

CONTEMPORARY CRISIS OF DEMOCRACY

Conditions for Change — but What Kind of Change?

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THE CRISIS OF GOVERNANCE OR THE CRISIS OF DEMOCRACY?

»Governance has never been easy but modern day governance seems to be especially difficult . . . Concern for the inability to govern effectively, that is found in the citizenry, also is found in political elites and among professional political scientists . . . Can democracy as a way of governance meet and survive what appears to be a worldwide crisis of governance?» (Milbrath 1982, 1)

The above statement (and a question) by *Lester W. Milbrath* is one of the many similar ones made by political scientists during the last decade. There seems to prevail a strong opinion that Western democracies are in some kind of a crisis. The nature of this crisis is, however, much more unclear. In reading political science literature, one gets the feeling that by crisis one refers above all to the changing attitudes of citizens, which in turn, reveal a growing distrust of politicians and established political parties. The emergence of »new» and »unconventional» methods of political participation, from the turbulent 1960s to new social movements of the 1980s, are thus seen to strengthen the image of attitudinal change. Many seem to feel that the development has made governing democratic societies more difficult.

One of the first and perhaps most influential books in the search for an understanding of the present was *Ronald Inglehart's The Silent Revolution* (Inglehart 1977). Inglehart's thesis of the change from material to post-material values is in many respects illuminating but at the same time problematic. It is problematic because it does not deal very much with the structural change of present-day states and societies. Values may change but the structure of society remains the same. An increased demand for more participation in society may be put into the existing structures. As, *Max Kaase* and *Alan Marsh*, for instance, have written in the same vein:

»We believe that this shift in political values, which may well constitute a threat to the political status quo, does not in itself threaten the persistence of the liberal democratic order.» (Barnes, Kaase et al. 1979, 31)

According to this view there is a crisis of governance, but not the crisis of democracy. The rising level of education has increased the political skills of citizens and has made them capable of participating in politics in a more substantial way. Linked with economic security, this development will guarantee the continuation of the growth of post-material values. It is not seen as probable that the trend will change because »to undo their affects would require sharp declines in prevailing levels of economic security and education» (Inglehart 1977, 98) and although the economy seems to be stagnating at the moment, economic problems can be solved in the long run. As society moves from representative democracy to participatory democracy, it also moves from national economy to world economy (cf. Naisbitt 1984).

In contrast to the studies which focus on the crisis of governance, there are also studies which argue that the change is more profound, a crisis of the whole democratic order. The depth of this crisis varies, however, among those writing about the subject. First, there are studies which deal with the party system. Many of these stress that there was a change in politics before there was a shift in attitudes. Politics has been changing into a play, a kind of a theater or show. Politicians are selling policies as they would be selling cars or soap. The activities of political parties have turned more and more towards emotional issues in their campaigns: personalities have become more important than issues and parties are concentrating more on concrete situations which do not touch the basic cleavages of society and so on (Andersen 1980). In short, political parties have developed into catch-all parties with very hierarchical structures.

A good example of this kind of analysis is that of *Theodore J. Lowi*. He shows quite convincingly how the political system, based on interest-group liberalism, produces malfunctioning democracy, political irresponsibility and cumulative inequalities in society. Those who do not belong to pressure-groups (but often would need help the most) stay outside the political decision-making process. There is no discussion of the needs of old political programs (because pressure groups have vested interests in them), »equal» distribution of political positions leads to compromises and ineffective decision-making, the power of experts grows, and so forth. Interest-group liberalism has an effect as well on the nature of these groups themselves. When they have a role in decision-making, the structure of these groups will become more hierarchical (criticism is dangerous, leaders must not be criticized). On the whole, a political system based on interest-group liberalism corrupts the

whole system because it confuses citizens' ideas about democracy, at the same time as it demoralizes political decision-makers who understand that the system is not capable of functioning any more, neither for equality nor social justice (Lowi 1979, 295–313).

The crisis is that of the political system based on competing groups, i.e., pressure groups and political parties and in this sense Lowi deals with another level besides that of only citizens' attitudes. There is a crisis of democracy which is linked to the crisis of the party system and interest-group liberalism in general, because the party system is one of the basic cornerstones of the whole democratic order. Political parties have traditionally been one of the main elements of the functioning of the political system, from taking care of the legitimacy of the system to the aggregation of interests, because «no other known structures can solve the democratic dilemma of representation and government in modern states.» (Damgaard & Kristensen 1982, 34)

The solution of the crisis demands structural alterations of the political system which may or may not be within the range of liberal democracy. The latter assumption is the case in the second set of studies focusing on the crisis of democracy, those of recent Marxist analyses on the state. *Joachim Hirsch*, for instance, sees the new social movements and increased political participation as a result of the structural crisis of capitalism, representing above all a reaction against the present »fordistic« form of reproduction of capital, which has split society into separate subcultures, by tearing apart old cultures based on social class. Social disintegration has had an effect on the whole political process, changing completely the conditions and forms of political consciousness and collective action.

