



FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES
FONDATION EUROPÉENNE
D'ÉTUDES PROGRESSISTES

Queries

N°03 / 2010

WHAT COMES BEFORE,
WHAT COMES **NEXT**

Magazine by FEPS - Foundation for European Progressive Studies

www.feps-europe.eu/queries

About **Queries**

Isaac Newton's famous book Opticks concludes with a set of "Queries".

These Queries are not questions in the ordinary sense,
but rather rhetorical questions intended to stimulate thinking.

This was Newton's mode of explaining "**by query**".

Queries

N°03 / 2010

FOUNDATION FOR EUROPEAN
PROGRESSIVE STUDIES
FONDATION EUROPÉENNE
D'ÉTUDES PROGRESSISTES



Inside

FOREWORD

- 7** **Tony Judt - *"Ill Fares the Land"***
Ernst STETTER
- 10** **Tony Judt**
Biographical note
- 12** **What comes before,
what comes NEXT**
Ania SKRZYPEK

IN MEMORIAM

- 18** **In between worlds**
Sheri BERMAN
- 21** **Inspiring mission and
obliging legacy**
Thomas MEYER
- 25** **Progressive should sometimes
be conservative**
Alain BERGOUNIOUX
- 29** **The deserted village**
Ruairi QUINN

STIMULUS TO DIALOGUE

- 34 The quest for an alternative**
Sunder KATWALA
- 41 Rehabilitation of politics**
André GERRITS
- 44 Tony Judt's Political Testament**
Josep RAMONEDA
- 47 Against left wing conformism**
René CUPERUS

COURAGE FOR CHANGE

- 56 Courage of conviction**
Roger LIDDLE
- 65 Space between dreams**
Oscar LANDERRETCHÉ
- 69 Politics of Passion**
Cornel BAN

LESSONS FOR THE "NEXT LEFT"

- 74 Reaching beyond
our own limitations**
Alfred GUSENBAUER



"Queries" is the scientific magazine of the Foundation for European Progressive Studies.

The Foundation for European Progressive Studies is a European progressive political foundation, close to the Party of European Socialists (PES). As a platform for ideas, FEPS works in a close collaboration with social democratic organizations, and in particular national foundations and think tanks, to tackle the challenges that Europe faces today.

Publisher: FEPS – Foundation for European Progressive Studies

First published in Belgium 2010

Publishing supervisor: **Dr. Ernst Stetter** (Secretary General – FEPS)

Managing Editor of Queries: **Dr. Ania Skrzypek** (Policy Advisor – FEPS)

Translations: **Paula Lopez Novella, Isabelle Hertner**

With the financial support of the European Parliament.

FEPS Team

Massimo D'Alema
President

Dr. Ernst Stetter
Secretary General

François Isserel-Savary
Senior Policy Advisor

Dr. Ania Skrzypek
Policy Advisor

Dr. Matthieu Méaulle
Economic Advisor

Charlotte Billingham
Executive Secretary

Judit Tanczos
Junior Policy Advisor

Yolanda Fernandez-Romero
Junior Policy Advisor

Stijn Van Hummelen,
Junior Policy Advisor in Economics

David Kitching
Junior Policy Advisor

Gaston Simon
Financial Advisor

Designed by: Ogilvy Belgium

Copyright © FEPS – Foundation for European Progressive Studies
ISSN 2032-9113

This magazine is published subject to the condition that it shall not by way of trade or otherwise be lent, resold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publishers' prior consent in writing in any form of binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

The articles collected in the magazine reflect only the individual observations of the respective authors.

FEPS

Rue Montoyer 40, 1000 Brussels, Belgium

Phone + 32 2 234 69 00, Fax + 32 2 280 03 83

info@feeps-europe.eu

www.feeps-europe.eu

Foreword

Tony Judt – "Ill Fares the Land"

Dr. Ernst STETTER

FEPS Secretary General



Something is profoundly wrong with the way we live today – this is the opening statement of the brilliant last book of Tony Judt *"Ill Fares the Land"*. For the European progressive think tank FEPS, his analysis poses a real challenge. The challenge lies in our duty to keep in Europe an intense debate on values like social justice, equality and solidarity – the overall traditional values of Social Democracy and the Labour Movement.

Solidarity is the answer to how we, progressives, see society. Nowadays it needs redefining in order to be even more precise to tackle the issue of rising individualism. Its character must be captured in order to respond to the changing, globalized world through a strong call for international solidarity. Equality and social justice provide the motivation to construct a system in which each and everyone has the same opportunities and is empowered to be able to seize them. Democracy and peace linked with solidarity and equality provide four strong pillars on which an understanding of what the state, the European Community and Global Governance mean and should be about.

Europe seems increasingly to face a crisis of democracy. This requires more than ever that social democracy clarifies what is the role of the state and its policies. Since the 1990s social democracy accepted capitalism as a ruling economic paradigm and abandoned at the same time the entire debate on industrial and/or post-industrial society. As a consequence of that not only the distinctive vocabulary, but also entire philosophical backbone was lost. This left social democracy unarmed, even in contemporary circumstances of grave economic crisis in which the current mainstream neo-liberal ideologies appear absolutely vulnerable. This is one of the main reasons for the problem of why the European left is at such a weak point at the moment.¹

¹ G.Esping-Andersen, *Welfare states in transitions. National adaptations in global economies*, Sage Publications LTD., London 2004

To find a way forward, Tony Judt examines with brilliance the lessons we all have to learn from our recent past. He argues that we have to reevaluate the meaning of fairness and efficiency rather than simply placing blind faith in the market. It is especially his thoughts on the role of the state and the state class of politicians that are so worthy to reflect on.

The “*unbearable lightness of politics*” as Tony Judt arguing brought Western societies through a steady shift of public responsibility to the private sector to no “*discernible collective advantage*”. It is necessary to discuss in our progressive movements these kinds of politics of the two last decades. Progressives have been deluded in taking the markets as the most efficient instrument for generating welfare, growth and jobs. The outcome is now known. We have been hit by the most disastrous economic and social crisis since the Great Depression of the 1930s. Markets are not an act of God; they are managed by human beings!

Politics have to regulate and control the behaviour of the market participants and eventually a new phase of capitalism needs to emerge. In his final chapter, Tony Judt gives elements of what this should entail. Perhaps this is the only part of the book where one would have expected to read more. It is perhaps not only a question of the Left conserving something. It is first and foremost a challenge to the Left, for once, to cast away its modesty and be more outspoken when seeking achievements and programmes for the good of our future societies.

This current crisis must be observed from the level of the individual, through to governmental, European and finally international level. This is naturally closely related with the fact that there seems to be a general deficiency within the traditional, democratic, party system and its respective ideologies. This shortcoming both disables one’s capacity to govern and causes distrust among the citizens in democracy in general and politics in particular.

The first and biggest challenge ahead for social democracy, therefore, is to break through and use these circumstances as an opportunity to reboot. This book by Tony Judt is a reference for working together and renewing our politics with reference to ideology, but also with the inherent progressive pragmatism that facilitated our achievements in the past. Therefore, this process will show a concrete willingness to shape our European societies.

FEPS is very grateful to all the contributors of this issue of “Queries”. We thought it would be use-



ful to contribute to the intellectual debate on renewing social democracy by asking for comments on Tony Judt's last book. We are more than delighted with the result.





Tony (Robert) Judt was born in London, UK on 2nd January 1948. His parents' ancestors mostly hailed from Eastern Europe. His mother was born into a family of Russian immigrants and his father was a descendant of a Lithuanian rabbi. This particular background, cultivated through his upbringing in Yiddish culture, influenced Judt's early years and laid the ground to motivate him in 1967 to take part in the six day war in the Israel Defense Forces. His strong, evolving opinions on the matter of peace in the Middle East and his advocacy for *one two-nations'* state in the pages of New York Review of Books brought him much of criticism in later years and even cost him his position on the editorial board of the New Republic.

Tony Judt attended a Hebrew primary and secondary school in London, after which he entered King's College in Cambridge. This is where he obtained in 1969 his bachelor's degree and subsequently in 1972 defended his Ph.D. in the field of historical sciences. During his studies he also stayed in Paris, where he attended lectures at École Normale Supérieure. Exploring France and its political traditions resulted with Tony Judt's first publication: *Socialism in Provence 1971-1914: a Study in the Origins of the French Modern Left*. This inaugural work was written in a spirit that was very characteristic of his writings throughout his life – namely his focus on social history.

In the later years of his academic career Tony Judt worked mostly in the United States, where he lectured as a professor at Berkeley (California) and at the New York University, among others. At New York University he was Director of the Remarque Institute, which he cofounded and built up as an academic centre focused on European Studies. In 1996 Tony Judt was appointed a member of American Academy of Arts and Science, and 11 years later he became an affiliate of its British equivalent.

Altogether, Tony Judt is an author and editor of 13 books, among which there are: *Reappraisals: Reflections On the Forgotten Twentieth Century*; *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944 – 1956*; *Postwar – A History of Europe since 1945* (which was one of the New York Times Book Review's Ten Best Books of 2005; winner of the Council on Foreign Relations Arthur Ross Book Award and finalist for the Pulitzer Prize); and of course *Ill Fares the Land*. This last book is de facto his political testimony as, a self-proclaimed, *universalist social democrat*. Judt was also an author of numerous articles and reviews, and a frequent contributor to *New York Review of Books*. In 2007 he was awarded with the Hannah Arendt Prize and in 2009 won the Orwell Prize for Lifetime Achievement.

In 2008 Tony Judt was diagnosed with the Lou Gehrig's disease and its quick progress caused an almost total paralysis as early as October 2009. He died in New York on 6th August 2010

What comes before, what comes Next



Dr. Ania SKRZYPEK
FEPS Policy Advisor

"Imagine a classic railway station..." demands Tony Judt, opening his case study on railroads, which constitutes an absolutely extraordinary episode in the discussion he leads us through in his latest book *"Ill Fares the Land"*. Once the reader's attention gets captured, the dialogue begins. Subsequent paragraphs, written with a certain degree of contemporary poetry, portray the stations as *"cathedrals of modern life"*. This is where the benefits of collectivism, which ensures provision of social services are most evident. And this is also the remark, that Judt makes to consciously provoke further exchange. To give an example, in Judt's railway microcosm the private sector runs the newspaper stands and coffee places and rightfully so. What would be the translation of this microcosm into a macro scale in terms of public-private partnership? Furthermore, Judt names railway stations a symbol of civilisation progress, the monuments of major technological achievements and hence of social change enabled through fast travel and transport. If we agree, what the message is then we get looking at the *aesthetic, functional* airports, which *no one would wish to preserve* for the sake of their beauty?

The above quoted case study can by itself be an inspiration to a fascinating debate on contemporary times, for which knowledge and understanding of the past, as well as willingness to make an effort to imagine the future are essential. In this context the most crucial questions arise, which highlight challenges of modern social life: revitalising our sense of collectivism in a demobilised society of individuals; redefining the place of the state and its role through a prism of provision of high quality public services; rediscovering the missing link of identity between people and the civilisational framework in which they exist. Typically of Tony Judt, in the centre of these deliberations are: people

¹ T.Judt, *Ill Fares the Land*, Penguin 2010, Pages 207 - 216

and the times they live in. This focus stimulated us, while choosing the cover of this issue of *Queries*. We devote it to the memory of Tony Judt, outstanding academic and “universalist social democrat”, whose political testament *Ill Fares the Land* we want to honour herewith.

What comes before, what comes Next aims at responding to a call made by Tony Judt both through his book, and specifically in one of his last interviews², which was to enthusiastically embark on a *serious intellectual conversation* to provide the *theoretical guidelines, which a newly re-woken social democracy could realise in its work*. Both Ernst Stetter, and Alfred Gusenbauer refer to this challenge in their contributions, respectively outlining the major dilemmas emerging within the “Next Left” research programme. For this particular FEPS initiative, which is realised with the support of Renner Institute, *Ill Fares the Land*, Tony Judt’s reflections on the social democracy are particularly relevant. Despite the critical assessment of progressives nowadays, which Judt describes as a *party of fear, of defensive strategy, a party under pressure*, he expresses hope saying that social democracy is *better than anything else at hand* and it is clearly our own mission to prove him right.

Tony Judt was a social historian, an intellectual, who believed that people create history. This is also why the first chapter of our magazine is inaugurated by the article of Sheri Berman, which is a very personal obituary of a “*public intellectual of the highest order*”, “*a man of the left*” and a “*man that stood in between many worlds*”. The subsequent article by Thomas Meyer, bridges this portrait with an outline of Judt’s work and the initial comments on how important his intellectual contribution was. “*His is indeed a remarkable legacy*”, writes Meyer. With no surprise, it links with a message sent by Alain Bergonioux, whose main focus is on the legacy of Judt to the French political sciences, whereby he as free “*spirit rooted in several cultures*” was and *is impossible to ‘categorise’*. The *In memoriam* chapter completes with Ruairi Quinn’s explanation on the Irish origins of the title of Tony Judt’s political testament, *Ill Fares the Land*.

Among the lines of the articles published in the first chapter, a reader can see Tony Judt as a brilliant academic, and as a esteemed debater and polemicist. This is why, the second chapter is entitled *Stimulus to dialogue* and in fact aims at exposing the most fascinating points that shall be seen as *Stimulus to dialogue*. Sunder Katwala, picks the challenge and in the *endangered tradition of public intellectual exemplar* names three particular points, upon which he would not agree with Judt as far as the assessment of the *pluralist tribes of modern global left* is concerned. His arguments are followed by these of André Gerrits, who expresses certain disappointment that the last *much acclaimed book* does provide *all kinds of clues for further debate and research*, but does not *offer the insight into the past or present that may help progressive politics to confidently face the future*. What is more, Josep Ramoneda sadly concludes that though social democracy is in a critical state and has made many mistakes, there is *no assurance that we will not continue that way*. The final words in this chapter belong to René Cuperus, who argues in favour of Judt’s certain left-wing romanticism and *neo-idealism*.

² Gespräch mit Tony Judt « Eine neu zum Leben erweckte Sozialdemokratie », [in:] *Neue Gesellschaft / Frankfurter Hefte*, 6 | 2010, pages: 57 - 60

The points for debate, as listed in the Chapter 2, are echoed also in Chapter 3 of “Queries”, in which respective authors call after Judt for *Courage for Change*. Roger Liddle’s piece is an intriguing, stimulating reply to the arguments that Tony Judt formulated in his quest against the Third Way. It also brings up the question of Europe (European Union) and a demand that *European Social Democracy has to think anew. The challenge is do what New Labour did for a time – to be electable and to inspire*. Oscar Landreche and Cornel Ban accelerate the debate even more, bringing along a global dimension, calling upon their particular Latin American and American perspectives.



Queries



01

In memoriam

Tony Judt's *"Ill Fares the Land"* has been widely recognised as a brilliant intellectual contribution. In its reviews it has been often overlooked that it is in fact a fascinating journey through Judt's most elaborated thoughts and this book allows us to know him better. *A first-rate historian... a public intellectual of the highest order... A man of the left...* As a scholar, Tony Judt cultivated in his writings the strong believe that it is the people who bring along changes. *"In memoriam"* is therefore the opening Chapter of this edition of *"Queries"*, in which **Sheri BERMAN, Thomas MEYER, Alain BERGONIOUX** and **Ruairi QUINN** write on what kind of a man Tony Judt really was and what inspired him – both at the beginning, as also at the end of his life.

In between worlds



Sheri BERMAN

Tony Judt stood in between many worlds. He was a first-rate historian, but also a public intellectual of the highest order. He was a European who emigrated to the United States, yet someone who never lost the ability to clearly see the strengths and weaknesses of both his homes. And Judt was a man of the left, in an America that didn't have much of one and from a Europe where his vision of the left was often at odds with the prevailing trends of the day. The various strands of Judt's life came together in his eventual embrace of social democracy, which he viewed as the most successful part of the left as well as the most logical and just framework for organizing political, social, and economic life.

Reading Judt's writings cumulatively and in retrospect, certain themes emerge. Judt's career began with his examinations of the French left, and although originally sympathetic to Marxism, over time he became disillusioned with it as its practical consequences became clear. These trends converged in *Past Imperfect*, which criticized many French intellectuals for their blind devotion to communism and unwillingness to recognize the devastating impact it had on those actually forced to live under it. The Marxism of French intellectuals, Judt came to believe, not only led them to condemn the citizens of the Soviet Empire to a life they themselves would be unwilling to lead, but also rendered them unable to contribute in any meaningful way to the problems of their own society. The inflexible nature of their ideology, their rejection of "bourgeois" democracy and capitalism, and their dismissal of pragmatism and compromise in favor of some idealistic or "infinite" future, made them irrelevant to real world debates about the actual future of France or Europe.

