**Isabelle Garo on Marx’s strategic thought and the spirit of revolt**

**Interview and translation by DARREN ROSO**

Isabelle Garo is an esteemed Marxist writer on the French left. She has written substantially on the connections between Marxism, politics and philosophy, and is currently helping to translate the collected works of Marx and Engels into French.

In this interview with *Marxist Left Review*’s Darren Roso, she discusses the political and philosophical challenges faced by the Marxist left today, assesses the theoretical contributions of Alain Badiou and Ernesto Laclau, and makes the case for a dynamic and politically engaged return to the revolutionary spirit of Marx’s writings. Garo has published *Marx, une critique de la philosophie* (Seuil, 2000), *L’idéologie ou la pensee embarquée* (La Fabrique, 2009), *Foucault, Deleuze, Althusser & Marx: La politique dans la philosophie* (Demopolis, 2011), *Marx et l’invention historique* (Syllepse, 2012), *L’or des images – art, monnaie, capital* (La Ville Brûle, 2013).

**Let’s begin with a short balance sheet of our current context. Your opening chapter announces that an emancipatory political project is in tatters – it has broken down. Why have you raised communism and strategy and deliberately sharpened the question of revolutionary politics today? What is it exactly you want this book to achieve and why?**

The present context in France and across the world is quite bad for the exploited and oppressed in general, as also for the organised workers’ movement. This long term weakening in the conditions of capitalist crises gave the green light to the ruling classes to take out their revenge at the end of the 1970s and wind back the limited but real social gains of the post-war period. The neoliberal policies imposed by the ruling classes haven’t ceased today to be reinforced – with their procession of social regression, reinforced exploitation and inequalities, financialisation, the commodification of all human activities, as well as repression and militarisation, all that in a context of persistent crisis that weakens capitalism and sharpens its inter-imperialist tensions. The threat of further economic tremors and the patently manifest effects of the climatic and environmental crisis are added to the list of human-inflicted damage, which hit the poorest, women and migrants the hardest.

Resistance with its many examples is strong in the face of this unprecedented global situation within which all these dimensions interact, but it remains fragmented. With the general capitulation of social democratic organisations to the cult of the market and the collapse of the Stalinist regimes, with the weakening of militant trade unionism, the challenge facing the radical left is enormous. Meanwhile the far right and racism are being propped up and instrumentalised by the neoliberal governments barely able to maintain stable electoral majorities.

But this picture would be incomplete if it left out the vivacity of social struggles all over the world. The *Gilets Jaunes* (Yellow Vests) movement in France, unprecedented and disparate – but powerful and durable – continues to mark the present situation all the while accelerating the decomposition of the existing political landscape. People are rising up in country after country against social injustice and authoritarianism. Capitalism is seen for what it really is – *irreformable* – guided by its most destructive and murderous trends. Despite the many avenues present in the movements (degrowth, universal income, the commons, ecological enclaves and libertarian insurrection, etc.), we don’t have a credible and common alternative. Sometimes the lines of struggle seem divorced from one another, for instance here the defence of the environment and over there is feminism, and there the struggle against racism and over here the defence of public services that still may exist.

This generalised radical crisis is fraught with threats but it also calls for the revival of strategic reflection, after its long “eclipse” as Daniel Bensaïd called it. This reflection bears upon the alternative that must be rebuilt, but it also raises questions of the organisation and reorganisation of our political and social forces that are too often trapped in electoralist logics or naïve ultra-leftist insurrectionalist fantasies.

In these conditions, it is urgent to reflect on the way – even on the theoretical level – these existing emancipatory struggles can be unified without claiming to dictate the exact path they must follow or unifying them bureaucratically from above.

We must also return to questions pertaining to the rebuilding of militant and revolutionary culture – after decades of defeats and assaults, of uninterrupted propaganda from the ruling class media, of demonisation of revolution, disqualification of the vocabulary necessary to thinking about and speaking of any alternative, and therefore of building it.

