

**FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF PARAÍBA CENTRE FOR HUMAN
SCIENCES, LETTERS AND ARTS**

**SEMINAR 200 YEARS OF MARX: DEMOCRACY
AND SOCIALISM IN THE 21ST CENTURY**

Auditorium 411 - CCHLA - 5th December 2018 - 7pm

SUMMARY

The seminar "200 years of Marx: Democracy and socialism in the 21st century" aims to discuss the current problem of the realisation of democracy in mass society, as well as the contributions of socialist criticism on the importance of substantial democracy, or as K. Marx put it, "true democracy". Marx put it, "true democracy".

The relationship between democracy and socialism stems from contemporary critical debates about socialism and its links or ruptures with democratic regimes. This theme repeatedly returns to the debate and its most fundamental theoretical substratum remains the thought of K. Marx. Therefore, on the occasion of the author's bicentenary, we propose this seminar in order to think about our immediate political reality.

METHODOLOGY

The event will consist of two tables with two speakers at each table. Researchers from related fields, but with divergent theoretical and political positions, have been invited to present different sides of the problem. After each speaker has spoken for 40 minutes, the public will be invited to debate.

OBJECTIVES

In addition to the specific objective of discussing the links and limits of the relationship between democracy and socialism in contemporary times, this event aims to promote the dissemination of knowledge produced by postgraduate research in order to contribute to the training of undergraduate and postgraduate students, establishing a dialogue with other professors from related areas.

PROGRAMMING

Coordinator: Prof Luciana Aliaga

05 DECEMBER 2018

5pm Book launch Auditorium 412

Table 1. 5th December at 7pm. "Is socialism up to date?" Giuseppe Tosi (UFPB) and Gianni Fresu (UFU)

06 DECEMBER 2018

Table 2. 6th December at 7pm. "Socialism and democracy in Brazil"
Marco Mondaini and Plínio de Arruda Sampaio Jr.

MARX'S BICENTENARY.
Which Democracy and Which Socialism for the 21st Century.

Giuseppe Tosi¹

Summary

The theme is the current state of socialism, which I'll develop in three points:

- i) Marx's critique of bourgeois or liberal democracy, based on the distinction between political emancipation and human emancipation;
- ii) Bobbio's critique of Marx's conception of democracy, and his proposal for a reconciliation between liberalism and socialism, through social liberalism or liberal socialism;
- iii) the current crisis of political and social liberalism in the face of the emergence and affirmation of economic liberalism and populism (especially on the right).

Conclusion: the socialist perspective is moving further and further away from the political horizon of the West and the world in general.

1. Marx: reformist socialism *versus* revolutionary socialism.

Marx's entire oeuvre is permeated by the dialectic between political and human emancipation, from his youth to his maturity. In *The Jewish Question*, Marx recognises that political emancipation is progress, but that it remains within the prevailing order and calls for true human emancipation:

Political emancipation does indeed **represent great progress**; it is not the definitive form of human emancipation *in general*, but it is the definitive form of human emancipation *within* the world order that has existed up to now. Let's be clear: we are talking here about real emancipation, practical emancipation (MARX, 2010, p. 54).

Decades later, in the *Critique of the Gotha Programme*, Marx (n.d.) returned to this distinction and warned of the danger that the programme would limit itself to political emancipation and lose sight of true human emancipation; in other words, that the German Social Democratic Party would lose sight of the revolutionary perspective in the name of concessions and compromises that the programme made with the bourgeoisie and the bourgeois state (inspired by Lasalle's thinking). Marx, on the other hand, decisively reaffirms that the ultimate goal is the radical overcoming of bourgeois society:

In the higher phase of communist society, when the enslaving subordination of individuals to the division of labour has disappeared and, with it, the contrast between intellectual and manual labour; when work is not just a means of life, but the first vital necessity; when, with the development of individuals in all their aspects, the productive forces also grow and the springs of collective wealth gush forth in torrents, only then will it be possible to go completely beyond the narrow horizon of bourgeois law and the

¹ Full Professor retired from Federal University of Paraíba, Brazil. This text, presented at the thematic panel with Prof Gianni Fresu (UFU) in 2018, has not been published and retains the characteristics of an oral presentation.

society will be able to inscribe on its banners: from each according to his ability; to each according to his needs (MARX, n.d., p. 214).

