03 2015

For a new experience of economic government: a call to Podemos

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In the international press concerned with the question of Syriza a certain unease is often expressed: the Greeks presented themselves in the Brussels negotiations with carefree attitudes, barely consistent with diplomatic etiquette. What a most strange impression this judgment gives if we compare the frankness of Varoufakis' comportment with the greyness of Schäuble! It appears like a scene from Molière's *The Miser*: an alleged squanderer of fortunes next to a bourgeois who most attentively defends the accumulated money! Aside from the scene, let's read the *pièce* from another perspective: here we have Varoufakis, free representative of a multitude of workers who demands, for them, the possibility of producing value and creating wealth - and before him, Schäuble, as agent of the extraction of value from that effort and imagination.

During a long period in Europe the wage variable was the thorn of capitalist development. The State, the States, paid this stimulus to development: for this reason the so-called Welfare State was born, and for the first time in history there was a degree of wellbeing for the working classes. These had emerged from their minority,

presented themselves in the political scene and translated the question of wage and Welfare into the effect of power relations that were favourable to them. For this reason the States indebted themselves in exchange for social peace. Now, in the crisis, the European employers' and political caste asks and demands of and imposes on the workers the compensation of this expense and calls it debt. And so domination is represented in the figure of debt. In the crisis the origins of capitalism are repeated. The origin lies in the unbridled accumulation and the monopoly over the social distribution of wealth and currency. In this manner are born the society and power of the bourgeoisie, constitutionalising its interests and grounding its identity in the exploitation of all social labor. Thus, we see, the problem is not debt, but how it has been formed; not its quantity, but its quality, the way it shapes the life of all.

With the change in the balance of power, debt has been turned into a punishment, not for those who established it (the employers, with the aim of maintaining social peace), but for the workers, who would have willingly gone without this peace - because it restored their subordination. And it is this relation of subordination that must be broken. Podemos - so it seems to us - has the opportunity to start putting an end to this scandal in Spain and in Europe. Why? Because Spain is the fourth largest economy in Europe, because its demographic and economic texture protect it from blackmail and manoeuvres of exclusion, because a democratic initiative that starts from Spain - a revision of the public debt, compensation, and a new impetus to growth in the form of loans and structural aid - will not be treated with arrogance by the powdered diplomacy of Brussels, but will instead join the interest and the constituent and political awakening of the other democratic forces in Europe.

That being said, an economic policy of renovation can only start with the elimination of tax injustice. This ultimately requires imposing highly progressive criteria on taxation, a lucid control of banking activities, a tax on financial transactions – all linked to a policy of destroying tax havens and financial rent. Ours is a firm call for fiscal interventionism. We are aware of the extent to which interventionism can backfire and devolve into the worst versions of Jacobinism, when a sacrosanct sense of justice is met by just as many doses of plebeian sectarianism: but in approaching the issue of taxation, it is necessary. Beyond its excesses, it is in this case about a representation of the feeling of equality that democracy produces, and a fundamental aspect of a renewed constituent will. In this terrain it is perfectly legitimate to draw upon that vigorous *moral persuasion* – the soul of democratic thought, according to Jefferson – exercised frequently and effectively by the multitudinous movements. The reconsideration, with this new experience of justice, with this new sense of equality, of a new constituent experience for the European Union represents the true theme of the critique of political economy of our century. Who pays taxes, in what quantities and for what ends? It is a question whose reintroduction is considered vulgar by the caste, but which proves fundamental in all constituent experiences of modernity. And if today we are further, if we are now in postmodernity, this means it is not enough to create a discourse about the social distribution of profits, but it is necessary to better develop an economic discourse that, starting with the reproduction of life and wealth, approaches the themes of social production. The democratic battle has to plant itself and win in the terrain of production.

Well, then, keynesianism or post-keynesianism? Once we have recognised the reactionary nature of ordoliberalism and the same

constitution of the ECB under the command of the Bundesbank, what economic and business framework should be favoured? And who should be the fundamental actor of this economic revival, which is at the same time a democratic one? The problem is difficult, and this is because it is new. Old is, rather, the sacred history of hard work and austerity of the experiment of the Federal Republic of Germany. Old is the ordoliberal belief in the "social economy of the market" with Erhard its prophet and the Currency Reform of 1948 as the first of its miracles. Once its anti-communist function ended, sponsored and organised by the Anglo-US occupiers, the ordoliberal gospel today is turning into the tool of destruction of the defences erected against a German neo-Bismarckianism that, again, rises as a threat to peace and democracy on the continent.

