

Reflections on Capitalism with Regard to the Question of Overcoming it¹

Peter Dinuš²

Institute of Political Science SAS, Bratislava

Reflections on Capitalism with Regard to the Question of Overcoming it. This paper presents a critical appraisal of a number of theoretical propositions that justify the need for social change and outline the paths to their achievement (in particular, one referred to as economic democracy). It also shows that a meaningful political struggle for the enforcement of an anticapitalist or non-capitalist alternative must meet some basic criteria (analysis of the current stage of capitalism, description of the political situation in the nation state and the existence of a political subject with a radical anti-regime programme based on the revolutionary theory).

Key words: capitalism, democracy, alternative, economic democracy, the Left

Vybrané problémy niektorých reflexií kapitalizmu z hľadiska otázky jeho prekonania: Príspevok kriticky reflektuje niektoré teoretické východiská, ktoré zdôvodňujú nevyhnutnosť sociálnej zmeny a zároveň k nej načrtávajú cesty (predovšetkým v podobe tzv. ekonomickej demokracie). Zároveň ukazuje, že zmysluplný politický zápas za presadenie antikapitalistickej resp. nekapitalistickej alternatívy, musí naplňať niektoré základné predpoklady (analýzu súčasného štádia kapitalizmu, charakteristiku politickej situácie v národnom štáte a existenciu politického subjektu s radikálnym antisystémovým programom opierajúcim sa o revolučnú teóriu).

Kľúčové slová: kapitalizmus, demokracia, alternatíva, ekonomická demokracia, ľavicová

The economic crisis that broke out in 2008 sparked academic debate about capitalism and its relationship to democracy, about the crisis of democracy, the relevance of civil movements against the consequences of neoliberal policies and ultimately about overcoming the capitalist system itself. The crisis is seen as a point in time full of paradoxes and opportunities, which may give rise to a variety of alternatives. At a certain moment, quantitative changes lead to qualitative shifts. Since capitalism and the capitalist class are not destined to survive (D. Harvey), these may also be anticapitalist and socialist alternatives. Asking questions about the future of capitalism as such as an appropriate social system should therefore be at the forefront of current discussions. These

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² Address: PhDr. Peter Dinuš, PhD., Institute of Political Science SAS, Dúbravská cesta 9, 841 04 Bratislava, Slovak Republic. E-mail: peter.dinus@tiscali.cz

discussions generally arise with the beginning of crises and end with their demise. What seems desirable, however, is to stimulate debate about these issues continuously from the positions of the fundamental critique of capitalism based on radical leftist theories.

A number of leftist theorists view the capitalist system as a model of social organization. They discuss its effectiveness, its suitability or unsuitability, the consequences it brings to people and to the world, whether it is able to survive and if so how and in what form. Meanwhile, survival or non-survival of capitalism should be dependent on its specific abilities such as the ability to overcome crises, on the achievement of certain growth, on the solution of societal problems, on some satisfaction of human needs and the like. These "capitalist studies", as a rule, are not devoid of historical or class dimension of capitalism; in most cases, however, they confine themselves merely to the general issues of the critique of the domination of capital and vaguely defined possibilities or needs of an alternative model of social organization that no one should know where to look for it or what it actually is. Such a surmise seems to result from the rejection of the relevance of socialist systems in Eastern Europe, with the former Soviet Union in the lead.³

In his book *The Mystery of Capital*, D. Harvey argues that the absence of a political force able to formulate and implement an anti-capitalist program is not the reason why we should shun considering the alternatives. Such a conclusion, however, can be seen as regressive, pushing one back to the already obsolete tendencies to construct utopias in the fashion of E. Dühring of the 19th century as this would mean an unnecessary resurrection of the old ideological disputes that had been won (and deservedly) by Marxism.