Unlike some other intellectuals, however, Judt's rejection of Marxism did not propel him to the other side of the political spectrum. Even as his unease with the left was growing, his discomfort with the right was refreshed by the rise of Margaret Thatcher and the transatlantic resurgence of conservative thought more generally that began in the 1970s and 80s. Indeed, it was Thatcher's coming to power and the impact this had on British universities and intellectual life that helped push Judt out of Europe and into the United States.

Judt's move to the "new world" facilitated a shift in his scholarly perspective on the "old" one. By the 1990s, he was engaged by the very biggest questions in European history: what made the continent's descent in barbarism and total war possible? And then how, after so many generations of social, political and communal conflict, was Western Europe able to successfully rebuild itself after the Second World War? Judt was acutely aware of how distinctive, precious, and fragile Europe's achievement after 1945 was: for the first time in its history, the continent (or at least its western half) was democratic, prosperous and stable. What had made this possible, he asked himself, and what could be learned from the transformation? The answer, especially towards the end of his life, seemed simple: social democracy and its virtues.

What he meant by this was merely that the postwar order created after 1945 – the foundation upon which European peace, prosperity and democracy rested – was itself based on insights, ideas, and policies that grew out of and were best associated with the reformist democratic left. During the second half of the twentieth century, elites and masses across Europe and across the political spectrum came to accept the need for, and perhaps even the duty of, states to temper capitalism and forestall the social insecurity, divisions, and inequality that had led Europe to tragedy in the past. So widespread was the acceptance of such views that, as Judt put it, *social democracy [became], in one form or another...the prose of contemporary European politics.*¹

What Judt came to worry about was how this had been forgotten by so many people on both sides of the Atlantic. As the trend toward unbridled individualism and materialism accelerated in the post-Cold War era, Judt bemoaned how few appreciated the distinctiveness and success of Europe's postwar social democratic order – and how ugly a world without it would be. Judt looked with alarm at the increasingly dysfunctional and unequal nature of American (and to a lesser extent European) society. He bemoaned a world in which efficiency was the only criterion used to judge public policies and political outcomes. He feared a world in which social divisions and communal identification overtook a sense of common purpose and community. And he worried about the widespread inability of intellectuals and politicians to come up with practical responses. *We appear, Judt wrote, to have lost the capacity to question the present, much less offer alternatives to it. Why is it so beyond us to conceive of a different set of arrangements to our common advantage?*²

Consistent with his social democratic temperament and world view, Judt believed that the way forward lay not with some grand idealistic project that would, like all such projects, end up a failure, but rather with a renewed appreciation for the "politics of the possible." Recognizing the possible, in turn, required appreciating the lessons of the past. Social democrats, Judt argued:

... needed to remind their audience of the achievements of the twentieth century, along with the likely consequences of our heedless rush to dismantle them. The left...has something to conserve. It is the right that has inherited the ambitious modernist urge to destroy and innovate in the name of a universal project.

¹ T.Judt, *What is Living and What is Dead in Social Democracy*, *New York Review of Books*, December 17 2009

² *Ibid.*



Social democrats...need to speak more assertively of past gains. The rise of the social service state, the century-long construction of a public sector whose goods and services illustrate and promote our collective identity and common purposes, the institution of welfare as a matter of right and its provision as a social duty: these were no mean accomplishments.

That these accomplishments were no more than partial should not trouble us. If we have learned nothing else from the twentieth century, we should have grasped that the more perfect the answer, the more terrifying its consequences. Imperfect improvements upon unsatisfactory circumstances are the best that we can hope for, and probably all we should seek.

In our current world of “unsatisfactory circumstances,” the “imperfect improvements” social democrats should be championing, he believed, were manifold. Judt sought to remind the left that its accomplishments were vast and formed the foundation of the most prosperous and stable era in European and Western history. The traditional social democratic emphasis on the need to temper capitalism and actively challenge social insecurity, divisions, and inequality, he argued, was as important today as it had been in the past. The challenge ahead, he concluded, was not to come up with some new utopia but rather to appreciate how much progress had already been made to devise concrete policies that would bring us still further. He was entirely correct, and his voice will be sorely missed.

Biography note

Sheri BERMAN is associate professor and chair of political science at Barnard College. Her latest book is *The Primacy of Politics. Social Democracy and the Making of Europe's Twentieth Century*. She has written extensively on the history of the European left, European politics, and political development. She is currently working on a project examining the development of democracies and dictatorships in Europe in comparative perspective. Her professional website's address is: <http://bc.barnard.edu/~sberman/>

Inspiring mission and obliging legacy



Thomas MEYER

A social democracy of fear

At the end of his life, only a couple of weeks before he died on 6 August 2010, Tony Judt brought together a small group of social democratic thinkers from all over the world in the penthouse of the president of New York University. Judt, who had been paralysed since the beginning of that year, expected these thinkers to bring to life the ideas of social democracy in science and intellectual discourse. That they would not only disseminate these ideas within the public discourse of their countries and the world, but that they would pass them on to the next generation of scientists. On those two days in March 2010 he introduced the argument from his small, but important and brilliant book “‘Ill Fares the Land’” into these conversations with his friends and colleagues. His is indeed a remarkable legacy. The motto, which is borrowed from the title, accurately describes what the Left means with the controversial, yet seldom correctly understood, argument: “‘Ill Fares the Land’”, to hastening ills a prey, where wealth accumulates and men decay’ (Oliver Goldsmith, *The Deserted Village*, 1770).

This message should not be interpreted as a final attempt to find a basic replacement for the disdained concept of social democracy at a time when it is threatened with indifference or disrespect. It is rather the passionate admonishment from this famous historian to fight against the neglect of 20th century European history - at least its decisive fundamental experience – in order to prevent the present generation from having to relive the disasters of that time.

The peace, equality, and safety that social democracy has brought to citizens in Europe and even the United States - from FD Roosevelt’s *New Deal* to Lyndon Johnson’s *Great Society* – is not the result of the moral generosity of the ruling class or the mood of minorities in newly created democracies after 1945. It was rather born out of their imminent existential crisis, of the consequences of the insurmountable distance between social classes and the realisation that only the social democratic

compromise could secure their foundations and thus prosperity and social peace. Democracies have rested on these foundations until the present. However, undermining forces are becoming stronger, while the stabilising ones are weakening. There is a risk that we may forget that this foundation supports all - social peace and prosperity - and that we may lose the capacity to maintain it. A social democracy of fear, which is a reminder misinterpreted as a thin replacement for a new, future-oriented vision is rather a political appeal; a sum of the great historical work written by Judt covering the 20th century is that today, social democracy not only needs to reform many things, but it also has a lot to defend.

The dramatising exaggeration is the result of that fact that the Left, whose purpose and authority is founded on this, has forgotten to discuss the subjects that in reality represent the unfinished and now historically endangered project of social democracy: public goods, the moral foundations of common interests, the state, equality and social safety. However, these things that cannot be explained in a language understood in our times seem to lose their power or might at best continue to exist in a misunderstood, reduced shape.

A speechless project?

According to Judt, the problem is not so much rooted in the politics social democratic actors pursue in many places, but rather in the fact that their language is historically worn-out and that they lose the capacity to communicate important matters in terms that are understood by today's generation. Because in the beginning was the word and without it there will not be a fresh start. However, now is the time for the *social democratic moment* to be revitalised after the last vestiges of the libertarian moment are completely exhausted as a result of the global financial crisis. This libertarian moment overtook the now powerless social democratic movement at the beginning of the 1970s. The social democratic impulse did not survive the founding generation of the modern welfare state. The reason is that even the historically unprecedented benefits of the modern welfare state were gradually taken for granted and the memory of its social origins faded. The expensive welfare state lost its appeal to a younger generation, and made it vulnerable to attacks from people who had long been waiting to corrupt its moral foundations. Although social democracy has over time proven to be an extremely productive compromise, it only managed to shine in times of crisis. In peacetime people forgot its social legacy. Social democracy combines cultural and religious tolerance, the best heritage of Liberalism, with the idea of collective action for the collective good. It represents the collective protection of freedom and the dignity of the individual, but not collective ownership as traditional socialism does. It represents equality and safety. It reconciled the commercial, and occasionally also the self-employed middle classes, with the institutions of liberal democracy because it allowed them to profit from the welfare state's services such as education, health care, unemployment benefits and pensions. Tony Judt warns: those who forget this risk everything.

For sure, other social scientists have analysed the foundations and conditions of the historical compromise of social democracy more thoroughly and sophisticatedly than Tony Judt – particularly as a class compromise that inclined the economically powerful to make extensive concessions in fiscal policies, democratic participation, market regulation and income distribution from which the working population benefits. In return, it guarantees them the core of their ownership interests and economic freedom of action. It is not Tony Judt's concern to replace the memory of the purpose and foundations of this historical compromise with the new social democratic politics in a world of environmental crisis, globalisation and deepening social inequalities - on the contrary. The passion of his grippingly formulated essay conjures first of all the indispensability of the foundations of sustainable politics. The aim is not only to find and formulate the overdue answers of social democratic politics, but also to communicate them persuasively to a new generation. For this, he delivers important ideas.

Something is missing today

Because something is missing in our societies and increasing numbers of people feel that it makes them unhappy. The ideology of selfishness, which has become acceptable since the libertarian revolution of the Reagan / Thatcher era with its economic determinism and materialistic utilitarianism, is disintegrating our societies. Ultimately, nobody will benefit from it. Inequality, which was substantially reduced during the social democratic century, has increased drastically since the beginning of the libertarian turn. It is, as Judt notes, the root of all evil. It corrupts our moral conscience and prevents us from radically asking the right questions. This ideology has even infiltrated the left. Tony Judt partially blames this on the individualistic aesthetic culture of protest of the '68 movement which replaced the common purpose with individual self-realisation. According to Judt, this was the fertile soil in which the marginalised ideologists of aggressive Libertarianism, above all Friedrich von Hayek, could sow their great renaissance. The cult of the private at all costs dominated public life and debate for three decades. In Europe and the United States, the country where this imaginary world originated, tax was perceived as an income reduction without reward, the state as the source of all evil, and the private as the bringer of salvation. However, the truth is that the privatisation of public services and companies which occurred in countries like Great Britain since the 1970s, has thoroughly refuted libertarian promises. In most cases, major public assets were sold below cost to private companies. Private profit-seeking was encouraged while public risk guarantees were given at the expense of the community. Services became more expensive while their quality deteriorated. At the same time, the community was deprived of something that was existentially important for most citizens. Something the community could have agreed upon while practicing solidarity and a spirit of responsibility towards its own interest.

The power of ideas

Tony Judt reminds the Left of one of the great lessons from John M. Keynes. The power of the great minds and superior ideas is stronger than those of privileged interests and even stronger than reality. Libertarian ideology might have been thoroughly refuted due to the global financial crisis. Yet, as long as the ideas it carries are alive in the brains and hearts of many people in the corridors of power, libertarian ideology remains the decisive power. In political practice, the advocates of social democracy successfully defend their doing, yet they have forgotten how effectively to 'preach' their cause. This inability to shape public discourse is a weakness of today's Left. The problem is not a lack of experience, arguments and proposals. What is lacking is a language able effectively to spread the message. One that not only undermines the uniform discourse of neo-liberalism, but one that replaces it with images and terms – above all a language that makes us see the world in a different light.

There is no doubt that in this vision - dictated by clear-minded Tony Judt on his deathbed – challenges are neglected. The environment plays almost no role, and globalisation is only mentioned fleetingly. Tony knew very well that a future vision of social democracy would be unthinkable without the central inclusion of those topics. However, at this moment it was more important for him to remind us that those issues, without the foundations of social democracy, would have no chances of inspiring the masses, neither as topics nor as a vision. This does not turn him into a conservative who has nothing to contribute to a new understanding of progress aimed towards the quality of life and our living together. His vehement plea is that today, progress cannot mean that we create more of what most of us already have in abundance. We need, rather, to make possible once more what is missing. And he calls out to us that social democracy has something important to defend and that without it, nothing new can be created.

Biography note

Thomas MEYER is a professor doctor of political science, author of more than 30 books and 150 articles on social democracy, political culture, cultural diversity, citizenship, democratic theory and European identity. Graduated in political science, philosophy and German Literature at the Frankfurt University, he defended also there his PhD and subsequently presented habilitation at the Free University in Berlin. Since 1995 he is Senior Professor of Political Science and Speaker of the Department of Political Science at University of Dortmund. Meyer has been director of several research projects by DFG, among them since 2002 on A Theory of Social Democracy. Since 1999 he has served as Director of the Political Academy of the Friedrich Ebert Foundation in Bonn, since 2000 as Academic Advisor to the European Commission for Social Science and Humanities, and since 2004 as a Member of the European Research Network of Excellence Garnet. He is editor in chief of the political-cultural magazine *Neue Gesellschaft / Frankfurter Hefte*. His most recent book is *The Theory of Social Democracy*. (2007 Cambridge: Polity Press) Professional websites: <http://www.garnet-eu.org/index.php?id=124> and <http://www.frankfurter-hefte.de/Ueber-uns/Redaktion/>

Progressive should sometimes be conservative



Alain BERGOUNIOUX

Tony Judt's legacy to the French Socialists

News of the recent death of historian Tony Judt was relayed by a few obituaries in the French press. His death however did not prompt a true debate about his contribution to our understanding of our own times, although his finest work, *"Postwar: a history of Europe since 1945"* published in 2005 was an enormous critical success. The reason for that may well be that Tony Judt was simply impossible to "categorize" in the framework of the French political debate. A free spirit rooted in several cultures, from his Marxist years in college to the more liberal thinking of his later years, from the French to the British historical schools, from the old Jewish culture of Central Europe to the culture of American campuses, Tony Judt was also a talented polemist who could be quite intransigent in his defence of what he believed to be the truth, and whose stands always managed to sow confusion. It cannot be excluded that his being so severe towards three generations of French intellectuals - the Postwar generation of Jean-Paul Sartre, the "anti-Humanists" of the 1960s gathered around Michel Foucault, Louis Althusser and Jacques Derrida, and the "new" philosophers of the 1970's - may have earned him a reputation of abrupt self-righteousness.

Yet Tony Judt dedicated a significant part of his intellectual life studying France and especially the French Left: five of his books are devoted to this subject, starting with his PhD essay on *"Socialism in Provence and La Reconstruction du Parti socialiste"* on the reconstruction of the Socialist Party after 1920, published respectively in 1971 and 1972; but there were also minor essays on the French political culture of the Left, a reflection on *Marxism and the French Left* published in 1987, *Past Imperfect: French Intellectuals, 1944-1956* in 1992, and finally *The Burden of Responsibility: Blum, Camus, Aron, and the French*

Twentieth Century, which was published in 2001. His work never ceased to be of critical interest (his historical overview on Europe since 1945 is remarkably well-informed), maybe because by observing the French Left, Judt tried to grasp the reality of the culture of the Left while putting the beliefs of his own youth to the test. In fact, what makes Tony Judt comparatively so unique (though fortunately he was not the only one) is that he never separated historical issues from moral questionings. Far from the naive “innocence” of the 19th century, Judt always resorted to the rigorous tools of the modern historian, for history was for him a “guide to life”.

For him as well as his readers. The analysis of the situation that led to the split of Socialists and to the survival of a Socialist Party in France in 1920 allowed Judt to focus on two issues, which he never stopped addressing since. If French Socialism survived, it is first and foremost thanks to its people and to the steadfastness of its often older grassroots activists, elected representatives, trade unionists and co-operators. And they did so because they stood up for a project, which in the end was just as clearly articulated as the Communists’: the old French Socialist ideal combining both a revolutionary spirit and an undisputed attachment to the French Republic. The Tours Congress did not end in a split between Reformists and Revolutionaries, contrary to what is generally believed (and Tony Judt always disliked what is generally believed!), but between two political cultures. As a patient observer of ideas and similarly to François Furet’s views on the subject, Tony Judt identified the origins of this very notion of political culture in the legacy of the French Revolution, which shaped the political debate for so long in France, and which established equality as a priority and the State as the privileged tool for change. The acceptance of the Republic and of democracy did not invalidate this ideological core, which preceded the very development of the working class. Marxism only came on top of this actuality.

This particular fact was the centre of attention of Tony Judt’s work, which mainly focused on the analysis of the interaction between ideas and actuality. Marxism in France was a favourite subject of his as he postulated the simple causal relationships between understanding the world, acting and coming to terms with reality. Most of all, he reinforced radical French thinking, which of course existed before him in the intellectual world as well as among grassroots activists. For decades, the Communists and Socialists fought for Marxist legitimacy. This fight accounts for the recurring difficulties of French Socialists, and even more so of French Communists, to come to political compromises and implement them. Left-wing intellectuals were not much of a help when it came to bringing about new ideas to generate the right conditions for democratic political action. They were so fascinated by being radicals that they ended up creating what Raymon Aron called “imaginary Marxists”. This is indeed the



main critic Judt develops in *Past Imperfect* and he does not hide his indignation. For Judt, the vast majority of Left-wing intellectuals did not want to see the actual totalitarianism of Communism and he even accuses them of “voluntary servitude”. Because of their overwhelming faith in abstraction – and this is very indicative of Judt’s Anglo-Saxon way of thinking – French intellectuals never came close to experiencing reality first-hand. They forgot to root their ideal on a more empirical grasp of the world. They forgot to follow Jean Jaurès’s call to “go to the ideal and comprehend the real”. Of course, the situation has changed a lot since the 1970’s, even more so since the collapse of the USSR. But even anti-totalitarian thinking remained somewhat superficial in the eyes of Tony Judt, who accused French intellectuals to be too reluctant to recognize the complexity and elusiveness of the world, and therefore to lack a profound understanding of political democracy.

