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Richard Sandbrook

**The Democratic Left in
the Global South**

Dieter Deiseroth

**Whistleblowing and Civil Disobedience
in a Democratic, Constitutional State**

Bernd Rother

On the Demise of the Socialist International

Gero Maass

Scandinavia goes its own way

INTERNATIONAL QUARTERLY EDITION

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Editorial

The focus and innovative powers of social democracy have shifted from the world of Western industrial democracies into the Global South. That, at any rate, is the conclusion drawn by our Canadian author, Richard Sandbrook, on the basis of a comparative study. There are several reasons why social democracy has gone on the defensive in the North. In Europe, many of its adherents have been disappointed by the gap between promise and performance. Social Democratic parties have often made numerous commitments prior to elections, but once they are in power they usually revert to a center-right austerity program, a move that earns them a serious credibility problem. In the United States President Obama was elected on a pledge to bring about greater social equality. Yet, despite his convincing electoral victory, he has not even been able to persuade his own party consistently to deliver on that pledge. Nor should we forget the Occupy movement, which quickly assumed a well-nigh global scale in the wake of the British-American financial crisis of 2008 and offered new hope to those who were disappointed by organized social democracy. However, the movement has never been able to formulate a coherent ideology and persuasive program capable of transforming its initial élan into durable projects sustained by unflagging energy. Everywhere in the world social democracy has the same ends: equal liberty supported by social civic rights. But only a few countries in the Global South, especially in Latin America, have managed recently to take significant steps in that direction, albeit to differing degrees and along diverse paths. Will the moral and intellectual leadership of social democracy take up permanent residence in the South, or will its proponents in the North be able to regain the initiative they have so urgently sought? After all, the social democratic moment has not yet passed in the Global North; indeed, conditions there positively cry out for markets to be embedded, social rights to be secured, and state intervention brought to bear where it is needed.



The German Federal Judge, Dieter Deiseroth, has devoted an article to the topic of whistleblowing, a phenomenon that has long played an interesting political and legal role in many different countries, especially in Europe and America. As a leading expert in the field, he has written an informative contribution designed to identify the criteria for genuine whistleblowing in the public interest. Democratic societies today have become so complex and, in many spheres of life, so opaque, that they need more democratic oversight. That is where whistleblowing comes in, provided that it gets the legal treatment that it deserves. You will find these and other inspiring topics discussed in the current issue of the Quarterly.

Thomas Meyer

Thomas Meyer
Editor-in-Chief and Co-Publisher

Dieter Deiseroth

Whistleblowing and Civil Disobedience in a Democratic, Constitutional State

Thoughts on the NSA Spying Scandal

There is no generally accepted or even legally defined notion of »civil disobedience.« It arises from a tradition that can be traced to Henry David Thoreau, Mahatma Gandhi, and Martin Luther King, Jr. In his study, *The Justification of Civil Disobedience* (1969), as well as his classic work, *A Theory of Justice* (1971), the American moral philosopher John Rawls explains it in the following way. Civil disobedience is a morally justified protest expressed in a public, non-violent illegal act inspired by conscience. Normally, the act is intended to bring about a change in the laws or in government policies. Civil disobedience is embodied either in a conscientious violation of precisely those laws or rules that have been judged unjust (direct civil disobedience) or in the violation of laws regarded as intrinsically just, in order to draw attention to the injustice of other laws or rules (indirect civil disobedience). The agents justify their violation of the law by invoking a law (whether derived from divine or rational sources) that is allegedly »higher« than the positive legislation in effect in their own countries. As Rawls and others see it, civil disobedience is ethically *justified* when three criteria have been met. First, the protest must be directed against precisely circumscribed instances of severe injustice. Second, opportunities for legal remedies with some prospect of success must have been exhausted. Third, the activities of disobedience may not reach the point at which they jeopardize the operation of the state's constitutional order. Jürgen Habermas and many others have supported these criteria and stressed that civil disobedience can only be a public act with an exclusively symbolic character that

relies on non-violent means alone. It is usually announced in advance; it is restricted to the deliberate violation of specific legal norms. That is, the acts of disobedience must not call into question the legal order as a whole. Finally, it requires a willingness to accept the legal consequences of the violation of legal norms.

As a rule, whistleblowers pursue ethical/moral objectives supposed to advance the public interest. But they do not intend to commit illegal acts of their own. Rather, as insiders, they take action in good faith against grievous wrongs and mistakes in their milieu in order to expose and eliminate them. In their view, the point is to »go outside« and to »reveal wrongdoing.« There is a distinction to be made between internal (within the office or firm) and external whistleblowing. The latter may involve notifying the proper authorities, but can also mean passing on information to labor unions, members of parliament, journalists, or the general public. Thus, what the whistleblowers want to accomplish is to uncover serious violations of the law, dangers or extreme risks that might have adverse or harmful consequences for life and health or that might jeopardize other fundamental rights. But whistleblowing may be motivated by other concerns, including dangers and risks to democratic rights and institutions, or rights to privacy. Furthermore, the agents may wish to bring about more just social and economic arrangements, more sustainable ways of protecting and developing ecosystems, or peaceful coexistence among human beings and nations. The criticisms that whistleblowers level against the misdeeds they have exposed are of course not

always based on existing legal norms. Rather, those norms may themselves become a target for critique based on the whistleblowers' own political or ethical/moral standards. The act of »going outside« or »going public« may place them in conflict with the duty to maintain secrecy. This is the case if and to the degree that whistleblowing is not sheltered by the constitutional right to free expression, the right to petition the government for redress of grievances, or other similar norms offering special protection. When a whistleblower decides to »raise the alarm« anyway, his or her actions may become acts of civil disobedience.

There are laws to protect whistleblowers in numerous countries, some in effect for quite a long time. In the United States, legislation on the federal level as well as in many states has taken some initial steps toward offering better protection for whistleblowers against reprisals in state agencies and private firms. There have been some positive approaches in the United Kingdom, too, since the end of the 1990s. Still, we should be cautious when comparing one legal text to another. Moreover, in the United States there has been quite a bit of backsliding in whistleblower protection since the 9/11 attacks. There are shortcomings especially in the military and secret service areas, as the Snowden case has revealed in striking fashion.

Snowden did not see any real possibility or point in availing himself of the U.S. Intelligence Community Whistleblower Protection Act and demanding that cer-

American intelligence agencies operate in a lawless zone created by the law itself

tain U.S. agencies such as the NSA act within the limits of the law in carrying out the transnational, global spying activities that he had uncovered. After all,

when these U.S. agencies launch intelligence-gathering attacks upon non-U.S. citizens, they are operating in twilight zones

that are essentially outside the law, which they are permitted to do on account of the Patriot Act and the U.S. Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Amendment (FISA). American intelligence agencies do not recognize any legal limits vis-à-vis non-U.S. citizens when they are operating outside the country. In a situation such as this, there is practically only one option left for the whistleblower: to alert the public and mobilize citizens to protect the basic rights of those involved – a case of rendering emergency assistance, one might say.

Effective protection of whistleblowers requires three things. First, there has to be an effective guarantee that the freedom of expression of any and every employee will be respected. It will not do to follow previous practice and protect constitutionally guaranteed freedom of opinion in »indirect« ways, for example, by relying on judicial interpretation of broad clauses or vague legal concepts. This has usually involved the courts in an effort to balance interests expressed in different interpretations of the legal procedure protecting employees against dismissal. That approach does not permit employees to make firm plans; instead it deters them. Employees' freedom of expression should not play second fiddle to that of their employers.

Second, there must be an explicit protective norm. Anyone who complains to the appropriate authorities or to the public about serious deficiencies in private-sector workplaces or in the public service, violations of the law, or even criminal acts should not be discriminated against or put at any kind of disadvantage, let alone be fired. In cases where any of these things happens, the victims should have effective legal remedies, whether for compensation or civil damages. Among other things, whistleblowers may have to be brought into a witness protection program, be granted residence in a third country, be protected from extradition, given at least a subsistence income, or be assisted in

integrating into society. Those prerogatives could perhaps be guaranteed via reformed international agreements and related conventions designed to insure freedom of communications and data protection, duly supported by laws at the national level embodying consent to and enforcement of such agreements. Civil societies will have to exert enough political pressure to make sure that regulations of this kind are enacted.

Third, employees must be protected effectively when they refuse to participate in or cover up infractions of the law.

Apart from changes in the laws it is also necessary to create an «ethically friendly» infrastructure. Among other things, this would include developing and implementing a code of conduct for business enterprises, institutes, and government offices, including appointing ethics officers and ombudspersons, to whom whistleblowers could turn without fear of reprisals.

As a matter of principle, diplomatic exchanges must be kept strictly confidential, since confidentiality is among the most important «capital assets» of the trade. In general it would be hard to dispense with rules of secrecy even in governmental deliberations within states, let alone in international relations. Nevertheless, govern-

Grave infractions of the law as well as dishonest or scandalous behavior on the part of civil servants do not deserve protection

ments should not be able to cover up misconduct under the pretext of secrecy. For that reason we need to have regulations that protect whistleblowers from per-

secution and reprisals when they pass on information to prosecutors or the public concerning serious wrongdoing in politics, administration, or the economic sphere. Grave infractions of the law as well as dishonest or scandalous behavior on the part of civil servants do not deserve protection from parliamentary deputies, individual

citizens or the general public. In the IT and telecommunications sectors in particular, the point is to uncover human rights violations and serious infringements of the constitution, ordinary laws, or international-legal agreements, in order to put a stop to them. That is the lesson of Edward Snowden's revelations.

If the executive branch had the exclusive right to decide whether to keep secret or make public illegal, dishonest, or scandalous goings-on within its own agencies, it would end up in the position of withholding or handing over evidence (against itself), even though it is a suspect in this case. Such a procedure would presume the honesty and law-abidingness of the representatives of executive authority, despite the fact that those qualities are precisely the ones that the current investigation must call into question.

It will not do to delegate oversight of the intelligence services to the legislature and the courts. The fact that the U.S. Congress and its committees failed in the run-up to the ongoing eavesdropping scandal is among the more important reasons why legislative oversight must be judged inadequate.

