

Fear Yourself More than the Other

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1.

One of Karl Marx's main theses is realised: capitalism is a global system. It has established its form of production and circulation at the global level, and, as Alain Badiou claims, it prides itself on its global nature.¹ The world of capitalism defines itself as based on democracy/democratisation, human rights, ecology and the free circulation of capital.

The capitalist-democratic regimes have presented themselves after the fall of the Berlin Wall as a universal value, as the only possible political system. This system, this mode of production with its political coordinates, was portrayed as the one most fit to human nature, the one humanity had longed for throughout history. In the 1990s, the decade of the realisation of the liberal dream, democracy was the prerequisite for capitalism; as Badiou often repeats, our problem is not so much capitalism as democracy.

2.

Another thesis has been proposed recently by Rastko Močnik, who says that capitalism does not need democracy; on the contrary, it is authoritarian regimes that suit capitalism better.² According to Močnik, democracy is the precise ideological condition injected into countries in conflict or internal tension (translation mine). That is to say, democracy is *le passé* in order to maintain capitalist order. If democracy was a political necessity for the utopian 1990s, the first decade of our century has everywhere seen the appearance of authoritarian regimes. This is what is happening across Europe, with Italy's Silvio Berlusconi and Russia's Vladimir Putin as the sublime exemplars of this political proposition.

The fall of the Berlin Wall inaugurated the precise ideological configuration for the 'new' to take place. Politicians, financial speculators, mainstream thinkers and academics tell

us that the fall of Berlin Wall marked the beginning of new possibilities. It meant that the ideological struggle was over, that liberal capitalism had triumphed over 20th century ideological platforms and their perverted forms (the totalitarianisms: Nazism, Fascism and Stalinism), and that now we could peacefully rest in our unique liberal capitalism with democracy as its consummate political form of organisation. Francis Fukuyama announced the end of utopian visions with his thesis of “the end of history”, and the beginning of the new, liberal-democratic utopia.

3.

Liberal democracy stands for ‘the dream realised’ in a precise sense: in psychoanalysis, ‘the dream realised’ has a name. It’s called horror. In his recent book, *First as Tragedy, Then as Farce*,³ Slavoj Žižek recognises “the happy Clintonite era” of the 1990s as a purely utopian era that had to come to an end. The book’s title draws on Marx’s observation in *The 18th Brumaire of Louis Napoleon*: “Hegel remarks somewhere that all great world-historic facts and personages appear, so to speak, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second time as farce”. Žižek applies this formula to the opening years of the 21st century. Utopia is over: first with the tragedy of September 11, 2001, then with the farce of the ongoing financial meltdown at the close of the century’s first decade, as what Lacan would have called the Real of liberal democracy.

4.

How do we grasp the ideological propositions of our era? The fall of the Berlin Wall did not mark the end of all walls. The fear generated by ‘ideological struggles’ is now transposed into fear of worker immigrants, of new fundamentalisms (religious, ethnic), of new forms of sexism, and so on. New walls are popping up – not only physically (Palestine, the US-Mexico border, also recall the proposal of the mayor of one Italian city to build a wall through the city as a division of the poor from the rich), but also in the form of ‘administrative’ walls, such as visa regimes. Liberal capitalism in its ideological-political configuration is unable to resolve the problems it generates. In order to maintain its ideological body, it has to invent new forms of fear – fear of the toxic Other.

5.

The Society for the Protection of Animals Abroad (SPANA) is a British charity that works in some of the poorest countries of the world. Its aim is to protect animals. As the short description provided on their webpage states, they are “not an ordinary animal charity – we know that working animals ensure that families can make a living”.⁴ SPANA is well aware of the crucial importance of animals in the lives of poor families in underdeveloped countries. They’re also very precise: “When a working animal falls sick or becomes injured, there rarely is a qualified vet nearby. If there is one, most people cannot afford the treatment. So, while the animal remains sick and untreated, it won’t be earning any money for the family. They will be going to bed hungry every night”.⁵ SPANA sent a veterinary team to Kosovo shortly

after British troops arrived in the capital, Prishtina, in 1999. Its activists also worked with schools to encourage children to respect and care for animals that have been neglected. In one report in *The Times* in July 1999, SPANA claims its experts came to Kosovo “to bring crucial help to war-traumatized animals”.⁶

6.

In the Republic of Kosovo, KFOR (the acronym for the NATO forces in Kosovo) cannot dominate and rule by means of force alone. In Kosovo, we all witness KFOR's systematic violence every day. Leave aside the regular patrols we daily see, concentrate only on the ideological campaign, and the result is not very different. Billboards and advertisements in each and every newspaper, on all national television channels, over each and every radio station and also TV and Radio KFOR⁷: they are nothing but a brutal demonstration of their force.

Apart from its function as a Repressive Apparatus, KFOR has also decided that it has a mission as an ideological agent: it bombards us with campaigns expressing the need for more tolerance, love, respect, etc. This campaign that started in June 1999 continues today. In the latest billboards to appear along the roads of Kosovo, we see a dog and a cat embracing one another. The slogan reads, “They can. Why can't you?” This is meant to imply multi-ethnic tolerance, coexistence, etc. But the effect of this ‘anti-racist’ campaign is that KFOR itself slides into racism. The paradox is that the literal content of the billboards is the Real of liberal European multi-ethnicity as a concept: European multi-ethnicity (in its liberal configuration) is as possible as the coexistence of a dog with a cat.