One of the most prominent Czechoslovak Marxist philosophers of the pre-November period V. Černík in his study of 2011 raises a question of whether capitalism is free and fair. He concludes that this question is not worded correctly and thus cannot yield a clear answer. There are actually two different questions: 1) Is capitalism free and fair in terms of the application of political freedom and democracy? 2) is capitalism free and fair in terms of the application of economic democracy, and in terms of the application of social and cultural freedom? His answer to the first question is in the affirmative. The historical merit of capitalism lies in the fact that it has politically liberated the working man, it has created a free market and political democracy, and has

³ We believe, however, that their metaphysical refusal is not conducive to the development of a theory of a new socialist "counterproject" and that in this respect it is necessary to ensure a dialectical approach in assessing the history of East European socialism, which evolved in the specific conditions and contexts of the time. At the same time, the dialectical approach to the evaluation of the past is a guarantee that the socialist "counterproject" of rebuilding society will not be hazy.

built a legal system based on the principles of commutative justice. His answer to the second question is in the negative. Capitalism was (and probably is) unable to fully develop freedom and democracy in the economic area, and consequently also in the social and cultural areas, nor was (and probably is) it able to fully develop distributive justice. (Černík, 2011, p. 786) These conclusions, namely that capitalism per se has not developed political democracy, need to be elaborated on. Similar findings make us perceive capitalism in the metaphysical sense. Capitalism is a socially diverse, antagonistic class system. It has developed political democracy mainly as a result of the struggles of an organized and politically conscious working class, which had a stake at its development (particularly the introduction of universal, equal and secret suffrage). This was reiterated by political and theoretical representatives of the proletarian movement. Without the development of political democracy under capitalism, this movement could not achieve its goals. Development of democracy was in its natural class interest.

V. Černík ties the concept of democracy to that of civic society. This term expresses a set of relationships of politically free individuals within a particular socio-political system. In the ancient socio-economic formation, civic society was viewed as a system of ties of politically free citizens of the polis (slaves were not members of civil society). Inside ancient civic society, ancient principles of democracy were in force, the latter being a democracy for the free citizens of the polis, but a dictatorship for the slaves. Under capitalism, members of civil society comprise working people, including wage earners (politically free owners of their own workforce). All citizens of the state are formally, politically (but not yet economically or socially) free. Capitalist civic society is characterized by the advancement of formal, political democracy. In the early stages of capitalism, the principle of the rule of law was not exercised. There were large groups of citizens who did not enjoy equal rights. In the fully developed capitalism the principle of the rule of law (equality of all before the law) came into force. Yet formal democracy is a democracy only in political terms for the antithesis of labour and capital still exists there. Work has found itself under economic pressure (the discipline of hunger) while capital exists under the pressure of competition (the discipline of profit). Formal democracy is governed by the principles of economic coercion and appreciation of value. The bourgeoisie may proclaim full formal democracy because the actual right to use it is decided by the size of wealth. In order to achieve effective union of democracy and civil society, formal democracy must be transformed into real democracy. This, however, is not possible without extending democracy from the political domain to the economic, social and cultural areas. And this requires overcoming the antithesis of labour and capital. In real democracy the use of democracy will not be decided by the size of wealth but by the

community of economically, socially, politically and culturally free individuals. (Černík, 2011, p. 790)

If V. Černík notes that while ancient democracy was a democracy for the free citizens of the polis, i.e., for the slavers, but a dictatorship for the slaves, by analogy he must state that capitalist democracy is a democracy for the bourgeoisie, but a dictatorship for the salaried working class. In such a case however we cannot speak of capitalist democracy at large, for this would imply civic society. Both slavery and the capitalist social order are class-antagonistic, based on the appropriation of the work of the majority by the owning minority. Both ancient democracy and capitalist democracy are class democracies, democracies for the minority of private owners of the means of production. We believe that where V. Černík speaks of formal democracy as a democracy in the political sphere, he should rather speak of a class, bourgeois democracy. In his famous work *The State and Revolution*, V.I. Lenin maintains that preservation of the capitalist mode of production brings an appropriate political superstructure in the form of limited democratism clamped by the tight framework of capitalist exploitation, i.e., democratism for the minority, only for the ownership class, for the rich. (Lenin, 1950, p. 69) Ultimately, Černík himself arrives at the same conclusion, stating that the bourgeoisie may proclaim full formal democracy for who will utilise it will be decided by the size of wealth. Let us add that the same is true for freedom. Freedom of capitalist society always remains roughly the same as it was in ancient Greek republics: freedom for the ruling minority. (Lenin, 1950, p. 69-70) One who is not free economically, socially, may not be free politically.