But how to achieve this goal? How to act in the period of transition to communism without betraying the revolutionary horizon? This is the crucial question for the entire communist movement: Marx insistently warned of the dangers of a "moderate" transition.

The question then arises: what transformation will the state undergo in communist society? Or, in other words: what social functions, analogous to the current functions of the state, will remain? This question can only be answered scientifically, and no matter how many ways we combine the word "people" and the word "state", we won't get a millimetre closer to solving the problem (MARX, n.d., p. 221).

Marx appeals to the "scientificity" of socialism but says little or nothing about the type of state he needs to build. To answer this question, he limits himself to quoting the canonical "dictatorship of the proletariat" that had already appeared in the *Manifesto of the Communist Party*:

Between capitalist society and communist society lies the period of the revolutionary transformation of the former into the latter. This period also corresponds to a political period of transition, whose state can only be **the revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat**. The programme, however, does not deal with the latter, nor with the future state of communist society (MARX, n.d., p. 221).

This is Marx's main criticism of the programme: it risks losing sight of the revolutionary horizon by defending totally insufficient "democratic" flags, which remain within the horizon of the bourgeois state:

Their political demands go no further than the same old **tired democratic litany**: universal suffrage, direct legislation, popular law, people's militia, etc. They are a mere echo of the bourgeois People's Party, of the League for Peace and Freedom (MARX, n.d., p. 221).

The Programme's mistake is the illusion that, within the capitalist and bourgeois state, a "democratic republic" can emerge that will allow the transition to communism, without the dictatorship of the proletariat, that is, without the violent overthrow of the bourgeoisie. The programme deludes itself into pulling off this democratic republic

to a state that is nothing but a military despotism with a bureaucratic framework and police armour, garnished with parliamentary forms, mixed with feudal ingredients and already influenced by the bourgeoisie; and, on top of that, to assure this state that someone imagines they can get it from it "by legal means"! (MARX, n.d., p. 222).

Marx calls this strategy "democratism" which forgets the objective of "waging the definitive battle of the class struggle" to overthrow the bourgeois state. That's why measures like "co-operatives, universal suffrage, direct legislation, people's right, people's militia, a single progressive income tax,

General and equal popular education at the expense of the state, compulsory schooling for all, free education, freedom of science, freedom of conscience, normal working hours, a ban on women's work and child labour", etc. are considered by them to be palliative measures, "democratic braggadocio and superstitions" because they act within bourgeois limits and "have nothing to do with socialism" (MARX, n.d., p. 223).

Although Engels stated in 1891, in the introduction to the work, that "the Gotha programme was abandoned in Halle [at another congress] as absolutely unserviceable, even by its own authors", this was precisely the path that, in practice, the labour movement and social democracy in Germany and other European countries followed in the following decades, at least until the First World War.

It was the path of reform rather than revolution, the expansion of democratic spaces rather than the dictatorship of the proletariat, which marked an era of the development of mass and inclusive democracy, until the rupture of the October Revolution in which Lenin faithfully followed Marx's criticisms of the Gotha reform programme and promoted the dictatorship of the proletariat, which gradually became the dictatorship of the party over the proletariat³.

In this respect, the debate between Kautsky (1979) and Lenin (1977) on the character of the Soviet revolution remains relevant today (LYRA, 2013). With regard to the dictatorship of the proletariat, while Lenin maintained an almost literal fidelity to Marx, Kautsky revised Marxian thought, at least on two fundamental points: criticising the theories of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the extinction of the state in communism.

