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WHOSE
EVOLUTION?



Proceedings from the event held in
Kino Kultura, Skopje, Macedonia,
May 5-6, 2017

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*Proceedings from the event held in Kino Kultura,
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This publication gathers the presentations, as well as the discussions, from the event “Whose Revolution?” and is meant to document the analytical momentum after the second anniversary of the #protestiram movement in Macedonia, drawing on analogies and different experiences from the region too. Two panels were organized with the participation of regional activists and theoreticians.

We have witnessed massive popular mobilizations in the region in the last few years. But many of them were often coopted by liberal tendencies ending up with little or no serious changes within the society or system. At the same time, we see the rising right-wing populist movements across Europe who claim to be pursuing an anti-establishment revolutionary path. Caught between these two fires, we wanted to reproach the concept of revolutionary politics today and rehabilitate the “revolution” in its socialist bedrock.

Panel I.
PAST AND PRESENT REVOLUTIONS:
DISCONTINUITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

LUKA MATIĆ
KATERINA KOLOZOVA
BRANIMIR JOVANOVIĆ
VLADIMIR SIMOVIĆ
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| LUKA MATIĆ |

WHOSE REVOLUTION?

SOME HISTORICAL POINTS FOR DISCUSSION

I.

When inviting us for this discussion, the Institute for Social Sciences and Humanities - Skopje stated that they see it as an opportunity to talk about the concept of revolution in light of the second anniversary of the #protestiram movement and the subsequent Colourful Revolution, but also that we could discuss different concepts of social and political change in a broader context. Having that in mind, I would situate my presentation between two histories: on the one hand, that of revolutionary Marxism, and on the other, the one of revolutionary history of the past century. Regarding the latter, I would invoke the thesis of late British historian Eric Hobsbawm that "the history of the Short XX Century ... virtually coincides with the lifetime of the state born of the October revolution."¹

Speaking of Hobsbawm, there is another introductory point that I would emphasize, as he writes in the *Age of Extremes*:

It is an irony of history that the "real socialist" economies of Europe and the USSR, as well as parts of the Third World, became the real victims of the post-Golden Age crisis of the global capitalist economy.²

Crisis, or crises, of the socialist economies that, as Hobsbawm notes, have not managed to adapt and, in a sense, reinvent themselves according to the new situation - and on the other hand increasing political pressure from most advanced capitalist countries during the eighties - generated the political crises in most of the states of the so called "really existing socialism." Speaking specifically of the case of Yugoslavia, as we can understand reading Jake Löwinger's dissertation titled *Economic Reform and the "Double Movement" in Yugoslavia: An Analysis of Labor Unrest and Ethno-Nationalism in the 1980s*,³ dissolution processes were started by economic crisis and reformist move of signing the stand-by arrangement between Yugoslavia and the Inter-

¹ Eric Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes. The Short Twentieth Century 1914-1991* (London: Abacus, 1995), 55.

² Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, 473.

³ Jake Löwinger, *Economic Reform and the "Double Movement" in Yugoslavia: An Analysis of Labour Unrest and Ethno-Nationalism in the 1980s* (doctoral dissertation, Baltimore, Maryland: John Hopkins University/ProQuest, 2010), available at: <https://tinyurl.com/ycu4eoyq> (accessed August 5, 2017).

national Monetary Fund. Against effects of that arrangement numerous workers' mobilisations occurred (more than 5.000, gathering more than 700.000 protesting workers). Ongoing economic and political crisis, states Löwinger, "opened the door for the expertise of Milošević and his nationalist counterparts elsewhere in the federation, who played on the disaffection of masses of people." Must it be said that one of the main tools of Milošević's gain of power was named "anti-bureaucratic revolution"?

Besides that, we also remember the Carnation Revolution of 25th of April 1974 against the Portuguese Estado Novo, the Velvet Revolution of 1989 in Czechoslovakia, or the Orange Revolution of 2004/05 in Ukraine.

Unlike the revolutions of 1789/1848 or 1917, none of the aforementioned "revolutions" had the universalist appeal. Going back to Hobsbawm, we find his assessment that "[t]here has never been anything closer to the world-revolution" than the revolutionary wave of 1848.⁴ As he says:

But the political models created by the Revolution of 1789 served to give discontent a specific object, to turn unrest into revolution, and above all to link all Europe in a single movement - or perhaps it would be better to say current - of subversion.⁵

What the revolutions of "the long XIX century" did not achieve, the October revolution did. Again, as the eminent British historian states:

For, if the ideas of the French Revolution have, as is now evident, outlasted Bolshevism, the practical consequences of 1917 were far greater and more lasting than those of 1789. ... A mere thirty to forty years after Lenin's arrival at the Finland Station in Petrograd, one third of humanity found itself living under regimes directly derived from the "Ten Days That Shook the World," and Lenin's organizational model, the Communist Party.⁶

⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, *The Age of Revolution 1789-1848* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 112.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Hobsbawm, *Age of Extremes*, 55.

II.

Of course, it would be too much to make an exposé of the October revolution itself in this short time, but I want now to go to Lenin's *April Theses*, or, more specifically to the 5th thesis - the one that says unequivocally "No!" to the "parliamentary republic" as opposed to a republic of soviets formed bottom up.⁷ It relates to Marxist radical democratic traditions from their inception onward. Namely, the thesis has to do with Marx's critical assessments of reflections of 1848 in the German lands, and programmatic texts of his and Engels' dealing with international workers' movement.

Let us start with their proposition of *Rules of The Communist League*, which sees its aim in:

... overthrowing of the bourgeoisie, the rule of the proletariat, the abolition of the old bourgeois society which rests on the antagonism of classes, and the foundation of a new society without classes and without private property.⁸

In the *Manifesto* Marx and Engels have seen the bourgeoisie to have had "played a most revolutionary part."⁹ Marx draws on that idea when assessing the German 1848 when he remarks that the German bourgeoisie of that time was counter-revolutionary and, thus, is comparable neither with the English bourgeoisie of 1648 (which formed an alliance with the new nobility against the feudal nobility, the King, and the Church), nor with the French bourgeoisie of 1789 (which formed a pact with the people against the kingdom, nobility, and Church).

Unlike both the English and French revolutions - for which Marx and Hobsbawm agree they had proclaimed a political system for, at that point, the new Europe - Marx saw the Prussian revolution as a vague provincial echo of a European revolution in a backward country. What made bourgeois upheavals of the 1648 and 1789 revolutionary was, in his opinion, the

⁷ Vladimir Illich Lenin, *Collected Works* (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1974), Vol. 24, 23.

⁸ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Rules of The Communist League," *Marx/Engels Collected Works*, Vol. 6 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 2010), 633-638, quote on 633.

⁹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, "Manifesto of the Communist Party," *MECW*, Vol. 6, 477-519, quote on 486.

fact that the national bourgeoisies took on themselves the task of representing interests of modern society as opposed to interests of the feudal societal structure.¹⁰

More often than not the revolutionary character of the bourgeoisie of those times is overlooked today. What it enabled in social sense was the shift of economic power away from the feudal nobility to the emerging capitalist class, but in political sense it broadened the space of political participation and introduced principles of constitutionalism, division between the branches of the government, and accountability of the executive branch. The first one, as we know from different theoretizations of fascism, is extremely important because the fascist rise, both historical and contemporary, works by bringing domination to the executive branch and removing the procedures of accountability.¹¹

"What is modern society?" is not, at least for the later Marx, a question. Thus, in "Critique of the Gotha Programme" we might find that, as a modern society, he sees the "capitalist society ... more or less free from medieval admixture, more or less modified by historical development of each country, more or less developed."¹² Contrary to societal structure, that is more or less the same all over the capitalist world, when it comes to the state-form, Marx was of the opinion that it changes from country to country, and is thus a fictitious concept. Nevertheless, regardless of state-form, Marx sees that the societal structure and social relations encapsulate the class antagonism. Following that, when speaking of the revolution, in the conclusion of "Critique of the Gotha Programme," he is talking about transition from capitalist society towards communist society, and not from capitalist state to socialist state. And just to note, for the sake of facts, at that point he is not mentioning socialism as the transitional period, but the state as the "revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat."¹³

¹⁰ Karl Marx, "The Bourgeoisie and the Counter-Revolution," *MECW*, Vol. 8, 154-178.

¹¹ Cf. Reinhard Kühnl, *Formen bürgerlicher Herrschaft. Liberalismus - Faschismus* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1971). Yugoslav edition: Reinhard Kühnl, *Oblici građanske vladavine. Liberalizam - fašizam*, predgovor i prevod Ivan Prpić (Beograd: Izdavački centar Komunist, 1978).

¹² Karl Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," *MECW*, Vol. 24, 75-99, quote on 94.

¹³ Marx, "Critique of the Gotha Programme," 95.

On that point, he departs from the notions of his philosophical predecessors, namely from Hegel. In Hegel's idealist system of "objective spirit," society is seen as a field of antagonisms - or, as he formulates it when writing down the philosophy of the right, "the system of needs."¹⁴ The conflict of those needs, says Hegel, resolves itself in *The State* governed by a clear line of sovereignty.

III.

Why would all of this be relevant for the topic of this forum? One might say that this kind of approach is already seen in a number of failed leftist organizations which have imploded due to fights over legitimate exegesis of classical Marxist texts. My intention is a bit different. It relates to the historical break that had happened in the post-socialist world, namely, in ex-Yugoslavia. But the problem goes deeper if we look beyond our post-1990 history. What is it about? After the unification congress of the Communist Party of Yugoslavia in 1919, it was forbidden as soon as the December of next year. Then came two decades of its illegal work, followed by four years of war and forty-five years of workers' state.

As we know from different research on workers' protest activity over the course of Yugoslav socialism, those protest actions were mostly *ad hoc* and punctual in the meaning of the lack of broader organizing and network building. In that sense, trade unions were structurally reduced to a consumer service, providing union loans, meat on discount, etc.

So, it is not only the post-socialist *damnatio memoriae* introduced on the basis of various policy documents of European institutions such as the Council of Europe, and executed by political elites or other political actors, that is responsible for the general anti-socialist spirit. Alongside that we have a lack of historical experience of leftist organizing - trade union organizing as well as party organizing.

As if it is not enough, that kind of discontinuity from revolutionary practices is accompanied also by enclosure of the

¹⁴ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*, trans. by H. B. Nisbet (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1991), §200-201, 233-234.

so called New Left inside the framework of national states. Thus, we can say that the conceptualization of the new revolutionary politics has in front of itself serious and undeniable obstacles, although not insurmountable ones.

IV.

A further question to be addressed - going back to Marx's thoughts about the revolutionary character of the bourgeoisie - is if we can agree that there has not been an alternative Left to restoration of capitalism in the past quarter of a century; were there political actors that we could characterise as progressive ones?

Setting aside all the differences, as well as the polemics that have taken place lately, mostly on topics of European integration, NATO membership and anti-fascism, I think we can say that at least one part of the liberal civil society has played a progressive role in post-Yugoslav societies.

And here comes a "but"! The specific middle class urban identity of those actors, accompanied by a specific composite of social and cultural resources that made them forerunners of the fight for minority rights - where they can be seen as a socio-demo-geographic minority themselves - has difficulties communicating with the working class due to lack of common formative experiences. So, when it comes to the social challenges that come as a result of intensified precarization of workers, curtailment of workers' rights and progressive impoverishment - all conducted by authoritarian/undemocratic pro-capitalist political elites of the post-socialist periphery - they respond in the same way as they responded to authoritarian nationalist regimes of the 1990s, appealing for the rule of law, European values and so on. Using Marx's terms, from potential progressives, as in England in 1648 or France 1789, they become the Prussian bourgeoisie of 1848: instead of being the avant-garde of their time, they lag behind the challenges that it puts on the table.¹⁵

¹⁵ Cf. Paul Stubbs, "Networks, Organisations, Movements: Narratives and Shapes of Three Waves of Activism in Croatia," *Polemos* 15, No. 2 (2012), 11-32.

V.

There is, of course, another, yet unmentioned, disadvantage of the Left in post-socialist countries: the relative stability of appropriated positions in the political field (inclusive of civil society), which complicates the emergence of the left actors and the shift of political discourse. And it also has to do with the lack of infrastructure and material means needed for successful political work. In that sense, the Left was faced with a strategic question of forming national, regional and international alliances that would build up both its organizational strength, as well as its public image of a relevant actor in the political field.

Easier said than done, that question also entails the question of acceptable compromises with the aforementioned left-leaning, potentially progressive actors. Having in mind that the programme of those actors is, as I already mentioned, the appeal for civility, democratic institutions, model parliamentarism and so on - in other words "Europeanization" of the post-socialist periphery - before I concede the floor to other panellists and the auditorium to contest that idea from perspectives of critique of orientalism, theory of uneven development or any other they find suitable, I would conclude my presentation by raising one last remark. As far as we have experienced, the post-socialist transition - despite the promises of the late 1980s and early 1990s - brought to us neither more democracy nor economic prosperity. In that sense, we can say that the further belief in a liberal programme would be a farcical revival of Eduard Bernstein's illusion that, due to their elasticity and adaptability, liberal institutions of modern society should be further developed, and principles of liberal politics should be advanced to become universal social principles that would steer society towards socialism;¹⁶ or in other words that the further belief in a liberal programme means that dominant classes would concede fulfilment of their interests in favour of social justice.

The illusory character of Bernstein's concept of a reformist path towards socialism, as Rosa Luxemburg had shown, was based on three presuppositions: first, that objective develop-

¹⁶ Eduard Bernstein, *The Preconditions of Socialism*, ed. and trans. by Henry Tudor (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993).

ment of capitalist ownership and the state will lead towards gradual expropriation of the capitalist class; furthermore, that the state will dissolve into society; and finally, that it is impossible for the working class to seize power. Consequently, states Luxemburg, Bernstein conceded the political and social struggle to capitalist classes without even fighting.¹⁷

As opposed to social-democratic coalition with the national bourgeoisie, analyzing the Russian revolution of 1917, Luxemburg sees as the final impetus for social revolution the posing of acute and specific questions, crucial for the working class - e.g., questions of peace and agrarian reform in Russia of 1917 - as the ones opening the possibility of building socialist system through experience of social struggle of the working class, that is through the process of simultaneous articulation of social needs and working on their resolution by means of socialist, instead of bourgeois, democracy.

