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The New Form of Capitalist Militarism: The Permanent State of Exception The Challenges of Anti-War Theory and Activism

“Today, we face the choice exactly as Friedrich Engels foresaw it a generation ago: either the triumph of imperialism and the collapse of all civilization as in ancient Rome, depopulation, desolation, degeneration – a great cemetery. Or the victory of socialism, that means the conscious active struggle of the international proletariat against imperialism and its method of war.”

Rosa Luxemburg (1915)

ABSTRACT

There is a hypothesis here which says that in the populist we have entered a new era of capitalist militarism which can be called the *permanent state of exception*. The populist hybrid regimes recognized the new type of warfare analysed here and introduced it to the everyday politics. Hybrid right-wing populist systems have been created based on the hybrid warfare. I will theorize the biopolitical background of exceptional warfare of our times. After that, I will put an emphasize on the nationalist-populist hybrid regimes which create this exceptional situation based on the permanent enemy creation. Finally, I will show some thought about how we can reconfigure the contemporary anti-war politics and politics. I am convinced that the Left theory and political practice should reconcile the Marxist (especially Gramscian) and the post-structuralist (Laclau-Mouffian) assumptions into a transnational framework. This reconciliation seems to be the main challenge of contemporary Left and in my view the solution can be found in Rosa Luxembourg political thought.

KEYWORDS

Social and Critical Theory, Biopolitics, Rosa Luxemburg, Populism, Hybrid Warfare and Regimes, War, Capitalist Militarism

INTRODUCTION

Rosa Luxemburg was an anti-war theorist and activist and she, as a co-founder of Spartacus League, gave her life to her ideas and activism. In my view, we live in an era in which we have to reconsider what we have thought about war and peace. The separation of war from politics was a fundamental goal of modern political thought and practice among liberal and non-liberal political theorists as well. On the one hand, the problem has been emerged and the nature of war has been changed and now the state of the war

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cannot be seen as a conflict between independent nation-states. The transformation and decline of the theory and practice of modern nation-state sovereignty has changed the nature of war which now can be seen an asymmetric situation and occurs between states and non-state actors as well. On the other hand, the coalition around the separation of war from politics has broken up and there are several political actors who are interested in to introduce the permanent state of exception elaborated by Giorgio Agamben. In the 20th century this has begun with totalitarianism and in the 21st century it continued in the framework of hybrid regimes created by Right-wing nationalist populists. I will analyse in this paper what the capitalist militarism of our time means.

1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND: IMPERIALISM, WAR, BIOPOLITICS

1.1 Imperialist War, Capitalism, Social Democracy

Socialist politics should oppose the imperialism and the war caused by imperialism. Unfortunately, this concept has not been as obviously as it sounds. Probably the main cause behind the embarrassing attitude of the Left towards imperialism and war can be found in the fact that put an end to both means the overthrow of capitalism.

Before the First World War, the anti-imperialist and anti-colonialist attitude was very weak among the Socialist parties: “The socialist parties did indeed speak out against the rapacity of their own governments, but as the discussion at the Stuttgart Congress showed, a consistent anti-colonialist position was far from the thoughts of many leaders of the International.” (Cliff, 1969). Moreover, the Socialist International Congress of 1907 in Stuttgart instated that there were some positive aspects of colonialism. The first World War, which can be seen as a fight between the imperialist powers for the division of the colonies, has been supported by the majority leaders of Socialist International. Rosa Luxemburg clearly opposed imperialism and she put an emphasis on the present danger of imperialist war: “In the event of a threat of war it is the duty of the workers and their parliamentary representatives in the countries involved to do everything possible to prevent the outbreak of war by taking suitable measures, which can of course change or be intensified in accordance with the intensification of the class struggle and the general political situation.” (cited by Cliff, 1969).