One possible materialist interpretation of Černík's abstract statement, that the union of democracy and civil society can be attained through the transformation of formal democracy into real democracy, is that true democracy is achievable only through the political elimination of bourgeois class democracy. Gradual growth of democracy from the political domain into economic, social and cultural areas without the resistance of the ruling minority owners of the means of production is a phenomenon unheard of in history. The reason is the sanctity of private property. Ideas about the possibilities of peaceful expansion of democracy from the political sphere to the economic area are as illusory as declaration of programs of control over monopolies and peaceful transformation in a community of "democratic socialism" within the context of ideas about the superclass nature and role of the bourgeois state. Thus, there is no other way of overcoming the labour-capital antagonism as a prerequisite of the accomplishment of "real" democracy than organised dismantling of the bourgeois democracy in a conscious class struggle.

Currently, a theory of the so-called economic democracy is proposed as a path to the application of democracy in the economic sphere and thus to the

transformation of a formal, political democracy into an authentic democracy by overcoming the traditional labour-capital opposition. Economic democracy, according to its most prominent author D. Schweickart, is a true democracy, not only a capitalist polyarchy. It is characterized by the absence of a small privileged class, by active and well-informed citizens as well as by universal suffrage. While democracy is considered to be a natural concomitant of capitalism, rather than its antithesis, D. Schweickart asks whether capitalism is compatible with democracy, or whether what is considered democracy in advanced capitalist societies really is a democracy. He answers this question in the negative. Instead of defining capitalist democracy as a bourgeois democracy, a democracy for the owning minority and a dictatorship for the salaried working masses, like V. Černík, who speaks of formal democracy, he is inclined to the opinions of R. Dahl and Ch. Lindblom, who distinguish between democracy and "polyarchy". Capitalism thrives under polyarchy, which, however, is not compatible with real democracy.⁴

Elected political leaders do not protect the interests of labour but those of capital. Vast inequalities in income and wealth, emblematic of capitalism, allow the upper classes to dominate the electoral process through richly funded campaigns, endowments from foundations and think tanks, which raise the political agendas, and through the ownership of critical mass media. If this mechanism proved ineffective, they would have the option of plunging the economy into a crisis by means of investment strike. (Schweickart, 2010, p. 170)

But it is not only the elected leaders whose self-interest is structurally linked to the interests of the capitalist class; the stakeholders include the rest of society. Decline of economy will put the salaried workers in the private sector flat on their back. In real democracy voters could change these fundamental institutions, should they have opted for a different system. Since the interests of capital differ from the interests of the decisive majority, this idea should not be difficult to grasp. Yet this, according to D. Schweickart, is the very reason why capitalism tolerates polyarchy and not real democracy. Economic democracy could avoid the negatives associated with capitalist polyarchy or could reduce them significantly. Much greater economic equality will curb the possibility of financial leveraging of elections. Economic elites will no longer control the media. The most important, however, there will no longer be a tiny group of

⁴ Conclusions about the existence of polyarchy instead of democracy do not exceed the libertarian critique of capitalist society we encounter in the works of American academics. With their publicly presented critique of capitalism they create a semblance of democratism and openness of the opinion of the ruling regime in the United States, thus strengthening rather than weakening the immune system of capitalism

people who, if they dislike the government policy, can throw the economy into a recession by sparking an investment strike.