¹⁷ Rosa Luxemburg, "Reform or Revolution" in *The Essential Rosa Luxemburg*, ed. by Helen Scott, trans. by Integer (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2008), 41-104.

| KATERINA KOLOZOVA |

PRESENTATION

Luka Matić's intro set the frames conceptually as to what is revolution and how we use the term. I would like to focus now on the problem of the inflation of the use and the meaning of the term "revolution" in the past years, maybe decades, and in particular here in Macedonia. And the inflation of the term comes, according to me, or rather originates in its use - exploitation - for the purposes of mainstream parliamentary politics. So in a way it is exhausted, it is emptied from its original meaning and it does not happen just here, it happens elsewhere as well. I see it problematic when, for the purposes of a certain political campaign - for example take the US and Sanders' campaign - there is use of the term revolution, whereas what we are talking about is the eventual electoral victory of a bit more of a left-wing party or movement derived from mainstream party politics. So the problem of this loss of meaning of the term might sound abstract, it might sound not urgent to salvage it, to salvage a notion, but I think that the consequences of this loss of meaning behind the concept is soon going to be materialized or it is already being materialized, as we speak. So for the sake of some more general conceptual purposes that are internationally relevant, I believe that for the Left it is worthwhile discussing in what way we have been using the term recently, both from an international point of view and from a local one. The local view concerns the use of the term in the past two years, beginning with May 5th 2015, going through the Colorful Revolution which took place in the following year, and coming to the situation of today.

So the banalization of our ideals in the past period is truly depressing. Since where we started from and where we see ourselves now - where we find ourselves currently - is a mere process of change in party politics, in government, change within a system that remains the same. And so it is indeed in terms of a political system, in the classical sense of the notion of political system and studies of political system - the system has remained the same, being a liberal democracy, it remains parliamentary pluralism. So we are talking about change in power, nothing more than that, and yet refer to a "revolution." Talking about Macedonia, the only substantial change we can expect is less authoritarianism, hopefully, but we are not sure even about that. Nonetheless, in the meantime I am worried that we have lost focus, we have lost socialist focus, we have willingly sacrificed it in the

name of the emergency of this struggle against the previous right-wing government. The result is change in power and not much more than that. Let us hope there will be less authoritarianism but we cannot be certain about that. So it is not that it is a wrong cause, it is not that it is a waste of time – it is a cause I have participated in because I find it urgent to fight authoritarianism – state capture is merely its method, so I do not consider it a waste of time. But I do mourn over the loss of the meaning of several terms – first of all, the term revolution, second of all the term socialism, third of all – anti-regime struggle, and the most important thing is the perception that if we stick to some ideological definition, if we stick to a certain distinction from the main opposition party, which will be in our case the social democrats – we consider it a luxury – we used to consider it a luxury – that we cannot afford in a situation of urgency. And we were sort of successfully blackmailed for a while by this logic – that in the name of this urgency and emergency, in the wider struggle against the authoritarian system, we should sacrifice any distinction, any definition which was also expressed in the discourse we used. So we have witnessed self-disciplining by ruling or mainstream oppositional discourse, we have sacrificed fidelity to our own language and set of basic values, because this urgency and emergency was allegedly more pressing than anything else.

Again, I do not think that we wasted our time by participating in the anti-authoritarian movement, but I do think that the symbolic investment put into that was too much of a sacrifice and what is most problematic of all – it was the hegemony over discourses of radicalism, leftism and revolution that was soon after taken over by a mainstream political party, the Social Democrats. So the rhetoric of revolution, anti-institutional struggle, mind you, anarchism already, was adopted actually by a long standing mainstream political party which is currently forming a government. So we conceded even to that, even to this symbolic loss. The discourse, the language, the terminology – even the iconography – was hegemonically conquered by the mainstream movement – the anti-authoritarianism movement – and controlled by the second in power political party in the country.

Let me conclude briefly, following on what Luka Matić talked about. What values we subscribe to and when we joined this

moment? We subscribed to the values that are currently mocked by being called liberal. I insist that the use of the term liberal in the sense of the contemporary international left critique (but also the new right or the alt-right) is inaccurate. Liberal, liberalism means something else, it is not the same as neoliberal values, it is not the same as neoliberalism, and some of the set of political ideas in liberalism are far from contrary to Marxism and to the left-wing positions. Quite to the contrary, but let us not get into theoretical debate. We should still stick to the current Macedonian, if not regional, reality. So what we actually fought for was the preservation of the liberal democracy as we knew it or as we sought to achieve through this so called Europeanization. The problem there is that the set of values has been all along bourgeois – so I would choose that term as target of critique instead of liberal. And perhaps historically it was necessary – I do not know, I do not have a theory about it – but practically we knew it was necessary to fight authoritarianism. But let us just be aware of what we have been doing ideologically and how much we have sacrificed symbolically and ideologically in this past period of two years, and let us, by revisiting all of this, reconsider the possibility of gaining over the hegemony of our own discourse, and stop being morally and otherwise blackmailed by the political mainstream.

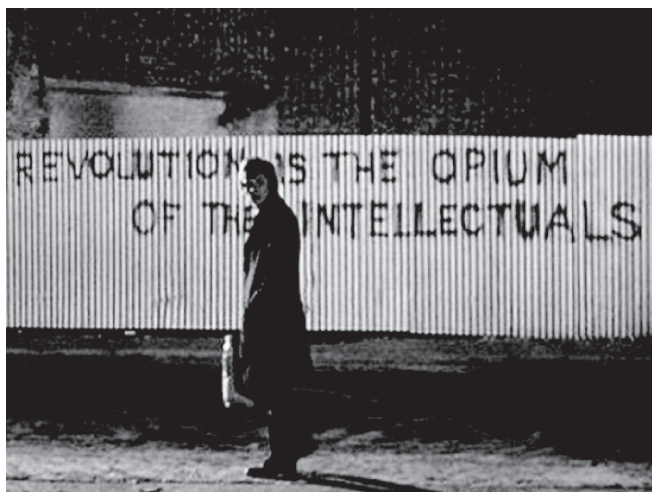
|BRANIMIR JOVANOVIĆ|

REINVENTING REVOLUTION

I will begin by paraphrasing Marx: "Revolution is the opium of the intellectuals."

I am also amazed how relevant Marx's whole discussion of religion from "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*" becomes if you substitute the word "revolution" for "religion:"

Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the *expression* of real suffering and a *protest* against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the *opium* of the people. The abolition of religion as the *illusory* happiness of the people is the demand for their *real* happiness.¹



Scene from the movie *O Lucky Man!* (1973), directed by Lindsay Anderson

But what is revolution actually?

According to Marxist thought, workers need revolution in order to free themselves of capital's oppression and build a society managed by and for the workers. The liberation is

¹ Karl Marx, "A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's *Philosophy of Right*. Introduction," *Marxist Internet Archive* (2005), <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1843/critique-hpr/intro.htm> (accessed September 25, 2007).

made in such a way so that workers will take over the means of production from the bourgeoisie. The aim of the revolution is to build a classless society where there is no oppressed and oppressors - that is, communism.

There are many examples of such revolutions throughout history, starting with the Paris Commune, via the October Revolution, the Chinese, the Cuban one. My short online investigation showed that in the XX century there were about 30 such revolutions.

However, there are only five countries in the world today that have a basis to be called communist - Cuba, China, Vietnam, Laos and North Korea.

Does this mean that throughout history such a revolution was unsuccessful.

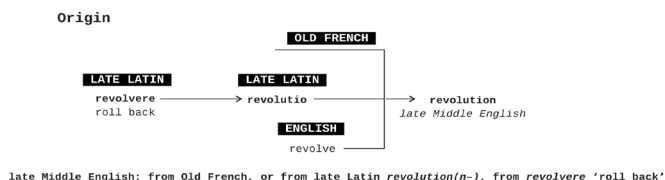
Probably yes.

Does this mean we need to entirely reject revolution as a potential idea for the future?

Not yet. We only need to redefine it, that is, to reinvent it.

And in that search for the revolution, we should start from etymology.

The etymological origin of the word "revolution" comes from the Latin word "revolvere," which means to roll back, or turn around. Hence, I would define revolution as the process of turning back, the process of radical change.



But turning back towards what? A radical change towards what kind of society? Here I would stick to the original understanding of revolution, according to which the aim of the

revolution is to build a communist society, but I will stop now to ponder upon necessary commentary on the concept of communist society.

The common definition of communism is that it is a society where the means of production are owned by the workers. I think this is wrong and anachronic. The question of ownership today is not so important as it used to be, both because of state regulation and income redistribution by the state. But the question of ownership will further lose its importance in the upcoming future when automation becomes widespread. Under conditions of high-level robotization, when robots will replace factory workers, it is futile to fight for a society where workers will own the means of production.

This is why I think communism should be understood in its original sense, again proposed by Marx (in "Critique of the Gotha Programme"), that is, as a society where each works according to his ability, and each receives according to his need.

We should not just redefine communism, but we should also redefine the way towards it. The concepts of class struggle, dictatorship of the proletariat, etc., are also things from the past. They do not resonate with the human of today. Today we cannot achieve such a society through violent overthrowing of power by the workers. Workers today do not care about that. The reason is simple - the form of oppression today is different than the one 150 years ago. Oppression today is not by stick, as in the past, but by hypnosis.

Factory workers today are not forced to work 12 hours a day, 6 days a week. They are being served all sorts of needs, such as the newest mobile phone, a modern car, travelling around the world, etc. They bite the bait and get excited about such things, and in order to afford these things they willingly decide to work 12 hours a day, 6 days a week. Workers today are not aware that they are exploited, and this is why they will never take over the power.

This is why it is necessary to wake them up from this hypnosis, to make them aware of what is going on. This is, of course, not easy and cannot be done overnight. To achieve that, it is necessary to work on raising the awareness of

workers, but also on bettering their material conditions of living, which are the underlying reason for their unawareness.

In order to raise awareness, a bottom up approach is needed, that is, we need to work with people on the ground, to educate them, to emancipate them, as well as to build coalitions with them so that a critical mass is created.

In order to better the material conditions of living, a top-down approach is needed, that is, we need to work through the system's institutions. There is no more effective way of bettering the material conditions of living and reducing poverty than working through institutions. Increasing social benefits, raising the minimum wage or lowering taxes for the poor can all better the lives of much more people than any other non-systemic action. This is why leftists today should not run from coming to power, even in some coalition, but on the contrary, should aim to do that.

"Che" Guevara has said: "The revolution is not an apple that falls when it is ripe. You have to make it fall." I would say that right now we need to plant the apple tree and water it so that it grows and gives apples. Planting the tree is the work from the bottom up. Watering it is the work from the top down.

|VLADIMIR SIMOVIĆ|

SOME NOTES ON RADICAL LEFT
STRATEGY TODAY

If we are about to provide an adequate political strategy, we have to start with the reflection: the left-wing movement in the region is on the margins of society. This is not a coincidence, or a problem induced by a wrongdoing. It is the consequence of a huge defeat real socialism suffered in the XX century. There is a radical discontinuity in left-wing political articulation – there are no left-wing parties with the infrastructure that can support political development of the movement. In other fields, we have lack of material base as well. There is an obvious disappearance of socialist intelligentsia, trade unions are highly bureaucratized and stuck in the social dialog ideology, we have media infrastructure deficiency, etc. The starting point for restarting of the radical Left in the region is not inducing much optimism. We are practically building from the scratch and struggling to fill in this black hole which appeared with the defeat of socialism.

New forces are emerging from several fields of struggle. Probably the most relevant is the students' movement. Through the struggle against commercialization of higher education a lot of young people got politicized and started organizations that now represent the base of the broadly understood radical Left. These organizations can be understood as a part of civil society and they cover various fields of action – some of them can be defined as think tanks, some of them established media platforms, some are focused on working with trade unions, etc. Other struggles which produced new left-wing forces were workers' struggles against privatization. Although this struggle did not bring much of success, it was an important way of politicizing people.

The wave of optimism emerged after 2008 and the crisis that hit capitalist centres. Before the crisis, any mention of left-wing politics was greeted with hostility. This is not something that should be surprising. The crisis of socialism induced huge economic and political problems that served as a basis for a general demonization of the Left. Nevertheless, with the crisis and with the emergence of huge movements that fought against austerity across the world, left-wing politics became much more acceptable in former socialist societies. But the optimism that was generated should be taken with caution, because:

A crisis does not enable the attacking troops to organize themselves at lightning speed in time and in space; much less does it infuse them with a fighting spirit. On the other side of the coin, the defenders are not demoralized, nor do they abandon their defensive positions, even in the midst of rubble; nor do they lose faith in their own strength or their own future.¹

EXPAND THE STRUGGLE

For some time now, we are practically at a new beginning, of course with important historical experiences behind us. In order to regain the trust of the wider population that another world is really possible and in order to rebuild the radical Left's human and organizational capacities, a serious political work has to be done. What makes this work more difficult is the fact that while, in Gramsci's words, we are fighting "the war of position," the ruling class is constantly in the phase of "war of manoeuvre." While working to establish material conditions for its own reproduction, the Left is under the constant pressure of reactive action. These two things are not excluding each other, but the constant state of urgency prevents the thorough work on organizing and defining concrete political proposals that go beyond the rewriting of recipes from the past.

In a situation in which the lower classes are effectively excluded from the decision-making process, all their demands are always directed towards the state. Various trade union protests and strikes, student protests and occupations of university buildings, protests against evictions, protests that oppose the privatization of cities' public spaces, all these forms of social struggle are predominantly defensive and, ultimately, have the same target - a state that needs to solve the addressed problems. There is not much that is controversial here, except one oversight: this kind of state does not work for us.