There was a shared and unfounded belief among the Socialist “Marxist Centre” (Karl Kautsky, Eduard Bernstein) concerning *capitalist or bourgeois pacifism*: they argued that “imperialism was not a necessary outgrowth of capitalism, but an abscess which the capitalist class as a whole would more and more wish to get rid of”, they were convinced that the peace will become universal and armaments race can be overcome by general disarmament agreements, international arbitration courts, peace alliances, and the formation of the United States of Europe (Cliff, 1969). Instead of this catastrophic viewpoint, Rosa Luxemburg saw it very clearly, that capitalism is impossible without expansion, and capitalism and militarism go hand in hand. She put a sharp emphasis on the militant nature of capitalism: “Militarism fulfils a quite definite function in the history of capitalism, accompanying as it does every historical phase of accumulation.” (Luxemburg, 1951: 454.). Rein stated that Rosa Luxemburg argued convincingly “that militarism plays an essential role and is revealed as an enduring feature of imperialism (even as the practices of direct colonialism were fading) and makes the key role of the state in capitalist accumulation most obvious.” (Rein, 2016: 76.).

Luxemburg analysed the function of capitalist militarism: in the period of “original accumulation” capitalist militarism is crucial part of the colonialism and conquering the

parts of the World outside of Europe, it destroys the social structures of non-European societies, later it has become a weapon in the struggle between capitalist and non-capitalist states (Luxemburg, 1951: 454.). The main assumption about capitalist militarism which evidently makes the beliefs in capitalist pacifism totally illusion is that militarism is a pre-eminent means for the realisation of surplus value (Luxemburg, 1951: 454.). It can be said, that Rosa Luxemburg in a unique way indicated the changing nature what militarism is in capitalist societies: she “showed that imperialism and imperialist war could not be overcome within the framework of capitalism, as they grow out of the vital interests of capitalist society” (Cliff, 1969). Rosa Luxemburg elaborated this in the Guiding Principles of the Spartakus League: “The struggle against imperialism is at the same time the struggle of the proletariat for political power, the decisive conflict between Capitalism and Socialism. “The final aim of Socialism can be achieved only if the international proletariat fights uncompromisingly against imperialism as a whole, and takes the slogan ‘war against war’ as a practical guide to action...” (cited by Cliff, 1969).

The emerging neoliberal thinking and practice after the second World War faced the success of Social Democrats in conjunction with the pacifism: “Demands for social justice found new forums for expression in the world after World War II. United Nations agencies, at least formally, granted nations equal sovereignty, and there were ever more of them in a decolonizing world. European countries built up welfare states, and the countries of the global South demanded consideration of their economic needs.” (Iber, 2018). Although, the neoliberalism is arguing that the capitalism is inherently anti-imperialist, the situation is about that the nature of militarism and war has changed in contemporary phase of capitalism. The main causes are that the language of rights and the consequences of decolonization threatened the capitalist market (Iber, 2018).

1.2 The Changed Nature of Capitalist Militarism in the Populist Era: From the State of War to the State of Exception

The militarist nature of capitalism and the appearances of warfare have been totally redesigned in contemporary societies. The main thought elaborated here is about that the new form of militarist capitalism is based on the privatization and domestication of warfare incorporating it to our everyday life. The militarist capitalism consists of state militarism which is “ultimately in the hands of capital itself through the executive and legislative apparatus of the state and through the press, whose function is the production of so-called public opinion” (cited by Rein, 2016: 79.). Rosa Luxemburg saw very sharply the challenges of militarism-fixed capitalism: “The triumph of imperialism leads to the annihilation of civilization. At first, this happens sporadically for the duration of a modern war, but then when the period of unlimited wars begins it progresses toward its inevitable consequences. Today, we face the choice exactly as Friedrich Engels foresaw it a generation ago: either the triumph of imperialism and the collapse of all civilization as in ancient Rome, depopulation, desolation, degeneration – a great cemetery. Or the victory of socialism, that means the conscious active struggle of the international proletariat against imperialism and its method of war. This is a dilemma of world history, an either/or; the scales are wavering before the decision of the class-conscious proletariat.” (Luxemburg, 1915).