At the same time the state has expanded its activities to all spheres of life, taking an active role in the material and ideological reproduction of society. These social processes have also penetrated the old organizations of mass mobilization. Political parties and trade unions have developed into mass-integration apparatuses which do not articulate the interests of their members any more, but rather take care of the general legitimation processes of society.

The working class has lost its revolutionary potential at the same time as dissatisfaction towards society is increasing. Some resort to escapism, some to spontaneous political protest in some form of populism or anti-bureaucratism. New social movements and post-material values have been born out of this contradictory process and these movements are as contradictory in nature as the society which produced them. They contain different tendencies, ranging from militant anti-capitalism to reformist beliefs in the existing political system. At the same time, their heterogeneity means a legitimation problem for the bourgeois state, because no one knows exactly how to deal with them

(Hirsch 1983). Solution of the crisis demands a new kind of democracy and a new kind of society. But how this is done is another problem. The Marxist theory of the state is clearly in search of the right political strategy at the moment.

These three notions of the present crisis, that of governance, that of the political system (democracy) and that of the whole society are not, of course, separate from each other. One can even claim that the crisis of the whole society is crystallized in the crisis of democracy, because the political system is the element which keeps the whole society together. On the other hand, the changing political attitudes are also clearly at least a part of the crisis. In this sense, this article argues that the present crisis is not only a crisis of governance, but a deeper one, although it is not much use to support any of these three interpretations only with the references above.

If one concentrates on attitudes only, it is quite legitimate to find a very mixed picture of the crisis. There are surveys showing very ambivalent results, some pointing to »no crisis at all», and others to »a lot of crisis». (Middendorp 1982, 29) Because of that some analysts have even felt free to predict that it is quite possible that citizens' trust in established political parties will increase again and maybe after a decade there will be new active participation within political parties (Nousiainen 1983, 14). Of course, these results and predictions are as good as others, if one cannot treat the subject on a broader basis. In order to do that, one needs an analysis of democracy and its crises in a historical setting. Before that, one has also to clarify the whole notion of crisis and its relation to different dimensions of democracy.

THE NOTION OF CRISIS AND THE DIMENSIONS OF DEMOCRACY

There are, of course, different concepts of both crisis and democracy. The concept of crisis in its old medical usage refers, however, to that phase of an illness in which it is decided whether or not the organism's self-healing powers are sufficient for recovery. This is an implicit background also for many usages of the concept in the social sciences, whether this is a Marxian notion of economic crisis or a systems-theoretic concept of crisis, wherein »crises arise when the structure of a social system allows fewer possibilities for problem solving than are necessary to the continued existence of the system.» (Habermas 1975, 2, see also 1-8)

According to *Jürgen Habermas* the notion of crisis always implicitly presupposes that there is both an objective structure of the system which is endangered by something new and that the members of a society also sub-

jectively experience structural alterations as critical for continued existence and feel their social identity being threatened. The notion of crisis implies, then, that there are three dimensions in any social system which one has to take into account if one is talking about a crisis. Firstly, there is the structure of the system (its form), secondly, there are the attitudes of the members of the system towards that system (its legitimacy) and thirdly, there is the concrete practice of the members to change or to keep up the system. In this sense the crises can arise both from outside and inside of the system.

When one talks about the crisis of democracy, one has to take into account these three different dimensions. The concept of democracy itself is, of course, open to different interpretations. The word comes from the Greek words *demos* — people and *kratos* — rule. In that way the concept and its content are tied into the meaning of the words »people» and »rule». It is also a fact that democracy was until the 19th century a strongly unfavorable term. For *Aristotle*, democracy was a system where many were entitled to rule, although they ruled in their own interests, not in interests of all. Democracy was the poor side of polity. And *Aquinas*, for instance, defined democracy as popular power, the whole people acting like a tyrant, oppressing the minority. During the French Revolution the opponents of the revolution considered democracy to be »mob-rule». This means that in its original meaning the concept had a certain class-meaning, the people being equated with the majority using their power against the minority (Williams 1981, 82–87).

However, democracy is one of the established ideologies of today. Regardless of a more specific political ideology, most people and most countries are for democracy. This means that democracy is also an ideological form, a political formula, to use the expression of *Mosca*, which is used to affect the attitudes of people towards the social system. The two major conceptions of democracy, the democratic-liberal concept which is linked to capitalism and the socialist concept share a common background, although they stress different aspects of the word. As *C.B. Macpherson* has argued, the ultimate goal is, however, the same, »to provide the conditions for the full and free development of the essential human capacities of all the members of the society.» (Macpherson 1981, 37) What is different is the strategy to achieve these aims.

