

Debate : Socialism and Democracy for the 21st Century

Friday 25 March 2011, by [LIEVENS Matthias](#), [MENIST Jet](#) (Date first published: 15 March 2011).

We first publish here Jet Menist' review of Matthias Lievens, *Socialisme en democratie in de 21ste eeuw*, followed by an answer from the author.

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Reform and revolution today: The strategic puzzle

Matthias Lievens, *Socialisme en democratie in de 21ste eeuw*. Ghent: Socialisme 21, 2010. 269 pp.

Jet Menist

Between 1945 and 1979, capitalism was overthrown in substantial parts of the planet. Alongside bureaucratic tyrannies, this yielded promising experiments like the Sandinista revolution, and a wealth of material for debates on socialist democracy and strategy. After 1979, with capital on the offensive, the strategic debates fell still. Only in the new century have we seen the beginning of what Daniel Bensaïd called 'the return of the strategic question'. Flemish socialist Matthias Lievens' new book on socialism and democracy in the 21st century provides a welcome opportunity to continue the discussion (which should not be restricted to those who can read it in Dutch).

Lievens has set himself no easy task. Marxists have traditionally believed that strategy and the shape of a socialist society can only be the product of victorious struggles. There has been no lack of struggle in the past 30 years, but few victories and no anti-capitalist breakthroughs. There have also been many changes in capitalism over these years, which have partly sapped the foundations of old methods of struggle, while new methods have yet to prove their efficacy in the new conditions. Lievens' book has no pretension to provide a full-fledged socialist strategy for our times. Its greatest strengths are its appealing portrayals of a socialist future.

Lievens' socialism is above all the opposite of the reigning neoliberalism. Although all neoliberal and social-liberal parties, from the right to the centre-left, talk non-stop about democracy, Lievens

rightly insists that neoliberalism is profoundly antidemocratic. In fact, he writes, 'No genuine pluralism is possible under capitalism.' (62) Thatcher came up with the phrase that can still serve as motto for the dominant policy almost everywhere: 'There is no alternative.' There is nothing to discuss, nothing to decide; almost all decisions are better left to unelected corporate managers and the market. So it is no surprise that a gap has widened between citizens and bourgeois politics, which loudly proclaims its own incapacity!

Faced with this denial of politics, Lievens compellingly argues, the response of the left must be 'to once more politicize the relations of power that economic categories are covering up'. (89) So we need more discussion, more joint action, more collective solutions. In recent decades the market has shown how incompetent it can be: in transporting people, running hospitals, building homes or disseminating knowledge. Now it's the citizens' turn: they can and must show how much smarter they can be.

In this connection Lievens makes a useful distinction (borrowed from Carl Schmitt) between 'politics' and 'the political'. Politics is the business of corrupt, manipulative, professional politicians. People have every reason to be sick of it. But everything in society is political. So the political is too important to leave to the politicians. This has consequences for our image of socialism. Rejecting Engels' claim that politics would disappear under socialism and make way for 'the administration of things', Lievens argues that political discussion and democratic decision-making must be at the heart of socialism.

He also has no patience with the idea that socialist decisions can only be taken by workers (and perhaps peasants) councils. Without denying the importance of economic struggles, he stresses the importance of other movements and other social subjects. Feminism in particular has been indispensable in broadening our conception of the terrain of politics. Housewives, neighbours and consumers must also actively contribute and help decide in a democratic socialist society, at least in part on the basis of universal suffrage.

Much of Lievens' book is taken up by a discussion of the role of the market, plan and democracy in a socialist economy. While not terribly original — he depends largely on the earlier work of Diane Elson and Catherine Samary — these sections are clearly written and well thought-out. After careful discussion, Lievens rejects both market socialism and a centrally planned economy (even democratically planned). He argues for an economy based on workers' self-management, as decentralized as possible, that gives a limited role to a socialized market. His 'intermezzo' on ecosocialism, though brief, is also solid.

1917, 1789...

The book's strategic reflections are weaker. Not because they lack a fully elaborated strategic model — that is not to be expected at this point in history — but because they give a one-sided picture of the situation. Above all, they neglect too many strategic lessons that were learned at a terribly high price in the last century.

