars.

Among the emerging countries, the situation in China is also interesting; since 2009 it has registered a tremendous rise in total debt. Nevertheless, the IIF has observed a slight decrease in corporate debt since the first quarter of 2017. On the other hand, the debt ratio of private households has risen to almost 50% of GDP. The growing foreign-currency debt of the Chinese financial sector is a risk. According to the IIF, foreign-currency debt since the beginning of 2010 has risen from 110 billion US dollars to, most recently, 785 billion US dollars. This increases the vulnerability of the financial sector to oscillations of the renminbi yuan.

Graph 12: China's total debt continues to rise
debts as % of GDP
▨ private households   ■ non-financial corporations   ■ the state   ▨ financial sector
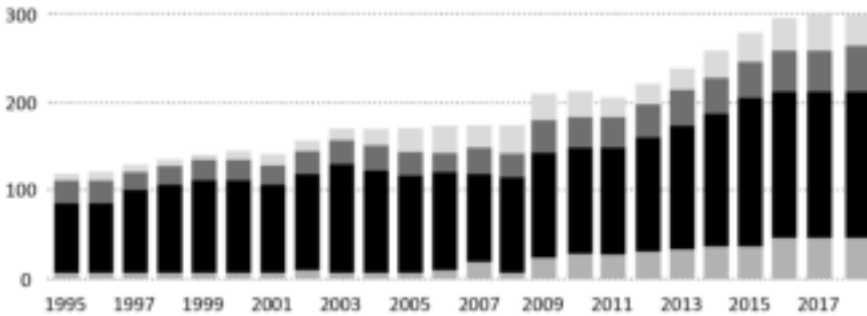
Source: Institute of International Finance

In the second quarter of 2018, the gross domestic product of the world's biggest economy grew by 6.7% in comparison to the same quarter of the previous year, that is, slightly more slowly than in the previous three months. The government's measures for combating credit risks had a braking effect. Despite the intensifying trade dispute with the US, exports remained stable in June.

Graph 13: China as a stronghold of stability
Change in economic performance compared to prior year quarter, in %
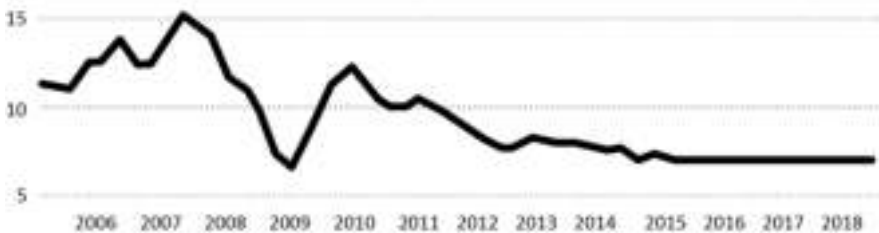
In June, the volume of the newly granted loans was 11.1% higher than it was in the same period in the previous year and thus grew the slowest since 2005. In 2017 the newly undertaken material capital investments were at their lowest level since data began to be collected. The head of state and party general secretary Xi Jinping had emphasised several times in the previous months that a stable financial system is a central pillar of his future policy. This requires that China push forward debt reduction of the local governments and state enterprises in the coming months. These two sectors are responsible for about a third of economic investments.

Trade war

Ever since Donald Trump assumed command in the US, the possibility of 1930s-style trade wars can no longer be excluded. Trump has imposed punitive tariffs on important trading partners such as Canada, Mexico, China, and the European Union. The countries concerned have, for their part, put punitive tariffs in force and lodged complaints against the US with the WTO. As a result, the global trade dispute is spiralling into a trade war.

The US president wants to reduce the US's trade balance deficit, which he regards as a sign of weakness and the cause of the decrease in industrial jobs. Apart from the fact that a balance-of-trade deficit is in itself not something bad, the US profits from openness, even if services, foreign assets, and financial streams are included in the calculation. Washington's demand for fair trade rings hollow because this is supposed to blur the truth that it is simply American interests that are at stake here, fully in the sense of Trump's 'America First' presidency. However, for this Trump receives not only his electorate's approval; domestic political opponents as well as many allied governments would have to support the US government's efforts to 'bring Beijing around' to more openness.

