For liberty and union
An interview with James McPherson

Spencer A. Leonard

Spencer A. Leonard interviewed noted Civil War historian James McPherson, author of the classic Battle Cry of Freedom *(1988), to discuss the new Lincoln biopic by Steven Spielberg and the 150th anniversary of the Emancipation Proclamation. The interview was broadcast on January 29, 2013 on the radio show* Radical Minds *on WHPK–FM (88.5 FM) Chicago. What follows is an edited transcript of their conversation.*

Spencer Leonard: 150 years ago, on January 1, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued his famous Emancipation Proclamation. This constituted an important culmination in the long struggle for the abolition of slavery. What, in brief, is the background to the Proclamation in terms of the long struggle for free labor in North America stretching back to the Revolution and into colonial times? Was the destruction of slavery in America simply a matter of coming to terms with an original American sin or a lingering hypocrisy? Or had the course of history in the 19th century posed the question of chattel slavery in a way that it had not done for the generation of the American Enlightenment and Revolution?

James McPherson: Well, in the first place, slavery was not a uniquely American sin. It had existed in many societies over many centuries even prior to its first introduction into Virginia in 1619. In subsequent decades, slavery took deep root in all of the British North American colonies, as it did in the Caribbean and in South America, where in fact slavery was much more deeply entrenched than it was in most parts of North America.

But starting in the third quarter of the 18th century, a variety of forces began to call the morality and validity of slavery into question—cultural forces and intellectual forces and economic forces. The Enlightenment and, with it, the Age of Revolution—the American Revolution, the French Revolution, the Haitian Revolution, the revolutions in Latin America—these began to attack the philosophical and economic underpinnings of slavery. In the northern states of the new American nation, the Revolution led to a powerful anti-slavery movement which by about 1800 had eliminated slavery or had begun to eliminate slavery from all of the states north of the Mason-Dixon line. The Haitian Revolution beginning in the 1790s liberated that island, albeit violently.

So, there was a gathering movement against slavery in the Western world that had a significant effect in the United States, generating a strong anti-slavery movement first among the Quakers, then spreading. It extended not only to the North but to the South as well, reaching a kind of culmination in the 1830s with the beginning of the militant Abolitionist movement—William Lloyd Garrison, Frederick Douglass, and the founding of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Gradually, that impulse spread into a political movement, first with the Liberty Party in 1840 and then with the Free Soil Party in 1848 and the Republican Party in the middle 1850s. Together these developed what historian Eric Foner talked about many decades ago as a "free labour ideology." That politics created a sense of two socioeconomic orders in the United States: One in the North based on free labour with social mobility, a dynamic entrepreneurial society; the other in the South based on slavery, which since the 1780s had become more deeply entrenched.

In the 18th century there was a widespread sense that slavery would disappear. The Founding Fathers, who formed the Constitution in 1787, assumed that slavery would soon die out. This is why they were willing to make certain compromises with the slave states to get them to join the new nation. Though the Constitution-makers assumed that slavery would probably die out soon, quite the opposite happened in the South, starting in the 1790s and early 1800s with the spread of the Cotton Kingdom, which meant that in the very decades that slavery was disappearing in the North and a strong anti-slavery movement was developing in the first half of the 19th century, the institution was becoming much more deeply entrenched in the South. That generated a whole series of cultural, social, and political justifications for the institution of slavery. By the middle of the 19th century the two sections had come to a kind of face-off with each other over the question of the expansion of slavery, which had been made an acute problem by the acquisition of a huge amount of new territory in the Mexican War. A bitter struggle ensued, starting in 1854, over the territories that had originally been acquired through the Louisiana Purchase of 1803; the whole question of whether slavery would be allowed to expand into those territories that were not yet states became acute in the 1850s. So, in a sense, the anti-slavery impulse that had deep roots going back into the latter part of the 18th century was coming into a collision course with a pro-slavery impulse that had become pretty powerful by the 1830s and 1840s in the slave states. This led to the showdown in 1860, with Lincoln's election and the secession of the southern states.

SL: So, at the time of the Revolution and the drafting of the Constitution, there was not among American revolutionaries North and South indifference towards slavery so much as an expectation that the institution would die out. And, indeed, slavery was abolished throughout the North in subsequent decades. But in the South the expectations of the 18th century proved mistaken. That generation did not foresee, for instance, the sort of changes that the cultivation of cotton for industrial production would bring about.

JM: The cotton textile industry was at the cutting edge of economic change in the late 18th and early 19th centuries. There is a real irony here, as the same industrial changes that encouraged the growth of cotton in the South and thus entrenched slavery there ever more deeply also generated—first in Britain and then in Northern United States—the free labour system that came into violent conflict with the slave power in the war.

SL: In 1862, prior to issuing the Emancipation Proclamation, Lincoln remarked, "I do not want to issue a document that the whole world will see must necessarily be inoperative, like the Pope's bull against the comet!"[1] Was the Proclamation inoperative, as Lincoln feared? If not, what was the specific import of the Proclamation in the ongoing process of the war's destruction of slavery as an institution in the United States? What of the clauses lifting the ban on the enlistment of black soldiers in the Union Army? Finally, was Lincoln dilatory in issuing the Proclamation and confronting slavery?

JM: From the very beginning of the war Lincoln had to walk a narrow path. On one side, there were forces set in motion that eroded slavery. These began at the very start of the war: The moment the first Northern soldier set foot in the South he became an agent of emancipation—even if an unwitting and unintentional one—because slaves started flocking to Union lines. Very early the Lincoln administration made the commitment not to return them to slavery. So, starting in the Virginia Peninsula in May 1861 and expanding to many other places as army and naval forces began to penetrate the Confederacy, thousands, then tens of thousands of slaves came within Union lines. The Lincoln Administration was resolved that they would not be returned.

At first, they were not returned only if the owners supported the Confederacy. But by the late summer or fall of 1861, even in the border states that remained loyal to the Union, slaves were not being returned to masters unless the masters could prove, which turned out often to be very difficult, that they were loyal to the United States—and sometimes not even then. Congress also began passing legislation. First there was the Confiscation Act in August 1861. It said that masters whose slaves had worked to support the Confederate War effort but escaped to Union lines—those masters had forfeited the rights to their slaves. In fact, what they meant was that the slaves had become free. Half a year later, in March 1862, Congress passed legislation prohibiting Union officers from returning slaves to their masters, whether those masters were loyal or not and whether this process took place in the Confederacy or in the loyal border states.

That's one side. The other is Lincoln's concern to maintain the northern war coalition that included northern Democrats and border state Unionists. Neither of these groups saw this as a war against slavery but only as a war to restore the Union—the Union of 1861 in which slavery existed in half the country. They threatened to withdraw their support for the war if it became overtly and explicitly a war against slavery. So Lincoln had to walk that path. In the first year and a half of the war he sustained the steps I described above by which thousands of slaves did in fact achieve freedom. At the same time he had to make clear that this was not a war for the abolition of slavery, but only to preserve the Union. Any steps that eroded slavery were just a by-product of this war to defend this Union.