Likewise, oversight by the American FISA courts has not turned out to be very effective. Frank James Jr., a prominent Republican Congressman who chairs a key intelligence subcommittee in the House of Representatives, was asked by a *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* interviewer, »Do you think that the intelligence committees in the House and Senate are accomplices of the government in its attempts to stretch the laws?« Instead of saying »no,« the Congressman offered a response that left no room for doubt: »Absolutely. Of course, the intelligence committees were established after the American intelligence services had gone too far in the sixties and seventies, during the Vietnam War and the civil wars in Central America. In a case like this the committees and the FISA courts

were supposed to step on the brake. Instead, they hit the gas pedal.«

In a democratic, constitutional regime, a state or agency secret only warrants protection when it accords with the constitution and existing law. This is the case because, as Adolf Arndt has correctly and repeatedly emphasized, the prerogatives of

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of the powers and
limits granted by its
constitution*

a state are a function of the powers and limits granted by its foundational document. Consequently, it is impermissible to distinguish between the security of the state and the protection of its constitution, since it is the constitution that endows the state with its claim to be worthy of protection in the first place. By the same token there cannot be a valid legal claim to exclude something from the application of the law (e.g., keeping secrets) when it is an injustice in terms of the constitutional order. The citizens, who are sovereign in any democratic regime worthy of the name, deserve to know when their elected government or its officials have violated the principal constitutional duty with which they are entrusted: to uphold the existing legal order without exception. Otherwise, how could the citizens avail themselves of their democratic rights to play an informed and competent role in the shaping of public opinion and the aggregation of interests? How are they supposed to exercise their fundamental democratic right, the franchise, in a responsible manner and be in a position to vote a governing majority out of office if information of this kind is withheld from them, and that withholding is supported by the threat of criminal sanctions? Let us cite Adolf Arndt once more: »The will of the people can only emerge completely and fully when the people are informed about all the facts that may influence it, including those involving defense issues.«

That is also an important lesson to be drawn from the so-called »Ossietzky case.« Carl von Ossietzky, the editor-in-chief of the *Weltbühne*, as well as numerous other persons, were sentenced by the Imperial Court of the Weimar Republic to serve time in jail for having leaked information about the illegal *Schwarze Reichswehr*. What they revealed in this case was the fact that an armored unit and an air force had been secretly created, and that the German army had been cooperating with Soviet authorities. All of this was a gross violation of the Versailles Treaty and the Weimar Constitution. Nevertheless, the Court ruled that Ossietzky and his associates could not appeal to their fundamental right to freedom of expression or any other right as a defense in their case. The Court reasoned that an individual citizen was not justified in publicizing circumstances contrary to the law if he was aware that those circumstances were being kept secret in the national interest. In their efforts to restore legality, citizens were »never permitted to notify foreign governments«; their only option was to appeal to domestic institutions designed for that purpose. The Court concluded that there was a natural-law obligation of loyalty to country and nation that required citizens not to inform the public of what they had discovered.

The Imperial Court's jurisprudence provoked considerable outrage both in Germany and abroad, which eventually led to Carl von Ossietzky receiving the Nobel Peace Prize in 1925.

This debate has had repercussions that have lasted from the end of the National Socialist regime until well into the era of the Federal Republic. The SPD has repeatedly demanded a »Lex Ossietzky« that would rule out prosecutions under the criminal code for disclosure of illegal state secrets. In 1950-1951, Adolf Arndt, the crown prince of German legal scholars in the SPD's parliamentary delegation, ma-

naged to influence the discussions about a »new political criminal code« then being enacted by the Adenauer government in the wake of the »Korean crisis.« In cooperation with liberal circles in the CDU and the FDP he got a new rule inserted into Section 100, Paragraph 3 of the German Legal Code clarifying that deputies in the Bundestag, at least, would now be authorized to publicize breaches of law in the Parliament and before its committees, even when the executive judged them to involve »state secrets.« This was a significant achievement that unfortunately did not last. It was abolished by the emergency legislation of 1968, at the insistence of the United States government, among others. The German Bundestag should correct this mistake forthwith and reinstate the rule. However, that will not be sufficient.

In addition, we need to institute an effective law to protect whistleblowers. In the case of the intelligence services, this

We need an effective whistleblower protection law

could be done by building upon a key decision reached by the Federal Court in 1965 and later confirmed by the Federal Constitutional Court. The case involved a whistleblower by the name of Werner Pättsch, who was employed in counter-espionage unit of the Federal Office for Constitutional Protection, known by its German acronym BfV. After consulting with a lawyer in 1963, Pättsch had decided to reveal serious cases of wrongdoing in that office, including the widespread practice among the Western allies – actively abetted by the BfV – of monitoring mail and telecommunications. As part of his exposé, he described in detail cases of spying on both citizens and non-citizens. Moreover, he stated that there were many former members of the Gestapo, the SS and the SD employed in his agency and especially in his department. According to Pättsch, these politically-compromised employees formed cliques and poisoned the

workplace environment. Also, they were active in the illegal monitoring of the mail and telecommunications and thus engaged in grave violations of basic constitutional rights.

In contrast to the jurisprudence of the Imperial Court, the Federal Court's verdict reached the conclusion that, as a matter of principle, »everyone must have the right to criticize misdeeds in public life even if matters that had been kept secret are brought to light in the process.« On the other hand, as the verdict goes on to state, »There are certain vital necessities with which states are confronted when one considers them in the context of inter-state relations. Hence, it does not appear permissible for every individual, taking full advantage of his constitutional right of censure, to be in a position to criticize every state secret on the grounds that it violates the constitution or existing law.« For these reasons, the »decision about the collision between interests of state and the basic right of the citizen ... must involve a weighing and balancing of the benefits and duties on both sides.« In the process of weighing the tradeoffs between the competing interests, the operative rule should be to begin with the most obvious and innocuous means: namely, Article 17 of the Basic Law, which gives every person the opportunity to file a grievance with the proper authority, in this case the BfV and the Interior Ministry, which supervises it. Furthermore, one can call upon a Bundestag deputy or the entire parliament for help. Only when these appeals have come to naught is a person entitled to go public, since informing the public will also necessarily entail revealing a state secret to »a foreign government.« Here, because the complaint cannot be brought before the public in a timely manner, the right to censure public wrongdoing has been restricted. Still, the Court's rule cannot apply in every case. There is, the Court decided, a »core area of constitutional law, the vio-

lation of which gives anyone the right to alert the public immediately and without any detours, even if doing so will inevitably lead to the disclosure of state or official secrets.« This core area, said the Court, is essentially equivalent to the concept of the »constitutional order.« At any rate, »a transgression against the fundamental values of a democratic constitutional state, implicit in the legal notion of a »constitutional order«, does entitle a person to register immediate, public criticism. Of course, the transgression must be a grave one, but only a case-by-case analysis

will determine whether it is sufficiently serious to warrant a direct public appeal. It is true that the Federal Court did not consider the case before it serious enough to invoke direct public involvement. However, its verdict contains important hints for fashioning protective rules that should be included in any whistleblower protection law, even as it applies to the area of intelligence services, to insure the rule of law. It would be a very welcome development if the newly elected German Bundestag would take up this task with all the requisite gravity and élan.



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»Conformist Rebellion«

A new culture dedicated to protecting national vested interests

After all the votes in the 2009 European elections were counted, numerous far-right parties had managed to win seats in the European Parliament. The most important winners (by percentage of the vote tally) included the Slovakian National Party (5.6 %); the Greek Party known as Populist Orthodox Alarm (7.1 %); the Latvian Party for People and Fatherland (7.5 %); the Greater Rumanian Party (8.7 %); Italy's Lega Nord (10.2 %); the French Front National (6.3 %) as well as its offshoot, the Mouvement pour la France (4.6 %); the Bulgarian Koalizija Ataka (12.0 %); the Party of Order and Justice in Lithuania (12.2 %); the Austrian Freedom Party (12.7 %); the Hungarian Jobbik Party (14.77 %); the Danish People's Party (14.8 %); the Belgian Party Vlaams Belang (10.2 %), Belgium's

Lijst Dedecker (4.8 %), the Dutch Freedom Party (17 %), the British National Party (6.2 %), and the United Kingdom Independent Party (16.5 %).

Some deputies of these parties joined forces to create a bloc called »Europe of Freedom and Democracy,« among them the True Finns, the Danish People's Party, the Lithuanian Party of Order and Justice, the Italian Lega Nord, the Slovakian National Party, the Greek Populist Orthodox Alarm and the United Kingdom Independent Party. At this point the parliamentary bloc includes 34 deputies led by bloc chairpersons Nigel Farage (UKIP) and Francesco Speroni (Lega Nord). Some other far-right deputies chose not to affiliate with a parliamentary faction: namely, those from the Dutch Party for Freedom, the Jobbik

from Hungary, the Austrian Freedom Party, the Greater Rumania Party, and the British National Party. Parties that can be subsumed under the heading »extreme right-wing« are quite diverse. Some, such as the Danish People's Party and the Dutch Party for Freedom, advocate a relatively populist version of rightist ideology, while others embrace more openly far-right (and in some cases even neo-fascist) positions. The British National Party and the Hungarian Jobbik fit the latter description. The agitation carried out by right-wing populist parties is based on a sharp distinction between the people and the economic or political elites. Politicians of the right-populist camp regard themselves as the sole authentic representatives of the »silent majority.« They pillory the shortcomings of the Establishment, fan resentment of foreigners and minorities, and advocate Euro-skeptical and nationalist positions.

The appeals of right-wing extremist parties start from the assumption that social inequality is grounded on differences of race, ethnicity, or culture. Right-wing extremist parties demand ethnic homogeneity within the borders of the nation-state and reject – implicitly or explicitly – the principle of equality codified in human rights declarations. Furthermore, they insist that citizens subordinate their own interests to the higher interests of the state, reject the pluralism of values that is characteristic of liberal democracy, and want to reverse processes of democratization.

Although there are differences of degree in the views of the parties within the extreme-right family, they occupy a great deal of common ground ideologically. Their views range from implicit or explicit nationalism; a nationalistically inspired critique of the processes of globalization and European integration; a plea for economic protectionism; hostility toward both indigenous and non-native minorities, as well as expressions of undisguised racism. Racist attitudes have a variety of targets,

including animosity toward the Sinti and Roma, Muslims, immigrants from Eastern Europe, refugees, and Jews, whether in the form of open or covert anti-Semitism, or anti-Semitism disguised as anti-Zionism. Sexist and homophobic tendencies are also characteristic of these parties, as are advocacy of social-Darwinist ideologies and authoritarian structures, acceptance of violence and militarism and positive references to historical fascism. All of these phenomena can be found in the programs and ideologies of the extreme right in Europe.

The two parties that fared best in the European parliamentary elections of 2009 illustrate clearly the variations on the theme of far-right appeals. These were the Dutch Party of Freedom, which won 17 % of the vote, and Hungary's Jobbik, which took 14.8 %. The former, known by its Dutch acronym PVV, can be assigned to the group of right-wing populist parties. Its program and electoral appeals are directed primarily against what they portray as the danger of the Islamization of the Netherlands. Jobbik fits into the category of right-wing extremist parties, although there are neo-fascist undertones in its ideology. The latter are mainly aimed at the Sinti who live in Hungary. Moreover, the ideology disseminated by Jobbik is pervaded by either covert or blatant anti-Semitic resentments.

The values and norms incorporated in the appeals disseminated by the PVV and Jobbik could scarcely be more different. The PVV is essentially a one-man operation in the style of Pim Fortuyn and presents itself as libertarian, even in respect to the recognition of homosexual lifestyles. By contrast, Jobbik urges that homosexual acts should be subject to criminal prosecution.