There is one fundamental difference, though. The socialist concept today is still nearer the original meaning of the term. Democracy is the system where majority rules over minority. This is a notion which the democratic-liberal concept has tried to rid itself of. The concept has been made a legitimate concept in the Western capitalist societies during this century by stressing

democracy as a rule of all the people. This has been done by equating democracy with a certain system of power and form of political system.

Although there have been different interpretations of the question of whether democracy is the direct rule of the people or whether it can also be indirect through representatives, the latter version has, however, slowly emerged victorious and the whole concept has in practice developed into that of a representative democracy. It is not seldom that one defines democracy by referring to certain institutional arrangements of political power. The essential features of that system usually include a representative government, universal and equal suffrage as well as freedom of political opinion and opposition (cf. Therborn 1980, 6).

It is interesting that although nowadays this institutional arrangement of the rule by the people is closely connected with bourgeois states, the great bourgeois revolutions did not lead directly to that kind of political arrangement. The birth of democracy in its modern form was a slow process, during which the term acquired its positive content. It may even be argued that the positive content was born out of the struggle for universal suffrage, and that struggle was tied into the question what shall be the meaning of »the people«. There have all the time been attempts to limit »the people« to only certain groups of society by property, race, sex, etc. and the whole struggle for new forms of power has marked the turning-points of democracy. These turning-points have signified the crises of democracy, where the old structure has changed into a new one.

This means that the theory of democracy cannot deal solely with the structural theory of the state, but must also take into account concrete political struggles. There is no theory of political struggle, and therefore there must be concrete historical research about those struggles linked to the theory of the state. This concrete historical research should be conducted at the three different levels of democracy mentioned, those of form, practice and legitimacy of the system.

Democracy is the concrete political system (form) with special ways of organizing itself (election laws, suffrage requirements etc.), but it is also the concrete practice which goes on in this form (the activity of the people, the operation of political parties, etc.) and lastly, it is also a legitimating ideology of that system, the ability of the system to keep up its legitimacy through claims for democracy.

How these levels interact with each other is one of the most important problems for the theory of democracy. This is also the problem the next chapter deals with.

NOTES ON THE HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF DEMOCRACY

The Formation of the Form

As noted earlier, the liberal-democratic state coincides with capitalist society. One cannot, however, equate liberal democracy with the bourgeois state. As Macpherson has argued, liberalism came first, democracy later:

»Liberal democracy is a fairly late product of the market society; the first need of the market society was for the liberal state, not a democratic one: a liberal state which was designed to operate by competition between political parties responsible to a non-democratic electorate. The democratic franchise was added only when the working-class that had been produced by the capitalist market society had become strong enough to demand that it should have some weight in the competitive process.» (Macpherson 1981, 35)

Unfortunately there are not many studies dealing with the inauguration of democracy. Besides, those which exist usually only touch on some aspects of the problem, which makes comparison between them difficult, if not outright impossible. As an example, one may refer to two studies which are among the best, those of *Robert A. Dahl* and *Göran Therborn* (Dahl 1971, Therborn 1980). Although their points of departure are quite different (Therborn looks at the widening of suffrage, Dahl primarily at the conditions which favor or impede the development of public opposition), both studies show well that the growth of democracy has been a process taking place in different ways in different countries.

Both authors also try to develop types of this historical process. Dahl argues that there have been five different roads to the inauguration of democracy (or polyarchy as Dahl calls it). Development may have happened either within an already independent nation-state or within a subject state. In the first group the democratization process was brought about either by evolutionary processes (e.g. Belgium, Britain, Denmark, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland), by collapse or revolutionary displacement of the old regime (e.g. Austria, the first republic 1918, France 1789–92, 1848, 1870, Germany 1919) or by military conquest (all following World War II, Austria, the second republic, the German Federal Republic, Italy, Japan). In the second group the national independence struggle (e.g. in Finland, Ireland and the United States) was a starting-point for the inauguration of democracy, the evolutionary processes being the other starting-point (e.g. Australia, Canada, New Zealand) (Dahl 1971, 42).

