

War against socialism: Opening the door to creeping fascism - the modern crusade against radical social movements

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Something is happening that has alarmed the ideologues of capitalism and the right. Young people in key countries are rejecting capitalism and forming a positive view of socialism. Since 2017 the capitalist press has been full of it. Look at this account from Newsweek magazine:

"In the two years since Senator Bernie Sanders's campaign for president, the image of capitalism among young Americans has taken a dramatic hit, a new poll has found. Less than half, 45 percent, of Americans between the ages of 18 and 29 have a positive view of capitalism, according to a Gallup poll released Monday.

"When Sanders, a self-identified socialist, challenged Hillary Clinton for the Democratic nomination for president two years ago, the figure stood at 57 percent, up 1 percent from 2012 but down 11 from 2010. For the first time, more young Americans now have a positive view of socialism than they do of capitalism, even as support for socialism among the group has remained steady at 51 percent..."

It is not only young people who are increasingly rejecting capitalism, however. [The Gallup poll](#) also indicated that 47 percent of Democrats, or those who lean Democrat, have a positive view of capitalism, compared with 57 percent who look favorably upon socialism.

This situation has naturally caused concern in hard right circles. Susan Kemond in the National Catholic Register, contributed an article called 'How to Talk to Your Kids about Socialism'. You do it, apparently, by telling them that Russia and Eastern Europe were crap. And that's what you get if you take Karl Marx seriously.

The British Spectator says it 'beggars belief' that young people like Corbyn and socialism, because "the [superiority of capitalism to socialism](#) when it comes to helping the very poorest is completely indisputable." The author of these lines, Toby Young, puts young people's views on socialism down to the education system. Young people are taught to love socialism by a left-leaning education system, the proof being that only 11% of university teachers said they were going to vote Tory at the last election.

Politico magazine reports that 'just a decade ago' socialism was a dirty word in the United States, but now "Bernie Sanders, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and a handful of other politicians have breathed new life into the label, injecting a [radical alternate vision](#) for the U.S. economy into the mainstream political debate."

If just a decade ago socialism was a dirty word, what has changed? And why is the fury of the radical right against socialism and the Left, also directed against radical social movements? In fact the new controversies about socialism come out of the political effects of the 2007-8 banking crisis and the vicious austerity imposed on millions as a result.

In the period from the crash in 2008 until 2012-13, the Left and radical forces forged a series of social movements and political parties that were effective in mobilising millions – with the help of social media. The repeated general strikes in Greece leading to Syriza, the Indignados in Spain leading to Podemos, the Arab Spring, the worldwide Occupy! Movement, the first Melenchon presidential campaign (2012) and the Front de Gauche in France, then eventually the Corbyn phenomenon, and Bernie Sanders (and the DSA) in the United States, and anti-austerity mobilisations in many countries. During this period, especially before 2011-12, the pink tide in Latin America was still *en marche* – roughly up until the death of Hugo Chavez.

The political spirit of that time – just a few years ago – was summed up in Paul Mason's book "Why it's all kicking off everywhere". Basically, the idea that rebellion and the Left are on the offensive.

As a consequence of these developments the political representatives of the ruling class internationally have over the last 9-10 years been engaged in a massive counter-revolutionary offensive to crush these radical responses to the 2008 crash, and to deliver devastating political blows against the Left.

Creeping fascism has been enabled by this generalised neoliberal counter-offensive, either deliberately or as a more-or-less unintended consequence of harsh xenophobia, Islamophobia and ideological rage against socialism and the Left. What Tariq Ali calls the 'extreme centre' – the Blairites, the leaders of the EU, the right-wing leadership of the Democratic Party – are no less partisans of this war against socialism and the Left than is French hard right leader Marine Le Pen.

Socialists and radical activists have to see creeping fascism as part of a wider process, which explains the terrible tragedy unfolding in Venezuela, the eventual no lesser tragedy in Brazil, the more and more global offensive around charges of anti-Semitism, the crushing of the radical government in Greece, as well as phenomena like the election of Donald Trump and Brexit. It involves not only the radicalisation of the right, but also the process in some key countries like Italy and Germany of merging hard right conservatism with more-or-less open fascism.

A first conclusion is that the right-wing conservatives and liberals are completely incapable of fighting fascism, and indeed have enabled it, by encouraging or bending to racism and xenophobia.

The second conclusion is that generalised Islamophobia and racism are now being deliberately fused with a war against socialism and the Left. [Full spectrum mendacity](#) is being employed in the mass media and on the internet in the fight to crush the Left ideologically, the biggest anti-socialist crusade since the McCarthyite witch hunt in 1950s America.