Rubens Pinto Lyra (2013, p. 140) writes about the first question:

In his work *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat*, Kautsky revisits Marx's thinking on the concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat and the end of the state. On the **dictatorship of the proletariat**, Kautsky expresses himself in the following terms: "it is true that democracy does not give the certainty of peaceful transition, but infallibly such a transition is impossible without democracy" (1979, p. 30). In 1919, he proposed replacing the term "dictatorship" with "rule", so as not to mislead people into thinking that the transitional regime to socialism would be undemocratic.

And on the extinction of the state, he writes:

Kautsky also criticises the Marxian utopia of **the extinction of the state**, repeatedly defended by the Bolsheviks. The dictatorship exercised by the Bolsheviks shows that it is not possible to conceive of eliminating the bureaucracy, since companies, trade unions, cooperatives and political parties cannot do without specialised officials, since the people cannot manage themselves. They need their own bodies to carry out matters concerning the administration of their organisations. Above all, it needs the most powerful of its organisations: the state. Instead of self-government, it is better to speak of self-decision by the people [...]" (LYRA, 2013, p. 141).

³ Marx, in the end, looks like a German ideologue, of the kind he criticised in *The German Ideology*, more concerned with the orthodoxy of the theory than with its ability to explain reality. If reality turned out to be worse for it, the important thing was to maintain the purity of the doctrine; a stance that would give rise to the long tradition of Marxist scholasticism, which would then begin with Marx himself.

In conclusion:

Thus, for Kautsky, the state, as a regulatory body, is necessary under socialism, albeit stripped of its class content. This is because society would continue to need an organ to contain its particularist impulses. In other words, a new state, supported by a "classless democracy" (LYRA, 2013, p. 141).

It's hard to say which of the two was faithful to Marx's thinking: perhaps both: Kautsky because, like Marx, he knew that the transition to socialism would take place in a capitalistically advanced country and in a way that, if not exactly peaceful, was in a way "natural", based on the explosion of the contradictions that the system itself would generate without the need to resort to revolutionary violence; Lenin because, like Marx, he didn't believe in a peaceful path either to the East or to the West, and took on Marx's criticisms of the "fanfares of democratism" and of a moderate and etapist vision of the revolution. In short, Lenin was never a democrat and always despised bourgeois democracy, thus creating a long generation of followers on this path to this day.

2. Bobbio: Liberalism, democracy and socialism ⁴.

Bobbio criticises the Marxian idea of revolution in the essay in which he states that there is not really a doctrine of the state in Marx, but only a doctrine of transition (BOBBIO, 1983). He advocates both a possible reconciliation between liberalism and democracy and a link between democracy and socialism. Bobbio believes that it is possible to read socialism as the heir to the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, which continues the banners of liberty, equality and fraternity without a revolutionary break (as Marx and Lenin advocated), but through a slow and constant process of reform that reconciles fundamental freedoms (which are not only bourgeois) with a conception of material equality, at least as equality of opportunity, which required positive intervention by the state in the economy and society in order to realise it; and to do so without violence, or with the legitimate violence of the rule of law.

Bobbio cites the dominant doctrine of the incompatibility of socialism and liberalism in an essay entitled *Tradition and Heritage of Liberal Socialism*:

On an ideological level, on the one hand, socialism - in its most influential historical manifestation by tradition, which in Europe of course is Marxism, and then in the countries of real socialism, Marxism-Leninism - has liberalism as its main adversary, interpreted as a manifestation of bourgeois individualist thinking, of the ideal of *homo œconomicus*, which transforms every human relationship into a utilitarian exchange relationship. On the other hand, liberal thought, in its most finished and argued theoretical arguments, considers socialism, be it economic, political or philosophical, to be its main adversary" (BOBBIO, 2003, p. 511 and 513).