In the summer of 1862 the Confederates launched a series of counter-offensives that ended the hopes of a quick Union victory that had spread following Union success in several theatres of the war earlier in the year. The Confederacy was roaring back. It was also becoming increasingly clear that slave labour was sustaining the Southern war economy. Slaves provided much of the labor required by the Confederate army's logistical efforts. To "strike against slavery as a military necessity" was therefore the phrase used over and over again in the North in 1862. To undermine the Confederate war effort by striking overtly at slavery, Congress passed a more comprehensive Confiscation Act in July 1862. In that same month Lincoln decided to issue a proclamation freeing the slaves in parts of the Confederacy that were at war with the United States. His proposed proclamation would go well beyond the earlier partial steps by which slaves who came within Union lines achieved freedom.

Lincoln was dissuaded from making this overt proclamation at a time when Union armies were reeling back in defeat. He was anxious that it not be viewed as a desperate measure to incite slave insurrection. So he withheld it until after Union armies won a limited but significant victory at Antietam in September 1862. Five days after that battle Lincoln stated his intention to issue a final proclamation on January 1, 1863. This would

"Interview" continues on page 3

www.platypus1917.org

53

The Platypus Review

Issue #53 | February 2013

Statement of purpose

Taking stock of the universe of positions and goals that constitutes leftist politics today, we are left with the disquieting suspicion that a deep commonality underlies the apparent variety: What exists today is built upon the desiccated remains of what was once possible.

In order to make sense of the present, we find it necessary to disentangle the vast accumulation of positions on the Left and to evaluate their saliency for the possible reconstitution of emancipatory politics in the present. Doing this implies a reconsideration of what is meant by the Left.

Our task begins from what we see as the general disenchantment with the present state of progressive politics. We feel that this disenchantment cannot be cast off by sheer will, by simply "carrying on the fight," but must be addressed and itself made an object of critique. Thus we begin with what immediately confronts us.

The *Platypus Review* is motivated by its sense that the Left is disoriented. We seek to be a forum among a variety of tendencies and approaches on the Left—not out of a concern with inclusion for its own sake, but rather to provoke disagreement and to open shared goals as sites of contestation. In this way, the recriminations and accusations arising from political disputes of the past may be harnessed to the project of clarifying the object of leftist critique.

The *Platypus Review* hopes to create and sustain a space for interrogating and clarifying positions and orientations currently represented on the Left, a space in which questions may be raised and discussions pursued that would not otherwise take place. As long as submissions exhibit a genuine commitment to this project, all kinds of content will be considered for publication.

Submission guidelines
Articles will typically range in length from 750–4,500 words, but longer pieces will be considered. Please send article submissions and inquiries about this project to: *review_editor@platypus1917.org*. All submissions should conform to the *Chicago Manual of Style*.

The *Platypus Review* is funded by:
The University of Chicago Student Government
Dalhousie Student Union
Loyola University of Chicago
School of the Art Institute of Chicago Student Government
The New School
New York University
The Platypus Affiliated Society

Issue #53 / February 2013

Interview, continued from page 1

apply to all parts of the Confederacy that had not by that time returned to the Union. When January 1, 1863, came and the rebellion still persisted in the seceded states, Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation. It was the culmination of a process that went back to the beginning of the war. In some ways, of course, it went back decades before, back into the long history of the struggle against slavery, the movement to abolish it or at least to restrict its power.

The Emancipation Proclamation had a powerful symbolic as well as substantive impact. It announced that now one of the goals of the war was to bring an end to slavery—maybe not everywhere, maybe not immediately, but it was a much more dramatic statement of purpose than anything that had gone before. It also lifted what had previously been in effect a ban on enlistment of African Americans in the Union Army and announced an explicit intention to recruit freed slaves into the Union army. This added another arrow to the quiver of the Union. In the end, about 200,000 African Americans, most of them former slaves, fought in the Union Army and Navy. As Lincoln himself said on several occasions, these black soldiers made an essential contribution to the Northern war effort. In some ways that might have been the most important part of the Emancipation Proclamation, because now the slaves could not only achieve their own freedom by coming within Union lines but could be armed to fight for their own freedom and for the freedom of the entire slave population.

SL: Karl Marx's Civil War writings, many of which were written in his capacity of London correspondent for Greeley's paper, repeatedly decry the open or at least tacit sympathy for the Confederacy in governing circles in London. It is an aspect of it little remarked upon now, but in its own day the Emancipation Proclamation was as much directed at Europe as it was towards Richmond and the plantations of the South. Thus 150 years ago, on the day the Proclamation was issued, Horace Greeley, editor of what was then the leading Republican newspaper in the country, *The New York Tribune*, wrote the following[2]:

> Our European friends have all desired and hoped that we would take ground against that mother of sedition, that fruitful source of all our woes, Slavery. Victor Hugo, Garibaldi, John Bright—every recognized and honored leader of the party of progress—had impatiently anticipated the Proclamation of Freedom... The policy of Emancipation has won to our cause some valued friends over the water—we do not hear that it has lost us one.

Why was the success or failure of the project to enforce militarily the emancipation of American slaves significant internationally? What was the Emancipation Proclamation's impact on that plane?

A photograph taken after the Battle of Antietam. Alexander Gardner, "Bloody Lane," 1862. Library of Congress.

JM: At one level, the Emancipation Proclamation was significant in precluding foreign intervention in the American Civil War. Most civil wars throughout history have attracted foreign intervention. We can think of examples in our own time: Libya last year, Syria right now. There was a real possibility that something of that sort would happen in the American Civil War. If that had happened, foreign intervention certainly would have been on the side of the Confederacy.

SL: There were French armies at the time on the borders of the Confederacy...

JM: That's right. France had intervened in Mexico in 1861, ultimately sending some 35,000 troops, and in 1864 they installed the Archduke Maximilian of Austria on the Mexican throne. During this time, the Confederates were reaching out to the French and to Maximilian. The French might have provided some assistance to the Confederacy in return for Confederate recognition of Maximilian's reign in Mexico. That never happened, but it was a real danger.

But the primary fear of the North and hope of the South was British intervention, and, as Karl Marx recognized, there was a lot of sympathy for the Confederacy in Britain, especially among the gentry and the aristocracy. But there was also a countervailing trend of hostility to slavery in Britain. The British had themselves abolished slavery in their West Indian colonies back in 1833. At that time it was the largest single act of emancipation in the history of the world. Within the British working class and among middle class liberals there was a lot of sympathy for the North. After all, for a generation or more before the Civil War the United States was seen by many British workers and middle class liberals as a kind of exemplar of democracy, but with its great, tragic flaw of slavery. So, as long as the North was not openly and overtly fighting a war against slavery but only for the restoration of the Union, it was difficult for those British liberals and radicals to argue that, despite the cutoff of cotton by the war which had caused a kind of economic crisis in Britain, Britain should not intervene in favor of the Confederacy. But once Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation, that tragic flaw was removed and British liberals and the British working class could now openly celebrate their support of the Union, and British sympathizers with the Confederacy could no longer use the argument that this was only a war for dominion and not a war for freedom. It became much more difficult to argue that the Union was no better than the Confederacy, that Britain ought to intervene in order to get cotton, that Britain had an obligation to sustain a people fighting for self-government, and so on. So, yes, European and, especially, British opinion was a factor in Lincoln's decision to issue the Emancipation Proclamation, one major consequence of which was that it put a definitive end to any possibility of military intervention. Such intervention would have been seen as supporting slavery against freedom.

