

# Is the Left dead?\*

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A well known analyst of the now defunct theoretical journal *Marxism Today* recently published an article with the above title, less the question mark.<sup>[1]</sup> Indeed, today, few people question that the traditional Left is politically dead. This is particularly true of the now dominant reformist Left, i.e. the Left which neither challenges —directly or indirectly— the existing institutional framework of the capitalist market economy in its present internationalised form and its political complement, namely, representative ‘democracy’, nor proposes a strategy for the overthrow of this system, but claims certain reforms, instead, which aim to ‘deepen’ ‘democracy’ and social justice. The dwindling support for the parties of this Left is a clear indication of its gradual demise.

The strange thing, however, is that the reasons which have brought the traditional Left to its deathbed are the same ones which could potentially lead to the creation of a new antisystemic Left, which could integrate —and at the same time transcend— the present antisystemic Left, in a new synthesis of the socialist and the autonomy/democracy traditions with the radical currents in the new social movements and trends. These reasons refer to both the objective and the subjective conditions.

As regards the objective conditions, it is well known and accepted by almost everybody (apart of course from the system’s ideologues) that neoliberal globalisation, which has led to a multi-dimensional crisis is —within the institutional framework of the open and free markets of the internationalised market economy— a one-way street. This crisis is:

- Economic, as is shown by the huge and constantly growing inequality all over the world.
- Ecological, as is shown by the continuous deterioration of planetary climatic conditions, and of quality of life in general because of the contamination of natural resources, of the food chain and so on.
- Political, as is shown by the discredit into which international political institutions have fallen both at the international level (UN and international law) and the domestic one (political parties, professional politicians).
- Social, as is shown by the massive expansion of crime and drugs.

As regards the subjective conditions, the same reasons which have led to the gradual drastic shrinkage of the traditional revolutionary subject, the proletariat, manifested themselves through the collapse of class consciousness and class struggles. Although many in the traditional Left still attempt to interpret today’s reality through the use of theoretical tools which were developed a hundred or a hundred and fifty years ago, the fundamental development of the decline of the working class was a crucial factor in the collapse of Western social democracy. The fall of the soviet system played a similar catalytic role with respect to the subjective conditions, since the peoples’ belief in the feasibility of systemic change collapsed with it. I do not refer of course to the demoralisation of ex Marxist

intellectuals, many of whom opportunistically moved to the reformist Left, nor to the demise of the radical Green movement and the subsequent degeneration of many European Greens into the crutches of the system. I refer instead to the massive popular disillusionment that grew as a result of this historic development and which eventually—contrary to the predictions of analysts like Chomsky who welcomed the collapse of soviet socialism because it supposedly opened the way to a genuine socialism—led to the present apathy, privacy and cynicism, exactly as planned by the transnational elite which orchestrated the ‘People Power’ that brought about these cataclysmic events.<sup>[2]</sup>

There is therefore no doubt that liberalism is the winner of its historical conflict with socialism, which has marked the entire modern era since the emergence of the capitalist market economy and representative ‘democracy’, two centuries ago. Liberalism is today hegemonic at the political, the economic and the ideological levels, influencing even many in the radical Left!<sup>[3]</sup> This does not however mean that we have reached the ‘end of History’, as the system’s ideologues like Fukuyama dream of. In fact, the constantly deteriorating multidimensional crisis and the emerging new forms of struggle show exactly the opposite. These new forms of struggle, which are emerging ‘from below’ in several parts of the planet, transcend the traditional ones (strikes, demonstrations and the like), which today have acquired a defensive nature everywhere, aiming to defend past people’s conquests from the charge of neoliberal globalisation. Instead, the novel forms of struggle take on an aggressive nature, aiming to create new institutions, which prefigure the future ones. This bears no relation of course to the attempts of professional politicians to introduce from above institutions of pseudo-participatory ‘democracy’, with the obvious aim of covering up the growing political crisis.

These new trends, however, although a symptom of the new conditions, are bound to remain marginal, unless they become an integral part of a programmatic antisystemic movement with its own political project.. Such a project should be characterised by:

- its own analysis of today’s reality,
- its own proposals for a new institutional framework which will overturn the essence of the present system, i.e. the unequal distribution of power in every social sphere which constitutes the ultimate cause of the multidimensional crisis,
- its own proposals for the transition to such a society, which could potentially be peaceful, should this transition not become the victim of the attack of the elites and their fellow travellers in the privileged social strata —as has almost always happened in History.

Needless to add that such a political project should transcend the arbitrary visions-‘models’ of certain intellectuals and be integrated instead into the historical traditions of the Left, drawing the organisational principles of the future society from a systematic analysis of present society and the trends within it.

The presently imposed New World Order has inaugurated a new long, even more barbarous, Middle Ages, where the elites control populations with the bogey of ‘terrorism’ —of which they themselves are the ultimate cause! The outcome of the tension between the traditional Left and the new trends will determine whether the Left (including the Greens) will play the role of law-abiding ‘opposition’ to the elites’ administration of neoliberal globalisation or whether, instead, a new antisystemic Left will emerge out of the new

trends, which will create the conditions to transcend the multidimensional crisis and to create a new autonomous democratic society.

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\* This is a translation of an article that was first published in the fortnight column of Takis Fotopoulos in the mass circulation Athens daily *Eleftherotypia* on 11/12/2004

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[1] Martin Jacques, "The left, as history knew it, is dead," *The Guardian* (20/11/2004).

[2] See the revealing article of a self-confessed ex cold war bagman and presently Oxford lecturer, Mark Almond, "The price of People Power," *The Guardian* (7/12/2004).

[3] See Takis Fotopoulos, *Towards An Inclusive Democracy* (Cassell/Continuum: London/New York, 1997), pp.199-206.