Therborn partly follows Dahl's reasoning by dividing the process into three

main groups. Democratization has come about through military defeat, through national mobilization or through internal development. However, his criteria of placing the cases into these groups is partly different from Dahl's criteria. Democracy has been inaugurated by military defeat either directly (e.g. Austria, Finland, the German Federal Republic, Italy, Japan) or indirectly (e.g. Sweden in 1918 after Germany's defeat). National mobilization has played its role either as a means (e.g. Canada, Norway) or as an effect (e.g. Belgium). The internal development is then specified in a more exact manner than is the case with Dahl. It must be said that Dahl's evolutionary processes can mean so many different things that the whole concept is not very helpful. In contrast, Therborn divides the internal development into two parts. First are those countries where the independence of the petty-bourgeoisie has been crucial to the development of democracy (e.g. Australia, Denmark, New Zealand, Switzerland). The second group consists then of countries where the splits within the ruling classes have made democracy possible (e.g. France, Great Britain, Netherlands, United States) (Therborn 1980, 41).

As these examples show, the growth of democracy has been a very complicated process and, as Dahl and Therborn themselves know, democracies have not been inaugurated only by military defeat, national mobilization or by internal development; these processes have usually been in operation at the same time, one of them being dominant in a certain historical situation. The main emphasis usually is on the internal development of a country, but depending on country's level of economic development, strength of social classes and political forces, prevailing political organizations, level of education, etc., together with a country's international position, there have emerged different kinds of strategies and possibilities for democratic development (cf. Dahl's conditions favoring polyarchy, e.g. Dahl 1971, 203).

Clearly, the explanations given to the phenomenon are linked to the definition of democracy, and on the other hand, to the theory of the state one may have. In this sense, it is not much use to compare Dahl's and Therborn's categorizations, because they use different concepts and their image of the same processes is different. We can take an example which illustrates the difficulties of comparing these two authors, that of Finland. Dahl lists Finland as a democracy immediately after Finland had gained her independence. Universal suffrage was achieved in Finland as early as 1906 when Finland was still a part of the Russian empire, but independence was gained only in 1917 and the first Constitution was promulgated in 1919. In that way Dahl may use Finland as one of his examples of how democracy is inaugurated by a national independence struggle. However, Therborn explains Finland's entry as a democracy by a direct military defeat in the Second World War. The reason

for that is that although Finland had begun her independence formally as a democracy, the bitter heritage of the civil war (1918) had its effect on politics during the inter-war period; the Finnish Communist Party, for instance, was outlawed until 1944. In addition, the Socialist Labor Party, which had been an outlet for the radical left in Finland after the civil war, was also forbidden in 1930.

This example gives cause to repeat the earlier argument that the theory of democracy cannot deal only with the structural theory of the state, but must also take into account concrete political struggles. One must look at the general tendencies inherent in capitalism which are linked with the liberal-democratic order and concrete historical research country by country must be done in order to understand the specific features of democratic development in those countries.

As to the general tendencies inherent in capitalism, the reference above from Macpherson has already indicated the role of the working-class in this process. In the same sense Therborn lists some tendencies of capitalist society working towards democracy, class struggle and its context being central. The judicial freedom of labor-power and creation of a free labor-market with industrialization and concentration of capital led to the birth of a working-class and its organizations. Widening of political rights then became one of the central demands of workers, at the same time as the bourgeoisie, or a part of it, needed the help of the working-class (e.g. in times of war, in order to achieve a national unification and/or larger markets, and to destroy the feudal order) (Therborn 1980, 42-47).

However, the development has been very contradictory. Although demands of the working-class have been a strong factor behind the widening of political rights, the existence of workers' organizations has at the same time often led to the suppression of these same rights. At the same time concrete political forms which were adopted in different countries differed from each other, often for political and social reasons. It is interesting to note, as *Stein Rokkan* has observed, that electoral systems in different countries seem to be closely tied to the strategy of national integration. The proportional system of elections was first adopted in those countries which were linguistically, religiously and/or ethnically very heterogenous (Rokkan 1968, 18). The majority principle would not have worked. At least this seems to be the case in Europe, although the reverse is the case in the United States. However, the United States is otherwise an exception due to its lack of a strong and militant working-class.

The other problem, then, is the development of democracy after its inauguration. This is also a blank spot on the map of research, so there are not

very many concrete studies on the subject (cf. Laakso 1980). After the growth of democratic forms of government, the practice of democracy has changed some of these forms, but principally the practice itself has changed.

The Practice Within the Form

Universal suffrage has been perhaps the most important stage in the development of democracy. But one cannot equate democracy with universal suffrage. Governmental power was formed, with judicial power, long before legislative power emerged and even in that system there was some democracy. But universal suffrage changed the nature of politics once and for all, throwing at once all the struggling classes and forces into the arena of politics (cf. Poulantzas 1970, 321–322).