The basic idea of economic democracy stems from a striking anomaly of modern capitalist society that while the general public has the right to select their political leaders (albeit exclusively from the members of political parties representing the interests of capital), it has no right to choose their superiors at work. Democracy in the workplace usually does not exist, companies are based not on the democratic but on the hierarchical governance and decision-making. Rather than democracy, there are different degrees of dictatorship that rule a company. The model whose main feature is employee self-governance of the companies competing in a market environment with the necessity of social control over the investment has a real basis; what is unrealistic, in our opinion, is the road to achieving this. The fundamental problem here is the question of how to introduce economic democracy by political means, in other words, how to remove the capitalist class (bourgeoisie) from power. Schweickart himself notes that the problem is not that we do not know what the human economy outlined by him should look like, but rather that extremely strong forces of power hinder its implementation.

One of the crucial conditions for the transition from capitalism to socialism should be that a leftist political party with a radical socialist agenda, one that would bring society to economic democracy, will be elected to power. This party would then implement the fundamental institutional reform peacefully. Yet how can it get into power under the current conditions? How can a socialist counterproject take root in the minds of the people? In answering these questions Schweickart remains vague, unconvincing. By recognizing Marx's analysis of the role of capital on the one hand and dismissing the formation of an anti-capitalist social subject in the form of a salaried working class and rejecting a class struggle at large (considering it to be an outdated political prejudice) on the other, he sometimes finds himself in a blind alley of contradictions. The crucial role in enforcing economic democracy should be played by the movement of workers because the change of the nature and structure of the workplace is a fundamental economic dimension of the socialist counterproject. But how can this role be played by a worker without the class confidence, without the class antipathy that Schweickart rejects?⁵

⁵ "The Leftists often bemoan that lack of class consciousness among the working class, but at this historical juncture it may be just as well that class antipathy is not widespread, and that ordinary people do not despise the wealthy. The movement for

We see it as unrealistic to assume that the capitalist class will voluntarily give up its political power and will cease to accumulate capital, holding in its hands all the economic, geo-political and ideological propaganda tools. We cannot assume that it would not use these tools, allowing any party with a radical socialist agenda to implement reforms hostile to it and that it would sit passively watching the dismantling of their power. Schweickart himself admits that capitalist societies are leaning towards "tolerant" societies only as long as this does not jeopardize their basic institutions. "Then the gloves come off, and we get death squads", repressive legislation, violence, lawlessness, military junta and fascism. (Schweickart, 2010, p. 158)

Schweickart points to the risk of the onset of fascism in the context of economic crisis, which although can bring significant opportunities for reform, may invite fascism instead of socialism if a severe crisis comes too early, even before the counterproject begins to take place. (Schweickart, 2010, p. 193-194). Hence, he does recognise the reality of opposition from the ruling capitalist class, noting, however, that the spirit of generosity inherent in economic democracy will reduce the intensity of resistance of at least part of the capitalist class to the introduction of a new order. Those who will use violence or other illegal means to thwart the democratic process will not escape punishment, but the capitalists who will participate in the new process fairly will not be forced to radically change their way of living "after the revolution", states Schweickart literally. (Schweickart, 2010, p. 193). Thus, he assumes disunity, division of the capitalist class, which is traditionally not only a class in itself but also a class for itself. The differences in the ruling bourgeoisie, however, would occur under the condition that the class struggle would exist and escalate, and not be suppressed.

We ask ourselves what point is, or rather would be, in a model based on the principles of economic democracy under the existing polyarchy? Schweickart feels an affinity for the Mondragon production cooperative in Spain, which is often presented not only as an alternative to class struggle but also as an alternative to socialism. Such ideological justification of Mondragon has existed since its foundation by the local Catholic priest, a supporter of papal social encyclicals. Mondragon, which – as Schweickart himself admits – has not solved the problem of alienated labour, it does not

Economic Democracy can avoid a politics of resentment, which although potent in the past as an organizing strategy, has often been brutalizing". (Schweickart, 2010, p. 134)

change anything about the capitalist order in Spain. We cannot expect it to be a catalyst for social change. The reason is not only that it will remain a cooperative island in the capitalist sea – the sea of ever-increasing competition. The main reason is this lack of class self-awareness as the main prerequisite for the organized political struggle of its members.