Bobbio criticises this opposition in the name of possible conciliation:

⁴ TOSI, G. Democracy, Liberalism and Socialism in Norberto Bobbio. A response to Vitullo and Scavo. *RIDH* | Bauru, v. 5, n. 2, p. 51-78, Jul./Dec., 2017 (9)

The idea that socialism is not the antithesis of liberalism, but, in a way, its continuation and complement, is the main focus of Italian liberal socialism. We mustn't forget that Carlo Rosselli was inspired by Rodolfo Mondolfo, who, despite declaring himself a Marxist, emphasised the humanist aspect of Marx's thought [...] At the beginning of the century Mondolfo wrote an essay *From the Declaration of Rights to the Manifesto of the Communists* (1906), in which he clearly set out to highlight the novelty in continuity, interpreting Marxism as the fruit of the natural maturation of the ideals of the French Revolution, and not as a violent break with the past (p. 511).

He continues:

In somewhat schematic terms, political emancipation, which was the work of the French Revolution, would have been followed by economic emancipation. In fact, the French Revolution was preceded, in turn, by the Reformation and the secularisation process that resulted from it, by religious emancipation. Religious and political emancipation were expected to be complemented by economic emancipation. [...] The first two forms of emancipation were successful; the third proved more difficult (p. 513)

In conclusion:

[...] However, the remedy that he [Marx] proposed, or that the political movements stemming from it sought to apply, had the perverse effects that we all see today. It is precisely this perverse effect that, in recent years, has revived the ideal of liberal socialism (p. 513).

In short, Bobbio seeks to reconcile the negative freedom of liberalism (of non-interference in the private sphere) with the positive freedom of the state to provide basic rights, both civil and political as well as economic and social. In the end, this is not just a wish, but a historical reality that took hold in the Europe of the *welfare state* and the state as the driving force behind reconstruction and economic and social development in the decades following the Second World War, at least until the fall of communism in the early 90s.

But it's not just Bobbio who defends this thesis: democracy, as the rules of the game, but also as a guarantee of individual and collective freedoms and rights (whose affirmation had the decisive contribution of the working class against economic liberalism), is something recognised by Marxist and socialist leaders and intellectuals who went so far as to affirm democracy as a "universal value" (BERLINGUER, 2009)⁵.

In Brazil, Carlos Nelson Coutinho, one of the most important Marxist thinkers, made an important distinction between genesis and validity in his 1979 book *Democracy as a Universal Value*:

If we want to be faithful to Lenin's *method*, we have to come to the following conclusion: it is true that all democratic freedoms in their modern form (the principle of sovereignty and popular representation, the legal recognition of pluralism, etc.) have their *historical genesis* in the bourgeois revolutions, or more precisely, in the broad popular movements that ended up (more or less unintentionally) opening up the political space necessary for the consolidation and

⁵ "Universal", in this debate that took place in the middle of the Cold War, must be understood as a fundamental value for overcoming the historic division between the countries of Eastern and Western Europe. We know how unsuccessful these attempts, which were called *Eurocommunism* in Western Europe and *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* in the Soviet Union, were.

reproduction of the capitalist economy; but it is equally true that, for historical materialism, there is no mechanical identity between *genesis* and *validity*.

He concluded by saying

Therefore, for those who, in the name of the historical-universal interests of the workers, **are** fighting for socialism, political democracy **is not a simple tactical principle: it is a permanent strategic value**, insofar as it is **a** condition both for the conquest and for the consolidation and deepening of this new society (COUTINHO, 1979, p. 36 and 37)⁶.

But the situation described by Carlos Nelson is rapidly changing and getting worse.

3. The crisis of political liberalism and the rise of economic liberalism and (right-wing) populism

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, Norberto Bobbio and other liberal intellectuals expressed the cautious hope that the end of the historical period of the Cold War would usher in a new era of expansion of the democratic rule of law in the world. This hope (which was not to be confused with Fukuyama's thesis of the end of history) was partly realised: there was indeed an internationalisation of the democratic rule of law in some areas of the world, such as the countries of Eastern Europe and Latin America, which ended the tragic period of military dictatorships. The "third wave", as Samuel Huntington (1994) called it.

