

Politics in the age of austerity: from above or below? - “The disintegration of social democracy and the impasse of the revolutionary left”

Saturday 26 March 2016, by [DAVIDSON Neil](#) (Date first published: 17 April 2015).

Neil Davidson, in an article originally published in the Spring 2015 issue of the rs21 magazine discusses the disintegration of social democracy and the impasse of the revolutionary left.

In 1976, Perry Anderson, then editor of New Left Review, noted that a new situation was emerging in Europe:

“For the great mass Communist Parties of Western Europe—in Italy, in France, in Spain—are now on the threshold of a historical experience without precedent for them: the commanding assumption of governmental office within the framework of bourgeois-democratic states, without the allegiance to a horizon of ‘proletarian dictatorship’ beyond them that was once the touchstone of the Third International.” [1]

The anticipated breakthrough never occurred. Instead, between 1976 and 1981, it was the social democratic parties that experienced a final flowering, above all in those Southern European countries that were either only then emerging from various forms of dictatorship, like Portugal, Spain and Greece, or where social democracy had since been previously overshadowed by the local Stalinist organisation, as in France. Indeed, the French Parti Socialiste government of 1981-1986 may have been the last to attempt a traditional reformist strategy – and to have been prevented from achieving it in an equally traditional way. [2] Since then, social democracy has adapted, unevenly and with occasional backsliding, to the neoliberal order in its ‘social’ variant, a process initiated not in Western Europe at all, but by Labour Party governments first in Australia (1983) and then in New Zealand (1984). [3]

Nearly forty years since Anderson’s original speculations about the possibility of Communist parties forming or at least entering government, and thirty years since the last stand of social democracy in its classic form, we face a situation in which a new range of left parties are contending for office in Europe. The oldest of these, the Left Party in Germany and the Party of Communist Refoundation in Italy have, according to Charles Post “reproduced the social and political contradictions of classical, pre-First World War socialism”. In particular, Post notes: “Neither party has transcended the pre-1914 social democratic ‘twin pillars’ organizational norm where the party focussed on electoral politics and while union officialdom directed the day-to-day class struggle in the workplace and beyond.” [4] But newer formations, including the only one so far to have actually formed a government – Syriza in Greece – are harder to incorporate into this model.

A more plausible comparison might be with the movements in Latin America, which saw the election

of governments of varying degrees of radicalism from the late 1990s through to the mid-2000s. With the partial exception of Argentina, however, these took place in states with problems characteristic of that region, which are quite different from those experienced by even the poorest countries of Western Europe, above all the oppression of the indigenous population and the existence of giant peripheral slums inhabited by the under- or unemployed. In general terms, the centre-left governments of Latin America have constructed 'compensatory states', where rents are collected from state-owned and multinational firms involved in the extraction of primary commodities – coal, oil and gas – and redistributed to the poorest sections of the population; but this uneasy relationship is not a challenge to the existence of state or private capital. [5] And, as Ashley Lavelle has pointed out in his obituary for social democracy, the state which has done most to raise the living standards of the Latin American working-class, Venezuela under Hugo Chavez, did so on the basis of appropriating oil revenues when the price of that commodity was high. Even leaving aside the problems that the fall in oil prices has caused for this strategy, it was never going to be a model for the revival of the left in Western Europe. [6]

For some commentators on the revolutionary left, there is a better comparison for the new parties of the European left, involving a model, one designed "for a left that has lost whatever confidence it had that a revolutionary party rooted in the working class is possible":

"On the one hand, as against a discredited reformism that no longer talks of an alternative to capitalism, it preserves a commitment to socialist aims and demands; on the other, it sees this commitment being fulfilled in the creation of a party that, while supporting and seeking a basis in mass action, sees the parliamentary framework as the route through which change comes. That, then, is a way to paint left reformism red. Is there a historical precedent for this? Actually, there is in the Eurocommunist project of the 1970s. This involved more than de-Stalinisation. It involved a theoretical shift: a repudiation of the Soviet model of power as no longer appropriate or operable in 'democratic' countries. Socialism was not a matter of 'overthrowing the state' but of using parliamentarism to create a mass force that would stop the state being used to block social advance.