This raises again the question of what democracy is all about. However, this article will not try to define the concept in any rigorous sense. Suffice to say that for the purposes of this article, democracy is the rule of the people. What that means in concrete terms is another matter. One thing can be specified, however. Democracy is not, according to this interpretation, defined by preferences of the people, but by peoples' capability to take part in the decision-making process. Democracy deals with power, not with the fulfilling of needs or wishes.

Of course, through power it is possible to fulfill one's preferences, but on the other hand, preferences may be fulfilled also from above. In the sense in which democracy is defined here, organizational aspects of democratic practice become important. One of the most important factors affecting the degree of democracy in a society is the structure of governmental organization itself. Democracy is also dependent on forms and functions of the state, the relationship between governmental and legislative power (do bills originate in executive branch or in the legislature), the nature of judicial power (possibilities to control laws, equality of citizens in courts) and of course, on the forms of the electoral system.

Democracy is also dependent on practice at large in society. We may take one more example, that of the United States in relation to European countries in the 19th century. It may be argued that democracy was far more advanced in the United States at that time, an assertion which was vividly described already by *de Tocqueville* in his time. Although male suffrage was nearly universal from the 1860s onwards, this was not a real reason for democracy in the United States. Universal manhood suffrage in principle prevailed at the same time in many European countries as well (France, Germany, Greece,

Switzerland). The real reason was that the United States lacked the feudal order (which one had to struggle against in Europe) as well as it lacked a strong and militant working-class (which was feared in Europe). The constitution of the United States was partly born out of revolutionary bourgeois ideology. The situation formed a political culture which stressed democracy and liberty as national values. There were bourgeois ideals, but not ideological »fears» and practical »obstacles» for democracy.

This does not mean that democracy worked without defects in the United States, only that there were more defects in Europe. In the 19th century, women, blacks and a great number of immigrants were not entitled to vote at all or there were at least serious hindrances to their voting. In this sense it can be argued that not until 1920 when women gained suffrage through the constitutional amendment was it possible to talk about any real democracy in the country. However, in Europe other things made democracy still weaker. For instance, the Representation of the People Act of 1918 in England gave universal suffrage to men, but at the same time it also gave additional votes for owners of commercial and business property as well as for university graduates. Moreover, in many countries political parties were prohibited and the granting of suffrage to women was a much slower process (e.g. France in 1945, Italy in 1946, Greece in 1955) (regarding these facts, see Rokkan-Meyriat (eds., 1969), Rose (ed., 1974)).

But if universal suffrage has been the most important stage in the development of democracy, changing as well the practice of democracy once and for all, it does not mean that democracy has remained the same after its inauguration. The inter-war period experienced both a hard struggle for state-power and a deep economic depression, which separately and together changed the nature of democracy. In some countries democracy was destroyed under fascism. In others the state moved into »reformist» path. Tasks of the state were enlarged (e.g. New Deal in the United States) and possibilities of different groups to gain access to power also increased. The development had already begun during the First World War and the Second World War made the development in this respect still faster. From this situation there developed a political system based on interaction and compromises of different interests, a system called pluralist democracy or interest-group liberalism. If we now turn our attention back to the discussion about the problems of governance which started the article, it seems that this discussion must be placed against these developments. Political problems of the 1960s with the new structural crisis of capitalism in the 1970s have brought up new questions about the nature of democracy. The answer to these questions lies in the historical development.

The development has been circular in such a way that the growth of pressure groups brought the demand for representative democracy, the formation of which changed the role of pressure groups which again changed the nature of the state. The whole process coincides with the growth of the bourgeois state, and economic and technological development which shapes the structure of society, changing at the same time the forms of political practice and consciousness. If the crises of democracy are stages where it is decided whether the system will continue its existence or will experience some structural change, consciousness plays a major role in that process. A good example of just that is the birth of universal suffrage, when at first workers, then women became conscious of themselves as belonging to »the people«. Consciousness is linked to external and internal changes in the social structure, but it is also the factor through which the form and practice are mediated.

Although the above analysis has dealt only with social practice at the macrolevel (it would be important from the viewpoint of democracy also to study things at the microlevel; e.g. participation in party politics or the degree of unionization in a given country), it hopefully brings forward the idea that democracy is also something more than just a form. How the form and practice are experienced by the members of society is then the last of the dimensions of democracy.

Legitimacy of the Democratic Order

Problems of legitimacy in relation to the development of democracy seem to have followed the crises of the system. *Bernhard Blanke* has claimed that there are two different strategies which the bourgeois state has used in keeping up its legitimacy, both of which base themselves on general mechanisms of consensus in society. In the first instance, consensus was achieved through enlarging political rights. The solution is related to the exchange of commodities (the formation of capital-relation) and the general form of constitutional state (*Rechtsstaat*), which reproduces the capital-relation in a disguise of equal constitutional and political rights at the level of politics. The formation of parliaments transforms equal commodity owners as well into equal subjects of law.