This broad outline of his reflections deserves to be discussed (and nuanced) – as his ideas have been. The diversity of the intellectual world was much greater than portrayed by Tony Judt. Internal conflicts have been very strong in the last decades, ever since the famous confrontation opposing Jean-Paul Sartre and Albert Camus. Indeed the work of Claude Lefort, who also recently passed away, profoundly renewed the concept of democratic politics (and the price to pay for it!). The French Socialists themselves have witnessed the continuous discussions between “two Lefts” ever since the 19th century, one faction being more partisan of state control and attached to a universalist vision of the Republic, and the other in favour of a more decentralised approach in order to better grasp society’s diversity. Nevertheless the cultural and political dynamics Tony Judt focused on in his work is particularly enlightening and allows the reader to better understand the nature of the French Left, and the contradictions and ambiguities that are still visible today, though perhaps less starkly so.

From his reflections as a historian, Tony Judt also offered his political views as a citizen, stemming from questions he asked himself and which accounts for his choice of topics. Keeping his mind alert even until the painful end of his life, he never traded the beliefs he acquired in his youth for any other. He cast a very critical eye on the prevailing neoliberalism of the last thirty years. Close to the dissidents’ struggle in the late 1980’s in Eastern Europe, he also identified and reported the damaging effects of extreme deregulation in the new societies. His essay and last book *Ill Fares Land*, published in 2010, offers a last reflection on what he had understood from historical evolution over the last two centuries. Far from rejecting the moral aspirations on which the first European socialist movement was founded, he reasserts them against liberal economism, which reduces all values to a quest for short-term efficiency and the promotion of self-interest. In this book, he calls on the



Socialist Left to claim and defend these values and to stand up for the Social State, which, at least for a certain time period, allowed whole populations to stop being worried and afraid. Was Tony Judt a conservative “old socialist”? Yes, he was, but only if that the old Socialism should learn the lessons of the 20th century, and give up its vain idea of having found the “perfect answers” ; only if it establishes a link between remaining faithful to its ends and rooting its thinking on an empirical action closer to people’s reality. For the reader of Tony Judt’s books and articles, it is therefore no paradox to find his last book to be a praise of social democracy in its principles and action. But it is not and it cannot be considered as a nostalgic book because for Tony Judt, it is impossible to only go backwards. The days of an administrative State deciding it all and determining what is good for everyone are gone forever. Preserving what needs to be preserved for the sake of our societies’ cohesion cannot prevent us from projecting ourselves into the future by adapting to today’s world the most precious legacy of past socialist generations: social democracy. To conclude on a dialectical note, which Tony Judt would certainly not have rebuffed in the light of his Marxist years as a student, progressives today should sometimes be conservative.

Biography note

Alain BERGOUNIOUX is a professor of history of the universities associated in the l'Institut d'études politiques in Paris. Among numerous functions, he is a general inspector of the l'Education nationale and director of *La Revue socialiste*. Bergounioux is an author of plentiful of publications, mostly devoted to the history of socialism and trade unions' movement. Among his recent books are: *L'ambition et le remords. Les socialistes français et le pouvoir* (published together with G. Grunberg, 2007Paris, Hachette Littérature), and *Les socialistes*, (2010, Paris, Ed. Cavalier Bleu). He is a member of the Scientific Council of the Jean-Jaurès Foundation.

The deserted village



Ruairi QUINN

Tony Judt's last published work, before he died, was titled *"Ill Fares the Land"*. It is an elegant evocation of a sound and secure social democratic society which was achieved and consolidated, in some European countries, after the destruction of World War II. Such a society is now mortally threatened by the neo liberal ideology of the new Right and left bankrupt, in some cases by the collapse of Wall Street in 2008.

This short book *"Ill Fares the Land"* reads, in a way, as a postscript to his magisterial work *"Post War"* which describes, in detail the European journey from 1945 to 1989 and beyond.

"Ill Fares the Land" is the opening phrase of the second verse of a long poem called *"The Deserted Village"* by Oliver Goldsmith 1730 – 1774. The complete verse quoted by Tony Judt is as follows:

*"Ill Fares the Land", to hastening ills a prey,
Where wealth accumulates, and men decay:
Princes and lords may flourish, or may fade;
A breath can make them, as a breath has made;
But a bold peasantry, their country's pride,
When once destroyed can never be supplied.*

Oliver Goldsmith was born in Ireland and was educated in Trinity College where he received a BA degree in 1749. After many years wandering across continental Europe doing odd jobs, including translations and teaching, as well as singing for his supper in various taverns and public houses, he

settled in London. He soon became a central figure amongst a group of intellectuals, including Samuel Johnson, Sir Joshua Reynolds and the great Westminster parliamentarian, Edmund Burke to name a few.

England was the first country to experience the industrial revolution with all the traumatic social change which it brought about. Goldsmith, the son of an Anglican clergyman, was brought up in rural Ireland and clearly had a nostalgic memory of that world when he wrote *"The Deserted Village"*. The winds of change had begun to affect pre-industrial rural England and Goldsmith's poem was a *crie de coeur* for a vanishing world which would be replaced with an inhospitable landscape. Further in the poem, he describes the outcome thus:

*Thus fares the land, by luxury betrayed,
In nature's simplest charms at first arrayed;
But verging to decline, its splendours rise,
Its vistas strike, its palaces surprise;
While, scourged by famine, from the smiling land
The mournful peasant leads his humble band;
And while he sinks, without one arm to save,
The country blooms – a garden, and a grave.*

Tony Judt wanted to evoke a better future from a successful past at a time of dramatic social change brought about, in part, by globalisation.

The sirens of doom, including the Chicago School of Economists, have masqueraded as prophets of the success of unlimited and unfettered markets. Despite the collapse of their world in 2008, their music continues to be played by many influential voices in the media and elsewhere, within the political discourse of our modern age.

Neo liberalism has failed the developed world, as the citizens of the United States and many European countries, including my own, Ireland, know very well. The forces of change which have brought about globalisation can neither be reversed nor ignored. However, if we are to secure a future for all of our people those same forces must be civilised.

Tony Judt's description of how post-war Europe, on both sides of the iron curtain, rebuilt itself from the ruins of the Second World War is a good place to start. The triumph of social democracy has been the transformation of a bitterly divided and intolerant continent to the open democratic and progressive community of nation states within the European Union. We need to take courage from what we have together achieved and apply it with vigour and commitment to the world stage. Tony Judt would demand and expect nothing less.

Biography note

Ruairi QUINN has been a member of the Irish Parliament Oireachtas since 1976, and since 1999 Treasurer and Vice President of the PES – Party of European Socialists. Currently he is the Labour Party Spokesperson for Education and Science, having previously also served as party's deputy leader (1990 – 1997) and subsequently leader (1997 – 2002). He served as minister: for Finance (1994 – 1997), for Enterprise & Employment (1993 – 1994), for Public Service (1986 – 1987), for Labour (1984 – 1987), of State for the Environment (1982 – 1983). Quinn is Chairperson of the Holocaust Educational Trust Ireland.

Queries



02

Stimulus to **dialogue**

"Ill Fares the Land", contradictory to what the title may suggest, is not a fatalistic vision of the end of the world as we know it. The grave criticism on the times we live in, in which individualistic tendencies rule over any sense of collectivism and in which terms of fundamental importance, such as 'social contract', lose any meaning, is merely an invocation. Judt believes that there is a chance to reverse the negative trends and that a renewed social democracy stands a chance to fulfil this mission. The creation of the Next Left must be done, however, accordingly to certain principles. Among them is the respect for the movement's past and traditions, while re-adjusting its programme and language to the reality of the 21st century. The question if this thesis of Judt is feasible was an inspiration for Chapter 2 *"Stimulus to dialogue"*, in which **Sunder KATWALA, André Gerrits, Josep RAMONEDA** and **René CUPERUS** have taken part.

The quest for an **alternative**



Sunder KATWALA

Tony Judt's work and life offers one of the best contemporary exemplars of the vital and somewhat endangered tradition of the public intellectual. In an age of increased academic specialisation, Judt only ever seemed to increase the range of his intellectual concerns. That made him a thinker with broad global reach too. He spent many years in New York, an engaged observer and participant in the social and global debates of the world's superpower. He was not afraid of controversy, though he did not seek to provoke it unduly or for the sake of attention, being undoubtedly somewhat bemused by the ferocious reaction to the depth of his secular Jewish disillusion with Israeli policy could spark quite the storm that it did, at one point seeming to overshadow his thinking and writing on almost any other public or academic issue. Yet Judt can surely be claimed as simultaneously both a cosmopolitan thinker and a great European intellectual (particularly when that is quite a rare vocation for an Englishman).

All of this would be true without having been underlined by the remarkable circumstances in which Judt made his final urgent contributions to public and political debate. The methods by which Judt 'raged against the dying of the light' as motor neuron disease gradually immobilised him no doubt dramatised and generated wider recognition of his intellectual and political contributions. His defiant response to illness surely symbolised too his lifelong commitment to universalist enlightenment values: that political arguments matter, that the word should make a difference, that, ultimately, what gives life and humanity meaning is that we *think*.

The pluralist tribes of our modern global left – European social democrats, American liberals, democratic socialists around the globe and other progressive fellow travellers in the quest for an egalitarian politics – ought not to be too grateful that we were Judt's final subject, in his lecture and essay "*What is Dead and What is Living in Social Democracy*", then expanded into the elegant book length treatise of "*Ill Fares the Land*". We must be painfully aware that the reason for the attention was

our own existential crisis, and his fear that we would not survive it. Judt, who has always believed in speaking uncomfortable truths to power, now found it necessary to also discomfort the too often powerless partisans of the political left.

So every social democratic politician should find just a few hours to read and reflect on the book and its argument. For the book works best as meditation on the condition of the left in the world, a provocation to thought and to argument and a stimulus, perhaps above all, to political conversation. This is Judt's legacy to generations of a left yet to come: a challenge borne of his testimony as a representative of the lucky generation of the post-war era, now painfully aware that its precious inheritance was not understood and valued as it might have been. As an elegant elegy on a politics lost, it inevitably does less to map out the future terrain that it challenges us to find. The book makes no pretence to be other than an opinionated essay, a highly subjective polemic borne of out of the experiences of the post-war generation. Being inevitably bound by those generational assumptions perhaps makes *"Ill Fares the Land"* seem too pessimistic on several fronts when it comes to the search for the 'Next Left' that it demands.

- Firstly, the book misdiagnoses how, where and why the left lost its identity and sense of mission. Judt offers a now familiar critique that the individualism of the 1968ers did not only challenge the stifling conformity of the immediate post-war years yet also helped help to pave the way for the marketisation of the 1980s. But the book is more convincing on this complex legacy of the 1960s than in Judt's uncharacteristically ambiguous reading of the meaning of 1989.
- Secondly, Judt overestimates the triumph of his enemies. He is right has dominated political discourse with a pro-market and anti-government argument for thirty years. It is surely, then, interesting that. The left has been too defensive, but has also been better at playing defence than we realise. There may be lessons here in how we can move onto the front foot.
- Thirdly, Judt perhaps underestimates the potential to rebuild collective solidarities again for our age of insecurity.

A better yesterday? 1989 as the end of the left

That Tony Judt took delight at the end of the division of Europe is evident. He opens his magisterial book *Post-War* by revealing that the idea of writing the book came to him as he changed trains in Vienna's Westbahnhof in 1989, returning from Prague where he had witnessed Havel's Civic Forum tipping the Communist state into the dustbin of history. The political opportunity to reunify Europe provided the motif for a great intellectual challenge too. It would be necessary to reconsider, indeed to reunify, the history too, by attempting a synthesising history of the modern European continent, where the Cold War would now be understood not as the central, permanent and brutal fact of

European life but as a transient era, as linkages across western, central and eastern Europe were once again reasserting themselves.

As a European democrat and champion of liberty, Judt naturally credits too in *"Ill Fares the Land"* that the dissolution of the Soviet bloc was *a very significant transition: one in which millions of men and women were liberated from a dismal and defunct ideology and its authoritarian institutions*. This empathy goes beyond an intellectual recognition of this obvious political truth. Judt's natural position is that of a liberal contrarian, often railing too against the lack of vigilance to civil liberties in the western democracies too.

All of this makes it most curious - *"1989 and the end of the left"*, no less – that Judt gives 1989 such a significant role in the existential crisis of the (western) left, seeing it as the founding moment of a loss of identity and faith, where *the disappearance of so many regimes so closely bound to a revolutionary narrative marked the death knell of a 200-year promise of social progress*. But why? It is surely perverse to regard the promise of "Liberty, Equality and Fraternity" as somehow fatally weakened by the disappearance of states which had little or nothing to do with any of them. They offered only a mocking and nightmarish cartoon caricature of the egalitarian ideal, also capable of discrediting the more liberal and humane versions for which Judt rightly stands.

Perhaps this is the writer's love of a paradox, or a willingness to seek or bear witness to uncomfortable and even incommensurable truths. If so, the argument unnecessarily knots the author in a series of ambiguities, which risks contradicting both the emotional and the intellectual core of his understanding of what social democracy might have to offer us now and why. In the Cold War context, the term "democratic socialist" risked tacitly accepting the libel that what we sought was the so-called 'actually existing socialism' of East Germany, except by consent. So 1989 was a moment of liberation for the west European left as well as, more profoundly, for the citizens of the former Soviet bloc. To present 1989 as the moment of tragic loss, the cause of the existential ennui and identity crisis of the left strikes me as unconvincing on several levels.

Firstly, Judt's account overstates the influence of the Marxist tradition on the European left, when it was considerably weaker in some countries than others. The British Labour movement was rightly said to owe more to Methodism than Marxism from the start. Revisionist social democracy and related varieties of democratic socialism had often become dominant political and intellectual traditions – most famously with the West German SPD's Bad Godesberg program in 1959 – before the Berlin Wall went up in 1961. So the eclipse of Marxism hardly had to await its fall. There was a generational renaissance for some of the '68ers, yet Judt wrily notes the irony of those "expressing enthusiasm for Mao Tse-Tung's dictatorially uniform 'cultural revolution' while defining cultural reform at home as the maximising of private initiative and autonomy", somehow willing to support choices imposed in faraway countries while preaching an almost complete libertarianism for themselves at home.

Secondly, the political left was, at least briefly, in some ways somewhat more confident after 1989 than before. The security politics of the Cold War was often a millstone around the necks of the

democratic western left. Of the larger democracies, only in the specific circumstances of France (where Mitterrand had to win the long political battle to overhaul and marginalise electoral Communism to produce a governing opportunity for the left) did the democratic left perform better in the last decade of the Cold War than it did in the 1990s. The Italian left was completely excluded from power, while it is no coincidence that the US Democrats won only one of the last six Cold War Presidential elections (and that in the immediate wake of Watergate) but have won three of the five held since. Judt offers a cogent critique of how the politicians of the 1990s lacked sufficient vision and depth. But much the same can be said of many of their predecessors in both the 1970s and the 1920s. If we were to replay the 1990s with the Berlin Wall still up, does anybody believe that the grim existence of the Communist states would have generated a more visionary western left than the third way managed?

Thirdly, *inevitability* is surely the enemy of *politics*. Judt's argument is that the left lost a secular faith in inexorable historical laws which guaranteed their victory. Certainly the left requires confidence in the belief that social progress is *possible*, and must rekindle that flame whenever it flickers too weakly or seems in danger of being extinguished. But what need is there for the politics of either ideas or organisation, to argue or to mobilise, if social and political outcomes are already predetermined? The belief in being inevitably and inexorably on the winning side of history has as or more often been a source of inertia and conservatism on the left as of radical energies. There is a cost to such fatalism. Judt himself notes the refusal of Marxists *to propose or even debate solutions to the crisis* of the 1930s slump and depression. That strand of utopianism provided nothing to the creative political settlement of FDR and the post-war European states which we are now called upon to defend. Just as religious belief in the afterlife can legitimise injustices in this world, the rhetorical utopianism of a vague non-capitalist future provided a brake on radical and insurgent thinking about reshaping the world as it was.

How far did the market triumph?