A 2009 study entitled *European Conditions*, which is devoted to the investigation of hostility to certain human groups, expressly endorses the finding that there is a great affinity for extreme right-wing ideologies among the populations of Europe's member states. People in Great Bri-

tain, France, the Netherlands, Italy, Portugal, Hungary, and Poland were interviewed. According to the study, over half of the respondents (50.4 %) expressed the opinion that there were too many immigrants living in their countries. Nearly a third of the sample (31.3 %) agreed with the statement that there is a natural hierarchy between people with black and white skins. Almost a quarter (24.4 %) believed that Jews had too much influence in their countries.

The phenomenon of right-wing extremism in Europe suggests an obvious question: Why have nationalistic and racist forces been able to expand their base of support so much in recent elections – both those to the European parliament and to national parliaments? Another study may help to pinpoint the causes. It is entitled, *Socio-economic Changes, Individual Reactions, and the Appeal of the Extreme Right (SIREN)* and was carried out in eight European countries between 2002 and 2004. The researchers were able to trace how much rapid changes in their work environment had affected jobholders in Europe. Changes in the workplace have been especially wrenching since the middle of the 1990s as a result of privatization and the outsourcing of production, and these trends have inevitably left their mark on the lives of working people. The results of that study furnish empirical data from which several patterns can be inferred.

The first pattern involves feelings of injustice among the respondents. These sentiments originate from the fact that their legitimate expectations

Dashed expectations with respect to work, employment and social status had been dashed. Such feelings of injustice emerged in the context of corporate restructuring, which in turn led to layoffs or forced early retirement, a new management culture, or intensified competition in the labor and real estate markets. In the wake of these shifts, qualifications

and hard-won work experience were devalued or even rendered worthless. The second pattern relates to the experience of becoming *déclassé* and to insecurities and feelings of powerlessness associated with deindustrialization, precarious employment, or the devaluation of professional skills and qualifications. The respondents often point to other social groups that they consider privileged, whether these be managers, politicians with high incomes, or people who live from social welfare payments instead of the »work of their hands,« or refugees supported by government subsidies. They keep bringing up the perception that »decent, hard-working« people like themselves are being cheated. Predictably, right-wing populist political messages and ideologies resonate with them, because they set their adherents apart from both elites and socially marginalized people.

The third pattern was prevalent among people who were able to achieve some degree of professional advancement within their companies over the last few years. This group tended to identify quite strongly with the firm and its goals and to care deeply about achievement and success. Such »up-and-comers« demand a lot of their colleagues and associates. They internalize the rules of the neo-liberal capitalist system and often express support for the »survival of the fittest« ideology, which is another way of saying that they think in social-Darwinist terms.

The results of the empirical studies presented here are somewhat out of date by now, so we should reconsider them in the context of the trends of the last few years such as the global economic crisis that began in 2007. Those trends have been accompanied by an unprecedented upsurge of mass unemployment (especially in the southern part of Europe), socio-economic marginalization, and downward mobility. So one can anticipate that the tendencies identified here – i.e., those that have recently encouraged more people to

feel an affinity with the extreme right – will not be reversed, but in fact may develop a hitherto-unimagined dynamism.

Still, it would be too simplistic to regard the rise of the far right as the automatic consequence of an economic crisis. As we consider the chain of causation here, we should try instead to determine empirically exactly how the socio-economic experiences felt in the workplace are being perceived, processed, and interpreted. In this context the real question is: What kinds of political and ideological interpretations are invoked to make sense of the individual experiences of marginalization? Here, political ideologies come into play that shape subjective interpretations by suggesting how to assign blame and construct an image of one's rivals or enemies. In the Netherlands, those ideologies might stoke a powerful hostility toward Islam, while in Hungary they might encourage a populist ideology linked to anti-Semitism and/or animosity toward »Gypsies« (Roma and Sinti). The political cultures of EU member-countries, including their racist and anti-Semitic undertones, can be switched off or reactivated quickly in crisis situations, so as to attain (in the words of Antonio Gramsci) »cultural hegemony.«

Furthermore, as the data gleaned from the SIREN project make clear, the crisis of political representation plays an important role in explaining the phenomenon of the extreme right. That link manifests itself most forcefully in the domain of party politics. The respondents in the survey no longer perceived regular political parties as legitimate representatives of their own political interests. This was true regardless of whether they were talking about governing or opposition parties, or about conser-

vative or socialist/social-democratic parties. On the contrary, skepticism, mistrust, and vexation with established parties dominated their political attitudes and positions. Parties of the extreme right were frequently seen as the only forces on the political scene willing and able to represent the interests of »the people.«

The reciprocal influences among insecurity, powerlessness, and political orientations also shed light on another kind of connection, one that at first glance might seem contradictory. We have called the latter »conformist rebellion.« It became evident that many of our interviewees regarded racism as a strategy to articulate their protest against social injustice, but to do so in a way that would be officially accepted and authorized.

In December, 2013, José Manuel Barroso, the President of the European Commission, called on Europeans to fight back against the growing power of nationalist and right-wing extremist parties in Europe. He added that it was time for Europeans to break their silence. It was indeed necessary to defend Europe, he explained, but the defense of the continent should not be turned over to the extremists. »The opponents of European unity should not be the ones who influence the emotions and fears of the people faced with an economic crisis and unemployment.« Barroso's appeal is an important step, considering the threatening rise of the extreme right. But it will remain ineffective in the absence of profound changes in underlying socio-economic conditions during the next few months, since it is these that help to strengthen the extreme right. Or – to cite the words of Wilhelm Heitmeyer – »lectures do not make much headway against experiences.«



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The Undead and the Resurrected

On the Demise of the Socialist International and the Comeback of the »Alliance«

Today, the 16 years that Willy Brandt spent leading the Socialist International are considered to be the most successful period ever in the history of that organization. But back in 1976 it took considerable effort on the part of his political friends to persuade Brandt to assume the post. His impression of the International – an alliance of social-democratic and other similar parties – was as bad as could be imagined: he saw it as ossified, ineffective, and incapable of coming to grips with matters outside of Europe. For those reasons Brandt had been pursuing a different project since 1975: the »Alliance for Peace and Progress.« Nowadays no one remembers it. But in many respects Brandt's initiative of 40 years ago resembles the »Progressive Alliance« that was christened last May in Leipzig. The parallels go far beyond just the similarity of their names and their shared disillusionment with the SI. They also exhibit strong convergences in their conceptual approach. Yet many of the causes of the SI's current troubles can be traced back to the proposals advanced then by Brandt, which were quite innovative at the time.

Ever since the early 1970s, Brandt had been debating the basic issues of future social-democratic policy with Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky and Olof Palme, Sweden's then-Prime Minister. All three agreed that the labor movement in liberal democratic regimes should seek allies on other continents to create a global alternative to both communism and untrammelled capitalism as well as to attain greater independence from the superpowers. It seemed like a propitious moment, because the United States and the Soviet Union had been weakened, the first on account of the

Vietnam War and the second by economic turbulence and the Sino-Soviet conflict. In the Third World, the attractiveness of the revolutionary path à la Cuba had diminished. Europe's social democracies had developed and implemented globally attractive political models with their welfare states and policies of détente. Only one thing was lacking: there was no forum in which they could find common ground with reform elements outside Europe.

The Euro-centric Socialist International was in no position to provide a forum of this kind, as Brandt, Kreisky, and Palme quickly realized. Party chairs were less and less inclined to attend its meetings, sending instead their international secretaries. That delegation of authority initiated a downward spiral, which also caused public interest in the International to reach its nadir.

But there were other obstacles inherent in the Socialist International's history that impeded the project of expanding it beyond Europe. During the Cold War the SI had sided unswervingly with the West. But many reform movements in the Third World refused to accept the logic of political blocs and balked at joining one of the two camps. Their position had little to do with sympathy for communism as practiced in Moscow. But U.S. conduct in Latin America, Iran in 1953, and of course the Vietnam War, was not likely to convince them to pledge unlimited solidarity with »The West« either. Even a number of SI parties were not well received by politicians in the developing countries. The French Socialists were partly responsible for the war in Algeria, while the British Labour Party took a long time to commit itself to complete decolonization.

As envisioned by Brandt, Kreisky, and Palme, the »Alliance« was not supposed to replace the SI. It was intended to organize a global dialogue, while the SI would be limited to Europe. An SPD Party Congress held in Mannheim in November, 1975, was to lay the groundwork for the activities of the Alliance. Never before had so many international guests been invited; in all there were 38 delegations. The first event sponsored by the Alliance was a conference in May, 1976, in Caracas which brought together 13 European and 15 Latin American parties. There had never been such an illustrious gathering of progressive forces prior to this event. The European and Latin American participants reached agreement on a concluding declaration that called for social reforms to be carried out under free conditions while repudiating untrammelled capitalism. In his keynote speech, Brandt supported the creation of a new global economic order, but also insisted on more democracy in the developing countries. People had to interpret his statement as implying that the governments of the North did not bear sole responsibility for poverty and lagging education in the global South. There were quite different political cultures assembled at the conference, as became evident from the Latin Americans' proposal to set up a liaison committee, but allow it to operate in secret. The European delegates considered this a mistake. For the rest, everyone agreed that they should not create a new organization with a central office and bureaucracy. Likewise, there was no interest in having a formal membership. Although some thought was given to publishing an international journal that would facilitate the discussion of topics of common interest, nothing ever came of it.

The Forum was intended to appeal to »social-democratic forces and progressive parties all over the world that are aligned with them,« as Willy Brandt put it. He envisioned possible interfaces between so-

cial-democratic intellectual traditions and a variety of parties, from the Congress in India to the Democrats in the United States, just as the founders of the »Progressive Alliance« do today. Contacts with Africa were supposed to follow on the heels of the collaboration between Europe and Latin America, but this never happened. The partners whom the Europeans hoped to involve in their project, such as Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia, displayed little enthusiasm for it. In terms of its programs, the non-communist left in Africa was more heterogeneous than that of Latin America. Basically there were the somewhat pro-Western elements, such as Leopold Senghor of Senegal or Habib Bourguiba of Tunisia, on one side, and, on the other, Tanzania's Julius Nyerere, the liberation movements of the former Portuguese colonies, and the anti-apartheid organizations in southern Africa, all of which regarded themselves as anti-imperialist. A few of them flirted with Marxism-Leninism. In respect to their attitudes toward a multi-party system, the differences between the two wings were muted: even in Senegal and Tunisia, only a single party was permitted at that time. The social-democratic leadership trio was visibly attracted to the »anti-imperialists.«

As 1976 wore on, Willy Brandt finally bowed to the ever-increasing pressure to run for the presidency of the SI. He did little more to promote the Alliance as an organization, but he did pursue the objectives associated with it in the context of the International. In order to attract new partners outside of Europe, the SI softened its commitment to democracy on the North Atlantic model. During the Cold War, the SI had decided to call upon all member parties to commit themselves unambiguously to a parliamentary form of government. Brandt and his friends now turned this into a qualified, relative commitment. They argued that one-party regimes that permitted sufficient internal pluralism in

the form of different currents of opinion ended up having liberties comparable to those that prevailed in other countries with multi-party systems. As examples they pointed to Mexico and Tanzania. Ten years later, appearing before the SI Council, Brandt described that policy (in English, its *lingua franca*) in the following way: »One point I would like to stress is that we have learned in the Socialist International not to impose rules, let alone models, on each other. We also realized very early on that democracy is not only political in nature, but that it also has a cultural and a socio-economic dimension of considerable amplitude. [...] The principle of pluralism and steps in the direction of more real democracy will certainly continue to be of crucial importance to us. But if we define our understanding of democracy in global terms, we will have to properly appreciate the traditions and living conditions prevailing in different parts of the world.«

At the time, this kind of openness helped Europe's Social Democrats to develop contacts with the Third World. They were able to banish their image as auxiliaries of the United States; moreover, they no longer presented their future allies with demands prescribing what model of political organization they ought to adopt. Had they not taken this position, they could not have shown solidarity with the Sandinistas of Nicaragua after the fall of Somoza, that country's former dictator. But they also inducted into their ranks state parties such as those of Tunisia and Egypt. When the latter were accepted as members in 1989, it was hoped that they would eventually democratize. Likewise, there were expectations that the SI might be able to advance the peace process in the Middle East with

the help of these new members. Unfortunately, these hopes were not born out.

