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INTRODUCTION

by Paolo Borioni

The present collection of essays contains an in-depth analysis of social democratic internationalism at the moment when this political culture was at its height (1950-1980). Such development was promoted mainly by the correlation between, on the one hand, the radical reform of capitalism in Europe, and, on the other, the Global North-South relations in a decolonisation framework. Thanks to, in particular, leaders of non-colonial countries or countries other than the Great Powers, the Socialist International overcame the legacy of "progressist" colonialism, and tabled a political approach based on the idea that a "welfare world" – i.e. a global economy that rejects exploitation, and promotes equality – was at the core of stability, both within countries and between blocks. Such approach was in blatant contrast with neoliberalism, as promoted by Reagan, and also encountered problems inasmuch as it did not manage to defend an increasingly wage-led growth model.

Keywords: welfare, internationalism, Socialist International, social democracy.

La presente raccolta di saggi approfondisce la questione dell'internazionalismo socialdemocratico al culmine dell'egemonia di questa cultura politica (1950-1980). Tale sviluppo fu alimentato specialmente dalla correlazione fra profonda riforma del capitalismo in Europa e relazione Nord-Sud globale in un contesto di decolonizzazione. Grazie in particolar modo a leader di Paesi non coloniali e non-potenze, l'Internazionale socialista superò i retaggi di un colonialismo "progressista" e propose un modello politico fondato sull'idea che un "welfare world", ovvero un'economia globale che rifiuta lo sfruttamento e costruisce l'eguaglianza, fosse la base della stabilità, sia interna ai Paesi sia fra blocchi di alleanze. Questa visione entrò in contrasto netto con il neoliberalismo guidato da Reagan, ma anche in difficoltà perché non riuscì a difendere un modello di crescita maggiormente *wage-led*.

Parole chiave: welfare, internazionalismo, Internazionale socialista, socialdemocrazia.

The purpose of this introduction is to provide a historical and conceptual contextualisation for the essays by Cicchinelli, Marklund, Schmidt, and Thoradenya, included in the present issue.

Social democracy and the social models through which, with all due national differences, it changed European capitalist societies between the 1930s and the 1980s, built their success upon an alliance between working and middle classes willing to promote a "primacy of politics" (Berman, 2006), meaning pre-eminence of democratic decisions over free market economy. This primacy was in turn based on two intertwined convictions:

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a) "laissez faire" capitalism had, until the 1930s, led the world into repeated and catastrophic crisis of which, totalitarian and aggressive regimes were largely an outcome;
b) in order to avert the collapse of both democracy and social conditions caused by "laissez faire", it was necessary to build a balance of power between capital and labour, both in a merely class-bargaining and in a wider political-social-constitutional sense. A deep, democratically socialist reform of capitalism was, simply put, the most important precondition of intertwined national and global stability. This, in the decades of the Cold War, also implied preventing lethal global consequences from taking place.

The generation of democratic socialist leaders come of age in post-war decades was moreover very firmly convinced that even earlier wars, such as WWI, were an aspect of unhinged national capitalist systems conflicting to conquer spheres of influence. The latter were most times outlets for products stemming from the "European Centre" of each colonial empire, and, simultaneously, providers of raw material out of which manufactured goods were produced. These, moreover, were the terms of "unequal economic exchange" the world was dealing with in the decades in which democratic socialism has been most hegemonic.

As I interpret Stephanie Mudge, the clear-cut break in historical continuity was represented by the interwar generation, giving birth to a new socialist approach to politics as a means of economic reform (Mudge, 2018). While former social democracy was either inclined to reformism based on the conviction that capitalism was not prone to lethal and ultimate collapse (Bernstein) or reliant upon the inevitability of capitalist collapse (Kautsky-Hilferding), the new generation had become convinced that something else was the case: reformism (including policies ranging from welfare state to demand management and even democratic planning) was exactly necessitated by the crisis-proneness of capitalism.