There is no organizational infrastructure that could serve as a cohesive tissue, no entities that connect different struggles, articulate common policies and strengthen their

¹ Antonio Gramsci, *Prison Notebooks*, Vol. 3 (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007), 163.

influence. Power is largely concentrated in the apparatus of the capitalist state, which is not addressing our demands.

So, we are small and we need to look for possible partners in order to make our struggle relevant – we need to broaden physical capacities and to expend our political outreach. Generally speaking, we can define two models of cooperation. The first one is *ad hoc cooperation* – action unity on specific topics which demands fast and concrete response (anti-fascist protests, refugee crisis work, struggle against evictions, etc). Some of these topics can become of strategic importance, but it is a question of concrete context and political analysis, assessment and decision of local actors. The second model is *strategic cooperation* which includes fields of strategic importance for building a socialist alternative, the fields which determine social reproduction. For example, it could be the struggle for the public sector as a sector which offers the basis for non-capitalist social reproduction. That does not mean we should only defend the public sector as such. And that is exactly why the public sector could be the field of strategic importance – it ultimately compels us to dig deeper and enables us to open the questions of democratization and further change of the public sector in the direction of a socialist logic of reproduction.

POLITICS OF URGENCY

But we have to be aware that shortcuts do not exist. The work on revitalizing the radical Left in the region is a hard one and it requires a lot of sacrifices. On the other hand, it is understandable that people are in a hurry. On one side, people that constitute the radical Left at the moment are in a hurry because they invest a lot of energy with results that are usually not immediate and tangible. Also, there are people who can be defined as sympathizers and who have expectations from the Left, usually articulated through demand for the entity that can articulate their interests in political sphere.

This kind of urgency is understandable, but at the same time it can generate strategies that can lead the movement into deadends. The *imperative of relevance* can result into radicalization on discursive level, with no relevance on real life experience and with no organizational potential

to fulfill what you advocate for. This kind of *politics of slogans* is a radical approach that cannot connect with existing problems because it always has two kinds of answers: the cause of the problem is Capitalism and the solution is Revolution. Thus, it stays immune to the needs of the wider population and the Left that is already on the margins of society is being pushed further to the margins. Paradoxically, the *imperative of relevance* is in this case making the Left irrelevant. On the other hand there is a *problem of withdrawal* in the sense that the *imperative of relevance* pushes you to withdraw from revolutionary politics and give up on the working class as a subject of revolutionary politics. If you put forward a soft agenda thinking it will allow you to reach a wider population, how do you transfer back to revolutionary politics? If you expand your base with this kind of agenda, it forms your organization according to it. So when do you pull out your secret (revolutionary) card? If you chose this path you risk being totally pacified and induced into dominant ideologies. Thirdly, the *imperative of relevance* can result in *politics of mimicry*. In other words, left-wing actors can try to indulge in nationalist or liberal positions in order to get closer to the base. The presumption behind this approach is that people are not ready for radical Left argumentation and you should mimic what is supposed to be the dominant ideological stance so you could connect with the base. The mistake being made here leads to an apolitical approach which presupposes that ideological discussions should be left aside and that through the concrete struggle other actors and individuals will eventually come to the socialist positions.

We should not let our tactics determine our fundamental political positions. And these political positions are not a question of lifestyle or identity politics – anticapitalist positions are the product of systemic analysis showing that the question of exploitation, inequality, democracy, and so on cannot be resolved in a society established on the basis of capitalist reproduction. What we need is to find a way to translate our analysis into concrete political proposals, not to lose time in finding a way how to work our way around and trick people. Organizing is a long term process full of hard work and it implies building infrastructure and institutions, building bridges and uniting atomized individuals and groups.

Revolution is not a game – it is a question whether you believe you can make life better for everyone inside the capitalist system or you need to change it in order to make life better for everyone. Giving up on revolutionary politics leaves us only on the level of struggle that is focused on the struggles inside of capitalism. This does not exclude radical revolutionary politics by itself, but the goal should determine the practice. It is the fact that some struggles inside capitalism can have progressive outcomes (strengthening the infrastructure and base, for example), but it is a problem if these struggles become an aim in themselves. We have to be aware that political positions have very explicit consequences in the practice. We should always be aware of the history of social democracy and ask ourselves: Do we really make a step forward if we soften our political agenda? Is it maybe the time for radicalization of our positions? This radicalization, of course, should be done in a smart way, concentrated on hotspots that can mobilize people and provide us with the small victories that can enforce our strategic position and open a way for further progress of the movement. It is easier said than done, but what do we have to lose?

|IRENA CVETKOVIĆ|

PRESENTATION

First, I just want to make a distinction. The topic of this panel is not really the focus of my professional interest, it is, as Artan Sadiku said, something that I have been experienced in, and it is more of being a person who is into politics and a person who has experience with being a very active participant in social and protest movements, and of course with some distance I can elaborate on things that were done in Macedonia. I will focus on this context. Just to say that all of my positions will not come from research, but mostly from my perception and experience.

I expected that this panel in many ways will be preoccupied with what the term revolution means. So in this corpus of thousands of definitions of how we could see the revolution in contemporary societies, I will rather speak about on something I define as political togetherness or communities that are based on political voice, that can be articulated in different ways. For the sake of this panel I will take most of the examples from protest movements. As one form of creating communities based on political voice.

A lot of my life I have spent as actively involved into LGBTI organizations and movements, if we can say we have some kind of movement here, and what we and my friends and fellow activists thought a lot about is the distinction between these political communities and communities based on identities. It is a huge challenge, when you come from the LGBTI community, and speak and articulate a political movement that will escape the traps of identity politics, I think it is important. And why I think it is important to invest in this kind of protest movement, this kind of communities? Because we can escape the traps of identity politics and yet focus on some shared issues, like shared experience of shame, of bullying, of being an outcast, etc. So if you see throughout this recent history of Macedonia, we had, if we were to compare, there are two kinds of togetherness, where people and bodies on the street are taking part in protest movements. On the one hand, we have the example of the Colorful Revolution, and on the other hand we have something going on today - For a Common Macedonia. I think it is important to invest in this kind of communities because there are some huge changes, differences between them, to be part of the political community, it is a free choice.

But I would like to again take some distance - it is maybe a poor translation of what I want to say, I do not believe in the liberal definition of revolution, of free choice, I just want to say that if you come from identity community, it is something you are born with. That is why a lot of LGBTI movements stick to this "born this way" rhetoric, although it is something I personally do not believe in. The same is with For a Common Macedonia - there is nothing to be done, it is not my choice to be a Macedonian, to be ethnic Albanian, etc. The political movements, I believe, should have transient character, characteristics, unlike the other type of communities that are permanent. They should be created by *ad hoc* grouping instead of dreaming about everlasting and stable positions, and should be built based on political voice and solidarity instead of shared blood or genes or some identity characteristic like sexual orientation, for example, or gender. So being activists we always face some kind of questions, even when we enroll ourselves in organizing something in a protest movement, a lot of people ask, and I somehow saw this kind of dilemma in this panel, what should we do after, why are we here, what should we do after we stop protesting? And I really do not think that we should think about protest movements as something that must guarantee sustainability or must guarantee something lasting for very long in the public sphere. The principle of the connection as I said is solidarity and not belonging, so we should not be preoccupied with what should we do tomorrow.

And also as someone who is also coming from these movements, let me say there are a lot of huge expectations from people who are involved in this kind of communities and movements. Like "Why would I go to protest, why would I do it, just to help some people gain power and other political parties create government?" And I really do not think activists are the ones who should be responsible for the comprehensive political situation in the country. I do not think we are the only ones, I do not think so, I think we are even the last ones to whom these questions should be pointed to. And when it comes to the movements, I think I will be very close to what is next in the programme: "What is to be done?"

But I had some examples of smaller movements and the traps some of them get into. Let us say the movement Aman, which was a protest movement against the increase of prices of

electricity in Macedonia. After many days of protesting on the streets the organizers and the people protesting thought it would be a good idea to start a democratic procedure, and collecting signatures for this topic to be considered in the Parliament. It was, I suppose - because I was not part of this protest - a really hard job to be done, and eventually it succeeded, 10.000 signatures were collected. People from the protest movement entered the Parliament, the Parliament included in their agenda discussion of the topic, so people from the protest movement entered the Assembly, they put up their argument again, and the majority of MPs, the government also repeated their arguments and concluded that they [Aman] were right. At the end, you have a situation where a protest movement showed to the public that there is democracy in our country! That everything was by the procedure, by the books, by the law, and nothing happened. And it was a waste of time and energy.

On the other hand, I think the Colorful Revolution was a bit smarter in this way, and of course people learned the lesson, and entered very much in the field of PR and branding, which actually succeeded on the micro level more than the other protest movements. So what you have is that the Colorful Revolution and all the things from the Colorful Revolution were criticized, actually showed that the winning scenario is in this context. But still I can agree with Katerina Kolozova, there are many lessons to be learned - and that if the goal of the protest movement was changing the Government - and it was - it was successful, and of course the ones who will gain most are the political parties that will actually form a new government. But for me that is fine.

What I see as something that was crucial and important from the perspective of this kind of protest movements, was that in the last few years I sense that we as a society have learned that we can actively practice politics. And it was a huge lesson that Macedonian society may have finally learned. It is not about being politically active, it is not even about being collaborative in political sense, but what is more important for me is that somehow, we took the monopoly over of the political from the political parties. Before this it was for the political parties, two from the Macedonian and two from the Albanian political blocks, and they were the ones who were in charge in all, in whatever politics means.

The civil society, for example, was supposed to be more of a humanitarian sector, or dealing with the poor and organizing humanitarian events. And this break of the monopoly of politics is important and something in which we should invest more in the future, especially now that we have a successful story on our side, even though we can all here agree it was not a huge success.

Another thing, which I see as a danger, and we have seen it very recently here, is having now politically vocal people who can make really bad choices and choose very dangerous strategies in political articulations of their values. I will mention the last case of a protest against the Monstrum case.¹ Few days ago a man went on the streets during the day, in front of twenty people, killing a dog with an axe in his hand. Immediately after that, many people gathered in front of his house, and protested there, there were graffiti like "Murderer," "We will kill you." I think, and of course on the social media you can find many pictures of him, members of his family, his brother, etc., I am really afraid of people's courts, and we should be really aware of this, and it was very disturbing to watch what was going before his house. I do not believe in the privatization of the criminal [justice system], and I will definitely say it is very important for people who are politically active not to put themselves as substitution of the system, you have to invest in the system, we should locate the problem in the system, instead of choosing people by name. Of course, I was very traumatized, I do not like this guy, I was really shocked by what he did, but after a while I felt some kind of empathy for what he was going through. So these are some of the problems that might start happening in the future.

¹ For more information on this case, see the Wikipedia article at https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Smilkovci_lake_killings (accessed September 25, 2017).

|DISCUSSION|

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

(MAY 5, 2017)

Question from the audience: I have three questions. The first one is for Luka Matić and Katerina Kolozova. I want to raise the question of the stereotypes and what is right here - a problem of terminology. For example, Luxemburg accused Bernstein for his socialist populist approach. How to use this approach? I would say the stereotypes about what is anarchism cannot be just used for the Left. Skinheads are also using anarchism and its stereotypes, in a trashy way. How do you find this problematic? Is this an outcome of the globalization? On the other hand, the leftist movements are using a rational pragmatism which is considered a right-wing approach. Is this a problem of terminology or outcome of globalization? My second question is for Branimir Jovanović. How do you find the issue of communication in terms of revolution? In the classical Marxist approach, when the workers' state is dissolved, the worker will have no work. Now technologies are developed and we do not know what is the proletariat because it works with machines. Not to mention intellectual property. The classical approach should be replaced with evolution, not revolution. Maybe this is the future, the working forces will be so developed that people will not have to work but just communicate.

Katerina Kolozova: Well, I agree that the distinction between left and right may not be pertinent any longer and that what is called the extreme center by Tariq Ali has something which can find a way to penetrate activism as well. So we fail to recognize and make these distinctions, after all, between the two possible positions on the ideological spectrum. That is why there is this confusion in terms of values as well. Who purports what values, who embraces what sort of values. There are sets of values that would traditionally be something that a more privileged class would care about, and are still somehow endorsed and advocated by the Left and the other way around. Yes, categories have shifted and it is not for the better. There is some confusion that needs to be cleared out and for the purposes of doing that I am assuming the first thing that the Left should do - those of us that purport to be the Left, who position themselves on the left which implies they embrace certain values making them left, although these categories have become more and more vague and confused - is perhaps the return to some classical categories and definitions. One of those things would be that we all recognize that we are not working class (as in manual

workers), because this is some sort of classical sociological category, that we are all proletariat. The proletariat is working for wage, so all of us depending on the whims of capital by way of being wage workers, regardless of hierarchical position, earning more or less - it does not matter, we are all working class in the sense we are all the proletariat or working for wage. In that way, if we identify ourselves as proletariat - so perhaps issues and some strategies of identity politics are necessary here, and strangely this politics can be also universalist as well - maybe this rather universalist identification would help sharpen the political position and definition. Certain new avenues, especially avenues of communication could open. In that way, we do not have to go and talk to workers and convince them that they are supposed to have class consciousness. In fact, it is the left-wing intelligentsia which lacks class consciousness and perhaps we should start with ourselves and develop our own class consciousness as (part of) the proletariat. And to the details you raised about automation and precariat, and what will be an increasing unemployment: let us recall that in Marx the proletariat is not only the active working class but also the reserve labor army. So everyone is proletariat: the potential worker and the active worker. We are still workers, we are far from full automation and my prediction, Branimir, is much more pessimistic. When everything becomes fully automated we will be a material resource. Very cheap labor, cheaper than machine. They will think of something, how to exploit us.