Following the way of Rosa Luxemburg, who studied what militarism methods in the historical versions of capitalist societies, we can investigate the role of militarism in contemporary neoliberal and globalized capitalism. In the 21st century the warfare has been totally redesigned: first, the technological changes have reshuffled the very meaning

of war (for instance the battlefield has become virtual, the war is an ongoing phenomenon on the Internet, that is why the cyber warfare is an existing phenomenon); increasing number of people engaged in warfare; new wars involve state and non-state actors (from terrorist organizations to private warfare companies) as well; moreover, the war itself has been privatized and private companies engaged in war. There is a hybrid, unconventional, irregular warfare (take a look at the Russian intervention in Ukraine) which is complex military strategy which “employs political warfare and blends conventional warfare, irregular warfare and cyberwarfare with other influencing methods, such as fake news, diplomacy and foreign electoral intervention”². These tendencies, as Hardt and Negri (2000) analysed, depend on the decline of nation-state sovereignty and the emerging of the globalized neoliberal capitalist system. Mary Kaldor states that despite the new warfare is being essentially localised, it involves a myriad of transnational connections (2012: 2.). The contemporary war is privatized and globalized at the same time.

Moreover, the type of violence is directed against civilians (Kaldor, 2012: vi.) and we can add to this that it is happening in a more sophisticated way: given the fact that contemporary war is privatized and virtualized, in my opinion, the war is becoming more and more a part of everyday life. We are getting used to war, because we are staring on our devices and meantime we do not even realize that the same thing happens to us as well. According to my main hypothesis, in the populist era there is a very new tendency in the capitalist militarism which can be called the *permanent state of exception*. The populist hybrid regimes recognized the new type of warfare analysed here and introduced it to the everyday politics. Hybrid Right-wing populist systems have been created based on the hybrid warfare. The new contemporary militarist tendencies of globalized capitalism seem to be a relatively new phenomenon, but the political theoretical assumptions behind them are well known from the 20th century and before: what we can see is some kind of re-emerge of the disciplinary society elaborated by Foucault (1990). In the following section I will analyse the permanent state of exception on the biopolitical literature.

1.3 Biopolitical Bases of State of Exception

1.3.1 Giorgio Agamben: *The Production of Bare Life*

Giorgio Agamben (1998, 2005) proceeds from a fundamental continuity of biopolitical mechanisms whose foundation he finds in the *logic of sovereignty*. According to Agamben, who used the works of Michel Foucault, Carl Schmitt, Walter Benjamin, Hannah Arendt, Martin Heidegger, the sovereign power is itself already biopolitical. Agamben stated that “the emergence of the technology of biopower signifies, not a break in the history of Western politics, but the expansion of the existing biopolitical imperative of the State, as bare life moves from the periphery to the centre of the State’s concerns, entering in modernity into the political order as the exception increasingly becomes the rule” (O’Donoghue 2015). According to his view the main distinction of the political is not enemy and friend (as Schmitt argued), but “the separation of natural life (*zoé*) and political qualified life (*bíos*) – that is, the distinction between natural being and the legal existence of a person” (Lemke 2011, 54). Biopower is about to create marginalized forms

² Source: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hybrid_warfare

of life, the production of bare life is the original act of biopolitical power (Takács–Losoncz 2015, 7-8).³ Agamben puts it forward that modern State places the biological life (bare life) at the center of its calculations. He remarkably stipulates that “[t]he idea of an inner solidarity between democracy and totalitarianism... is obviously not... a historiographical claim, which would authorize the liquidation and levelling of the enormous differences that characterize their history and their rivalry.” (1998, 10). This claim has provoked much resistance, because “[i]n this sense, there is no sharp division between parliamentary democracies and totalitarian dictatorships, liberal constitutional states and authoritarian regimes.” (Lemke 2011, 55). The concentration camp and other totalitarian attributes, which are the symbols of the border between bare life and political existence, have been interpreted in a way as “the hidden matrix of the politics in which we still live” (Agamben 2000, 44), this makes “an inner link between the emergence of human rights and the development of concentration camps” (Lemke 2011, 55). From an Agamben’s view the bare life has been produced in these places of totalitarianism, which are the materialized places of the state of exception (Agamben 2005) and concentration camp has become biopolitical paradigm of our age.