However, this panorama has changed and is changing rapidly in recent times. Countries that have not historically experienced democracy, such as China and Russia, are governed by regimes of economic liberalism (albeit with strong state control) and political authoritarianism; the Arab Springs did not result in democratic regimes, but in civil wars and/or military dictatorships; and in countries with a democratic tradition, such as Europe and the United States, the fastest growing political ideology is populism, in all its different guises.

The hope for a democratisation of international relations through an ever-greater spread of the liberal democratic rule of law, which followed the fall of the Berlin Wall, is today in crisis both in consolidated democratic regimes and in new political regimes.

The hope for an internationalisation of democracy is being replaced by a disbelief in democracy, even in the countries where it was born: see, for example, the debate sparked in the United States by Jason Brennan's book

⁶ For Coutinho, the strategic value of democracy is the first movement of an indissoluble binomial: "there is no socialism without democracy", while the second movement is much more complex and difficult: "there is no democracy without socialism". The homage to "Lenin's method" doesn't hide Coutinho's substantial difference with the Bolshevik revolutionary leader, even though he holds Stalin most responsible for the elimination of democracy in the Soviet Union. Similarly, the criticism of Kautsky's "opportunist formalism" cannot hide the substantial similarity between the Brazilian philosopher's criticism and that of the "renegade Kautsky" of Marxism-Leninism. See Valério Arcary's remarks on the subject: "But the recent converts to democracy as a universal value could not resort to Kautsky's texts as a theoretical foundation, because they came from a tradition in which, at least in words, it was necessary to maintain the reference to the October Revolution" (ARCARY, 2002, p. 102).

Against Democracy (2017); and in Europe the rise of right-wing populism, whose main ideologue is Alain de Benoist (2017).

On the other hand, authoritarian regimes such as China and Russia are challenging Western democracies in the name of the "ethical and political" superiority of their model, which combines political authoritarianism and economic liberalism, in the face of the weaknesses and inefficiencies of liberal democracies, which are unable to cope with the processes of economic, political and social globalisation.

In the US, a heated debate on democracy has recently emerged, also due to the unexpected victory of Trump's populism, which promotes a certain "revisionism".

In 2017, Jason Brennan wrote a book published by *Yale University Press* with the eye-catching title *Against Democracy*,⁷ which sparked a wide debate. The central thesis is the opposition between democracy as a flawed form, above all due to the incompetence and ignorance of the people on ever more complex technical matters; and "epistemocracy", as the power of those who possess knowledge, the technicians, thus taking up Plato's opposition between *doxa* and *episteme* and his defence in *The Republic* and *The Politician* of the ruler being the one who knows, the *Philosopher-King*.⁸ Another author, Yascha Mounk⁹, in *The People Versus Democracy*, states that liberal democracy faces two extreme situations: either a democracy without rights, or rights without democracy.

Two central components of liberal democracy - individual rights and the popular will - are increasingly at war with each other. As the role of money in politics has soared and important issues have been removed from public contestation, a system of "rights without democracy" has taken hold. The populists who protest against this say they want to give power back to the people. But in practice, they create something just as bad: a system of "democracy without rights" ¹⁰.

Levitsky and Ziblatt, professors at Harvard, have written a book with the frightening title: *How democracies die. What History Reveals about our* ^{Future}¹¹, soon to be published by Zahar in Portuguese in Brazil. Levitsky was recently at the Fernando Henrique Cardoso Institute in São Paulo to give a lecture on the subject, warning of the dangers facing Brazilian democracy:

Despite facing a 'perfect storm', due to the combination of a deep economic crisis and one of the biggest corruption investigations in history, over the last 25 to 30 years Brazil has done a tremendous job of consolidating its position in the world.