On the basis of this analysis we are close to repeating the moment identified by Anderson in 1976: One descendent of Eurocommunism is Syriza, currently riding high in the Greek polls [this was written before the Greek election of January 2015 – ND]. Those who espouse the model embracing reform and revolution hold this party up as the party to follow. But the Eurocommunist road to socialism proved unable to deliver even modest reforms — and in a situation where the crisis of capitalism is now much deeper a new improved left reformism will fare no better." [7]

Syriza's effective capitulation to the Troika on 19 February demonstrated that these parties are not immune to problems of reformism; but this does not mean they can simply be assimilated to Eurocommunism or social democracy as such. In many respects they represent new developments, where either – as in the case of Syriza itself – an existing formation was heavily influenced by the Movements of the Squares from 2011 or, like Podemos in Spain, one emerged directly out of these movements. As these connections suggest, unlike Eurocommunism these parties are on a leftward moving trajectory, are closely related to popular struggles and contain revolutionaries of various denominations. Furthermore, they are already displaying variations of internal structure and regime: although Syriza and Podemos are often spoken about in the same context, the former remains a coalition in a way that Podemos is not. Comparable formations are likely to follow – and not necessarily at the nation-state level: the conditions for something to emerge are clearly present in Scotland, for example.

What attitude should revolutionaries take towards these parties and the others which may follow, given that large numbers of working-class people are increasingly predisposed to support them? To simply conjugate the verb 'to betray' is obviously tempting ('they are going to betray you; they are

betraying you; they have betrayed you'); but if revolutionaries are to avoid being emotionally self-satisfied, but utterly irrelevant, then our response has to involve far closer attention to the type of strategic alternatives that we can offer, rather than simply repeating the need for revolution, or counterposing 'the streets' to parliament. It may be worth briefly restating why revolutionary socialists have argued that their goals can never be achieved by electing politicians.

The necessity for revolution was set out very early in the formation of historical materialism, in the notes that would eventually be published as *The German Ideology*. There are two reasons why "the revolution is necessary", wrote Marx and Engels, "not only because the ruling class cannot be overthrown in any other way, but also because the class overthrowing it can only in a revolution succeed in ridding itself anew of all the muck of ages and become fitted to found society anew". [8] In other words, assuming that the goal is indeed socialism, revolution is not a choice of method, but recognition of a necessity. This is what led Rosa Luxemburg to make her distinction between reform and revolution:

"A social transformation and a legislative reform do not differ according to their duration but according to their content. ... That is why people who pronounce themselves in favour of the method of legislative reform in place and in contradistinction to the conquest of political power and social revolution, do not really choose a more tranquil, calmer and slower road to the same goal, but a different goal. Instead of taking a stand for the establishment of a new society they take a stand for surface modifications of the old society." [9]

The distinction was put in a different way by the American Marxist Hal Draper in a celebrated essay that distinguished between socialism from above and socialism from below. Both social democracy and Stalinism are examples of the former: "What unites the many different forms of Socialism-from-Above is the conception that socialism (or a reasonable facsimile thereto) must be handed down to the grateful masses in some form or another, by a ruling elite which is not subject to their control in fact." Draper's point is that the result is not socialism at all. He contrasts it with "socialism from below": "The heart of Socialism-from-below is its view that socialism can only be realised through the self-emancipation of activated masses 'from below' in a struggle to take charge of their own destiny, as actors (not merely subjects) on the stage of history." [10]