According to Lemke: “Agamben outlines this hidden foundation of sovereignty through a figure he derives from archaic Roman law: *homo sacer*. This is a person whom one could kill with impunity, since he was banned from the politico-legal community and reduced to the status of his physical existence. For Agamben, this obscure figure represents the other side of the logic of sovereignty. »Bare life«, which is considered to be marginal and seems to be furthest from the political, proves to be the solid basis of a political body, which makes the life and death of a human being the object of a sovereign decision.” (2011, 54-55). Although, Agamben focuses on the Nazi regime and its modern implications⁴, it is obviously that the Communist regimes used the very similar biopower as other totalitarian structures as it has been elaborated in the previous section.

The populist nature and techniques of contemporary hybrid regimes are new forms of capitalist militarism, because the main goal of the populist propaganda is the rule of the biological life (bare life) and to create the modern form of *homines sacri* (Agamben 1998). Summarizing Agamben main thesis, the “sovereign is not the one who decides on the exception, but the one who decides who belongs to bare life, that is to say, who can be eliminated” (Takács–Losoncz 2015, 8).

1.3.2 Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri: Global Capitalism as a Biopolitical Phenomenon

As Giorgio Agamben (2006), Hardt and Negri also put it forward that the new global form of sovereignty relies on the state of permanent exception or emergency. Ruling the biopolitical moment of the state of exception and managing the crisis caused by the

³ Takács and Losoncz marked: “Agamben’s aim is to show that it is precisely the contingent character of this distinction that determines the way that biopolitics functions. The politicization of natural life on the one hand, and the naturalization and animalization of politics on the other, are the two sides of biopolitical power.” (2015: 8.).

⁴ “The trace of *homo sacer* runs from Roman exiles through the condemned of the Middle Ages to the inmates of Nazi camps, and beyond. In contemporary times, Agamben conceives of »bare life« as existing, for example, in asylum seekers, refugees, and the brain dead. These apparently unrelated “cases” have one thing in common: although they all involve human life, they are excluded from the protection of the law. They remain either turned over to humanitarian assistance and unable to assert a legal claim or are reduced to the status of »biomass« through the authority of scientific interpretations and definitions.” (Lemke 2011, 55).

Empire itself is crucial in the field of the Empire, because “to take control of and dominate such a completely fluid situation, it is necessary to grant the intervening authority (1) the capacity to define, every time in an exceptional way, the demands of intervention; and (2) the capacity to set in motion the forces and instruments that in various ways can be applied to the diversity and the plurality of the arrangements in crisis.” (Hardt–Negri, 2000: 16–17.). Because of the exceptionality a new imperial right has been called right of the police, which ensures the right of the intervention in exceptional situation. This right is moreover a biopolitical and moral obligation of the Empire, because it “is inscribed in the deployment of prevention, repression, and rhetorical force aimed at the reconstruction of social equilibrium: all this is proper to the activity of the police” (Hardt–Negri, 2000: 17.).

The decline of nation-state’s sovereignty becomes tangible because the fact that supranational law overdetermines and reconfigures the domestic law. The most significant example is the right of intervention which ensures “the right or duty of the dominant subjects of the world order to intervene in the territories of other subjects in the interest of preventing or resolving humanitarian problems, guaranteeing accords, and imposing peace” (Hardt–Negri, 2000: 18.). It is obviously that the intervention, as a moral category, has been legitimated by reference to universal values. Intervention means not only military intervention but also moral intervention and juridical intervention (for instance humanitarian NGOs are the most powerful form of imperial intervention).

