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WHAT IS TO BE DONE?: A FIRST STEP1/

NOTE: This essay takes as its presupposition my works on today's necrocapitalism, as perhaps summarised in the article "Where Are We: And a Radical Way Out," <https://independent.academia.edu/DarkoSuvin/Papers>. Please read that too.

Whoever does not hope/expect, shall not find the unexpected; arduous is searching for it and accessing it.
Heraclitus, 540-480 BNE

The issue which has swept down the centuries and which will have to be fought sooner or later is the people versus the banks.
Lord Acton, 1881

Why do the good lack tanks and airplanes?
Brecht, 1940

1. Where We Are

People seem to need a sense of history comparable to the sense of direction of the migrating birds.... We might wonder whether the enormous spiritual magnetism of Marx's work could be explained... by its revelation of a *historical sense*.
Victor Serge, diary note of 3/1/1944

1.1. TINA and WHOA

A Johns Hopkins University study in 1988 found that a 1% increase in US unemployment leads to 37,000 deaths (650 of which homicides), 4,000 more people in mental hospital population, and 3,300 more in prison population (Barnet and Cavanagh 292). Assuming a 1:23 ratio between US and world population in 2012, this would mean that a 1% increase in unemployment entailed 850,000 unnecessary deaths per year, to leave all other consequences aside. Of course, US statistics cannot be simply extrapolated to the world, the environment is different: the consequences may be, say, half or double that amount. But if we add to this the results of direct killings from the dozens of wars following 1989, and then the resulting starvation and diseases, we would get to staggering numbers of human misery. Those physically spared are as a rule deeply scarred mentally.

It is almost 40 years now that between 1,000 and 2,000 million people live in abject poverty, and a majority of the rest is inexorably sinking towards it, while environmental destruction is out of control. Instead of easing life, the credit system has monstrously expanded into the major means of transferring wealth from the population into the electronic coffers of the super-rich, flanked by dispossession of creators through biopiracy, copyright, patenting, and licensing. In short, we live in times deeply imprinted with the aura of seeming hopelessness, a closed horizon of decaying brutal capitalism forever. The immediate large scale destruction and the long-range fallout of capitalist wolfish ideology, and the despair that ensues, are strictly analogous to the poisoning of environment by nuclear power stations at Three Mile Island, Chernobyl, and Fukushima, and to the Asian-cum-African wars of imperial power: at whatever human cost acquired, billions of profits do not stink (*non olet*). The oppression, exploitation, and humiliation of probably 95% of world people, on the road to becoming true proletarians with only their muscles and brain convolutions for sale in order to

badly survive, is growing more and more intolerable. This upper-class Iron + Teflon Heel is argued intellectually in such gapingly nonsensical ways that it is often simpler for them not to argue it at all, but to state what amounts to: “What I define as X is X (say, any and every opposition to oppression, exploitation, and humiliation equals terrorism), and whoever does not agree will be killed.” Thus capitalism is rapidly destroying both human society and its seat in nature. It obviously has no long-term answer to its ongoing crisis. And yet there exists both a dire necessity to act against it and a wealth of experiences from the last 150 years of how to do it and how not to do it: we must at almost all costs get out of catastrophic capitalism. “The catastrophe is that it keeps going on like this” (Benjamin).

As the editors of the remarkable *n+1* US magazine put it two years ago: “What counts is history asking us a question — about our content or purpose in a society of accelerating insecurity, including our own — that one way or another we need to formulate as sharply as possible, since we answer it with our lives.”

What is first of all necessary is: wedding people’s deepest desires, from yearning to wrath, to a *historical orientation* toward a not only desirable but also possibly achievable goal. Without it, all action will be mere reaction, condemned to little success or none.

Let us on the radical Left — the only hope left in this historical moment, however faint — therefore go back to our roots: that is, Marx. Besides towering scholarly achievements for intellectuals, what is it in his work that inspired millions of badly, partly or not at all schooled people to organise into parties identifying with his horizon? It is that all he wrote was deeply imbued and shaped by a sense that the old world of class society can be wrenched around toward emancipation, justice, and pleasure: that is, destroyed and replaced by a classless society.

There are two components of this orientation-vector of desire, frustration, and hope: the destructive and the constructive one. The destructive is based on the contradiction born with and inside capitalism as he knew it — an unbridled competition passing into oligopolies and monopoly: it must collapse of its own weight. Today we see this most obviously in the *ecological collapse* of our air, water, and soil. And its twin is incessant and ever more destructive *global warfare*, cynically waged with the flimsiest of mendacious masking. Marx’s and all his orthodox followers’ long-range expectations are coming true in spades. This is accompanied by the yo-yos of manipulated economic crises, used for upper-class warfare against the majority and leading to deep immiseration and savagery. Most people feel it in their daily lives, anybody who thinks can see the anguish of millions, the skulls grinning between the headlines even of our Unique Thought mass media.

However, the constructive component of a possible alternative is the only one that prevents despair and utter cynicism, passive or active giving in to what prevails. This is what had to be — and was — destroyed first of all, in the most efficient Thatcherite slogan (blatantly stolen from the radical Left): TINA, There Is No Alternative. Which is why we must today say both *TINA*, There Is No Alternative to saving a liveable just society, and *WHOA*: We Have Our Alternative, and it is a just and liveable future history. Unless we spell this out, deep savagery will win. To talk about a refurbished Marx today, is to bet on and work for a different, more liveable future.