The most important recent developments in this respect have indeed occurred in Latin America, but not the activities of Chavez, Evo Morales, Rafael Correa or any other elected leader. Instead, they were in the new forms of collective organisation that emerged first in Argentina between 2000-1 in the form of the *piqueteros* ('picketers') and *asambleas* ('assemblies'), and then in Bolivia between 2003-5 in the form of the neighbourhood assemblies and workers' regional committees, which organised from the vast slum city of El Alto to blockade La Paz. The emergence of new organisational forms 'from below' in Argentina and Bolivia is of crucial importance for revolutionaries, since they present, if only in embryo, the possibility of an alternative to the bourgeois state, not merely the attempt to use it ('from above') for the benefit of the working class and the oppressed. Since 2011 Western Europe has seen massive gatherings and demonstrations, and - in Scotland at least - unprecedented levels of electoral participation; but not yet comparable forms of collective organisation. Revolutionaries clearly have a duty to help develop these forms when they appear, but they are not in our gift to magic them into existence - indeed, if our belief in the creativity of the working class has any validity we should expect them to emerge and take unexpected forms: the important thing is to recognise them when they do.

Most critics of 'socialism from below' are socialists driven by a desire to defend one or other of the remaining state capitalist regimes - which for obvious reasons tends to be Cuba rather than, for example, North Korea - on the grounds, not merely of the supposed benefits that they bring to the working class, but because of the impossibility of a pure revolution from below:

“What experience has shown, however, is that the pure form of such a state has proven to not yet be possible in any country where a successful anti-capitalist revolution has taken place, nor is it easy to anticipate a successful revolution where a pure form of this state would be possible under current circumstances. The only case where it is likely that the form of the state after a successful revolution is going to be one of a “pure” Paris Commune or Soviet type is that of nearly simultaneous revolutions in the main imperialist centres.” [11]

There is an element of truth in this: “whoever expects a pure revolution will never live to see it” as Lenin famously argued. The socialist revolution is likely to be a prolonged process – not merely on a global scale, but within individual countries. At some point, in that process, each state will have to be destroyed, but before that moment is reached, revolutionaries may likely find themselves, perhaps in alliance with others, attempting to use the existing bourgeois state apparatus to introduce ‘reforms’ which will strengthen the position of the working class. What should they do in these circumstances?

I will return to this question, but first we need to consider why social democracy as it is currently constituted will be unlikely to play a role.

Even leaving aside future revolutionary developments, the main reason why these new formations have already acquired such significance is the decline of Social Democracy. Gregory Elliot argues that it evolved over three distinct periods: 1889-1945, 1945-1975, and 1975-the present. [12] As a movement, it has always been fundamentally supportive of capitalism in practice, but during the first period it was at least committed in rhetorical terms to abolishing it. In particular, from the split in the Second International and the Russian Revolution onwards, it was able to present an explicit reformist strategy for achieving socialism, as opposed to the revolutionary one advocated by the Communist Parties: using the bourgeois state rather than destroying it.

The second period coincided with the post-war boom and allowed the possibility of positive reforms for the working class without the need to transform the system, although these were also delivered by forces to the right of social democracy. During this period at least some ‘revisionist’ discussions argued that the system had already been self-transformed by Keynesianism and the Welfare State into something that no longer deserved the name of capitalism.

The crisis of the 1970s destroyed these illusions and saw the onset of the third period: once the possibility of reform seemed to be removed by the imposition of neoliberalism, all that remained, for the leaderships at any rate, was the commitment to capitalism and some residual rhetoric: do whatever was necessary to save capitalism, then we could maybe think about further reforms. Central to this process was the crisis of Keynesianism. In ideological terms, the collapse of the Stalinist regimes did not so much ‘prove’ as confirm the already widely held belief that any alternative form of economy to neoliberal capitalism was impossible. As Alan Sinfield has pointed out, by 1989, virtually no-one, especially not on the post-1968 revolutionary left, regarded the Stalinist regimes as ‘a model for socialism’. The real ideological shock, although one which was more slow-acting, had been the earlier revelation that Keynesianism and the Welfare State in its post-1945 form was incompatible with capitalism, at least as anything other than a short-term expedient. [13]

These periods embody tendencies: it is possible to find each of the dominant attitudes in periods before or after the periods with which they became associated. In particular, the left-wing of Social Democracy tended to be one step behind its overall trajectory: after 1945 they still argued for a reformist transformation of society, rather than merely for reforms; after 1975 – in the UK this occurred after the collapse of Bennism in the early 1980s – they still argued for reforms rather than for repairing capitalism.