The political discourse of the left has changed since the 1990s. The standard of parliamentary democracy as a universal value gained ground, while critics began to attack the relativism of the 1970s and 1980s. Universalist positions also became more influential, because now they were no longer seen as equivalent to partisan stances in the conflict between East and West. However, these new debates had little effect on the SI. It continued to cling to its old positions despite changing circumstances, which is always a sure recipe for political irrelevance.

Will the »Progressive Alliance« consolidate its position as an alternative to the SI? It has an impressive list of participating parties and organizations. But quantity does not ensure quality. The decline of the SI in spite of the enormous growth in its membership reinforces this truism. Under Willy Brandt the SI became a global player because it concentrated on the right issues rather than trying to address all issues. Furthermore, it was not so much the official sessions and resolutions that made it attractive, but rather the contacts and debates going on at the margins. Israelis and Palestinians, Argentinians and Englishmen, even Germans and French could try to overcome the things that divided them and seek common ground. Finally, one should not underestimate the significance of having an internationally respected leader at the helm, someone who could serve as the »face« of the organization. It remains to be seen whether the »Alliance« will be able to meet these challenges.



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The Democratic Left in the Global South

Moderate and Radical Paths

Today it is mainly in the Global South, notably in Latin America, that one finds a newly self-confident Left with consistent strategies for dealing with recalcitrant global realities. The democratic Left in the West, in contrast, is in disarray.

Even on the heels of the worst capitalist crisis since the Great Depression, the latter has been unable to seize the initiative and press for a new policy/political paradigm. Socialist and progressive movements in general have made bold pronouncements during election campaigns, but, when elected, they have governed in a manner similar to the center-Right. Many Leftist parties in Europe since the crisis of 2008-2009 have jumped on the stimulus bandwagon, and later vacillated on the necessity for austerity programs. In the United States, President Barack Obama, unconvincingly cast as a socialist and liberal by the American Right, has been unable to rally support within Congress for many of his modestly progressive policies. Meanwhile, the highly publicized Occupy movement produced no coherent ideology or organization. Although the Occupy movement raised awareness of inequality and its detrimental consequences, it elaborated no alternative program for realizing its egalitarian, democratic goals. Moral and intellectual leadership is thus shifting south from the Left's Western bailiwicks.

The democratic Left in the developing world holds a vision of the good society that accords with what has animated progressives everywhere. Rectifying the ills of capitalism involves two things: positing an end (primarily equal freedom) and finding appropriate means to achieve it, principally solidarity and participatory politics. The concept of equal freedom

implies the creation of a society in which all citizens have similar opportunities to experience freedom. People should be able to live long, worthwhile lives of their own choosing, rather than have their fates determined by circumstances of birth, family standing or initial market position. »Social« liberals (or what Americans refer to simply as »liberals«) state their goal in the same terms. Both they and progressives focus on the development of individual capabilities. But the Left, in contrast to the social liberal current, emphasizes the importance of cooperative means in achieving the *equal* development of human potential – a society in which, to quote Marx, »the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all.« Not individual competition and liberal-democratic politics but cross-class solidarity, autonomous social movements and participatory politics are the means best suited to this radical goal. In the global South, as elsewhere, the focus on collective organization of excluded or marginalized groups and collective political action to achieve redistributive goals distinguishes the Left from social liberalism (the »Third Way») and other ideological tendencies.

We can distinguish the strategies of the democratic Left in the developing world in light of two criteria: the degree of institutionalization of the Leftist parties and the intensity of class conflict. Institutionalization matters because weakly institutionalized parties are inherently less cohesive, less organizationally competent, more dependent upon loyalty to the supreme leader, and thus less stable and effective than highly institutionalized parties. Struggles for equal freedom normally take place over extended periods, so democratic con-

tinuity is central to the project of a democratic Left. Hence, well institutionalized parties are more likely to achieve lasting redistributive success than their weakly institutionalized counterparts.

The intensity of class conflict also distinguishes the various strategies of the democratic Left. Progressive movements divide into two types: There are Leftist parties with a moderate strategy that, often grudgingly, aim to implement redistributive programs with the acquiescence of elites. But there are also parties convinced that only unrelenting assault on existing power structures and inherited privilege – that is, class struggle – will work. The tension between class compromise and class struggle is thus fundamental.

Employing these criteria, I arrive at four potential varieties of the democratic Left: moderate social democracy, a radical social-democratic strategy of socialist transition, old-style populism and Left populism.

In contemporary Latin America and elsewhere, the *moderate social-democratic route* predominates. Prominent cases include Brazil since 2006, Chile 2000-2010, Uruguay since 2004, Costa Rica from the 1950s until its slide into social liberalism in the 1990s, Mauritius since the early 1970s, and two states of India, Kerala and West Bengal, that had initially pursued a radical strategy led by the Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPM) but in the 1990s grew more moderate so as to garner

middle-class votes. The moderate strategy is innovative. It avoids populism and the full commodification

Moderate Social Democracy

of labor, land and money, while dealing somewhat effectively with the challenges of poverty and inequality despite the constraints imposed by neoliberal globalization. In other words, proponents have found a progressive way to balance the imperatives of redistribution/equity and accumulation/efficiency in a relatively open capitalist economy.

They achieve this feat by marrying elements of macroeconomic orthodoxy to a pro-active state, incremental social citizenship and modest participatory institutions. Such governments adopt certain Washington Consensus-style policies, using monetary and fiscal policy to keep inflation low and the external debt minimal, while maintaining a fairly open economy through trade liberalization and acceptance of foreign investment. Yet these governments also deviate from economic orthodoxy by relying on a directive state developmentalism; the state promotes redistributive growth through orchestrating incentives, including tax incentives, good infrastructure and cheap loans, to realize industrial policy goals. The aim is to generate growth that spawns many »good« (that is, productive and well-remunerated) jobs, augments state revenues that will permit the extension of social citizenship and permits progressively higher minimum wages. Expanded public revenues and new taxes underwrite phased-in universal social protection, targeted cash transfers (such as Brazil's *Bolsa Família*, which now serves as a minimum income guarantee as well as a targeted child allowance) and good public services, especially education and health care.

Proponents also promise to bolster democratic participation, both as an end in itself and as a means of buttressing the state's focus on reducing poverty and inequality. Concerned, however, to allay populist pressures that would undercut delicate class compromises and pragmatic alliances with centrist and Right-wing parties in the legislature, moderate Leftist governments have opted only to expand public consultations at the national level and consign participatory decision-making to the local level. Overall, moderate social democrats undertake a hybrid approach, one that is neither fully neoliberal nor consistent with traditional notions of progressive politics. State developmentalism deserves further

attention. It lies between free-market orthodoxy, where the ideal is the self-regulating market, and the developmental state, which governs the market even to the extent of picking »winners.« During the heyday of import-substitution industrialization from the 1950s to the 1970s, states played a directive role in the Global South. The Washington Consensus discouraged interventionist states outside East Asia. However, industrial policy experienced a renaissance in the 2000s, spurred by disillusionment with the efficacy of neoliberal remedies in the 1990s and admiration for the achievements of the developmental states of East Asia.

Yet developmental states, on the model of South Korea and Taiwan between 1965 and 1995, require stringent conditions to succeed: political and bureaucratic elites with a developmental mission; an efficient, coherent and skilled bureaucratic apparatus; a robust tax base to support a strong state; and a balance between the bureaucracy's autonomy and its embeddedness in society that imparts coherence and effectiveness to the state's industrial plan, according to Peter Evans analysis in *Embedded Autonomy* (1995). Few countries in the Global South exhibit all these conditions. Furthermore, the Left clearly requires a *democratic* developmental state, not an authoritarian and labor-repressive one on the South Korean model. This requirement introduces another level of complexity to an already ambitious Left agenda.

But progressive governments can succeed without this rare species. »Good-enough« states can play a developmental role. Social-democratic governments may not be able to lead the market, but they can at least prod it to conform to their inclusionary socio-economic agenda. Prodding rarely involves »picking winners.« Instead, developmentalist states exploit the beneficial legacies of democratic reformism – advanced human capital, good social and physical infrastructure, stable

and relatively effective government and industrial relations – to attract foreign investment and encourage local producers to fill lucrative niches in the global economy. By orchestrating tax incentives, providing the requisite infrastructure and channeling credit and other assistance to private firms and joint ventures, developmentally oriented states stimulate innovation and competitiveness in select high-value-added exports. They put greater emphasis on enhancing global competitiveness than on protecting older industries.

Moderate social democracy, however, may succeed in balancing conflicting imperatives only as long as growth continues. The commodity boom through much of the period 2003-13 served the Left well. But when growth recedes, the leadership loses its ability to promote both accumulation and redistribution (or, rather, redistribution *from* accumulation). The moderate Left's choices may then become stark: to reassure investors by yielding to the accumulation imperative, thus reverting to neoliberalism, or to embrace asset as well as income redistribution, thus effectively moving toward class confrontation. Either path will prove tumultuous.

A *radical social-democratic strategy of socialist transition* offers a second model. Against the backdrop of the failed state-socialist experiments of the twentieth century, I suggest that, if there is a democratic path to *Radical Social Democracy*, this is what it looks like. The strategy offers an escape from the socialist impasse: namely, that socialist attempts to transcend capitalism have previously ended up in an authoritarian cul de sac, thus contradicting the initial emancipatory socialist aims. But radical social democracy is a highly risky, controversial venture whose success depends upon quite unusual conditions.