⁷ BRENNAN, Jason. *Against Democracy*. Princeton: Princeton University Press 2017. (eBook)

⁸ PLATON. *The Political*. São Paulo: Nova Cultura, 1991 (The Thinkers); PLATÃO. *Protagoras*. Lisbon: Relógio D'Água Ed., 1999; PLATÃO. *The Republic*. Introduction, translation and notes by Maria Helena da Rocha Pereira. Lisbon: Calouste Goulbenkian Foundation, 2001. See: TOSI, G. - GUIMARÃES, R. *Democracia e Elitismo dos Antigos e dos modernos*. Curitiba: CRV, 2020.

⁹ MOUNK, Yascha. *The People versus democracy*. Why our freedom is in danger and how to save it. Cambridge - Massachusetts; London, England: Harvard University Press, 2018. (eBook)

¹⁰ "Two core components of liberal democracy-individual rights and the popular will-are increasingly at war with each other. As the role of money in politics soared and important issues were taken out of public contestation, a system of "rights without democracy" took hold. Populists who rail against this say they want to return power to the people. But in practice they create something just as bad: a system of "democracy without rights." (p. 14).

¹¹ LEVITSKY, Steven - ZIBLATT, Daniel. *How Democracies Die*. And how ours can be saved. New York: Crown Publishing, 2018. (eBook)

democracy. Don't give in to the temptation to put a candidate with authoritarian tendencies into the presidency.¹²

Another professor, this time from Cambridge, David Runciman, says that we are witnessing the end of the modern state because we are too confident that democracy can survive its mistakes¹³.

Christopher Achen and Larry Bartels, professors at Princeton, brought together decades of joint research in a book entitled: *Democracy for Realists. Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*,¹⁴ in which they depart from Schumpeter's elitist conception of democracy to analyse electoral processes and propose a realist vision of democracy.

Larry Diamond, from Stanford University, wonders if there is a global decline of democracy after the third wave described by Huntington¹⁵:

The third wave of democratisation in the 1980s and 1990s was unprecedented in human history and resulted in a great expansion of democratic values and institutions both in Latin America, Southeast and East Asia and in the former communist bloc (Eastern Europe and the republics of the former Soviet Union). It was inevitable that there would be some kind of reflux, because not all the young democracies of the third wave would be sustainable, but the democratic strangulation in countries with average economic development such as Turkey, Thailand and Venezuela did not seem inevitable," he said. Poland, Hungary and Egypt are other countries of concern, according to the speaker.¹⁶

Spanish sociologist Manuel Castells has just released a book with a significant title: *Rupture. The crisis of liberal democracy*.¹⁷ It analyses phenomena such as the crisis of political representation, the politics of fear, the new rebellion of the masses and the dangers of European disunity¹⁸.

As a practical example of this situation, in addition to the more famous case of Donald Trump, we can cite the Italian political movement, "Cinque Stelle - M5s", founded a few years ago by a comedian, which became the main Italian party in the 2018 elections, and which governs Italy in alliance with another populist party of extreme directness, "La Lega". The M5s advocates a plebiscitary type of direct democracy and criticises representative democracy and the political "caste".

It's no coincidence that the electronic platform used to choose candidates and carry out polls and consultations among activists is called *Plataforma*

¹² <https://medium.com/funda%C3%A7%C3%A3o-fhc/como-morrem-as-democracias-por-steven-levitsky-fe3f1b9328cc>

¹³ "Maybe this is the end of the modern state," says Cambridge professor. Folha de São Paulo. 21.01.2028. Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrissima/2018/01/1951709-estamos-watching-the-end-of-the-modern-state-says-cambridge-professor.shtml>. Prof Runciman recently wrote a book entitled *How Democracy Ends*. New York: Basic Books, 2018.

¹⁴ ACHEN, Christopher - BARTELS, Larry. *Democracy for Realists. Why Elections Do Not Produce Responsive Government*. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2016.