This is then why the collapse of the USSR in 1989 — and then of SFR Yugoslavia and all other European “socialist” countries, together with the slide of PR China into Confucian capitalism (adding insult to injury, their composite Kong Fu is called Karl Marx) — was such a watershed. Not because a real socialism **or** communism ceased then to oppose the all too real capitalism: that had in fact happened between a quarter and a half century earlier. But if socialism/communism did not really exist on the world map, it did exist, in spades, in the imagination of the millions of people I mentioned. They believed that, in spite of all, the “other camp” represented a different horizon, though maybe an arrested march toward it with many (avoidable) impurities. Like Trotsky, they could not let go of the huge hope that the world can make historical sense (in which they were right) and that this is proved by the existence of “the socialist camp” (in which they were wrong). The upshot is that in global ideology the precious baby was emptied out with the unbearably dirty bath-water. The overwhelming majority of what is nowadays called the Left — the Social Democrats —

are sterile administrators, serving capitalism even when they at times slightly slow down the rate of immiseration and despair.

Dialectically, however, the fall of the completely corrupt Soviet bloc means “another communism might also be possible” (Harvey 227). Planned, democratic, and enlightened social command over production and distribution of goods and the human metabolism with nature must be reinstated, or our species will perish. This road leads to the self-government of associated proletarians. In that sense, there are “millions of de facto communists among us” (Harvey 259): it remains for them to grow conscious of their own horizon and to associate.

1.2. The Limits of “Movements”

I do not dispute the good will and sincerity of various anti-capitalist protests that flared up in these last decades but it is obvious they have led nowhere. Their quasi-anarchist lack of durable organisation and historical memory is deeply beholden to the capitalist shrinkage of historical time fixated on the almost point-like present. This is of a piece with the movements being exclusively composed of students and white-collar or professional classes, a grouping that has *by itself* never led (or led to) revolutionary changes. For all the media spectacle, there never really was in time or space a “movement of movements”; the power and ravages of turbocapitalism have not been diminished a jot. We ought to recognise that movementism alone is as much of a dead-end as Stalinised pseudo-Leninism.

The main problem for us today may be encapsulated in what was earlier called a political line — that is the vector toward an overall, provisionally final goal, toward the horizon for any advance. Leninist parties always had a firm “party line,” though often wrong and subject to changes at the whim of the USSR leaders (from Stalin to Brezhnev). That is to say, they had at first a too narrow and inflexible or deficient political line, without sufficiently clear vectors toward the desired horizon, and at some point the horizon itself shifted to an anti-plebeian oligarchy. In reaction, movementism has refused any positive line except scattershot momentary slogans justly resenting the effects of capitalism on its component groups; that is to say, it had an unclear and rather blurred political line. Thus the Left pendulum swung from dogmatism to laxness, from erroneous definition to indefiniteness. Neither will work for us.

2. Who Are We (Proletarians, Plebeians Today)?

Est enim veritas index falsi et sui.

(Truth is the touchstone of falsity and of itself.)

Spinoza, 1677

But who are “we” — the *proletarians or plebeians* of today, whose deepest *interest* is to pull down the class edifice that stifles us? Marx rightly focussed on the central historical agent who should and could bring this about: the proletariat and its “historical mission” of saving the world. Without a believable antagonist, whose core at least has a deep faith in its historical mission of salvation, there is no hope of winning the battle against a supremely well organised enemy. The proletariat proved to be, I believe, a correct concept for those who have materially and morally lost almost everything and have everything to gain, and whose interests demand the toppling of the existing order: and yet, restricted to simply industrial workers, the theoretical horizon of all three Internationals proved wedded to a 19th Century reality. Marx was right insofar as our only hope lies in those who suffer. They too are (we are) alienated in our subaltern ways, and yet we are the only parts of society whose vital interests demand an end to destruction of people and values and a thoroughgoing justice and democracy. The successful revolutions as well as the more numerous absent and failed ones proved that a clear majority of all plebeians or proletarians has to coalesce into a historical anti-capitalist bloc if the corporations’, military, and media empires are to be overthrown. By plebeians or

proletarians I mean all people and social classes who live by their physical and/or mental work — thus also the peasants and the intellectuals — rather than by means of wealth and privileges from capital or the State, though due allowance should be made for the particular ingrained subalternities, especially of the working petty bourgeoisie (see point 4 below).

Do we have a historical mission? Yes, we potentially do. Is it guaranteed by what Marx once imprudently called “iron laws” (*eherne Gesetze*) and could just as well have called divine preordination? No, it is not. It is rather a matter of what he much better called “tendential laws.” Above all, TINA: socialism or barbarism — today we better say communism or savagery — are the possible alternatives. The mission is mandated, on top of unbearable physical and psychic misery, as much by our martyred forebears as by any bright futures. It is not religious doping we need, it is pessimism of the intellect and optimism of the will. Any Party we need will not be a Church.

Sociopolitically, what mass social forces or classes would find it their central interest to (and therefore should) oppose capitalist immiseration, exploitation, and degradation? A very provisional global look can identify at least three:

1/ First, there are hundreds of millions of peasants deprived of land, casual labourers, street vendors, and the like who constitute the overwhelming bulk of people in many parts of what was earlier called the South (Asia, Africa, Latin America) but has today — not only through immigrants but also through immiseration of the “poor Whites” — infiltrated the “North.” They vegetate, living from hand to mouth in ruined villages and urban slums, and their resistance is often expressed as casual vandalism and gangs. It is vulnerable to any pursuit, however degraded, making for sheer survival such as drug peddling or indeed a racist setting immigrants and “natives” against each other propagated by thuggish, well-financed political organisations (from al-Qaeda and ISIS to the US Tea Party and European neo-fascists). But on the other hand the deep if pent-up hatred can be channelled into protests, often responding violently to the violence they suffer, against home eviction, deprivation of water and electricity, and against oppression or austerity (especially around the Mediterranean).

In this group I would include the rapidly dwindling pre-capitalist remnants of indigenous peoples in former colonies of the metropolitan “Whites.” They range from the famous armed-cum-media resistance of the Zapatista ELZ in southern Mexico and the long-standing insurgencies in central India to protests in North American and above all in the Andean countries, where they have even come to power in Bolivia. Obviously, they can and did have success only when fused with intellectuals and traditions of the labour movement.