Luka Matić: Just a few remarks drawing upon what Kolozova said, going back to history - it is about [taking sides in] the conflict between labor and capital that determines what side you are on. After the historical defeat of the so called really existing socialisms that Vladimir Simović mentioned in his presentation, what happened is that, especially in our post-socialist countries, all political forces fell in the line of the new consensus on non-alternativeness of capitalism. Among them, the ones that were inclusive towards minority identities were perceived as the Left, and the Right was perceived as that wing of the center which was against inclusion of minority identities. Or, in the words of one of the quite shameful episodes of Croatian social democratic parties in the 1990s: they had a slogan "Even the workers are Croats," which meant that even the former self-managers had

the right to be included into the national capitalist consensus. That was the line of division between Left and Right after the fall of socialism in post-socialist countries, and we know and it is clear to us that there was no conflict between that left and that right, and that politics in those days was the politics of the extreme center. When you mentioned Luxemburg's critique of Bernstein, that was exactly on the line of the internationalist approach to socialist politics, on the line of the impossibility of socialist politics which is not inherently internationalist. Which is another big difference, I would say.

Branimir Jovanović: First of all, communication and communism. I would say it is a funny and interesting observation. To give communism this meaning: communication and communism. Maybe it is true - in the future people will not be workers but communicators, i.e., people will not work, but just communicate. On the notion of evolution - yes, I agree that it is important, but not sufficient. Revolution must be accompanied by evolution and vice versa. Revolution without evolution means circling around, staying in the same place just turning around, and evolution without revolution means going in the wrong direction, so this is why they have to go together. And a comment to Kolozova and full automation: it may be possible that with full automation the workers will be treated as slaves, but it may also happen that they will be in control of everything, so it is all a matter of redistribution. What the Left needs to understand is that the real question is about redistribution, and not ownership. Socialism and communism is not about ownership of the means of production, it is about redistribution of the income, maybe not the wealth. It does not matter that all robots will be owned by one person if the income is distributed evenly to everybody. So that is the fact: we have to fight for redistribution and this reinforces my previous point that the Left needs to work through institutions, and enter the public discourse and should change opinions of politicians, economists, in this direction. Everybody should understand the need of redistribution in policy, that is the fight and the future fact of the Left.

Vladimir Simović: I wanted to comment on the previous question from the Left differently. I want to continue on this point. You cannot talk about redistribution if you do not

take into account production. As you said: if we have one guy who owns the means of production, how will you make him redistribute the wealth?

Branimir Jovanović: Taxes.

Katerina Kolozova: But it is still capitalist...

Branimir Jovanović: So you have one guy and five million other guys. Who do you think will win on elections?

Vladimir Simović: I think we as the Left should start from the question of production and who owns the means of production. Because I think that the power is there, you cannot make any moves without taking into account production. Concerning the other question, I wanted to talk briefly about the differentiation between left and right. I am a little bit tired of this recent discourse that right and left is meaningless anymore. It is similar to the whole discourse on totalitarianism and it is analytically completely useless. Similar to when you say: "The Nazi party was a workers' party, so is there any difference?" I mean, there is a huge one and we have to stick to the analysis and to see, OK, if Le Pen wants benefits for some workers, then who are these workers? Are they only French white workers, are they only male? What about people with different sexuality? There is a huge difference between right and left. You cannot erase it.

Branimir Jovanović: Can I reply to this? It is interesting to have a debate, not just questions. I am not saying ownership is irrelevant, it is important especially for power relations and struggles, but it is also not crucial. The problem of the Left is that it is lost in the past, it is locked in these phrases from the past - striving for the workers controlling the factories, etc. It is not so important from an economic point of view. Ownership is not so important as redistribution of income. It is important, yes, but not so much. From political point of view, it is much easier to tax the income of the rich than taking his factory, because in the latter case he may think you are stealing from him, but not with the taxes. So we have to be smart. Just as capitalists are smart and give us credits and force us to work through them, we have to be smart ourselves. To basically take what they have taken from us but without making them face it.

Katerina Kolozova: Just to clarify the point about the extreme center. I am not saying we have surpassed, transcended the distinctions and that it is good. I am just saying that the ruling ideology is that of neoliberalism, of the neoliberal center. The boundaries are blurred, but it is not something I endorse. I am just warning that it has contaminated activism as well. We are still riding that wave, but I completely reject the argument in favor of the extreme center. I mean unless it was not clear.

Question from the audience: First question is to Katerina Kolozova. Maybe you could refer a little bit more to liberal democracy in the framework of neoliberalism and the development of capitalism, because what I think is that liberalism is long gone dead. But in this context what does it mean to have liberal democracy? There is a complete change in the structure of power, a certain autonomization of the executive power, legislative power, and so on. There are nuances to be mentioned here. We do not live in the time of liberal democracy. This is not just for the sake of the phrase, I think we live in some kind of authoritarian statism and competition between the nation states. Second question is to Branimir Jovanović and this question about technological optimism. First, we must ask ourselves what will be the system in which robots will do all the jobs, who will make the robots, are they being self-redistributed, self-made robots, will human labor make them? Which will be the way of producing such a technological invention, who will make this sort of job? I think you somehow dropped the point connected to the notion of accumulation and its importance for the capitalist mode of production. You cannot just think of redistribution disconnected from ownership. Ownership is quite important because of this logic of accumulation, it is of great importance for sustainable capitalist social relations and in order to provide accumulation for the reproduction of this kind of society. If you only think in terms of redistribution it becomes pretty utopian and I cannot see how just by means of taxation you can achieve certain social structural changes.

Katerina Kolozova: I agree that the form called liberal democracy is perhaps dead or moribund. My remark about liberalism or the notion of the liberal refers again to a similar task to the one of salvaging the notion of revolution. So also salvaging the notion of "liberal" in its traditional

classical political sense which refers to the values of freedom as a fundament of certain political differentiation. But then this is a different task. I am not sure if it is applicable now to the situation you are warning us about, this crisis of liberal democracy, although it might be connected indirectly. Because due to this not sufficiently examined problematic, due to a debate relying on more colloquial use of terms, the use of a term as a slander and not a theoretically examined term - by using "liberal" as a slur, we might be contributing to the strengthened rise of illiberal democracies, of the so called illiberalism in Europe, or alt-right in the US, to the new form of autocracy, which entails maintenance of the form of pluralist democracy (you keep voting and everything else but you reject the liberal values). What this means simply and in practice is perpetuating illiberalism or the authoritarian style of governing in the form of liberal democracy or democracy. In short, I have not examined this sufficiently from the perspective of political theory, but in short, I can say that, going back to some writings of Luxemburg, to some authors of the orthodox Marxism, I would say that even the term liberal, or freedom, is there perhaps in ways that are also being slurred through this type of use of the term. And just a short remark at the end - last week I visited the Democratic Socialists of America in Brooklyn and we talked about this issue mainly. And we were all surprised - it was a participatory panel, not *ex cathedra* - we all realized that the use of the term in this negative sense as a slur is colloquial, that there is no basis in political theory, not even on the left side, as to what it entails seriously. It is a colloquial thing, it remains to be studied. One of my students at the New Center for Research and Practice, who is also member of the Democratic Socialists of America, is working currently on Luxemburg and the variety of uses of the term, so we will see what comes out of that. This was just a remark on what is going on. Currently, practically speaking, I think we are just contributing to people like Viktor Orbán. From a tactical point of view, we should be careful.

Luka Matić: I would just like to also address this question shortly. When we say liberalism, it is basically the same thing as the use of the term Marxism when used in singular. Namely, both liberalism and Marxism, as theoretical traditions, compose themselves out of numerous different tradi-

tions which have a common denominator but, when speaking of liberalism, we have the one of the slave-owner (of the John Locke type) or the one of abolitionists such as Abraham Lincoln, to whom Marx wrote letters to comment his abolitionism of slavery in the US. But what I see as important is the fact that always, when talking about liberalism, we cannot detach the private ownership of the means of production from it. It is an integral and essential part of that political philosophy and that political ideology and that political practice. So that is the problem we have. Also, liberalism gave us its heritage - equality, in the eyes of the law. But liberalism never gave the peoples of the world equality in front of the court. So there is lots of problems and contradictions, and of course there is the liberalism of the French Enlightenment that has highly influenced numerous Marxist traditions. But it is always a question of how far should we go salvaging the liberal heritage, and how much should we try to say: OK, that is what we have, now let us put it aside and concentrate on building a socialist alternative to all that was before.

Branimir Jovanović: OK, so, who will make robots? Yes, robots will make robots in the end. It is an open question and I am not sure it is so important. Stephen Hawking said couple of days ago that he thinks there is no difference between human and artificial intelligence. He said in terms of limits - there is none. That AI can achieve anything that the human can. So if we accept that, yes, robots can do anything, even intellectual work. I agree with you that maybe this is too far-fetched and too far in the future; the idea is that we need to change our way of thinking, in this direction we should not oppose robotization and automation, we should encourage it. But try to address it in some way through these redistribution policies. And it is important for an additional reason - if we agree that one of the problems of capitalism or exploitation is the paid wage labor, then one way to remove exploitation is by removing the wage contracts, and this is done through robotization, so that is another reason why we should go for this. And I agree it is just redistribution in terms of taxes, that it is not enough, it should be accompanied by public provision of goods and services. So we should have and fight for free healthcare and education, etc. In terms of accumulation of wealth, yes, I agree with you that wealth is perpetuating itself, it is redistributing itself if it is privately owned. This is also what mainstream

economists say today - in his critique of capitalism, Piketty says that wealth or capital is perpetuating itself, it is creating itself, and that creates inequality in the world. That is what makes capitalism creating inequality globally, and that is the nature of capitalism. But then the solution to this problem is again through taxes. Piketty and most of the others do not argue for taking factories from capital, because capital today is not just factories, it is mostly financial capital. Nobody advocates taking capital from people directly, but everybody says - through taxes. This is the future, we should all fight for the introduction of a global wealth tax. Which means not just to tax income, but also to tax the wealth people have. If someone owns 1 billion in stocks, he has to pay a certain tax. That is the future, through redistribution.

Question from Vladimir Simović [to Branimir Jovanović]: In my presentation, I said something like "We should learn from the history of social democracy and we should learn from the failures." So the question is, in terms of what you talked about, and what we had in Western Europe in the 1960s and 1970s, why did it fail?

Branimir Jovanović: It all started with Thatcher, and that happened because of the oil shocks. Thatcher and Reagan came as the result of inflation you had in the Western world, which was created by the oil shocks, and this created several problems - basically total collapse of their economy. So that is why Thatcher came to power and Reagan too and then the world started going in the wrong direction since then. So it is not that the system itself was flawed, but it is just that something happened and it was a shock that turned the system around. Not that the system itself was so bad. At least that is my point of view. But then again, I do not see a solution - we should learn from the social democratic failures, but also we should learn from the communist ones. If you think which societies are the best societies right now, it is mostly those that can be classified as social democratic societies. That is the main message. I agree with you that social democracy should not be our final station, but it should be our passing station. We should pass through it and then go to communism. Otherwise we will never achieve communism.

Question from the audience: This is a question to Irena Cvetković. How do you see the role of the media in these protests? Regarding your example with the killed dog, for example. I am interested in what is presented as dangerous in the media, how do you see the media reflecting the protests?

Irena Cvetković: I would say the role of the media in creating moral panic is huge. The media creates something and labels out of a minor deviation. I am using Stanley Cohen's definition of moral panic - they will take one's minor deviation, label it as a huge problem, and then you could see people screaming on the streets wanting to kill somebody, perpetuating all the discourses on panic because they feel that they are threatened. Even when the media reports on a dog biting off a child's hand, which is a minor crime compared to everyday criminality, elsewhere and here, they create a moral panic. So I see media as crucial in all this.

PANEL II:
THE ACTUALITY OF REVOLUTION AND
OUR CURRENT PREDICAMENT

FLORIN POENARU
IVAN RADENKOVIĆ
ANA BLAZHEVA
ARTAN SADIKU
ANASTAS VANGELI

| FLORIN POENARU |
LEGACIES OF NEOLIBERALISM

Let me begin by thanking you for having me here and, especially, for organizing this event. In what follows I will make just a few general remarks about what can be called our current predicament. The purpose is to try to get a better idea of where we stand today in order to be able to develop proper means for action. Because we live in an ever more rapidly evolving situation, I think this task is crucial.

As I see things, the good news is that we live in revolutionary times today. The bad news is that this is not our revolution. So it is in fact only bad news. Whose revolution it is then, if not a leftist one? It is a top-down, class-based one that is being waged by a minority - that comes under different names but the name is not so important: the elites, the 1%, the rich - against the rest of the population. Of course, the lines of division are not so simple and this is exactly what makes the situation so complicated. This complicates even the classical Marxist division of the two classes, the bourgeoisie and the proletariat locked against each other. The complication comes from this class war being waged from top-down, because basically what is the main characteristic of this class war is precisely the acceleration and the imposition of class distinctions and class fractions within societies - basically an affirmation of class division and the mobilization of class factions against each other. So I think we live in a class war, a class division that is reproducing itself through its own existence, its own imposition. This is what I mean by "living in revolutionary times." The question is how to take control of this revolutionary process, because obviously we, the Left, are not controlling it now. It is being imposed on us from the top-down.

An important characteristic, which I think it is important to emphasize, is the fact that this war is nested: every class and segment of class is fighting the weaker link, the immediately subordinated classes. It is basically a race to the bottom. This, of course, is the historical legacy of neoliberalism. One of the ways in which I think it is important to understand neoliberalism is that it was a class project beginning in the late 1960s and early 1970s. It was, among other things, an attempt to get more control and gain more power for the capitalist class against the proletariat. Neoliberalism began this open class war against labor.

I think neoliberalism came to an end with the 2008 financial crisis. It represented the death of neoliberalism. Maybe ideologically it still holds some ground, maybe some ideas continue to survive and will do so for a while, but 2008 was the end of neoliberalism. Dominant but dead, to recall here Neil Smith's formulation. Austerity was an attempt to deal with its death, to solve the crisis of the death of neoliberalism, but it was short lived and of course it did not achieve its goals. But what happened after this moment was an acceleration of class divisions and class war - this is the legacy of neoliberalism. So we have to deal with this legacy but at the same time being very alive in its ultimate consequences, which is overall the class struggle.