¹⁵ HUNTINGTON, Samuel P. *The Third Wave. Democratisation at the End of the 20th Century*. São Paulo: Ática, 1994.

¹⁶ <http://fundacaoofhc.org.br/iniciativas/debates/ha-um-declinio-global-das-democracias-mesa-redonda-com-larry-diamond>

¹⁷ CASTELLS, Manuel. *Rupture. The crisis of liberal democracy*. Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 2018.

¹⁸ See: Valentina Pazé. *In the Name of the People*. The democratic problem. Bari: Laterza, 2011. Chantal Mouffe. *For a Populism of the Left*. Literary Autonomy, 2019. For right-wing populism, see: BENOIST, Alain de. *Populism*. La fine della destra e della sinistra. Bologna: Arianna Ed. 2017.

Rousseau. Recently, in a newspaper article, the administrator of this platform (who has control over it) said that in the not-too-distant future parliament will be abolished because direct electronic democracy will make it superfluous. In the same days, the founder and leader (some say owner) of the movement, the comedian Beppe Grillo, proposed that politicians should no longer be elected, but drawn by lot, as happened in ancient Athens. These are ideas that are now being put to the test when the movement becomes a party and takes over the government; but they indicate the new and worrying "spirit of the times".

What is common among the scholars in this debate is a strong pessimism about the fate of democracy, with a few exceptions¹⁹. Democracy faces two threats to its survival: on the one hand, technocratic elitism, which defends not political liberalism, but economic liberalism; on the other hand, as a reaction to this loss of control by the "people" over politics, the populist response.

Bobbio was concerned about this movement because he was in favour of political liberalism and had severe restrictions on economic liberalism, as well as being a critic of populism, which he considered to be a form of demagoguery or plebiscitary democracy with authoritarian, if not totalitarian, undertones.

Bobbio's conception of democracy sought to avoid two extremes:

- a) the first extreme leads to a restricted conception of citizenship, of the census type, which defends the need for economic and social inequality as something beneficial for the development of the market, which has no commitment to democracy or social rights, and which preaches a minimal state, less state and more market and a radical individualist conception.
- b) The second is a plebiscitary democracy that tends towards the tyranny of the majority, or a form of totalitarian or authoritarian democracy, on the assumption that there are a people, with a general will, a univocal interest, etc.

And it is precisely these two movements and political ideologies that are growing.

The advance of neoliberalism, as an ideology and as a practice, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of Soviet communism is, as Bobbio had seen, a serious threat to democracy, because it removes from democratic control the really important decisions that concern the economy, which are taken in inaccessible centres of power and lobbies, which are above and beyond state control: it is the revenge of oligarchies and invisible powers.

This neoliberal and globalising hegemony is **populism's** favourite target; a complex phenomenon that combines two essential components: it shares the

¹⁹ Going against the grain, as always, is Harvard professor Steven Pinker (author of *The Good Angels of Our Nature*. How violence decreased. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras), is one of the few who defends the thesis that there is no decline in democracy. See: *Steven Pinker writes about the advantages of the Western political system*. In an article with Robert Muggah, the linguist states that democracy's resilience is a reason for optimism. The de São Paulo 22.04.2018. Available at: politico-ocidental.shtml at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/ilustrissima/2018/04/steven-pinker-escreve-sobre-vantagens-do-sistema-politico-ocidental.shtml>. An interview with Steven Pinker appeared in the newspaper *La Repubblica* on 20 July 2018, in which he stated that the Enlightenment will defeat populism: https://rep.repubblica.it/pwa/intervista/2018/07/20/news/steven_pinker_ecco_perche_i_populisti_perderanno-202311403

presuppositions of direct democracy in its plebiscitary form, i.e. the (symbolic, mythical) existence of a people, of a general will, of a common good, and at the same time shares the elitist element: the leader is called upon to more than represent, to defend, personify, hypostatise/substantiate this popular power; the popular mass against the elite or the political caste and the "strong powers". And populism, especially on the right, is today the fastest growing movement in Europe and the United States.