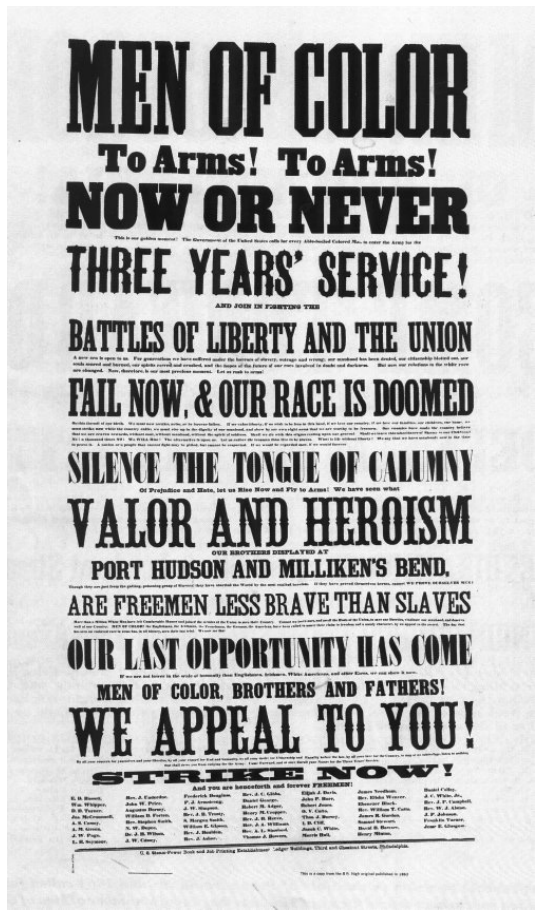
SL: One abiding misconception respecting the war is in regards to its character as a military conflict. Schoolchildren are often told simply that the North had inferior military commanders. But what this leaves aside is the way in which the Civil War was political not only in its aims, but even in its conduct. How does the Emancipation Proclamation grow out of and feed back into the conduct of the war by the Union Army? How did the transformation of the struggle into one for the forcible uprooting of the slave power, signalled by the issuance of the Emancipation Proclamation, culminate in Lincoln's appointment of General Ulysses S. Grant as commander of the Union armies? To take a line from the Speilberg film, how did Lincoln's Republican Party and Grant's Army enable each other "to do terrible things"?

JM: Politics and the military are inextricably intertwined. Carl von Clausewitz made the point in his book *Vom Kriege* that war is a continuation of politics by other means. In the case of the American Civil War, it broke out in the first place because of political differences and a resultant breakdown of the political process. Lincoln was well aware that as President of the United States, as leader of the Republican Party, and as Commander-in-Chief of the United States armies, he was fulfilling both a political and a military role. He knew they could not really be separated from each other.

Early in the war, Lincoln tried to maintain a united coalition of Republicans, of Northern Democrats, and of border-state Unionists for the war effort and he was afraid that any radical steps against slavery would fracture that coalition. But as the war ground on, that equation began to change in his mind and in the North more generally. Steadily demands grew louder from the principal part of his political constituency, the Republican Party, for bolder action against slavery to crush the rebellion—"Bolder action against rebels and traitors!" "Take their property!" And, of course, a principal form of their property was slaves.

So as the war grew harder and more bitter in 1862, the weight of politics became increasingly that of not merely restoring the Union, but of undermining the basis of disunion, which was slavery, the slave power. Lincoln became less and less concerned about maintaining the united support of the various parts of his war coalition and more concerned about striking against slavery and the slave power in order to break the rebellion. That shift in Lincoln's political calculations resulted in a similar shift in the military.

In the first year or so of the war, Northern generals, and Lincoln himself, tried to avoid destruction of property in the South. He tried to conciliate or win back the support of Southern whites for the Union. But it became increasingly clear that this policy of conciliation or "soft war" was not working. This was especially so, as I have mentioned already, by the summer of 1862, as the Confederacy came storming back from an earlier series of defeats. The pressure grew to "take the kid gloves off" (one of the most frequently used metaphors in soldiers' letters, newspaper editorials, political speeches in the North in 1862) and turn this into a really "hard war" against traitors. Instead of conciliating the traitors, the military aim was to crush them. This kind of language became increasingly common in the North in the summer of 1862. The Emancipation Proclamation and some of the Congressional confiscation legislation moved in tandem with the change in public opinion and with the actual behaviour of Union armies in the South. Whereas General George McClellan and General Buell, two of the principal Union commanders up until the fall of 1862, went out of their way to avoid hard war measures in the South, generals like Sherman, Sheridan, and Grant in 1864 adopted the policy of destroying anything that sustained the Confederate war effort whether it be railroads or farms or slavery. This was a sharp change not only in military behaviour but in the kind of political will that sustained it. The war aim ceased to be restoration of the old Union and came instead to be destruction of the infrastructure of the Confederacy so as to build a new Union on its ruins.



SL: The recent film "Lincoln" addresses Lincoln the Politician rather than Honest Abe the Plaster Saint or Everyman Lincoln the Log-Splitter. I want to play two brief clips from Spielberg's movie. The first is Lincoln's backroom colloquy with Thaddeus Stevens during a party at the White House respecting, in effect, the relations between war aims, strategy, and tactics. The second is Lincoln's disquisition to his cabinet regarding the necessity of the 13th Amendment, during which he remarks that the hardest thing in politics is to recognize what is required in the here and now. Allow me to play these two clips and have you comment on the film's portrayal of Lincoln as both leader of the Republican Party and as Commander-in-Chief during the Civil War.

In the White House Kitchen

> Thaddeus Stevens: Ashley insists you're ensuring approval by dispensing patronage to otherwise undeserving Democrats.
>
> Abraham Lincoln: I can't ensure a single damn thing if you scare the whole House silly with talk of land appropriations and revolutionary tribunals and punitive thisses and that's.
>
> TS: When the war ends, I intend to push for full equality, the Negro vote, and much more. Congress shall mandate the seizure of every foot of rebel land and every dollar of their property. We'll use their confiscated wealth to establish hundreds of thousands of free Negro farmers, and at their side soldiers armed to occupy and transform the heritage of traitors... The nation needs to know that we have such plans.
>
> AL: That's the untempered version of reconstruction...
>
> TS: .... The people elected me to represent them, to lead them, and I lead! You ought to try it sometime!
>
> AL: I admire your zeal, Mr. Stevens, and I have tried to profit from the example of it. But, if I'd listened to you, I'd've declared every slave free the minute the first shell struck Fort Sumter. Then the border states would've gone over to the Confederacy, the war would've been lost and the Union along with it, and, instead of abolishing slavery as we hope to do in two weeks, we'd be watching helpless as infants as it spread from the American South into South America.
>
> TS: Oh, how you have longed to say that to me. You claim you trust them, but you know what the people are. You know the inner compass that should direct the soul toward justice has ossified in white men and women, north and south, unto utter uselessness through tolerating the evil of slavery....
>
> AL: A compass, I learnt when I was surveying, it'll—it'll point you true north from where you're standing, but it's got no advice about the swamps and deserts and chasms that you'll encounter along the way. If in pursuit of your destination you plunge ahead, heedless of obstacles, and achieve nothing more than to sink in a swamp, what's the use of knowing true north?

In Lincoln's Office

> AL: I can't listen to this anymore. I can't accomplish a goddamn thing of any human meaning or worth until we cure ourselves of slavery and end this pestilential war. And whether any of you or anyone else knows it, I know I need this. This amendment is that cure. We're stepped out upon the world stage now. Now, with the fate of human dignity in our hands. Blood's been spilt to afford us this moment. Now! Now! Now! And you grousle and heckle and dodge about like pettifogging Tammany Hall hucksters. See what is before you! See the here and now, that's the hardest thing, the only thing that counts. These votes must be procured.