One of the characteristics of our contemporary moment today is the idea of populism. I want to go back to this idea, because what we witness now is a sort of blackmail politics - Katerina Kolozova spoke about this as well, about the blackmail politics we face today after the demise of neoliberalism. There is what Tariq Ali calls, problematically, but I think still usefully, *the extreme center* - this kind of post-neoliberal order which tries to represent itself as the only alternative, because otherwise we have the specter of extreme right-wing populism. I think this distinction itself is precisely one of the ways in which class division is being reinforced, because the specter of populism is mobilized more by the extreme center than by the populists. Populism is a specter raised by the extreme center to keep at bay any sort of popular demand, any sort of tradition of groups and populations against the common enemy. The specter is always raised in order to bring this division. So I think this division itself should be inscribed in the way class works, it is not an innocent distinction, it is already inscribed in this particular mechanism of waging class war from above. I think it is very dangerous to give in to this idea of the politics of blackmail. Because it is always the same - that if you do not do this, something bad is going to happen - either the populists will take power, or the extreme Right will come to power. Now nobody is afraid of the Left anymore - that is another diagnosis of the current situation, that nobody fears some sort of leftist insurrection taking power, it is only about some sort of crazy leftists coming to power - and it is everywhere. Maybe it was a little bit like that with Sanders, but it is the only example where you can think of

some sort of fear of the establishment that the Left will come to power. Nobody cares anymore. It is just about inventing this straw-man enemy, which is called the far Right. I am not saying it is not important to discuss it, but it is all about this sort of specter of the far Right coming into the picture. And that is why we have this politics of blackmail - that if you do not do this, then everything will be in chaos.

I think this is another very important characteristic of the current situation which somehow established the horizon of our political imagination, either left or not - this constant politics of fear. The only politics we have today is the politics of fear - either generating or managing fear. I am not talking only about particular fears - terrorism, ecology and so on, but it is more of fundamental fear that everything is collapsing, that there is nothing to be done about it, everything is going down and all we need is a little bit of administration to prolong the inevitable. There is no other sort of politics except this administration of the disaster. We have the incoming disaster. Everything should be temporarily managed because there is nothing to be done. And I think this really takes out all the energy, of being able to think ahead, of organizing for a bigger goal, which are characteristics of the Left from its inception. I mean there were characteristics of the capitalist ideology and functioning to look long-term. What is happening today is only this politics of fear - that everything is collapsing and all we need is some sort of administration. And this politics of impatience - that we have to do things now because otherwise it will be either too late or we will miss the moment - this kind of permanent injunction to do something now, because otherwise it will be too late. I think this really kills all the possibilities for more articulate politics. It is only - as I mentioned yesterday as well, and it is definitely the case for the Left - it is only a form of reaction. So you have to react to what has been put in front of you, immediately, instantly, or otherwise it is too late. I think we are caught up in this game, not us but everybody - in this kind of permanent urgency, this kind of permanent urgency to respond to what is happening, everything also defined by fear or by this constant blackmail we face -if you do not act, something terrible will happen.

Now I will say few more things about what I think are the most important legacies of neoliberalism or transformations that neoliberalism created and that the Left has to face after its demise. I think they are crucial for our understanding of our current situation. They are also crucial in order to rethink a particular leftist response to some sort of strategy to them. And then I will finish with an idea about how can we go back to this class politics in the current situation.

One of the very important things that neoliberalism did was to kill reformist liberalism. I think we are not very aware of that and I think you can be aware of that because neoliberalism is now in its demise, itself, and we see now the catastrophic collapse of neoliberal parties and politics and politicians everywhere. We still have here and there some sort of phantasmatic dreams about how neoliberalism can revive the economy, but nobody really believes that. For example, when Macron in France advocated neoliberal measures he looks like the most utopian politician. In the debate between Le Pen and the others, he was the most utopian extremist. Everywhere neoliberalism is more or less gone, but its legacy is very important. We knew that the social democracy collapsed in the 1980s and 1990s with this switch to Blairism and Clintonism. These latter forms collapsed as well, before and during the crisis. Pacification of social democracy, obviously it is devalued, there is no need to emphasize this because everywhere social democracy is basically dead. I mean as a political form - I am not sure about its ideas, the reformists Keynesians, I think they are still floating around. But in terms of political organization and parties, social democracy is dead, there is no question about it. But what is happening even more now is that the neoliberal center is also dying out.

Liberalism had its moments of crisis in the 1930s and it was severely contested. But then the post-war consensus was established on this kind of reformist liberal goals - centrist liberalism for most of the post-war period until the neoliberalism cracked in. So I think we only understand now how important this destruction of centrist liberalism made by neoliberalism from the late 1970s onwards is today, when we basically, in the current situation, have to defend or go back to liberalism. What Katerina Kolozova mentioned very well was the idea that what was one of the most important

elements of Marxism or leftism in general was to criticize this liberal framework, but somehow from within. The Left appeared historically as a radicalization of, or an attempt to, radicalize liberalism, to make liberalism fulfill its promises - to stand up to liberalism and advance it through a radical discourse.

I think neoliberalism killed this idea of liberal reformism. Reformist liberalism, we might call it. Which puts us in a very difficult position today, because we have to defend at the same time liberalism while criticizing it - and I think this takes out a lot of our energies. Historically, the main enemy was liberalism, in an attempt to overcome it. But now it is not possible anymore because you have to defend it in many places, you have to go back. So I think we are in this situation today, unfortunately, that is similar to the times before the 1840s when the Left actually appeared. We are in this situation where reforming liberalism is dead but also in this kind of organization of production and the way capitalism works that makes impossible the kind of massive proletarian types of organizations. The flexibilization of labor that is the consequence of neoliberalism makes it more plausible to have forms of contestation that were appropriate in the 1830s. There are small groups of workers, people organizing in certain ways. It is not very constant, it is not striking a blow to the enemies, it is not massive, there are just small actions that can be interpreted as resistance, reactive, but they are in a sense very peripheral and very localized and disjointed. We have this kind of moment and I think this is the real legacy of neoliberalism that we should really come to terms with, because it really changed the whole situation - for the Left but also for the whole political spectrum.

Two more things as last points. What neoliberalism did, one of the many effects it had, and it is also very important for the Left today, is that it managed to delink state, *laïcité* - that is, secularism - and citizenship. This was a package, which was criticized of course, especially from the Left, but this was one of the main pillars of reformist liberalism as we knew it before neoliberalism. You had this absolutely untouchable triad - state, secularism and citizenship. Neoliberalism delinked the three. Not only that it was allowed for religion to come back in, but also what neoliberalism

did was to open the space for political religion. Not religion in the sense of God *per se*, but in terms of religious politics, of bringing this type of political manifestation into the public sphere. Neoliberalism itself was a sort of religious manifestation in this belief of hidden hands and free markets. At its core, neoliberalism was very religious.

Related to that, neoliberalism also meant the demise or the complete erosion of the scientific idea. Here neoliberalism's legacy is more complicated, but one of the outcomes was this dissolution of the belief in the power of science. We see this even more today, but it has happened for more than forty years. The privatization of the universities is a symptom of this erosion, beyond the basic idea of opening a new market and retreating the state. This attack on the universities and their transformation on market principles also took the steam out of the Left. Historically, the universities were important resources of the Left movements. As somebody mentioned earlier, there are no leftist professors, the kind of classical intellectuals of the Left from the 1950s. It is part of the erosion of science that really closed many spaces that were available for the Left in order to articulate forms of mobilization and to bring people together. Why this attack on science? Trumpism is a good example of that. This is not neoliberalism rotting out. It is the embodiment of a new post-neoliberal world, it is the overcoming of neoliberalism right now. This end result of de-scientification that neoliberalism managed to promote. This is why absolutely abhorrent ideas and practices take shape today without being challenged properly: the ban on abortion, being against vaccination, creationism, the phenomena of fake news and the rest of it. I think this is one of the outcomes and it is really confusing because once you lose the ground of the scientificity you also lose the ground for making left statements.

|IVAN RADENKOVIĆ|
SOME TENSIONS IN CONCEPTUALIZING
THE REVOLUTION

The old mole of revolution seems to have reached the point of exhaustion. In its myopic vision, secretly and slowly burrowing through a subterranean world, the old mole works out the revolutionary strategy. But it seems that today an old mole is digging more deeply into the ground. Traditional strategic issues that occupied left politics for a long time such as armed insurrection, general strike or dual power seem very far from the current state of affairs. How then one can count on concentration of forces when we live in times of dissemination of powers and constant reconfiguration of political and economic space? In other words, what is the relevance of traditional political strategies in the light of continual defeats of the political Left?

The Shakespearean metaphor of the mole appears in Hegel's *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*. The mole refers to the spirit itself because the spirit is understood as a progress alone. The mole's teleological movement reveals Hegel's progressive optimism and providentialism: "Spirit often seems to have forgotten and lost itself, but inwardly opposed to itself, it is inwardly working ever forward ..."¹ The movement that brings a new spirit into the light of the day is inherently teleological in its progressivity. The emergence of a new spirit is possible only when it has developed itself, when maturity has been fully accomplished. Therefore, the metaphor of the mole points to the necessity of dialectical movement.

In contrast to Hegel, Marx uses the metaphor of the mole in a somewhat different sense. He obviates teleology and progressivity from the mole's activity. These properties are for Marx idealistic oddments. The work of an old mole progresses underground, away from the mature sunshine of a new spirit. The working class tries to pave its way beneath the surface of the earth, making no promises about the certainty of the revolution. The revolutionary event is thus tanked with *contingency*. However, contingency should be understood not as an external property that burdens the pure abruptness of the event, but as an uncertain outcome of class struggle in its historical reeling. Revolution cannot be reduced to a struggle that unfolds only under the condition of infal-

¹ Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of History*, Vol. 3, trans. by Elizabeth Sanderson Haldane and Frances H. Simson (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1896), 546-47.

libly favorable chances. Marx takes accidents as constitutive elements of history pointing to the problematic tension between event and history, moment and process, rupture and continuity, revolution and counter-revolution. What is certain in capitalist society is the conflictual nature of class struggle, not its outcome.

Crises as the "dark side of the progress" open up the possibilities for revolutionary change. Nevertheless, a relationship between event, resistance and history in the context of crises is not directly causal. The clarification of social antagonisms in times of big economic crises makes strategic political action possible. Crises could stir up the revolutionary wave but they depend on the strategic actions of the actors and their ability to estimate the situation. Therefore, the revolutionary dynamic reels not according to the mechanical causality but to the chronological succession. Crises precede revolutions, but not every crisis gives rise to a revolution.

THE ACTUALITY OF REVOLUTION - PROLETARIAN PARTY AND PROLETARIAN STATE?

The actuality of revolution cannot be simply conceived as a way of figuring out what needs to be done next, using the goal of revolution as the ideal focal point. During the periods of capitalism's booms, the proletarian revolution remains objectively utopian - reduced to an abstract goal. The Lukácsian phrase "actuality of revolution" points to the specific period where objective revolutionary possibilities have opened up. Strategic questions like those of the party action and the state power must then be approached in a qualitatively different way. The possibility of workers taking over the power lies in the revolutionary situation on the immediate agenda, and the role of the vanguard party and the proletarian state are gaining prospective meaning. Far from theologizing a vanguard party, Lukács is focused on the class struggle:

Naturally, even the biggest and best party imaginable cannot "make" a revolution. But the way the proletariat reacts to a given situation largely depends on the clarity and energy which the party is able to impart to its class aims. *When the revolution is an actuality,*

*the old problem of whether or not it can be "made" thus acquires a completely new meaning.*²

This insight is completely at odds with the Kantian idea of the contemplation of the revolution from a distance where the privileged position of the theoretical subject must be isolated in order to penetrate into its historical truth. Kant confidently looks at the French revolution neither condemning nor being condemnatory, nor moralizing, nor being paternalistic. His look is imbued with the enthusiasm of confession: the French Revolution was a historically irreversible event which shows that the human race yet progresses towards the better. However, this is only visible for the external subject-observer. The revolution cries for the *Other* and his gaze. In other words, distance from the revolution is the condition of its recognition as a universal historical event. Consequently, the position from which the purpose and meaning of a revolution can be seen does not coincide with the *topos* of revolution. Kant separates the theoretical and practical aspects: theoretical reflection and action are not part of the same register and do not occur in the same place. This does not mean that it is impossible for the revolution to be reflected among its actors, but that the measure and historical accolade of the revolution is external to it, that it is based on the moral reaction of the distant *Other*.³ For Kant there is no synchronization between determination of the meaning of historical rebellion and an immediate involvement in revolution. If meaning is caught, its occurrence slips away, and if we are involved in its occurrence, then we cannot catch the meaning. Anyway, Kant elevates the French Revolution as a historically legitimate realization of the noumenal sphere (or the sphere of mind), although in his legal writings he explicitly rejects the right to revolt as illegal. While Kant was delivering lectures on Adam Smith and the moral virtues of a free market economy to future leaders of the Prussian civil service, revolution as the exclusive contemplative art was at the time the only reality of German social thought.⁴

² Georg Lukács, *Lenin: A Study on the Unity of His Thought*, trans. by Nicholas Jacobs (London: Verso, 2009), 31.

³ Saša Hrnjez, "Virtuoznost i revolucija: politička teorija egzodusa," *Misliti revoluciju: Paolo Virno, Antonio Gramsci* (Novi Sad/Beograd: Akademska knjiga/Institut za filozofiju i društvenu teoriju, 2017), 89-90.

⁴ Paul Gottfried, "Adam Smith and German Social Thought," *Modern Age: A Conservative Review*, Vol. 21, No. 2 (Spring 1977), 146-152.