KFOR does indeed function *predominantly* by repression, but its ‘educational campaign’ is just as massive (perhaps Gramsci is right when he wrote on the state as an educator). Along with other colonial structures (mostly European Union missions in Kosovo), KFOR tells us that they are in Kosovo for our own benefit and good. Their charity has no limits.

7.

Benevolent charity claims that Kosovo citizens are traumatised subjects. This is what they care for and that's all that interests them. They're kind-hearted, and all their activities look noble. But what these colonial structures mean is that Kosovars are incapable subjects, or desubstantialised subjects. Therefore, we have to be under ‘international supervision’; we have to be under their paternal care, so to speak, because we are not responsible for our acts, gestures and so forth. EU representatives in Kosovo often repeat that they are here to help Kosovar institutions due to their limited capacities. Thus does colonisation take on the political face of charity.

8.

“Colonized society is not merely portrayed as a society without values. The colonist is not content with stating that the colonized world has lost its values or worse never possessed any. The ‘Native’ is declared impervious to ethics, representing not only the absence of values but also the negation of values”, says Frantz Fanon.⁸ Our colonisers are here to teach us

what democracy, tolerance and human rights are as the highest human political and cultural values. Following the same line of argumentation (and taking SPANA into account), one cannot but say that White European liberalism/freedom not only contains further inhibitions, but their (political) *whiteness* is constituted on the perpetual fear of the toxic Other. One has only to look at migrant workers (*immigrants without residence papers*). If they stay where they are (in their Third World countries), they are perceived as terrorists, fundamentalists, radicals, etc., whereas if they move abroad (to the First, capitalist, World), they become toxic subjects. Somehow they're good if they stay 'there' where they are, if they remain in their own folkloric and cultural exoticism. They're good if they remain as subjects-to-be-exploited.

The same happens in the Republic of Kosovo. We're constantly told that the EU, NATO, the UN and other missions are here for our own good. The main paradigms of their administration (or "supervision", as they like to put it) are: stability, multi-ethnicity, tolerance and other ultimately racist concepts. Each of them should be briefly examined.

9.

Kosovo political and social activist Albin Kurti writes that "EULEX [the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo] defines itself as a 'crisis management operation', as if the crisis is here to stay and merely has to be managed. '(Re)solution', the traditional vocabulary of international missions, has been replaced by 'management'. 'Crisis management' means the prevention of the explosion of a crisis, not the elimination of the crisis or its causes".⁹

10.

The European liberal conception of multiethnicity is the ultimate racist concept, turned into one of the main premises of the international administration in Kosovo. This is not to be read as an opposition to different cultures living together, or as a claim that all forms of multi-ethnicity are disguised racism – on the contrary. But, far from bringing people together, liberal European 'multiethnicity' necessarily leads to partition, to keeping the 'other' as far away as possible. While in classic colonialism, the colonised were called tribes, in our post-modern forms of colonisation, we're recognised as 'ethnicities'. 'Ethnicity' is another form of censorship, as Žižek said in the lecture he gave in Prishtina in May 2009. Therefore, we are not allowed to have a fully sovereign state.

Kosovo is perceived as a society that needs to be supervised. Pathological societies are those whose 'healthy' existence is dependent on a Master, a supervisor. In the eyes of Brussels, Washington, New York, etc., we are seen as a pathological society. As wars exploded in the beginning of the 1990s in the former Yugoslavia, Slovenian philosopher Mladen Dolar said, "The European unconscious is structured like the Balkans". That is to say, European political 'perversion' was so strongly repressed that it had to be projected somewhere else. The other place is, of course, the Balkans.

Notes

1. *Alain Badiou. The Meaning of Sarkozy (Verso, 2008, London/New York).*
2. *Rastko Močnik. "Kapitalizam ne treba demokraciju". Interview for Slobodna Dalmatija. Available at: <http://www.slobodnadalmacija.hr/Hrvatska/tabid/66/articleType/ArticleView/articleId/55876/Default.aspx> (accessed 5 November 2009).*
3. *Slavoj Žižek. First as Tragedy, Then as Farce (Verso, 2009, London/New York).*
4. <http://www.spana.org/about-us/index.html> (accessed 5 November 2009).
5. <http://www.spana.org/the-big-picture/families-rely-on-animals.html> (accessed 5 November 2009).
6. *Vanessa Pupovac. "Therapeutising Refugees, Pathologising Populations: International Psycho-Social Programmes in Kosovo". Available at: [http://reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/LGEL-5FDDDM/\\$file/hcr-therapeutising-aug02.pdf?openelement](http://reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900sid/LGEL-5FDDDM/$file/hcr-therapeutising-aug02.pdf?openelement) (accessed 5 November 2009).*
7. *It is very important to emphasise that KFOR is perhaps the only army (and that, supranational) I know of which has its own television and radio stations.*
8. *Frantz Fanon. The Wretched of the Earth (Grove Press, 2004, New York), p. 6.*
9. *Albin Kurti. "Causing Damage in Kosovo". Available at: <http://euobserver.com/7/28602> (accessed 5 November 2009).*