If, according to D. Harvey, survival of capitalism depends on the eternal overcoming or circumventing of a potential obstacle of sustained accumulation of the ever-present capital, then in the context of anti-capitalist struggle we have to ask ourselves what is this potential stumbling block of the accumulation. Our answer is class struggle. The process of capital accumulation cannot be blocked by spontaneous, unrestrained fight but by an organized, deliberate class struggle. The ruling capitalist class, therefore, uses all the resources of its ideology and propaganda to prevent the formation of class consciousness among the salaried working masses, to prevent their transformation from a "class in itself" into a "class for itself". Without this transformation, however, no consistent or effective anti-capitalist movement is possible. "Capitalism will never fall on its own. It will have to be pushed. The accumulation of capital will never cease. It will have to be stopped. The capitalist class will never willingly surrender the power. It will have to be dispossessed." (Harvey, 2012, p. 252) This, we believe, will require the existence of an organized and conscious political force.

Ideas about the avenues to new socialism appropriate to the historical conditions of the 21st century, notions of essential features and nature of the future of socialism, are typically found in various projects of the "socialism for the 21st century". They have some common features. While some authors speak of a revolution, their designed road map to the future stage after capitalism, the stage marked by its origins in capitalism, is based on reforms. Fortunately or not, there will be no such explosive, breakthrough political situation sparked by a revolution, reminiscent of that in which the Bolshevik Party found itself following the victorious October Revolution in 1917. Schweickart argues that Lenin's dilemma, which forced him to seek the ways to a new society, will not occur for there will be no seizure of property of the rich, no replacement of capitalists by dedicated cadres nor the creation of new institutions. (Schweickart, 2010, p. 188-189) The establishment and consolidation of socialism is not a matter of one-off change of power, of the imposition of power monopoly and somebody's dictatorship; socialism is not static; the path to it is a process. I. Wallerstein in this context openly speaks of the failure of the so-called two-step

strategy, i.e., first, to gain power and then to implement socialist agenda. The Leninist model, characterised by democratic centralism, by the existence of a well-organized and disciplined party with a unifying doctrine, is replaced by a model of emancipated, politically mature and active civic society implementing socialism bottom-up. Schweickart's counterproject aims to unite in a collective spirit diverse movements fighting, often in isolation, for progressive social change: the movement for gender and racial equality, for environmental health, for peace. The struggle against poverty, homophobia, militarism, imprisonment and executions with an ambition to tackle social problems. The newly established political system will not be a dictatorship of the proletariat; it will be a democratic government of the majority, defending the interests of this majority and seeking to spur this majority to political activity, to the understanding of its own responsibility for its life; the plurality of political parties restricted solely by constitutionality will replace the former one-party monopoly. It is not hard to deduce that such conclusions are a direct response to political praxis, to the nature and the fall of Eastern European socialism.

The problem is, however, that the antisystemic movement thus conceived has nowhere eliminated capitalism. It is not homogeneous, it suffers from fragmentation, and has no single programme or ideology. Moreover, a significant part of this movement even does not aim to eliminate capitalism, but only to reform it. It strives to transform capitalism by criticising the consequences of neoliberalism and the efforts to restore the welfare state within the bounds of the so-called social-democratic compromise. Theorists of thus defined "antisystemic" movement believe in the feasibility of harmony between labour and capital, relying on the arguments of A. Przeworski that social stability of capitalism can be maintained only at the expense of continual social compromise, i.e., the capitalist system should pay off not only to the owners of capital, but also to the representatives of labour. This is how it really should have worked in the post-war "golden era" of the welfare state; however, the 21st-century trans-national capital no longer needs a social compromise. Their program is some kind of capitalism with a human face; not the overcoming of capitalism, but its transformation. Enforcing a systemic anti-capitalist alternative becomes meaningful only after the failure of an effort to achieve the recovery of the welfare state. "It is certain that if the radicalization of global capitalism continues and if neoliberalism ravages all the social compromises of the past, a revolution will really arise." (Blaha, 2011, p. 164) Enforcement of the welfare state instead of neoliberal policies will,