Foucault (1990) described the historical transformation from *disciplinary society* [in which “social command is constructed through a diffuse network of dispositifs or apparatuses that produce and regulate customs, habits, and productive practices” and it has emerged in the first phase of capitalist accumulation (Hardt–Negri, 2000: 22–23.)] to the *society of control*, in which mechanisms of command has become more democratic and interiorized to the brain and bodies of the citizens. Power in modernity and postmodern times is exercised by “machines that directly organize the brains (in communication systems, information networks, etc.) and bodies (in welfare systems, monitored activities, etc.)”, the society of control can be characterized with “normalizing apparatuses of disciplinarity that internally animate our common and daily practices” (Hardt–Negri, 2000: 23.). On the passage of Foucault, Hardt and Negri described the biopolitical nature of the new paradigm of Empire’s power. Only the society of control can adopt this biopolitical nature of the power, in this context the society is perceived the terrain of biopower: “Society, subsumed within a power that reaches down to the ganglia of the social structure and its processes of development, reacts like a single body.” (Hardt–Negri, 2000: 24.). This new form of power is not totalitarian, moreover the rule of law has a distinguished position in the Empire. Hardt and Negri call biopolitics the nature and the mode of distribution of power, information, and affectivity in contemporary societies (Takács–Losoncz, 2015: 11.).

One of the main elements of these biopolitical terrain from the second half of the 20th century is the structure of transnational corporations which begins to structure global territories biopolitically: “They tend to make nation-states merely instruments to record the flows of the commodities, monies, and populations that they set in motion... directly distribute labour power over various markets, functionally allocate resources, and organize hierarchically the various sectors of world production... They produce agentic subjectivities within the biopolitical context: they produce needs, social relations, bodies, and minds – which is to say, they produce producers.” (Hardt–Negri, 2000: 31–32.). The communication sector has a privileged and hegemonic position in this field, because the legitimation of biopolitical Empire based on communication structures. This

phenomenon is on the one hand is a form of political production and on the other hand construction of imperial legitimation.

Multitude is about the possible realization of democracy, although it is hard to say that contemporary political regimes achieve the commitments of democracy. Hardt and Negri puts forward a thought which says that our incomplete democratization has been caused by the permanent state of war: “...the primary obstacle to democracy is the global state of war. In our era of armed globalization, the modern dream of democracy may seem to have been definitively lost. War has always been incompatible with democracy. Traditionally, democracy has been suspended during wartime and power entrusted temporarily to a strong central authority to confront the crisis.” (Hardt–Negri, 2005: xi).⁵

2. HYBRID REGIMES AND HYBRID WARFARE: THE PERMANENT STATE OF EXCEPTION

In my view, the contemporary Right-wing nationalist and populist regimes (first of all in Russia, Turkey, and Hungary) created a situation between war and peace and it can be called *permanent state of exception*. This situation rises several questions and dilemmas in the light of anti-war theory and activism. Agamben elaborates the concept the state of exception which is the modern form of government according to him and where the biopower of the modern state can control the life of the citizens. This situation is “in-between”, because it situated between law and politics, between war and peace. Not just the war itself, but the peace has been commodified in the era of global capitalism.

As we have seen, Agamben proposed a thesis in conjunction with the hidden foundation of sovereignty and he described a figure he derives from archaic Roman law: *homo sacer*. This is person, since (s)he was banned from the politico-legal community, can be killed by anyone with impunity. In my view, there is a remarkable tendency in the fields of populism which use the biopower of the modern state, as the totalitarian dictatorships as well, to regulate the human life, create a permanent state of exceptions and try to occupy the biopolitical production of financial capitalism. The Right-wing nationalist and populist regimes started to create the modern forms of *homines sacri* (refugees, NGOs, political opponents, ethnical and sexual minority groups) by biopolitical condition of state of exception. In this section, I will analyse the hybrid regimes and its government techniques as permanent state of exception. After that, I describe one of the main method of creating modern *homines sacri*, which is the criminalization of others.