Distancing himself from Kant's moral political stance, Lukács's thought tends to get closer to the revolution in its actuality. Therefore, he focuses on the issues of the state power and the necessity for the proletarian party as immediate strategic tasks:

The actuality of the revolution expresses itself in the actuality of the problem of the state for the proletariat. With this phase, the question of socialism itself at once ceases to be merely an ultimate far-off goal and confronts the proletariat as an immediate task. This tangible proximity of the realization of socialism once again involves, however, a dialectical relationship; it would be fatal for the proletariat if it were to interpret this approach of socialism in a mechanistic and utopian fashion, as its realization merely through the seizure of power (capitalist expropriation, socialization, etc.).⁵

Some Marxists find in these passages a confirmation for radically democratic theory of the party and state, while Marxists from different camps claim that Lukács's revolutionary Marxism presupposes an instrumentalist view of the party and the proletarian state. The first standpoint that sees the theory of class consciousness as radically democratic stresses that a party is only as radical as its strength to inspire workers who freely choose it. Marleau-Ponty is quite clear when he amplifies the reciprocity between Party and the masses in Lukács's analysis. He stresses the importance of proletarian praxis, or the life of proletariat in the Party:

The proletariat's acknowledgement of the Party is not an oath of allegiance to persons. Its counterpart is the acknowledgement of the proletariat by the Party. This is certainly not to say that there is a submission of the Party to the proletarians' opinions just as they are; rather there is the statutory aim of making them attain political life. This [is an] exchange, in which no one commands and no one obeys ... In the communist sense, the Party is this communication; and such a conception of the Party is not a corollary of Marxism - it is its very center ... In other words, the masses are never the simple means of a great politics

⁵ Lukács, *Lenin*, 67.

which is worked out behind their backs. Led, but not maneuvered, the masses bring the seal of truth to the politics of the Party.⁶

The second standpoint could be found in John Holloway's book *Change the World Without Taking Power*⁷ where he writes that

Revolutionary movements inspired by Marxism have often had an instrumental view of the capitalist nature of the state. They have typically seen the state as being the instrument of the capitalist class. The notion of an "instrument" implies the relation between the state and the capitalist class as an external one; like a hammer the state is wielded by the capitalist class in its own interests, while after the revolution it will be wielded by the working class in their interests. ... This view fetishizes the state.⁸

There is the general impression that Holloway's thoughts on the capitalist state are somewhat rigid, transhistorical and simplified. Marx, Lenin, Luxemburg or Lukács certainly did not write and stand for conquering the state but to progressively dissolve it. Even if the workers' state is replaced with some kind of direct administration of social affairs by the democratically organized masses, the people's will must obtain some kind of organizational form. They will have to organize factories and production, offices and schools and vote on their actions. But the organizational issues of the post-revolutionary society, its decision-making process and administrative issues are somewhat neglected in Holloway's book. For him, the negative force that leads towards the rejection of capitalism is simply converted by institutional building into something positive. For Holloway, on the grounds of Adorno's negative dialectics, all positive aspects of dialectics point to a petrified thinking trapped in identity. Thus, all conversions of capitalism by the

⁶ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Adventures of the Dialectic*, trans. by Joseph Bien (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1973), 50-51.

⁷ Holloway's book is an homage to the Zapatistas' upsurge movement in Mexico. The idea of changing the society by refusing to take power was popularized by the leader of the Zapatistas, subcomandante Marcos. Holloway uses these ideas for the purposes of a polemic confrontation with the ideas of revolutionary Marxism.

⁸ John Holloway, *Change the World Without Taking Power* (London: Pluto Press, 2002), 15.

state are for him *a priori* wrong because the state means the exercise of power over people and things and therefore it should be abolished. However, this attitude has its historical justification if we take into consideration the lessons of socialist states from the XX century.

But Lukács's theoretical reflections on the proletarian state and party cannot be simply reduced to the instrumentalist approach, since the party or the state cannot be understood as a puppeteer, and the people as a puppet. Party and state are not immune to the divisions along class lines (class lines precede identitarian ones), meaning that class struggle happens also within the revolutionary party and the workers' state. For Lukács, there are no capital factions or arcane players pulling the strings in order to achieve an intended social dynamic. What shapes the perception in a capitalist commodity society is inscribed in its fetishistic structure.

REIFICATION AND IMMANENT SOCIAL CRITIQUE

For Lukács, the emergence of a class-conscious proletariat is only possible at the end of a long chain of historical developments and crises, in which conscious intervention becomes progressively more important. He tries to make a consistent theoretical argument concerning the proletariat as a revolutionary subject facing what some Marxists, such as Norbert Trenkle or Moishe Postone, see as a fundamental problem: how a social category (the proletariat) constituted by capitalism itself could be at the same time the main force that supersedes it? This leads to the next question: if the proletariat is utterly imbued by reified "sociality," meaning that reification has become in capitalism the people's second nature that affects the relations of subjects to themselves and their relations to others and objects, how is it then possible to locate a stance from where the meaningful critique of the alienation process would be possible? What would then the immanent critique of reification mean? Lukács's answer lies in the constitutive and emancipatory role of the proletariat as a subject/object of History and its class consciousness that leads toward revolution. The liberation of proletariat from its reified form presupposes for Lukács a conscious rebellion against inhuman commodification. But here lies what Norbert Trenkle calls the hidden essence in Lukács's metaphysical approach to the notion of class. Name-

ly, Lukács says that even though the “worker is reified and becomes a commodity ... it remains true that precisely his humanity and his soul are not changed into commodities.”⁹ Here authentic human praxis encapsulated in the proletariat makes the transhistorical core in Lukács’s argumentation.

These lines from *History and Class Consciousness* incited Postone to make an inversion of Lukács’s subject/object relation (i.e., the proletariat/the emancipation of proletariat) positing capital as an egoless, blind and unconscious subject/object of History. Postone rejects Lukács’s critique of commodity fetishism from the standpoint of the proletariat, i.e., from the standpoint of labor, because this metaposition is deeply inconsistent. Capital as a blind force of society’s self-objectifying subjectivity in its actuality needs to be superseded not by liberating labor from capital (since labor is a reified and fetishized social category just as value and capital), but liberating society from labor. Just because the entire society is, figuratively speaking, under the “siege” of commodity as a ruling form of social mediation, this does not mean that class, as a socio-relational form inherent to capitalism, especially working class, will overcome reified social relations. History clearly shows that the proletariat is not inherently class-conscious, and if there are episodes where it is, it does not have to be revolutionary. Therefore, if the entire human practice is embedded in a totalizing subjectivity of capital, it is clear that the possessors of labor power are, forced by the blind automatism of capital, condemned to wage labor, meaning that the proletariat has no authentic class interest outside of capital relation. Class-based resistance of a proletariat does not provide the necessary basis for overcoming the commodity-form of sociality and the system of abstract labor.

If proletarian revolution proved as a wrong answer, as Postone or Trenkle claims, then what would be the alternative answer? What would be an alternative Subject? They provide no clear answer, as many other contemporary Marxist theoreticians. For example, Postone speaks in a highly abstract and vague manner about “non-totalizing forms of political coordinations of society” and about “plurality of subjectivities

⁹ Georg Lukács, *History and Class Consciousness: Studies in Marxist Dialectics*, trans. by Rodney Livingston (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1971), 172.

and practices" as something alternative to a commodity-producing society. But in fact those propositions are theoretically limited. Paradoxically, Postone and the *Wertkritik* authors fall into a somewhat bad abstraction when they try to think post-capitalist society. It is not enough to think that the plurality of subjectivities must indulge the necessary criterion which resulted from the critical analysis of traditional metaphysical and classist Marxism. Postone's intention is to make

... a major shift in critical perspective from a social critique on the basis of "labor" to a social critique of a peculiar nature of labor in capitalism whereby the former's standpoint becomes the latter's subject of critique.¹⁰

The main problem with this passage is the notion of the *social* in Postone's social critique. What is this *social*? According to Postone, social contradiction opens the possibility for social critique.

The possibility of the latter is intrinsically related to the socially generated possibility of other forms of critical distance and opposition - on the popular level as well. That is, the notion of social contradiction also allows for a theory of the historical constitution of popular oppositional forms that point beyond the existing order.¹¹

But what is the meaning of social contradictions, socially generated forms or popular opposition beyond the class struggle? What makes *populus* to be opposed to fundamental contradiction in capitalism, namely, the one between value as an abstract labor and as a material wealth? Neil Larsen justifiably notices:

That reification and the insurrectional consciousness expressed in the October Revolution were to reveal *themselves* to be yet another "antinomy of bourgeois consciousness" rather than the dialectical poles of capitalism's structuring contradiction is proof of

¹⁰ Moishe Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 78.

¹¹ Postone, *Time, Labor and Social Domination*, 88.

Lukács's *historical* error. But that observation supplies neither Postone nor the rest of us with any necessary, determinate basis from which to specify what would have, or could now, rectify that epic theoretical failure.¹²

It seems that all these new reconceptualizations of the theory of reification lack the anchoring into prospective and concrete practices able to supersede the commodity-form of human relations.

Although there are problems with the party and state organizing in the context of the revolution and its agents, it seems that its total neglecting without the real and feasible alternatives deepens even more the underground path of an old mole.

The XX century liberated us from a privilege of a mere observation but it forced us to face yet another distance: it is no longer an observational distance or a time lag in relation to the failed revolutions, but the distance *vis-a-vis* the *future*, to the possibility of its construction in different contexts.¹³

In this respect, all those decentralized, micro and local forms of resistance continue to be harmless for the system while the mole continues to dig deeper and deeper without any hope that it will break on the surface and change the world.

¹² Neil Larsen, "Lukács sans Proletariat or Can History and Class Consciousness Be Rehistoricized?," *Georg Lukács: The Fundamental Dissonance of Existence*, ed. by Timothy Bewes and Timothy Hall (London: Continuum, 1977), 93-94.

¹³ Hrnjez, "Virtuoznost i revolucija," 107.

| ANA BLAZHEVA |
PRESENTATION

My recent theoretical and research interest is related to the importance and effects of emotions in the realm of the political. For the exploration of the topic of actuality of the revolution in the current predicament, I would speak more generally why and how the affective domain should be taken into consideration by the Left.

It is my observation that the affective domain is left out from the left discourse, which is focused on its ideological concepts and differentiation among their positions. The affective turn in terms of the political was made by continental philosophers and feminism.

I claim that in order to identify revolutionary and transformative practices we should look more closely to the affective and reproductive domains and we should do it through the politics of care.

Why the affective domain? Emotions are one of the fundamental aspects of our lived experience and we cannot speak about politics outside the lived experience. Emotions and affective processes are the basis for our actions. The etymology of the word emotion - "to move" - also brings this meaning. The phenomenological perspective of emotions brings also the intentionality of emotions and their influence in creating the relational field. Practically, the emotions are processes that participate in the creation of the field dynamics. This, translated into more sociological terms, would be the dynamics of the social field or, in political terms, the dynamics of power relations.

Another phenomenological concept which is relevant for introducing emotions as an aspect of the political reality would be Merleau-Ponty's concept of intercorporeality. Emotions are embodied phenomena and intercorporeality explains the inseparable connection of our selves and bodies with others and their bodies in the shared relational field. Intercorporeality therefore is the concept that enables us to grasp how emotions, together with other relational aspects of ourselves, participate in the co-creation of our reality through the lived experiences, and why they should be important in the discussion of transformative political practices and social change.

An additional aspect of emotions relevant for thinking in the realm of the political are their universality in terms of human experience. One of the questions and challenges for the Left would be the articulation of what is universal experience, using its ideas and concepts of the Left.

How we reflect, understand and value our lived experience can lead us to different actions that shape the reality, for example, through destruction and violence or solidarity and care. An ideological position would make the difference and the ideological position is closely related to the process of reflective consciousness and how we give meaning to the lived experience.

We have found ways to use reflective consciousness for approaching the unconscious experiences and translate their meaning. Finding and understanding the meaning of the unconscious experience and using different support systems transforms it and helps to recover the trauma. The knowledge we have of change on the personal, emotional level could be relevant and used in the political reflection of change. We should not use this knowledge only for reparation but creation as well.

Badiou also pointed out that change is possible only in the field of relations. Transformation could not happen outside the relational field. This field is a field of change. In phenomenology and Gestalt psychology this is the field where intercorporeal relations are carriers of the reality through lived experience and reflective consciousness. Therefore, when I think of the political I think of experiences and practices more than concepts themselves. Experiences and their integrated affectivity are/can be the terrain of reflection while practices are/could be the terrain of different relations and exchange. This brings me to the idea I propose: that we should experiment with various social and economic practices, as main fields that organize our reality and experiences. These practices should not be subjugated to the existing power relations and the state apparatus, but preferably outside the field they create.

Why the reproductive sphere? Silvia Federici's claim is that capitalism was made possible because of the exploitation of women in the reproductive domain - the reproduction itself,

but also the care needed for its nurturing. If this domain is crucial for sustaining capitalism, I would suggest that it could also be one into which we can invest for transformative political practices. Moreover, if we are searching for sustainable systems, the domain of reproduction is for me the foundation that, in contrast to technology, can offer not just organization and information networks, but affective networks which are necessary as support systems for both the individual and the collectives.

Federici gives examples from Latin America where women lead new communities organized around reproductive labor (nutrition supply, hygiene, health, etc.). These communities not only represent a necessity for survival in conditions of military coups, dictatorships or facing natural disasters, but may also inspire a new opportunity for designing a different social fabric, one based on solidarity, closeness and support. In such communities, knowledge is exchanged and confidence is built. Namely, it comprises the affective potential of these communities that creates a sense of security and support rather than alienation, and reduces fear and anxiety.

Further, I find relevant Murray Bookchin's project of communalism through which he combines his knowledge on libertarian municipalism, social economy and dialectical naturalism. His idea of communalism is built around the system of governing small local communities loosely tied into a federation. Building strong local communities for Bookchin means strong and supportive social networks and democratic decision-making.