What of Lincoln's political greatness does Spielberg's film (and Tony Kushner's script) get at?

JM: In the colloquy with Thaddeus Stevens, Lincoln first of all pays tribute to Stevens's leadership. Stevens was a radical Republican who from the very beginning insisted this must be a war to destroy slavery and the planter class in the South. As he does in this scene, he frequently expressed his impatience with Lincoln's dilatory and gradualist approach. Lincoln is here shown acknowledging Stevens's prescience respecting what the goal of the war had ultimately to be. Stevens was the one who pointed to "true north," total victory and the destruction of slavery.

Of course, we have no evidence that anything like this conversation ever took place. Still, Kushner here conveys something of Lincoln's manner of often resorting to metaphor. The compass indicates the direction in which we want to go, but it says nothing about how to get there or how to negotiate the obstacles that will be encountered along the way. As President, he is saying, "You showed me the direction we needed to take." But, he elaborates, "if I had followed your advice and blindly struck out for true north, we would have lost the support of the war Democrats and border state Unionists, and, ultimately, we would have lost the war." As Commander-in-Chief and leader of the Republican Party, Lincoln was responsible for figuring out how to get around the swamps and mountains. He justifies his political leadership by saying that this is what he had been doing over the last three and a half years, and had led the country to the brink of abolishing slavery forever. The 13th Amendment was getting ready to pass. Lincoln notes that "it will bring us very near to the end of this long journey." It's a brilliant scene that shows Lincoln's leadership style in contrast with Stevens's. Both of them were important and necessary. Lincoln's brilliance was that he recognized how to implement Stevens's radical vision.

The scene with the cabinet is not true to the reality of Lincoln's relationship with them. It portrays the cabinet as dragging their feet on the 13th Amendment. That was not really true in January of 1865. Most members of the cabinet were fully committed to Lincoln's policy. But Kushner uses this scene, nevertheless, to make a historically valid point. Lincoln as Commander-in-Chief demanded that this step has to be taken and that here and now is the time. To use a contemporary metaphor that is much in the news right now, Lincoln says, in effect, "We can't just keep kicking this can down the road. We must act now and act decisively." It's another and important component of Lincoln's leadership, the matter of timing. There are times when you have to prevaricate and make backroom deals, but there also comes a time when you need to step up to the plate and do what it takes to accomplish the task at hand. In this sense, the scene is very effective even though it is not fair to Lincoln's 1865 cabinet.

SL: Beyond Lincoln's presidency, of course, lay peace and Reconstruction. Here, it seems, the contrast between war and peace threatens to obscure underlying political continuities. How did Reconstruction arise as a consequence of the war? We've been talking about the connection between the conduct of the war by the Union army and the political project that emerged of suppressing the slaveholders' rebellion against the federal government. How did Lincoln's acceptance of the emancipatory logic of the war shape the subsequent project of Reconstruction?

JM: Reconstruction became an extremely thorny problem for Lincoln, but even more so for his successors. One reason for this is that the word reconstruction had two meanings in the contemporary usage and these were potentially in conflict with one another. In one sense, reconstruction meant to reconstruct the union, to end the war, bring the southern states back in, and to knit the United States together again as one nation. The other meaning denoted the reconstruction of Southern society on a new basis. Now that slavery was gone, the question posed itself: What was freedom going to mean? What was going to be the status of the freed slaves? What was their relationship to their former owners going to be in this reconstructed union? That became the main problem faced by the country for many decades in some ways, most especially during the dozen years after the end of the war, from 1865 to 1877, when federal troops were stationed in the former Confederate states as the agents to enforce Reconstruction.

One way to reconstruct the United States was a degree of forgiveness, of amnesty, of conciliation toward former enemies—that is, the Confederates—in order to entice them to become loyal Americans again. But what would be the fate of the freed slaves if you restored, through conciliation, through amnesty, their former masters, the former Confederates, without any safeguards to protect the freedom of the slaves from some kind of new slavery, some kind of re-imposed quasi-slavery? Such a conciliatory Reconstruction project was what President Andrew Johnson, Lincoln's successor, tried to undertake, and he could invoke some of Lincoln's legacy by way of precedent and justification. Lincoln had issued a proclamation of amnesty and Reconstruction back in December 1863. In his second inaugural address he had talked about forgiveness and reconciliation. President Andrew Johnson tried to implement that side of Reconstruction to bring the southern states back into the Union as quickly, easily, and painlessly as possible. But the Republican majority in Congress rejected that approach, and I think Lincoln would have come to reject it too had he seen what was happening (if he had lived in 1865 and 1866). At all events, they tried to write a number of safeguards to protect the freedom and expand the civil and eventually political rights of the freed slaves, and that led to a decade, really, of violence and conflict in the south that, in some ways, reversed the aphorism of Clausewitz: The politics of Reconstruction became a continuation of the war. Organizations like the Ku Klux Klan came into conflict with union leagues in the South, organizations of blacks including some former black soldiers. The violence that took place in southern states during Reconstruction was in some ways a continuation of the war. So Reconstruction became a very troubled, controversial, and violent process. Whether Lincoln could have provided the kind of leadership in his second term, had he lived, to avoid the worst of that, is unknowable. Personally, I think he might have. If anybody could have undertaken a more thoroughgoing Reconstruction, he could have!

SL: You are of a generation of historians that emerged in the immediate wake of the Civil Rights Movement. But by the late 1960s, that movement was internally divided with Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bayard Rustin on one side representing liberal integrationism, and Stokely Carmichael and Huey Newton among others on the other side representing an ostensibly revolutionary separatism. So, the fault lines of the New Left seem not to correspond to those of the abolitionist revolution and

"Interview" continues on page 4

The 3 Rs, continued from page 2

alization of banks; the organization of strategic units without compensation, under workers' control, and dedicated to the people's benefit; prohibition of employment termination; social security for the unemployed and the poor; removal of the Troika; and emancipation from the modern dictatorship of the EU and capital.

A plan that aims at hegemony and transformation of social resistance into revolution doesn't depend only on a direct anti-capitalist program for struggle, but also on the reestablishment of a new communist perspective, a communism with, in the words of Daniel Bensaid, a regulative strategic hypothesis ("hypothèse stratégique régulatrice").[5] A strategic hypothesis is necessary to orient our everyday action and to stave off opportunism and degeneration of principles, toward which incorporated politics otherwise tends. A renewed campaign of communist ideas doesn't create revolutionary facts or conditions by itself, but can create the most radical current to function as a pole of attraction and as a point of orientation in the lead up to the next turning point, when social resistance will either catapult forward or else leap into the void.

Q&A

I listened to this debate for talk of the withering away of the state, communism, the nationalization of banks and all that, but I wonder if we have realized that we are not discussing the state anymore, but rather the complex of states that constitutes the E.U. Have come to the de facto realization that at this moment the most probable scenario for Greece is not a government leaning in a leftist or a socialist direction, but towards fascism?

KG: Nowadays, because we are in the middle of a deep capitalist crisis, we do face the danger that a fascist current will prevail, to the extent that an anti-capitalist emancipatory current is defeated. That is why I described the problem as a dipole. I believe that things will either objectively shift toward an overarching anti-capitalist and revolutionary situation, or will continue to regress into reformism, over which a fascist threat looms. Who will take the lead depends upon the struggle in the social field. In that sense, as is already evident, an administration that will be tapped out trying to handle its relations with imperialist organizations could pave the way for, instead of preventing, fascism.