In a radical social-democratic strategy, a cohesive, programmatic socialist party

does not impose socialism from above; instead, it works within a largely market economy and liberal-democratic institutions to challenge inherited privileges and power structures and deepen democracy. Civil and political liberties, competing political parties, autonomous social movements and voluntary associations continue to function. As in Eduard Bernstein's original notion of democratic revisionism, the party builds a cross-class electoral coalition. It appeals to its constituencies on both the ethical grounds of social justice and the material grounds of class interest. Generally, the party's or coalition's agenda of redistribution includes the removal of discriminatory practices, the extension of social protections and high-quality public services to the poor, the democratization of markets, selective nationalizations, land reform (where landholdings are concentrated) and participatory institutions. Democratic deepening involves the decentralization of powers and revenues, consultative or participatory involvement of social movements, and producer and marketing cooperatives of workers and farmers. Radical social democracy is more a *process* of building citizen capabilities, participatory structures, new economic opportunities and decommodification than it is a final *destination* («socialism«).

Consider the cases that illuminate the dynamics and dilemmas of radical social democracy. Eurocommunism, which made headway in Italy, France and Spain prior to the neoliberal age, was its precursor. The most dramatic and famous exemplar in the Global South is the Popular Unity (*Unidad Popular* – UP) administration of President Salvador Allende in Chile (1970–1973). However, the UP administration, though undoubtedly bold, courageous and democratic, lacked the majority support, the unity and discipline to carry off a non-violent, constitutional socialist transformation. Allende, with 37 percent of the vote in 1970, never received a convincing popular

mandate for revolutionary change. The UP proved unable to control its supporters: peasants seized land, squatters established unauthorized settlements, workers occupied factories, and allies (especially the Revolutionary Left Movement – MIR) promoted illegal seizures of property. This chaotic mobilization of social forces into politics, combined with a crashing economy linked to a United States embargo, polarized society and eventually drove small business owners (famously including truckers) into the arms of the oligarchy. The failure of the UP to attract the support of the small proprietors doomed the coalition to a minority status and laid the foundation for the brutal military coup of September 1973. The US government's efforts under President Nixon to destabilize the Allende regime – by funding the opposition, sabotaging the economy and aiding the Chilean military – exemplifies the external hostility that even democratic socialist regimes faced during the Cold War.

The Sandinistas in Nicaragua, between the 1984 revolutionary seizure of power and their electoral defeat in 1990, also resembled radical social democrats. But the period is too brief and too muddled by the internal war against the US-supported Contras to draw useful conclusions.

Two states in India led for various periods by the CPM – Kerala and West Bengal – best exemplify the radical social-democratic model, both its promise and its pitfalls. Indeed, Kerala from the 1950s to the late 1980s presents perhaps the purest expression of the model, owing largely to its special conditions. The radical phase endured for more than three decades, in part because Kerala was shielded from imperialist hostility as a state within a federation formally committed to socialism (under Congress Party rule). Furthermore, the constitutional right of Delhi to displace state governments by instituting Presidential rule in the case of disorder

was a powerful incentive for the CPM to undertake a peaceful transition in accordance with democratic rules and procedures. One instance of Presidential Rule, in 1959, was sufficient.

The Kerala case nicely illustrates the tensions to which the strategy (probably inevitably) gives rise. The radical focus on eliminating historical inequities and de-commodifying labor through class struggle precipitates an accumulation crisis. This crisis creates domestic pressure to de-radicalize the mobilizational model by shifting priority to accumulation. *Paradoxically, radical social democracy may become a victim of its own success.* By displacing the dominant class – landlords in Kerala's case – and fostering a comparatively well-educated and prosperous rural and urban middle class, the strategy creates beneficiaries who then embrace the consumer society and accumulation-oriented neoliberal policies. These beneficiaries then reject the socialists whom they blame for the stagnant economy. The CPM, with considerable intra-party dissension, responded in the 1990s by tacking toward moderate social democracy to retain its support in competitive elections. But does this back-tracking represent a failure of the model? That is a debatable proposition, considering the substantial degree of equal freedom attained through three decades of class struggle in this case.

However, the radical social-democratic strategy will not achieve even Kerala's degree of success in the absence of unusual national and global circumstances. The socialist/social-democratic party, to be effective, must be cohesive, well-organized and programmatic in its appeal. It must operate within a class-divided society, even if communal identities also remain strong. Whereas moderate social democracy depends on a class compromise in which elements of the dominant business class participate, radical social democracy involves class struggle

with a minimal or even non-existent society-wide compromise. Accordingly, the party/coalition needs a strong, mainly non-communal, political base to persist under such conditions. Social movements in civil society must manifest a density, autonomy and purpose capable of holding the social-democratic/socialist party true to its vision. Only this degree of mobilization can ensure that the party's commitment to equal freedom and democracy does not wane and a new privileged class of political insiders does not crystallize.

Yet social conditions in many countries are unconducive to class struggle – whether of the radical social-democratic or Left populist variety – owing to the prevalence of communal identities and the fragmentation of the class structure. Vast inequalities, persistent poverty, economic insecurity, corruption and discrimination against indigenous peoples, castes or ethnic groups combine variously to feed a sense of popular grievance. It is challenging, however, for Leftist parties to orchestrate electoral coalitions of such disparate groups as peasants, alienated indigenous populations, landless laborers, small and medium farmers, informal-sector workers and elements of the amorphous middle class, in addition to organized labor. In the burgeoning cities of Latin America and Asia, urban growth has shifted the locus of politics away from peasants and rural protest. But easily organized industrial workers rarely play as central a role in Leftist politics today as they did in nineteenth and twentieth century Europe. Except in rare cases, the industrial working class is relatively limited in size while the unorganized informal sector accounts for 50 percent or more of national labor forces. The organizational challenges are immense.

Furthermore, the state must be both relatively effective and uncaptured by the dominant economic class, if Leftist governments are to implement complex, redistributive social and economic policies.

The economy, though continuing to make extensive use of markets, must not be dominated by powerful oligopolies able to exercise a veto power over legislative initiatives. A democratization of markets (via cheap credit, expert assistance and preferential treatment in state procurement) provides opportunities for small-scale and cooperative enterprises, while diffusing economic power, but this is a slow process. Strong states with a high degree of autonomy are obviously rare.

In addition, the global opportunity structure is restrictive for both radical social democrats and Left populists. Imperialist hostility to socialist experiments, though not as intense as during the Cold War, persists; the mainstay of the neoliberal order, the United States, retains the capacity (and sometimes the will) to project military power and economic pressure on a global scale. The structural power of transnational corporations enables them to punish deviations from macroeconomic orthodoxy and respect for private property. Existing bilateral, regional and multilateral trade and investment treaties constrain the policy autonomy of all countries. Socialism in one country thus remains improbable.

Yet there are some supportive trends in the global arena. The probability of a radical experiment surviving increases if the country in question can exert exceptional leverage in the global economy – on the basis of extensive petroleum reserves or large size and industrial muscle, for example. Also, China's recent emergence as an alternative source of trade, credit, investment and even foreign aid has emboldened China's partners, especially in Latin America, to undertake heterodox experiments. But probably only the emergence of a regional bloc of like-minded Leftist states could buffer a socialist experiment from the retaliatory power of global neoliberalism. In South America, the rudiments of such a regional bloc are

currently being constructed. Hugo Chávez of Venezuela, in particular, promoted various regional organizations and foreign alliances to serve as a regional support base for anti-neoliberal alternatives. ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas), *BancoSur* and UNASUR (Union of South American Nations) are recent harbingers of a potentially Left-oriented regional bloc, though it is too early to assess its prospects. For now, the veto power of private capital, the World Trade Organization and Western powers remains formidable.

The final models of the democratic (or semi-democratic) Left include *old-style populism* and *Left populism*. They both feature personalistic leadership, populist rhetoric and weakly institutionalized parties. But Left populism diverges from old-style populism in important ways.

Old-style populism, a common political model in Latin America and elsewhere in the Global South, has four characteristics. The first is a political rhetoric that divides society into two antagonistic groups: the »people« and a coniving/rapacious/venal »oligarchy.« Secondly, populism puts forward an allegedly charismatic leader who cultivates a strong, emotional bond with his followers. Populist leaders are personalistic in demanding loyalty to themselves as individuals and in their emotionally charged, folksy rhetorical style that divides the world into friends and enemies. Thirdly, a populist party is loosely organized. The role of the party is to mobilize the people to carry out the leader's mission, to demonstrate through rallies the strength of the party and to reward followers with patronage. The personalistic, clientelistic basis of populism means that the departure of the leader throws the movement into crisis. Finally, old-style populism manifests a limited commitment to democratic checks and balances. The archetypal

Varieties of progressive populism

populists – President Juan Perón of Argentina (1946-55, 1973-4) and President Getúlio Vargas of Brazil (1930-45 and 1951-4) – only intermittently officiated in (semi)democratic electoral systems.

In what sense, if any, is old-style populism a specifically Leftist movement? Ernesto Laclau contends that traditional populism is neither Right nor Left. Instead, it embraces diverse and contradictory political beliefs. Unsurprisingly then, scholars have interpreted old-style populism in contrasting ways. One interpretation understands it as the inclusion of the popular classes, especially urban workers, in political life and in sharing the fruits of economic growth. In return for acquiescing to a class compromise engineered from above, urban workers and others will receive economic and social benefits. Critics point out that populist governments construct a class coalition, mainly of organized workers and the industrial bourgeoisie, in order to carry through a program of (import-substitution) industrialization. The regime secures trade union loyalty by co-opting leaders, distributing patronage and penalizing defectors. In short, social welfare for workers, antagonism toward oligarchy, plus popular empowerment, do not necessarily add up to a progressive orientation.

Left populism, in contrast, consistently aligns with the radical Left and opposes, not democracy as such, but *liberal* democracy. Left populism dates from the early 2000s, with varying strains in Eastern and Central Europe, the «Bolivarian Revolution» of Hugo Chávez and Nicolás Maduro in Venezuela since 1999 and somewhat similar regimes in Ecuador and Bolivia.

Left populism emerges in a particular context. The collapse of Communism, coupled with public dissatisfaction with the market volatility, sporadic economic growth and inequality associated with the Washington Consensus in the 1990s, opened a search for new egalitarian and

anti-capitalist formulas. Left populism has usually appeared in countries with a history of old-style populist or personalistic politics, a political style that is unlikely to disappear soon. The new variant abandoned the earlier populist notion of a class pact in favor of a politics of confrontation. It also dropped the Marxist focus on the proletariat in order to position itself as the voice of the «people» vis-à-vis the oligarchy. And it avoided centralized planning in favor of a «socially oriented» (highly regulated, mixed) economy. Finally, hydrocarbon-rich countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador, had sufficient leverage within the global economy to stake out a counter-hegemonic position – «Twenty-first century socialism» in Chávez's rhetoric since 2005. The result has been a personalistic but consistently Leftist populism.