When we say that we are in postmodernity, we pose, to begin, the theme of the economic subject as central, capable of interpreting and guiding the reform that the act of producing (in the form of a production that is social) demands. That being said, when we consider this in Spain today we cannot but refer to the people of 15M. Precarious, cognitive labor force, workers of industry and services, teachers and students, workers of the cities and of health, unemployed working sporadically or unofficially, women and men: it is a people exploited by global capital, a social multitude from which surplus-value is extracted. Financial capital extracts value from society in its totality, in all of its times and spaces. In contrast, the subject acting within these conditions, if it wants to rid of austerity and maybe poverty, and if it wants to withdraw from the mechanisms of exploitation, must access knowledge of the violence and the dimensions of capitalist command and the form in which it is exercised. What we are fighting (and certainly this is not a matter of ideological questions) is not only the

selfishness and greed of money and power, nor the moral individualism that accompanies them: if we do not take this discourse of democratic radicality into economic production and everyday life, we risk that our action will be completely insufficient. Thus, our task consists in moving to create, in the common, forms of redistribution of wealth and in developing a laboratory for liberating productive social labor.

Welfare, or the politics of well-being, are the primary terrain of this battle. A fundamental element of a new welfare is a decent, guaranteed basic income for living our own lives, for exercising our own citizenship equally and freely, protected from blackmail and privileges, from corporations and the corruption of mafias of all kinds. Basic income must therefore be thought of as one of the basic elements of all economic program. Starting from a guaranteed and decent basic income for all, policies of management and cooperative business can develop and open up new "human services for human beings": hospitals, schools, housing, ecological transformation of production, of transportation and cities, production based in free software and hardware (what our Ecuadorian and Spanish comrades have called the FLOK society). Something fundamentally distinct from neo-extractivism in its Spanish version, made of the ecological and social devastation of territories subjected to economies of exploitation and rampant precarity. Yes, but also - only to emphasise moments of exceptional importance - immediate measures that free the poor from misery and major policy that allows women to finally feel like citizens *inter pares*, that helps women to emancipate themselves not only within patriarchy and the family, but at the same time supports them in the vicissitudes of their liberation; that gives to migrant citizens the full citizenship they deserve *in primis*, because everybody can see that they have, in the last twenty years, also been the human

base of growth in the real estate sector and in personal services and above all in the maintenance of the public pension system.

We are dealing here with forms of productive activities that are part of the construction of the *common*. We need "metropolitan chambers of work" that prepare tools of struggle and figures of organisation of common life. And this applies not only to the social wage (basic income), but also to the wages of the workers; initiatives of unionisation must be measured with the social field; the forms of struggle already tested in the *mareas* and above all by the PAH (Platform for People Affected by Mortgages) must be adopted and amplified. It is a grand aim: the unification, in a strong and participative project, of the mutualist and cooperative initiative with union initiatives - for the construction of the common. And in this regard it cannot be forgotten that the PAH is more than a role model; it is a war machine that is returning life and hope to thousands of persons.

Podemos and its economists speak of an action inspired by Keynesianism in order to re-launch the country's productive machine. This reclaiming of Keynesianism in order to directly attack the ordoliberal measures of social and economic control is certainly useful. But to reinvent political Keynesianism today is no simple task after its its political defeat, after Thatcher, Blair, and Schröder. Nevertheless, it can begin as a favourable terrain for the recuperation of business initiatives and the introduction of effective redistributive policies if it offers a new field of social programs and political decision that directly affect the relation between financial capital and productive social subject. The people of 15M of whom we have spoken can assume a lead role here. But there comes the objection: it is an unorganised multitude, an accumulation of distinct forces. And this it is, but it can turn itself into something very different. Going deeper into this divide, a discourse and a

practice of (new) class struggle are necessary. After 15M the transition can be be made from the defence and conservation of Welfare to the European construction of a powerful Commonfare.

When he arrived in office in 1993 and wanted to construct a New Deal that would win back the working class for industrial development, Roosevelt proposed above all to create a new union, a mass-labor union (male and predominantly white). And so he did, with the aim that his political reform would work: this is to say, he promoted the unionisation of new figures of labor - and so the Congress of Industrial Organizations was born, antagonistic to the capitalists in the terrain of labor; and the old unions of professional labor were subordinated to its hegemony: corporations that were often corrupt and incapable of creating a universality for all of the exploited class.

Today, under new conditions, the same kind of action must be taken: of creating a coalition of workers of social and digital networks that corresponds to the new composition of working classes; to unite mutualism, cooperative institutions and, above all, to create a strong unionisation of the social. Basic income against social exclusion is fundmental, but it is not sufficient to determine the success of this project. The revision of public debt, the taxation of large fortunes, and financial transactions are equally essential elements. The decisive point is to create a subject that combines economic and civil interests, integrating the differences of the multitude; that creates in this manner a coherent and continuous political action, an agitation that opens constituent reform from below.

In the search for these new figures of economic democracy - and shaping them perhaps by governing the country - the social entrepreneurship of the multitude will be set in motion. We must

wrest from the political and financial castes the unjustified ideological and institutional monopoly over the capacity to do business. When wisely enacted, economic critique and programs of reform are born of the relation between government and multitudes. They do not exist prior to political action from below. But when popular initiatives make government, even economic theory can be renewed. We need a new science of economic government of postmodern society. Many expect from Podemos the introduction to this knowledge, which consists not only in excellence in the tactics of government, but also in the strategy of the multitudes and in the proposal of a real democracy in Europe.