Lievens suggests for example that in Europe today the idea of transitional demands — demands rooted in contemporary struggles that call for solutions beyond the limits set by capitalism — 'threatens to get bogged down in pure propaganda'. (220) Given the current state of Flemish politics, this is an understandable opinion. But that does not justify drawing such a conclusion for all of Europe, for every movement, or for an entire period. The enraged protestors on the streets of Greece in recent months have seemed quite open to anti-capitalist demands. Even in countries where anti-capitalist forces are weak, a vision of education that refuses to accept the limits of the

market can be attractive to protesting students. And of course, as Lievens writes himself, the defensive situation that the radical left is in today could change 'very quickly'. (221)

The book also suggests that Lenin and Trotsky's strategy — mass strikes in which power structures are formed based on grassroots democracy, a period of dual power in which these new institutions compete for power with the bourgeois state, resolved by an insurrection that definitively overthrows the old state — is not plausible in Europe today. This is not a quick or easy argument to refute. Many things have changed since 1923 or even 1968; it would be surprising if socialist strategy could stay completely unchanged. The experience of Stalinism also compels us to search constantly for safeguards for a democratic transition to socialism. [1] In this connection, Lievens' position that any 'proletarian dictatorship' should be understood as a 'state of exception', 'in fact an unavoidable element of any legal system' (178), can be useful. But there are problems with the alternative strategy that he advocates.

In a sense, Lievens' search for an alternative to the strategy of dual power takes him back before 1917, to the French revolution of 1789. He claims that 'virtually all the concepts that we use today to think about politics and democracy ... date back to the French revolution'. The 'socialist movement', he writes, 'has had little to contribute to the formulation of new concepts in this field'. (45)

There are various objections to be made to this assertion. It hardly does justice to Marx's theorization of the Paris Commune, Lenin's of the soviets or Brazilian socialists' of the participatory budget. Lievens' arguments also take too little account of democratic revolutions other than the French. The French revolution was certainly not the first — it was preceded by the Dutch revolt (with its most radical moment in Ghent, in Lievens' own Flanders [2], by the Levellers and Diggers of 17th-century England, and by North American revolutionary democrats like Tom Paine — nor the last, nor socially the most radical: in this respect the Mexican revolution of 1910-7 and the Indonesian revolution of 1945-9 went further. Nor is Lievens' account of the French revolution above criticism. He is mistaken for example in asserting that the king before 1789 was 'the owner of the state', 'both the exploiter and the political ruler', or that the peasants were immediately dependent on the king. (53-4) The origins of the revolution are incomprehensible without an understanding of the struggle between the royal court and the aristocratic parlements. [3]

Lievens takes up a very French position when he reasons that the state cannot wither away in a socialist society (as Marx and Lenin believed) because the political will remain essential. In Lievens' account the state is simply a 'public power of a political nature'. (102) Marx, himself a great admirer of the French tradition, nonetheless painted a very different picture of the French state:

"This executive power with its enormous bureaucratic and military organization, with its ingenious state machinery, embracing wide strata, with a host of officials numbering half a million, besides an army of another half million, this appalling parasitic body, which enmeshes the body of French society like a net and chokes all its pores, sprang up in the days of the absolute monarchy.... The first French Revolution, with its task of breaking all separate local, territorial, urban and provincial powers in order to create the civil unity of the nation, was bound to develop what the absolute monarchy had begun: centralization, but at the same time the extent, the attributes and the agents of governmental power.... All revolutions perfected this machine instead of smashing it." [4]

Not 'the political', but this 'enormous bureaucratic and military organization' is the essence of the capitalist state. One can discuss the extent to which a socialist society would be able to manage without officials or soldiers. But it is not convincing to declare the state eternal without even mentioning professional politicians, bureaucracy, the army, the police or prisons.

Chávez/Allende

Lievens sees Venezuela's Bolivarian revolution as a source of hope for a democratic road to socialism, not only in Latin America but also in Europe. This road, as he describes it, would consist of a series of left electoral victories, a steady growth in the strength of extra-parliamentary movements, and a 'constituent' moment in which the state is radically democratized.

The history of Salvador Allende's Popular Unity government in Chile in 1970-3 shows however how many pitfalls line this democratic road. Allende — who, unlike Hugo Chávez, considered himself a Marxist — actually had a more radical strategic vision than Chávez does. He said that his government 'would take advantage of what openings there are in the present Constitution to open the way to the new Constitution, the people's Constitution', through a constituent moment taking the form of a referendum. More clearly than Chávez — as Lievens notes, Venezuela 'has so far only taken very timid steps away from capitalism' (224) — Allende foresaw that this transformation of the state would have to lead quickly to the conquest of 'real power when copper and steel [and the banks] are under our control ... when we have put far-reaching Land Reform measures into effect, when we control import and exports through the State, when we have collectivized a major portion of our national production'. [5] And yet his government ended in tragedy, with a bloody putsch on that 'other September 11th' in 1973.