2.1 Hybrid Regimes

After the ‘third wave’ of democratization there has been a proliferation of regimes that are neither fully democratic nor classic authoritarian (Bogaards, 2009). Because of anti-democratization project there was a need to classify a distinct category between the terrain between liberal democracy and dictatorship. There are several assumptions concerning the classification of this hybridity: “Some of the most influential new terms

⁵ In this analysis there is no room to elaborate the alternative concept, called Multitude, of Hardt and Negri to the Empire. They reveal that Not just the Empire has been constructed by the forces of globalization, but a counter-Empire. “The struggles to contest and subvert Empire, as well as those to construct a real alternative, will thus take place on the imperial terrain itself – indeed, such new struggles have already begun to emerge. Through these struggles and many more like them, the multitude will have to invent new democratic forms and a new constituent power that will one day take us through and beyond Empire.” (Hardt–Negri, 2000: xv.).

are ‘delegative democracy’, referring to a minimally democratic country with a lack of horizontal accountability, and illiberal democracy, denoting an electoral democracy in which civil liberties are compromised. More recently, scholars have come to view post-transition regimes not as flawed democracies, but as weak forms of authoritarianism. This has led to a proliferation of adjectives to describe forms of authoritarianism. Some of the best-known examples are ‘semi-authoritarianism’, ‘competitive authoritarianism’ and ‘liberalized autocracy’ (Bogaards, 2009: 399–400). The emerging study of populism has showed that the various forms of hybrid regimes are in a close relationship with the contemporary populism (Robinson and Milne, 2017). Moreover, it has been stipulated by Levitsky that populism “pushes increases the likelihood that fragile democracies will break down into competitive authoritarianism” (2017: 1).

It seems to be obviously that populism in power has significant impact on the hybridity of political systems. On the one hand, there is a tendency which says that the nationalist populist government parties can start to reconfigure the political systems in which they gained power toward a hybrid regime. On the other hand, the hybrid regimes “can themselves develop populism to explain and justify their democratic shortcomings”, because not all the populist parties gain governmental power by electoral procedures (Robinson and Milne, 2017: 412). In this sense, the populism can be a tool of regime stabilization. In my view, both connection of populism and hybrid regime (“populism in power” and “populism as justification”) can be based on the concept of police and penal state. It has happened in Russia, Turkey, Hungary and Poland. It is also true from some respects to the USA in the Trump era.

Populism is based on an alternative conceptualisation of state-society relations compared to the liberal democratic institutions, because populism is based on “popular sovereignty” instead of legal institutions (Robinson and Milne, 2017: 413). This situation can cause several serious tensions within the democratic institutional structures. That is why transforming the state according to populist assumptions is very hard and can move to non-democratic way: “Difficulties in transforming the state mean that populism can create hybrid regime types rather than realizing its project to create a new form of popular representation that allows for pluralism.” (Robinson and Milne, 2017: 414). The institution building of populism in power can move very easily in an authoritarian direction, undermining several institutions that mediate between state and society (NGOs), manipulating the law-making and processes of public authorities, moreover using police force to fulfil political requirements.

2.2 Exceptional Governments

In my view, there is a remarkable tendency in the fields of contemporary populism in power: it starts to use the concepts the capitalist militarism to regulate the human life, create a permanent state of exceptions. The fusion of police and penal state caused some kind of exceptional governments which has met with the capitalist militarist tendencies. In state of exception-based populist hybrid regimes “[a] formal state of exception is not declared and we see instead that vague non-juridical notions – like the security reasons – are used to install a stable state of creeping and fictitious emergency without any clearly identifiable danger.” (Agamben, 2014). According to Agamben there is a seminal transformation in conjunction with the idea of government, “which overturns the traditional hierarchical relation between causes and effects. Since governing the causes is difficult and expensive, it is safer and more useful to try to govern the effects.” (Agamben, 2014). The populist hybrid regimes started to manage the effects of the crisis made by

them and this is a considerable change not just in the concept of government, but the penal politics. Agamben described this situation in the following way “The ancien regime aimed to rule the causes; modernity pretends to control the effects. And this axiom applies to every domain, from economy to ecology, from foreign and military politics to the internal measures of police. We must realize that European governments today gave up any attempt to rule the causes, they only want to govern the effects.” (2014).