The GATT/WTO system is a central pillar of the liberal post-war order and has had major impact. For example, since 1947 tariffs on industrial products have fallen to an average of 4%, and 164 economies are members of the WTO by now. Moreover, up to now there have been no true trade wars, although there were some serious endurance tests quite early on. Nevertheless, the WTO system contains conspicuous problems, which need to be addressed by reforms. A constant point of conflict, for example, is the protection of intellectual property in the WTO's practice, which from the rich countries' point of view is too weak and for the poor countries too strong. Similarly problematic are the WTO subsidy regulations, which especially China, in particular, is trying to circumvent with its state enterprises.

Up until 1994, the GATT continued to evolve through many years of trade rounds. The aim was to continually make more areas of economic life accessible to free trade. With the WTO further rounds were supposed to follow. However, already the first of these, the so-called Doha Round, which started in 2001 in the capital of Qatar, failed to progress. Since 2016 the rounds have been regarded as failures. Progress is actually only still seen in free trade agreements, which in the GATT had been provided only as a rare exception of the most-favoured-nation principle. An important reason for this is, naturally, that the WTO is a victim of its own success, since further tariff reductions become increasingly difficult with each round of liberalisation. But another reason is that with 164 members it is hard to

reach consensus on liberalisation measures that go beyond traditional tariff reductions.

Donald Trump has no discernible concept for an international trade regime. He is undermining the WTO but has also blocked the development of regional agreements. The impending end of the WTO and, despite its world power status, the US's lack of overall concept is raising other problems. For instance, at its founding the trade and monetary regime was part of a comprehensive peace project. It was conceived at the famous Bretton Woods meeting in 1944. The US, Great Britain, and 42 other countries wanted to create a stable economic order for the period after the war. In the future, new institutions were to prevent the kinds of economic turmoil and trade disputes that had broken out in the 1930s, which were considered contributors to the Second World War. In Bretton Woods, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank were created. Because a world trade organisation was considered too ambitious a project, an interim solution was found – the GATT as a pure customs agreement. But even this nearly collapsed due to disagreement between the US and Great Britain. Only in 1948, when the Cold War was proclaimed, did the Americans give in. The WTO could have learned from the experiences of this period. Instead, it went too far in foreign-trade questions and in so doing led to its own downfall – a downfall that is now being accelerated by Donald Trump.

If the US does not start moderating its stance, the escalation of the trade war will, for one thing, have an effect on the global boom, and the recessive effects along with the punitive tariffs will affect the majority of the other countries. Furthermore, the development of a stable economic order that includes China and Russia is on the global political agenda.

Outlook

World economic growth for now appears robust enough to withstand a tariff dispute, as long as it does not get out of control. After a long period with ultra-expansive global monetary-policy strategies, the time now appears to have come to introduce normalisation. China has also become more restrictive, like the US. It would be possible to prevent a new financial and economic crisis by reducing excessive debt. In order to brake speculation and exuberance, the protagonists would have to use their own money before they invest foreign money.

We have to expect future turbulence in the financial markets. This is based on three factors: There are overvalued markets in the advanced national economies, much too loose financing conditions, and too high debt levels in the world economy. Since interest rates are still extraordinarily low

and the central bank balances more bloated than ever, there is no tool in the medicine cabinet to help the patient back on to his feet or take care of him in the event of a setback.

We are now in a phase in which many protagonists are becoming conscious of that fact that the high liabilities are a problem. Against the background of the recent signals from the US central bank, a soft landing of the US and thus of the global boom is certainly possible. But the economic and political elites of the core capitalist countries are not prepared for worse times.

