

THE RENEWAL OF SOCIALISM



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uropean societies are going through a profound transformation. The economic crisis generates a process of social mutation of our capitalism, which affects both the situation of the European economies in the world market and the availability of material possibilities of freedom for sharing out.

Social life tends to fall apart through the segregation of a third of the population who remain outside the field of stable work. It is generally accepted that there is a need to restructure and reconvert the existing industrial fibre as well as to urgently forge a single European voice able to make decisions in certain matters. New possibilities and new conditioning factors for social life appear as a result of the incorporation of technological innovations in the production process. New demands emerge regarding the collective and individual improvements of the standard of living. These are all fairly basic reasons for demanding new outlooks. It would therefore be logical to expect a renewal of proposals, both on the left and on the right, so as to face up to the new challenges. To say the least, a large number of the old ideas seem outmoded. The right-wing seems to do nothing more than harp back to the worn out discourse of economic liberalism and part of the left-wing still lives in the hope of uninterrupted growth once we are through this brief "parenthesis".

The renewed society which is being shaped has generated new insatisfactions and has reinforced secular yearnings: the desire for individuality and creativity, the wish to achieve equality between people, irrespective of sex, social background or age, the realization that our environment and our living-space is a dwindling resource and that once destroyed it is irretrievable, that peace is an essential factor of existence, etc. Day by day we see how the world of work is *one* part of life, but that there are *also* other inequalities which are unjust and unnecessary, and which are even more intolerable in so far as the basic financial needs are less distressing, thanks to the existence of the Welfare State. Socialism cannot forget this demand for social liberation, because it is its own. The effort and the solidarity which are necessary to avoid the consolidation of a society of two thirds, to distribute labour and to face up to the challenge of international competition, must also include the dimension of solidary liberty which has always been part of the movement's thinking, of individual liberation in personal life and, with industrial democracy, at work. Through a viable economic programme and a programme of practicable social reforms, it is not only possible, but necessary, to create more conditions of freedom, so as to be able to distribute them more equally and correct the injustices caused by their earlier distribution, which depended on the market forces (of the existing power).

In my opinion, Socialism has to be seen as a movement for the step-by-step construction of a road to freedom for the people, in a joint effort to reach equal levels of freedom, to destroy economic, class or cultural barriers that create inequality. Socialism is the commitment to the construction of a world which allows equal opportunities to human beings to develop each

individual's capacity. It is a way to canalize the revolt against *injustice in an effort to change things*. Socialism is the realization of the democratic ideal in the political, economic, social and cultural fields, achieved by balancing the available conditions of freedom and the accessibility of the widest possible individual self-government. The complete realization of democracy in society, so long as we do not reduce it to its political aspect, leads to the Socialist impulse.

Socialism is not a ready-made economic project, it is not a programme of immediate reforms, it is not an ideology, it is not a party. It is the wish to subject the development of society to freedom of choice, an equal democratic choice of society's members which springs from our common belonging to the human race. It takes on the inheritance of the whole freedom movement, without shutting itself in in a false eternity of what already exists or in millenarian dreams.

For this reason, the debate within Socialism is between state-based and policentric Socialism, between bureaucratic Socialism and that which strives for transformation, moving towards European unity and the reinforcement of local and regional power, between the Socialism which bows to the Conservative pressure for the reduction of freedom and the Socialism in favour of a widening of freedom through a policy of peace and solidary social reconstruction, between the Socialism that sticks to the same old discourse (without being able to apply it) and that which intends to face up to the new issues of today and tomorrow: ingrained unemployment, European unity, flexibility of power-structures, personal freedom as a way to correct inequalities, the crisis of the patriarchal society, and a policy for peace. Socialism, then, is heading for a renewal (the right-wing is, too, and it ought to start thinking about it) of attitudes and programmes. Our aim is to govern now, and not in fifty years' time. It has to take up the "utopian force" of social reform in a new context, as the operative idea of a policy of government from the majority, that will turn the European countries into a progressive force for the twenty-first century and its political and social model (the least bad of those known) into one for the future, which will not be perfect. We need the Socialism that is possible to prevent the ritualistic rhetoric of the past creeping in to the simple running of the present or the simple running of the present becoming a ritualistic rhetoric.

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