

Elephant Archives

From the East Towards Capitalism

Alfredo M. Bonanno

Alfredo M. Bonanno
From the East Towards Capitalism

From *ProvocAzione* anarchist paper - 1987-1991

archive.elephanteditions.net

Putting aside for the time being the problems raised by the popular insurrection in China, limiting ourselves to as objective as possible an analysis of the insurrectional processes in course of development in various countries in Eastern Europe and the borders of the Soviet empire, we must make one further distinction right away.

The USSR, i.e. the hegemonic power of a universe that polarises the countries of the Warsaw pact, has for some years now been moving towards a political and economic project of deep-seated reforms, a project rendered necessary by the truly poverty-stricken conditions that the population finds itself reduced to. This has forced a reduction of spending on armaments in order to give the people a little more to eat.

A reason for new-found agreement in a universe that has been in a state of conflict until now, (i.e. with the USA and NATO countries) is the fact that the crises within the countries leading this universe, although not immediately comprehensible, and is only understood after careful observation of the loss of world economic command, has now been consigned into the hands of the Japanese. This is at the origin of the agreements on demilitarisation and breathing space conceded by the west to the projects of economic restructuring of the USSR.

Now, in a country that is politically strongly centralised, it is not possible for any real economic reform to take place before the political structures are dismantled. Hence the first steps towards democratisation not only in the USSR but also the various satellite countries, beginning with Poland and ending in Romania. The above distinction however concerns two kinds of problem: one which is specific to the State campaigns of the USSR, and another which is specific to the satellite countries, now openly on the way to finding their political, and therefore economic, identity without paying any attention to the Warsaw agreements any longer, and without fear of intervention by the Russian tanks.

Although we are trying to elaborate an analysis rendered more necessary than ever, it should be said that the two orders of problem are not the same. The USSR has its nationalistic problems on the European borders, which will get worse and worse in the politically and primarily economic federations, and considerable difficulties in the control and survival of the political and repressive apparatus in the USSR, possible explosions of conflicts of national liberation in the various political situations, however this problem could remain subordinated - although fermenting and dangerous - to the outcome of the USSR as a whole, a country that is approaching the productive and social situation of the West.

Moreover, the problem of the satellite countries is quite different to that of the USSR in the sense that the latter must face two situations, an internal one and one of relations with the West, this problem being similar to that of the satellite countries.

For the time being it seems more important to me to give a modest contribution to this problem of relations with the West, which is presenting itself in a virulent and chaotic way, under the aspect of a fascinating by an opportune propaganda of a kind of race to freedom and democracy.

Not one of these countries, from Poland which was the first to begin its trade union movements, to the gentle Czechoslovakia, to the incredible East Germany, to Bulgaria and the truculent situation of Romania, not one of those countries is moving towards *freedom*. Just as the USSR is not moving towards freedom. Towards profound structural, economic and political transformation, yes, but that is a different question.

Firstly, the abandoning of the political structures of the past is happening everywhere in a far-sighted and prudent way. The liquidation of an ideological cover such as the communist party should not impress us. The level of political transformation in all these countries, including the USSR, where the communist party remains standing, is more or less identical. In some countries the old leaders have been discarded, in others they have been accused of embezzlement and imprisoned, in others they have been shot, but these are not the real differences. In substance the apparatus is resisting and transforming itself, keeping a hold on to the levers of power which in its transformation is aiming at adapting the political structure to the economic needs that are showing themselves to be ever more indispensable and compelling. And this goes for all these countries, from the USSR to Romania.

The *facility* with which the marxist ideology with all its theoretical baggage that it seemed was to have finally put an end to the insurrectional revolutionary attempts of a libertarian matrix has crumbled, this *facility* is the proof, looking backwards, of how inconsistent and simply decorative that doctrine was, and of how much responsibility its supporters bear for having used it to cover up massacres, genocide, exploitation and oppression.

But this is not the most important problem. Basically, one was more or less certain that dialectical materialism would come to an end, as every now and again someone would lift up the edges of the cover and show what was hiding under *real socialism*. For our part, always convinced that the common idealist matrix of all historians belong to cannot but lead to oppression and the restoration of dictatorships, we were simply sitting on the banks of the Ganges therefore have had no *theoretical surprises* in seeing the corpses of the enemy float by.

Now the problem consists of assessing where these countries are heading for, what choices they are going to make. This is a serious problem, not so much for trying to understand preventively how *capitalism* is at the present time playing the role of seducer for those countries.

And it is clear that they are not moving towards a western-style capitalism of the kind that existed at the beginning of the eighties, i.e. towards an industrial

structure weighed down by large fixed plants, with the prospect of unpleasant social conflict with scarce productive flexibility in the work force. Nor are they moving towards an America in full vigour of industrial production, dominating the load-bearing sectors and armed gendarme of the interests of capital in a good part of the world. Finally, they are not moving towards a Eu-robe in debt to the Americans, with old economies and ideas that are even older.

These countries are moving towards a *new capitalism*. Reality is *different* at the beginning of the nineties. The USA is in economic difficulty precisely in the weight-bearing structures, with electronics in the lead, where they have been replaced by Japan. If they want to catch up they will have to abandon two things: the role of gendarme that they obliged to reduce, and the economic guardianship of Europe, which moreover is now less and less necessary. The European economies are incomparably stronger than they were ten years ago, while social conflict is under control nearly everywhere. Flexibility of production that economic technology has allowed is making possible structures of production no longer subject to the risks of backward plants and excessive employment costs. Mobility, after about ten years of adaptation, has now entered a mature phase, allowing for a fluidity of labour costs that is almost optimal. This is the *capitalism* towards which Eastern Europe is moving.

One should ask oneself, but is this *really* capitalism? We believe that the great *post-industrial* transformations have always greatly modified the situation. Once, as we have always maintained, the difference between *competitive state capitalism* (smuggled under the name of *real socialism*) were quite negligible and only some idiot ignorant of economic problems could maintain that capitalism did not exist in the East because it lacked the *market*. Anyone with a minimum of economic experience knows perfectly well that the market is like the *fata Morgana*, it is only visible under certain conditions. Or, remembering the words of Pirandello, there is *one, none, and a hundred thousand markets*. Precedingly, neither of the two types of capitalism worked at the level of the medium term, one had to adapt oneself to the short term, having recourse to ferocities and bloody adjustments. On the one side, in the West, an apparent wealth paid for in blood, hunger and death in the more backward countries, and with police bullets, but also with the camouflage of ideological consensus of the proletarian revolution. No real difference.

Had these conditions of the economic structure in East and West, and the social and political conditions of the eighties not changed, there would have been no move towards each other. Democracy and freedom wrapped up together in this rubbish are chatter like marxism and the proletarian revolution. Reality is quite different.

The East is not moving towards capitalism, but is moving towards *post-industrial technology* which, at the end of the eighties and more still through-

out the Nineties, will try to develop the conditions for a different kind of global domination.

These movements, considered by all as so surprising and fascinating, these popular uprisings, these insurrections that are eliminating ideological encrustations and years old dictatorships, are basically all moving in the natural order of the great capitalist transformations that are taking place all over the world, towards a new *post-industrial* society.

In such a perspective, our only hope, our strategy and our action, is that of analysis, in that it is precisely in these events of great international importance that they come forth strengthened.

AM Bonanno