My project began with this overall ideological situation, and its contradictions, by first moving through the relative return of the communist question on the theoretical terrain at a moment when its political disqualification is complete. I tried to precisely analyse the approaches of certain authors who have taken up the communist question while also situating them in their context and taking the time to re-examine the construction of a strategic alternative to capitalism. Because to actively participate in the revival of such strategy also takes place on the theoretical terrain.

**You reverse the order of presentation by beginning with the most up to date philosophers who are read on the left (Alain Badiou, Ernesto Laclau and Antonio Negri) before treating Marx’s ideas on emancipation and strategy. Why do you think it is important for a Marxist to take philosophers head-on? Aren’t philosophers ordinarily concerned with the search after Truth and the Good emptied of politics? You have elsewhere written a book about the relation of Michel Foucault, Gilles Deleuze and Louis Althusser to Marx – how do you understand the relations of philosophy, politics and history and why must you relate Marxism and philosophy? I take it that you do your best to show that Marxists take specific positions on philosophical questions.**

Your question has many components. With respect to the inverse order of my presentation, it testifies to the fact that my work does not follow a history of ideas, even if I believe that the greatest care is required when one moves through a critical and contextualising reading. My purpose is to begin with the present and to return to it, by passing through that which could help us radically transform it. To commence with an analysis of current philosophical works seems pertinent to me for many reasons. First because it is on this terrain that the communist and socialist questions are re-emerging, in France at least. Second because the authors I have chosen have all upheld an extremely critical relation to Marx and to Marxism. This gives a political dimension to their works that allows a return to reading Marx from a contemporary point of view. Last because their works, the reception of which is important, are all vectors of a complex repoliticisation of left wing intellectual debate that is revitalising the question of social transformation. These authors therefore invite debate and offer points from which strategic reflection can be kicked off again.

But you also raise the question of philosophy, as an eternal form situated beyond historical contingencies without any or hardly any transformative will. If the philosophers of whom I spoke in this book and my earlier one are in fact inheritors of this model of *philosophia perennis* [perennial philosophy], they belong to a tradition whose relation to the political is constitutive and singular. To capture it briefly: the French philosophy that emerged in the 1970s tried to redefine the notion of intellectual engagement. Sartre’s great stature served as a foil, because he was a fellow traveller of the Communist Party and a spokesperson for international causes.

There was a profound ideological turn in France at this time, an intellectual and media offensive against Marxism and the communist project under the slogan of anti-totalitarianism, and this discredited the universal Sartrean form of the intellectual. Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze (among others), who were at once removed from but tied to this general climate, participated in this transformation of the intellectual and political landscape in their own way; they both did so by originally reworking the philosophical terrain of it and by proposing micro-political orientations which were ambiguous but in opposition to the organisations of the workers’ movement, a rupture with the very notion of class struggle and with any perspective of the abolition of capitalism.

These brilliant and innovative non-Marxist theoreticians durably impacted their time and the history of philosophy while participating in the post-modern rejection of “grand narratives” that often targeted a caricatured Marxism. Importantly, they were able to reconcile opposites: academism and its radical critique; the rejection of institutions and their expert use; the will towards political renovation and a growing tendency towards mass depoliticisation interrupted by May ’68.

The authors I studied in this book inherit many of these characteristics. But because they are intervening in a very different context, they are also distant from them on many points: capitalism has not stabilised, quite the contrary, and resistance was scattered by the crisis of the Fordist-Keynesian compromise and the ruling classes’ thirst to win back their gains indeed weakened forms of class struggle on our side. Though all those I have chosen to discuss uphold an offensive conception of critical intervention, and though they put the discussion with Marx and Marxism at the heart of their own elaboration, they advocate a turn to a very different path that they suggest is capable of sustaining a possible social and political transformation at a time when the ruling classes are everywhere leading an intensifying social war.