This generation (Brandt, Kreisky, Palme, but also Kampmann in Denmark, den Uyl in the Netherlands, and many more) inherited, and further developed in post-war decades, the fundamental tenets of this interwar turning point, putting it into practice not only while governing their own countries, but also constructing a new form of simultaneously ideally ambitious and pragmatically updated internationalism. Furthermore, national social democracies had soon to update their ideology to the reality of Global South decolonisation within the Cold War framework.

Since the paramount contribution of Brandt and Palme is more generally celebrated, we decided to add a profile of Bruno Kreisky to this anthology. To be sure, also others would be deserving of mention, such as the Dutch social democratic leader Joop den Uyl, epitomising this era of social democracy by declaring that, for instance, if democratic socialists did not to speak up against the bombing of North Vietnam, "the world would not realize that there was a third alternative to Communism on the one hand and acceptance of the Pentagon line on world affairs on the other"[1].

Regardless, Kreisky's lifelong political beliefs, as well as the proposals he put forward to overcome the economic slowdown and persistent unemployment of the 1980s, confirm the continuity between the ideological and socio-economic novelties of interwar democratic socialism, and social democratic achievements of the second part of the 20th century. Also Kreisky's more global views were grounded on this continuity, so we can also enlist him in the strand of thinking called "welfare world" (Moyn, 2018). The "welfare world"

[1] Party Leaders' Conference, Paris, 13-14 January 1973, Confidential Summary, box 347, SIA, mentioned in Di Donato (2015).

view, behind which the figure of Swedish social scientist and reformer Gunnar Myrdal stands out, implied extending welfare state social reform to the global arena, since, if economic and socio-political collapse had been averted within the single nations of the Global North, it could still "turn out to be an accurate forecast in regard to the relations among nations". This was due to the fact that, while it was true that the Global South in post-war decades was not being "progressively pauperised" as more orthodox versions of Marxism had foreseen, it was nonetheless undeniable that its "wealth lagged further and further behind that of the well-off countries which were enjoying explosive growth". Thus, exactly the positive outcomes achieved nationally by social democratic welfare state reforms were a decisive argument that the very same reforms must be widened in scope and magnitude as to include the whole world. As Myrdal himself put it: "The concept of the welfare state, to which we are now giving reality in the advanced nations, would have to be widened and changed into a concept of 'welfare world'". The latter, as also gainfully underscored by Moyn, implied a much wider and more encompassing approach than nowadays "sufficiency" and "human rights" provisions: according to social democratic welfare (and "welfare world"), social minima and constitutional rights were a first floor wherefrom less fortunate layers of society should start a struggle for increasing equality[2]. This leads us to the specific version of the social democratic concept of welfare, beyond the mere redistribution of wealth based on "fairness". For democratic socialism, welfare institutions must achieve "decommodification", i.e. empower the working class to curb, and gradually reverse, the disadvantaged situation of having to sell their workforce to capital (commodification)[3]. Seen this way, welfare is not just redistribution of incomes, but also, if not more, redistribution of power between labour and capital. Consequently, "welfare world" implied not just benevolent aid from rich North to poor South, but a whole set of policies and institutional reforms designed to enable new decolonised nations to build and maintain their own welfare state systems. More equality globally, then, would also entail more equality domestically in the single nations of the Global South, which, for democratic socialists like Myrdal or Kreisky, would result in the higher degree of stability welfare state nations had been achieving domestically since the interwar years.