NOTES

1   For more details see Joachim Bischoff, *Tickende Zeitbombe Finanzmärkte. Bankenkrise, globale Kreditketten und Alternativen im Post-Kapitalismus*, Hamburg: VSA, 2019.
2   Bank for International Settlements, Annual Economic Report 2018, <https://www.bis.org/publ/arpdf/ar2018e.pdf>, p. 1.
3   In its 2018 Forecast <https://www.bundesbank.de/resource/blob/743990/121da3a61d41345f3448ccc83ee32f8c/mL/2018-06-prognose-data.pdf>, the Bundesbank modified its growth prognosis for Germany in 2018 from 2.5% to 2.0%. It reports that the slowdown of the boom is stronger than was expected. It goes on to say that positive economic development cannot go on indefinitely, and that it is especially the protectionist trade policy of the US government that can damage the German economy. The federal government, it warns, must prepare for worse times; this is true because the European Central Bank (ECB) can hardly react to the next downturn. More time will be needed, it states, before monetary policy re-enters normal navigable channels, and since the ECB in cases of doubt can hardly act against a new crisis, it is financial policy that has to take over this task.
4   Economic development is characterised by cyclical fluctuations. Nevertheless there is no unified concept for defining and identifying cycles. The upswing in the US has by now lasted 107 months – since June 2009 the growth of the US economy has been trending upward. The upswing is thus officially the second longest since the recording of cycles began in 1850; only the ten-year upswing starting in 1991 was longer. If the dynamic maintains itself through July 2019 it will be the longest in history. Then in only a few more months the US economy could complete its first decade ever without recession. This is impressive – up to the 1930s the US economy suffered on average almost three recessions per decade, after which the average was two. See Joachim Bischoff, 'Endless Recovery?', *Transform! 2018* yearbook.
5   Joachim Bischoff, *Finanzgetriebener Kapitalismus: Entstehung – Krise – Entwicklungstendenzen*, Hamburg: VSA, 2014.
6   Bank for International Settlements, *Annual Economic Report 2018*, p. 25.

Authors and Editors

Yannis Almpanis, a Greek journalist and social movements' activist, is a founding member of the Network for Political and Social Rights. He participated in the World Social Forum (WSF) and the European Social Forum (ESF) from their beginnings and was one of the main organisers of the 2006 ESF as a member of the Greek Social Forum.

Walter Baier, an economist in Vienna, was National Chairman of the Communist Party of Austria (KPÖ) from 1994 to 2006. He was an editor of the Austrian weekly *Volksstimme* and from 2007 has been Coordinator of the network *transform! europe*. His latest books are *Linker Aufbruch in Europa?* (2015) and *Unentwegte – Österreichs Kommunist_innen 1918-2018* (2018).

Mátyás Benyik is Chair of Attac-Hungary. From the end of the 1970s he has, as an economist, worked for various Hungarian foreign-trading agencies and was commercial attaché to Turkey and Syria. He has participated in several national and international campaigns against GATS and WTO, as well as antiwar, antifascist, and anti-poverty organisations.

Heinz Bierbaum is a sociologist and economist and head of the International Commission of the party Die LINKE as well as a member of the Political Secretariat of the Party of the European Left. He was a Secretary of the trade union IG Metall from 1980 to 1996, and his scholarly work focuses on industrial and social policy.

Joachim Bischoff is a German economist and co-editor-in-chief of the monthly *Sozialismus*, Hamburg. His latest books are *Götterdämmerung des Kapitalismus?* (together with Klaus Steinitz) (2016) and *Tickende Zeitbombe Finanzmärkte. Bankenkrise, globale Kreditketten und Alternativen im Post-Kapitalismus. Eine Flugschrift* (2019).

Luboš Blaha is a Slovak Marxist philosopher, political scientist, and politician. He is a member of parliament for the left-wing SMER-SD party and, since 2012, Chair of the Committee of the National Council of the Slovak Republic for European Affairs. In 2018 he headed the delegation of

the National Council of the Slovak Republic to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, which elected him its Vice-President.

Raffaella Bolini is Vice-President of the European Civic Forum and has been active since the 1980s in Italian, European, and global social movements and networks for peace, disarmament, international solidarity, against racism and for immigrants' rights, against neoliberal globalisation, and for an alternative Europe and Mediterranean. She has been involved in the World Social Forum and the European Social Forum processes from their beginnings.

Eva Brenner is a Viennese theatre producer, scholar, and author who worked for fourteen years on Off and Off-Off-Broadway in New York as well as in Switzerland, Germany, Italy, and France. Since 1991 she has been the artistic director of Vienna's Projekt Theater STUDIO (later renamed FLEISCHEREI/FLEISCHEREI_mobil). In 2002 she founded the 'SCHIELE fest' in Lower Austria. She produced *Der Schatten ist lang*, a film on Jura Soyfer in 1993 and now writes regularly for the monthly *Volksstimme*. She is the author of *Anpassung oder Widerstand, freies Theater heute. Vom Verlust der Vielfalt heraus* (2013).