One of the most striking features of this present conjuncture is therefore the return of the theme of communism on the theoretical terrain, more exactly the philosophical terrain. This positive use of the term “communism” remains a marginal one, but up to a certain point it reactivates the hope that was once invested in it, all the while remaining divorced from concrete political perspectives. And it is here that we find certain constant themes of a certain type of contemporary philosophical intervention: *usefully radicalising the critique of the existing world, it also tends to avoid the question of transitions and mediations, that is to say, the question of the means and organisations (concentrating instead on the ends), cut off from the building of social and political mobilisations.*

From this angle, Alain Badiou, Ernesto Laclau and Toni Negri, among others, all share two distinctive traits: on the one hand, they illustrate the durable fragmentation of alternatives and the cordoning off of previously related themes, in privileging certain lines to the detriment of others. So Badiou focuses on the state and the party, Laclau on hegemony, and property for Negri and the theorists of the commons; on the other hand, they try to repoliticise theory but it remains within the fold of theory itself. In other words, this repoliticisation of theory remains dependent on the displacement of politics by philosophy (a shift from politics to philosophy), and that is congruous with, and reactualises, the very same critique of Marxism developed between the 1960s and 1980s.

This is why I think it’s important to delicately evaluate this displacement which is neither a flight away from politics nor a direct taking up of politics, but rather the symptom of its crisis and an aspiration towards its renewal. And it’s also necessary to seize the moment, in the purview of the revitalisation of collective reflection as to the alternative to capitalism by starting from the paradox of this politics that refers to “communism” – the sign of the problematic links between an emancipatory project and its concretisation.

**I’d like you to outline your critique of Alain Badiou. In Australia you can make a career in philosophy out of an obsession with Alain Badiou. Of course, this is divorced from any commitment to radical politics beyond a banal verbalism, and it’s an example of the way Anglophone academics spend their lives propagating the ideas of whoever is à la mode on the continent. They naively treat Badiou’s relation to Maoist politics as a historical curiosity – tell a few jokes about Badiou’s Maoism, show your leftist credentials and then move on to the serious business of abstract philosophy. But you argue that in fact Badiou’s philosophical production is intimately part of his Maoist political project and, while creative, both of these projects have their limitations. Why?**

Well the first thing to underline is that Alain Badiou is one of the most stimulating philosophers alive today, one of those rare thinkers who is known and renowned for intransigently brandishing the banner of communism. One can reproach him for making a banner out of it (which tends towards schematism) and neither must one adhere to the philosophical construction that is indissociable from it in his work. But at a time when celebrity pseudo-intellectuals reign supreme, who are downright mediocre and wilfully collaborate in the rise of reactionary and racist ideas in France, Badiou is a laudable exception. His reception is a complex question from this point of view: if one remains focused on the epigones, one could correctly denounce an empty rhetoric that is merely gestural. But the greatest part of his audience is far away from all academic ambition and is actually searching for a renovated theoretical-political orientation. I’m addressing this kind of readership.

In order to do this, it seemed more interesting to situate the authors I discuss in their time and their trajectory – simultaneously intellectual and political – than to just contradict them. Badiou’s example is fascinating. He was born into a well-cultured left wing family (in 1937 – his father was in the resistance, mayor of Toulouse and a founder of the Unified Socialist Party). He undertook his philosophy studies at the prestigious *École Normale Supérieure* in Paris at a time when Louis Althusser taught there and regrouped around him a plethora of brilliant young philosophers. Althusser was also a critical militant of the French Communist Party, and he would never leave it. When the internal political debates hit and were crossed through with international questions as well as the opposition between the USSR and China, some of Althusser’s students came closer to the Chinese road and founded the Union of Marxist-Leninist Communists in France (1969): Badiou was part of this. He subsequently founded the Political Organisation (1985) which continued this same strategic orientation and was marked by a virulent rejection of the state and institutional forms in general, parties and trade unions included.

Badiou never reneged on his strategic choices but his initial orientations underwent considerable transformations, profoundly structuring his philosophical reflection even to the ontological and mathematical dimension which purifies his theses. We can say that with him a certain form of French philosophy of the 1970s, which was elaborated over a period of political retreat, conserved the spirit of protest and aspirations that are reawakening and renewing themselves today.