Behind these ideological shifts, were changes in structure that acted to make the shift to the right permanent. Until very recently, revolutionaries tended to argue that working-class people should vote for social democracy in elections. The main reason held that the most politically advanced workers regarded the social democratic parties as different from the capitalist (or openly capitalist) parties and revolutionaries had to 'stand alongside' these workers in when elections took place, partly to show class solidarity, partly because, when the Labour (or whichever) Party inevitably betrayed worker's hopes, it would be 'exposed' ("crucified on the cross of office") and that this would lead voters to turn to the revolutionaries instead. Unfortunately, examples of this actually happening in the short-term, other than in the case of individuals, are virtually non-existent. There has been a cumulative, decades-long process of disillusionment with social democracy, but this is reflective of far greater shifts in capitalist society, not this or that 'betrayal', shifts which have seen precisely those characteristics which workers used to recognise as making social democracy different from other parliamentary parties fade. Using the Labour Party as an example - although in some respects it is quite dissimilar to the majority of social democratic parties - there seem to be three of these characteristics, all of which have been eroded during the neoliberal era.

The first is working-class membership. Originally, the membership of the Labour Party was predominantly working class, although it also had a strong component of the professional middle classes, typified by the Webbs, Attlee, Gaitskell, etc. It was this actual class basis that led Lenin to describe it as a "capitalist worker's party", consisting mainly of workers, but acting in the interests of the bourgeoisie. (Although it is worth noting that the Tory Party also had strong individual working class membership down to the 1950s - in Glasgow particularly, but also in Liverpool and other areas across the UK especially with strong Orange/Loyalist connections.) This class base has been declining since the 1960s, and especially since the mid-1980s, to the point where the individual membership is dominated by members of the new middle class. Most of Labour's working class membership now comes from the affiliated trades unions, whose role is therefore decisively important.

The second - and usually the only one that is cited - is therefore a structural link to the organised working class. The affiliated trades unions and, more distantly, the TUC, STUC, etc., acted as channels for expressing organised working class views within the Labour Party. Although always heavily mediated through the bureaucracy, these views did influence Labour policy, a process which reached its peak around 1974. In theory, this could still take place, but in practice the bureaucracy have exercised a self-denying ordinance since the advent of New Labour that has led to the marginalisation of working class influence over the party. There is no doubt that in purely financial terms Labour would effectively cease to exist without the money it receives from the unions, now that its corporate sponsors have deserted it. It is, however, difficult to identify many policies which the unions have received in return: the minimum wage certainly, Gordon Brown's covert increase in public sector jobs perhaps, but beyond these? In fact, the main fruits of the trade union link are mainly in the other direction: TU officials holding back struggle on the grounds that it will endanger Labour's chances of re-election, even though, once re-elected Labour promise nothing but the same policies as the Tories in slow motion. It is no accident, as we say, that the unions that are the most politically radical - PCS, UCU - are not affiliated to Labour, and the rank and file tend to regard it with undisguised hostility.

The third is the promulgation of policies which are specifically designed to improve the condition of the working class ('reforms') rather than 'the people' or 'the nation' in general. Labour, historically, has a number of important achievements to its credit. We tend to be quite dismissive of these (as indeed was Miliband Senior), concentrating instead - for obvious and usually entirely justified reasons - on the record of Labour betrayal. The trouble with this approach is that it makes it difficult to explain why anyone ever believed in the Labour Party in the first place. But these achievements

are all in the past – in some cases the very distant past. Increasingly, voting Labour on the basis that it will make any practical difference is more of a historical memory than a contemporary reality. And this is not just about programmes like Wheatley's council house building in the 1920s, institutions like the NHS, or legislation like Equal Pay Act. There used to be a layer of Labour activists in most working-class communities – often quite right-wing activists – who would lobby the council, organise petitions, and generally act as focus for local community reformism. This layer is greatly diminished. These activities still get done, but it is no longer Labour members who initiate them as a matter of course.