therefore, avert revolution; it will be a warning that unless social democratic compromise is restored a revolutionary coup is inevitable.

While social capitalism may bring a greater degree of social stability and social security, it does not eliminate the essence of capitalism, which consists in the exploitation of the work force and the existence of democracy only for the owning minority. In other words, social capitalism cannot remove the antithesis of labour and capital, which is inherent in this the socio-economic formation, and thus cannot bring "real" democracy. Efforts to reconcile labour with capital in the post-war period proved to be necessitated by circumstances and thus were only temporary. Once the monopoly capital began to feel stronger following the collapse of the Eastern bloc, degradation of the achievements of the welfare state began.

A number of authors of the leftist theories therefore outline ways to overcoming capitalism as a system, in its core. When searching for the avenues to a meaningful struggle for the enforcement of a non-capitalist alternative, they draw on an analysis of the present stage of development of capitalism, its current nature in the global and the local space of the nation state. They approach the questions relating to the theory of antisystemic movement within the context of the given stage of capitalism, adapting the tactics of international (or global) and domestic antisystemic movements to the thus defined stage of capitalism, which makes it necessary to use the existing forms and methods of political struggle.

According to some authors, the imperialism as defined by Lenin no longer exists, or if it does persist, then only as a temporary condition. M. Hardt and A. Negri argue that it is the sovereignty of the nation state that lies at the roots of imperialist activity. Meanwhile, the nation state does not exist anymore, nor are there any boundaries, which should have served as the cornerstones of European imperialism, colonialism and economic expansion in the modern concept of nation states. Contemporary capitalism is a decentralized and deterritorialized mechanism of governance that will gradually encircle the global space in its ever-expanding borders. (Hardt – Negri, 2001: 12.) According to Hardt and Negri, full implementation of the global market marks the end of imperialism and the beginning of a new phase in the development of capitalism – the Empire. Being politically unified, the world market represents a supranational, global and total system.

Contemporary capitalism is characterised as a new stage of development of the capitalist system also by W. I. Robinson. He names this stage "global capitalism", which is marked by the rise of transnational capital. By

contrast, British Professor Emeritus of Hungarian origin I. Mészáros continues to speak of imperialism. He divides its history into three separate phases: the early modern era of imperialism of building empires, the so-called redistributive imperialism (this phase was described by Lenin as the highest stage of capitalism) and the global hegemonic imperialism with the United States as the dominant force in the lead, which was solidified shortly after World War II. (Mészáros, 2009, 45.) Still, we believe that, in principle, it does not differ much from the imperialism defined by Lenin, i.e., the imperialism as a stage of development of capitalism characterized by the domination of monopolies and finance capital.

The most frequently cited change compared to the imperialism of Lenin's time is the transformation of international monopolies into multinational (transnational) ones. Authors such as W. I. Robinson put forward theories of global capitalism whose social base is the multinational (transnational) capitalist class and whose economic base is the activity of multinational (transnational) corporations. The question is, however, whether this development has led to such a transformation of capitalism that one could speak of its new stage.