Hence if communism is for him an Idea, his purpose is absolutely not to affirm the primacy of theory *over* reality: the Idea according to Badiou is not a norm that is outside the historical process but an immanent norm, whose resurgence punctuates history to the tune of its repeated failures. An Idea is thus not destined to be realised (in the victory of communism) but to manifest itself in history, its defeats not impeding but actually guaranteeing its eternal return. And so also its eternal defeat! But this thesis should be discussed. It goes hand in hand with a re-exploration of the dialectic and a critique of representation (in the philosophical and political meaning of the term) which implies a rejection of institutions and a critique of democratic forms as if they are destined to bureaucratic relapse.

Communism is conceived of as a permanent popular mobilisation. It exists only as a historical convulsion, not as an instituted alternative: this exalting or exalted conception leans towards historical pessimism. Above all this ontology of history prevents thinking through the non-delegated forms of representation, associated with the control and the revocability of those elected. It abandons the exploration of radically democratised forms of communism of a new generation, concerned to renew collective planning over social life while also being against barracks socialism and the free market.

It is exactly this type of question that we are today confronted with. It invites us to critically debate Badiou’s proposed reading of Marx, when the latter analysed the Paris Commune, its institutional inventions and its forms of mobilisation. More generally, Badiou’s hostility to “socialism” goes back to his refusal to pose the question of dialectical articulation and mediations that are so urgent to revisit today, if we want to finally succeed in exiting from capitalism and constructing a viable and democratic social organisation.

**Your chapter on the late Ernesto Laclau is very valuable. With the renewed prospects of socialist electoralism, left reformist currents have looked to Laclau’s defence of left populism as a way of politically organising. Omar Hassan has written about this in an article titled “Podemos and left populism” in this journal.[[1]](#endnote-2) When Laclau and Mouffe’s book *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* was first published, the *New Left Review* ran Norman Geras’ incisive criticisms of their philosophical presuppositions, political arguments and cheap digs at Marx.[[2]](#endnote-3) Geras argued that the reach and hold of ideas is not always a direct function of their truth or quality, and that Laclau and Mouffe had blurted out an ex-Marxism without substance that in fact led to an impasse. Geras argued that socialist thought faced a two-fold difficulty. On the one hand socialist thought must understand the world, and to discover truths about the world is a many-headed collective effort involving open debate. On the other hand, socialist thought confronts different forms of hostility, “pressed in from all directions by those ready to write it off, deride it, belittle both its hopes and achievements as illusion or dross”.[[3]](#endnote-4) Laclau and Mouffe had met this two-fold difficulty improperly by taking intellectual short cuts that led back to liberal democratic criticisms of Marxism which have already been answered many times over. Thus, Laclau and Mouffe reinforced the anti-Marxist backlash going on at the time in several European countries to the benefit of bourgeois parliamentary democracy. Can you take us through the key steps of your critique of Laclau?**

That’s right – the works of Laclau and Mouffe have been widely criticised, particularly in the Anglophone world, and fuelled the debate on the question of socialism and also on strategy and hegemony, and this it to their merit. In the end, we can judge their contributions to be paltry and that their proposed political orientation had nothing whatsoever new to it: I share this criticism. But on this point again it is necessary to read Laclau’s texts closely, on account of the impact they have had today on a part of the radical left, and again considering the intellectual and political trajectory that sheds light on the theses he argued for.

Before elaborating on these remarks, we must begin by noting that Laclau’s profile is quite different from Badiou’s. Laclau was born in Argentina and was trained in a singular Argentinean political culture. He was a member of a far left party that decided to support Peron, who was deemed anti-imperialist. He constantly reaffirmed his faithfulness to his initial commitment, even if he evolved towards liberal institutional choices later on. And actually, we can take Peronism to have remained the matrix of Laclau’s later conception of populism as the construction of an alliance beyond the boundaries of class, which involves the articulation and aggregation of diverse demands (that can even be incommensurable) that can be embodied in the figure of a leader.

From this vantage point, one can say that Laclau is one of the rare authors to stand on the ground of strategic reflection, even if he reduces the field solely to the question of winning hegemony within the framework of existing institutions and capitalism. We can say that his work consorts with the contemporary ideological turn, without analysing it but also without giving up political intervention. And his methods are subtle.