Like similar organisations in Europe and Australasia, Labour has moved extraordinarily far to the right. Nevertheless, for what it's worth, it will remain a social democratic party so long as it retains the link with the trade unions, which holds open the possibility of working class demands – in however bureaucratised a form – once again influencing what it actually does. Since reformism remains the dominant form of consciousness within the working class, it may appear that nothing much has changed and that this reformism will continue to find expression in the Labour Party, as it has for the last hundred years or so. But there is no necessary connection between reformism in general and the specific form taken by Labourism. A combination of Labour's own behaviour in office and opposition – above all its acceptance of neoliberalism – together with structural changes in the nature of the working class and the current diminution of trade union consciousness, means that for many working class people, Labour does not appear to be fundamentally different from the other parties but is simply 'the least worst' of the choices on offer.

In these circumstances, if new parties appear, offering reforms, sounding as if they actually believe in them, and invoking the social democratic tradition, it is no mystery why working-class voters would support them: the changed fortunes of PASOK and Syriza in Greece are only the most extreme example of how this can occur to date. But although their formation and structures may be quite unlike those of social democracy their political strategies may not be that different – they merely hark back to an earlier phase in its history. The current Greek Finance Minister, Yanis Varoufakis, for example, argued that the key goal for socialists, even Marxists, was 'to arrest the freefall of European capitalism in order to buy the time we need to formulate its alternative' – precisely the attitude which has frozen his party in the headlights of the Troika:

"...with Europe's elites deep in denial and disarray, the left must admit that we are just not ready to plug the chasm that a collapse of European capitalism would open up with a functioning socialist system. Our task should then be twofold. First, to put forward an analysis of the current state of play that non-Marxist, well meaning Europeans who have been lured by the sirens of neoliberalism, find insightful. Second, to follow this sound analysis up with proposals for stabilising Europe – for ending the downward spiral that, in the end, reinforces only the bigots." [14]

It is not always the case that parties of the radical left will fill the void: the Scottish National Party is not in the slightest like Syriza or Podemos in terms of its structures or politics, but it has grown for similar reasons at the Labour Party's expense. The question – which has of course a wider application than Scotland – is whether the revolutionary left should involve itself in establishing a party that does resemble Syriza or Podemos in the sense of bringing together both revolutionary and reformist currents, and, if so, would it be possible to do so on a basis that did not merely set up a new set of reformist illusions. The question would be irrelevant if revolutionary party-building was sweeping all before it, but it is not.

For, unfortunately, it is not only reformist parties which have entered crisis: so too have those of the revolutionary left. By this I mean that nowhere has a revolutionary party, conceived on broadly Leninist lines, been able to grow, for any length of time, beyond a membership of the single-figure thousands. Why not?

One reason could be that the entire aim of building the revolutionary party was delusional: the working class will simply never attain revolutionary class consciousness, at least in sufficient numbers, to make the project viable. At best, revolutionaries can act as a pressure group, pushing reformists in the trade union movement and the social democratic parties further to the left than they would otherwise be prepared to go by standing fast to the ultimate, but unobtainable goal of total social transformation. At the time of his departure from the International Socialists in 1968, Alasdair MacIntyre invoked what he called the “law of diminishing socialist returns” whereby every political formation inevitably behaves further to the right than their formal political position would suggest. As a result, although “those with a revolutionary perspective” were unlikely to make a revolution, only they “are likely to promote genuine left wing reforms”. [15] If socialism was genuinely impossible, was just the ‘utopia’ that Trotsky was prepared to contemplate in the last months of his life, such a role would of course, still be essential. [16]

I, and I suspect most readers of this, do not accept this argument, although it is important to understand that many people on the left who do not believe in the possibility of a complete socialist transformation of society regard revolutionary groups as essential precisely because they play the role outlined by MacIntyre: this is why they are prepared to work with us. The experiences of the twentieth century surely put paid to any notion of the inevitability of socialism. Consequently, we do not and cannot know that working class will ultimately be triumphant – that is the ‘wager’ on revolution which many Marxist thinkers have invoked; but we still have good reasons to believe that it is possible and that our actions will be important in helping to bring that possibility about. [17] We should not succumb to despair.