Klaus Busch is Professor of European Studies at the University of Osnabrück and advisor on European policy for the German service workers' trade union ver.di. His latest book, co-authored with Joachim Bischoff and Hajo Funke is *Rechtspopulistische Zerstörung Europas? Wachsende politische Instabilität und die Möglichkeiten einer Kehrtwende* (2018).

Adriano Campos is a sociologist and member of Precários Inflexíveis, a movement of precarious workers. He is a member of the National Board of Bloco de Esquerda and co-author, with José Soiero, of *A Falácia do Empreendedorismo: Introdução* [The Fallacy of Entrepreneurship: An Introduction] (2016).

Eric Canepa is a music historian and co-editor of transform!. From 2001 to 2006 he was the Coordinator of the Socialist Scholars Conference/Left Forum in New York and from 2008 to 2012 co-Coordinator of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation's project North-Atlantic Left Dialogue.

Luciana Castellina is a founder of the Italian newspaper *Il Manifesto* and of the Partito di Unità Proletaria, a past Member of the European Parliament, where she was president of its Culture and Education and Foreign Economic Relations committees, several times a Deputy to the Italian Chamber of Deputies, former president of Italy's academy of motion pictures Italcinema,

author of numerous books and one of the leading figures of Italy's left continuously from the 1970s to the present day. Her latest books are *Manuale antiretorico dell'UE* (2017) and *Amori comunisti* (2018).

Erhard Crome is a political scientist and Coordinating Director of the WeltTrends-Institut für Internationale Politik, Potsdam. Until 2016 he was a consultant on peace and security policy in the Institute for Critical Social Analysis of the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation. His most recent books are *Faktencheck: Trump und die Deutschen* (2017) and *AFD. Eine Alternative?* (2015).

Judith Dellheim is a consultant on Solidary Economy at the Rosa Luxemburg Foundation in Berlin. She was active for more than ten years in leadership bodies of the PDS and is now active in Die LINKE as well as in social movements. She has published extensively on socio-ecological transformation, the EU, and the work of Rosa Luxemburg. She is co-author and –editor of *Rosa Luxemburg: A Permanent Challenge for Political Economy* (2016) and co-editor of *The Unfinished System of Karl Marx – Critically Reading Capital as a Challenge for Our Times* (2018).

Stelios Foteinopoulos is a policy expert, EU analyst, activist, and columnist. He has studied in Athens and London, worked for the Nicos Poulantzas Institute, transform!europe, and various European campaigns. He is a member of Momentum, a British political organisation close to the Labour Party, and is currently working at the European Parliament.

Haris Golemis is a Greek economist who worked at the Research Department of the Bank of Greece, was scientific advisor to the Federation of Greek Bank Employees and consultant to the United Nations Centre on Transnational Corporations. A political activist since his early youth, former member of the Political Secretariat and the Central Committee of Syriza and former director of the Nicos Poulantzas Institute (1999-2017), he is now Scientific and Strategic Advisor to the Board of transform! europe and co-editor of the *transform!europe* yearbook

Frigga Haug is one of the world's leading Marxist-feminist thinkers. She is the editor of the multi-volume *Historisch-kritisches Wörterbuch des Feminismus* and co-editor of the *Historisch-kritisches Wörterbuch des Marxismus*. Her most recent books are *Der im Gehen erkundete Weg* [The Road Found in Walking] (2015) and *Selbstveränderung und Veränderung der Umstände* [Self-Change and the Changing of Conditions] (2018).

Alexandros Kioupkiolis is Assistant Professor of Contemporary Political Theory at Aristotle University, Thessaloniki, Greece and directs a European Research Council project on radical democracy, the commons, social movements, and the philosophy of freedom. He is the author of *Freedom After the Critique of Foundations – Marx, Liberalism, Castoriadis and Agonistic Autonomy* (2012), co-editor of *Radical Democracy and Collective Movements Today* (Ashgate 2014) and *The Common and Counter-Hegemonic Politics* (2019)

Theodora Kotsaka is a political scientist and social anthropologist focusing on political behaviour and political parties. She is a researcher at the Nicos Poulantzas Institute where she manages projects on commons and free trade agreements. She has worked as a political analyst, columnist, lecturer on political science, and scientific consultant for the public sector.