I had the sense that, despite the different claims, all of the panelists articulated an anxiety about defining the revolutionary subject in class terms, and I also detected a distrust concerning identity movements, especially of the sort seen since the '90s. My question is simple: Are we ready, at this moment, to conceive radically the difference between oppression and exploitation? That is, can we realize that a general anti-capitalist discourse is not adequate to formulate or even to desire the revolutionary subject today?

AT: I will try to answer as tersely as possible: If we had won the Spanish revolution, if the revolutionary party had won, if the CNT (National Confederation of Labor), FAI (Iberian Anarchist Federation), etc., had prevailed, today we would be able to talk about these matters more easily. Knowing that economic equality is a necessary but not a sufficient condition for the complete emancipation of men and women, we would be able to start talking about political equality.

I have been harsh on identity movements, in part, because—whether we like it or not—capitalism is obviously the main thing we still have to deal with. If the Soviet Union had won, we would have been forced to fight capitalism in a new biopolitical context—for instance, confronting issues of bureaucratization and "the power of command" rather than the issue of ownership. Under present conditions, I would argue that identity movements are a symptom of earlier forms of the struggle for social democracy. The fact that we stand today, 40 years since their appearance, at some distance should allow us to draw some conclusions as to the question, What was the outcome of May '68? We are not talking about contributions of identity movements, but about their relation to "resistance, reform, and revolution." Wallerstein, for instance, said in 1989 that there were two global explosions that changed the world but did not dominate politically: the springtime of the peoples in 1848, with its impulse toward democratization followed by the victory of the bourgeoisie, and 1968, which changed the world, but not through revolution. Rather, 1968 changed the world in a more diffuse way, but changed the world nonetheless—it altered what was on the agenda when it comes to social issues. Today, when we see that the postmodern movements have not realized this, when Holloway and others come up over and over again with the same view about changing the world without taking over power, one has to ask, How do we understand power? It is clearly linked to what Bakunin famously said in the middle of the 19th century: "Liberty without socialism is privilege and injustice, and socialism without liberty is slavery and brutality."

TK: As far as the issue of the identity movements is concerned, this is exactly what I was referring to when talking about the complexity of the subject. What we have been taught by all these movements is that that there is no one central conflict. Domination is multiple, which means that we should abandon this separation between base and superstructure, or perhaps even reverse it. It is not the base that determines culture. We are the ones who determine the world, who reproduce it; society requires an act of instituting but society is also the result of such acts. In particular, I am referring here to the conflict between capital and labor, which is a paradox on its own. We need to overcome the very concept of labor if we really want to build a different civilization, if we want to start thinking seriously about how we could give labor a new concept in the context of community and start making serious decisions about who produces in a democratic way, and how.

Let's say, as has been suggested many times, that we do manage to turn our back on the state, capital, and the bosses. Can actual direct democracy stand, if workers are terrorized? Can my boss and I, as worker, under the threat of being fired, of being unemployed, join forces for the sake of humanity? He's a very nice person, indeed, but he's also a very good businessman.

TK: First of all, I would like to say that I did not use that term direct democracy in my speech. I am not trying to say that this ideal situation will be attained peacefully, or that everything can be worked out between people or that we will be a happy society with no oppositions whatsoever. On the contrary, autonomy is a process of multiple conflicts and fights in many and diverse fields, where the aspect of direct democracy—political control exercised by the entirety of the people who are affected by it—is always present. Now, that does not obviate the fight against the class aspect. That does not mean that we should convince our boss to concede. This fight has many aspects. As we said before, the fight carries on within, against, and beyond the state, labor, and the market. This means that within labor we should initially fight for some reform, but always while pointing beyond labor, trying to transcend labor, and not by merely striving to integrate ourselves successfully in labor's logic. Again, this process of autonomizing goes through many conflicts, in many different fields, not in one single field.

NS: Why is it necessary to present an absolute disjunction between this kind of social reformism within movements and its actual political mediation? An autocratic structure, let's say, is not the same as a less autocratic one. These can appear to you as quantitative nuances, but historically they are very significant. I mean, the New Deal was not identical with fascism, right?

TK: First of all, I cannot accept the term social reformism, because reformism in all its manifestations has to do with a change throughout all social relationships. However, in all its manifestations that I have witnessed, it always amounts to change from the top.

NS: But the unions of mutual aid and the experimentation with cooperatives were structures included in the history of the workers' movement and they were not always "from above." In fact, they started "from below."

TK: Exactly, it would *begin* from below, but the welfare state was about integrating these mechanisms into the logic of state and capital, which is when it became reformism. But it had always been a small, limited revolution, a small island in which totally different conditions were being held. That is, it was an island of autonomy. The state integrates them and turns them virtually into heteronomous mechanisms. That is the reason why I cannot accept the concept of reformism. On the other hand, I cannot accept the notion of the state as an integration of social will or as a privileged field of competition, or as the field towards which all the requests are being directed. The state is intertwined with capitalism; it is capitalism or at least capitalism's tool. Of course that does not mean that we just turn our back on it—that we cannot use it for our own purposes.

All of you hastened, so to speak, to define the idea of resistance in a negative way, to determine it quite negatively compared to reform and revolution, while in our days the idea of resistance is considered to have a positive meaning. Resistance prevails and we are a part of it—does this positive meaning, in your view, already indicate a deviation from a revolutionary perspective?

AT: I don't think we defined resistance negatively. At least, on my part, no such thing happened. Given that resistance exists anyway, the issue is whether one supports resistance as such, breaking the dialectical relation of resistance as a preamble to revolution. This is the first issue: Might resistance promote only reform? At a political level and at a social level, as is often said, one basic condition of change is questioning the status quo. I am not sure what use there is in presenting this questioning in a positive or negative light, because it already exists anyway. I stress which forms could lead to a revolutionary condition and which would not. When, for example, we came into contact with the steel workers in Athens, of course you will support the demand to call off the dismissals, or the collective agreements, and a thousand other issues. What really strikes us, as KEXA—the Movement for Workers' Emancipation and Self-Organization—is that workers should have the issue of self-management as a priority. Maybe not for today, due to the trusts, but at the level of consciousness, this should be discussed. You can't always promote resistance. When 100 workers are fired today, you try to take them back, but then tomorrow you discover unemployment is at 38 percent and so, in negotiating for labor power, you end up being on the defense once again.

Within in the revolutionary camp, there is the archetypical "Proudhonist" strain that takes capitalism to be "evil," something we must resist through precapitalist, community forms. We are familiar with movements like the Zapatistas, which resists the advance of capital as part of an anti-capitalist model based in community. There is also the ideal-typical "Marxist" strain that claims that all of modern life exists on the ground of capitalism and that capitalism isn't "evil" in itself. So, as our discussion comes to a close, I would like you to comment on this dilemma: What is your view on capitalism? Do you consider yourselves outsiders who resist capitalism outwardly? Or do you try to intensify, to sharpen, the contradictions of capitalism?

"The 3 Rs" continues below

Interview, continued from page 3

its opponents in the 19th century. How did the experience of the politics of the 1960s shape your generation's approach, for good and ill, to the history of abolitionism, the early Republican movement, the Civil War, and its aftermath?