In addition, Left populism represents a less equivocal position on democracy than old-style populism. Its adherents would say that they are unsympathetic to liberal democracy, not to democracy as such. They believe that the former has perpetuated, or even deepened, vast inequalities in wealth, income and political power between the elite and «the people.» On the basis of this critique, Left populists advocate what they often call «popular» democracy as an alternative to the liberal version. Rather than a set of procedural rules for choosing leaders, this alternative understands democracy as a type of society – one that is inclusive, egalitarian and permits forms of direct participation. Left populists have experimented with various participatory institutional arrangements, purportedly to arrive at workable models. Whether we should take these experiments seriously, or judge them as mere camouflage for a new authoritarianism, is an issue on which qualified observers disagree. It would be mistaken, however, to assume that Chávez, for one, was nothing but an old-style, authoritarian populist.

Looking to the future, it remains to be seen whether moderate social democrats can avoid co-optation by the elites and maintain the conditions for sustained, broad-based growth over the long haul. If the moderate Left falters while relative US power recedes, the radical Left may come to the fore. Left populism is a more likely alternative than radical social-demo-

cratic transitions, owing to the stringent conditions for the latter model to succeed. In articulating the disillusionment of people with both liberal capitalism and liberal democracy, it will probably take a less moderate form than one finds today. But can Left populism, if it proceeds far along the road to »socialism,« avoid falling prey to the bureaucratic-collectivist trap?



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Gero Maass

Up North Minority Governments Are Taken for Granted

Scandinavia goes its own way

After the outcome of Germany's recent national election became known, talks focused on several options, including a grand coalition (Christian Democratic Union and Christian Socialist Union plus the Social Democrats), a coalition between the CDU/CSU and the Greens (the so-called Black-Green option), and even a minority cabinet. However, Federal Chancellor Merkel quickly dismissed speculations about the latter model. She feared that it might be taken as a sign of instability, which would send that wrong message to Germany's European partners, particularly during the Euro-crisis. And yet minority governments are an everyday occurrence in Europe. Indeed, a third of all governments fall into that category, and in the Nordic countries they are even the norm. In Denmark almost 90 % of the governments have lacked a parliamentary majority, while the figure for Sweden has been more than two-thirds and in Norway well over one-half of all the postwar cabinets.

The Finnish brand of coalition democracy deviates from the Scandinavian pattern of minority governments, since in that country »super-grand« coalitions are the rule when it comes to forming governments. At this point, a rainbow alliance of various parties (with the Social Democrats participating as the coalition's second largest partner) is muddling through with a bare parliamentary majority until new elections are held in September of 2015.

The Finnish Communists and subsequent left-wing Socialist parties long since have been involved in governing coalitions, whereas in the other Nordic states they usually have ended up in opposition or else acted as silent partners of the Social Democrats, providing enough votes for the latter to muster a majority. In addition, politics in Finland has traditionally exhibited an extremely fragmented multi-party system currently numbering eight parties, among which three are of approximately the same size: the Social Democrats,

the Center Party, and the Conservative Party. For that reason, in Finland no dominant political »pole« has emerged capable of offering compromises to the small parties as a way of attracting them to participate in minority cabinets.

Minority cabinets are in power in all three of the other countries:

- In Copenhagen the Social Democrat Helle Thorning Schmidt is in charge with the tacit support of the leftist »Unity List.«

- In the Stockholm Reichstag, the conservative Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt is now in his second term even though he no longer commands a majority of his own.

- And in Oslo the Chairperson of the conservative Høyre Party, Erna Solberg, replaced Jens Stoltenberg of the red-red-green coalition last October. Relying on the tacit support of two small bourgeois parties, she now heads a minority government that includes the right-wing populist Progressive Party, known by its Norwegian acronym FrP.

Why is it that the Scandinavian countries, above all others, have had such good experiences with minority governments?

Consensus Culture as a Resource

First, their political culture is consensual – not only in politics, but in the sense that important actors in society seek consensus in the partnerships they form. Furthermore, the North can take credit for over a century of stable, democratic parliamentary government facilitated by a cooperative political style focused on the legislative process. For example, in the Swedish Reichstag the deputies do not sit together in compact parliamentary delegations. Instead, they sit according to the regions where their electoral districts happen to be, so that members of different parties congregate in the same group. Furthermore, as they advance in seniority the deputies move up in the benches. The majority of voters would not tolerate an aggressive, confrontational course.

Second, the Nordic countries do not have an upper house or a constitutional court-style jurisdiction, in which the opposition might exert extra influence over political events. Hence, the latter has no recourse but to try to influence the sole chamber in which parliamentary government takes place. Yet the Nordic law-making bodies are endowed with broad powers that allow the opposition to play an active role in setting the legislative agenda. Parliamentary committees have especially important powers when there is a minority government. Under those circumstances they emerge as central brokerage points between the government and the opposition. Seats and chairperson positions in the committees are allocated in proportion to majority ratios. Thus, all parties can develop a power base around the leadership positions they have attained in the parliament, which gives the opposition a share in government on a case-by-case basis. This is especially true when committee members achieve a high profile due to their special knowledge and expertise. Then, they are able not only to oversee draft bills submitted by the government but even to revise them, thus gaining input into the structure of the legislation before them.

Third, Scandinavian countries operate under the rule of *negative parliamentarism* when it comes to votes of confidence. That is, the government does not need to win a majority of the deputies' votes, because an absolute parliamentary majority is required to topple a sitting government or withdraw support from it. Abstentions thus indirectly help keep governments in power.

Fourth, the hurdles that must be overcome before a new election is called are quite high. Indeed, Norway rules them out completely, which forces the government and the opposition to compromise. This practice is closely linked to the strong position enjoyed by ministerial bureaucracies and state administrative apparatuses.

tuses, which benefit from high levels of trust in the general population.

The Social Democrats once enjoyed absolute majorities; they are now often the strongest single party in parliament but, because they lack an absolute majority, they must govern through minority cabinets. They managed to govern for years in this fashion, putting their stamp on the development of social-welfare states in most of the Scandinavian countries. Thus, from the viewpoint of parliamentary politicking, the much-praised Nordic model is the outcome of skillful policymaking by Social-Democratic minority cabinets that were sustained during the early phases in parliament by agrarian and left-wing socialist parties and then later by liberal and green centrist movements. In addition, Social-Democratic prime ministers were supported at the societal level by labor unions that collaborated closely with them.

In the past they often profited from disunity in the bourgeois camp. To the extent that parties to the right of the Social Democrats managed to paper over their differences and sometimes even forge formal coalitions among themselves, they made life much more difficult for their opponents of the left.

In 2005 a turning point in Swedish politics was reached when all of the bourgeois parties there agreed to support a common electoral manifesto, the »Alliance for Sweden,« which was designed to accomplish one objective: a change of government in 2006. So even though they were the strongest single party in Sweden (as they also were subsequently in Norway) the Social Democrats ended up in the opposition. This electoral shift was significant in a programmatic sense. During the eighties, Olof Palme had symbolized everything that the Swedish conservatives – actually a catch-all party for moderates – loathed about the Social Democratic welfare state. But by this time they largely had accepted the basic outlines of the Nordic

model, which helped them achieve a breakthrough in the 2006 elections. The Norwegian leader, Høyre, later copied that recipe for success. Moreover, the Swedish New Moderate Party claimed for itself, in the subtitle of its party logo, the distinction of being the country's new »party of labor.«

In Norway one sees signs of another realignment taking place among the traditionally conservative and liberal parties, one that bodes ill for the Social Democrats and all other progressive forces. Up until now the center-right had refused to cooperate with the increasingly powerful right-wing populists in any of the Scandinavian countries. In this respect, the new right-wing conservative coalition in Norway is a milestone in the country's politics, because it marks the first time that right-wing populists have taken on direct responsibility for governing in Europe since they helped rule Austria some years ago.

In all of the Nordic countries, right-wing populist parties are playing an increasingly important role in the unravelling party systems, if only to tip the scales in one direction or another. This is certainly true of the Norwegian FrP in recent years, even though it has taken a more moderate line ideologically and no longer fits very well into the »concert« of the European right.

The Norwegian Workers' Party responded to the new strategy of cooperation among the bourgeois parties by cobbling together a red-red-green coalition in 2005, which was re-elected in 2009 as the coalition clung to a slender parliamentary majority. During its eight years in power, the Workers' party did everything right, but it lost the next election anyway. Although it emerged from the 2013 elections as the largest party in the Storting once again, its two green-leftist coalition partners registered significant losses in their vote totals, barely making it over the four percent hurdle for entry into parliament. Their poor showing put an end to

the governing majority. Surveys taken after the election indicated that the Workers' party would have fared even better if it had campaigned without being part of a coalition.

The Swedish SAP wishes to learn from the Norwegian experience and, in marked contrast to its strategy for the 2010 Reichstag elections, has chosen this time to enter the upcoming balloting without making any concrete statements about its preferred coalition partners in advance. In an interview given last November, the Chairperson of the Social Democrats, Stefan Löfven, remarked that the attempt by the governing coalition to identify bourgeois and left-wing camps served only to harden and »dumb-down« Sweden's political landscape. He pointed out that, in the past, cooperation with the Liberals or the Center had often turned out well. Thus, potential partners from the government camp are getting the cold shoulder in terms of invitations to cooperate in the future.

The Social Democrats want to counter

this sort of bloc-formation in order to regain the more extensive set of political options that they had in the past. They believe that it is possible to cooperate in quite different ways. The Prime Minister and head of the Moderate Party, Fredrik Reinfeldt, described the Social-Democratic approach as unrealistic. After all, the smaller parties had only two choices: either to participate in a coalition government or else go into opposition.

The Social Democrats' chances to revive the successes of the olden days after eight tough years in opposition do not look too bad at this point. Recent opinion polls show the Moderates with 23.6% support, while the SAP stands at 33.7%. If polls are correctly predicting the outcome, then the Social Democrats would be by far the strongest party in parliament and could return to power in a minority government. Thus, the question of how a government might be formed that is able to get things done proves to be one of the main issues of the election.



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Oliver Schmolke

On Freedom

Where the left is at odds with liberalism, hopes fade for a better world

The German journal *Vorwärts* published a special edition to commemorate the one-hundredth anniversary of Willy Brandt's birth. The front page bore an irritating quotation: »Freedom is the most important thing.« It would be a daring act to write this message on the back wall of a Social-Democratic Party congress. But no- such a

slogan should be consigned to the department in charge of traditions. It is more suitable for a historical committee than for keynote addresses outlining future projects. Why is that the case? Evidently, the notion of freedom has become so alien to the left that it evokes mainly suspicion. Freedom is a word that we avoid using.