The American right calls the Democrats 'The Left' or even 'socialists'. Now a campaign to characterise the Democrats as anti-Semitic is starting: it worked in Britain, why not in America? The overall aim of the war against socialism is to make the Left as much an anathema as fascism was in post-war capitalist democracies. This is being done, [as Alexei Sayle points out](#), by racists accusing anti-racists of being racist. In this context, the refusal of the Corbyn leadership to stand up and fight is a gross act of irresponsibility, not only to Labour and the Left in the UK, but to the working class and the Left internationally.

In fact there is a combined offensive against the Left and social movements – violent slander and

repression. Teachers and lecturers are a particular focus of this slander campaign. *Investors Business Daily* is typical:

"America's older generations have no one to blame but themselves. They delivered their children and grandchildren into the hands of unionized public schools run by leftist administrators, with their dumbed-down, biased curricula. They sat them in front of TVs and computer screens, without paying attention to the nonstop message of [civilizational self-loathing](#) they imbibed from the mainstream media."

The ideological repression coming down the line will be on what teachers in schools and universities are allowed to teach. Already some progressive subjects in British schools have been closed down, and in the US there is increasing pressure on what teachers are allowed to say about evolution and climate change. It is just the beginning. In France the far-right movement of Marine Le Pen is waging a big campaign against "pro-immigrant propaganda" being taught in schools.

Violent slander is a typical tactic of the hard right. Accusing the Left of anti-Semitism is becoming an international phenomenon, a tactic that the Labour leadership in the UK has shown itself incapable and unwilling to fight. Now the conservative right, echoes by the liberal right, will try to associate all left-wing forces with the debacle in Venezuela, and cover-up the role of US inspired sections and sabotage.

The Left in many countries is the victim of massive repression. In Turkey and Egypt radical forces that participated in the Arab Spring (Egypt) and the huge Gezi Park movement in 2013 in Turkey have been crushed by physical repression as well as ideological slander. In addition in Turkey thousands were killed when the 2014-15 Kurdish rebel towns in South East Turkey was subject to military invasion and massacre. All the while democratic rights of assembly and free speech are [under pressure](#) in capitalist democracies.

In the war against socialism and radical movements the ultra-right semi-fascist forces will interact with and back up more traditional conservatives. On the [loony right People's Pundit](#) website Daniel Mitchell says:

"In 2016, I posed a rhetorical question about whether young people are so stupid that they shouldn't be allowed to vote. After all, many of them thought Bernie Sanders would make a good president (of America, not Greece or Venezuela). Well, maybe we really should increase the voting age. It seems 2016 was not an anomaly. Millennials are dangerously ignorant... we can look today at countries like Cuba, Greece, Venezuela, and North Korea to confirm the utter insanity of supporting any type of socialism."

So this is a crucial stage of the right-wing anti-socialism campaign. First, socialists and the Left have to be associated with Statism historically (and North Korea today), and the failures of left-wing governments, the real source of which is unexplained.

Second this Stalinist caricature of socialism is associated with all the enemies of the hard right, including more liberal Democrats in the United States. For example, when it became clear that Elizabeth Warren was going to put her hat in the ring for the Democratic nomination for 2020, Donald Trump claimed she was "a fraud pushing socialist policies". Characteristically the right is attacking Warren over her statement that she has some Native American heritage. Personal character assassination is a stock-in-trade of the hard right.

Donald Trump and his hard-right advisors are full on for the anti-socialist fight. In his speech at the United Nations 2017 General Assembly, Trump said:

"The problem in Venezuela is not that socialism has been poorly implemented, but that socialism has been faithfully implemented. From the Soviet Union to Cuba to Venezuela, wherever true socialism or communism has been adopted, it has delivered anguish and devastation and failure. Those who preach the tenets of these discredited ideologies only contribute to the continued suffering of the people who live under these cruel systems."

This is what all left-wing and radical movements are going to face in the next period. And this new period forces us to face up to how we defend socialism and the Left, the other side of the coin of fighting the fascists.

Phil Hearse

P.S.

- PRRUK. Feb 28, 2019:
<https://prruk.org/opening-the-door-to-creeping-fascism-the-modern-crusade-against-radical-social-movements/>

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Phil Hearse is the author of the pamphlet [Full Spectrum Mendacity: Social Media and the Far Right](#), and one of the authors of [Creeping Fascism: What It Is And How To Fight It](#)