Universal suffrage did not, however, end the rule of bourgeoisie. In order to legitimize its rule in the second phase, the bourgeoisie had now to make its domination look like a consensus derived from the equal interaction of different social interests. According to Blanke, this is the basis for the pluralist theory of democracy (Blanke 1976).

Also, Jürgen Habermas has interpreted the development of democracy in much the same way. According to him, formal democracy was one of the first legitimizing forms of the bourgeois state and has remained a basic ingredient of it ever since. Habermas writes:

» . . . through the universalistic value-systems of bourgeois ideology, civil rights — including the right to participate in political elections — have become established; and legitimation can be dissociated from the mechanism of elections only temporarily and under extraordinary conditions.» (Habermas 1975, 36)

Formal democracy was a product of liberal capitalism. In the first phase, the most important legitimation process was the market itself. But when liberal capitalism began to change into advanced capitalism, taking more and more functions from the economic system, there arose an increased need for a new kind of legitimation. Of course, this was also linked to the widening of suffrage.

The political system developed more and more into a system which required mass loyalty, but that loyalty had to be as diffuse as possible. Political participation had to be »reasonable»; some could be active, but at the same time there was also a need for passive citizens. The »reasonable» political activity was taken care by two mechanisms. The first may be called civic privatism, which means political abstinence combined with an orientation to career, leisure and consumption. Civic privatism is taken care by the educational system as well as the mass media. The second mechanism is that of structural depoliticization, which is an ideological form of legitimation and is justified either by democratic elite theories or by technocratic systems theories. Besides, there are many specific measures which the bourgeois state uses when trying to retain its legitimacy (the personalization of substantive issues, the symbolic use of hearings, expert judgments, juridical incantations, advertising techniques, etc.) (Habermas 1975, 37).

The two legitimation forms within the history of the formation of democratic order (and practice within that form) seem to suggest that the crisis of today cannot only be the crisis of governance, but of democracy (and in fact, of the whole social system). There is a crisis of form (criticism of representative democracy), a crisis of practice (criticism of pluralist democracy) and a crisis of legitimacy (increased suspicion towards established political parties, politicians and the system in general).

The trouble with the interpretations which see the new development strictly as a problem of governance is that they focus only on the changing measures of support and trust in governments and political parties and try to explain the crisis by using variables such as changing social structure (new

middle classes), rising level of education, economic growth etc. The explanations they give are themselves a part of the crisis.

Of course, it cannot be denied that, for instance, the rising level of education has had an effect on new forms of participation. But it is also a question of the content of education. It seems that the bourgeois state has always been able to cope with the rising level of education through its ideological forms. Moreover, if critical knowledge about society is extinguished, there will not be many possibilities for a real change in society.

In order to understand the present crisis, one should at least look at the changing nature of advanced industrial societies where, on the one hand, the state has expanded very rapidly from the 1960s, and on the other hand, the capitalization of the economy with its restructuring, aided by new technology, have changed the old concepts and social bases of social classes. This has brought about high unemployment, high inflation (a new struggle for incomes both nationally and internationally, corporations' need to invest in constant capital more than in variable capital while restructuring the economy), changing work ethics and leading to new attempts to control the whole process (incomes policies, corporatism). At a time when education has expanded in this context very rapidly, and at the same time as people receive more information faster than ever in a political situation rife with threats to survival (ecological catastrophes, nuclear war), democracy based on established political parties is in crisis because the system cannot cope with the new situation. This brings up the last question: as crises of democracy have thus far been conditions for change — what kind of change will come now?

ALTERNATIVES FOR THE FUTURE

Limits of Democratic Development

The emergence of new social movements means a quest for new democracy. These movements represent new life styles, feminism, gay lib, alternative family-living, new forms of collective housing (squatters), immigrants, etc. On the other hand, there has been a sharp increase in grass-roots politics, citizens' initiatives and activism based on more traditional political participation demanding social equality, e.g. traditional women's movement with demands for equal salary, and influence in local affairs, such as kindergartens, schools, housing, traffic, zoning, etc. Besides, peace and ecological movements attract many »ordinary» citizens along with the activists. People in these movements want to take part in a decision-making process because they feel

that social problems cannot be solved by elites only, and their solution demands participation of the majority of society in an open discussion.

Demands for change are not, however, easy to realize. The first obstacle is the social system itself. The old system will always develop its own defense-mechanisms. That is why the ability of the whole social system to continue its existence is not directly related to degrees of legitimacy or its capability to function otherwise. The reason for that does not lie solely in institutional arrangements of existing political systems (e.g. electoral laws). Contradictory interests of people, their poor ability to organize themselves politically, lack of motivation (passivity), etc. also play a role. Crises are only conditions for a change which also depends on the political skills and strategy of different social actors (cf. Hirsch 1978, 105).

