

Modern problem to be handled by philosophy of science

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The organizational conference of the social democratic unity held last week, was a success. We met earlier as a conference of all sympathetic people, and considered our common position. This time it was to nominate an organizational committee. The SD trend started with the protest march against the 18th Amendment. We separated ourselves from the UNP led procession as well as the activities of the JVP. We have to take this third oppositional position, because we felt that the plight of the Tamil people should be taken as one of the most important democratic problems; as important as the sell out to the global capital.

The threat to democracy and freedom is not only from the global capitalist powers, but also from the local chauvinist barbaric trends. The latter has done more damage to civil society and the functioning of human and civil rights, than any direct action of the global masters. Now we have drawn many from the UNP camp as well. Those who are frightened of the surge of chauvinism under the banner of going to the village masses , particularly the campaign of Sajith, are eager to find out what we are building under the sign of social democracy.

Internationally social democracy has a long history. First party to emerge under this name is the German social democratic party. In 1869, August Bebel and Wilhelm Liebknecht founded the Social Democratic Workers' Party of Germany), which merged with the ADAV at a conference held in Gotha in 1875, taking the name Socialist Workers' Party of Germany (SAPD). However, it was considered to be a revolutionary party by the establishment and also by the Marxists who were a dominant group within the party. Bebel was, co-chairman from 1892 to 1913. Through the anti socialist laws, Bismarck had the party outlawed for its pro-revolution, anti-monarchy sentiments in 1878; but in 1890 it was legalized again. That same year - on its Halle convention - it changed its name to social democratic party of Germany (SPD). As social democrats could be elected as list-free candidates while the party was outlawed, it had continued to be a growing force in the parliament, becoming the strongest party in 1912. During this period, SPD members of the Reichstag were able to win some improvements in working and living conditions for working-class Germans.

At that time the German regime was considered to be the ultimate state of law and order for humanity by the Hegelians. But the regime of Bismarck found to be most repressive and it was the social democracy that opened the eyes of the masses under the eagle eyes of Engels. The unification of Germany was seen as one of the biggest social, political and cultural victories for the mankind by contemporary German and other European bourgeoisie intellectuals. They expected from Bismarck something far better than the deeds of Cromwell and Napoleon. In the same way the half wits in the Sinhala community expect the Mahinda regime to deliver prosperity.

New horizon

The Germans thought the cultural heritage of Mozart and Beethoven will be taken to a new horizon. If the Germans were stupid to expect such from Bismarck, the Sinhalese are proved to be idiots by what is happening! Thanks to the social democracy of Bebel and others, the Germans could get out of the mess created by the Bismarckian state. Unfortunately, the German revolutionary social

democratic tradition came to an end with the killing of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxembourg. During the period between the two world wars the reformist social democracy fell into the traps of capitalism and finally almost physically decimated by fascism. Very few managed to join the common underground and fight together with communist and others against the fascist regime. After the Second World War it became a typical reformist capitalist party based on social welfare and Keynesian economics.

Negation of the negation

The history of the German social democratic party has followed the Hegelian historic principle of negation of the negation. It started as the revolutionary party against Bismarckian dictatorship; then it negated itself to become a reformist catalyst for bourgeoisie reform. After going through welfare politics, during the capitalist boom after the Second World War, now it is in a hell of a crisis challenged by the revolutionary Left. Today social democracy is searching for a modern interpretation. It wants to challenge not only neo liberal economics of global capitalism but also the very concept of statist socialism. This problem is not confined to the German party, but is a common problem faced by the Left throughout the world.

The question raised, if the present system of global capitalism is to be changed; surely it has to go; but what will be the alternative. No one wants an undemocratic, bureaucratic state like what we witnessed in Russia; nor anything similar to what one finds in China. Everybody wants the democracy which we have seen in the democratic bourgeoisie states under expanding capitalism; and something more. Nobody wants to sacrifice democracy, human rights, worker rights, civil society with everybody equal before the law; for a promise land of socialism. This is a modern problem to be handled by the philosophy of science.

So, those who participated in the social democratic conference peeped into all these problems. But we could agree to some basic socio-economic tasks. All are opposed to the global capitalist mess created by neoliberal economics; the ecological disaster, which everybody could feel; the energy crisis that could lead to a nuclear war; the food crisis that slowly consumes the human species. On the other hand, everybody wanted freedom and democracy. No political prisoners; there should be a national unification on a voluntary basis with autonomy to all nationalities. Mano, Siri, Lakthilaka, Sivaji, Abu, Keli, SG Punchi, were among those who participated.

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