I don’t know of any good name for this constellation and shall call them the immiserated on the margins of society.

2/ The wage-labour working class has so far proved impossible to suppress — somebody has still got to produce the material things that any society needs. From debatable ILO data of 2010-11 it seems to comprise 1.6-1.7 billion people of which more than one billion are in the service sector. Ca. 670 million people are mainly in China and the rest of Asia, with remnants in the classical industrial countries of Europe and North America. Its trade union (syndical) organisations have been mainly either suppressed or corrupted into servants of capitalism, but traces of former militancy do remain here and there (as in Italy’s FIOM). Their strong influence has in a very few cases (Brazil, South Korea, South Africa) had a significant impact towards Welfare State and a better democracy. However, bereft of real power within strong political alliances, they usually commit the fatal mistake of engaging only in day-to-day point-like protests over pay cuts, closures, and similar indignities instead of combining them with a general anti-capitalist stance, and have thus in the last one or two generations been on the whole isolated and defeated.

3/ A great majority of women, excepting the token female capitalist CEOs and shopping-addicted rich (or poor) wives or daughters. Women’s position is determined by “[c]apitalist patriarchal structures [which] help to secure an exploitative system of social differences by way of ideologies of gender... [sustaining, managing, and maximizing] the appropriation of surplus labor through a variety of complex arrangements”; for “[h]istorically the accumulation of profit has relied

on the cheap though socially necessary labor of reproducing labor power through women's unpaid or very low paid work in the home" (Hennessy 25 and 66). They are doubly oppressed, by public and home work, by often *de facto* and not rarely *de iure* political barriers. The growing feminisation both of the world labour force and of poverty makes their resentment and acumen, thus a strong place for materialist and non-sectarian feminism in the anti-capitalist alliance, indispensable for any real radical change.

4/ Last not least, there are what Therborn calls the "white-collar masses." They range from high-school and university students, who have played a leading role in all protests of these last years, to (often very) prominent intellectuals, but their bulk is found among the "middle" classes: office workers, lower and middle managers, intelligentsia. This comprises the internet addicts and specialists, torn between "cybernetic communism" (Shulamith Firestone) and monopolistic profiteering of the Bill Gates type. They are threatened by capitalism's economic devastation but also fearful of falling into the first two groups, of being proletarianised. Though in an equally fragile position, their ideologies are therefore heterogeneous and fluctuating, quickly flammable and quickly subsiding (see the North American Occupy movement). The great majority of intellectuals no longer speaks truth to power: they have been bamboozled or bought off. Nonetheless, their radical wing is indispensable for any durable anti-capitalist coalition with the first three groups. Alternatively, they can be manipulated to turn against popular alliances, as a good part were in the Chile of 1973 and more recently in Venezuela. Important parts can turn to the right and largely fall under the sway of racism, neo-fascism, and all kinds of dictatorships, as in France, Hungary or Egypt.

Significantly, the only real attainment of power by the Left was a coalition of the four above groups, in Venezuela, Bolivia and now Greece. Surrounded by oceans of capitalism, they remain very vulnerable to banks and tanks.

Much more should be added to the above modified class analysis. It only suggests the revolutionary potential of the gender/sex divide, in the age spectrum it only mentions the young, slighting the pensioners; and it does not factor in ecology or the racial double exploitation. It is only a beginning. But it makes clear that convergence of these four groups is the only way out. In particular, we intellectuals have to draw radical conclusions from capitalism's "sharp de-classing of intellectuals. Our precious credentials are increasingly useless for generating income and — let us hope — social prestige, too." (*n+1*). The importance of overwhelming ideological disorientation, that results in not only the "middle" but even the upper fractions of the proletarian classes often chasing after a spurious (and unattainable) *embourgeoisement* while economically falling into atomised marginality, should be highlighted and singled out for the most urgent and sharpest critique.

I shall end by discussing one crucial point: What is our lever? This means that we must talk about political organisation: it is a key link where we are weakest. And that in turn presupposes at least an initial discussion of both our horizons and our "culture" or better imagination and consciousness. For, as Wittgenstein taught us, "seeing that" is necessarily also "seeing as," and furthermore to interpret something as such-and-such is an action. All seeing, physical and imaginary (I would add), co-defines a possible world.

3. Decolonising the Mind: Horizon and Imagination

Theoretical rule: the eye cannot function without the brain; there is no brain without socialised presuppositions; therefore there is no innocent eye. Every reading of something as such-and-such will establish its own, value-laden meaning out of a text's

sense. Every reading is a denial (ideational suppression) of other readings, meanings, and values
D. Suvin, 1988

3.1. I can be brief about the horizon. Faced with international mega-turbocapitalism, it too must be on an international or planetary scale. Faced with the turning of classes to the new “gated communities” of the triune financial-military-communicational rule, it must be a classless society. By that I do not mean a society without articulations, because they should instead become most rich, but one without antagonistic class interests, where what is good for rulers — less than 5% of people — spells mass dying and blights for the ruled — more than 95%. In other words, it can only be an update of the generous 19th-Century socialist and 20th-Century communist movements, before their corruption by power, expanding upon the hints of Marx and the plebeian movements following him as well as upon those of all useful thinkers of emancipation regardless of label. (I would historically begin with much Engels, Kropotkin, Lenin, Luxemburg, Gramsci, and Brecht, but little if any Bakunin, Proudhon, and Stalin.) Prominent artistic thinkers and doers would to my mind be among them (for example in poetry, say, from Homer, Tu Fu, and the tankas to singers such as Leadbelly, Billie Holiday, Juliette Greco, Bulat Okudzhava or the Beatles). All of them are the best antidote to what a good theologian (Hinkelammert) has called “the ideological weapons of death.”