As far as we know, none of the relevant authors rebuts the conclusion that the existence of monopolies or corporations and their crucial role in the capitalist economy is indisputable, as is the existence of a financial oligarchy, which arises as a result of financial capital. Lenin repeatedly emphasized that the most deep-rooted economic foundation of imperialism is monopoly, that transition from competition to monopoly is one of the most important phenomena – if not the most important phenomenon in the economy of modern capitalism. (Lenin, 1984, p. 333, 336)

We are convinced that the basic classification into the capitalism of free competition and monopoly capitalism (imperialism) has lost nothing of its significance. Yet the changes that have occurred in the development of capitalism since Lenin's time could not affect the fundamental nature of the system, even though its forms have changed to some extent. The current capitalism still remains monopoly (corporate) capitalism, which means that we still remain at its imperialist stage. M. Formánek notes that "globalizing capitalism is nothing but imperialism, which confirms and at the same time accentuates and in a way further extends its basic characteristic features already salient in the early decades of the previous century." (Formánek, 2013, p. 29)

Within the wording of the current theories of capitalism as a global system, emphasis is put on the necessity of the existence of global

opposition. Based on their own characteristics of contemporary capitalism, Hardt and Negri outline a new strategy and tactics of the antisystemic struggle. "Empire can be effectively contested only on its own level of generality, and by pushing the processes that it offers past their present limitations processes that enable us to overcome the current limits." (Hardt – Negri, 2001, p. 206) That is, if capitalist domination becomes more global in the conditions of globalization, then our resistance against it has to be global as well. Although the strategy of local resistance, represented by some of the structures of civic and political society with the participation of the workers' movement unmasks the enemy more straightforwardly, the main enemy is the specific regime of global relations - the empire. Globalisation can be withstood only by antiglobalisation, by "counter-Empire". (Hardt – Negri, 2001, p. 207) The processes of globalization that the empire is associated with carry new opportunities for the forces of liberation from oppression. The political task of the forces of liberation of man is not only to resist globalization processes but also to recognize and systematically analyse and define them, to redirect the capitalist economic and social globalization to new goals. The building of a "counter-Empire" as an alternative to the political organization of global flows and exchanges should be within the creative powers of the broad masses. The masses are the real productive force of our social world, while the empire is only the apparatus deriving profits.

Initiatives of the masses as an expression of rejection of exploitation signal a new kind of proletarian solidarity and militancy. (Hardt – Negri, 2001, p. 54) It is necessary to unite people from different walks of life, from different towns and political directions to create a basis for a future great union. The united masses will create new democratic forms, they will constitute a new power that one day will put an end to the Empire.

Struggle for the disruption and overthrow of the empire as well as formulation and implementation of the new alternative should occur in many parts of the empire's territory for the centre of its power is virtual and as such can be hit from anywhere. In this sense the current understanding of the tactics of class struggles should change as well. Struggles against the empire can be successful only by reducing their ranks, by failure or by defections. Desertion and exodus are a powerful form of class struggle. (Hardt – Negri, 2001, p. 213) The main strategy should be creating counterbalance as a force that accumulates itself with the number of hits in the "heart" of the empire.

Hardt and Negri admit that the crucial factor will be the ability of the masses to consolidate themselves in the role of an active political entity. This question, however, is answered only in general terms. The initiatives of the masses will turn into a conscious political force only as long as it purposefully and directly confronts the major repressive operations of the empire by curbing imperial initiatives, by not allowing the empire to implement and restore order, by breaking the boundaries of segmentation, which the empire imposes on the new collective labour force, by gaining and evaluating the experience from the resistance of other segments of the masses and by targeting their further initiatives against the centres of imperial control.