The perhaps most comprehensive attempt to implement this global design was the New International Economic Order (NIEO), which, the Tanzanian leader Nyerere explained, was expected to function as an "international equivalent to 'trade union' […] which allowed weaker actors domestically to strengthen bargaining power and exact prerequisites". Thus, NIEO was not mere full sovereignty over natural resources, but simultaneously "a global social justice that was to work neither through the vindication of individual entitlements nor through violent revolution, but rather through the solidaristic institutionalization of a fairer deal for otherwise weak national parties in relation to strong ones". Röling, a Dutch international lawyer, brought the welfare state-NIEO-union similarity even further: "[…] in both fields the question was [whether] a law of liberty should be replaced by social law

[2] As for Brandt, human rights and North-South equality must always be jointly pursued, and so had the East-West Cold War dimension together with the North-South "social question". The SI programme for the 1980s must be "serving peace by developing cooperation between East and West; helping to overcome the North-South conflict; promoting human rights and reembodying this in our programme" (Brandt, 1981, p. 10).

[3] "For Esping-Andersen, the Swedish welfare state differs from other models in its extension of social rights – the 'essence of social policy' – and attention to decommodification and social stratification. Decommodification refers to the idea that a service is rendered as a matter of right and an individual can maintain a livelihood without relying on the market. Social insurance mechanisms cannot free the individual from commodification unless the individual is free from market dependence" (Agius, 2006, p. 95).

[…] It meant the universalization of principles that were already applied in the 'welfare state'" (Moyn, 2018, pp. 115-6).

International socialism and decolonisation

However, social democracy and the social models through which, with all due national differences, it changed European societies between the 1930s and the 1980s, were not always and from the beginning able to conceive, let alone deploy, this updated and more progressive internationalism.

In its first period, the Second International founded in 1889 crashed due to decisions taken by some of its most influential member parties (of Germany, France, and the United Kingdom) to support the military efforts of their respective nations in WWI. The Second International, at any rate, had preached a quite ideological sort of internationalism, a typical feature of the first and setting-up phase of socialism. According to it, the logics of class belonging would at any time have led organised workers of every country to reject exploitation and war. As hinted above, this simplified form of Marxism proved to be unfounded. Moreover, the Second International never really expanded beyond a European membership, thereby remaining largely unable to tackle the imperialistic and colonial dimension of national capitalisms. Lenin and his sort of socialism, taking advantage from the necessity to adapt Marxism to Russian necessities, on the contrary proved able to generate new analysis, legitimising a much more active (and actively revolutionary) political initiative. According to him and the communist tradition he inspired, imperialism and colonialist exploitation were granting advanced capitalism a (temporary) survival it would otherwise have struggled to earn. In other words, WWI, if framed as the clash of imperialisms, was the proof that rival imperialisms were conflicting because each of them was trying to overcome the shortcomings of capitalist development. This, in turn, allowed Bolsheviks to interpret the (actually huge) social turmoil generated by the war as the outcome of an equally huge terminal crisis.

Hence, there was no longer any need to wait for "the real final collapse", and even less to expect that it must necessarily be the outcome of inherent contradictions in the most industrialised economies. However, while Second International Marxism proved to be largely unable to confront interwar clashes and transition to socialism, communist revolution was likewise unable to expand westwards, except through military invasions.

A new, really expansionary, and nearly hegemonic internationalism came about only later, when new socio-economic and ideological preconditions were available. Indeed, an organised labour movement earning good wages, helped by regulation and welfare institutions, can bargain on a parity level with employers ("capitalists"), and reach a good compromise: competition and production without exploitation of workers. Its perhaps most hegemonic victory was that competitiveness can be achieved through innovation / better production rather than through underpaying working people.

Also, provided more average people earn good wages through safe jobs, taxation becomes sustainable for many. Hence, welfare states, plus for example public transportation at a low price, and education free (or almost free) of charge, will not be a high cost to pay for families.

If competition and production is attained through more innovation *and* quality (instead of through exploitation), economy will have good chances to grow through a double engine:

a) export, since quality production can more easily be internationally competitive;
b) more welfare and better wages, both fuelling domestic demand in all countries.

So: the more domestic markets demand goods from other countries, the more trade works out globally. On the contrary, if trade is only incentivised through private initiative and free trade among nations, and is not also fuelled through better wages / welfare state / more equality in an increasing number of nations, global growth will only be propelled by one engine, not both.