JM: There can be no doubt that the Martin Luther King, Jr. and Bayard Rustin version of the Civil Rights Movement powerfully shaped a generation of historians. I know it shaped my attitude toward the Civil War and Reconstruction. Mine was a liberal integrationist view. Along with others, I have interpreted the abolitionist movement as a liberal integrationist movement in the 19th century. Following on that, together with other historians of my generation, I interpreted Reconstruction as a noble effort to bring about a free and integrated society. This effort passed the 13th, 14th, and 15th amendments which, we felt, underlay the civil rights and voting rights legislation of the 1960s. We saw Reconstruction as a kind of tragic failure that had real possibilities that were undermined by Southern counter-revolution, if you will, as well as by a Northern retreat from their goals. What followed was the view that the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s was a second Reconstruction that was now on its way to implementing the liberal and egalitarian goals of the first Reconstruction. I think that the movement toward the New Left, the Black Power movement, Stokely Carmichael, and others in the later 1960s and '70s, rejected the whole idea that the liberal integrationist movement in the 19th century, the abolitionist movement, the Radical Republicans, and so on, ever had a chance to overcome white racism. For such thinkers equality had been a false promise. Reconstruction was not so much a tragic failure as it was something that never had a chance in the first place. The likes of Carmichael and Newton rejected the sincerity and genuineness of the abolitionists and the Republicans of the 1860s and 1870s. They were just racists, only slightly better than the Southern rednecks. On their view, all of those ideals of liberal egalitarianism needed to be rejected in favor of black nationalism. This view has not had as powerful an effect on the historiography but it certainly had a tendency to influence a good many historians in the 1980s and 1990s. Lerone Bennett's book on Lincoln as a common, quintessential racist is one example of that.

SL: In his recent book *Freedom National*, James Oakes speaks of the abolition of slavery in the U.S. as a process of "bourgeois revolution" inconceivable without political leadership and organization. Yet about this revolution, this leadership and the revolution it brought about, the American left has always been ambivalent. Among liberals, there is often a good deal of hand-wringing respecting the constitutionality of measures taken by President Lincoln. Others to their left view the war as somehow compromised or one-sided, an industrialists' war intended to free the slaves the better to subjugate them to industrial wage slavery. Still others seek to find the overcoming of slavery in a process "from below" that seems to take place outside of the political arena. They praise the abolitionist movement while evincing a certain reticence towards the political and military instruments that movement adopted to defeat the South and uproot slavery: The Republican Party, President Lincoln, and the Union Army. All are suspicious of the enormous growth in the power of the state that resulted from the Civil War and America's subsequent emergence onto the world stage as a great, ultimately a global imperialist, world power. What is the value in such left criticisms? What to your mind do they grasp and what might they lose sight of? How, if you care to speculate, has the failure to digest (and advance) this history colored or compromised the Left's subsequent project, whether in terms of the black question and racism or in terms of the politics of freedom more generally?

JM: I think that most of the "hand-wringing" by liberals respecting the constitutionality of Lincoln's war measures concerns his suspension of the writ of *habeas corpus*, the declaration of martial law in the North, and the trial of civilians by military courts. At the same time, they tend to approve of his measures to emancipate slaves, including the Emancipation Proclamation, which were based on the same grounds of his war powers as Commander-in-Chief. The suspension of civil liberties probably went too far, as Lincoln himself acknowledged on one or two occasions, but most such actions took place in the border states that were active war zones, with guerrilla warfare and various kinds of sabotage creating circumstances in which martial law seemed the only way to control the situation. Nevertheless, some of Lincoln's actions are troubling, and created precedents that have been invoked by subsequent presidents with considerably less justification. As for the argument that the emancipation of the slaves was intended to subjugate them to wage slavery in Northern industry, that seems pretty far-fetched to me. The almost universal assumption in the 1860s was that the freed slaves would remain in the South as small family farmers. And, in fact, the large-scale migration to the North and to industrial employment did not begin until a half century after the Civil War. And while it is quite true that the Civil War caused an enormous growth in the power of the state, the central government gave up much of that power in the decades after the war, until it began to grow again in the 1890s and 1900s, in response to circumstances that were quite different from those of the 1860s. The exercise of enlarged government power in the 1860s is something that the Left should approve of, since one of its principal uses was to abolish slavery and enact—on paper at least, and on the ground for a time—civil and political equality for the freed slaves. |**P**

Transcribed by Wyatt Green, Ed Remus, and Wentai Xiao

1. Quoted in James Oakes's *Freedom National*.
2. Horace Greeley, "The New Base of Freedom," *New York Tribune*, January 1, 1863.

The 3 Rs, continued from above

NS: Can I say something about this? If we consider the horizon of the *Communist Manifesto*, we would see not just praise, but an almost ecstasic language about capitalism's dynamic nature, about how it has a destructive dynamic in relation to all traditional systems of beliefs, to all the phantasmagoria of antiquity. Paradoxically, Marx seems to be enchanted by the universalizing and global dynamic of capital. This view was also evident in the Second International—the productive forces were praised as the source of progress and innovation, and of the destruction of the village and the community. On the other hand, there was also a defensive, anti-modern, communitarian, more conservative element when it came to their sense of the workers' identity, a fact highlighted by Orwell and other writers who claimed that the progressive identity of socialism was closer to conservatism. This involved an aspiration to save identities and to rescue modes of life against modernization from above. Both of these traditions, or "wombs," have demonstrated teratogenic results and problematic aspects. There is the opposition that conceives of capitalism as liberation from the ground, from the roots, as an abstract freedom, which can be valid if the means of production are socialized, but also the other side, the one upholding communitarianism, in the broader sense, which demonstrated other kinds of limits in the 20th century.

AT: The issue of the ownership of the means of production, as I said before, is something necessary, but not sufficient in itself. Therefore I think that up to a point it is futile to compare late Adorno, the Marxist, with—let's say—Traven, the individualist-anarchist. We need a new culture of non-exploitation. But what does that mean? Naturally we need the means for the reproduction of capitalism, so that we won't starve, but we also need our community heritage so that we can all feed ourselves, right? I think this is what it's about. Hopefully, we can achieve this with the right sense of the necessary anthropological type—that is, with an anthropological type who would deny the previous framework and shape a different one. But this is the thing about revolution. As long as we live, we can never know what the revolution might bring. It might bring a tragedy.

TK: Capitalism has created a paradox, which consists in the fact that we have never been so individualized yet, at the same time, so dependent on each other. We have never been so close in terms of geography, yet so distant in terms of our social bonds. Even a communalistic view, similar to that of Proudhon, should serve as an inspiration for the anti-capitalist movement today. We are definitely not talking about going back to precapitalist forms of life, but we should take care to preserve the sort of non-capitalist social forms that have survived, in particular a cooperative spirit and relationships not based on maximizing profit and benefit. We can use these values to build this new anthropological type.