Judt tends to overestimate the reach of his political enemies. He notes that the politics of certainty switched over to the neo-liberal and neo-conservative right in its Fukuyamist phase around the turn of the millennium. This ultimately proved a recipe for over-reach and hubris, as Francis Fukuyama's own thoughtful obituary of the neo-con project in his *"After the neo-cons"* sets out.

There can be little doubt that the right made much of the running, in western democracies at least, in the 30 years following the Reagan-Thatcher counter-strike against the post-war welfare consensus. If

social democrats everywhere believed that the Autumn 2008 crisis would bookmark the era, reality has so far proved to be far more complex. Judt is aware of the neo-liberal dominance of the intellectual airwaves, yet surely the architects of neoliberalism have reason to be disappointed at the results.

After three decades in which the message *less state equals more freedom* has been a major political message, how much less state do we have? Reagan and Thatcher could cut taxes, but dare not make significant inroads into spending. European Christian Democrats were often more ambivalent still about attempting this state-shrinking project.

So why did the neoliberal injunction that the state would at least begin to wither away also prove a false dawn? The most obvious answer is democracy. As Clem Brooks and Jeff Manza show in *Why Welfare States Persist* (University of Chicago Press, 2007), the answer is simple: citizens didn't want them to disappear. All of those editorials confidently predicting in *The Economist* and the *Wall Street Journal* that the welfare model would prove unsustainable in the age of globalisation could not overcome the brute political fact that the right struggled to mobilise sufficient political coalitions to fulfil the prophecy.

Judt acknowledges the tenacity of social democratic institution building alongside the failures of socialist utopianism: *Socialism has failed. Social democracy has not only come to power in many countries. It has succeeded beyond the wildest dreams of its founders. What was idealistic in the mid-19th century and a radical challenge fifty years later has become everyday politics in many liberal states.*

He notes that social democracy has become *the prose of contemporary European politics* of both centre-left and centre-right. This was never clearer than in the 2008 financial crisis. Now, the politics of *there is no alternative* meant that even every administration of the right knew it was the unavoidable duty of governments to intervene.

If social democrats struggle for a distinctive vision, it is a product of our political successes as well as our failures. That is a good reason to reject a psychology of defeat.

The future of solidarity

Judt is aware of the dangers of nostalgia. *Nothing is ever quite as good as we remember*, he writes, in warning of the danger of bureaucratic and insensitivity to those who lived with decisions made far above about social housing and planning. He is right that we need to assert the necessary role of the state – in providing public goods, in breaking down the inheritance of disadvantage and providing opportunity – while being more modest and wary of its over-reach.

But he is rather too pessimistic about the possibilities of solidarity in a diverse society. In arguing that “the kind of society where trust is widespread is likely to be fairly compact and quite homogenous”, Judt seems to take it as read that ethnic diversity must fray the bonds of a shared society, fearing that

the 20th century welfare model may rest on *something inherently selfish*. Yet, internationally, there is little evidence in the comparative data even for a sustained correlation, still less for this causation between increased diversity and less collective provision. Ethnic difference – a visible “otherness” – can exacerbate and become a signifier of grievances over whether the social deal is fair. But these fairness grievances have their own dynamic – fundamentally about whether the “something for something” principle of reciprocity is being upheld. The ideas of contribution and mutual insurance against risk which underpinned the post-war welfare settlement can and must be reinvented, and provide a route to restore what Judt calls *the magic of universalism*.

The British retrenched in the 1980s but then significantly expanded public spending after 2000: increasing diversity does not veto our willingness to contribute to the common pot. Judt misses this because his evident fury at Bush and Blair over Iraq leads to a cartoon caricature of New Labour, rather than any sustained effort to audit both its failures and successes in the round. The NHS was not privatised, as Judt claims: rather tax-funded resources for it tripled in real terms. Inequality – among the top 1% increased – yet inequality was checked, and reduced between the 90% of society from the bottom to the top decile. The UK did better on pensioner and child poverty in this period than almost any other country, as Jane Waldfogel of Columbia University’s recent authoritative study “*Britain’s War on Poverty*” sets out. The overall message is clear: redistribution made an important difference. *Policy works*.

There is something in Judt’s fear that technology creates dispersed communities of interest, with the loss of a shared canon or pool of common knowledge. This can be a significant driver of populist anti-political sentiment: the more time that I spend only encountering other people who think like me – and not encountering different views – the more incomprehensible becomes the refusal of ‘them’ in power to listen to the voices of “us”, the people, because the fundamental truth that politics is about the negotiation of differences risks being lost. But the shifts are not all in one direction. On one reading, the social shift from the big to the small screen broke up the collective audience. Time-shifting technologies from the video player onwards further atomised our experiences. Yet social networking is also offers countervailing pressures to rejoin a shared collective experience. Major political news events, like leadership debates in an election, are no longer a one-way broadcast experience, but instead now can be experienced with a live chorus from the crowd, whose twittering away keeps the civic square in continual session. The barriers to civic mobilisation and activism have never been lower, surely an opportunity for political movements who can provide causes which people believe are worth fighting for.

So “*Ill Fares the Land*” is an important stimulus to disagreement. We should endorse Judt’s belief that intellectual, and so political recovery must involve recovering a habit of asking ourselves foundational questions, central to political discussion from the Greeks onwards – *Is it good? Is it fair? Is it just? Is it right? Will it help to bring about a better society or a better world?*

Judt warns us of what has been lost, and what we might salvage of our inheritance. His and our inability, beyond that, to foresee what form new answers will or should take may seem a large part of the point. An important starting point is to insist that the conversation that we need will have to be a different one from that which we are having today. Judt is particularly incisive on the need to “recast public conversation”, to assert the need to discuss *alternatives*, even if we can not articulate what form they may take, here taking inspiration from the way in which political rhetoric in 18th century pre-revolutionary France prepared for the possibility of change. *If we do not talk differently, we shall not think differently*, he writes.

So it was not the loss of the dystopian Communist regimes which saw the left lose an ability to dream of different worlds. In insisting we reinvent a tradition of thinking again of alternatives and utopias, he makes a case for the combining the poetry of utopianism with the prose of incremental change. That was a case put well over a century ago by another distinctively individualist socialist, the playwright Oscar Wilde. Wilde would have reason to celebrate the way in which our societies have more space for liberty and dissent than the age in which his homosexuality saw him endure a tragically early death following imprisonment. But the question of future visions would surely remain. As Wilde wrote in “*The Soul of Man under Socialism*” as long ago as 1891: *Is this Utopian? A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which humanity is always landing. And when humanity lands there, it looks out, and seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of Utopias.*

If Judt’s legacy in “*Ill Fares the Land*” is to insist that we once again dream of new worlds, and ask *why not*, then that is a challenge we should be ready to accept.

Biography note

Sunder KATWALA is General Secretary of the Fabian Society, the centre-left British think-tank and political society (www.fabians.org.uk). He was previously a journalist with The Observer newspaper. Sunder blogs regularly for the Fabian blog www.nextleft.org and is on twitter at @nextleft

Rehabilitation of politics



André GERRITS

A few comments on Tony Judt, "Ill Fares the Land"

Tony Judt is the author of series of much-acclaimed books, the most impressive of which is *Postwar. A History of Europe Since 1945* (Penguin Press, 2005). Judt suffered from a serious illness which progressively paralyzed him. He died earlier this year. Judt was a public intellectual *par excellence*: critical, engaged, and committed. His last publication "*Ill Fares the Land*" offers the last example of his social and political engagement. Judt was no longer physically able to write this extensive political pamphlet; he had to dictate it. "*Ill Fares the Land*" fills the reader with admiration and respect – respect for Judt as a scholar and as human being. But there is also doubt, even disappointment. "*Ill Fares the Land*" does not offer the insight into the past or present that may help progressive politics to confidently face the future.

European social democracy struggles with a decline of popular support, with ideological confusion and with political uncertainty. If the term would not be over-used, one could argue that social democracy is faced with an existential crisis. "*Ill Fares the Land*" is considered by quite a few Europeans to be the much-needed answer, the response to the crisis of social democracy and to the social and political circumstances that have generated its predicament. European social democracy apparently needed a US-based scholar to write the thought-provoking and inspiring political manifesto that no single party intellectual or ideologue was able or willing to produce. I do not consider "*Ill Fares the Land*" as an effective antidote against the crisis of social democracy, against the lack of ideas and ambitions among social democrats. In the end the book does not offer the answers, the policy options the left-of-centre needs. Rather, it remains stuck in sympathetic and well-meant, but basically old-fashioned ideas and suggestions. I admire Tony Judt for his scholarly work, but "*Ill Fares the Land*" is disappointing. It is not so much his analysis of everything that went so profoundly wrong in the United States and in the United Kingdom which falls short of expectations, as are his

ideas on what needs to be done. Judt's political message is fairly traditional, if not conservative. It is largely devoid of original and innovative ideas. *"Ill Fares the Land"* contains intellectually challenging and politically inspiring thoughts and observations. It gives a sharp analysis of the problems concerning societal cohesion, state-society relations and perceptions of the public good from the 1980s. But in the end it disappoints, because it fails to give a convincing political answer to the challenges progressive politics are faced with.

I will limit myself to some pivotal aspects of Judt's analysis:

On the role of the state: *It is incumbent upon us to reconceive the role of government*, he writes in his introduction. *If we do not, others will.* One can only agree with this statement (although Judt, curiously, tends to confuse government with 'state'), but I would question whether one can (still) speak of a serious reluctance in Europe to defend the public sector; whether the changed role and perception of the 'state' during the last two decades is simply a matter of 'political pusillanimity', as Judt puts it; and if his ideas on what the state should actually be doing is not very unsatisfactory – the state as the 'intermediate' or protective institution between citizens and 'unresponsive cooperations' can hardly be considered as a stimulating, challenging thought.

On social equality: Judt tends to attach great importance to the growth of social inequality in US and others societies. He considers it as one of the most dangerous, most subversive aspects of our democratic polity. Without denying the dangerously grown gap between rich and the poor, especially in the United States, there is no reason, in my perception, to be as dogmatic about 'inequality' as Judt is. Inequality isn't necessarily 'unattractive in itself', to quote Judt. It is neither inevitably good nor bad – it depends, I would argue. It is a matter of measure and quantity. In most, if not all of the European welfare states the measure of social inequality is still very acceptable, and not comparable to the situation in the US. Generally, Judt's analysis of the welfare state is poor and inadequate. He focuses almost exclusively on the (restoration) of the traditional (redistributive) role of the state. This might be of some importance, but we need to reflect on other welfare state issues too. The role and perception of solidarity is changing. The welfare state rests on two pillars: a financial and a 'moral' pillar. The first financial dimension is about the extent to which the welfare state remains affordable. It concerns the limits of money. The second dimension is about the extent to which the welfare state remains acceptable, and how it is affected by globalization, migration, etc. This is about the limits of solidarity. Judt, characteristically, poses only the first questions, and he prefers to ignore the (eventually) more relevant second one. Overstretching the limits of solidarity is as dangerous to the sustainability of the welfare state, as overstretching its financial dimension is. Judt, as social democrats more generally do, focuses almost exclusively on those who (have the right to) benefit from the welfare state, thereby neglecting that critical part of society that actually provides the financial means to sustain it, i.e. not the state but the large middle segments of society.

On what needs to be done? For social democrats the most important part of the book is where it discusses the political consequences of the recent changes in state and society. Judt's political conclusions are not always convincing. He mentions the 'indifference' of citizens, but he does not provide us with a convincing explanation. His exposé on the glaring difference between the politicians of today and those of the past (1950s) is rather curious, if not somewhat silly. Additionally, I do not understand why debates in France and the Netherlands on matters of national identity should be considered as 'ersatz debates'. It is a reflection of Judt's high-brow intellectualism, the fact that he refuses to admit that issues of cultural distinctiveness or national identity are legitimate issues, as *real* as debates and discussion on price compensation or international peace missions are.

On the US and Europe: In its discussion of the role of the state, of societal inequality, of the perception of taxes, etc., the book is rather (too much) US-focussed. Judt does not seem to appreciate the differences between the US (the Anglo-Saxon world perhaps) and the European continent (i.e. the Western part of Europe). Things have definitely changed in Europe over the last two decades, but not to the extent that Judt wants his readers to believe. Very few Europeans deem that 'some planning, or progressive taxes, or the collective ownership of public goods (...) are intolerable restrictions on liberty...'. False analyses lead to false conclusions.

"*Ill Fares the Land*" is a challenging and stimulating book, but in terms of political solutions it is way too conventional, if it is not backward looking. The book does, however, offer all kinds of clues for further debate and research, and it deserves a far more thorough review than I have been able to give it in these two pages: on the role of the *national* state, Judt mentions the 'state' on almost every single page of his book, but hardly ever in combination with 'national'; on the (re) thinking the welfare state, which should be more that just rethinking the role of state in welfare state; on the specific role and relevance of social democracy under the current conditions, Judt's evaluation of European SD is mixed and ambivalent. The attractive, imaginative and effective (social) democracy which Judt advocates needs much more than the rehabilitation of the policies and the politicians of the past.

Biography note

André GERRITS is Professor of Russian Studies at Leiden University in the Netherlands. He is also chairman of the Alfred Mozer Foundation, affiliated with the Dutch Labour Party. He published extensively on the politics and history of East Central Europe and Russia.

Tony Judt's Political Testament



Josep RAMONEDA

"Social democracy doesn't represent an ideal future; it doesn't even represent an ideal past. But among the options available today, it's better than anything else we have". These words are taken from Tony Judt's *"Ill Fares the Land"*, written in the final stages of the amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS) that led to his death in August. With the help of his family and friends, Judt turned the last two years of his prostrate life into a period of creativity. In a way, this book is his political testament. The rest is for the memoirs that he left behind.

In *"Ill Fares the Land"*, Judt sets out his commitment to social democracy following an interesting project to look at contemporary malaise and its roots. The starting point is his perplexity at a society that has made money its sole moral criterion: *The search for material things has been turned into a virtue* - to the extent that it is the only thing left as a sense of collective will. Thus, we witness wild growth in inequality, the systematic humiliation of the weakest, the abuse of non-democratic powers (beginning with economic power), against which the State is powerless, and without there being the slightest revolt or indignation. The reduction of human experience to economic life has become second nature. A second nature that comes from a world constructed in the 1980s, offering no alternative, and founded *on the uncritical admiration for unfettered markets, disdain for the public sector, the delusion of endless growth*.

Judt quotes Adam Smith in reaffirming the destructive nature of a culture that uncritically admires wealth. *The largest and more universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments*. He describes the

¹ The text is inspired by the article of the author himself, that was published in *El País – Babelia*, on 23rd October 2010

blindness of the world we live in, where an increase in global wealth hides disparities in income distribution, breaks down social mobility, and destroys the mutual trust that is so essential for bringing sense to life in society. And the key to its success is the triad of insecurity, fear and mistrust which are used as a basis for a system of domination. The question running through Judt's book is: why is it so hard to find an alternative? And this leads us to the combined effects of conservative ideological hegemony and globalisation. The economy has globalised, but politics remains local and national. Politics should find empathy in a citizenry, the vast majority of which experiences life at local and national levels. But instead of reinforcing this link, politics has become blurred in its resigned acceptance of the limits of what is possible, as defined by the markets.

For Tony Judt, the big problem is the moral vacuum. We cannot continue evaluating our world and deciding on the necessary options without moral reference points and judgments. It is only through these that we can rebuild confidence. And trust is necessary for everything to function properly - even the markets. The author refers to another leading figure of the great liberal tradition, John Stuart Mill, in setting out an unequivocal position: "The notion of a society in which the only connections are the relationships and feelings arising from financial interest is something that is essentially repulsive."

No melancholic discourse of the past emerges from a critique of the construction of hegemony, which dates from the 1908s. It is clear that in the 30 years following the end of the Second World War, citizens in the U.S. and democratic Europe experienced the best social conditions ever known. But this was the privilege of a select group of countries that had found the right balance between *social innovation and cultural conservatism*. The riots of the late 1960s that broke the moral and cultural parameters of those years unconsciously paved the way for the radicalisation of individualism that in turn would lead to the conservative revolution of the 1980s. Then came the West's vain reaction to the fall of Soviet-type regimes. History is over, they said, as though Marx's promise of replacing policy with administration had arisen from the defeat of communism itself.

The Left was rendered speechless, while the Right focused on discrediting the State. And so we continue - with no alternative. Can democracy survive long in the culture of indifference? *Participating in Government not only increases the collective sense of responsibility for everything the Government does; it also preserves the integrity of those in power and keeps authoritarian excesses at bay*. Along the way, we have lost the idea of equality. Without it, the social discourse becomes blurred. So, what should be done? Rethinking the state, restructuring the public debate, rejecting the misleading idea that we all want the same thing, and looking again at William Beveridge's old question: *Under what conditions is living possible and rewarding for men in general*.