These formats seem to be the reflection of the experiences we have so far for managing social reality based on care and solidarity.

|ARTAN SADIKU|
PRESENTATION

I did not prepare a presentation. I think it is a problem of the way of constructing an approach to developing a problematic, which is also, you could say, a kind of Platonic approach of the *chôra*, an unorganized material, and that you try then to organize. So we have a lot of contents. In these two days we talked about different concepts, and then what do we do when we are left to face these mega concepts, approaches, experiences throughout the discussion. How do we reorganize this material, which actually remains out there, throughout this discussion, remains as an unorganized material. We did not have a task to put forward a strategy, to put forward a programme, but we had the task to throw out things and then to put forward challenges. So now we are faced with all these challenges and topics from now, that we have somehow to organize as a *chôra* - it is out there. We have to organize them. I think that maybe my task will be to kind of recapture all these things we talked about.

Actually I think we have a niche that is going in the discussion, it is this dichotomy between the micro and macro levels of revolution. We talked about taking over the state, the power, the party form, and being indifferent to the state - Badiou in a sense, remaining in distance to the system and providing for different practices which might potentially trigger an event. So I see this sort of dichotomy that keeps on running and this is not our problem, this is a problem that historically follows not only the level here, but of humanity as well.

A lot of thinkers and philosophers have tried to think about them. I think one of them who tried to provide a hint, but then tried to make a positive content out of this, was Nietzsche, who tried to think beyond good and evil, beyond the binary model of thinking good and bad, left and right, or micro and macro. And then Deleuze and Guattari tried to systemize this in the concept of the assemblage and thinking we might make micro revolutions to have gone through some sort of lived experiences which will transform us subjectively and then the complete sum of these micro revolutions which might happen individually, collectively, in a small collective, will define the system at large, but then the system of this large, molar level will come to also define the micro instances which initially provide for this. So it seems like

it imposes itself as a process of immediate correlation. We cannot say that the micro instances, the individual subjective affective experiences will definitely define the macro level, will definitely change the party, the state, or the state will change this, but they are in a constant immediate correlation - this defined the state or the system or the party and comes to define or redefine the individual in the new meanings that have been brought. And this has been sort of in the last School for Politics and Critique 2016 we had in Ohrid, we talked about the visions that revolutionary partisans had before the establishing of the socialist federation, that their visions were way beyond what the federation as a system codified as a social system, as a mode of state. And this usually is being used as a criticism against the Yugoslav federation, that the visions of the partisans were way more progressive or more socialist or more looking towards the future, but the system left behind these visions that existed during the fight, during 1945, especially, and throughout, the reproduction of literature and art this has been visible, you could read this. And the system then came to codify, to identify the whole process with the results that it itself brought about.

But actually I am fine when we criticize the results of the system, the result of the process, that we had different visions of the partisans than the system that was, that this process brought about, and left them behind. And actually I think this is a good strategy, we have to think of it in non-finite terms. This was the maximum of a step, that collectively they were able to take, but individually we may have had some sort of different visions, but this actually taken into consideration with what was present before, this was a step towards a certain horizon. And therefore, this configuration - we should not look at it in finite terms. And from there if we take a non-finitudinal approach towards a certain result of the revolutionary process, then we can explore the different varieties of experiences, processes and strategies. And here I think we have to bring into one union the different concepts of affective experiences, of lived experiences, of political strategies, of parties. That we do not have to look in higher histories, that it is first and foremost the Leninist strategy we should start forward and reproduce in our current predicament and then it is another level, the level of collectives, smaller communities, and then there

is a third, lower level of affective experiences, of lived experiences and affective becomings. I think this whole register of different categories we should put in one union and see what we can build from these and how can these categories work together. Because I completely agree with all of you from today and yesterday that we cannot split the party devotion from the personal experience, we cannot split the party strategies and tactics from the neoliberal codification of the territory in which the party functions. But this codification of the territory in which the party functions also codifies the territory in which the individual functions, in which we experience our everyday lives. And then we, as, in this case, members of parties, of organizations, or action groups, we still sometimes get into the traps of reproducing this domain which capitalism or neoliberalism imposes on us.

There was this interesting French theoretician - me and Katerina Kolozova once wrote an article together on the concept of the right to the city - who writes about the separation of the city and how we experience the city, that is, Lefebvre. Kolozova was asked to write how is she experiencing the city as a Macedonian, and me as an Albanian, and we were shocked - that we can write how we can experience the city together in different domains of the transformation. The article was called "The Struggles of Skopje,"¹ and actually we took the concept from Henri Lefebvre, the concept of the right to the city, and this was an interesting case because he was ideologically thinking about the revolution, he started to think of the revolution through the Communist Party of France, and he was a member of the party, and if you look in his biography it is an interesting shift. He starts as a member of the CPF and writes about the party, he writes about the necessity of the party, of the necessity of this high-level intervention when you take over the state, and then we all know what happened with the post-1960s intellectuals, so he was one of them as well. After the 1968 revolution in France, all the intellectuals, Althusser, Lefebvre and others, they were depressed, and all this social upheaval did not bring about the communist party taking over the power, it resulted basically in intellectual depression and frustration. So then Lefebvre went from the concept of the party to landscape intervention to right to the city and considered the city

¹ See Artan Sadiku and Katerina Kolozova, "The Struggles of Skopje," *New Eastern Europe*, No. 2 (2013), 37-44.

as the domain - and you see still today that David Harvey considers the city as the domain of workers' struggles - as a domain of urban rebellion. So he shifted to the city, and considered cities as some kind of organic structures which can of themselves reorganize if there are enough transformative practices which can be organized in the life in the city in different manner. And then he got disappointed also from this terrain of the city and went to write his last book, *Critique of Everyday Life*. And he said OK, now, the revolution is not at the party level, the revolution is not at the city level, the revolution is at the level of everyday life. I think this line of disappointments, many of us have lived through this. Me personally, I have had dreams that a left party in Macedonia will take charge and probably bring some sort of change or shift in paradigms. It was like OK, let us do it with Solidarnost and smaller groups, let us change the practices and provide a space which is emptied of the neoliberal tendencies and practices of formations. And then after this, OK, let us do something individual, let us transform the personal experience in the space, and then try to find some sort of principles out of this experience and try to coagulate it with other experiences. And I think that another reference, which is interesting for this division, which, I think, again, is interesting, collapses the micro and the macro level. It is interesting because I think that we usually, as Left, get into endless discussions and into accusations: you are Stalinists, we are anarchists, these are the most extreme positions. If you try to advocate for personal experiences and bodies on the streets, then it seems like you are not so serious because you do not challenge the formal stage of politics, or if you only stick to the formal stage of politics, and you stick to disciplining, which is contrary to the affective level - because there you have to adhere to this sort of voluntarist political strategy - then this position from those on the other side gets you accused as being a Stalinist.

So in this two, in this dichotomy of how we should pursue the revolutionary path - should it be personal, small collective, or party, national or international - it remains all the time as a dichotomy, which I think at one point we have to philosophically and theoretically challenge and see what happens when we collapse these two possibilities or these two paths, which have always been there. Sometimes we have a

huge enthusiasm for the party, and sometimes I am a Leninist, and sometimes I am an autonomist. So I find myself in what I was talking about, in an affective challenging of myself, sometimes I think of my actions in the future past, as I am trying to pursue them in a more Leninist way: that we have to do things by discipline and diminish all the affective senses. And then on the other hand I think we should explode with our affective and libidinal possibilities, which will then kind of reconfigure the whole system in a new way.

And this is very important. We know basically what is to be done. This is not the question. We know what we have to do - pursue the revolutionary path, we have to speed up and accelerate all these actions at different levels, on the level of the party, of smaller organizations, communities, individual actions. But the problem is: today, where do we find the energy for this? And I think what Ana Blazeva hinted at a little bit is, I think, that we have to find the energy in the very basic biological substances that we are built of, but, again, this is where I will end, trying to make a link of these micro and macro levels. Of course, we all individually care about this basic predicament of the collective, because all of us have this substance, and that makes it the basic predicament of the collective. Because we all have the same substance, but we need a political organization of all of these libidinal energies in order to provide a space which assemblages in a revolutionary, not organization, but a drive, in a historic sense.

|DISCUSSION|
HOW IT SHOULD BE DONE?
(MAY 5, 2017)

Opening words from Anastas Vangelis: I thought my job at this panel was to summarize the discussion and add comments, but since the previous speaker did it, I guess my task now is to do what I always do - that is, to bring China into the picture.

Let us say you are an alien and come to this blue planet called Earth. And first you realize people do not live on the blue areas, but the brown and green territory. You ask yourself: So where do I go? Which is the biggest country? In an Italian movie the aliens arrive and they go straight to China. You go there and you see hammer and sickle and a red star everywhere, you see its constitution and it says it follows the principles of Marxism-Leninism, Mao Zedong Thought, Deng Xiaoping Theory, you read that the president has a PhD in Marxism, and so on. And let me make a provocative hypothesis - it may only be a liberal conspiracy from the 1990s to make people believe China is not really communist, because they (liberals) are trying to justify how to keep doing business with China all the time. But we should think beyond that, just like the aliens from the story.

What I was trying actually to say was, since Ivan Radenković brought up John Holloway - who was one of the first authors who brought me to leftist thinking, Zapatistas and so on - that there is something in his thought that I also, paradoxically, see in China, which is a different civilizational legacy, and a non-Western way of thinking. One of the core pillars in Chinese Marxism is, for instance, the Chinese concept of contradiction, similar to the concept of contradiction in *indigenismo* and the anti-colonial approaches, where the concept could be "both/and" rather than the Western approach which is "either/or." Not "EITHER socialist OR capitalist," but "BOTH socialist AND capitalist at the same time." This is how social autonomous spaces could work. The society can be corrupted, but at the same time we could also have parts of it which are not that corrupt. I do agree that Holloway has this hippie aura, but not completely. Ideally, the title of his book should be *Change the World Without Taking Power Right Away*. At some point you should take it, but the change starts without taking power. That is what I see when I think about the Chinese Revolution, but also about China as a global actor and changing the world.

Another aspect of this thinking - Ivan Radenković mentioned Kant as well. What I see as a very core difference between inductive and deductive thinking and strategies of the world. We think through these neoliberal techniques, we have internalized a blueprint of strict rules and micromanagement, every comma matters, every bullet point matters, and then you end up trying to fit the reality to the plan (rather than the other way around). Whereas outside Western civilization you have inductive thinking, "seeking truth from facts" (not abstractions), with flexible rules, which is more empirical, and that is also the slogan of the Zapatistas and Holloway: "Caminando, preguntamos," which means "Walking, we ask." You of course have some destination in mind but you focus on the road rather than the end destination. And that is what drives you.

Ivan Radenković: He talks about the process.

Anastas Vangeli: Yes, exactly. I would also bring another thinking and notion here - Ernst Bloch and his notion of non-simultaneity and non-synchronicity. Some parts of the world and society can change before others, or some can change, and some not. When you zoom out you see a big general picture, but when you zoom in the different elements have realities that are multiple, they are plural, and have different trajectories and sometimes they do not even correspond to each other despite the physical proximity. Which helps understand why things can be "both/and" and not just "either/or." And this should not be considered bad, as it is inevitable.

Also, Florin Poenaru said something I very much agree with - we are not intimidating. Well, I do not agree that the bad guys are not afraid of the Left, they are very much afraid of what the Left has to potentially offer. But they are not afraid of the leftists at the moment. The Left has become too nice and has given up much of its potent dangerous weapons, and has made a lot of concessions and surrendered a number of topics to the liberals and the nationalists and the far Right. Of course, that can be traced back to the early 1990s in the wake of the lie of the collapse of communism, going back to China. What really happened back then, did communism really collapse? (That is another topic we can discuss.) Either way, in the wake of this "communism is over" narrative (which it is not, again, that was the first step, it was a

lie), the Left gave up, started building the Third way, accommodated to neoliberalism. Today we do not use sharp language, we make a lot of concessions, we try to be the nice guys, reformists, and so on. If you see who leads the discussion on core principles of what used to be the Left - let us say class or sovereignty - you have that in Le Pen and even Trump. If you see who talks about justice, government, education - it is liberals. Many of these themes are given up by us. And we retorted to rethinking the core issues, giving space to the extreme center and the militant liberalism. We have even given up - and this is very visible in Skopje and Macedonia - we have given up the idea or the sexiness of revolution, the term itself. We had a "revolution" that organized a press conference, that sent emails (literally the sender of announcements was signed as "the Colorful Revolution"). This is why I said to the organizer: Why did you not put a seat for the revolution to come and even send the revolution an email?

The point is, we gave up. We do not talk about revolution because we consider it a thing of the past - liberals talk about revolution now.

Branimir Jovanović: I would like to comment on something Florin Peonaru said - that neoliberalism is dead. Actually, I strongly disagree with that and I think it is exactly the opposite. I think neoliberalism is alive and stronger than ever. Before we talk about it it necessary to define neoliberalism, we should know what we are talking about. And the way I understand neoliberalism, which I think is the most widespread understanding, is through/as economic policies which favor the rich and the capitalists, and these policies are about privatization and scaling down the government and the state, or lowering labor rights, deregulating the market, lower taxes for the rich, etc. These policies started at the end of the 1970s and had their culmination in the 2000s and the 2008 crisis when the policies of neoliberalism entered into crisis, I agree with you on that. But then I think it is wrong to say that neoliberalism died because the policies we have now are exactly the same policies or are maybe even stronger. Just think about Trump. What is Trump? Trump is the embodiment of neoliberalism. He wants to destroy Obamacare, lowering the expenditure on healthcare, he calls for deregulation of financial services, calls for lower taxes for

the rich, he is exactly the embodiment of neoliberal policies. Then Theresa May goes for exactly the same austerity in Europe, then you have in Greece Syriza, it is dead at the end. Basically, wherever you turn, it is the same neoliberal policies, just on a different scale. And I think it is very important to understand that neoliberalism is alive and stronger than ever because if we agree on that we have to admit we failed. If someone failed, it is the Left. I would not say the Left is dead but that it is dying. Why am I saying this? Just think about where was the world two years ago and now. Two years ago, you had Syriza in Greece, Podemos rising in Spain, Corbyn in Britain, Sanders in USA. Then what we had was Syriza conceding, Corbyn lost, Bernie lost, etc. What I am saying is that the leftists are dying slowly and we need to understand why is this happening. The main reason why this is happening is because of the main mistake Syriza made, the referendum decision: the No vote and the decision for the austerity programme. That was the main mistake. Why is this so important? Because people everywhere in the world started believing in this neoliberal dogma that there is no alternative. Syriza came to power, tried to change the system, it did not succeed, so there is no alternative. We need to understand these failures. Also we need to understand what made Syriza so strong, how it came to power? Because it entered the mainstream, it was not a marginal, too radical party unattractive to everybody, it became a sexy party, everybody wanted and liked Syriza. That is a role for the Left in the future. We have to learn from the mistakes but that does not mean we should throw everything from the past, we should take the positive things from the past and throw away the bad things.