The bourgeois state itself has two faces, one repressive and one ideological (cf. Althusser 1971). The main emphasis has been on the ideological side, but it must, however, be remembered that when that has not worked, the bourgeois state has been quite apt to resort to violence (e.g. repressive measures against the enlargement of democracy in all its history and fascism).

However, as the formation of democracy has been different in different countries, so the relationship between repressive and ideological means seems to vary. Every country has in this respect its own history. Take, for instance, the Federal Republic of Germany. Growth of democracy in Germany was not a result of the struggle of the bourgeoisie against feudalism, rather the bourgeoisie gained power through the feudal state. Because political rights were not a result of the struggle, this has always had its impact on German development. The bourgeoisie has been ready to sacrifice these rights in time of need more readily than has been the case in many other countries (Negt 1981, 21).

However, there is a universal danger of repression that threatens movements trying to broaden democracy. New social movements are an interesting example. Because the state cannot control them as easily as it controls other political movements and because at the same time, many of these movements represent genuine and thoroughgoing demands and alternative practices for changing the whole basis of advanced industrial societies (not only the party system, but also family institution, work ethics, etc.), there increases a danger of repressive measures against them. As has been noted, there is a tendency for a rise of a »security state» with a simultaneous post-democratic and post-fascist content. This would mean a manipulative control of the majority of citizens (e.g. ideological use of mass media, material goods as rewards for »behaving well») at the same time as different kinds of minorities are either brushed aside from the circulation of capital (e.g. the old, the sick and the unemployed) or repressed (dangerous political minorities) (Hirsch 1981, 38).

But, of course, there may not be any need for outright repressive measures. There is also a possibility of a new kind of legitimating ideology. When the first ideological form of legitimation was equality through elections, the difference between revolutionary action and reformism was simply the fact that reformism believed it was possible to win state-power through elections. It is interesting that every time there has been an enlargement of suffrage, the political activity of those struggling for it has usually decreased tremendously after the goal has been achieved. Such was the case, for instance, after women received suffrage (see Colman 1982, 5–6). There were similar tendencies as well when a new form of legitimation arose in the form of equality through compromise. Reformism again believed that it was possible to achieve equality with other social forces by working with them in government and around council tables.

Now the new form of legitimation is about to rise from the demands of new social movements themselves. Criticism of the existing political system has been aimed in the first place towards »political« decision-making, that is, against compromises and decisions made by politicians and civil servants elected on political grounds. There is a certain idea of anti-political politics within the ranks of the new social movements (cf. Gransow 1982, 5). In this situation, decision-makers and politicians have been eager to adopt pseudo-processes of grass-roots democracy. There is already a clear tendency to build forms of controlled political participation with plans for industrial democracy, local committees, etc. In fact, there are a lot of experiments which many local and state governments have launched in order to create new forms of political participation, at the same time when these same bureaucrats have a very authoritarian attitude to citizens' own initiatives concerning political participation. Because this form of legitimation, which could be called non-political decision-making (not because it is non-political, but because it seems to differ from politics as usual), has its roots in real social development and because it is also partly an answer to distrust in politics and politicians as well as an answer to demands for equality and a widening of democracy, it may have a potential to »capture« a part of the members of new social movements (particularly those participating in a more traditional way at a local level), split the criticism, and thereby hinder the change.

It is also interesting that this new form of legitimation tries to get rid of the notion of power. Because politics and politicians are not to be trusted, there is no need for real politics. It is much more important to create a new way of life, which does not want power but quality of living. Democracy does not deal with power but with the good life. In this situation there is, on the other hand, also a tendency to create an illusory feeling of equality among

people with informal interaction among owners and workers, with a new terminology of jobs and so on.

The third problem of the new social movements is internal. Their problem is whether to institutionalize themselves as a political movement as the Greens in the Federal Republic of Germany have done or to remain as a heterogeneous counterculture. In the first case, there is the danger of bureaucratization, in the second, that of political insignificance. If the security state manages to solve the problem of new social movements as a threat to the bourgeois state, it is quite possible to leave them alone in their own ghettos of counterculture. At the same time it is not very difficult to control the more traditional political participation at a local level by splitting and neutralizing citizens' activity. For instance, different groups can be placed against each other easily because interests usually are very scattered at the local level (see e.g. Parenti 1970).