3.2. The sea-change of the global social imagination, largely for the worse, can be most easily seen at work in our *language* (but also in all arts etc.). The semantics of defining horizons and possibilities has changed radically since the early 1970s because of cultural or ideological subalternity to imperial capitalism. One example: what Marx called the “general intellect,” that is, the collective power of human intelligence, has been disjoined from economics and politics, resulting in a welter of fragmented, impoverished, and sectarian languages. The dominant *gleichgeschaltet* (uniformly inculcated) language is blind worship of Mammon and capitalist profit, even in areas never before in history subjected to its destructive swath. It is accompanied by a willingly tolerated, indeed in good part encouraged, discourse of separatist ethnicity and nationalism, mostly invented in the 19th Century or even *ad hoc*. Certainly ethnic hatred has been purposely constructed and planned by rulers of small statelets, and adopted not only by resurgent and vociferous fascist or semi-fascist parties across the globe but also by all governments across the world as a welcome diversion from the (literally) deadly central problem of class warfare from above, that makes for lesions and dispossession of the peoples. Accompanying it is the discourse on terror by all the major ruling States and governments, which totally suppresses two decisive facts. First, that in any tenable definition of terror — as exemplary killing popularised in order to cow the rest of the people — the major terrorists are the USA and its European allies in their undeclared wars (see two essays on this in my *Darko*, 263-306); and second, that at stake in this warfare are major economic and strategic interests of all major States and of new criminal classes in minor States. It leads to major population shifts both in “ethnic cleansing” and in mass attempts to flee killings and starvation in Asia and Africa, which migrations are then used for further exacerbations of ethnic fears and hatreds.

As a result of all these changes, the two major classes that could and did counteract violent capitalism, the physical and the intellectual workers, as well as the non-metropolitan and non-imperial nations that found a chance for independence in the Cold War interstices, have been pulverised and reduced to isolated little groups. On the whole, these classes and nations have no major political organisation representing them; those ideologically still Left are reduced to quarrelling small sects, sometimes with interesting views and always based on the deep enmity of working masses against their exploitation, but with no political weight. Very many disgusted and/or browbeaten people have sunk into atomic individualism, apathy, and solitude, at best alleviated by small privatised circles. As I suggested earlier, the exacerbated Rightwing movements, the more or less fascist nationalists often supplied by the rich and the secret services, have fared better in

attracting popular support, and in a number of countries are now part of the governing establishment and often its spearhead in fostering wars and ethnic killings.

The radical reorientation in Post-Modernism, where domination of financial capital supplanted that of industrial capital, is supplanting production of mass goods and mass employment by “production” of huge riches for 1% of people and huge miseries for roughly 95% (the rest is what London called Mercenaries of the rulers). This had two main inhuman fallouts. First, the image and feeling of society as *community* of people and actions: community has become non-working and unworkable (in Nancy’s term, *desoeuvrée*), together with communism and communion. The traditional networks of family, class, etc. solidarity have been mostly destroyed by the ruthless libido of class domination. Instead we have tsunamis of apathy and cynicism, and small quasi-communities — from the couple to erotic or at any rate affective, religious (orthodox or new age), artistic, and other small groupings. These could of course be wonderful if connected to an empowering societal community, but remain fragmentary and disconnected, communities as crutches. And yet, human beings are possible only as “being with” (other people, things, shared ideas, affects, prospects, and horizons). The greatest perversion is when such quasi-communities turn into “damned communities” (Schininà) of class and ethnic hatred, into groupings for killings, exploitation, and humiliation. In brief, we cannot have true communities unless we get rid of capitalist domination.

Second, what was suppressed and lost by the capitalist onslaught, well defined by its intellectual executors as instilling “weak thought” into opposition to capitalism, is the concept of *destination or aim*. Unless we have a goal there can be no way, only errance and permanent desert homelessness. When we have one, we can search for a way that is also a method. The goal is justice and safety for all: socialism, or better, communism. Community is inextricably linked to communism.

This also means that the flow of history as change is being denied: there remains a present of permanent shock and sensations, well represented by both the financial class warfare from above and the “shock and awe” of US bombing wars.

The pit dug by murderous financial capitalism is thus exquisitely and horrifically totalising. To dig ourselves out of it, to “decolonise the mind” (Ngugi), we have to work simultaneously upon horizon, imagination and/or culture as well as on political organisation. Putting practice as the key, I shall in the rest of this essay concentrate on the last element. The question of questions is: what kind of political organisation do we need as an Archimedean lever?

4. Neither With You nor Without You: On an Anti-capitalist Political Party in the 2010s

sic ego nec sine te nec tecum vivere possum,
et videor voti nescius esse mei.
aut formosa fores minus, aut minus inproba, vellem....
[Thus I cannot live either without or with you,
And it seems I cannot reach a conclusion.
O that you were either less beautiful or more faithful!]
Ovid, *Amores*, ca. 10 BCE

4.1. Not With You: Arguments against the Need for Some Variant of a Tightly Organised Nucleus in the Anti-Capitalist Movement

4.1.1. “Any permanent leadership and mandatory coordination of ongoing important activities from a centre is counter-productive.”

This stance is very popular not only among anarchists but also in the 3/4 anarchist “Movement of movements,” say from Seattle through Dakar to Occupy. It arose on the basis of the evident failure of both national communist parties, with an initially global and rigidly top-to-down structure.

Anarchism is in some ways, in its suspicion of organising from top downwards, a needful component of any viable anti-capitalist political organisation to come. Let me stress that both anarchists and leninists bear a heritage of nasty historical sins of intolerance and hatred against each other; to the contrary, both must be welcomed in a popular front against turbocapitalism — on condition that they agree to the flexible but firm organising discussed in this essay. However, faced with the full computerisation, globalisation, and militarization of neo-imperialism, the anarchists' artisan-shop tenet cited at the beginning is ridiculous, not only counter-productive but guaranteeing failure. How could workers in metropolitan countries strike against a multinational which will simply move the plant/s they are striking in and against into an even more impoverished country? Only by re-creating some tighter analogy to all the three Internationals, that is, working for and in a coordinated — and in some crucial moments momentarily but clearly hierarchical — set of all sincere and consistent anti-capitalist movements, parties, people, and groups. This coordination demands some kind of a central authoritative body, elected and recallable, probably not fixed for a too long time in any one place or continent, but in emergencies to be obeyed.