KG: First, postmodernism, as the cultural crisis of capitalism, has already produced a certain anthropological type of late modernity, which limits the collective political program of Marxist as well as anarchist-autonomous milieux. Following Nikolas's apt description, it is an anthropological type without collective orientation towards the future; therefore, when the crisis broke out, in the beginning, this type dealt with changes like a primitive, without any means to analyze them. Second, the dynamics of modern capitalism have been an enormous disaster, creating the conditions for an ecological meltdown. Nevertheless, the dynamics of modern capitalism are at the same time the starting point for the possibility of communist emancipation. As I alluded to in my earlier comments, the communist perspective must be proved scientifically, which necessitates asking, What is the present social basis? How are social classes structured? What are the modern productive forces? How have they developed thus far? What are their results? While today revolution can hardly be grasped as a process, communist emancipation is much easier to envision as a dynamic constitution, which will allow us to instantiate a social revolution. |**P**

Transcribed and translated from Greek by Efi Avgita, Dora Vetta, Giorgos Stefanidis, and Thodoris Velissaris

1. Exactly the same base as the one described above would be the source of the lifestyle movements (according to Bookchin) coming to life in the period immediately after this.
2. See Georg Lukács, *The Process of Democratization* (New York: SUNY Press, 1991).
3. Richard J. F. Day, *Gramsci is Dead: Anarchist Currents in the Newest Social Movements* (London: Pluto Press, 2005).
4. John Holloway, *Change the World Without Taking Power: The Meaning of Revolution Today* (London: Pluto Press, 2002).
5. Daniel Bensaid, *The Powers of Communism*, available online at <http://www.internationalviewpoint.org/spip.php?article1799>.

The 3 Rs: Reform, revolution, and "resistance"

The problematic forms of "anti-capitalism" today

Costas Gousis, Thodoris Kariotis, Nikolas Sevastakis, and Aris Tsioumas

The following are excerpts from the transcript of a moderated panel discussion and audience Q&A on the problematic forms of anti-capitalism today, organized by the Platypus Affiliated Society in Thessaloniki. The panelists were Nikolas Sevastakis, associate professor at the School of Political Science of Aristotle University of Thessaloniki; Thodoris Kariotis, who participates in direct democracy and cooperative movements; Aris Tsioumas, a member of Movement for Labor Emancipation and Self-Organisation; and Kostas Gousis, member of NAR, a component of the anti-capitalist coalition ANTARSYA. The panel discussion was moderated by Giorgos Stefanidis of Platypus. The event took place in the Lodge of the Student Unions, Faculty of Philosophy, Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, on May 30, 2012.

Nikolas Sevastakis: The appeal to resistance—and I am talking about the multiple appeals to democracy that have appeared in the last few decades—often reflects a puzzlement concerning the founding aspirations of the radical movement. Not only puzzlement, but also an actual avoidance of the target of transcending capitalism. Let me put it a little differently: The aim of radical systemic change is substituted by practices of stalling or blocking the most extreme and negative aspects of a state of domination, or of a governmental decision. At this point, resistance, accompanied by "radical" and "subversive" terms, evokes the idea that the movement is everything, the final goal is nothing, an idea formulated by Bernstein in the reformist tradition.

Despite the limits of the logic of resistance (and the appeal to resistance), i.e. despite the fact that it actually "carries with it" the experience of the losses and the multiple defeats of earlier emancipatory movements, I consider it politically and ethically problematic to "repress" this experience of loss or failure for the sake of some new truth as affirmation, by which we are "exempted with a leap" from the burden of a sad or guilty consciousness. I believe that the experience of loss as a starting point for the daring recognition of the ethical and political evil that has risen within the radical tradition (mainly, but not exclusively, within communism) is preferable to the charm exercised today by certain dogmatic trends. The necessary distance from older "disorienting" moments of postmodern mourning for the loss of meaning, or the liberal postmortem on the darkest aspects of the revolutionary movements of the 20th century, should not lead to a kind of "ethical insensitivity" disguised under the veil of radical praxis—a combination of Carl Schmitt and Lenin that attracts many radicals of our era.

I think, firstly, that we can all agree here with the assumption that the present framework of neoliberal crises and the collapse of the welfare state significantly alters the conditions for social and political antagonism. From the perspective of the structure, or the dominant tendency of political systems and economic architectonics, reformism appears blocked, at least in its evolutionary and institutional version. This old, venerable form of reformism, which was bound up with the idea of rational consent, actually belongs in the period of great social compromises and social democratic contracts. But if we seriously consider the collective ethos and the social representations of the working classes, at least in European societies, even the idea of revolution has no credibility. To a large extent, it is something invisible and alien. For many reasons, the revolutionary project, as it was formed during the period from 1789 to 1968, is not recognized any more as historically alive or, to be honest, even as ethically and politically desirable. This is the case not only for intellectuals or the academics but for the large majority of the popular classes. What we can do then is to restore the link between reform and structural rupture, with effective concrete breaches in the present state of fixation on the belief that there is no alternative. In this case, a possibility can appear again: "reformist breaches" of this kind will allow people from below to hope, to desire something better. It is thus possible for the dynamic of contestation to be reintroduced. To my mind, this is extremely important. If we don't want radical politics to be commemorative, we should insist henceforth on the idea of democracy, and to rearticulate it with the social question, the question of the distribution of social power.

Working on this junction between democracy and the question of social power we could, perhaps, reasonably expect the reemergence of plural sources of anti-capitalism. Because anti-capitalism remains the concern of an extreme minority, despite the popular discontent with the rich, the corruption of the new oligarchies, and diffuse anti-plutocratic dispositions that lead to disillusionment, the notion of anti-capitalism seems more outlandish than the idea of colonizing Mars. It could nevertheless exist again as a serious prospect, as a possibility, only through an experience of democracy in which critical elements, even of this liberal democracy, would be incorporated. It goes without saying, of course, that the transition from the idea of democracy to anti-capitalism presupposes transcending the current state of social depression. Combatting social atrophy and cachexia, stopping the further degradation of the lives of a broader stratum, and halting the most aggressive core of austerity programs, are not insignificant aims. When conditions are such that the substantive elements of liberal and social democracy are inhibited, the demand for real democracy and the symbolic constitution of values of social solidarity and dignity may be the most effective approach.

The confusion between revolutionary euphoria in words and radicalism is, to my mind, a residue of a static conception of the relation between reform and revolution. This enchantment with revolutionary phraseology retains a value, of course. It can remind us of the conflictual foundations of any normative order, of any rational consensus, of any political mediation in a competitive and deeply unequal society. But the value of this reminder often turns to self-deception about the clear-cut sides, to denial of political nuances, and to contempt for complex transitions and mixed moments.

Thodoris Kariotis: Let's try to reverse what seems to be a common thesis in libertarian thought, that the state and the market are "non-social institutions." It is indeed hard, nowadays, to find some sort of pure and untainted society, in which the basic networks that reproduce social life are not structured through the state and the market. The coercive mechanisms of both, such as the state's monopoly on legitimate violence and the market's debt apparatus, stand as a last resort for these institutions, which impose their own logic. Throughout our lifetime we internalize these mechanisms which reproduce themselves, for instance, through the principle of representation/entrusting, or through the profit maximization principle, etc.

Following Foucault, let's call this field of reproduction of social relations "biopolitical." The subject is the product of exercised authority: the commodity relations, the class relation, and the relations of domination have determined us to such a degree that we are doomed to reproduce them. Each one of us is an agent of capitalist reproduction. The state and the market therefore do not dominate parasitically from without, but rather from within the very heart of social life.

Of course, the biopolitical field is not enough for capitalist reproduction; there is also a "political" field required, political in the traditional sense of the term: the state, the system of representative government, state laws, economical institutions, mechanisms of suppression and integration, anything that has to do with the administration of capitalist totality.