It still has no place in the debate over the future course of social democracy except perhaps that of being suspect, as though it were the mistake and not a way to correct that mistake. Skeptics imagine that it might be meant to hide some facet of social and political inequality, or – in the best case – that it is too vague to throw the goal of justice into sharp relief. Yet Willy Brandt saw the matter in a different light. In the farewell address he delivered upon resigning from the chairmanship of the SPD in June, 1987, he declared: »If I were to say what is more important to me than anything else except peace, I would reply without any doubt or hesitation at all: freedom; freedom for the great majority and not just the few, freedom of conscience and opinion, as well as from want and fear.« These few sentences alone serve to sweep aside the misconception that freedom concerns only the elite, while bringing to light its universal meaning and promise. It should be understood not as the prerogative of the privileged few, but instead as an equal right to be enjoyed by every single person. In this way a faded liberal idea gets transmuted into a revolutionary formula that continues to confound autocratic systems all over the world and undermine corrupt clientele regimes. To this declaration one could readily append the eloquent plea for utopia recently written by Marc Saxer in the pages of this journal. But first there are still some observations to make about the self-inflicted wounds of the family of left-wing parties.

The political left thinks and feels within the tradition of great historical struggles. Outrage is its rhetorical style, and protests its existential environment. Social democracy bears the marks of protest as if they were inherited traits. It is distinguished by the resolve to give political voice to the rage against injustice, since democracy cannot survive without tough criticism of its shortcomings. Left-wing projects try to forge links with tales of revolt

against inhumane conditions. Albert Camus's portrait of the person who says no is the classic type. But that type appears in every meeting, no matter what it concerns. By the time that conditions improve, the old habits have taken on a life of their own and the old rhetoric rings hollow. After a while, that sort of thing really can get on one's nerves.

One can certainly ask why, given Germany's concrete circumstances in 2013 prior to the national parliamentary elections, the Social Democrats' interpretation of the country's situation did not find greater resonance. On the political left the answer was that party positions were still too timid, that they did not stir up enough protest and outrage. This may be a misreading of current affairs that will have grave consequences. No one should be afraid to air the suggestion that the focus on negative depictions of our society, considered as the party's program, by now have reduced the SPD's share of the vote to a mere 25 %. Advice to intensify the rhetoric of accusation is a bit like the carpenter's old saying that, when you are trying to tighten a screw, it gets tighter at first but then much looser at the end. By over-tightening one is no longer able to engage and mobilize the citizens. Evidently, more than 40 % of those who summoned up the energy to vote thought that Germany had something to offer and could also hold its head high in international comparisons.

The weapon of critique grows dull when one pounds it on a solidly built world view that has experience and satisfaction on its side. Now there are efforts afoot to communicate the social-democratic discourse better, in order to sharpen the blade again. Carefully crafted »framing« is supposed to reorient all political debates around the positive values of justice and solidarity. For example, if one wants to justify a social welfare state, one should avoid stigmatizing the people who depend on it for support as lazy cheats. Anyone

who upholds the value of solidarity and chooses to use the term »responsibility for self« should always be on guard against embellishing the egoism of the cold-hearted self-optimizer. Yet in these instances there is a danger of losing touch with the common sense of the majority. Here is an example from my own experience. In a strategy session devoted to figuring out how to communicate the party platform's plank calling for higher taxes, I heard the following suggestion, coming from the »framing« camp: Avoid the concept »tax increase« completely and do not even talk about greater burdens. Instead, emphasize the value of higher taxes to the community. Alternatively, one could also speak of »adequate revenues for the state.« To be sure, invoking the concept of the state is no way to mobilize the masses, since ordinary people are most interested in having adequate revenues for themselves. Nevertheless, one can certainly call for and justify higher payroll taxes and other levies. But if they can't be called tax hikes anymore, and if we ignore people's everyday experience of looking at their paychecks and seeing taxes as a burden, then we are moving in the direction of sectarian world views. Of course, George Orwell did not invent the idea of manipulating language for purposes of political control (»newspeak«); he got the idea from the rich stock of intuitive material supplied by totalitarian systems.

Branding someone as an ideological enemy is almost certain to stir up emotions. In the nineteenth century the political left acquired the habit of identifying certain groups as foes.

Be careful whom we label an enemy Not only did they categorize dictators, warlords, and exploitative owners

of capital as enemies; they treated the entire bourgeoisie as their antagonist. The first enemies list was based on experience, while the second was purely ideological in origin, and was in fact derived from a particularly absurd ideology. In the struggle

against class society, the status of citizens was a lever that social democrats could use to achieve emancipation and equality of rights. In his freedom speech of 1987, Willy Brandt recalled those circumstances: »Our party was never on the side of those who started wars and brought servitude upon our people. To the contrary, we have always worked to enable millions of oppressed proletarians and rights-deprived women to become self-confident citizens.« The triumphs of social-democratic policymaking are evident in the growing awareness of civic equality, from Carlo Schmidt's drafts of the Basic Law to the maxim, »dare more democracy,« that accompanied the second foundation of the Federal Republic after 1968. Yet hostile talk about the »bourgeois camp« has taken such deep root in the SPD that it has almost acquired the status of folklore. The deeply conservative, anti-social-democratic origins of this attitude are no longer recognized. Such talk of a »bourgeois camp« is actually a way of singling out domestic political enemies, one that distinguishes the parvenu and established bourgeoisie from »unpatriotic« outsiders. The point of the term is to defend privileges and block off access routes. An enlightened left must oppose that outlook by fighting for equality of civic rights. The left wants greater equality for all citizens, male and female alike, gays and straights, immigrants and natives.

To launch polemics against everything bourgeois means to cultivate the pride of the outsider while leaving hierarchies of dominance and subordination intact. What is more, it means abandoning the aspiration of building a party capable of mustering a majority in society. This is so because becoming bourgeois is what most people hope for, not something they fear. It is a virtue, not a defect.

One of the paradoxes of left-wing discourse is that it wants to offer people opportunities for social advancement, but rebuffs them when they have advanced.

This paradox relates to the ambivalence of the idea of achievement. When individual achievement is not given due recognition – for example, by systematic underestimation of immigrant children in schools or by poverty-level wages in the world of work – we immediately perceive the offense against justice and protest against it. But when achievement leads to success, the spontaneous reflex is to suspect »treason against one's class.« When some people are successful and make use of their potential influence to advance social-democratic causes, their efforts evoke mistrustful glances, as though their conduct implied that they believed themselves superior to everyone else. Popular politicians have an easy time when they appeal to a conservative base, since they are confirming the image of human beings that the latter already hold: namely, that there is nothing wrong with hierarchies. But politicians seeking support from within the left-wing families of parties have a much tougher row to hoe, at least after the initial euphoria surrounding the supposed new »beacon of hope« has passed. They can scarcely fulfill the paradoxical hopes vested in them that they will wield power unobtrusively. On this point let us cite another of Willy Brandt's observations from 1987: »We should not begrudge the successful among us the success they have achieved. There is nothing necessarily wrong when a Social Democrat comes out on top!«

The latent antipathy against popular personalities from the ranks of one's own party vitiates the effectiveness of political campaigns. After all, it is human beings who make politics and evoke trust. Character types are needed that are not afraid to take responsibility for an idea. And it is these politicians who remain the most likely to maintain contacts with their political constituencies, since it is the latter who must elect and re-elect them. By contrast, ideologies and organizations that have lost touch with the everyday life-ex-

periences of the great majority of ordinary citizens have an alienating effect.

Politics has philosophical foundations, and there is also an aesthetic quality that informs it. Still, the proof of the pudding concerning the value of an idea is not that it sounds good, but that it can be put into practice such that it benefits a large number of people. In view of that insight, the political left should not undervalue the move from promise to actualization, from program to governing.

At the conclusion of the long-drawn-out coalition negotiations among the CDU, SPD, and CSU in the fall of 2013, the respective party chairs unveiled a coalition agreement with a golden social-democratic thread running through it. The agreement promises action on a range of issues including a legal minimum wage, a solidarity pension, quotas for women in private firms' boards of directors, equal wages for equal work, per capita premiums in health insurance, broadening the options that immigrant children face in deciding on their citizenship, more investment in higher education, oversight of financial markets, a financial transactions tax, the enormous sum of two billion euros for development aid, and tougher parliamentary oversight of arms exports. In spite of its defeat in the elections, the SPD achieved more than most people expected through tenacious negotiations. On the day after the final night of negotiations, the DGB labor union chief gave his blessing to the outcome, adding a statement that was simple but true: »Now everything depends on turning good programmatic principles into good laws.«

In other words, the point now is not to go out and announce the rest of the Social Democratic program. Instead, it is time to seize the opportunity to enact as much as possible of that program. The SPD's road to participation in a grand coalition government should, at the very least, induce it to respect the principle that practice is the best test case. Many people have been con-

cerned that the party lacks a strategy for attack, mobilization, or consolidating its own camp. But what we need now above all else is a strategy for implementing our programs. The power to mobilize support that might help win future elections will not come from escalating class struggle where there are no classes. It will come from achieving what it is possible to achieve, and building trust on the basis of success in practice.

When the minimum wage comes – as it must eventually – it will be an SPD minister who introduces the bill in the German Bundestag. For the political left, the art of governing has long been a matter of finding progressive compromises that induce recalcitrant groups and powers to take the next step ahead, but always with an eye to the Social Democrats' core principles of a free, equal, and just society.

Marc Saxer quite properly reminded us of what we really need: a compass and orientation, the longing to navigate toward a destination that may still be enveloped in fog, but which inspires our enthusiasm to make renewed political exertions in its behalf. If one wishes to galvanize people, one has to include them in the action, or indeed even grant them sovereign power over it. That is another reason why freedom and democracy are worth infinitely more than the state by itself. Because the democratic attainment of equal life-opportunities always encounters resistance, majorities also need instruments of power to change society.

But not every instrument of power can be acceptable to a democrat. There are states in which no one who is committed to respect for individual self-development would care to live anymore. Before long, the majority achieved and defended through

free elections ends up being ignored. When free elections are not allowed, people will eventually flee. Utopia by administrative fiat is a dead end. That is something that the left used to know and that shouldn't be forgotten. In his farewell address, Willy Brandt also alluded to this truth: »We are not looking for regimented ›happiness‹; we would much rather liberate the creative impulses inherent in human beings. Each person's liberty of action – exercised in socially responsible ways.«

Expressed as a principle, this means that the left ought to regain the ability to distinguish between emancipation and paternalism. Nor should it ever lose sight of the difference between democracy and dictatorship in international relations.

What does freedom mean as a positive and progressive notion? In the first place, it implies a universal claim to equal treatment. Money, gender, descent, sexual identity, confession and faith, national and cultural traits should not be allowed to play a role. Privileges and clientele systems deserve to be abolished. The mistreatment and exploitation of dependents, whether in the family or in the workplace; religion – or nationality-based deprivation of freedom, ecological inequality in the use of resources between developed and underdeveloped countries – all must be overcome. In the second place, it implies freedom of action and speech, as well as existential protection from violence and material want.

Every one of these points implicitly refers to poignant inequalities at the beginning of the twenty-first century. Thus, the program of left-wing liberalism describes a different world. Freedom is a leftist utopia.

