



**The Politics of Change. Globalization, Ideology and Critique**

Werner Bonefeld & Kosmas Psychopedis (eds.)

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This illuminating book offers a Marxist consideration of the issue of globalization across the themes of the state and market, globalization theory and the issue of emancipation. Peter Burnham's contribution offers a powerful critique of three main positions — post-Fordist (Jessop), new global order/withering away of the state (Ohmae and Strange), and the internationalization of the state (Cox and Sinclair) — as regards the changing nature of the national state in the global political economy. The post-Fordist thesis is that the increased internationalization of production that globalization has unleashed requires a post-Fordist state which is hyperliberal and has many of its capacities transferred to the international level. The new global order thesis builds on the post-Fordist argument and suggests that the nation state is becoming obsolete given the sway of global forces. Finally, the internationalization of the state thesis suggests that the state is not disappearing but is instead transforming itself to better respond to the needs of the world economy which then determine domestic economic policy. Burnham rejects all three accounts for three main reasons. The first is that they all view the state as being in opposition to the market with the latter having power over the former due to increased globalization. For Burnham, this results in a fetishizing of these relations as things and thus fails to give a class analysis which would conceptualize states and markets as moments in a wider set of social relations. Second, these approaches are also guilty of giving a mythical account of the past where states were assumed to be able to control capital before a perceived watershed in the global political economy some time in the 1970s. Finally, they either ignore the capital/labour relation or see it as external to the process of restructuring. In contrast, Burnham emphasizes the internal relation of states and markets and, following Marx, puts class struggle at the centre of his analysis. On this basis he argues that there has been an increased 'depoliticization' — 'the process of placing at one remove the political character of decision making' (p. 22) — in state strategies to deal with the increased internationalization of capital. Such a process is evident, Burnham argues, in the attempt by national states to reimpose tighter labour discipline and recompose the capital/labour relation. Ultimately, then, he concludes that the fundamental character of the capitalist economy has not been altered by



globalization and that both governments and capital face the same problems as they always have in confronting labour and regulating the social relations of production.

Bonefeld's contribution dovetails nicely with Burnham's analysis as he offers a critique of the world market. Bonefeld offers some interesting exegetical interpretations of Marx's writings here to show how Marx sees the world market not as the sum of many states and their national economies but as the 'totality of capitalist existence' (p. 37). The national exploitation of labour therefore acquires its livelihood as capitalist production in and through the world market. Bonefeld argues that for Marx, the market itself is not simply a national market but is in fact a world market. From its very origin, then, capital has always been global. This strikes at the heart of much globalization theory which reverses this relationship and sees national states as being eroded by globalization. Strategies which therefore attempt to re-assert liberal democratic values at the national level ignore the fact that relations of exploitation would still exist. As Bonefeld rightly asks: 'Can humanization really succeed without concern for the conditions that render humanization necessary?' (p. 65). Liberals would seem to be wrongly and perversely answering 'yes'.

Kosmas Psychopedis concentrates on how the human element has been abandoned in much contemporary theory. For Psychopedis, the fact that the structure of the world is changing due to the process of globalization means that we need to critically re-examine the way we explain phenomena and in doing so transcend rather than rubber stamp existing relations of globalization which are based on exploitation and alienation. Psychopedis therefore stresses how concepts undergo a 'distortion' from asserting human values as social relations which *appear* as individual and egoistic (p. 102). Yet, he suggests, it is this very 'distortion' which indicates that existing structures are in crisis and thus holds out the possibility for emancipatory actions and the creation of a better world.

Helmut Reichelt offers a critique of Habermas' reconstruction of historical materialism. He argues that where Marx and Habermas differ is that Marx focuses on forms to show how capital inverts the relations that bind people together as a community into external relations. The task then is to emancipate ourselves and in doing so ensure that our relations with each other are truly human. Habermas, on the other hand, thinks that the experiences of German fascism and what was actually existing socialism means that such thoughts are now highly questionable. Instead, Habermas suggests that we need to find those ideas that are embodied in the bourgeois state which ought to be preserved in a socialist society. He reconstructs the approach of Critical Theory to do this to show how moral categories impregnate judicial and political institutions. For Reichelt, however, Habermas ultimately fails in his project



because he cannot 'thematise and to develop genetically the actual forms of bourgeois society' (p. 144). As such his theory is insufficiently related to reality and even when it is it only affirms rather than challenges the status quo.

Maurice Godolier considers the issue of transition from one form of society into another. He rejects the dichotomy between evolution or reform and revolution in this process and instead argues for a '*pluralism* of struggles and movements' that are united in their pursuance of radical democracy and thereby a new society (p. 168). In relation to this, Johannes Agnoli examines the seeming triumphalism of capital through the power of global forces. For Agnoli, however, such triumphalism is 'fragile' to say the least and should be opposed through utopian thinking for a more free and equal society (p. 203).

The Zapatista uprising in Chiapas in the south-east of Mexico on 19 December 1994 and the concomitant panic on the financial markets is the focus of John Holloway's spirited and excellent contribution. Holloway cites Subcomandante Marcos' defiant assertion that such an event 'made the Power of Money tremble', and emphasizes the importance of 'dignity' for countering the craziness of capital (p. 173). Holloway argues that the fragility of the international financial system that the Zapatista's caused to tremble is an illustration of capital's inability to fully subordinate labour. Yet he also realizes that the power of capital was expressed in its flight which resulted in huge increases in exploitation. The power of money therefore fought back. As Holloway notes, 'neo-liberalism is the naked rule of money' which has increasingly supplanted the usual rule by military dictatorships (pp. 187–188). The response from those who want to unite dignities and achieve liberation must be then to attack money itself. To some this may seem 'insane', but then, as Holloway argues, it is only as insane as the Zapatista uprising itself 'and yet they made the Power of Money tremble' (p. 190).

Overall, this book offers an interesting consideration of globalization from a Marxist perspective and thus poses challenges for much orthodox theory in this area.

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