While politicians on the Left quietly advocate social democracy, for Tony Judt it was the only adequate approach, because today's main issue is inequality. Thus, social democracy needs to work for the prestige of the State, reconstruct its own language and find a moral tale. Injustice, inequality, unfairness, immorality... social democracy used to have the language for talking about these issues,

but it gave it up. Judt says that we are emerging from two lost decades, between the selfish amorality of Thatcher and Reagan and the Atlantic self-sufficiency of Clinton and Blair. And there is no assurance that we will not continue that way. Judt refers to Tolstoy in warning us that *there are no living conditions that a man cannot become accustomed to - especially if he sees that everyone around him accepts them.*

Biography note

Josep RAMONEDA is journalist, philosopher and Spanish writer. Nowadays he is director of the Centre of Contemporary Culture of Barcelona and collaborates with El País newspaper and Cadena Ser. He is also president of the Institut de Recherche et Innovation of París and directs the collections "Philosophical texts" of Edicions 62. He was the director of the Institute of Humanities (1986-1989), collaborator of La Vanguardia (1980-1996) and teacher of contemporary philosophy in the Autonomous University of Barcelona (1975-1990). He has published numerous books, between which can be emphasized Apology of the present (Editions Peninsula, Barcelona 1989) and After the political passion (Taurus, Madrid 1999).

Against left wing conformism¹



René CUPERUS

Who ignores the scars of the 20th century, will fail

'In a new age of fear and insecurity, we are abandoning the labors of a century and betraying those who came before us.'

Romantic souls can understand the feeling of loss, decline and failure, expressed in this quote by Tony Judt in his intellectual testament, *"Ill Fares the Land"*. They share his criticism of selfishness, insipid materialism and lack of culture of the past decades – *the selfish decades* – as Judt described them. The more pragmatic politicians and socially liberal technocrats will label Tony Judt's alarming statement a nostalgic and pessimistic pain in the neck.

More and more I can relate to the group of romantics, who feel that crucial parts of our historical legacy are being undermined. Even though I do not agree with Judt's rather old-fashioned praise of the 1950s welfare state, which in his book, mainly written for American students, takes a lot of pages. Moreover, his gloomy analysis of the Anglo-Saxon socio-economic situation and political culture cannot be transferred one-to-one to European continental countries, such as the Netherlands, where taxation, despite the neoliberal era, is still conceived as a civilised contribution to society. Furthermore, I really don't like Judt's concept of a *social democracy of fear*. That notion is both a monster in terms of ideology and marketing technique. One should never build a leftwing, progressive political project on fear. In my view, this expression is a big mistake. Hence, I am less impressed by Judt being a political theoretician, but much by his diagnosis as a cultural historian. Both dimensions are inextricably linked in *"Ill Fares the Land"*.

First of all, the former director of the Remarque Institute in New York has written a moving book.

¹ Tony Judt's pamphlet against leftwing conformism

He had to dictate it. Tony Judt suffered from the incurable muscular disease ALS and was no longer able to write the book by himself. Only his brain was still free to move. Like some sort of Stephen Hawking of the liberal arts he dictated his intellectual will to an assistant. The result is an improvising, passionate and controversial book, fundamentally opposed to the *Zeitgeist*. It is the uncompromising diagnosis of discomfort by a classic leftwing intellectual who looks back on his own life and the scars of the 20th century.

According to Judt, the world lost its direction at some point during the 1970s. He believes that the ideals of the post-war era – progress, a better world, collective improvement and fight against inequality – were swept away by a culture of greed, narcissism and market confusion. This applies in particular to the Anglo-Saxon world and the countries willing to adopt this model.

Tony Judt addresses young people in particular. With passion he shows them that the world they live in is not the only possible one. The world has not always been so selfish, materialistic and career-oriented. Politicians have not always been spineless anti-intellectuals. The world did not always blindly follow global casino-capitalism. Not always have people been so indifferent towards the grotesque growth of inequality. And not always were human beings subordinated to blind efficiency thinking.

How the hippies paved the way for neo-liberalism

Judt refers to the Golden Age between 1945 and 1975 – the period he dedicated his famous opus magnum *Post War. A History of Europe since 1945* to. This era was characterised by a social democratic consensus. After the horrors of war, political ideas were re-examined. The liberal rule of law and the christian democrat and social democrat welfare state were the natural cornerstones of many Western societies. As we all know, Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher destroyed this consensus with their neoliberal Washington doctrine. Both heads of state declared war to the basic idea of the communitarian welfare state society. A privatisation and self-enrichment cult destroyed the ideal of a solidary society. What started as a management approach to solving a financial crisis of the post-war welfare state became a fundamental paradigm shift, influenced amongst other factors by the processes of secularisation and individualisation.

The author meticulously analyses the failure, active involvement or even collaboration of the Left during the *selfish decades*. Above all, his own, spoiled baby-boomer generation has to face criticism. According to Judt, the generation of protest movements, the hippies of the 1960s, has undermined the fundamental values of Western society out of ignorance and narcissistic identity politics. The cultural liberalism of the 1960s and 1970s had become the sorcerer's apprentice of economic neo-liberalism. This turned us into politically and economically disoriented consumers. Leftwing politicians

had given up their ideals which they had not followed. In particular, Judt names Bill Clinton and Tony Blair as left-wing baby-boomers without ideological foundations.

Until here, Judt's argumentation is scholarly and sharp, but at the same time, we are confronted with a slightly clichéd social democratic pamphlet against the hegemony of neo-liberalism. According to Judt, this hegemony has led to the apocalypse of the international financial crisis. However, neo-Liberalism has, surprisingly, not suffered a political support and image problem as the dominant political paradigm – which is frustrating and humiliating for social democrats. It even gets worse: the neoliberal ideological slogan - *the government is not the solution, but the problem* - seems to reach its climax in the contemporary post-crisis period. Everywhere, politicians react to the financial-economic crisis by cutting jobs in administration and the public sector – from Greece to the Netherlands. This was reflected in election manifestos and the political discourse of recent election campaigns. In particular, progressive-minded forces such as the social-liberal parties or The Greens support the new aftershock-momentum for reform and slimming down welfare state institutions for “the new generations”. This is an example of *progressive reformist politics* identifying trade unions and their voter base as their enemy – and not the bonus-bankers. “How left are the progressives and how progressive is the Left?”, is one of the most pressing questions to be asked within the intra-left camp in Europe. It symbolises that the negative attitude towards the welfare state has survived the “*déconfiture*” of neo-liberalism. For Tony Judt, this is part of the big scandal.

“Volksangst” or fear from the people

Judt's book offers much more than its assault on market fundamentalist neo-liberalism. For example, phrases and aphorisms one can immediately fall in love with. In my view, his book is above all a pamphlet against spineless conformism, against an indifferent and vague uniform way of thinking that is controlling our world. *Why do we experience such difficulty even imagining a different kind of society? (...) We need people who make a virtue of opposing mainstream opinion.* Judt examines a double conformism: First of all, there exists “populist fear”² – many politicians fear public opinion as produced by the mass media and by polls. It makes them slaves of a populist illusion. Secondly, and equally problematic, is the uncritical adaptation to technocratic administrative elites. These experts present us political decisions as apolitical questions in which ordinary citizens should not interfere. *We need to relearn how to criticize those who govern us. But in order to do so with credibility we have to liberate ourselves from the circle of conformity into which we, like they, are trapped,* Judt writes. This is even more important as we realised that the ‘all knowing emperor of the economy’ did not wear any clothes during the financial crisis. The emperor was all naked.

Until today we are made to believe that there exists only one model of the new global world order, only one realistic and feasible future. The “*pensée unique*” of *There is No Alternative* is still very

² Volksangst

dominant within circles of the international policy makers in OECD, the European Commission or other meta-technocratic institutions. This attitude is fundamentally wrong, and the Left, in particular, needs to have the democratic courage for fighting this neo-liberal, technocratic uniform discourse. Judt's harsh judgement: *Shorn of a story to tell, social democrats and their liberal and Democratic fellows have been on the defensive for a generation, apologizing for their own policies and altogether unconvincing when it comes to criticizing those of their opponents.* The Left still has not found a proper alternative. In particular, Judt criticises the assumption that all members of society should want the same. *It has become commonplace to assert that we all want the same thing, we just have slightly different ways of going about it.* The author shows in a very simple and refreshing manner how to negate the complexity and potential for conflict within societies. *The rich do not want the same thing as the poor. Those who depend on their job for their livelihood do not want the same thing as those who live off investments and dividends. Those who do not need public services – because they can purchase private transport, education and protection – do not seek the same thing as those who depend exclusively on the public sector.*

However, Judt goes much further. Looking back at 20th century history, he is expressing a strong sense of urgency. One of the most important passages of the book is supposed to put us on alert:

We have entered an age of fear. Insecurity is once again an active ingredient of political life in Western democracies. Insecurity born of terrorism, but also, and more insidiously, fear of the uncontrollable speed of change, fear of the loss of employment, fear of losing ground to others in an increasingly unequal distribution of resources, fear of losing control of the circumstances and routines of our daily life. And, perhaps above all, fear that it is not just we who can no longer shape our lives but that those in authority have also lost control, to forces beyond their reach.

Tony Judt believes that today's 'elites' are playing with fire, misunderstanding the experience our ancestors went through during the dangerous 20th century and laconically negating all of its negative impact. I have expressed the same opinion in my book *"De wereldburger bestaat niet. Waarom de opstand der elite de samenleving ondermijnt"* (The cosmopolitan, global citizen does not exist. Why the revolt of the elite undermines society)³. Judt draws a parallel between today's attitude of risky arrogance and the beginning phase of globalisation of the *"Belle Époque"*, when affluence was skyrocketing, to be followed by the trenches-genocide of the First World War. *Today, it is as though the 20th century never happened,* Judt warns. *Once more, we believe that globalisation and integrated global capitalism are unavoidable and welcome, natural processes. Globalisation is with us to stay, a natural process rather than a human choice. The ineluctable dynamic of global economic competition and integration has become the illusion of the age.* Against the background of his historical knowledge, Judt fears the collapse of this illusion and its political and social consequences. *We have entered an age of insecurity – economic insecurity, physical insecurity, political insecurity. The fact that we are largely unaware of this small comfort: few in 1914 predicted the utter collapse of their world and the economic and political*

3 R. Cuperus, *De Wereldburger Bestaat Niet. Waarom de opstand der elite de samenleving ondermijnt*, Amsterdam, 2009, Bert Bakker. Under consideration for English translation at Policy Press, London.

catastrophes that followed. Insecurity breeds fear. And fear – fear of change, fear of decline, fear of strangers and an unfamiliar world – is corroding the trust and interdependence on which civil societies rest.

Is our materialistic consumer paradise robust enough to survive the strong forces of history, forces that are re-appearing after the numbness of the post-war era? (Follow the vehement debate on Thilo Sarrazin in Germany around his statement that “Deutschland muss Deutschland bleiben” (Germany must remain Germany). Which moral compass and which social ideals can our post-religious, post social democratic world offer in times of fear and insecurity? In my opinion, those are the core questions of *“Ill Fares the Land”*. Tony Judt cannot be praised too much for confronting the young generation with these ‘old-fashioned’ questions that are relevant for all societies: *As citizens of a free society, we have a duty to look critically at our world.* The reason is that younger people have adopted very few intellectual and moral principles from their parents - the spoilt, narcissist and progressive generation of baby-boomers.

Tony Judt advocates the return of an “ethically informed public debate” which shall replace our economic thinking. “A successful mix of social innovation and cultural conservatism” has got lost. According to Judt, it is precisely this combination that his great hero, the economist John Maynard Keynes, symbolises. The “Keynesian consensus” which during the post-war period helped to prevent social breakup, insecurity, fear and hate offered security and protection in the shape of a *social security state*. By this means, the middle classes which had embraced Fascism due to a feeling of resentment and fear of social decline became part of the welfare state consensus.

Judt’s solution for the present fear and insecurity is a rehabilitation of social democracy - also to confront rightwing populism. The author characterises social democracy as an instrument against insecurity, as a moderate force, as a movement that polishes the sharp edges of conflict and the grotesque inequality within our society. He defends this social democracy with verve. According to Judt, social democracy needs to re-evaluate the national welfare state because only nation states are able to protect citizens from global capitalism. *In the meantime we should have understood that politics remains national, even if the economy does not.* Judt does not agree with *rootless cosmopolitans* who, with their transnational knowledge, live in *gates communities*, hiding from the local society. *This rootless cosmopolitanism might be right for intellectuals, but most people live at a fixed location.*

Judt advocates *a workable scope of a community of trust*. Trust, social cohesion and community spirit grow best in egalitarian and homogeneous societies like the social welfare states in the North-Western part of Europe. These countries should be a source of inspiration and an example for the generation of baby-boomers who suffer from narcissistic arrogance and the loss of historical memory, but also for the more competitive but unfair Anglo-Saxon model. This is the message Tony Judt wanted to share with us when he sat paralysed in his wheel chair.

“Ill Fares the Land” is a memorial of the 20th century. It is a moving testament of wisdom and

moderate social democracy. Tony Judt tries to go beyond something that I have labelled the 'double secularisation' of the Left: first the secularisation of the Christian belief during the 1960s and 1970s; and secondly the secularisation of the progressive way of life during the neo-liberal 1990s. Tony Judt tries to make us sensible again for a path of leftwing neo-idealism. Neo-idealism which, symbolised in the thinking of his hero Keynes, strikes a balance between progressivism and conservatism, between reform and historical legacy. Confirming this statement by Gavin Kelly and Nick Pearce: *Beyond eco-conservatism, the centre-left hasn't worked out the strands of conservative thinking that should form a core part of its political identity in the 21st century. Only when it finds a sure footing on this territory will it find a way of responding to some of the cultural concerns of the electorate that currently find expression in hostility to immigration.*⁴

I finish with a beautiful phrase by Tony Judt: *Without idealism, politics is reduced to a form of social accounting, the day-to-day administration of men and things. This is something that a conservative can survive well enough. But for the Left it is a catastrophe.*

Biography note

René CUPERUS, Drs., is Director for International Relations and Senior Research Fellow at the Wiardi Beckman Foundation, think tank of the Dutch Labour Party/PvdA. He writes a blog for the LSE-linked Social Europe Journal, www.social-europe.eu and wrote a column for De Volkskrant. His latest book is *De Wereldburger bestaat niet. Waarom de opstand der elites de samenleving ondermijnt* (Bert Bakker, 2009, under consideration for English translation at Polity, London). For many years, he was Editor-in-Chief of *Socialisme & Democratie*, the theoretical monthly for Dutch social-democracy. He was a member of the international team 'Adjusting the Profile of Social Democracy' of the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung; member of the Scientific Committee of the Paris-based think tank Terra Nova and active within Policy Network (London) and the Foundation for European Progressive Studies (FEPS) in Brussels. He co-founded the Berlin-based "Forum Scholars for European Social Democracy". His current research interests are the rise of right- and left wing populism in Europe; the malaise of the European Project and the multiethnic transformation of societies. He was a member of the Basic Values Commission, the European Policy Review Commission and the Parliamentary Selection Committee of the PvdA and served as senior policy adviser to the Chairman of the PvdA, as well as to the Party's Parliamentary Group. He holds degrees in political and cultural history and cultural anthropology from the Universities of Groningen and Lisbon, and gives guest lectures at the Universities of Rotterdam, Tilburg and Maastricht.

⁴ G. Kelly and N. Pearce, *Wanted: an old, new left*, [in:] *Prospect*, 13-9-2010,



Queries



03

Courage for Change

Without idealism, politics is reduced to a form of social accounting, to the day to day administration of men and things wrote Tony Judt in *"Ill Fares the Land"*. He believed that at this point in time social democrats lack both the idealism, as also the courage. This he found imperative to be retrieved by the progressives in order to enable them to win a leading position in a moral debate. But how to learn from the recent past, when there are so many assessments of it within the movement? How to break through being just the *prose of contemporary European politics* and to communicate our vision in a credible manner all around the globe? These challenges are being tackled by **Roger LIDDLE**, **Oscar LANDERRETCHÉ** and **Cornel BAN**, who write on how to benefit from Tony Judt's testament to rediscover courage, revive passion and reach out for new dreams.

Courage of conviction



Roger LIDDLE

"Ill Fares the Land"

Tony Judt's brilliantly written and passionately argued last will and testament speaks to social democrats everywhere. In this essay I would like to address Judt's central thesis: that European social democracy has lost the moral courage of its convictions, that the way forward for the future is a reassertion of egalitarianism in face of mounting inequalities, and that this requires an attempt to rebuild the nation state social democracy of the post war "golden age" with a re-energised welfare state that our national electorates can cling onto as the last best hope of addressing the growing insecurities of a globalised world. I do this from a British, pro-European perspective of someone who committed himself wholeheartedly to New Labour and is now trying to make a balanced assessment of both its considerable strengths as well as its failings so that social democrats can learn the right lessons for the future.