This leads to a problem of political organization in general. The new social situation has changed the traditional role of political parties which are now unable to respond to new developments. They do not find answers in party ideology but are unable to change themselves, because the change could also demand changes in party organization. This is the case above all with European parties and with the parties on the Left. Conservative parties have, in fact, succeeded much better in recent times because their ideology has never been as theoretical as the ideology of the Left, and they have been able to follow pragmatic concerns more easily. In short, major European conservative parties have more and more been changing into kinds of political machines which the political parties of the United States have already been for a long time. The Left in Europe seems, on the other hand, unable to unite. In this situation, the direction of development can lead into a long governance of the right and it is quite probable that the future will be characterized by a long period of conservative (and maybe right-wing populist) governments which govern with the organizational weakness of the Left (cf. Gransow 1982, 16).

Possibilities for Democratic Development

The analysis above does not seem to offer many possibilities for democratic development. The present crisis of democracy may be solved by the existing society so that the real development of democracy will not be realized. The first conditions for change are necessary political skills of the actors and the right kind of political strategy. On the other hand, possibilities for democratic development are different in different countries, demanding strategies suitable

for a given country. There cannot be any universal political strategy which could be applied, but one must take into account the political culture of different countries. This lesson can be learned already by looking at the historical development of democracy. The other lesson to be learned is that the enlargement of democracy has been very much the result of oppressed groups themselves, the working-class being one of the central motors in this development. This said, the following argument cannot but be on a very high level of abstraction.

To enlarge democracy through solving the present crisis, one has apparently to try to solve the problems analyzed above. Whether this is possible is another matter, but the solution must lie in the activity of those groups which are trying to widen democracy. Probably this would require a new kind of political coalition in many countries.

One possibility to avoid at least the dangers of repression would be co-operation and mutual learning processes between the new social movements and traditional working-class organizations. If these new movements together with elements of social democratic and other left-wing parties are able to make some kind of compromise, this would at least offer a common front against the united conservative forces. The coalition would even be necessary for real societal change; even though the composition of the working-class has changed into a complex heterogeneity and its revolutionary potential has diminished, it still is the backbone of social movement (cf. Negt 1981, 16). For new social movements this co-operation would offer safety from repression and avoidance of political insignificance. As a history of the struggle for democracy shows, democratic rights have been very much the product of the struggle of the working-class. It is important to defend these rights, but without the help of the working-class it may not be possible. Co-operation between these two social forces would furthermore diminish the problems of bureaucratization within the new social movements. It would not be absolutely necessary for them to institutionalize themselves. They could be examples of new social relations, thereby changing the basis of the bourgeois state.

Co-operation would also benefit the organizations of the working-class and bring them back to revolutionary politics. Of course, this demands that both sides try to learn something new. It is very difficult to say whether the obstacles for this kind of co-operation are too high at the moment or not (Hirsch and Roth 1981, 18–19, 22–23). However, in order to remove these obstacles, it is important at least to try to demystify the nature of the bourgeois state, above all, in its ideological forms which are major hindrances to co-operation between subordinated classes. In this sense the real political

struggle will be waged in the arena of ideology.

The new coalition would also demand a critical analysis of the role of the political party in contemporary society. In what sense are political parties any more those intermediating forces through which democracy is and will be realized? Whom do the parties represent and how? (cf. Laakso 1980, 346–347). The new kind of political coalition should be open to all, open to internal criticism and the whole concept of representation should be re-evaluated. This would mean that activity would stress the grass-roots level with possible rotation of offices and representation, something which could be learned from the Greens in the Federal Republic (see, e.g. Frankland 1983, 19–27).

Because the class structure of society is not at the moment the basis of political mobilization and there are many important social contradictions which cannot directly be derived from the economy, this kind of political coalition has its background in the nature of the present. When real political struggle is at the level of ideology, the basic goal should be a hegemonic intervention in a Gramscian sense, the coalition's »ability to represent the 'universal' interests of the whole society and to unite to itself a group of allies.» (Sassoon 1978, 28) This would mean going beyond compromises, creation of new alternatives, building utopias, discussion of everyday ethics and bringing ideology back into politics again. Hegemonic intervention should talk more about power than economy, demanding a new kind of democracy, criticizing representative democracy and different forms of legitimation.

Democracy deals with power. The kind of forms created to organize the power structure of society and how democratic they are is dependent on practice. That, on the other hand, is dependent on the political culture of different countries. In some countries the organization of democratic forces may be possible only outside the existing party system (e.g. the Greens in the Federal Republic of Germany), whereas in some others an existing party may form a channel for these same forces (e.g. Socialist Party in France). Still there is a possibility to try to use purely political machines in order to create progressive politics (e.g. the Left within the Democratic Party in the United States). The present crisis of democracy in different countries offers conditions for change, but the direction of that change is still uncertain.

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