Tamás Krausz is a Hungarian historian and a founding editor of the journal *Eszmélet*. He is a member and past co-chair of the Russian-Hungarian Historians' Committee. His published works focus on the national question and Bolshevism, the Soviet Thermidor, the Holocaust, and the regime change in the USSR and Eastern Europe. His book *Reconstructing Lenin* was awarded the Isaac Deutscher Memorial Prize in 2015.

Michael Löwy is a French-Brazilian Marxist sociologist and philosopher. Presently he is the Research Director Emeritus in Social Sciences at the Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) and lectures at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris. Author of books on Marx, Che Guevara, liberation theology, Lukács, Benjamin, Goldmann, and Kafka, he received the CNRS Silver Medal in 1994.

Jiří Málek was active in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia and its youth organisation, and was in charge of education, universities and academic science for the municipality of Prague. After 1990, he was active in private business and then in the Party of Democratic Socialism of the Czech Republic. He is chair of the Society for European Dialogue / Společnost pro evropský dialog (SPED) and a member of the transform! europe board.

Jane McAlevey is an organiser, author and scholar. Her *Raising Expectations (and Raising Hell)* was named the 'most valuable book of 2012' by *The Nation Magazine*. Her second book, *No Shortcuts: Organizing for Power in the New Gilded Age* (2016) has been published in German as *Keine halbe Sachen. Machtaufbau durch Organizing* (2019). She is a regular commentator on radio and TV and continues to work as an organiser on union campaigns, lead contract negotiations, and train and develop organisers.

Róbert Nárai is a construction worker, co-editor and translator of a forthcoming collection of unpublished and untranslated works by Lukács, and member of the Australian organisation Socialist Alternative.

Gavin Rae is a sociologist living and working in Poland. He has written extensively on Polish politics, society, and economy and on issues relating to Central and Eastern Europe. He is the author of *Poland's Return to Capitalism. From the Socialist Bloc to the European Union* and *Privatising Capital. The Commodification of Poland's Welfare State*. He is a founding member of the think-tank Naprzód (Forward), an observer organisation in transform! europe.

Bernd Riexinger has been co-chair of the party Die LINKE since 2012. Previously, he was the long-time executive director of the Stuttgart branch of the German service workers' union ver.di and in 2003 was one of the initiators of the protests against Agenda 2010.

Rossana Rossanda, active at a young age in the Resistance in Milan and soon thereafter a leader of the Italian Communist Party in Milan where she directed its prestigious Casa della Cultura, she was asked by Palmiro Togliatti to head the party's National Cultural Commission. Her famous 1968 essay, in which she declared her support for the student movement, led to her and Lucio Magri's expulsion from the party in 1969. Together they directed the monthly *Il Manifesto*, later a daily from 1971. Among her many books, her autobiography *La ragazza del secolo scorso* has been published in English (*The Comrade from Milan*) (2005), Greek, and Spanish.

Alda Sousa is a Lecturer in Genetic Epidemiology, University of Porto (Portugal) and an activist in feminist groups, solidarity campaigns, and Portugal's Teachers' Union. She was a founder of Bloco de Esquerda (Left Bloc) a member of its National Board until 2016 and from 2012 to 2014 a Member of the European Parliament.

Jon Trickett is a British Labour Party politician who has been the Member of Parliament for Hemsworth in West Yorkshire since 1996. He served as Advisor to Prime Minister Gordon Brown from 2008 to 2010 and then Labour leader Ed Miliband until 2015. He was the first MP to publicly nominate Jeremy Corbyn for the leadership and is a key member of Corbyn's Shadow Cabinet.

Tasos Trikkas is a Greek journalist and author. His two-volume *EDA, 1951-1967: The New Face of the Left* has had several editions since it was first published in 2009. Considered a dangerous communist, he was compelled

to serve his time in the military on the penal island of Makronisos. In exile after the April 1967 coup he co-organised resistance to the dictatorship as a member of PAM (Greek Anti-Dictatorial Front) and the left political party EDA. In the 1968 split of the KKE (Communist Party of Greece) he sided with the KKE (interior), entering its Central Committee in 1974. A former member of the Political Secretariat of Synaspismos, he is now a Syriza supporter.