This holds also for the national organisations of such an international movement, say for strikers against whom strike-breakers from a poorer region or class are used. A branching national, and where needed international, force is indispensable that could act just as quickly as the multinational's computer links, to speak to the strike-breaker in their lingo and with the knowledge of their background. Or should the strike wish (as it ought to) to affect all the plants of the corporation or maybe even the whole industrial branch, or the boycott wish to affect its products widely, such a force is the only realistic possibility to go toe to toe with the capitalists and the armed forces.

Inductively, thus, counterarguments are strong.

4.12. “If not unnecessary — that is, if it may work well for a given purpose — any permanent leadership and mandatory coordination of ongoing important activities from a centre is highly liable to bureaucratisation of such a centre, which would do more harm than good to the movement as a whole.”

Objection: there is no movement which would be a formless mass, each has a kind of nucleus, probably changing at its periphery, with which it stands or falls. There are only two questions. First: will such a centre be of short or long duration, and will it be only local or nationally viz. internationally coordinated? Second, is there a need for coordination not only in space but also, and perhaps primarily, in time — so that experiences of struggles do not remain confined to the immediate space and time but are popularised, sifted, and generalised for future needs? The coordination in space has been accepted by even the most anarchist movements; but it is the need to have bodies existing and minds functioning in coordination between the peak manifestations which is theoretically denied — less so in practice, which then however stops halfway. Yes, bureaucracy (or better, oligarchy) is a deadly blight to be combated, but the equation of any permanent — even if elected, changeable, and responsive — central body with bureaucracy is logically inadmissible. A sarcastic remark has it that the equation of organisation with degeneration is very similar to the Christian dogma of the Fall (Hallas 11). It testifies to the deep mistrust for working people within the anti-capitalist movements, that is, to the tenet that they are not capable of bringing about a durable collective and democratic control from the basis upward. Contrariwise, I see no virtue in a weak organisation or disorganisation: “the only weapon of the proletariat is organisation” (Lenin).

True, if the uselessness of any mandatory coordination from a centre is unproven this does not mean that its contrary is proven — clearly, no leadership can be faultless, and permanent leaderships are prone to degeneration. Yet it is also clear that in complex societies, such as the capitalist one, there is no effective activity without formal organisations. This does not mean that any organisation or coordination from a centre is always useful. We can only say that a permanent elected and responsible leadership can in most overarching circumstances be much more useful than its absence.

And just what are these circumstances cannot be established by general propositions but only by induction from particular situations

4.13. “The experience first of the social-democratic and then of the communist parties is a clear proof of propositions 4.11 and 4.12.”

Let us then proceed inductively. The proofs are indeed very numerous and very impressive. The German Social-democratic party as well as its Trade Unions have already at the beginning of 20th Century been so bureaucratized that the sociologist Robert Michels could base on them his hypothesis on “the iron law of oligarchy” in political parties. The same holds for the U.K. Labour and the proverbially top-heavy bureaucracy of its Trade Unions, and more or less for all the parties of the Second International. All of them not only failed but did not even attempt to stop the enormous slaughterhouse of the 1. World War, where the blown up and poisoned cannon fodder was supplied by tens of millions of their proletarian members. It is hard to imagine a worse betrayal by the organising centre against its members than this (except perhaps in High Stalinism).

As to the history of “bolshevised” parties after coming to power: Lenin had at least two models for a socialist party. The 1903-04 one was conceived for illegal underground work under fierce tsarist repression, so that its horizon of strict conspiracy and strong centralisation is valid for these circumstances only. Should imperial capitalism evolve to a full Iron Heel (a cyber and nanophysical version of London’s novel), we might need to dust off and reuse this first model. In 1905 and after the 1917 October Revolution, when the party was legal, Lenin immediately switched to mass party forms with a full democratic centralism, that is, elections from below upward and freedom of fractions and conflicts in all leading organs, including the Central committee and Politbureau, and a congress electing these organs practically each year. I shall return to this second model of Lenin’s.

Unfortunately, the full economic and demographic collapse of Russia, that left the communist party as the only functional coordinating entity, forced Lenin in 1921 amid a full retreat to NEP to urge a ban on fractions for one year. Because of his illness and Stalin’s arrival as the secretary of the Party, this ban was never withdrawn, so that in half a dozen years the communist party adopted, by means of mass assumptions of new members and purges, the Stalinist model of bureaucratic oligarchy and terror, which is truly monolithic. This model’s only connection to the main Bolshevik tradition up to 1921 is Stalin’s system of lies and murders of all “old Bolsheviks”: it must be completely rejected.

Finally, we must remember the elementary logical rule that from particular positions no general proof follows (*ex propositionibus particularibus nihil sequitur*). Therefore neither the 19th Century German social-democracy nor Stalin’s All-Union Communist Party proves anything insofar as 2.11 above — leadership and mandatory coordination from a centre — is concerned. Nonetheless, both of these parties remain exceptionally bitter historical warnings of dead ends that must be always kept in mind.

4.2. Nor Without You: Arguments for the Need of Some Variant of a Neo-Communist Party

If we take Lenin’s model for a legal party as the initial hypothesis, it should be supplemented by many experiences after it from two groups of sources. The first one would begin with Gramsci and continue with an analysis of positive and negative aspects within “socialism” from Yugoslavia, China, and Cuba — and perhaps also from Vietnam, sandinist Nicaragua, and today’s Bolivia, if and when they become accessible. The second one would rework experiences from within bourgeois (or better *citoyen*) democracy, especially of its early, not yet fully capitalised forms, as well as from libertarian anarchist organising, while rejecting its dogmatic tendency towards individualist chaos and inefficiency. Concerning our horizons, two questions remain foremost. Generally, how should such a model look today? In particular, is Lenin’s insistence on a political party that both evolves stances and ensures their carrying out still necessary, and therefore acceptable?