2.3 Everyday Warfare: Criminalization of Others

Hardt and Negri (2004, 6) stipulate that *the separation of war from politics* was a fundamental goal of modern political thought and practice among liberal and non-liberal political theorists as well. On the one hand, a problem has been emerged, the nature of war has been changed and now the state of the war cannot be seen as a conflict between independent nation-states. According to my hypothesis, the transformation and decline of the theory and practice of modern nation-state sovereignty has changed the nature of war which is an asymmetric situation and it can take place state and non-state actors. On the other hand, the coalition around the separation of war from politics has broken up and there are several political actors on the nationalist-populist Right-wing who are interested in to introduce the permanent state of exception elaborated by Agamben (1998, 2005). In my view, the disappearing borders of war can be interpreted in a way that war is dissolving in the peace situation and the rising of state of exception remarkably indicates this procedure. In this sense, the police forces have become the soldiers of the state of exception where the rule of war and even the legal bases of normal situation will be empty.

Concluding this situation, the state of exception-based form of government has created a new form of state, which can be called populist hybrid regime focusing on the security reasons (for instance terrorism, domestic problems). The police force in a permanent state of exception has become a relationship with the state itself. This has caused several dangers: “placing itself under the sign of security, the modern state has left the domain of politics to enter a no man’s land, whose geography and whose borders are still unknown” (Agamben, 2014). In my view, the rise of the police state based on the state of exception means unprecedented danger, because of the pressure making everyday warfare, the populist governments use the bureaucratic and political power of the state to create political enemies and annihilate them as the modern forms of homo sacer (this has happened in Hungary during the refugee crisis and nowadays, moreover a system of everyday warfare has been institutionalized in Turkey and Russia).⁶

3. ANTI-WAR THEORY AND ACTIVISM: FIGHTING AGAINST THE EXCEPTIONAL WARFARE

In this situation, the question arises: what should and have to be done? I am convinced that we should return the anti-war theory and practice of Rosa Luxemburg and we must renew it at the same time according to the alteration of capitalist militarism and the challenges of our time elaborated here. First of all, we should analyse and describe the real world we live in, because the permanent state of exception began to become to everyday reality: we are in a situation of war without the formal declaration of war. This

⁶ According to political theoretical base of enemy creation in Hungary see: Antal, 2017a.

paper aimed to be a little contribution to this debate and confrontation. I would like to put an emphasize on three points: (1) the necessity to combine the class-based and mass-based traditions in the Left theory and practice; (2) mass movements against enemy creation; (3) mass strikes against the authoritarian state and capitalism.

3.1 Combination of Class-based and Mass-based approaches

I am convinced (Antal, 2018) that the main factor of the unprecedented breakthrough of the Right-wing nationalist-populism is the specific situation where the Right-wing nationalist-populism has found a way to be populist from both a Gramscian (creating a hegemonic bloc and constructing hegemony) (2000) and a Laclau-Mouffian (creating political identities from the masses) perspective (1985). It is definitely true in Eastern Europe, but other parts of the world affected by Right-wing nationalist-populism

Although, the hegemonic project of the nationalist-populist Right abounds in nationalism, antagonizing rhetoric and xenophobia, it reflects a Gramscian way of thinking. In this sense, the Right-wing leaders emerged as a “post-modern Prince”, which is ‘a political subject that could form a collective will out of diversity and difference, in a social, cultural, and political context’ (Briziarelli, 2018: 106.).