As British Labour party members lick our wounds after Labour's second worst defeat since 1945, Tony Judt's "cri de couer" that social democracy has lost its soul undoubtedly resonates with. Labour's mood is not one of anger against its government: this is not like 1970 and 1979, when Labour previously lost office. Rather there is a quiet pride in what New Labour achieved under the Blair and Brown Governments: saving the NHS, bringing in a national minimum wage, attacking pensioner and child poverty, renewing the public realm, promoting equalities, leading on international development. It's a long list of achievement, capped by the decisive action Gordon Brown took in the global crisis of 2008 to avoid a return to a 1930s Depression.

But inner pride is coupled with a sense of deep disappointment. As newly elected Labour Leader, Tony Blair generated massive enthusiasm, not just as a man who could make Labour safe and

electable, but as someone with a vision for reform of his country that was morally appealing and bold. He inspired the highest of hopes and made millions look at Labour afresh. That mood did not last. It was not just that far more could have been achieved if Labour had used its huge Parliamentary majorities for more radical purposes, but that in the end Labour completely failed to mobilize public opinion, still less build any kind of popular movement, for a fairer, more decent society.

New Labour did proclaim a bold mission of reform in public services. It made progress in raising standards, diversifying provision and offering choice to those who could never afford to “go private” in education and health. However, there was no compelling narrative of social justice to offset the steady chipping away of support that the daily grind of government brings. Rather the reverse was true. Labour alienated the public with what the historians, David Marquand¹ and Peter Clarke, have described as a “mechanical” rather than “moral” approach to reform. New Labour in government pushed and pulled at the Whitehall levers which its Parliamentary majorities at Westminster supposedly gave its Ministers control over. It treated the British public services rather in the way Gosplan hoped to transform the Soviet economy. The nostrums of new public management theory had gained sway under the neo liberal influences of the Thatcher era. However New Labour’s whole paraphernalia of “delivery” - with its profusion of top down targets, service standards, quasi- markets, independent regulators, multi area agreements, specific grants and incentives and “earned autonomy”, took faith in benevolent managerialism to a new and higher level. This was all done for the best of motives, but ended up being counterproductive. Instead of transforming the dedication of public employees (in a typology that the LSE’s Julian Le Grand invented²) into ever more “knightly” efforts on behalf of the public they serve, it encouraged the mentality of the “knave” in ticking boxes, playing by the rules and working the system. Swing voters concluded that the additional billions Labour spent on public services were frittered away in bureaucracy and waste, particularly the skilled and white collar workers whose support Labour lost in the electorally decisive south and midlands, as Patrick Diamond and Giles Radice explain in their Policy Network pamphlet “Southern Discomfort Again”³. The correct conclusion is not simply that New Labour failed to reform enough; but that it lacked the ability to make a moral case for the changes in public services it was trying to bring about and explain them in a wider context of how it wanted to transform society.

The truth of this struck me when after a gap of forty years, I re-read RH Tawney, the leading mid twentieth century sage of British social democracy. Just reflect on this passage from “*The Radical Tradition*” first published in 1949⁴.

Civilization is a matter not of quantity of possessions, but of quality of life. It is judged not by the output of goods and services per head, but by the use which is made of them. A society which values public welfare above private display; which makes the first charge on its resources the establishment for all of the conditions

1 D. Marquand, *The Progressive Dilemma*

2 J. Le Grand, *Knights and Knaves*

3 P. Diamond and G. Radice, *Southern Discomfort Again*, Policy Network 2010

4 R. H. Tawney, *The Radical Tradition*

for a vigorous and self respecting existence; which gives a high place to the activities of the spirit and the services that promote them; which holds that the most important aspect of human beings is not the external differences of income and circumstance that divide them but the common humanity that unites them, and which strives therefore to reduce such differences to the position of insignificance that rightly belongs to them, such a society may be far from what it could be, but it has at least set its face towards the light.

Tawney's language may appear dated, but the moral passion he expresses speaks to the inadequacies of our present day discourse. Yet his sentiments are more relevant today than they were half a century ago. Gross inequalities have once again become acceptable and the excesses of conspicuous consumption have returned: yet our economy flounders in a mountain of debt as a result of the vain attempts to keep up of those who can ill-afford it. There is no longer an automatic confidence that faster economic growth will deliver "well being" for those trapped in "lousy" jobs⁵. The processes of individualisation (of which gender equality is a very positive subset) have advanced in step with the idea that there is no higher purpose to our human existence than personal gratification. While I support the idea of each individual's entitlement to self-fulfillment, we have lost any clear conception of "the good life" and it is distinctly unfashionable in this moral relativist age to advocate it. And in our society which is characterised by all forms of diversity, which sections of our solid citizenry find as disturbing as liberal cosmopolitans find attractive, we need a stronger sense than ever of what makes for our common humanity.

In the 1990s New Labour did try to articulate a new political language that was more than about materialism and GDP. Prior to 1997 Tony Blair is remembered principally for persuading Labour to come to terms with the market economy through his re-writing of Clause Four. But to do this, he expressed his real convictions in terms of solidarity, partnership and community. Unlike Margaret Thatcher he stood for something called "society" as against the creeping reach of doctrinal neo liberalism. He even on occasion criticised excessive pay awards for privatized utility chief executives. But despite the pre-1997 eloquence of his belief in "community", the extent of his failure to carry this idea through into practice is brought home by David Cameron's success in promoting the concept of the "Big Society" as his big idea. In government New Labour did argue, rightly in my view, for "rights and responsibilities", but it was one sided in execution. As part of what was seen as the only possible compromise between social democracy and globalization, the social obligations of big business and the better off were never spelt out, while those of the unemployed, welfare recipient and juvenile offender were.

I believed strongly – and still do believe - that social democracy has to work closely in partnership with business. But it is a responsible form of capitalism that social democrats ought to foster, not singing hymns of praise to deregulated financial markets, where Gordon Brown was equally at fault.

⁵ Goos and Manning, *Lovely and Lousy Jobs*

Of course a flourishing entrepreneurial and innovative culture requires an acceptance of unequal incentives and an avoidance of penal taxation, but it does not mean that wealth however gained is legitimate. The 2008 crisis has reminded us that what happened was far more than technical failure of regulation: capitalism with the wrong values can result in catastrophic market failure. Also, as Tony Giddens has argued⁶, our response to climate change involves a return to planning in some form. Having broken with Labour's statist past, Tony Blair and Gordon Brown proved unable to get right the necessary balance between the market and the state. In 2008 Gordon Brown to his credit recognized that there had to be change, even though in its attitudes to the banks after the crisis, the government often looked uncertain as to which way to turn, perhaps understandably given the huge conflict of objectives it then faced. But Tony Blair appears from his memoirs even to reject the necessary adjustment to New Labour thinking that Gordon Brown and Peter Mandelson then made⁷.

Tony Judt then is right: social democracy has to re-discover a more confident moral voice. But there are risks in pitching that voice as a backward looking lament for the strong welfare states of some presumed post war "golden age". As a child of that golden age, with a father who was a railway clerk and no one in the family had ever been to university, it was a good time for clever grammar school boys to win scholarships to Oxford on a full grant. But opportunities for girls were still then more limited. My abiding memory of school days was the children in the class who had been told by their parents not to bother with the 11 plus, because by starting work at 15 (forget even becoming an apprentice – that didn't earn decent money!) they could make the quickest possible contribution to the family finances. This lack of aspiration has cost Britain dearly in talent.

Of course "post war" was a lot better for working people than "pre-war", not just because of the Beveridge welfare state, but because with the coming of full employment, employers had lost the whip hand in the labour market. It became the heyday of "you've never had it so good" for the affluent worker in the mass manufacturing society. Nevertheless the relative exigency of the UK state pension by comparison with its Continental counterparts and the patchiness of additional occupational pension provision, particularly among blue collar workers, meant that old age remained for many a time of unwelcome means-testing and real hardship, especially for elderly widows. One of Gordon Brown's great unsung achievements as Labour Chancellor was greatly to reduce poverty in old age.

However one of the weaknesses of Tony Judt is that he fails to understand that the welfare state

⁶ T. Giddens, *The Politics of Climate Change*, Polity Cambridge 2009

⁷ T. Blair, *A Journey*, Hutchinson, London 2010

needs much more than a post Beveridge patch-up. Social and economic change makes a fundamental rethink inevitable. The impact of globalisation and technology on the labour market has been to reverse the shift in the balance of power that characterized the post war years. We need much more than nostalgia for a more comfortable past to work out how the present realities of free capital mobility, ever more rapid technological change and mass migration can be managed to produce better quality job opportunities and a more favourable income distribution for the bottom half of the workforce. The Third Way response of better equipping people for change through investment in human capital and active labour market policies is clearly not a sufficient answer to the dilemma, even it remains a necessary one.

At the same time the welfare state faces new costly demands- not just those of greater life expectancy and the growth in numbers of frail and vulnerable elderly, but the new social risks of poverty such as the prevalence of relationship breakdown or the redundancy of skills, once highly valued as for life, that now can be overtaken in mid career by technological advance or rapidly changing consumer preferences. Without radical innovation in the way public services are delivered, the rising costs of highly labour intensive activities will become an unsupportable drag on future welfare state sustainability. The Achilles heel of the Nordic model could well be that rising demand and costs come up against a tax constraint, forcing a rethink of traditional notions of entitlement and universality. Then if Europe is serious about tackling climate change, there appears no alternative to much higher energy prices and huge life style change, not just militating against the materialism of the traditional social democratic attachment to better living standards for working people, but particularly threatening to middle income families who have fled the cities for the freedoms and security of the new outer suburbs and country towns, and a car-dependent way of life.

If social democracy is to recommit to a new offer of security for all through a re-energised welfare state, it must find acceptable solutions to these objective realities. Not only that, it has to define a new concept of fairness that will stand the test of public acceptability in a more fractured, diverse and individualistic society where the public discourse is dominated by tales of scroungers, welfare cheats and migrants jumping the queue. For social democrats to be crystal clear what they think is fair and unfair is not to bend the knee to media driven right wing fantasies. It is essential if popular support for a modern welfare state is to be rebuilt. Bill Clinton recognized this truth with his notorious soundbite that he would “end welfare as we know it”. The welfare reforms Congress eventually implemented were harsher than Clinton himself would have wanted because they had to be negotiated with Republican Congressional leadership. But a big regret about the New Labour years is that Labour did promise to “think the unthinkable” about the welfare state and then backed away. Now that in Britain the Conservative- Liberal Democrat Coalition is pressing ahead with welfare reforms led by the former Conservative Leader, Iain Duncan Smith, it would be a mistake for Labour simply to condemn what is proposed. That would be a politically easy but mistaken course. The

challenge for Labour is to advocate a financially viable alternative reform strategy that it can argue is genuinely fairer.

Rebuilding a new politics of the welfare state will not be easy for social democrats, but Judt is right to set us the challenge. And Judt is also right that it will require a re-assertion of the values of the nation state in social democratic thinking and the capacity of democratic politics at national level to make a real difference. Globalisation does not make this impossible as the resilience of the reformed Nordic model shows.

The welfare state was a crucial part of national pride and identity. Bismarck recognized this when he backed the extension of social insurance in Imperial Germany. In Britain the high point of Labourism was the post war Attlee Government which implemented the welfare state reforms that the Beveridge Report had proposed in 1942 in the middle of wartime. The report's publication generated enormous popular enthusiasm. It became the most powerful symbol of a remarkable cross-class "social patriotism" that saw victory in the war not just as defeating Nazi evil, but ensuring that the mistakes of the inter war years were never repeated. The "guilty men" of the 1930s stood condemned for both appeasement abroad and mass unemployment at home.

Can social democrats in Europe's nation states build a new national progressive consensus for a re-energised welfare state? Pessimists will argue that a welfare state consensus was much easier to build when a society faced an existential challenge like wartime Britain or the task of reconstruction in post war West Germany. In addition Robert Putnam's argument has gained traction that as societies become more diverse, ethnically and culturally, it is more difficult to maintain an ethic of solidarity. There is also another concern that rising inequality in a world of increasing globalization detaches our society's elites from the daily lives of most citizens. Indeed the reference point for the elite has often ceased to be their own country: a new global upper class is emerging. Yet the success of social democracy has historically depended on co-opting the elite into a least a grudging willingness to embrace reforms – accepting change in order to stay as we are.

But to accept these arguments is a counsel of despair. European societies face several existential threats that should offer social democracy in Europe much needed opportunities for political renewal. These threats all have their origin in the shifting global balance of power.

First, Europe needs to find a sustainable growth model for economic prosperity and social cohesion as a result of the after-shocks of the global economic crisis of 2008, the startling rise of Asia, and the continuing economic weakness of the United States. This can only be a more explicitly social democratic version of the EU's Lisbon Agenda of 2000, but combining a market liberal drive for faster innovation with more concern for rising inequality, tighter financial regulation, stronger corporate governance reform, and new policies for education, training and the labour market aimed not simply at raising employment participation, but at creating better paid and better quality job opportunities

for those with lower level skills. Centre Right parties are already trying to move onto this territory. However they are in hock to financial market orthodoxy and lack a clear strategy for an investment based return to growth within a disciplined fiscal framework. Their fundamental divisions between consensus-minded practical men and women of power on the one hand, and ideologically driven neo-liberal small-staters on the other, will create new openings for social democracy.

Secondly, while the immediate pressure for action on climate change has slackened as a result of the recession in the developed world, the pace of Asian expansion will bring the issue back with renewed urgency before long. The only basis for global consensus is that those who have done most to create the problem in the first place must demonstrate the greatest willingness to change their ways. That means principally Europe and the United States, with Europe inevitably forced to take a lead, given the higher level of commitment in Europe to act and the dysfunctionality of US domestic politics. That in turn will lay the basis for a renewal of Red-Green politics in Europe as social justice is the only viable long term basis for environmental sustainability.

Thirdly, the world is becoming a more dangerous place with a high risk of nuclear proliferation as well as the growth of religious extremism and violent reactions to Western culture. These global power shifts and clashes of culture challenge the complacent view that the European social model is the pinnacle so far attained of human intellectual and social achievement. This challenge provides a powerful pressure for Europe to demonstrate an essential, but so far lacking, external unity of purpose. Internally it requires defeating the politics of race and cultural conflict which define the new populist parties of the Right. If the Centre Right tries to embrace this populist politics for its own electoral gain, as it may, it will disillusion the centre ground and create new opportunities to build new progressive alliances on the Left.

These three external pressures offer social democrats the possibility of a comeback. But one has only to describe the opportunity in this way to demonstrate that nation state social democracy cannot adequately respond to these opportunities on its own. A vital and unavoidable dimension is a new social democratic politics for the European Union in which we share a common destiny as partners. In Britain, although the vast majority of Labour Party members are now instinctively pro-Europe, we have yet to incorporate the reality of the EU into our politics and our way of thinking. In the recent leadership election, none of the candidates presented a positive programme for the EU, not even as an optional add-on, though it has to be a central part of their political mission.

The reason of course is that voters in Britain – and increasingly in other parts of the EU - don't like the EU very much. And this is even truer of many newspaper outlets who determine our parties' ability to get our general political message across to the public. So we push to the



back of our minds the enormous practical significance of our EU membership. For example in Britain we neglect to explain to our supporters that the UK economy is wholly integrated into the European Single Market and that any growth policy for Britain will only work properly if there is a complementary growth policy in the rest of Europe, and especially the Euro area with which our economic future is bound. The present conjuncture of each Member State outdoing each other in stringency in order to gain competitive advantage for a bigger share of sluggish EU growth is doomed to failure. More positively, we talk about building a new economic model for Britain, or a “moral” economy, but if we want tighter financial regulation and new corporate governance rules, what happens at EU level is crucial. Similarly, in order to best protect our welfare state from spending cuts in this age of austerity, the social democratic capacity to raise taxation without running the risk of a flight of companies overseas, could be greatly enhanced by tax coordination at EU level and the introduction of EU wide taxes on carbon consumption and financial transactions. And of course if we are serious about managing migration, how we promote growth in the dismally poor – and getting poorer - parts of the EU whose citizens want to leave – for example through the Structural Funds – and how we enforce migration controls at the EU common border, should be matters of great British concern.

The problem is that we still play politics as if it is still a wholly national game. And of course by exaggerating what nation states can do, and underplaying how important in reality the EU now is, in shaping the possibilities of politics, in the long run we do politics itself, and our own legitimacy with the voters, a great disservice. This matters a lot less for the Conservatives in Britain because they position themselves as sceptics about Europe anyway (though in government they will find that this stance comes up uncomfortably against reality). But Labour takes both the electoral hit for being pro-Europe and fails to demonstrate how a positive social democratic policy for the EU can be. Yet Europe while never the whole answer to our current problems and dilemmas, has to be a vital component of social democracy’s new forward offer. Tony Judt, like many Labour members, shows little appreciation of that.