4.21. I shall first delve into the second question, because it is a preliminary and important one. Following Hallas (15-16), I shall draw upon the difference between *a vanguard* and *an elite*. The vanguard or avant-garde is a military term for the foremost detachment of an advancing army or naval force: it is neither better nor worse than the main force but functionally differentiated from it by scouting and exploring the terrain into which the whole force should advance. Metaphorically, it means a person or usually a group that „leads the way“ or „is at the forefront“ of new ideas and attempts, for example in culture (it was actually coined by Saint Simon for the arts). It has sense as a metaphor for political struggle and opposition only if behind it there follows the main body, or at least if it can be reasonably expected that this main group will follow in a not too distant future. Therefore, this metaphor — useful in its own time, and perhaps again in the future — should be used sparingly; I shall return to it.

To the contrary, elitism is based on the claim that obvious differences between the capabilities, consciousnesses, and experiences of people are — possibly biologically — hardwired into them. Only a (very or somewhat) small elite is capable of leading society, while the mass is perpetually incapable for independent decision-making and for administering the business of community — for *self-government*. This was formulated first and best by Plato's *Commonwealth (Politeia)*. At the centre of his dialogue is the figure and type of the Ruler class as the Knower. It signifies and embodies the fusion of Knowledge and Power indispensable for a perfect (class) community or State. Here is a key passage from Plato's Book 4:

Then, in the State we just founded, is there some knowledge possessed by some of the citizens that doesn't judge about any particular matter but about the State as a whole and the way it should best comport itself both internally and toward other States?... [A] whole State would be wise because of the smallest class and part of it, namely the governing or ruling one. And to this class... belongs a share of the knowledge that alone among all other kinds of knowledge is to be called wisdom (*sofia*). (428c-429a, modified from the Gruber-Reeve translation)

The trajectory of the communist parties in power, from Lenin to Tito, Mao, Castro, and Ho — to limit ourselves only to the leaders of true people's revolutions — seems to fit into Plato's horizon.

Thus, modern elitism and vanguardism have on the Left a common denominator in the hegemonic Party that ought to use its Power to disalienate from above the working people and educate it to use direct democracy from below. Even after a revolutionary seizure of power, the interval or “transition” of such practical and theoretical education would be most onerous, as in it there must simultaneously meld the defence of the revolution against the unceasing menace of world capitalism with the radical reshaping of the whole economy and way of life. Such a period demands an intimate, unceasing and growing, fusion of Power and Knowledge. Since this is historically supposed to be a first step towards the dismantling of any oligarchic form of that selfsame fusion, it poses a fundamental grave problem, on which communist parties after Stalin foundered (I approach it theoretically in „15 Theses“).

However, as opposed to vanguardism, elitism does not believe that the main force can ever rejoin and fuse with the vanguard; or in other words, that empirical differences between people's capacities stem for the main and decisive part from societal alienation that can be combated and changed. Elitism (say a professional Church) is the necessary ideology of every ruling class — today, of all capitalists and bourgeois power-holders. In socialist and communist parties it has always been the sign of a most dangerous anti-democratic and hierarchical degeneration.

To the contrary, I hold that the metaphor of vanguard, of a smaller group of precursors that can be the first to notice important aspects of the matter at hand and report it to an existing or incubating main body, remains on our agenda, on condition strict democracy from below is preserved both in it and society as a whole. The reason is that the alienation Marx named 170 years ago nowadays pervades the whole society in ever stronger and more profuse forms, including necessarily the plebeians or proletarians (people and classes without property over the means of production). To

bridle probable excesses by the vanguard, it should be self-consciously critical and shun both privatised despair and immodest claims. However, the main proletarian body obviously suffers badly from the pitilessly growing pressure of the class warfare from above by financial and other capitalism against it (cf. Buffett's interview) — and against the more or more proletarianised middle class — so that it cannot be foreseen when it will seriously join in an active resistance. Readiness is all.

This prominently includes readying through our discussions and practices the proper organisational form for a great number of proletarians joining the vanguard.

4.22. A further illumination may be found by briefly paraphrasing Gramsci's argument in favour of a unifying political centre from the point of view of *consciousness needed for durable radical activity*. Clear-headed analysis and planning for an efficient politics need not only cognitions but also techniques of cogitation or thinking that do not follow so-called "common sense." For the latter is a consciousness deeply infected by banalities and errors stemming from the alienated practice of class society, and deposited in language itself as well as in groundless pre-scientific beliefs which he calls "lore." The *stance* of this "everyday philosophy" is as a rule uncritical, haphazard, and fragmentary. No doubt, a critical consciousness needed for historical change can only come about if based on the naive reasoning of mass participants in changing society, on the popular "implicit" philosophy: but on condition that it be further articulated, redone, and refined into coherent and explicit political knowledge. Only thus may a social group come about which possesses common ways of thinking and acting, that is, a unified stance towards all events. This makes possible a dialogue or feedback for mutual education and schooling between the common sense of given popular strata and some intellectuals of a new, committed type — who function somewhat as metal hoops holding together a barrel; it issues in the formation of a political party as a "collective intellectual" (see Haug and Thomson).