The above is a simplified description of the material and therefore also ideological preconditions of internationalism. Thus, true internationalism can be defined as a setting in which rising rights and social conditions of workers in one country are increasingly in functional (not only ideological and value-based) accordance with the rising rights and social conditions of workers in other countries. For all the ideological orthodox commitment of the Second International, none of the material preconditions for it was close to availability in any Global North country until the 1930s-1940s.

Nonetheless, even after the Socialist International (SI) was refounded at the 1951 Frankfurt congress, other factors were in play hindering socialist internationalism: some key member parties in SI were out of touch with the specific realities of post-war decolonisation.

The Labour Party of the United Kingdom and the French Socialist Party (PS) kept lingering in the attempt to develop what today appears to be an odd progressive welfare colonialism of sorts (Imlay, 2018, pp. 409-15). The French Section of the Workers' International (SFIO), for instance, tried to avert the independence of Algeria by proposing a "French Union" comprising metropole and North African colonies kept together by new social and political entitlements equally conceded to ethnic French people and Algerians. SFIO had proposed something similar also some years earlier when France was waging another colonial (and likewise unlucky) war in Vietnam.

The British Labour Party was in the 1950s likewise searching for the "progressive" reasons to perpetuate or not wholly dismantle colonial dominions. According to the Fabian Society, one of the pre-existing organisations that founded the party in 1906, withdrawing colonial administrations as the United Kingdom had done in India and Palestine would trigger huge unrest due to the fact that democracy would have benefitted Hindu majorities as opposed to the Islamic population (India), and Israelis as opposed to Palestinians (Middle East). The majority issue is by the way addressed by Darshi Thoradenya in her essay concerning the shortcomings of Swedish aid in Sri Lanka.

As long as SI key member organisations opposed independence movements, SI would exclude itself from the possibility to interact with the decolonisation process irreversibly rising in the Global South. Thus, the new internationalism potentially generated by the practice of class parity, democracy, and welfare was contradicted by the French and British attempt to find some sort of compliance between colonisation and welfare state reform. Moreover, some member parties were immersed in Cold War logics, and thereby were, at least for some time, if not unable to reinterpret East-West relationships, at least incapable of providing a focus shift from the prevailing East-West dimension to the North-South dimension.

However, other parties were able to reframe welfare, and "welfare world", as a new strand of internationalism fully compatible with decolonisation. Even as a fuel, actually, to such self-sufficiency of decolonised countries that would provide the world with several and multipolar growth factors.

The contribution of neutral Social Democrats, like the Swedish and the Austrian member parties, committed to excluding (and historically compelled to exclude) the power factor from their international branding and strategy, was able to provide an alternative, which SI as an organisation, and democratic socialism as a political culture clearly benefitted from. As underscored by Agius in explaining the "social foundations of Swedish neutrality", reform internationalism was linked with the Swedish domestic welfare model: "Just as the SAP *[Swedish Social Democratic Party]* programme concentrated on reforming the injustices inherent within capitalist society, this is also viewed on a global scale as an imperative, not only to peace and stability, but also to wider notions of solidarity. The picture of Sweden's active internationalist profile […] reveals that Social Democratic norms and values have been pursued on the international level. Neutrality was the platform from which to perform these 'good offices', but Sweden was actively internationalist on the basis of its domestic norms" (Agius, 2006, pp. 114-5)[4].