But neither should we embrace an unwarranted triumphalism. It could be argued that a more plausible reason for the universal failure to build mass revolutionary parties is not working-class incapacity but that revolutionaries have faced a series of temporarily insurmountable objective conditions – not such as to make exponential growth an impossible goal, but to hold it within certain limits. There is obviously some truth in this. It was impossible to build revolutionary parties in the post-war boom, under conditions of which combined relative prosperity and the joint stranglehold of social democracy and Stalinism over working-class politics. With membership numbered in tens (as it was for the Socialist Review Group in the early 1950s), there was no alternative to what Trotsky once called “the primitive accumulation of cadres”. But from 1968, these conditions no longer pertained to anything like the same extent. The period beginning around 1975 (‘the downturn’) once again made growth extraordinarily difficult for the revolutionary left, but to argue that this can explain failure to build anywhere over the subsequent forty years is stretching credulity to breaking point: it is effectively to say that revolutionary parties can only be built in excellent conditions – in effect, in revolutionary conditions, but the entire case for revolutionary organisation from the German Revolution of 1918-19 onwards is that it has to be built before a revolutionary situation arises.

But the only genuinely mass revolutionary parties – those of the Communist International in its revolutionary period – were never built by recruiting ones and twos in this way. There are four actual or potential mechanisms – which can also be combined: 1) merger with several organisations of a comparable size; 2) an influx of members following secession from a mass reformist organisations; 3) affiliation by militants organised in a trans-union rank and file organisation; or 4) collective adherence by elements of a campaign or social movement. None of these are likely to arise without a generalised move to the left. None will leave the host organisation unaffected, so that exponential growth almost invariably means the original revolutionary party acts as the nucleus of a new formation, rather than simply undergoes quantitative growth: the Communist Party of Britain (CPGB) was not simply an enlarged British Socialist Party; the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) was not merely an expanded Spartacus League. The route the most relevant to revolutionaries in the

UK in recent years has been that involving a campaign or social movement, although never to the stage where mass membership was prepared to transfer directly to a revolutionary party without passage through an intermediate political formation.

In short, 'building the party' in the way that has been understood in the IS tradition has failed – and of all the post-Trotsky traditions its superior politics to the other traditions meant that it had the best chance of success. Unless it is seriously being proposed that we simply carry on doing the same thing and expect – in line with Einstein's famous definition of madness – to achieve a different result, we have to find a new approach.

What conclusions can we draw from these developments – the disintegration of social democracy and the impasse of the revolutionary left? First, although the specific forms of social democracy are in an advanced state of collapse, reformism is not disappearing, nor will it: it is a form of consciousness produced by the contradictions of capitalism and one which will ultimately seek organisational expression, even if these expressions do not take the form previously taken by organisations such as the Labour Party.

Second, although the distinctions between reformism and revolution are still valid, widespread working class understanding of these distinctions has perhaps never been less clear. New activists may describe themselves as 'on the left' or even as 'socialists', but any finer distinctions have simply been lost; and this is an aspect of a deeper ideological and theoretical vacuum. Back in the early 1970s, Duncan Hallas wrote:

"A new generation of capable and energetic workers exists but they are no longer part of a cohesive movement and they no longer work in a milieu where basic Marxist ideas are widespread. We are back at our starting point. Not only has the vanguard, in the real sense of a considerable layer of organised revolutionary workers and intellectuals, been destroyed. So too has the environment, the tradition, that gave it influence. In Britain that tradition was never so extensive and influential as in Germany or France but it was real enough in the early years of the Communist Party." [18]

That judgement was exaggerated then, but Hallas's words are certainly apt to describe the current situation. People need to find out whether they are reformists, revolutionaries – or even vacillating centrists; it will take the combination of participation in struggle and prolonged argument to clarify matters.