In the years that followed, this terrible defeat occupied a central place worldwide in the left's strategic debates. Eurocommunists and other reformists responded by taking an even more cautious approach. The far left, by contrast, concluded that Allende should have attacked the centres of bourgeois power more forcefully. This implication is present, for example, in Nicos Poulantzas' last book. He wrote that 'political domination [that of the bourgeoisie, in the case of the capitalist State] is itself inscribed in the institutional materiality of the State'; therefore, 'It would be an error fraught with serious political consequences to conclude from the presence of the popular classes in the State that they can ever lastingly hold power without a radical transformation of the State.' [6] Ernest Mandel (in a book that Lievens cites, though not in this connection) drew an even sharper conclusion: 'The experiences of Spain 1936 and of Chile have ... made clear the need for a thoroughgoing purge and elimination of the whole repressive apparatus of the bourgeoisie, the disbanding of repressive bodies'. [7]

Yet Lievens fails, as he lays out his version of this strategy, to say anything about the necessity, nature or timing of the radical transformation of the state that Poulantzas insisted on, or of the thoroughgoing purge that Mandel called for. In general, Lievens has little or nothing to say about the army, the repressive apparatus in general, or the danger of foreign counter-revolutionary intervention. He focuses mainly on the national arena, arguing for 'once more setting in motion a decentralizing logic once the centralizing logic of the world market has been defeated'. (228) This argument skips over the whole revolutionary process. A socialist transition in one country in Europe today would very quickly come up against a European Union that explicitly, systematically and aggressively defends neoliberal capitalism. This makes a European and international dimension indispensable and urgent for any transitional strategy.

Another troubling omission in Lievens' discussion is the role of the trade union bureaucracy, left-wing parliamentary parties and the NGO-ized leaderships of social movements as obstacles to resistance to the rule of capital. He writes as if the unions' and social democracy's more or less reluctant acceptance of neoliberalism is simply a choice, made under pressure from the multinationals and the media they control. He leaves unmentioned the many ways in which the leadership of the labour movement has been integrated into the neoliberal elite. Yet without determined, intelligent resistance to this co-optation, any form of effective anti-capitalist politics will

remain illusory.

Again, the point is not at all to reproach Lievens with not having a fully worked-out strategy. No such strategy can exist at this point in history. He deserves credit for pursuing this discussion. We should all continue to do so, in a spirit of openness to new, 21st-century ideas and possibilities. In doing so, however, we must not forget what the 20th century taught us about the bloody dead-ends to which reformist or left-reformist illusions can lead.

Jet Menist

* From International Viewpoint:

<http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article2019>

Socialism and Democracy

Matthias Lievens

Let me first thank Jet for having read the book and written this review. By doing this in English, she threw the book in the midst of a debate that is raging internationally in the left, thus amplifying my voice far beyond the audience the book was originally meant for. I have great doubts whether the book deserves this attention. But I can only thank her for giving me the occasion to explain some of its central ideas to an English-speaking audience

The book appeared in a very precise context: it was published in a self-managed way and on a limited number of copies for a public that mainly consists of the (small) radical left in Flanders. It particularly aimed at triggering a debate and stimulating the imagination of fellow activists to rethink what socialism can mean in the twenty-first century. Talking about a socialist society is not an evident thing in a country where the 'left' - greens, social democrats and anticapitalist left together - obtains less than a quarter of the votes, and where conservative and neoliberal versions of nationalism are thriving. However, a number of interesting initiatives recently arose in Flanders, in particular the so-called 'Round Table of Socialists' which last year organized a 'day of socialism' that gathered about 800 people from all radical left currents, for a full day of debate about the meaning of socialism today. Similar initiatives are planned in the future. The book 'Socialism and Democracy in the 21st Century' was launched on this very day, and contained a number of (unfinished) reflections I developed throughout years of experience in the Belgian section of the FI.