Hence for instance, Laclau argues that social classes only exist through their struggles. This thesis is also Marx’s. But Laclau radicalises it to the point of cutting off the definition of this struggle from all conflicts of social and economic interest, anchored in the very structure of the capitalist mode of production. Because no class is an alternative, it must be given to it from the outside: the leader is a demiurge, working for the political unification of a social world that is fragmented by definition. The success of this intervention depends only on the judicious selection of a demand or of one “interpellation” among others, able to catalyse them. Hegemony finds itself redefined as a tool to access social and political power such as it stands, very far indeed from the notion that is borrowed from Gramsci.

More generally, Marxism in Laclau’s eyes is simultaneously an obsolete theory and a reservoir of notions to redefine, a vocabulary to renew. The way he debates Marx’s theses is often devoid of any rigor. Laclau knows he can count on a general lack of knowledge when it comes to Marx, Marxism and the failures of statised socialism, by attributing to Marx the project of a communism that is summed up in the “dictatorship of the proletariat” and in playing with the sinister resonances of the term “dictatorship” throughout the twentieth century.

Because of this pruning operation, emancipatory strategy is redefined as the fabrication of an effective subterfuge, of a unifying myth, close to the ideas developed by Georges Sorel at the turn of the twentieth century (his nationalist and anti-Semitic side would distance him from all emancipatory perspectives). The essential point for Laclau is to begin the linguistic and rhetorical turn of socialism, with only “discursive constructions” being able to confer a provisional coherence to a social world that is fundamentally fragmented and malleable, blind to its own future. This is what the word “populism” means in strategic terms: not the popular will, but in reality, its opposite, the construction of a people by the strategist who presents himself as its expression, its incarnation, and not as its representative or its delegate subject to collective control.

Laclau elaborates a very particular style that is in profound agreement with this compass-less strategy. It is deeply eclectic, heteroclite even, mixing the most diverse references, from Kautsky to Barthes, from Gramsci to Wittgenstein, from Marx to Schmitt – conforming to the image of a fragmented social world he describes; this is carried out while trying to rhetorically illustrate and legitimise a pragmatist politics that disguises itself as a radical innovation. From this point of view, when Laclau defines political intervention as the discursive elaboration of a demand that pre-exists it, he actually correctly describes what is in fact the manner in which his own theory is built!

This alternative to the alternative ultimately takes liberal democracy’s word for good coin. Laclau began by decoupling socialism and communism: his double rejection of political mediations and anti-capitalist goals eventually led him to propose what one could call a “post-socialism” – a political pendant of post-Marxism – that is nothing more than bourgeois parliamentary democracy led back to its own abstract and empty ideal: the pluralism of opinions. At a time when democracy is decomposing, to recall the slogans of classical liberalism can seem quasi-subversive! But fundamentally, Laclau’s goal is merely to rehabilitate intervention in the institutional political field as it currently stands, by acknowledging the growing popular rejection of it while also reaffirming its unsurpassable horizon. This conception calls for debate, given the resonance it today has in France and Spain.

**I’d like to move now to your chapters on Marx, on emancipation and strategy respectively. You are against reading Marx in a purely Marxological way and insist on the political dimensions of Marx’s work. You call for a renewed political reading of Marx and communism, anchored in the critique of political economy. What did you want your readers to draw from your chapter on Marx, communism and emancipation?**

This question forms the heart of the book. I am one of those who considers Marx’s thought to have an unparalleled ability to encourage a critical analysis of capitalist relations of exploitation and domination, which are constantly changing. Far from being descriptive, this analysis is part and parcel of the perspective of a radical transformation of social reality, which is its condition even more than its consequence. It is precisely this critical potential – at once theoretical and militant – always in need of readjustment and being brought up to date, which manifests itself particularly in the strategic field, in a way that has hardly been touched on enough until now.