I have written this essay from a British perspective. But the British situation is not “sui generis”. Social democracy flounders across Europe. 29% for British Labour in May 2010 was 23% for the SPD in September 2009. And in Sweden, the “mansion house” of European social democracy has fallen for an unprecedented second time to the Centre Right bloc, with right wing anti immigrant populism rearing its ugly head and winning traditional Social Democrat votes as it has done in so many other EU Member States.



European social democracy has to think anew. The challenge is do what New Labour did for time – to be electable and to inspire. The best memorial to Tony Judt would be to demonstrate how we can do this better next time.

Biography note

Roger LIDDLE is chair of Policy Network and a Labour member of the House of Lords. He is also chair of Cumbria Vision, a sub-regional public-private development partnership., Roger chaired the UK government's New Industry, New Jobs, Universities and Skills advisory panel (2009-2010). He was until October 2007 economic adviser to the European Commission president Jose Manuel Barroso and for seven years from 1997 special adviser on European affairs to then British Prime Minister, Tony Blair. Roger has written extensively on European and British affairs and appears regularly across a variety of media platforms. He is the author of numerous publications, including *The Blair Revolution* (with Peter Mandelson, 1996), *Global Europe, Social Europe* (with Anthony Giddens and Patrick Diamond, 2006) and *Beyond New Labour* (with Patrick Diamond, 2009). He has also co-authored two papers for the President of the Commission's thinktank, the Bureau of European Policy Advisers, on "Europe's Social Reality" (February 2007) and the "Single Market: Yesterday and Tomorrow" (July 2006), alongside several other Fabian Society and Policy Network pamphlets.

Space between dreams



Oscar LANDERRETCHÉ

Dreaming of El Dorado

It is troubling to talk about the challenge of inequality and recovery of the public good that Judt outlined for future social democrats in his final words when one is a Latin American. After all, one speaks as a progressive who comes from the most unequal region of the world; where inequality has profound historic roots and is deeply engraved in race; where injustice has a troubling and exhausting persistence that has resisted the most varied and original political projects, with only the visible exception of those (very few) countries that have sacrificed for a long and painful time their political liberties. One is talking from a region where, in a very profound sense, social democrats, democratic socialists and many types of revolutionaries have failed miserably time and again. That is not the case of Europe, whatever the future challenges might be.

The reasons for this failure exceed the space of this article and probably vary from country to country, but have one common root: the seemingly unavoidable addiction of progressive forces of the region to political short cuts for long historical processes involving substantial collective and individual sacrifice, slow and methodical institution building, as well as professional politics and rigorous activism. All over the continent, the hard and exhausting work of knitting together the construction of a more equal society with civil liberties has been usually avoided and replaced by some rhetoric that offers a faster way, involving political drama and sometimes violence, but always accompanied by construction of heroic symbols and personality cults. It is as if we had inherited the “conquistadors” obsession with finding the city of gold: El Dorado; with the shortcut to power, wealth and glory, replacing the painstaking construction of industrial productivity and economic power. To our credit, these heroic symbols have become immensely powerful and have acquired

meaning for people all around the world. But any reader that is familiar with the history of the Latin American left will surely agree that the power of what they represent does not really have a concrete social effect to match their sonority. There are results, but they are few and of limited structural consequence. This uncomfortable truth seems pervasive, accompanying the story of the left for generations, from Juarez to Allende, from Lula to Bachelet, from Guevara to Zapata.

Recently when Alvaro Vargas Llosa was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature we were reminded of this: this obsession with a socialist El Dorado, which he writes of in *"Historia de Mayta"*. Vargas Llosa himself is exactly the result of these failures of the Latin American left: a brilliant socialist intellectual that quite simply got fed up with the search for El Dorado and decided to put his stock in with what he saw as a more viable and realistic force for modernizing Latin America: democratic liberalism rather than democratic socialism, and the free market rather than collectivist politics. Can we really blame him?

The recount of Nobel Prizes shows the region with sixteen laureates: two in medicine, two in chemistry, five in peace, and seven in literature, no physics and no economics. It seems that we are a civilization of poet politicians, capable of imagining the most amazing worlds but with a very limited capability of effectively shaping the actual reality around them. This form of frustrated idealism is something with which many like Vargas Llosa have got fed up over the years. It remains for the new generations of Latin American social democrats and socialists to prove that in the future we will overcome the world of rhetorical heroism into the difficult task of actually getting some structural transformations done.

The "European Dream"

Everybody is searching for the national equivalent of the "American Dream". It's ridiculous. I have seen it argued for Chile and Colombia, but I'm sure that someone has come up with this for other countries, including Europeans. It's too obvious.

The "American Dream" is of course one of the national ethos of the United States: the idea that their society should be organized to allow any individual the possibility of achieving happiness and success according to their merit and capabilities. Under the inspiration of the "American Dream", society organizes itself so that individuals can become whatever they want. The beauties and ugliness, the power and weakness, the miseries and glories of America are inexorably tied to that cult of the individual. The challenge of American humanists is to adapt that individualist ethos so that it is not violent as it sometimes has become, the challenge of American progressives is that equality has a place in the "American Dream".

From my perspective Europe has a history that reveals a different collective ethos, a different dream. Europe is the land of collective dreams. Europe is the place where every single possible

collective dream has been tried out, not rhetorically like in Latin America, but really. Europe has had the most varied and complex political experiments in the history of the world for a very long time. In fact the idea of a supranational identity that contains diverse collective (or national) political projects can be traced back as far as Ancient Greece and can be seen nowhere else in the world. Under the inspiration of the “European Dream”, supranational society organizes itself so that collectives can become whatever they want, be they nations, regional identities, religions or political groups. The beauties and ugliness, the power and weakness, the miseries and glories of Europe are inexorably tied to that cult of the heterogeneity of collective projects, to having tried out the most amazing ideas in practice with dead serious militancy. The challenge of European humanists is to adapt that collectivist ethos so that it is not violent as it sometimes has become, and the challenge of European progressives is that equality has a predominant place in the collective projects that Europeans try out.

In his last words, in my view, Tony Judt calls out to younger generations (he says so explicitly) to remember the “European Dream” and to remember the role of equality within it. In my view this means, today, to adhere to the idea that supranational society (currently the EU) should be organized to allow and induce heterogeneity of collective projects that pursue different interpretations of the collective good. In my view Judt is calling out for the recovery of the “European Dream”, and within it advocating for those collective projects that put equality as a collective objective. In a sense, when Judt advocates for these things he is advocating for what in my view is the essence of European identity.

Battle of Dreams

Latin America is the land where the two dreams have battled for some time and will continue to do so. Judt is right to identify which one is winning at the moment. Latin America is predominantly about economic growth right now and that inevitably brings the predominance of individuality as a social ethos. But that has not always been so and will not always be that way. Inequality and the lack of social mobility that it involves (and Judt documents) inevitably will bring collective interest back together in societies where injustice is so profound. So we will be back in collectivism pretty soon (some countries are already there, although far from the tolerant European collectivism). The challenge of the Latin American left may be to find a middle ground, to find a space between dreams; and in the same way that one should adapt that American Dream to contain its more ruthless and darwinian aspects; to understand the European dream as one of collectivism within heterogeneity, yes, but also of reality and hard work.

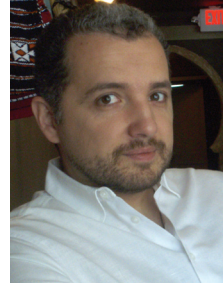
If Europe dreams again... it will certainly help.

Biography note

Oscar LANDERRETCHÉ is an assistant professor of economics at the Department of Economics of the University of Chile where he is regularly associated to the Intelis Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship as well as the Micro Data Center. He teaches and researches international economics, political economy, labor economics and macroeconomics. At the University of Chile, Dr. Landerretche was the founding director of the Master in Public Policy of that university which runs a joint program with the Harris School of Public Policy Studies of the University of Chicago (during the years 2006-2009). He is currently the Chilean local partner of Global Source Partners of New York (an economics, finance and politics intelligence firm). He is a former member of the Financial Advisory Council of the Ministry of Finance and a regular at the Expert Committee on Potential Growth. Dr. Landerretche served as a senior economic advisor for Michelle Bachelet's 2005-2006 presidential campaign, executive secretary of the Presidential Advisory Council on Labor and Equality during 2007-2008, and chief economist for the 2009-2010 presidential bid by Senator Eduardo Frei. Dr. Landerretche is currently running the Economics Workshop for Young Socialists (Taller de Economistas Jóvenes Socialistas, TEJOS) at the Instituto Igualdad. He is a well known and regular columnist in several leading magazines and newspapers and is currently syndicated at the newspaper La Tercera. He is also a regular colaborator with the thinktanks Fundación Democracia y Desarrollo, Cieplan, Chile 21, Proyectamérica and Instituto Igualdad. Dr. Landerretche received his Ph.D. in economics from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and his B.A. in economics from the University of Chile.



Politics of **Passion**



Cornel BAN

Social Democracy and the Politics of Passion

Tony Judt bemoaned the current state of social democrats but did not lose faith that they could reclaim the offensive in politics. He believed, simply, that they should start by reinventing the economic ideas that garnered them support in the first place. This is, undoubtedly, crucial for their political survival. One can imagine social democrats returning to an economic policy centered on the promise of full and dignified employment. Without this promise publics that suddenly find themselves cut off from cheap consumer credit and faced with rising prices and crumbling communitarian traditions have little recourse but unplug their lives from democratic participation or, alternatively, push the political spectrum further to the right.

Social democrats could also stop nodding their heads and wringing their hands over the costs of the welfare state. It provides a guarantee of real citizenship and, with proper taxation and appropriate levels of aggregate demand, the gloomy stories of bankruptcy need only be stories. If social democrats would only stop agreeing with their political opponents they could, in fact, be relegated to the status of just another set of conservative cultural artifacts.

But a potential social-democratic resurgence requires more than taking pride in prior achievements and using better economic ideas. While the track record of social democrats gives them every reason to boast their managerial skills, the recent success of the right in the middle of a severe crisis shows that politics demand more than reasoned argument. As Judt made plain, social democrats must relearn the old lexicon of the left - its unequivocal critique of injustice, humiliation, and lack of dignity. Updated, this lexicon could be used to revector public anger into a progressive agenda based around redistributionary economics rather than the politics of cultural identity.

Importantly, this reinvention should not be conceived of as a mere intellectual exercise. Social-democratic politics was once the politics of passion. As anger grows throughout Europe and the achievements of the welfare state are targeted one by one, this politics should be embraced again. There is much public anger as larger and larger swathes of the population are asked to work longer, for less pay and with less security. There is anger at growing inequalities of wealth and opportunity. There is anger at useless university degrees and the failure of education to oil the cogs of the social mobility. There is anger at the replacement of unionized industrial jobs with precarious low-skilled employment. When not properly addressed, all this anger can turn into attempts to make our societies less open and perhaps even less democratic.

The current metastasis of social injustices breeds not only anger, but also fear that things will get worse. Could this or that hospital where you must bring your own sterilized gloves for the surgeon and the bathroom has no running water be the future of your healthcare? Unless those with more resources are asked to pay more for the basic costs of civilization, no managerial wisdom can allay such fears. Unless the social contract is renegotiated on the social-democratic principle of social citizenship, the low intensity warfare we see emerging in some of our cities can mutate in even more widespread and uncontrollable forms.

The devaluation of the public and the exultation of the private in the eyes of the public was one of the most destructive cultural operations of the right. Despite its success it was precisely to public institutions that those who lost out in financial markets looked for rescue, only to cynically play Realpolitik with the rescuers' bonds later on. Given this, why can't the public ask for something in return? Social democrats know that the financial markets can only continue their piñata parties on national treasury bonds markets if they can pick up on the high deficit countries and mobilize the misguided self-righteousness of the low deficit ones. If all of Europe would "get tough," – act as a real political union and provide stimulus simultaneously for the public good of Europeans, will the fear of bond market warriors be substantiated? Just as the right plays tough in inflicting the pain of austerity on the public, the social democrats should get tough on the mechanisms of wealth polarization that corrode our societies and humiliate millions in putatively civilized societies.

Social democrats lost elections just as financial markets were tanking and numerous conservative parties were moving further to the right. Moreover, the far right scored big even in such bastions of social-democracy as Sweden and the Netherlands. Election studies specialists can quibble forever over the details of such shifts, yet few reflexive social democrats deny that the losses were largely anchored in the perception of the electorate that social democratic governments presided over and even abetted the deregulation drives that made the crisis possible in the first place. As Rawi Abdelal's *Capital Rules* showed, technocrats coming from the French Socialist Party advocated more loudly for capital account liberalization than Wall Street marauders did. Of course, conservatives were complicit in the operation. The crucial difference is, however, that for them such deregulation constituted the fulfillment of a promise, not the betrayal of it. Moreover, when campaigning during the crisis they did

not feel bound by norms against stirring public fears about strangers and translating anger over economic status into the language of identity dilemmas. The result is that large chunks of the formerly left electorate now votes right or far-right.

Faced with this situation, social democrats have two choices. The first is to surrender to the conservative onslaught on yet another front: immigration. But even from a jaded instrumental perspective, it is uncertain that a combination between “old” social-democracy and “new” right discourse on migration can give social democrats a competitive edge against their opponents. Alternatively, social democrats can reclaim an old weapon that once served them well in elections and helped them build decent societies while in office: class. The cold war is over, Eurocommunism is dead and the political space on the left is empty. Expanding this space does not require rocket science given that Europe’s political anger has economic causes. Would our “downwardly mobile middle class” (they couldn’t find a sillier managerial metaphor!) be as likely to support the right if immigration were discussed openly as a class issue rather than as a cultural one?

Yes, class categories are more fluid than they were thirty years ago. But this means neither that they have ceased to exist, nor that the interests of progressive class coalitions cannot be re-narrated by a social-democratic discourse taken back to the left. Moreover, when data tells us that the middle class in many European states is being decimated and that its offspring are certain that they will do less well than their parents, what is there to wait for? The lesson of the nineteen thirties is that class interests are not fixed but can be redefined in situations of extreme uncertainty. Now, if ever, is the chance for European social-democracy to undertake such redefinition around an agenda of solidarity. Judt showed us that the old masters of social-democracy were pretty good at this. They may be worth a visit.

Biography note

Cornel BAN is deputy director of International Development Studies at the Watson Institute for International Studies at Brown University. His research bridges political economy and sociology and is focused on the diffusion of new economic ideas across national policy spheres, with Brazil, Spain and Romania serving as empirical background.

Queries



04

Lessons for the “Next Left”

Tony Judt wrote that *social democrats all across Europe are hard-pressed to say what they stand for*. As an academic, he wanted to provoke and at the same time to be challenged by a visionary, distinctive idea that progressives would carry on. He demanded that social democrats show readiness to act, to disagree, to win over their own incapacity to imagine and proclaim a different, good and ethical society as a goal to build collectively. Judt argued that as long as this does not happen, people in Europe will disengage more and more. That would of course undermine legitimacy of any political decision; destroy what is still left of the culture of parties and movements. As an impact, he feared, the existing democratic consensus will turn to be a vacuum. These reflections are of extreme importance as a contribution to the FEPS “Next Left” research programme. Its chair, **Alfred GUSENBAUER**, who was also a personal acquaintance of Tony Judt, uses therefore this very last Chapter to discuss “Ill Fares the Land” in its role for our common future...

Reaching beyond our own limitations



Alfred GUSENBAUER

In his last published work, “Ill Fares the Land” Tony Judt demanded from us, social democrats, *to do better*. Having delivered an overall historical analysis, pointing out our weaknesses and sins, assessing our assets and potential, he still believed that though not *ideal*, we still remain *better than anything else to hand*.¹

Perhaps his assessment was not an entirely objective one. But Judt was undoubtedly hopeful while responding to the question on the how much life there is in social democracy, which finds itself in critical condition. This diagnosis is proven by the subsequent *election-cardiograms* in Europe. But Judt was a philosopher, a historian and an intellectual, refusing to see things within a limited cadre of contemporary factors. He drew his conclusions on the bases of a lifelong stadium. It had its beginnings in France and ended with reflections that went beyond the borders of Europe, bridging in his deliberations the comments on the respective situations of progressives on the Old Continent and in the North America.

Although Tony Judt believes in the future of social democracy, his prediction is not an unconditional one. As a dedicated tutor, he sets a handful of challenges that social democrats need to overcome². And as a whole-heart devoted mentor, to which position the book surely elevates him, he outlines the challenges, but gives no pre-fabricated answers. And this is in fact the core of his intellectual

¹ T. Judt, *Ill fares the land*, Penguin Books, 2010, p. 135

² *Ibidem*, p. 225

³ I refer to “social democrats”, as also in his writings Judt is very strict in terms of definitions and distinctions between the respective left wing currents.

testament – having brought us to read, to analyse and to seek answers in a newly framed dialogue. The passion of an intellectual, who critically assesses the overall conditions, who is perhaps annoyed with all the shortcomings, but wants to keep his faith by engaging others to think beyond and aim at a change, is the message that he sends out.

