

## Where Progressively We Might Go

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Serge Halimi, the President of *Le Monde diplomatique*, wrote a longish editorial entitled, “We can’t go on like this” (*Le Monde diplomatique*, No. 1309, September 2013). He claims refreshingly and I think rightly that by now (2013) “the legitimacy as a way of organizing society has been undermined, its promises of prosperity, social mobility and democracy have lost credibility” (1). He is principally thinking of neo-liberalism ways. He adds, “But there has been no radical change” (1). It has also come to be acknowledged that as globalization goes on the United States is still the world’s leading imperialist power. But now it does not rule the roost to the extent that it once did. There is, for some, the disturbing factor that the BRKs and more generally “Latin America has become a relatively autonomous geopolitical force” (12). Latin America, formerly the United States’ backyard, has shed a significant amount of its dependence on and deference to the United States. It still has its comprador states (e.g., Colombia, Mexico, Honduras and Paraguay, the latter two after a short time of partial freedom). But there has been a marked but unstable turn to the Left or Center Left in Latin America. The Left and Center Left and even those rather firmly in the capitalist camp (Colombia, Argentina, Chile and Peru) work together with their more leftish colleagues in a Bolivarian spirit, a spirit re-envisioned by the late Hugo Chavez. Even the firm Left (Cuba, Venezuela (now in 2016 collapsing), Bolivia, Ecuador and more increasingly Uruguay) is different politically and economically than in times past. Yet these nations are comrades working together. There has been a considerable amount of cooperation across Latin America and there are fewer North American poodles around. The United States is not so firmly top dog, though very recently (2016) it is gaining some of its power back.

So with this, Halimi in effect qualifies his claim that there has been no radical change in the new liberal globalizing order. But still, Europe and the rest of North America and Australia and New Zealand are in first-class cabins on board the U.S. steamship. Harper, Cameron and Abbott might well be characterized as U.S. lap dogs. Now (2015-16) Harper, Abbott and finally even Cameron (2016) have been put in the dustbin of history. However, the new (2013) American Ambassador to Canada is a thorough Wall Street man, a former high officer of Goldman Sachs. Canada now has such a fellow as an ambassador in its country. But there is Justin Trudeau, a Liberal in a modernized traditional version of his father. He marched (2016) in the Gay Pride Parade. The times they are a-changing. That would not be something Harper would do or even dream of doing.

Neo-liberalism has sought to gain force. It has even brought its opposition, including much of its *somewhat* Left opposition, to swallow hook, line and sinker Margaret Thatcher's mantra that there is no alternative to capitalism's delights. Straighten up and fly right, you deviants read the *Economist* and all will be well as it can be. Is Sweden even somewhat caught by this, too?

Halimi agrees with standard neo-liberalism that that though our situation is grim flexible alternatives exist. The existing order can be contained and then rolled back. He argues that "an extension of nonprofit companies can respond to this challenge" (12). It would operate to check the commercialization of human beings. There might become strict laws that kidneys and the like are not for sale as they are in India. Though organs can, and should be, donated at death. But for such a law to be effective so that a desperate Indian farmer about to lose his land or a desperate woman with her child starving do not have to, legally or illegally, sell one of their kidneys. This can only be done by reining in the capitalist order from commercializing everything for which there is a chance for there being a profit in its sale. This is to be done by characterizing basic needs (housing, food, education, health care including transplants) being made available to all and by funding them collectively and providing them for all. Body parts are not for sale. People at death can, for example, donate their kidneys but they cannot sell them, though they can be donated even before their deaths.

But the other things mentioned must be available for all. If not enough kidneys are found by such donation, then there should be a law that requires that they be taken at death. Then no one would be pressed into such a stressful situation of having to sell a kidney or even be able to do so for they would not be for sale. Pirates forcefully grabbing them would be resolutely punished. This would be a beginning in enhancing the life of populations in ways that neo-liberals will not and cannot guarantee. Trumpists do not care about it one way or another. Profit *uber alles* it is for them.

Halimi claims we should, and can, move in the way I have been recommending. He follows the sociologist Alain Accords in recommending, to quote Accords, “expanding public services rapidly and continuously to the point where they cover all fundamental needs for ‘free’ in synch with their historic evolution, which is only economically conceivable if all resources and wealth used for social work and produced through collective effort are returned to common ownership” (Alain Accords, “La Gratuite contra les eaux tieses du reformisms,” *Le Sarkophage*, no. 20, Lyons, September-October, 2010). This goes quite a few steps beyond Bernie Sanders’s proposals for a democratic socialism.

In trying to change the world, something that is daunting, including intellectually daunting, it would be well to instigate such matters looking non-nostalgically and non-dreamlike at them as something for the future.

It is clear now that neo-liberalism has not worked as a way of organizing society and that the world order has been led by it into disaster. Halimi puts that well at the end of his article:

The game is not over. The neo-liberal dream has lost its status as an absolute and an ideal, without which its social projects will wither and perish. All it is capable of producing now are privileges, and cold, dead beings. A change will occur. Each of us can help it to happen a little sooner (12).

Change will surely occur. But with the dumping of Sanders and the elevating of Hillary Clinton, it will be held up for a while. With Trump, which seems unlikely, we will get a further trip to the Right. Neo-liberalism, if it ever had any relevance at all, is surely now utterly discredited. I hope with all my heart and head that we will take in broad terms the direction Halimi takes. I am less

confident than he is that we the people will take that direction. But we on the Left have a chance and we should struggle to achieve it with all our might. Neo-liberalism has been aptly shown to be a non-starter. We, if we have reasonable political, economic and moral sense, can come to be aware of the tyranny of the market as we become aware of the tyranny of state absolutism. This must not be, as was the tyranny of the statism of Soviet society without capitalism but tyrannical all the same or with a tyranny like that of China with its state capitalism and stock market. We must not have either *laissez faire* capitalism—the extreme neo-liberal model—or state capitalism Chinese style or the statism of the Soviet Union calling itself a socialism on the road to a communism. Neo-liberalism does not work and statism does not work, particularly when it takes the old Soviet statist model. Chinese state capitalism might work but only at the price of great inequality, absolutism of state party power, brutality with the liberal use of the death penalty and with a million people dying each year of air pollution due to its environmental policies. It is not only the United States, Canada, Australia and Qatar that are bad guys here. Russia and China are in their different ways bad guys, too.