The Laclau-Mouffian theory of populism is based on “the heterogeneous, precarious, and volatile subaltern, which is formed by people who feel they have fallen outside society’s social contract” (Briziarelli, 2018: 106.). What makes the populism of nationalist-populist Right so remarkable from a Leftist perspective is the fact that the they reacted to the transformation and liquidation of the working-class (Rovny, 2018): its populism goes beyond class-based politics and embraces a nationalistic-nativist discursive strategy. The nationalist-populist Right put the emphasis on the making of sub-cultures, which offered the replacement of narrow ideologies with populist transversality. This kind of populism based on catchwords and “empty signifiers” (Laclau) is capable of merging several sources of discontent together to create a strong protest identity. Based on the Laclau-Mouffian populist model, the nationalist-populist Right successfully expropriated from the Left its critique of globalized capitalism and of EU’s neoliberal institutions in Eastern Europe.

The Left should consider coalescing the Marxist (especially Gramscian) and the post-structuralist (Laclau-Mouffian) assumptions into a transnational framework. I am afraid that without such a perspective, Left populism will deal with similar problems as Eastern Europe: it will have no future or even worse, it could go down the nationalist slope. This reconciliation will be the main challenge of contemporary Left and in my view the solution can be found in Rosa Luxemburg political thought.

3.2 Mass Movements against Enemy Creation

The reconciliation of Marxist and post-structuralist traditions requires the awareness of the militarist nature of capitalism elaborated by Rosa Luxemburg. There is no compromise with the capitalism as it has happened before the First World War and since then too many times. The nationalist-populist Right is lying to the declining classis and manipulating the awed masses. This strategy required nationalism, xenophobia, racism, a politics of hatred based on political cleavages created. The nationalist-populist Right used the resources of the State implementing penal and police state which maintain the criminalization of other. There is a core need of a transnational mass movement against the enemy creation of nationalist-populist Right. We should elaborate a new “war against

war” strategy which is based on uncompromisingly fight against the militarist nature of capitalism. The rise of the contemporary nationalist-populist Right proves Rosa Luxemburg’s thesis: militarism is an inescapable and quite definite function of capitalism (Luxemburg, 1951: 454.).

3.3 Mass Strikes against Authoritarian State and Capitalism

On the one hand, the hybrid regimes use the whole power and bureaucratic apparatuses of the State to maintain the permanent exception. On the other hand, contemporary nationalist-populist Right-wing hybrid regimes have been totally integrated to the neoliberal global world order. This thesis can be reinforced by the concept of authoritarian capitalism (Bloom, 2015; Scheiring, 2018). According to Bloom: “The intervening two decades have severely tested such optimism. The post Cold War world reflects a much more authoritarian reality than the one predicted by the liberal triumphalists. It is characterised by ‘market despots’, such as China and Russia, as well as a rising tide of so-called ‘illiberal democracies’.” (2015). The nationalist populist Right-wing hybrid regimes represent a discipline force which can create the modern forms of homines sacri. Bloom puts it forward: “The global spread of capitalism fundamentally depends on an authoritarian form of politics. It is a repressive logic whereby a strong capitalist sovereign is required to ‘discipline’ those who are economically ‘irresponsible’. This can be seen as states ‘disciplining’ citizens, corporations ‘disciplining’ their workforce, or international organisations ‘disciplining’ states.” (2015).

In this sense, we have to find the way to organize mass strikes against the authoritarian State and capitalism. This is a double challenge in hybrid regimes, given the fact that the State and capitalism have been militarized at the same time. The social democratic movement need to find the way to reach trade unions. We should again put an emphasize on Rosa Luxemburg, who stated that: “The trade-union movement is not that which is reflected in the quite understandable but irrational illusion of a minority of the trade-union leaders, but that which lives in the consciousness of the mass of proletarians who have been won for the class struggle. In this consciousness the trade-union movement is part of social democracy.” (1906). Of course, the revolutionary development will not happen by command and several social factors are needed to the revolution. (Luban, 2011). However, the reconciliation of class-based and mass-based politics proposed here could offer a very new perspective of anti-war movements in 21st century.

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