Third, and more positively, because neoliberalism has moved 'official' politics so far to the right, many issues that in the era of the long boom would have been considered 'reformist' demands, or even elementary issues of human decency, are now resisted by the dominant institutions of capitalist society. The attitude of the Troika to the Greek arguments for the end of austerity has provided a striking demonstration of this. It is not merely that we need to fight for reforms in a revolutionary way, although that is still the case, it is that the reforms themselves have the potential to constitute revolutionary demands in a context where the system is unable to allow them, for fear of interrupting the restoration of profitability.

The difficulty is that working classes can respond to austerity by oscillating between explosions of anger taking the form of demonstrations and occupations ('from below'), and simply relying on elected politicians to deliver for them ('from above') without there being any relationship between the two, let alone control of the latter by the former. The recent experience of the independence referendum in Scotland shows both processes: a massive level of mobilisation and local creativity, often involving people who had never been politically active before; then, without any institutional means of holding and channelling the energies released by the Yes campaign, much of it went in to membership of or support for the SNP. Not all though, and many people radicalised by the campaign

are rightly suspicious of the SNP and now seek a political home. Serious revolutionaries should aim to provide them with one – not by offering their own organisations as ‘the’ revolutionary party, or by creating incoherent and momentary electoral lash-ups, but rather by establishing a broad socialist party, with a clearly defined revolutionary current, through which strategies can be tested and the necessary debates conducted.

The Scottish Left Project seems to be the best means for working towards this goal in Scotland itself, but this approach cannot be easily generalised. One of the effects of neoliberalism in its austerity phase has been to heighten the unevenness and increase fragmentation of political life internationally: revolutionaries have to argue for revolutionary politics, but the means, the forms through which they will have to do so can no longer be assumed to have been settled in advance.

Neil Davidson

P.S.

* “Politics in the age of austerity: from above or below?”. rs21 on April 17, 2015/3:
<http://rs21.org.uk/2015/04/17/politics-in-the-age-of-austerity-from-above-or-below/>

Footnotes

[1] Perry Anderson, ‘The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci’, New Left Review I/100 (November 1976-January 1977), 6.

<http://newleftreview.org/I/100/perry-anderson-the-antinomies-of-antonio-gramsci>

[2] Donald Sassoon, One Hundred Years of Socialism: the West European Left in the Twentieth Century (London: HarperCollins, 1997) 534-571, 592-644.

[3] For the differences between ‘vanguard’ and ‘social’ neoliberalism, which can be summed up as being those between Thatcher and Reagan on the one hand, and Clinton and Blair on the other, see Neil Davidson, ‘What is Neoliberalism?’ in Neoliberal Scotland: Class and Society in a Stateless Nation, edited by Neil Davidson, Patricia McCafferty and David Miller (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2010), 31-54 and ‘The Neoliberal Era in Britain: Historical Developments and Current Perspectives’, International Socialism, second series, 139 (Summer 2013), 182-198. <http://isj.org.uk/index.php4?id=908&issue=139>

[4] Charles Post, ‘What is Left of Leninism? New European Left Parties in Historical Perspective’, The Socialist Register 2013: the Question of Strategy, edited by Leo Panitch, Greg Alba and Vivek Chibber (Pontypool: Merlin Press, 2012), 191.

Available on ESSF (article 28450), [What is left of Leninism? The new parties of the Left in Europe](#).

[5] Jeffrey R. Webber, ‘Crisis and Class, Advance and Retreat: the Political Economy of the New Latin American Left’, in Polarising Development: Alternatives to Neoliberalism and the Crisis, edited by Lucia Pradella and Thomas Marois (London: Pluto Press, 2015), 161-164. Webber draws the concept of the ‘compensatory state’ from the as yet untranslated work of the Uruguayan economist Eduardo Gudynas.