Contrary to what Jet suggests, it is not at all a book about strategy. It is not conceived as a contribution to the strategic debate as it has been conducted in *Critique Communiste*, *Contretemps* etcetera. It rather attempts to re-envision or re-imagine socialism as such, namely as a fight for a radicalization of democracy. Of course, strategic issues cannot but be addressed within such a framework, but, as Jet has rightly stated, the book's reflections on strategy remain limited and undeveloped. The chapter on strategy takes only 29 pages out of 269. It contains a number of generalities, without going into detail. But the essence is there, according to me: the fact that the realization of socialist democracy requires an institutional rupture with the existing state (a state of exception), the role of the party, the revolutionary crisis (as thought by Lenin), the role of dual power, the problem of elections etc.

That many parts of the book are not particularly original is a legitimate critique. One of the aims of the book was to introduce a number of debates that have taken place in the Fourth International and in the international left in general to a Dutch-speaking audience. Due to the rather low level of the intellectual and political debate in the left in Flanders, these debates do not filter through at all here. The book was an attempt to address this lack. It draws inspiration from the work of Daniel Bensaïd, Catherine Samary, Ralph Miliband, Ernest Mandel, the recent debates about socialist democracy and about market and planning etcetera. It has been particularly influenced by the fascinating work of Antoine Artous, which I think deserves much more attention than it currently does. Furthermore, it attempts to mobilize ideas of Etienne Balibar, Claude Lefort, Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, Jacques Rancière and a number of other authors for an anticapitalist perspective.

Socialism and democracy

The book is grounded in a reflection on the sources of the socialist critique of current society. To put it schematically: it aims to go beyond 'scientific socialism' (which grounds its critique on scientific insights about the inner contradictions of capitalism) and 'ethical socialism' (which criticizes capitalism on normative grounds) and to develop what one might call a 'political socialism'. With the latter term, I mean a socialist critique of capitalism which focuses on the way capitalism deals with 'the political'. In an attempt to avoid complex philosophical debates, one could bluntly define 'the political' as a symbolic order which acknowledges the realities of conflict, decision, power and contingency. These realities are often obfuscated by the way capitalism functions, and this is deeply problematic from a democratic point of view.

The kind of political socialism which the book defends attempts to provide an immanent critique of the historical 'democratic revolution', which opened a space both for 'the political' and for its obfuscation through the workings of capitalism. The thesis of the book is that socialism can best be thought of as an intervention within this contradiction.

It attempts to radicalize (the logic of) the democratic revolution far beyond the limits that capitalism imposes on our current, limited type of democracy, and to politicize ever new spheres: the economy (through class struggle), the household (through feminism) etc. In a way, this breaks with a number of classical Marxian conceptions: rather than being a society where the political nature of the state has disappeared, socialism should be an attempt to take 'the political' fully serious. That is also why socialism is so closely linked to democracy (which can be defined as the attempt to find a form that takes 'the political' most fully into account).

Capitalist society, in contrast, engenders a number of depoliticizing tendencies which fundamentally undermine democracy. The book deals with these at length. It attempts to show for example how commodity fetishism can be understood as a form of depoliticisation, how fashionable notions such as governance undermine the political, how neoliberalism naturalizes the economy and conceals its contingency, or how the market undermines pluralism and conflict.

Confronted with this, class or feminist struggles are not merely struggles against a concrete enemy (the bourgeoisie, patriarchy), but they are perhaps first and foremost struggles on a metalevel: they are struggles for the recognition that there is conflict in the first place. They are struggles for the political, i.e. for the acknowledgement that the economy, the household etcetera are places characterized by conflict, decision, power and contingency. That is why these struggles are of fundamental importance to democracy. "There is a war between the ones who say there is a war and the ones who say there isn't," Leonard Cohen once sang. This is the kind of war that socialists wage.

Throughout the book, I develop a kind of ideology critique that is based on this fundamental idea. I think it constitutes a starting point for thinking about the emancipatory struggle for an 'other', socialist democracy.

Emancipatory struggles are always asymmetrical to an extent: they are struggles between politicization and depoliticization. Such an asymmetry appears on different levels: while the Marxist 'critique of political economy' (at least in its non-dogmatic or scientific versions) attempts to uncover the underlying political nature of the economy, neoliberal public choice theories try to give an economic account of politics. While financial markets function in such a way as to make sure that 'there is no alternative' (Thatcher), Socialists try to show that there is contingency, and that a number of strategic options remains open.

The fact that socialist struggles are so closely linked to a democratic logic is most obvious when we look at the nature of the extraparliamentary power of capital and labour. Labour's extraparliamentary struggles necessarily take a political form, as they always create new public spheres through collective action: in a strike, the street or the gate of the factory become a public sphere of debate, conflict and the formulation of ideas. Capital's extraparliamentary force, in contrast, consists of closing off public spheres, by threatening with delocalization, by lobbying behind the scenes, by closing factories whose workers are to combative.