Peter Ullrich is co-director of the Social Movements, Technology, Conflict area of the Institute for Protest and Movement Research, Technical University of Berlin, in it Centre for Technology and Society.

Hans-Jürgen Urban is the executive coordinator of the steering committee of the German trade union IG Metall where he is responsible for social policy, occupational safety, and the healthcare system as well as vocational training; he is also a lecturer in sociology at the Friedrich University of Jena and a fellow there at the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft's College of 'Post-Growth Societies'.

Christophe Ventura is a research director at the Institut des relations internationales et stratégiques, Paris. From the late 1990s, he has been involved in the alterglobalist and other international civil-society movements. From 1998 to 2008 he directed the international sector of Attac France, in which capacity he participated in the conception, foundation, and organisation of the World Social Forum as well as the foundation and organisation of the European Social Forum (2002-2010). He is chief editor of the website Mémoire des luttes <www.medelu.org>.

Nikos Xydakis has written for several nationwide Greek newspapers and magazines and was awarded the Greek Parliament's Botsis Award for the Journalist of the Year in 2009. He was editor-in-chief of the daily *Kathimerini* from 2003 to 2015 before being elected to the Greek Parliament as a Syriza deputy. The Syriza government appointed him Alternate Minister of Foreign Affairs and later Parliamentary Representative of Syriza's parliamentary group. He is a member of the Parliament's Committee of Foreign Affairs and National Defence and the Committee of European Affairs.

Gabi Zimmer is a Member of the European Parliament (EP) for the German party Die LINKE, a member of the EP's Committee on Employment and Social Affairs, and president of the EP's Confederal Group of the European United Left/Nordic Green Left (GUE/NGL).

transform!european network for alternative thinking and political dialogue

www.transform–network.net

office@transform–network.net
Gusshausstraße14/3
1040 Vienna, Austria

Members and Observers

Austria

transform!at
www.transform.or.at

Cyprus

Research InstitutePROMITHEAS★
www.inep.org.cy

Czech Republic

Society for European Dialogue- SPED
email: malek_j@cbox.cz

Denmark

transform!danmark
www.transformdanmark.dk

Finland

Left Forum
www.vasemmistofoorumi.fi

Democratic Civic Association – DSL
www.desili.fi

France

Espaces Marx
www.espaces–marx.net

Foundation Copernic★
www.fondation–copernic.org

FoundationGabriel Péri★
www.gabrielperi.fr

Germany

Journal *Sozialismus*
www.sozialismus.de

Rosa Luxemburg Foundation- RLS
www.rosalux.de

Institute for Social, Ecological and Economic Studies- ISW
www.isw-muenchen.de

Greece

NicosPoulantzas Institute- NPI
www.poulantzas.gr

Hungary

transform! hungary★
www.balmix.hu

Italy

transform!italia
www.transform-italia.net

Claudio Sabattini Foundation★
www.fondazionesabattini.it

Cultural Association Punto Rosso
www.puntorosso.it

Luxembourg

Transform! Luxembourg
www.transform.lu

Moldova

Transform! Moldova★
email: transformmoldova@gmail.com

Norway

Manifesto Foundation★
www.manifesttankesmie.no

Poland

Foundation Forward / Naprzód
www.fundacja-naprzod.pl

Portugal

Cultures of Labour and Socialism- CUL:TRA
email: info@cultra.pt

Romania

Association for the Development of the Romanian Social Forum★
www.forumulsocialroman.ro

Serbia

Centre for the Politics of Emancipation (CPE)★
www.cpe.org.rs

Slovenia

Institute for Labour Studies – IDS★
www.delavske-studije.si

Spain

Alternative Foundation (Catalonia)
www.fundacioalternativa.cat

Europe of Citizens Foundation – FEC
www.lafec.org

Foundation for Marxist Studies- FIM
www.fim.org.es

Instituto 25M★
www.instituto25m.info

Iratzar Foundation (Basque country)★
www.iratzar.eus

Sweden

Center for Marxist Social Studies
www.cmsmarx.org

Turkey

Social Investigations and Cultural Development Foundation – TAKSAV★
www.taksav.org

R–komplex★
www.r–komplex.org

UK

Transform (UK) – A Journal of the Radical Left★
email: transform@prruk.org

★ *Observers*