- [6] Ashley Lavelle, *The Death of Social Democracy: Political consequences in the 21st Century* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 16-17.
- [7] Kevin Orr and Gareth Jenkins, "The Case of the Disappearing Lenin", *International Socialism*, second series, 144 (Autumn 2014), 61-61. <http://isj.org.uk/index.php4?id=1008>
- [8] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels [1845-46], *The German Ideology: Critique of Modern German Philosophy According to Its Representatives Feuerbach, B. Bauer and Stirner, and of German Socialism According to Its Various Prophets*, in *Collected Works*, vol. 5 (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1975), 52-53.
https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/download/Marx_The_German_Ideology.pdf
- [9] Rosa Luxemburg (1899), 'Reform or Revolution', in *Rosa Luxemburg Speaks*, edited by Mary-Alice Waters (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 77-78.
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/luxemburg/1900/reform-revolution/ch08.htm->
- [10] Hal Draper [1966], 'The Two Souls of Socialism', in *Socialism from Below*, edited by Ernest Haberkern (New Jersey: Humanities Press, 1992), 3.
<https://www.marxists.org/archive/draper/1966/twosouls/0-2souls.htm>
- [11] Joaquín Bustelo [2005], "On the Two Souls of Socialism", *The North Star* (22 March, 2013).
<http://www.thenorthstar.info/?p=8036>
- [12] Gregory Elliot, *Labourism and the English Genius the Strange Death of Labour England?* (London: Verso, 1993), 1-17.
- [13] Alan Sinfield [1997], 'The Politics and Cultures of Discord', in *Literature, Politics and Culture in Postwar Britain* (Third edition, London: Continuum, 2004), xxx-xxxiv.
- [14] anis Varoufakis, 'How I became an Erratic Marxist', *The Guardian* (18 February 2015).
<http://www.theguardian.com/news/2015/feb/18/yanis-varoufakis-how-i-became-an-erratic-marxist>
These conclusions should not have come as any surprise to anyone familiar with the arguments Varoufakis had used as an academic, shortly before becoming a politician, which involved solving the global crisis through the 'the formation of a national coalition of emerging countries' or 'for the West to have an epiphany and, at long last, embrace John Maynard Keynes' suggestion of an International Currency Union'. Admittedly, even he regarded the possibility of the latter happening as 'far-fetched'. See *The Global Minotaur: America, the True Origins of the Financial Crisis and Future of the World Economy* (London: Zed Books, 2011), 227.
- [15] Alasdair MacIntyre, 'In Place of Harold Wilson?', *Alasdair MacIntyre's Engagement with Marxism: Selected Writings, 1953-1974*, edited by Paul Blackledge and Neil Davidson (Leiden: Brill, 2008), 371.
- [16] Leon Trotsky [1939], 'The USSR in War', in *Defence of Marxism (Against the Petty Bourgeois Opposition)* (London: New Park, 1971), 11.
- [17] James Connolly [1915], 'The Re-conquest of Ireland', *Collected Works*, vol. 1 (Dublin: New Books 1987), 263; Antonio Gramsci [1929-1935], 'Problems of Marxism', *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, introduced and edited by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell Smith (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1971), 438; Lucien Goldmann, *The Hidden God: a Study of the Tragic Vision in the Pensées of Pascal and the Tragedies of Racine* (London:

Routledge, 1964), 90; Alasdair MacIntyre [1964], 'Pascal and Marx: on Lucien Goldmann's Hidden God', *Alasdair MacIntyre's Engagement with Marxism*, 314; Michael Lowy, *Fire Alarm: on Reading Walter Benjamin's 'On the Concept of History'* (London, Verso, 2005), 114.

[18] Duncan Hallas, 'The Way Forward', in *World Crisis: Essays in Revolutionary Socialism*, edited by Nigel Harris and John Palmer (London: Hutchison, 1971), 259.