4.23. Thus, what could today be a useful analogue to Lenin's and Gramsci's party with a truly democratic centralism, as an activist collective thinker amid a different but equally acute generalised crisis of values, beliefs, and institutions? Let me leave aside whether it should be called communist or even party (though this is ideologically not an indifferent matter so that I shall continue using those terms) and concentrate on its horizons and forms. There is much we don't know but we can begin with negations

First, such a party, however small at the beginning, must be composed of individuals who agree with a platform of aims based on a stance and method incorporating Marx, that is, with the horizon of an anti-capitalist emancipation of each and all. However, a general agreement is not enough. The party must right away have at least two further features: *activity* in some intelligently chosen fields which strongly concern proletarians as citizens and as class, and *mutual learning* among party members on the basis of theory plus practice, as training for what is probably impending. This holds especially for interaction between the two indispensable components of such a party, manual and mental workers. It ought to be assumed that, being under constant onslaught of a shameless and technically efficient propaganda of individualism, all of us are more or less infected by such misanthropic stance, so that only by means of active work and mutual learning from each other and from critical reflection on our great ancestors we may be able to gradually recover. Our horizon would remain what Luxemburg called "the fusion of science and workers." A publishing activity in printed and electronic forms, and whenever possible with video and media components, for both internal use and external propaganda will be quite indispensable; it should feed into reading and viewing discussion and dissemination groups.

Second, such a party must needs right away function as a full democracy with as much centralism as necessary for increasing efficiency — neither less nor more. As Lenin's original proposals insisted, the vanguard party must be subjected to "rules inspired by the Paris Commune, aiming to limit political professionalism: elected representatives to be paid a wage equal to that of a

skilled worker, constant vigilance against favours and privileges for office-holders, responsibility of those elected to the electors” (Bensaïd). All forms of democracy, not only primarily electoral (though it too should be used) but direct and associational, such as plenums, actives, rotation of functions, etc., are welcome on condition that they increase efficiency. Strong conflicts of opinions accompanied by mutual respect are indispensable for a party that would not be simply a sect. Only by such means, cross-checked by practical work, can clear and sound stances crystallise. Still, all such opinions and stances must be within the platform adopted at the beginning. It can (and certainly from time to time will have to be) be filled in and changed, but only if the horizon defined in the prior paragraph and some central orientations towards it remain fixed and unchanging. To formulate such orientations and “planks” of the platform is, together with immediate practical activities among proletarians, the main purpose of such a party.

All of the above, based on a national party model, would have to obtain, with due modification, for an association on the international scale too.

Paradoxically, as Bensaïd notes, the very invention of such a party as a *pars pro toto* of the working class (or classes, as I would say) opens up not only a possibility of the part arrogating itself dominance instead of the whole class bloc, but also the opposite possibility of the class finding other, plural organisational forms for its different and multiple interests, as has in fact often happened with the trade unions.

5. What Now?: Initial Proposals

Bread is the people’s first right.

Louis Antoine de Saint-Just

5.0. The central red thread of any anti-capitalist platform is necessarily a redistribution of wealth from the upper, most bloated and necrophiliac 5% (cf. Banerjee) to the working 95% of people.

5.1. What immediate and semi-permanent planks — to be supplemented or changed whenever needed — might be necessary to begin with? I have no full panoply to offer, But I propose that they include at least the following points, as an initial and not exhaustive red-green-womanist strategic proposal, all geared to preventing and beginning to reverse further immiseration, and to be supplemented by short duration tactics:

- Financial capitalism needs and means violence, culminating in literal war; today’s utterly predatory and ruthless capitalism is out to annihilate all forms of human commonalty except the monetary nexus. It is the real theological extremism of our times, of which the so-called Islamists are only a pale copy: a plague on both their houses! Therefore we must vehemently oppose all violence and war except in clear self-defence, for example against an overt assault on the central interests of a people. As long as capitalism exists, we must reject NATO and any military expense which is not directly connected to a country’s self-defence; we must firmly orient ourselves towards an all-people territorial defence — of the Swiss type — and a strict watch on hi tech specialist units such as aviation and tanks while rotating their membership (remember Allende!).
- We must vehemently oppose the immiseration of working people dictated by finance and other capitals, that is, insist on strong democratic control of banks (with the horizon of their take-over) and of monetary policy, and reject two centers of capitalist power. First, a refusal of the really existing European Union -- a good idea if based on socialist democracy but today twisted into a new prison-house of peoples, enforcing hunger and want by banks (Greece) but if need be also by tanks (Ukraine). It is now increasingly a Dickensian debtor prison, monstrously enlarged to continental proportions; it has shown itself to be unreformable Second, a refusal to bow to the international organisations of capital — the World Bank, WTO, and IMF, including the most

pernicious TTIP proposal — whenever they want to impose immiserating forms of economic life. Forms of an exit that would be as painless as possible from the Euro ought to be carefully but quickly prepared, and national debt servicing made conditional upon a “haircut” of over half of the debt (cf. Lapavitsas).

- We must wage a stubborn fight for a minimum wage and minimum citizen income for any person over 16, for dignified pensions, and for healthcare, water, education, and other “commons” available to the whole population; this can only be done by a predominantly State and workers’ cooperative property, in a transitional mixed economy using private capital only when clearly advantageous for people and ecology (see Levi, points 5-6).
- We must wage a stubborn fight for ecological justice: the care of forests and wetlands, refusal of atomic energy, use of railways and bicycles instead of cars, reduction of energy needs through conservation, etc.
- We must unceasingly attempt to find forms of efficient internationalist struggle, involving other European — especially southern — nations but not only them (see a bit more on this below in 5.2).
- We must face up as soon as possible to the unprecedented flood of refugees from countries being annihilated by international capitalism, coming to Europe from Africa (“Black”) and Western Asia (“Islamic”). In the years and decades to come their numbers will only swell. They are our neighbours, our brothers and sisters under the skin; tomorrow we might be in the same situation. Furthermore, those escaping death by hunger and bombs are on the whole unstoppable. And finally, their work is indispensable for the continuation of whatever human welfare (medical insurance, pensions, and similar) may survive in European societies. They must be given full rights of asylum Europe-wide, from the overt and hidden warfare they are fleeing (cf. Iveković 245-58 and *passim*), and possibilities of employment. If we do not take good care to set up networks for liaising with them and with the places they arrive into, they will be used for a swell of fascist chauvinisms that will destroy all our other efforts.