Willy Brandt's internationalism

Willy Brandt from Germany was a third key player in first conceiving and then bringing about a truly internationalist and global evolution of SI. It was the first time, in the framework of Brandt's, Palme's, and Kreisky's new internationalism, that Article 10 from the 1951 SI Frankfurt Declaration was put to the test of an irrevocable decolonisation process: "Socialists work […] for a world in which the exploitation and enslavement of men by men and peoples by peoples is unknown […] in which the development of the individual personality is the basis for the fruitful development of mankind"[5]. For Brandt, SI had to open up and include non-European versions of socialism: "[…] democratic socialism is no longer confined to certain countries of origin. Moreover, what was good for one set of nations need not necessarily be good for another. The task is one of translating into practice pluralism and civic freedoms, rights of co-determination and claims to self-realisation under the given economic, cultural and political circumstances prevailing in different states and regions". Also, Europeans could not "elevate the pluralism customary in our parliamentary democracies to the status of being the sole valid model of democratic socialism", even though free pluralism was a precondition. Even "industrial democracy […] will have a different appearance" in Sweden or Germany "[…] to that in a country whose industrialisation only dates back a few years" (Brandt, 1981, p. 10). This openness and "elastic cooperation" brought European founders of SI closer to progressive political cultures of the Global South, and, perhaps paradoxically, closer to their own most crucial principles: "In our Frankfurt Declaration of 1951 we said that 'socialists would struggle to achieve a world of peace in freedom, a world which outlawed the exploitation and the oppression of people by people and nations by nations'. This challenge has remained very much a matter of topical concern" (Brandt, 1981, p. 10).

Brandt saw it as his lifelong task, especially after having to resign as German Chancellor in 1974, to mitigate East-West tensions not only through *Ostpolitik*, but at least as much by virtue of a fairer North-South relationship, based on global economic and political

[4] A critically bourgeois view in this "moral socialist activism" is provided by Dahl (1991).

[5] Declaration of principles adopted by SI in 1951, available at: https://www.socialistinternational.org/congresses/i-frankfurt/.

reform. The two blocks could co-exist, and paradoxically even be stabilised, if the first (western capitalism) and the second world (one-party regimes around the USSR) not only cooperated to reduce armaments, but allowed a fairer development of the Global South to take place: "At our congress in Geneva in November 1976 we pointed out […] we did not dispute the significance of the superpowers for the progress of detente. But we refused to accept a division of the world into two immovable and opposing blocs and, with them, the risk of dangerous confrontation" (Brandt, 1981, pp. 7-9).

In this sense, the "new" fully "anti-colonialist" SI was based on a new analysis of why conflicts and tensions in the world arose and/or could be averted: "The European Social Democrats rejected the US view that conflicts in Central America and other regions were the result of East-West confrontation. The European democratic left and Latin American reformists concurred in seeing the origin of these conflicts predominantly in social injustice. The differing views led to major controversies within the Western Bloc" (Rother, Larres, 2019, pp. 2-4). As underscored by Wolfgang Schmidt in his essay, these controversies became particularly harsh after Reagan was elected as US President in 1980. This had a strong impact on national social democracies through the 1980s, and some were particularly willing to transform the manifold impulse from Brandt into successful political practice. Danish, Norwegian, Greek, Spanish, and French socialists were outwardly critical towards the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). In Danish social democracy, many members of Parliament urged the party to follow the "[recommendations] of the so called Brandt-report […] equalised income differences between North and South […] and prompting more development south of the equator, among other things by reducing armaments and using thereby saved resources to fight poverty in the South" (Mariager, 2015, pp. 99-101). As Brandt himself put it: "International expenditure on arms at present amounts to 500 billion dollars a year: the allocations for public development aid make up less than 5 per cent of that sum. A mere 0,5 per cent of the yearly spending on arms would be enough to purchase, until the end of the decade, the farming machinery needed to improve agricultural output – in the poorest countries – now so desperately short of food – and even enable them to achieve self-sufficiency" (Brandt, 1981, pp. 7-9).

Thus, Brandt as President of SI, and even more as President of the Brandt Commission, saw it as the interest of the Global North and especially of Social Democrats to extend the "welfare world" practice of internationalism to developing countries, so more stability and (not to forget in years of global North stagflation) more stable growth engines in the world would be at work. This was meant to be social democracy applied on a global level.

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