Katerina Kolozova: In response to Florin Poenaru. I agree with your diagnosis on the situation globally. And the fact that we find ourselves now facing false choices - the extreme populist Right and extreme neoliberalism trying to survive. Ideologically and economically, the offer is the same, we have just two different packages of the same. What is your proposition? How should we address this situation? Should we make a choice between these two false choices? What would you recommend the choice to be? Do you consider these retro-neoliberal choices, like Macron, would be more reformist? Because I assume you were advocating for some sort of return to the liberal left reformism and solution to the situation.

Or would you suggest some sort of acceleration of the negative? Or complete abstinence from choice?

Artan Sadiku: I would like to relate my comments to Branimir Jovanović's comment on Syriza through Ana Blazheva's presentation, which fascinated me. I think that when we are at the domain of these social movements, which Syriza was part of for many years before it came to power, there was the domain of these affections - that Syriza was part of the largest anti-fascist festival in the world which takes part in Thessaloniki, until three years ago, now, it is not because it was expelled. Now what is the shift? I think this is the example, with Syriza. Because they had to take a step forward and go inside the system. We have to see that Syriza dies as heroes, not as traitors. Why? Because they entered a stage which was alienated from the other side. Not only on the European level but the global one, the whole pressure was on the next Greek government, not to attempt to erase debt. This was the pressure - which will be the next government with which we will negotiate the whole bail? So Syriza had to fight the social context which brought the conditions for Syriza to arise, but then this, in the globalized context, when they came to power they faced another context which was extremely alien to them. So, of course, they were defeated at this second level, in a context where the enemies were waiting for them. And, of course, not only Greece, whichever country would elect such a government would face the same experience. But what Syriza did is that at one point in time it materialized all the wishes and dreams of the Greek people. What happened with the referendum is a clear example that you cannot have what we know from history - socialism in one state. Because of what the Greeks have to do, as a government it would have to bail out and bankrupt the country and then it will face all the attacks from the World Bank and ECB. So I do not think we should look at Syriza as a bad experience, but as a good one of how the process of the Left coming to power looks like, and then learn what are the challenges of a contradiction of a left-wing government in these times. And then from there try to draw new strategies. They claim this all the time - we could not do anything. That is why they supported Podemos, Die Linke, because they tried to create a Europe-wide anti-austerity coalition. This was a lower bar. Because anti-austerity is against capitalist Keynesian politics, it is not anti-capitalist communist politics. We are

all extremely disappointed and angry with Syriza, but now we have time to analyze what happened and why the situation is as it is in Greece.

Florin Poenaru: I agree with the diagnosis on Syriza. It was a complex situation to blame that. I would say a few things in reply to Katerina Kolozova. First, you mentioned that years ago the Left was stronger than today. My interpretation is this: I think the Left completely died in 2008/9 - not being able to capitalize on the popular discontent following the crisis. So that was the moment when you could see, except for particular movements - Syriza, Podemos and few others from different countries that had some sort of anti-austerity message and managed to get to or close to power based on anti-austerity measures, and that is important, this was the outcome of the crisis, the solution to the crisis. I think the fact that the Left, the global left, whatever you want to call it, was not able to capitalize on the popular discontent following the crisis meant - it meant that it is completely demised, the way we knew it. What I think died is not the Left itself, it was not the idea, I think what died then was precisely the type of Left inaugurated by the 1968 movements. So neoliberalism collapsed then [after the 2008 crisis]. What also collapsed is this post-1968 Left. This is finished. This is absolutely finished. Some of it happened before that, but this was the precise moment when it died. You could see this in the current searches of the Left - what people are trying to talk about, parties again, I mean if you look at the references today: Luxemburg, Lenin, it is a different quest than the Left of post-1968. I think it is a process of re-articulation, I think it will take a lot of fight, but that particular Left is dead and the crisis killed it. I will not go into this debate about neoliberalism - we talk about this forever, what are its key features. It is a very contradictory phenomenon - it had salient features, but at the same time it had, ideologically, rhetorically, neoliberalism is against the state, weakening the state, but if you look in practice it was only weakening the left hand of the state, as Reagan called. Reagan was practicing military Keynesianism, in terms of foreign policy, it was very contradictory. So I would insist that it died and I would say why. Not by looking at these particular features, but if you look historically how neoliberalism appeared. It appeared as a solution, as an attempt to overcome a crisis, a capitalist crisis of the

1960s and 1970s following the oil crisis and the crisis of profitability. And we have the same situation today, when we live in a prolonged crisis of profitability again. So neoliberalism was a response, it tackled, or rolled the ball further, but now it is finished as a response to that crisis. Now you have another crisis of profitability looking for another answer and if that will happen or not remains to be seen. But I think as a general response of the capitalist class itself neoliberalism is finished. And you could see this in Trump and in others - you have neoliberalism, but at the same time they talk about building infrastructure. Theresa May talked about the reindustrialization of England, so you have different ideas coming up in order to articulate a vision that will be able to go over this crisis of profitability again. That is why I am saying from this perspective that neoliberalism is dead - because it was a solution to a crisis that is not in front of us anymore. It is a different situation.

OK, there was also Kolozova's question about the false choices. There is no choice, obviously, between two false choices there is no choice to be made, I think you need to focus somewhere else and rethink the Left. What is very important today is to have this articulation of a diagnosis of what is happening, to see these phenomena as what they are and not fall into this trap of moral panic - "Oh my God, the extreme Right is coming, the fascists are here," it is really much more complicated. I am not denying the reality of crisis. I think the first step to do something as leftists is to reclaim, as you very well mentioned, at least this idea of class politics. I think it is so fascinating how the idea of class and the mobilization of class is now in the hands of the right. Trump, Le Pen, they all have a class discourse, and they mobilize class elements, and they talk about class struggle, and they talk about class politics on the right. It is not a new, unseen phenomenon, but it is completely new in the sense that the Left abandoned it completely, the Left does not talk in an orchestrated and organized way about class politics, and actually mobilize these class fractures for gaining political power. I think this language of class will be important.

I would like to make a comment to the presentation of Ivan Radenković, and I have a question. The way I understood it, and that is how the link I see comes in, is through what I see

- as I said in the presentation, the class war is waged from above. And for Lukács, precisely, the existence of classes within capitalism represented the guarantee that the revolution will always be actual. So the actuality of revolution is the actuality of class struggle. But the context now is that this class struggle is being orchestrated from above and from the Right, so the question would be: it makes sense that the activity of revolution is dead because we have lived this revolution, but how to reinterpret it from this perspective of Lenin and Lukács again?

Ivan Radenković: It is an interesting question, especially about the notion of the proletariat as a historical subject of the revolutionary change as it could be found in Lukács. I think a lot of Marxist theoreticians contested the ontological premises of this notion in Lukács, especially on proletariat and class consciousness, as some kind of potential for radical class-based political change. Of course, Lukács's notion of proletariat and class refers to a different historical sequence in comparison to the current historical sequence. Today we have a problem of how to interpret the notion of class. The discursive dissipation of a notion of class suffers from methodological flaws mixing phenomenological, structural, Weberian determinations. On a conceptual level it is, today, a much bigger problem than the approach I have mentioned before - this Kantian attitude of revolution in a mode of contemplation. We have made another distance now, a distance that reflects the actual state of affairs. We cannot see the future, in fact, we have a distance *vis-à-vis* the future. It is not anymore a distance from the revolution and what revolutions had brought about in XX century, but a distance from a future in its political form and what has to be-come. It is a distance *vis-à-vis* what could be a prospective meaning of social change. There is a certain interpretative delirium about what non-revolutionary and revolutionary situation could mean today. You said, today is the time, we are in a revolutionary situation, the conditions are fulfilled, crisis is here and it is constant, etc., but there is the obvious problem with the new energy, mobilization etc. There is a constitutive problem of creating intersubjective space in order to overcome the fetishistic logic of the capital as an automatic subject. It is very hard to reconceptualize Lenin's politics simply because Lenin's strategic and tactical approach could not be applied in a globalized

post-Fordist time. And again, these questions are haunting contemporary thought on capitalism. At the beginning of the book *How to Change the World Without Taking Power*, John Holloway addresses the question how would new social relations beyond capitalist ones look like by one simple answer: "I do not know." And at the end of the book he says also: "OK, is it clearer now how we change society? No, I believe this story has a bad happy ending." Personally, I think that the negative dialectical approach in thinking revolution in Holloway's case might be something that is interesting at the micropolitical level, but it certainly neglects the power of the national state by avoiding class struggle in the analysis of the capitalist state, especially the power of the competing national state - this neoliberal national state and what is left of it right now.

Anastas Vangeli: Let me pick up some things mentioned. First Trump and giving up left-wing topics - we have to give credit not just to Trump but to this whole new type of Right for actually doing the job of producing a really solid diagnosis of what is wrong in society, which is also comprehensible and has the mobilization potential. And if you see not just the public act, but if you go deeper in the influences of these last three years also in Europe - for me the highlight is the Hungarian case of Viktor Orbán - if you see their analytical approach, it is actually really sound, and the way they reach conclusions is very much to the point. Though their prescription is wrong and their practice is even worse. But again, I think, and we repeated it many times, this is what we have to do. We are also trapped in being way too nice.

And Syriza was also too nice. On what Artan Sadiku mentioned: I say they did not read Poulantzas, they did not read the most important Greek Marxist. He is a core reading because he could not bear the difficulties and the impossibility of topics close to what we talk about, and the desired outcomes - so he ended his life. Basically, he argued, once you enter the state institutions, you are done. I recently heard this very good comment - the outside world can end, but the bureaucratic structures will continue to exist with their own mentality and problems and what they deal with. What we talk about here - once you enter bureaucracy, that is the only thing that matters. The outside world is completely irrelevant to those sitting in the institutions. We

talked about experts. Once you come in the highest position, you can be the smartest guy or whatever, you have a whole structure below you which cannot be replaced or even dealt with. You cannot be totalitarian and say "OK, this has to be absolutely done" because of rules and procedures. Sometimes the first-hand accounts come from secretaries and clerks we despise and do not want to even think about that can dictate policy. On the other hand, what you also see in the case of Syriza is another failure of the Left - giving up the notion of the transnational interconnectedness of power and actually the limits of politics within the realm of the nation state. Because Syriza was faced with a tremendous coercion by an international non-entity, as Varoufakis referred to the Council of Ministers. You cannot sue them because they do not formally exist, but they have absolute power.

And this is another instance where the Left has failed. With the end of the Soviet Union, let us not forget, the emblem of the Soviet Union was the globe. The original goal of the Soviet Union was to become a global state that would eventually abolish itself at the end. But after that, regardless of how failed or bad the idea was or it was bastardized with Stalin, etc., after that there is no global vision on the Left. We talk global capital, globalization, global paradoxes, but there is no awareness - yes, we have "Think globally, act locally," but in the realm of power, at some point engage in global politics. And that was actually I think the lesson from Greece: you win power but at the end of the day global capital knocks on the door.

Ivan Radenković: Yes, the same situation is with the trade unions and their international way of "doing things." When they think globally they usually operate nationally, defending mainly national interests. They are unaware of what wage differentials means on an international level and how they directly affect this. Nevertheless, it is not just a critique based on the unawareness of trade unions, since it is not the question of consciousness, but the question of globalization and segmentation of production. The biggest trade unions, such as North American Steelworkers and United, are main advocates of neo-protectionist politics. They usually omit the fact that raising the worker's wages on the national level directly produces lower wages in the Global South, while at the same time imported consumers goods in the Western market

are not the result of their own productivity. And I think it is a great problem, especially in a globalized world, to speak at the level of trade unions about international solidarity, because this means almost nothing, this is an empty signifier. As the ominous case in Bangladesh in 2013 already showed: under the pressure of trade unions, North American Steel Workers and European United, Barack Obama introduced the import tariffs to Bangladesh. The US government really revoked Bangladesh's tariff-free access to the US market. Unions were defending their capitalist classes saving their imperialist governments from the "menace" of "social dumping" and "unfair competition" which comes from Bangladesh, all in the name of "workers' rights" and "labor standards." Of course, "labor standards" and "workers' rights" appear here as a smokescreen for the implementation of neo-protectionist politics. The US government received \$809.5 million in customs duties on \$4.9 billion of garment exports from Bangladesh. The average wage of the 4 million workers in Bangladesh's ready-made garment industry, before the wages were increased in November 2013, was \$780 per year, for a total wage bill of \$3.1 billion. The US imports makes 22% of Bangladesh's apparel exports, so it can be estimated that 22% of \$3.1 billion, or \$690 million, was paid in wages to the workers who produced for the US. One can do the math and see that this punitive protectionist policy is carried out at the behest of union officials who claim to be concerned about the plight of Bangladeshi workers!

Anastas Vangeli: Just to add a point. This is where actually left-wing policies in one country can have a negative spillover effect elsewhere. For instance, you have leftist government in country A which introduces really high standards of labor, protections and what not, and then you have companies moving somewhere in Asia, building sweatshops to restore profit.

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