Socialist struggles extend the political, and therefore the democratic logic, to new spheres, and fight against the bureaucratization (which is a form of depoliticization) of the state. The general thrust of the book is that socialism can be said to constitute a radicalization of the democratic revolution rather than a rupture with it. One of the 'symptoms' of this is that almost all concepts we currently use to think about politics were first or most saliently coined during the long period around the French Revolution. Think about popular sovereignty, human rights, constituent power, citizenship, popular surveillance, etc.

Jet's objection to this does not really provide a response. Of course, there have been many other revolutions where important ideas have been developed. Many socialists have developed all kinds of new interesting theories and insights. But the fact remains that for political theory, the French revolution remains a crucial reference point. I only found two concepts that were developed within the broad socialist movement after the period around the French revolution : self-management (coming from the anarchist tradition), and hegemony (developed by Gramsci), both of which are of course absolutely crucial for thinking about democracy.

But for the rest, all socialist theories of democracy are but recombinations and redefinitions of previously existing fundamental political-philosophical and juridical concepts. It is often said for example that one of Marx's contributions to democratic thought was his advocacy of the possibility to recall elected representatives. However, it is often forgotten that it was Condorcet who first developed such a conception. I contend that this genealogy of political concepts has a relevance if we want to think about the place of socialism 'in history' and its relation to the democratic revolution.

The rupture between the democratic revolution on the one hand, and feudalism and absolutism on the other, is much more fundamental and complex than many Marxists have recognized, although, under capitalist conditions, I repeat, this revolution has not been able to fully realize its potential. It is the crucial challenge for socialism to go beyond its limits. Generally speaking, the democratic revolution constitutes a double rupture with absolutism. On the one hand, it breaks with the symbolic logic of absolute monarchy, where the monarch is seen as the representative of god on earth. It thus creates a space of contingency which is a precondition for democracy.

On the other hand, it fundamentally changes the institutional principles governing the state (at least in theory). While absolute monarchy was based on the principle of venality (the possibility to sell public offices to noblemen) and on taxation as a means of political accumulation, modern democracy (however bourgeois it is) is based on totally different principles: the state is no one's property, public offices are not for sale (at least in principle), and political governors are institutionally separated from economic exploiters (although, of course, they are related to them by all kinds of political and ideological ties).[1]

However critical we may be of 'bourgeois' democracy, a number of these principles that are fundamental for creating a public sphere, cannot easily be dismissed. There ought to be more continuity between socialism and the logic of the democratic revolution than many classical Marxists have admitted. Our challenge is to think about a rupture with capitalist society by making use of the classical political concepts, rather than assuming it will be possible to create a society that will be based on fundamentally different principles which we cannot think yet now.

Strategy

As Jet said, the chapter on strategy has its limits. It is mainly concerned with giving some outlines of the ongoing strategic debate and showing the relevance of the foregoing reflections on democracy for thinking about strategy. Perhaps more than other parts of the book, this section is written with the Flemish situation in mind. The first concern of the left in Flanders, according to me, should be to try to regain the initiative in the political sphere, and to make the opposition between left and right visible again, against dominant nationalist discourses. Before intervening in ongoing struggles with an (actualized) version of a transitional program, making a left 'camp' in society is of foremost importance.

There are radical left groups that think they should intervene today with a so-called transitional program based on nationalisations under worker's control and the like, but that remains strictly propagandistic (which has its value, but only a limited one). The real question is through what initiatives and with which demands we can again create a space or a camp of the left. The tradition of thinking about transitional demands, which I otherwise fully endorse, does not help us so much in solving this particular question.

It could perhaps be predicted that many people would focus on the discussion on the state in the book. Contrary to what Jet suggests, I don't think the book underestimates the weight of bureaucracy and the importance of the struggle against it. However, I do think that a visible and contestable 'place of power' is inevitable in any democratic society, and that this is a crucial element of the modern state, even in future socialist societies.

In general, Marx and Engels' statements on the state are problematic to say the least. The focus on self-management is also not really convincing: of course, self-management can replace bureaucracy in the exercise of a number of organizational functions. But it cannot replace the need for a central place of power (a place where the sovereign people appears through several kinds of representations). In that sense, I remain fundamentally indebted to Claude Lefort (Antoine Artous is one of the very few Marxists who has understood what is at stake here; see his recent excellent book 'Citoyenneté, démocratie, émancipation').