*Utopia by
administrative
fiat is a dead end*



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Michael Müller

A New Look at Geologic History

The Anthropocene: the Age of Humankind

Willy Brandt's 1992 message to the Socialist International contained an urgent warning: politics can only achieve the good if it keeps up with the times. To be politically astute means to understand contexts and make decisions in the spirit of the Enlightenment. Only thus can politics provide reference points that can be translated into grand projects of reform. Brandt's appeal is more important than ever, since we live in a radically changed world in which we now face enormous, closely interwoven economic, social, and ecological challenges.

However, politics is less and less able to control events. It is built upon the institutions and normative assumptions characteristic of the nation-state, which long since have run up against transnational asymmetries, interdependencies, and physical limitations. Because it has been unwaveringly fixated on increasing gross domestic product, politics has become a hostage to economic growth. Ecological challenges likewise stymie any return to well-trodden paths. But instead of questioning previous assumptions, specialists analyze reality into minute parts, while decision-making is in thrall to the short-term concerns of the moment. Politics must keep abreast of, assimilate and put to use the latest research in the natural sciences. But this happens all too infrequently. Paul J. Crutzen, who was awarded the Nobel Prize for chemistry in 1995 for his research on ozone depletion, has proposed renaming the current period in the earth's geologic history the Anthropocene, the age that bears a human stamp, to distinguish it from the older term, the Holocene. Because of deficiencies in our ways of doing politics, Crutzen's suggestion has stirred up only a muted debate, mostly in specialist circles. But he is asking

for nothing less than a new way of surveying the ages of the world. In 2002 Mr. Crutzen justified his concerns in an article for the scientific journal *Nature*, in the following words: »Because of these anthropogenic emissions of carbon dioxide, global climate may depart significantly from natural behavior for many millennia to come. It seems appropriate to assign the term ›Anthropocene‹ to the present, in many ways human-dominated, geologic epoch, supplementing the Holocene—the warm period of the past 10–12 millennia.« A name change of this scope entails far more than a conceptual revision. It could have far-reaching consequences.

The International Stratigraphic Commission (ICS) of the London Geological Society will decide next year whether to adopt this new name for our geologic epoch. Through analysis of distinct rock layers laid down during the approximately 4.55 billion years of earth's history, the ICS creates a sequence that is organized chronologically and hierarchically into eons, eras, periods, and epochs. Plotting the geologic time scale is a complicated art that establishes strict criteria for naming.

The period during which the physical and intellectual capacities of human beings formed, known as the Quaternary, began about 2.6 million years ago. The present epoch is the Holocene, so named by the Third Geological Congress, which met in 1885. Despite both climatic differences among the earth's regions and natural climatic variability, the conditions of life have remained fairly stable, which has allowed human civilization to emerge. The decisive turning-point that initiated the Anthropocene was the Industrial Revolution, which began near the end of the eighteenth cen-

tury and triggered a hitherto unimaginable expansion and acceleration of economic and technical processes. The impact of human actions upon nature has been escalating ever since. Regardless of whether we consider the water cycle, the availability of land, species extinctions, or the chemistry and dynamics of the atmosphere, it took until the middle of the last century to record even a third of the ecological damages that have occurred overall during the last five hundred years.

Imitating the powers of nature, humanity has made itself into the strongest driving force behind geo-ecological processes. Crutzen calls this the geology of mankind. As he sees it, »mankind will remain a major environmental force for many millennia,« sapping nature's capacity to regulate itself. In 2007 the Geological Society collected considerable evidence in a comprehensive report suggesting that humankind has entered an age that is »without precedent in the last few millions years.«

The science journalist Christian Schwägerl translates Anthropocene as the »human age« and describes the calamity that has befallen the modern era as follows: »Humanity creates new landscapes, disrupts the global climate, empties the oceans, and invents new forms of life. The natural environment becomes a man-made environment, but it is plagued by myopia and plundering.« According to a report entitled the »Trilemma of Growth« (population growth, energy consumption, and climate change) issued by the Berlin Institute, human population has doubled to seven billion in just 44 years, while energy use has tripled and carbon dioxide emissions have increased fourfold during the same period.

The first battle, implementing the Kyoto Protocol, already has been lost. The poorest parts of the world are the victims of climate change. In just a few years, harvests are likely to decline by at least 20 % in 29 developing countries. According to United

Nations estimates, at least two billion people will be living in slums within ten years, often in ungovernable megacities facing cumulative problems of energy, nutrition, and waste-disposal. Peak oil was already reached in 2008, according to the International Energy Agency. Mobility may soon become a luxury. Ecological and social problems are closely connected everywhere.

In 2009 a 28-person team of scientists led by Johan Rockström and Will Steffen, and including Paul Crutzen, examined nine planetary boundaries that must not be exceeded if humankind is going to survive. In three of those – climate change, the nitrogen cycle, and loss of biodiversity – the boundaries have already been breached. Ozone depletion is the only one in which improvement has been detected. These dangers have to be seen against the backdrop of the addition of at least 1.5 billion people to the earth's population as well as the catch-up industrialization going on in many parts of the world. All this may yield negative synergies for our planet that we cannot even imagine at present. In any case the planetary boundaries indicate that a turning point has been reached in the modern age.

As natural sinks exceed their carrying capacity, finite resources are overexploited, and biodiversity is eliminated, natural boundaries will become a major factor limiting both the economy and society. Progress can no longer be about going faster, higher, and farther; instead, it must put quality above quantity. But that will be difficult, since growth in the gross domestic product has become a recipe for solving quotidian problems and seems to offer the best hope for a better life. To this very day, many people consider the value of GDP growth to be a truth that has been demonstrated beyond any shadow of a doubt. Overcoming this dependency on economic

The natural environment is becoming a human environment

growth is not merely a technical challenge; it calls for a new model of progress that rearranges the order of economic, social and cultural factors. However, Crutzen doubts that politics, the economy, and society are capable of such a drastic makeover. He therefore proposes a controversial plan for geo-engineering to slow down climate change and thus buy time for a more thoroughgoing reorientation.

The future path of development can no longer afford to underestimate the laws of nature and the finitude of natural support systems. Sustainability, the guiding principle of a socio-ecological transformation, is not compatible with the total removal of all temporal and spatial restraints and the untrammelled use of natural resources. The term Anthropocene suggests, first, that human beings are the cause of the earth's deterioration, and, second, that they can prevent ecological and, eventually, social collapse. This conclusion should compel us to ask: »How is progress possible today?« In other words, how we can create an economic and social order that is both ecologically sound and socially just? The task of social democracy is to merge its historical tradition as the party of democratic socialism with preservation of the conditions that make life on earth possible. These two commitments mutually reinforce each other. That is why it is not a matter of asking which deserves to be given higher priority, the economy, social welfare, or ecology, but instead of inquiring how we can create a good, sustainable society.

The current upheaval is far more dramatic than anything that has happened since the onset of the Industrial Revolution. By the eighteenth century, if not before, technical-scientific development was being understood as the basis of progress, which would in turn eliminate bondage and injustice. Economic growth and the improvement of scientific and technological know-how emerged as the core issue

of thought and action as well as the most crucial vantage point for envisioning future societies. Even more than enlightened liberalism, the workers' movement saw in the improvement of productive forces a solid foundation for the progressive development of society. Harnessing growth and scientific advancement was not regarded as an end in itself; rather, it was supposed to promote the social, political, and cultural emancipation of humanity. For the workers' movement, the point was more to transform the relations of production – i.e., class relations – than to change the modes of production. Nevertheless, the enormous achievements of technical progress fostered a pervasive feeling that »we are ushering in a new age.«

This sense of progress was never quite as naïve and unchallenged as many critics make it out to be. But in the course of the previous century it has been applied ever more narrowly to exclusively economic ends. The idea of European modernity has been turned upside down: The pathway to the goal became the goal itself, while the goal was boiled down to a measurable quantity. The glaring weakness in this world of progress – one that seems to operate on auto-pilot – is that the value of the natural systems that sustain life is alleged to be zero. This »forgetfulness of nature« (Günter Altner) puts man above nature.

However, by the 1970s the dream of perpetual prosperity was nearing its end, even in the economic sense. This was particularly true of Germany, where unusually high rates of growth coupled with a form of corporatism linking capital and labor had paved the way for the social market economy. The inflationary aftermath of the Vietnam War and the termination of the Bretton Woods system signaled the end of the welfare-state Keynesianism that had been practiced during the postwar era. »Democratic capitalism« (Wolfgang

Redefining the idea of progress

Streeck) bumped up against its limits, because:

- The globalization of markets driven as it is by economic, political, and cultural trends, limits the capabilities of nation-states
- Growth rates in advanced industrial societies have been slowing down
- Demographic change is increasing pressure on the financial viability of social welfare systems
- The overexploitation of nature becomes ecological self-destruction
- Policymakers have responded to all these trends by relapsing into monetarism and deregulation

Ever since then, attempts have been made to revive economic growth by experimenting with new ideas that only seem to work temporarily. The latter tend to be ideologically pegged to the short-term expectations of markets, behind which often lurk the speculative interests of financiers. Once again, the economy has begun to lose its solid moorings in society, this time on account of global financial capitalism.

Nevertheless, ecological boundaries are being reached and crossed, and nature is striking back, especially since technological advances are negated by the growth in the sheer quantity of production and the so-called rebound effect, i.e., the fact the savings potential of efficiency increases is not being (fully) realized. Now that matters are coming to a head, the alternatives we face are either to continue on our destructive course or begin to control our own behavior and its consequences. The fact that we have entered the Anthropocene does not mean that we should adopt an attitude of passive fatalism. To the contrary, it calls upon us to take the first steps toward de-

coupling the utilization of nature from economic development. The reconstructive road we must follow, and indeed its goal, do not entail vitiating the grand themes of modernity – emancipation, freedom, and justice: We should in fact strengthen our commitment to those themes by seeking a higher-quality economy and way of life. The optimal starting-point for the rebuilding process is systematically to reduce our use of fossil fuels, scarce resources, and »modularized« consumption of mass produced, standardized commodities manufactured mostly in low-wage countries. This can be attained

- in conjunction with economic, social, and cultural modernization as well as with socially just and ecologically compatible life styles and patterns of consumption;
- through integration into local and national politics and stronger ties to European and global-level policymaking; and
- by finding ways to generate economic growth without using up natural stocks

Ecological limits to growth also bring to a head the question of distribution at the national, regional (e.g., European), and global levels. One now has to recognize that issues such as an efficiency revolution via absolute reductions in energy consumption, consistent efforts to »renaturalize« industry (Udo Simonis), and sufficiency based on moderation and fair frugality belong together in the same discussion. Those considerations should encourage us to add a seventh article to the six preliminary ones articulated by Immanuel Kant in his late essay entitled *On Perpetual Peace*: »We must raise human existence permanently above greedy acquisitiveness, so we can reach a world that knows neither shortages nor surpluses.«



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