Far from presenting Marx as the bearer of an eternal truth, with a view of giving a lesson to all those who deviate away from such eternal truth, the purpose of my book is actually the opposite: since authors today are renewing themes of communism (and socialism), since the question of the alternative always searches for, and forges itself, within the social relations and existing ideas, let us start from these contemporary questions to reread Marx in their light and ask the great question that concerns us all anew: that of the abolition of capitalism.

The chapters dedicated to Marx are focused on the constant development of his conception of communism which is never a project he has readymade answers for, but neither is it an evanescent and indefinable notion. The term names the complex process of building a political path of the radical contestation of capitalism, the permanent invention of the theoretical and practical means to achieve it, all the while sketching the outlines of the society to invent.

This is why we can say Marx’s communism is *strategic* and is far from many historical interpretations that ossify and simplify his arguments.

Marx’s questions are still our own: what are the contradictions of capitalism and how to intervene into it? How to build organisations that lead social struggles to their revolutionary terminus? How to confront the question of the state and democracy? How to conjoin and mobilise different social forces bearing emancipatory projects that are not necessarily the same? The revolutions of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries have faced all of these obstacles. To return to Marx from this vantage point is not at all to look for readymade answers, but to raise questions that still concern us and to find analyses that retain – in many ways – an unparalleled power if we reactivate the political scope of them.

**When Marxism was under attack in France and Italy in the 1980s, one of the key arguments mobilised against its adherents was that it lacked a specific “politics”. They basically said that Marxism dissolves politics into economics. You have coedited *Political Marx* and tried to show the political content of Marxism and I find your chapter on Marx’s communism as strategy a further contribution to this debate. You insist on the revolutionary potential of labour power, and you claim that this potential has political and epistemological consequences (that reformists and liberals fail to comprehend) which tie critical knowledge and political rebellion together. Why should Marx be read with an eye to communism as strategy? What were the key moments in the development of Marx’s strategic thought, and why do they matter for our present?**

This reading of Marx as an anti-political author remains the dominant interpretation today. It is correct in one way if we consider that Marx fundamentally redefines the notion of politics, by refusing to cut it off from economic and social dimensions, inaugurating a “critique of political economy” that articulates them. But above all, Marx’s analysis bears on the contradictions and on the manners of intervening into them: far from proposing a model of the ideal society, prior to its historical construction and taken to polish off the meaning of history in a definitive sense, Marx calls “communism” a political construction based on the class struggle. And in days gone by, as today, the struggles of ideas take part in these class struggles.

One of the central tenets of this Marxian communism concerns the transformations of the relations of property, which form the legal structure of capitalism. Today, it is common to encounter a critique of capitalism that denounces consumerism and consumers, who are judged incurably intoxicated by the dependence on commodities. This critique disarms action and fails to understand the complexity of the wage relation, where the conditions of life and the spirit of revolt, the aspiration to social justice and the adhesion to the competitive vision of the world, and the whole gamut of their interrelations, are tied together. It also misses the dimension of individuality as a contradictory place where aspirations, constraints and consent collide.

It is at this precise point that communist intervention takes on its full meaning, as a politicisation and collective organisation of this social rage that is everywhere today being felt again, and which takes contradictory – regressive as well as emancipatory – forms. Marx thinks it through in a powerful way: as the abolition of large scale capitalist property and of the regime of wage slavery, and as the appropriation of the self (individual and collective) aiming towards the development of autonomy, human faculties, collective social control, of the reorganisation of time. For Marx, capitalist social relations organise the theft of human activity and its products, this fundamental dispossession affecting the human subject with full force.

The central motor power of the class struggle is the propertyless taking back the proceeds of their exploited labour. This is a central place where a possible forming of class consciousness can take shape. The associated producers must take back that which they never actually had, but which they are clearly lacking: the collective control of their working conditions, the production and distribution of wealth that is produced by them.

Once the extent of this re-appropriation is redefined, which involves the development of unprecedented potentialities, the difficulty lies in making it a credible and mobilising political objective, placed at the heart of revolutionary strategy: it is precisely this question that Marx tackles both in *Capital* and in the political writings, whether they be interventions or analyses, weaving the question of ends and mediations (means) into a coherent whole.

