

ON THE STRATEGY OF DEVELOPMENT OF
DEVELOPED COUNTRIES:

The Red-Green Alliance and its Problems

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1. Introduction

By "developed countries" in this context I am essentially thinking of rich, capitalist countries - in other words of the OECD countries.⁽¹⁾ They are today in a crisis of their own making. The crisis has two roots: one in the international system, one in the intra-national system - one global, one domestic. The global crisis stems from the clearcut decision by Third world countries no longer to serve as a periphery or external sector of the economies of the OECD countries, but to internalize their own economies, possibly even turning the cards the other way, externalizing the OECD countries.⁽²⁾ And the domestic crisis has its root in the web of phenomena that can be referred to as "material overdevelopment, non-material underdevelopment" - in other words as maldevelopment.⁽³⁾ Needless to say these two phenomena are related to each other, and in their wake follow such symptoms as human and social pathologies:⁽⁴⁾ civilization diseases (cardio-vascular diseases, tumors, mental diseases), crime and violence in general, alcoholism, apathy, suicide, top heavy social structures, militarization of the societies and so on. The list could be made much longer, this is only to suggest the topic to be discussed. It should also be emphasized that many of the domestic problems that only ten years ago would be attempted solved through economic means today are no longer solvable that way (they were not ten years ago either, for that matter): the money is no longer available due to the deterioration of the position of these countries in the world economy.⁽⁵⁾

As a result of this, in Northern Europe, and to some extent in North America, the two major political forces right now seem to be "the blue wind" and "the green wave". Whether in power or not social democracy has been the dominant trend for the last fifty years or so. Its "red" or "rose" solution, (soft) state control over capitalist forces, has led to a considerable expansion of the public sector, to a blunting of some class contradictions, to a welfare state system. At the same time changes in social formation and social composition have led to a steady decline in the size of the traditional working class.⁽⁶⁾ Reactions against that social construction are now mounting : from the right the critique of the state as economic agent, the yearning for more right and freedoms to dispose over economic means, for the "private" individual; from the forces, usually small, further to the left the push to go further in the same directions with more state and worker control, from the new green pole a general critique of technocracy, whether rooted in state, capital or both, of clientelism and consumerism, and so on. At the same time most labor parties are probably split more or less in a right wing, a blue pole that sympathises with the political right, and in green and red factions, particularly among its youth. Thus, the future of these giant parties may easily be very similar to the present of the great liberal parties that preceded them in many countries : a conscience of society. Further South in Europe big communist parties are developing rose, green and even blue poles - so the crisis is as a crystal dissolving mono-chromatic parties into something more colourful.⁽⁷⁾

The concern here, however, is not with the future of labour parties as such, but with the fight for human and social development. It is taken as axiomatic that blue poles in the socio/economic/political formation based on private corporations, will by and large be status quo oriented, and so will most of the protagonists of the rose solution, state control over private corporations. What they will try to do will be to solve the problems as they appear, one by one, and they are already now discovering that they are running out of economic, social and human capital in trying to do so. Hence, one would look towards the green wave as an important carrier, in its fight for alternative ways of life, and one is led to the question: to what extent is this compatible with, in contradiction with, or in outright conflict with the class struggle of which the labour parties have been the organizers? Put in simple terms: what is the relation between WOL (Way Of Life) struggle and class struggle? I am putting the problem in those terms, but also in some other terms: what are the possibilities of a red/green alliance? The two ways of putting it are not quite identical if one defines the "red pole" of the political spectrum as an emphasis on the state as actor and the "green pole" as an emphasis on the local level as an actor. One may be active in the class struggle without believing much in the state as an economic actor, and vice versa, and one may be interested in changes in way of life without necessarily linking them to action at the local level. I shall be playing on both sets of concepts, however, trying to explore the relations between them.

2. Class struggle versus WOL struggle: an overview

No doubt we are dealing here with two different phenomena, even though they relate to the same society - mature, capitalist societies (although much of the same could be said also about mature state capitalist societies, "socialist" societies).

This is seen very clearly if one engages in strategy analysis, asking the six crucial questions what?,why?,who?,how?,when? and where? of the two types of social struggle.

(1) The what

In class struggle the what to do, the goal itself is relatively clear: a socialist society with class differences abolished or at least very heavily reduced, particularly with regard to conditions of production and level of living - thereby liberating everybody. From a WOL struggle point of view this is not seen in terms of classes but rather in terms of everybody living a more or less wrong life, so the struggle takes the form of a fight against maldevelopment, ie. against patterns of under and overconsumption whether for material and/or non-material needs, for everybody. Thus, both of them have as a goal a more harmonious society: the class struggle should lead to a society without classes, the WOL struggle to a society without maldevelopment, a society where nobody is forced into patterns of under and overconsumption of one thing or the other. No doubt class struggle asks more questions about how goods and services are produced, who decides, what is the distribution of what is produced and the costs and benefits of the production process; WOL struggle asks more what is produced, what is consumed, what kind of life does this lead to, and so on. For that reason there is no difficulty giving caricature presentations of each of them: the class struggle people can be seen as people who do not dispute what is produced as long as the share in the consumption and the conditions of production is about right; WOL struggle people do not care so much about how it is produced, who own and decide about the means of production as long as what is produced and what is consumed are about right from the point of view of a more desirable way of life. Both of them, however, would reject - and rightly so - such caricature presentation: the class struggle people would say that the struggle against capitalism also opens for the possibility of new decisions where production is concerned, more for use and less for exchange etc.; and the WOL struggle people would similarly say that to set right what is produced and how it is distributed a new social

formation is needed where not only workers but also, indeed, consumers decide over the production.