Bobbio would also be concerned about the **resurgence of nationalism**, now called sovereigntism, which is going in the exact opposite direction to his cosmopolitanism, and which is trying to break up the European Union, one of the most successful processes of regional integration of a federalist and democratic type; as well as the advance of religious fundamentalism in the public sphere and the assault on the secular state.

Another significant aspect of an epochal change is the ever stronger criticism of **human rights**, the other theme, along with democracy and peace, dear to Bobbio.

As Bobbio shows in *A Era dos Direitos*,²⁰ there has always been left-wing and right-wing criticism of human rights from the French Revolution to the present ^{day}²¹, but after the Second World War, there was a joint effort to converge different political, religious and philosophical doctrines to give the UDHR a foundation²²; a convergence that was strengthened after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the end of the Cold War and the 1993 Vienna conference.

The human rights have never enjoyed unanimity, but for a while there was a broad acceptance, which is changing recently both in people's common sense and in the understanding of intellectuals and political leaders. Just two examples:

On the left is Slavoj ŽIŽEK's pamphlet, *Against Human Rights*, (2010) on the one hand, which takes up and updates and radicalises the Marxist criticisms of human *rights*; and on the other, *Beyond Human Rights*. 2011, p. 4 (Kindle), a review of the various historical criticisms of human rights, which calls into question, above all, their claim to universality, which hides a political project of Western hegemony.

On the contrary, the particularism of each culture and cultural traditions that are to a certain extent irreconcilable with other traditions are claimed, which raises the prospect of a clash of civilisations rather than a convergence and raises serious doubts about the possibility of cosmopolitanism. The doctrine of the superiority of a certain culture over others also reappears, a certain return to a rather diffuse neo-colonial mentality against which (de)colonial analyses are directed.

²⁰ BOBBIO, N. *The age of rights*. Translated by Carlos Nelson Coutinho. Carlos Nelson Coutinho. Rio de Janeiro: Campus, 1992.

²¹ See: TOSI, Giuseppe. - FRAGOSO, Williard. S. P. *Right-wing and left-wing criticisms of human rights*, *Problemata*, V. 8 n. 1, 2017.

²² UNESCO recently published a special issue of the magazine recalling this moment: The UNESCO Courier. *Human Rights: back to the future*. October-December 2018. Available at: <https://en.unesco.org/courier/2018-4>

Conclusion.

After the fall of the Berlin Wall, which definitively ended the cycle of revolutions (bourgeois and socialist), not only did the socialist and social democratic perspective enter into crisis, but political and social liberalism also entered into crisis; and we are witnessing the advance of neoliberalism and far-right populism. So the socialist perspective is moving further and further away from the political horizon in the West and more generally in the world: and Brazil could be the "vanguard of backwardness", of this process of authoritarianism and barbarism that is accelerating dangerously after the fall of Dilma, the imprisonment of Lula, the victory of Bolsonaro, all at the time of a coup programmed and articulated internally and internationally that has brought to government, but I would say even more to power, a historical bloc of alliance between militarism and justicialism that is very difficult to overcome and that has come to last also because it is part of a wave of an almost worldwide trend.

The question many people are asking is: "Is there still room for a theory of revolution in the 21st century?" I would rephrase it like this: "Do we have a left-wing political theory that is up to the challenges that the 21st century presents us with?" I don't know, but in order not to say that I've only spoken (badly) of Marx, he was right on one point: just as capitalism created the global market, there needs to be a global political solution; one that we can't see on the horizon at a time of multipolarity and an anarchic tendency for each state to act in its own interests, dangerously increasing social and ecological problems, inequalities, migrations and wars without a solution on the horizon.

Difficult times await us!

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