The question of communism must therefore be posed at the heart of the “laboratory of production”: against bourgeois political economy, Marx argues loud and clear that “labour is the substance, and the immanent measure of value, but has itself no value”.[[4]](#endnote-5)

It’s precisely here that exploitation and domination are knotted together and clash with the social rage they evoke, forming a contradiction that is as economic as it is social and individual: “That which comes directly face to face with the possessor of money on the market, is in fact not labour, but the labourer”, Marx writes.[[5]](#endnote-6) It is the workers’ faculties that are simultaneously forged and denied, their emancipation that is met and denied, that drives the producers to struggle for the shortening of the working day and, in the end, against capitalism as such. The question of property widens here to the question of emancipation. We are far from having a communist program that remains exterior and anterior to the class struggles and its actors.

**The book ends with an argument for what you call a “strategy of mediations”. What is this, and why is it necessary?**

Strategy, for all those who want to abolish capitalism and who think a revolutionary perspective fitting for our time is relevant, commences by understanding the difficulty and the complexity of such a historical process. Humanity has never yet succeeded in organising collective mastery over its becoming and future. Now under the penalty of extinction, we must accomplish this colossal effort without any further delay. This is why the construction of an alternative resides not only in the theoretical elaboration of another world, but, on the one hand, in the ability to connect it to a project of radical transformation and, on the other hand, to connect it to the collective mobilisations and individual aspirations as they exist today.

To bring these two sides – project and resistance – into a coherent project is the political task *par excellence*. It moves through the invention of mediations. Mediations aren’t merely means, still less stages, but living forms. They are democratic forms of organisation, of mobilisation and struggles, programs and collectively elaborated projects. But they also constitute an activist culture that participates in the reconstruction of forms of life – social and political – that are inviting and able to grow. In short, these are the multiple forms of class struggle conscious of its conditions and finalities, and of their inseparable character.

The task is possible, as difficult as it seems: it is enough to have participated in a long strike or a mobilisation that has lasted some time to know just how quickly and with what intensity the shared joy of a true social life that is intense and rich, of labour reconsidered, of time liberated, can flower in these moments of struggle. How can these possibilities spread, consolidate themselves and discuss matters further? Reflections in action and theorising interventions, they are situated at the meeting point of existing structures, parties, trade unions, associations, all the while having to go beyond their institutional contours in a constructive way.

How is it possible to rally this dynamic without choking it, in fighting against the alienating logic of politics as well as the purely spontaneous outbursts that have no future? How to escape the double pitfall of utopianism without struggle and struggles without hope? It is the perspective of such a strategic revival that we must explore, in taking up the best of what the socialist and communist traditions have left for us to use and explore. One book is unable to give the answers, but the current absence of strategic debate in the strong sense of the term for the moment fuels the dispersion of protest. But the lack also fuels the proliferation of theoretical solutions that are intended to be final, panaceas destined to benefit from the crisis of concrete alternatives.

My book is intended to contribute to this revived confrontation, all the while demanding the project of a collectively decided abolition of capitalism.

That which is called, yesterday as today, a *revolution*.

## Notes

1. Omar Hassan, “Podemos and left populism”, *Marxist Left Review*, 11, 2016, Summer. [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
2. <https://newleftreview.org/issues/I163/articles/norman-geras-post-marxism.pdf> and <https://newleftreview.org/issues/I169/articles/norman-geras-ex-marxism-without-substance-being-a-real-reply-to-laclau-and-mouffe.pdf>. [↑](#endnote-ref-3)
3. <https://newleftreview.org/issues/I169/articles/norman-geras-ex-marxism-without-substance-being-a-real-reply-to-laclau-and-mouffe.pdf>. [↑](#endnote-ref-4)
4. Marx, *Capital*,1, chapter 19: “The Transformation of the Value (and Respective Price) of Labour-Power into Wages”, <https://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch19.htm>. [↑](#endnote-ref-5)
5. ibid. [↑](#endnote-ref-6)