(2) The why

From the class struggle point of view: because there is a major enemy, capitalism(in state capitalist societies this would take the form of the state capitalist) which perpetuates this pattern of class division because it disposes, by virtue of its monopoly over means of production, over the surplus produced by the workers and will always try to manoeuvre in such a way that the surplus increases (by keeping wages low, by increasing productivity, and so on). And from the WOL struggle point of view: because there is a major enemy, technocracy, with both capitalist, state and intelligentsia components. This will also perpetuate these conditions of maldevelopment as there is an assumption of bigness which will always remain contradictory to true human interests for which reason technocracy has to be destroyed or built down to scale and a society with smaller units and high level of local self-reliance has to emerge. Both of them will energetically reject the caricature presentation referred to: the class struggle people will say that in destroying capitalism new goals can be set for society; and the WOL struggle people would say that in destroying technocracy one opens for the possibility of a class-less society. Both of them will see what they suggest not only as a sufficient condition, but as a necessary condition.

(3) The who

Both types of struggle will draw their support from people hit by the aspect of society in focus, and/or conscious of that way of conceiving of social ills. Thus, the class struggle would draw upon working class elements, wage-earners in general and on "enlightened" people from the bourgeoisie who will share with the working class people in making the bourgeois style of life available to many more people, ultimately to everybody; and the WOL struggle will draw upon people who have tasted and tested the bourgeois way of life and found it wanting:

(upper) middle class people, particularly the young and the educated, together with "enlightened" people from the working class willing to share with the bourgeois elements in the search for alternative ways of life, away from the bourgeois way of life. This point gains in perspective by also asking "who are on the other side" : most of the bourgeoisie in the case of the class struggle, anxious not to lose their privileges in a levelling out of material standard of living in general. In the case of WOL struggle much of the working class who would hate to see their dream denigrated, even destroyed before their eyes just as they are about to lay their hands on it (and there is no doubt that this is precisely the reason why the bourgeoisie is starting destroying its own style of life - more or less a correct perception). The upper classes would be more threatened by class struggle than by WOL struggle, they have the resources to escape from many of the evils of maldevelopment anyhow, if not from all, and they might also perceive the WOL struggle, in amusement, as an effort to copy some of their own manners, gimmicks and passtime exercises, but at a considerably lower level of expenditure.

(4) The how

Both of them will, of course, carry out their ideological jobs in order to bring about higher level of consciousness formation, in themselves as well as in the population at large, with the whole populace as possible proselytes. Both of them will mobilize, organize. But when it comes to the type of confrontation made use of and the method of fight in general there are important differences. In the class struggle as it has developed in the OECD countries the demonstrations and the strike are standard, but there is an underlying assumption of nationwide solidarity. The gains should be for all, not for a part of the working class - not better conditions for workers in that factory, or workers with this kind of speciality. It should be for the working class as a whole, otherwise the capitalists would be able to play one group against the other, fragmenting the working class through separate deals, and so on. In the WOL struggle an important method is of course also the demonstration, but then there is the positive negation, the

concrete utopia, the future now, to gain experience and show concretely what the goal is. Where class struggle would be waged with a view to national working class control and national solutions, not going ahead locally in one branch before all can join, the WOL struggle would be gambling precisely on the local element, working for people's local control at the micro and meso levels - at the level of the small communes and the municipalities. The class struggle people would only realize a part of their total dream, but try to do that on a nationwide basis: the WOL struggle people would realize the total dream, they would practise praxis now, and not wait for national solutions. In conventional political science terms: the class struggle people would be high on domain but low on scope; the WOL struggle people would be high on scope but low on domain.

(5), (6) : The where and the when

It is actually implicit in what was just said: the class struggle people want to do it everywhere, possibly by hitting first at the key centers of control, through a revolutionary coup. The WOL struggle people want to do it where it is practicable, at a place where there is space, where experiments can be carried out, even to some extent tolerated, showing the way. What the class struggle people gain in space they then lose in time: there is the assumption that one has to wait for the right time, the ripe time - eg. for the contradictions to become sufficiently mature. And the opposite can be said about the WOL struggle people: what they lose in space they gain in time: the time for action is now. No doubt, in all of this one can hear the shadows of the "debate" between Marx, representing the class struggle point of view and Fourier, representing the WOL struggle point of view - both referring to themselves as socialists - the former aiming for total control of structural and resource power in society, the latter hoping to achieve results through the power of the examples.

It makes little sense to discuss a strategy without also discussing the obvious counter-strategies - not only who is on the other side, but how, when and where they would try to maintain the

status quo, perhaps even using the force opposing them as a way of strengthening their own situation (but for this they have to be a little clever).

Thus, if the class struggle takes a revolutionary form the obvious counter-strategy would be to keep a low horizon and simply join the revolutionary party, hoping for, even knowing, that after the revolution there will still be a class society although perhaps of a slightly different kind and then trying to dig out a niche in the new, "classless" society.