While tactical compromises accepting less than full implementation of these points may well be necessary, especially at the beginning, the planks ought never to be forgotten and downplayed for tactical purposes: they are the reason for the party’s being. As our enemies would immediately know, such a party would be against the present financial capitalism, thus in a way Keynesian but in its final horizon clearly Marxian or communist. To this banner of ours we ought to add another colour (green), but we must never be ashamed of the red, for it means blood and life.

5.2. I cannot here develop what the great Lucio Magri has called “A New Communist Identity”, but I shall quote some of his central insights (see more in my “Prescience”). He grounds it in two converging overarching factors. On the one hand, today’s technologies and access to information make possible both reduction of working time and decentralisation of power – in his words, “today the idea of communism in its original and richer meaning of emancipation is for the first time historically ripe,” without the fixation on economic progress and on the State as the only alternative to a dominant market. It is what Brecht in the 1950s called the possible habitability of our planet. On the other hand, capitalism cannot deal with the environment, since that needs long-term planning and a distance from the profit motive. Therefore, qualitative instead of quantitative production is within reach but foreclosed in favour of a “production of illusions and of the ephemeral” that denies the needs of health, education, or space planning. Today’s capitalism has as its structural precondition the irrelevance of politics, used as a hollow ritual for decisions reached by the new rulers, a small economic and technocratic oligarchy in the international economic and political centres, bereft of any democratic constraint. This degeneration can be opposed only by “the full development of political democracy.” The new world of direct global power by financial capital and multinational corporations needs an international opponent, Rousseau’s and Tito’s *people* as “a collective political subject able to implement a long-range overall project.” And that opponent cannot be incisive without a Gramscian party (or group of parties) as “stimulus and synthesis of a complex system of autonomous and

permanent political movements.” Syriza, Podemos, and some Latin American coalitions can provide some first pointers to such a stimulus and synthesis, on condition their internal focus be sharp enough and external enemies, financial and military, be kept at bay.

However, two preconditions obtain. First, in capitalism exploitation and class warfare, today overwhelmingly from above, constitute an overarching framework which unifies all other contradictions. “Capital itself is the great unifier which subordinates every aspect of social production and reproduction, remodelling the function of the family, determining the social division of labour, and submitting humanity’s conditions of social reproduction to the law of value. If that is indeed the case, a party, and not simply the sum of social movements, is the best agent of conscious unification” (Bensaïd).

Second, it is obvious that international capitalism, for all its cutthroat competition, has learned from Leninism the need for unity when facing its enemy: the working people of the world. In turn, we must learn the same lesson, using more flexibility than Lenin found possible. No State can fight the world capitalism’s financial and military powers alone: *Tsipras docet*. Communist internationalism of Marx’s and Lenin’s kind must be our horizon, or we shall be picked off singly.

5.3. Last not least, two decisive points I had to slight:

First, in his Preface to *The History of Russian Revolution*, Trotsky compared, in a by now somewhat paleotechnic metaphor, the relationship of “mass” and “party” to component parts of a steam engine: the masses are the potential energy of steam, the party is a cylinder with piston which condenses and transmits that energy. Without the mediating apparatus, energy would dissipate in vain, but without the energy potential, there would be no movement (19). My essay has only initially mentioned, in section 2, the working people as fount of energy, but without an intimate and permanent connection with them, and with the young, any machine will work more and more feebly.

Second, we, the inevitably communist Left, may well fail. Then we would get to the full savagery of total warfare and total immiseration, an Iron Heel which would bury both us and competitive capitalism in favour of full neofascism. We ought always be aware of this inescapable alternative.

Note

1/ The decision that we must again talk about and work for a suitably updated communism arose from a life-long commitment but was sparked by my work on an overview of SFR Yugoslavia from 2009 on, a version of which was published as *Samo jednom se ljubi*. It can be seen in some collateral essays from those years, including those in the Bibliography below. The original somewhat larger version of the book, *Splendour, Misery, and Potentialities: An X-ray of Socialist Yugoslavia*, is now forthcoming from Brill. A number of works in these last years have encouraged me further in pursuing these horizons, most prominently those of W.F. Haug, David Harvey, Lucio Magri, and Alain Badiou. Further, I am happy to see that in the Left intellectual community there is a growing consensus on a sufficiently flexible but finally rigorous party formation. However, this essay, written over the last three years, does not pretend to mention, much less exhaust, all the main points to be touched upon either about communism or about a new party form.

I acknowledge the stimulus from Francis Mulhern in section 1.1, Göran Therborn in 2 and Jean-Luc Nancy in 3.2, and from exchanges with the Novi Sad comrades Gordana Stojaković, Maja Solar, Andrea Jovanović, and Lazar Atanasković in 2 and 4.11, even where my categorisations might differ from theirs. My special thanks go to the critiques of Mladen Lazić, Eric Canepa, and of my friend from university days Marcelline Krafchick, who allowed me to correct many imprecisions, and to Michael Stöppler.

As to the “mass social forces” I envisage in 2, I see them as classes, or fractions and groupings thereof. We should heed Hennessy’s warning: “...the retreat from class analysis... in the eighties and

nineties [seems] one of neoliberalism's most effective ideological weapons" (12). What I mean by "class" can be found in my „On Class," especially in its Introduction. In particular, for the stance that the great majority of women is a potential „class-like“ ally of anti-capitalism I refer to the work of N. Hartsock, D. Smith, and E.M. Wood, which can be found in Hennessy's bibliography.

This essay attempts to glance at the international situation, but in its proposal of remedies focusses mainly on European experiences.

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