There remains a need for a central place of power from where a given territory is governed and through which society can gain its self-understanding. The existence of such a place is a precondition for democratic contestation and conflict. This does of course not mean that 'this place of power' should be structured and organized in the way it is now (the struggle against bureaucracy

and the state's separation from society therefore remain actual).

As is explained in the book, self-managed councils can only partly fulfill this function. To the extent that they are not based on general citizenship on a given territory but are grounded on productive structures and workers agency, they simply fail to create a place where the people can be represented and become the object of contestation. This does not mean councils are to be dismissed, but as the book explains, they should have a place next to democratic institutions of a more parliamentary type in a kind of bicameralism (which is an idea that several fourth internationalists have already defended, so it is certainly not very original).

In general, I very much agree with what Jet says about Allende and Chavez (whom I do not defend at all in the book: it contains very few references to Chavez; but to what other contemporary experiences can we refer if we want to make a theoretical story somewhat more lively?). She is also right in stating that I insufficiently discuss the role of state repression and violence, and that the focus remains too much on the national level (contrary to what Jet suggests, however, I do discuss the problem of the bureaucratization of the labour movement in chapter II). These are certainly shortcomings of the book.

Of course, they are crucial issues (especially the question of globalization and of how we can realize socialism internationally in the current circumstances, and the relevance of past experiences), but I am perhaps not capable of saying something really interesting about them now. They would certainly require another book, or even several books. [2] Especially the role of elections and the formation of a leftist government within a revolutionary process remain a difficult puzzle, and I cannot claim to have a solid position on this question for the time being (in the first place for lack of practical experience and of real, practical involvement in such processes and debates).

To the extent that violence is discussed in the book, it is to unmask the enormous limits the capitalist state has in dealing with democratic contestation. When this state takes recourse to violence and repression, it gives up the remains of the democratic principles on which it claims to be based. Therefore, democracy is at our side. That is the red thread of the book. I am convinced that such a self-understanding will make socialists much stronger in the confrontation with state repression than the sterile attempts to create 'good Bolsheviks' who are prepared to violently create a dictatorship of the proletariat. The latter discourse is a recipe for political marginalization in the first place.

It is a pity that Jet ends her review with a suggestion that I uphold 'reformist or left-reformist illusions'. I know some people tend to search for the fundamental political and theoretical grounds for why I am no longer a member of the Belgian section of the FI, while my reason for leaving the section is simply that (particularly) its Flemish wing has simply become unworkable due to a seemingly irresolvable internal crisis and an unwillingness to genuinely face it. The book is certainly an attempt to go beyond forms of sterile dogmatism and certain forms of 'trotskyist' political correctness that I consider irrelevant in the Flemish context. But I could not possibly have written it without the solid political education and experience I enjoyed within the FI, whose project I fundamentally still support.

[1] *This analysis is based on the seminal recent work of Benno Teschke (The Myth of 1648: Class, Geopolitics and the Making of Modern International Relations, 2003), which goes beyond the work of Anderson that Jet cites.*

[2] My proposal to those who attempt to write such a book would be to reflect very well on the notion of history that is presupposed in discourses on 'the lessons of history'. However interesting past experiences (from 1917 to Allende) are, history does not teach lessons. It is much more complex than that.

* *From International Viewpoint:*

<http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article2020>

Footnotes

[1] or a valuable discussion of Gramsci's and Poulantzas' contributions to a strategy of democratic transition to socialism — within a broad spectrum of dual power strategies — see Peter Thomas, 'Voies démocratiques vers le socialisme: Le retour de la question stratégique', *Contretemps* no. 8 (Jan. 2011).

[2] See Robert Lochhead, *The Bourgeois Revolutions* (Amsterdam: IIRE, 1989), 24-29.

[3] Lievens' insistence that pre-revolutionary French society was no longer feudal is not a convincing refutation of classic Marxist studies like Perry Anderson's *Lineages of the Absolutist State*.

[4] Karl Marx, *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte* (New York: International Publishers, 1963), 121-2.

[5] Régis Debray, *The Chilean Revolution: Conversations with Allende* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971), 82, 85.

[6] Nicos Poulantzas, *State, Power, Socialism* (London: Verso, 1980), 14, 142.

[7] Ernest Mandel, *Revolutionary Marxism Today* (London: NLB, 1979), 40.