Like Hardt and Negri Robinson, too, sees globalization as an opportunity for mass resistance, for organising mass protests around the world regardless of the frontiers. He claims that globalization cannot be reversed, but its direction can be changed, that top-down capitalist globalization can be transformed into bottom-up, people's democratic globalization, that globalization can be shaped by active participation of the masses. As Robinson believes, this would allow the creation of a truly global civilization based on the new universal concept of equality. (Robinson, 2009, p. 286) This is the journey that requires the awareness of the global masses of salaried workers, the formation of their alternative ideology, the ideology that would be able to compete with the ideology of global capitalism and that would express the logic of satisfying human needs, the logic of the poor, hard-working class of humanity. (Robinson, 2009, p. 306)

The process of monopolization of capitalism that began before World War I made an impact on the overall governance mechanism of bourgeois society in the space of the nation state. Lenin himself pointed out that the bourgeois parliamentary political systems had transformed themselves into mechanisms of artful manipulation of public opinion and of the "will of the people". They have become elaborate instruments of new forms of maintaining class rule of the bourgeoisie. The interests of the latter are usually promoted by a motley spectrum of political parties, which either individually or in coalitions rotate in government power. A. Gramsci, who analysed the capitalism during the period of the rise of fascism, in his *Prison notebooks* showed that the stabilizing core of the capitalist social order is not made up solely by political or government structures but also by the structures of civic society. "Civic society", Gramsci writes, "has become a very intricate structure, resistant to catastrophic 'breakthroughs' of immediate economic agents (such as crises or depressions)." (Gramsci,

1988, p. 318-319). The superstructures of civic society are like a system of trenches in modern warfare, of fortresses and casemates of bourgeois society. The power of the ruling class, its hegemony is never based on violence alone; it is implemented not only through enforcement mechanisms, but also through the mechanisms of obtaining the consent of the dominated.

We are convinced that – as the experience so far has confirmed – under the conditions of monopoly capitalism a poorly organized, ideologically and socially heterogeneous movement may not be sufficient for victory. Conviction that people of work can take over power bottom-up, without a strong political party, by the pressure of the broad-based "civil masses", appear to be ineffective. Waging political struggle for the enforcement of an anti-capitalist alternative in the conditions of the domination of monopolies, which create mechanisms for manipulating people's consciousness, in the conditions of bourgeois hegemony, is unrealistic without a strong political entity. We believe that the existence of a well-organized, homogeneous political party still remains a necessity. Creation and active presence of a strong political organization is essential to the concept of imperialism, of the empire, and of global capitalism. Indeed, this is emphasised by the very authors of the theory of imperialism and empire.

In the existing conditions, when a meaningful, successful and effective struggle for the enforcement of a non-capitalist alternative is hampered by the power monopoly of the capitalist class, when the owning minority holds in their hands all the means for controlling people, and when the anti-capitalist movement plays the role of dissent, successful political struggle for overcoming capitalism requires a material and economic base. Therefore, introduction or enforcement of pluralism of capital ownership, or, more precisely, of means of production, should be an essential political requirement of antisystemic parties as this will create the material and economic base necessary for the antisystemic political subject. Under the dominance or monopoly of private ownership of the means of production, the antisystemic party cannot be a standard political party, a relevant subject of the party struggle under the existing power of the owning minority.

The requirement of putting all forms of ownership on an equal footing emerged during the November coup. As early as November 25, 1989, it was incorporated into the programme declaration of the citizens' initiative Public against Violence (*Verejnosť proti násiliu*) and the Coordination Centre of Slovak College Students. It reappeared later in the election programs of political parties, which in 1990 entered the June parliamentary

elections. The requirement of equality of different forms of ownership sought to undermine the economic basis of pre-November society in the dominant state ownership thereby weakening the material and economic base of the political power of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia. This is a crucial prerequisite for an efficient struggle for systemic change. While in the November of 1989, this requirement was directed towards the restoration of capitalism through disrupting the dominant state ownership, in the anti-capitalist struggle it aims to promote an alternative social order (socialism) by disrupting private ownership of the means of production.

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Peter Dinuš, is scientific fellow at the Institute of Political Science SAV. He specializes on the issues that are dealing with the communist past, Marxism and social change.

PhDr. Peter Dinuš, PhD.
Institute of Political Science SAS
Dúbravská cesta 9
841 04 Bratislava
Slovak Republic
e-mail: peter.dinus @ tiscali.cz