I wish that there was still a chance to reply to that call directly to Tony. I am one of those who had an honour to meet him. The disease that Tony had been fighting and which took him away last summer left us no chance to engage him further. Deeply regretting that he is no longer among us, I find it most appropriate that FEPS – Foundation for European Progressive Studies decided to pay a tribute to him by publishing a special issue of “Queries” and commemorate him through a high level debate over the questions he posed. I am honoured to be a part of it. As Chair of the FEPS “Next Left” research programme since June 2009, I will therefore use this opportunity to offer some of the reflections upon the points made by Tony from the perspective of our initiative. In itself it is already a sort of polemic, as he argued that the debates on politics within think tanks take place in an environment, *where unconventional opinion rarely finds a place and the public are largely excluded*.⁴ I plan to make 3 points (on history, on the European dimension and on social democracy itself), and I hope that they will respond to the profound challenge of “thinking beyond our own limitations”.

Learning from our own past

Judt, being a historian himself, calls for a reflection based on understanding both the present, and the past. He seems convinced that the certain de-rooting of social democracy is one of the reasons why it cannot succeed in defining its own space in both public life, as well as on the political scene. The philosophy he follows is outlined in his book in the following manner: *For the Left, the absence of a historically-buttressed narrative leaves an empty space. All that remains is politics: the politics of interest, the politics of envy, the politics of re-election. Without idealism, politics is reduced to a form of social accounting, to the day to day administration of men and things*.⁵

This is a genuine truth. Knowledge of our own history equips us to comprehend the ideological guidelines, to predict the subsequent stages of a political process and to be able to advance. Indeed, on a theoretical level that works really well and also I must admit served us in practice, once we inaugurated the Next Left programme having asked distinguished experts and academics to reflect on the historical causes of the EU-wide failure of social democracy during the last European elections, in June 2009. One would expect that after one year of debate answers would be formulated, but the reality is more complicated than that.

I support Tony when he writes that *we should learn about the past and that there is a very respectable*

⁴ *Ibidem*, p. 159

⁵ *Ibidem*, p. 142 - 143

heritage of social democracy.⁶ I agree that we should invest more efforts in making sure that it becomes a point of identity and pride for all our members, especially the young. We of course also owe that to those, who step by step kept on building and strengthening the movement, bringing it to its peak, described even by some as the *Golden Era of Social Democracy*. Nevertheless when considering his statement: *All political arguments need to begin with an appreciation of our relationship not only to dreams of future betterment, but also to past achievements: our own and those of our predecessors*,⁷ I have to point out that generating this respect for a common past on the European level is an extremely difficult task.

The very last pan-European debate on the future of social democracy (and I admit we have had several of them already) was related to the inauguration of the Third Way in the United Kingdom and Neue Mitte in Germany. The division created then within the European social democratic family, still remains a source of anger amongst some. Arguments of the past from some invoke issues of ideological “betrayal”, while their opponents talk of “having imprisoned social democracy in old fashioned frames”. It still returns to the debate table now. In that respect I have witnessed many debates, which inevitably turned to a dispute on who interprets the recent history correctly.

The point I wish to make herewith is that it is high time for the European progressives to draw a line. Certainly both sides of this disagreement are well trained to provide arguments to advocate for their case to be a prevailing strategy. But circumstances have changed. Europe, especially during the recent crisis, became more than ever an orientation point for the citizens. The performance of socialists in Greece has an influence on the perception of the left wing parties during the elections in Sweden and the Netherlands. We need to depart from that point, to conclude in a spirit of honesty what is a painful lesson of the history of the last two decades.

I believe that it will have a crucial impact on two matters. The first manner is to self-evaluate how we got to a stage in which we became according to Tony a ‘hybrid’.⁸ He suggests that this comes from borrowing too many arguments from the liberals, which I would recognise as a vital point for any further debate. Admitting having done so, seems to be more difficult among ourselves than accusing the right wing of having stolen our *rhetoric*. In this light, I am also more of a supporter of what is called ‘historical strategy of perception what social democracy is’.⁹

The second manner is very close to my heart and concerns international social democracy. Just recently, thanks to the hospitality of Watson Institute of the Brown University¹⁰, together with my esteemed colleague Ricardo Lagos, we prepared a two day academic colloquium on “Next Left in Europe and Latin America”. During this reflection round, academics from three continents (Europe, Latin America and North America) embarked on a debate on the state of progressive movements

⁶ *Ibidem*, p. 222

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 233

⁸ *Ibidem*, p.5

⁹ See : D.Sasson, *Socialism in the twentieth century : a historical reflection*, [in:] *Transitions in social democracy. Cultural and ideological problems of the golden age*, ed. J.Callaghan and I.Favretto, Manchester University Press 2006, p.15

¹⁰ Providence, Rhode Island, USA

worldwide. One of the key conclusions is that looking at how the left performs in the North West and in the so called South, it is clear that the European social democracy must learn its lesson of modesty. A new approach, truly incorporating the spirit of international solidarity, must be developed on our side. And here, on this specific point, I would have also wished Tony Judt to elaborate more.

Europe as an opportunity for social democracy

Tony Judt wrote that being a European *for purposes of self-identification is a newly acquired habit*.¹¹ Within the Next Left research programme, we have concluded 4 thematic seminars on the European level¹², as well as numerous so called round tables in the respective EU member states¹³. Though the mid-term review is to be released later on this year, one can already by now state that there is a strong conviction expressed that the debate on the renewal of social democracy must bring about the feasible change that some refer to as Europeanisation of the movement. There are several arguments supporting this reflection, however I would like to focus on two. They are those of democracy and the post-war economic growth paradigm.

The last European elections, from which the Next Left dates its beginnings as a research programme, were the failure not only of social democrats but over the whole democratic process. As Judt wrote: *democratic failure transcends national boundaries*.¹⁴

That is also a statement that we share within the Next Left research program. Looking at the last European elections, it must be recognised that they showed the lowest turnout in history, being only slightly above 40% and hence falling 20% below the attendance in 1979, resulting in the situation that the newly elected European Parliament is the most fragmented in its history, not to mention the relatively strong representation of populists and right wing extremists in it. Judt attributes this to *political demobilisation*¹⁵; a situation in which a minority elects what then can be potentially a coincidentally chosen representation. Judt notes that the poorest are usually the ones who need the representation most and who vote least¹⁶. Assuming that this situation continues, it might deepen to a level in which decisions taken by the institutions (in Brussels) will be mostly foreign to the resentful majority of voters.

The democratic deficit can also be noticed on the national level. The result of the elections no longer determines which party is to form a government, as shown in Sweden, Netherlands, UK, etc. The situation of a landslide victory can only be sentimentally dreamt of. In parallel, the parties (both on the right and on the left) are losing in terms of their membership¹⁷.

11 T.Judt, *Ill fares the land*, Penguin Books, 2010, p. 66

12 On: "Responding to our changing society" (March 2010), "Our values in a changing world" (June 2010), "A progressive socio-economic paradigm" (October 2010) and "Mobilizing for International solidarity" (November 2010).


13 In: Sofia (March 2010), London (May 2010), Barcelona (June 2010), Berlin (June 2010), Dublin (July 2010), Manchester (September 2010), Rome (November 2010), Ghent (November 2010).

14 T.Judt, *Ill fares the land*, Penguin Books, 2010, p. 166

15 *Ibidem*, 132

16 *Ibidem*, 36

17 See also: U.Jun, O.Niedermayer, E.Wiesendahl, *Zukunft der Mitgliedspartei*, Verlag Barbara Budrich, 2009



In this context, the debate on the future of social democracy and its place in the world of politics and society is in fact the key debate within formulating a progressive vision for the future of democracy itself. This encompasses many other issues, such as the roles of the state and also the government. And in the globalised reality, it shall be of a natural conclusion that the debate should lead to redefining the European Union as a historical project that by principle was to be democratic and social.

Deliberating on the role of the state, Tony Judt gave a lot of attention to a challenge of re-establishing a social deal. He sees it as a necessity to preserve the achievements of the European social model, which understood as a welfare state, is according to Judt the most effective investment in the future of the society. Tony does not, however, spare criticism existing practices, exposing that 'cradle to grave' and 'one fits all' practices have not always proven to be the most sustainable and efficient ones. I agree with Tony on many of the points he makes. But what I believe we need to focus on is in fact not only the preservation of principles such as universalism or fair redistribution but above all what the new socio-economic paradigm is supposed to be about.

The predictions of the post-crisis situations make it plain that the post-war model that was based on generating growth is no longer going to be sustained in the way we used to know it. Europe no longer contributes to the world's GDP as much as it used to, which may also mean a shift of its position in comparison to the places taken now on the world's emerging powers i.e. China or India.

Realising this, means that social democracy needs to urgently rethink its vision of social and economic policies. I strongly believe that it should guard equality as the leading principle in this process. This historical reflection will have an impact on all the elements of our programmes, and most likely, as Judt wished us to do, will in fact require redefining the core pillars of our agenda.

Taking into account the progress in European integration, especially in terms of the economic policies, it is only natural that such a reflection must be done in a European context. It will mean, that the agenda of Social Europe will need revising, as it is no longer the case that we can advocate for our space in the European policy sphere in a credible manner stating that what we want in principle is to *make sure that economic growth generated by European integration translates to the improving living and working conditions*. That is a genuine good principle, but in our times may not be good enough for the people to believe in and support.

We must also respond to the question of what kind of a European society we want and how we, as social democrats, want to build it. In the times of fear and anxiety, when people doubt the sustainability of solutions that are in place, when there is no clear answer on what the value of labour

is, this is naturally a challenging mission. As Tony wrote, social democrats particularly experience a great difficulty in imagining a *different sort of society*¹⁸.

Renewing social democracy

Despite believing in the future of social democracy, Tony Judt has not spared it same words of severe criticism. It called it *unable to conceive alternatives*¹⁹, *defensive and apologetic*²⁰. He wrote that we *have nothing distinctive to offer*²¹.

Indeed, social democracy is under pressure to renew or resign. It is not yet another moment, when this is only a temporary loss and the electoral results curfew will bounce back in our favour on its own. There are three levels on which the reflections must take place.

First of all, there is an ideological backbone of ours to rethink under the pressure of the contemporary reality, in which terms such as i.e. equality require redefinition – due to new and deepening inequalities arising²². It has to reintegrate its policies in this new, hopefully credible ideological spirit.

Secondly, there is the question of tge movement to reconsider. Tony believed that these are no longer the times of the political movements, and that we unite only sporadically in the name of one or another cause²³. I would say that the meaning of terms such as ‘political movement’ or ‘progressive alliance’ must be re-thought, to see if he was right. At the same time there must be a discussion on what it actually means to be a member, or part of such a movement – and how to bring back what Judt called ‘a self-gratifying’ feeling of each particular, who engages for the common cause.

Thirdly, we must revise how we communicate our policies and who we are. As mentioned before, Tony was writing about the apologetic character of social democracy in the way it appears in front of the public. From the studies that we concluded there is in fact a paradox, that parallel to being defensive, social democracy gained certain arrogance in the way it approaches politics, matters, and voters. It got used to being a party of power or influencing power via mechanisms available to oppositions. It lives with the illusions of the past, among memories of what used to be its ‘traditional partners’, while the points of identity it refers to are no longer to be clearly defined i.e. for women movements, young people, migrants. It got accustomed to speak on behalf of some of the groups, while studies prove that a core electorate is as such a reference of the past. Through historical reflection, through acknowledging its position and chances in Europe, to its own core of nowadays – a lesson of modesty and respect of one another and of the others is there to be learnt for all of us.

18 Ibidem, page 134

19 Ibidem, page 2

20 Ibidem, page 6

21 Ibidem, page 153

22 See also R.Wilkinson and K.Pickett, *The Spirit Level – Why Equality is Better for Everyone?*; Penguin Books 2009

23 Ibidem, page 134

In one of the very last interviews, which Tony Judt gave to Neue Gesellschaft / Frankfurter Heft, he said: *We need a double folded strategy: serious intellectual conversation, especially with the younger generation on the arts of politics and the language of it – and the theoretical guidelines, which a newly re-woken social democracy could realise. And this is a mission for people like us. Afterwards there should be a political action – maybe on the level of the new political parties – so that we would have a vehicle, through which all these ideas with enthusiasm and credibility could be transmitted. Before this is reached (we) will continue loosing, even if we gain in some elections*²⁴.

Within the Next Left Research Programme we try our best to respond to this call, preserving in our grateful memory all the thoughts and questions he left us with so that they could be continued...

Biography note

Alfred GUSENBAUER, Dr., born in 1960, was *federal Chancellor of the Republic of Austria and member of the European Council* between January 2007 till December 2008. He led Sozialdemokratische Partei Österreichs (SPÖ) between the years 2000 and 2008. Mr Gusenbauer studied law, philosophy, political sciences and economy at the University of Vienna and there obtained Ph.D. in political sciences in 1987. Mr Gusenbauer began his political career in Sozialistische Jugend Österreichs (SJÖ), of which he was President since 1984 till 1990. In 1985 on SJÖ's behalf he was elected Vice-President of the International Union of Socialist Youth (IUSY), in which function he served till 1989. In 1991 Mr Gusenbauer was elected SPÖ chairperson for Ybbs an der Donau and member of the Lower Austria party executive. Same year he became member and Deputy of Lower Austria in Bundesrat (Upper Chamber of the Austrian Parliament). During the following years of his political activism, Mr Gusenbauer held several positions and functions: was Member of Parliament between 1993 – 2007; served as Leader of the Opposition from 2000 till 2007; was Member of Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe from 1991 till 2007; and was Chairman of the Social, Health and Family Affairs Committee of the Council of Europe since 1995 till 1998. He has been actively engaged in the Party of European Socialists (PES), as the party's Vice President since the year 2000 and in the Socialist International as its Vice President since 1989. Mr Gusenbauer is Professor-at-Large at the Brown University Providence / Rhode Island and a James Leitner Fellow for Global Affairs at the Columbia University of the N.Y.C. Furthermore, he is President of the Renner Institute, President of the Austrian Institute for International Studies, President of the Austrian-Spanish Chamber of Commerce, member of the supervisory board of F.C.C. (Construction) – Spain and Alpine Construction and a CEO of Gusenbauer Projektentwicklung und Beteiligung GmbH. Mr Gusenbauer holds an honorary doctorate of the Hertzliah University of Israel and is Senator of the European Academy of Sciences. Since June 2009 he chairs the "Next Left" Focus Group of FEPS (Foundation for European Progressive Studies).

²⁴ Gespräch mit Tony Judt « Eine neu zum Leben erweckte Sozialdemokratie », [in:] Neue Gesellschaft / Frankfurter Hefte, 6 | 2010, pages: 57 - 60



2024



What comes before, what comes next

Once the first issue of the scientific magazine by the Foundation of European Progressive Studies was being prepared in February 2010, the title “Queries” was chosen. Since then it has served as a guideline in selecting themes and articles that pose the most crucial questions and can stimulate an intellectual debate. Hence, it comes with no surprise that this magazine was selected as the most appropriate way to **commemorate late Tony Judt and his work**.

As Ernst STETTER, FEPS Secretary General wrote in his opening text; *especially the last book of Tony Judt, “Ill Fares the Land”, poses an extraordinary challenge*. This very particular intellectual testament of an outstanding academic and universalist socialist encompasses a fair, though bitter, assessment of today’s world. It touches upon the mission that a renewed social democracy must embark upon in order to reverse the negative processes corroding our societies, through respecting all the achievements of past generations and being optimistic about the chances for the progressives to succeed in the future. This motivated the title of this issue: **“What comes before, what comes NEXT”**.

This issue is divided into four chapters. The first one, **“In memoriam”** presents Tony Judt as an exceptional personality, a brilliant scholar and a forward thinker. This very personal portrait is made complete with contributions referring to his academic work and bridges with what inspired him both in his youth and during his later years. The second chapter, **“Stimulus to dialogue”** picks up from the message that “Ill Fares the Land” leaves us with: a challenge to enter into polemics and develop new arguments that could advance and accelerate the debate on the state of social democracy. The third Chapter, **“Courage for Change”**, responds directly to Judt’s call: the process the progressives are in is a historical one, in which fairness is needed to learn from the past and the audacity of idealism is needed to design and communicate a vision for the future. Finally, the last chapter, **“Lessons for the Next Left”**, is where Alfred GUSENBAUER, Chair of the Next Left research programme, links the reflections of Tony Judt and the current on-going pan-European debate on the renewal of social democracy.

The message of Tony Judt was to follow a double folded strategy: **on one side carry on a serious intellectual conversation, on the other rebuild the strength of social democracy as a political being**. This issue of “Queries” responds to that call. It remains its hope that the readers will follow – and whose comments are always awaited and warmly welcome!