From this perspective, the strategies of social emancipation that focus on the change of the "political" without taking account of the "biopolitical" can only result at best in fragmentary and temporary victories: We are programmed to reproduce capitalism.

It is certainly an exaggeration to say that social relations, on the whole, are being determined by the state and the market. There are communal, collective, cooperative relations in society that still survive and keep themselves out of the logic of individualization and profit maximization, of abstract labor and accumulation.

The present economic crisis provoked an outburst of social creativity in that direction. The withdrawal of the welfare state and the expansion of the market in new fields of social life had as a side effect the disengagement of large segments of society from state custody and the rise of forces of cooperation and solidarity of society itself.

It would certainly be naive to claim that all these new projects are openly antagonistic against capitalism, or that they form a clear and homogenous proposition of transcending capitalism with its specific characteristics. It is more about the emergence of "multitude" as Hardt and Negri conceptualize it, rather than the emergence of a new revolutionary subject in the Marxist sense of the term.

Therefore, we are the ones who constitute capitalism. We need to stop making capitalism possible and do something else. Within this framework we can understand the emergence of a plethora of these new projects based on the principle of equality, horizontality, and participation, examples of which include social centers, consumers' and producers' cooperatives, urban agriculture, eco-village communities, experiments of social and solidarity economy, exchange trading networks, give-away shops, neighborhood assemblies, defending public goods movements, and structures of social solidarity.

Despite the contradictions and ambiguities that characterize all these social movements as attempts at transcending the present state of affairs, these projects have created within themselves social relationships that oppose the dynamics of the market and the state-centered hierarchy.

It is about experiments of social emancipation from below that do not impose changes throughout the whole social nexus. They do formulate clear propositions but they do not have a plan of a total social transformation from above. They do not wish to impose their vision; perhaps that would seem to them to be contradictory. Their very diversity is an evidence of freedom in action. We do not have a single model that needs to be applied but a plethora of models based on similar values, principles and practices.

These projects are both a solution to immediate practical needs, and also socially experimental; they are attempts for social change here and now, since they do not wait for the uncertain, magical moment of revolution. But even when the time comes, they will have a proper sense of what can or cannot function in post-revolutionary society.

To see them as movements of resistance would signify a poor understanding of them. It is about small experiments of "autonomy"—or rather of "autonomizing," in order to emphasize not the situation, but the process of passing to the prefigurative formation of different social relations and structures through the denunciation of the existing order. They are not confined to the "biopolitical" field, even though it is *par excellence* their field of action; they just take it as a point of departure with the intent to create a new civilization, a new anthropological type, that will consciously abjure the values of capitalism.

It is certain that these projects of autonomy are not enough on their own. The political framework within which they move poses limitations and creative ways to overcome them remain to be found. There is also always an underlying danger of anchoritism and of isolation from social and political reality.

In my opinion, this movement towards autonomy passes necessarily through the creation of mediators by society itself in order to establish networks between communities, manage common affairs, and resolve differences. It is necessary to create institutions that will unite the biopolitical field with the political one and will constitute a new pole from below in political life.

Some of the characteristics of these new institutions should be: (i) to allow a division of labor that does not favor specialization and entrusting through selection by lot, as far as positions of accountability are concerned; (ii) to allow a mild degree of delegation without however ever reaching the level of representation; (iii) to set boundaries to the obligations and the rights of the collectives that constitute them; and (iv) to institutionalize mechanisms of collective decision-making, of synthesizing opinions, and of resolving any differences.

Aris Tsioumas: In my introduction I will take 1933 as a starting point, when the New Deal regulation and the new management introduced by it were not yet a universal model. The alternative ways of managing capitalism at a global level would become yet another reason leading to a world war.

The day after the war would find Europe in the middle of two superpowers, hoping for an extended development process achievable only on the ruins of a total war. In the period between 1950 and 1970, Europe would experience the full growth of the social democratic model. This turned the social democratic economic base into a new biopolitical management of capitalism, mainly through state intervention.

The modus operandi of the social democratic system was relatively simple. A state net was put in place by way of the ownership of the means of production and labor power. At the same time, public goods were vulgarly defined as state products. This meant the beginning of a process by which public goods were introduced into the market, becoming commercial products.

The main objectives of this process were to maintain the capitalist mode of production and allow the bourgeois elite to continue managing power, by leaving the control of the state in the hands of the political staff.

Using the promises of prosperity as a theoretical framework and the institutions of mass incorporation (i.e., political parties and trade unions as part of the state apparatus) as a practical tool, a process was initiated by which the working class was closely tied to the plan of capitalist development.

This was an effort to stifle the working class by depoliticizing it, as the very position of the working class, which is the class that reproduces capitalism, makes it potentially revolutionary. This observation brings us to the heart of today's event.

For the New Left that sprung out of and at the same time gave rise to May 1968, the new social movements became one of the basic elements of its structure. The cohesion of those social movements was not based on the ground of class, but on cross-class patterns, through the notion of the active citizen, in terms of identities worked out on the basis of one's membership in civil society. The political objective of such a position is either legislative reform for the protection of individual rights or the establishment of new collective behaviors.[1]

By dismissing the opposition between capital and labor as the basic opposition underlying capitalist society, these movements moved away from class confrontation into issues pertaining to the superstructure (gender, minorities, immigration, institutionalization, imprisonment, and so on). This process shifted the emphasis away from the revolution as a means of emancipation and toward reforms in political and administrative structures based on behavioristic assumptions of the mass individual. Such reforms sought legal protection of human rights conducted by the very power framework that the reform movements opposed.

In Greece, because of a strong Leninist tradition, this movement was almost exclusively represented by the neo-libertarian current, and from 1990 onwards by the post-anarchists (that is, postmodern anarchism). This actually involved a process of transforming social reformism into political reformism through cross-class citizen initiatives within capitalism that seek to intervene only at the level of legislation. It is a process that speaks of revolution but bears only the name of reform.

In a completely imaginary antithesis, part of the post-Stalinist left would prefer to nurture its own resistance movement after 1990 and the collapse of at least the official socialist project. Based on a superficial approach to the Marxian tradition, this part of the Left would impose its own interpretation of the social on the basis of an imaginary political institution. Interpreting the world in terms of a setback in emancipatory movements, this trend would retain its references to the class struggle, which was a supposedly more realistic approach, though it had only led to trade unionism.

The claim of the resistance movement—which is represented in Greece by all the left-wing organizations without elected representatives in parliament—that the workers, with whom they will never have a real connection, are on the defense, has turned the very notion of resistance into a fragmented, senseless and empty shell, into a vicious circle that violently breaks the dialectical relation of resistance as a preamble to revolution. This process is glorified as eternal resistance, but is actually little more than the transformation of political reformism into social reformism.

Today, the role of emancipatory movements, of those who actually talk about and support the revolutionary process, is to constantly remind the class and the society of the repressed that there can be no revolutionary politics without the self-management of society by those who produce wealth and without overcoming the separation of power between the economic and the political. There can be no emancipatory politics from above, no popular movement can succeed on the basis of the dominance of the political over the social, and direct democracy as a political form of communism is an indispensable element in the endeavor for human emancipation. There can be no left and no anarchy, unless the task is changing the mode of production, unless we are talking about abolishing private ownership, abolishing the power of man over man at all levels. What remains is to remember this and act on the basis of the dictum, "What we said holds true."

Kostas Gousis: When the battle breaks out, it is indulgent, and sometimes even cowardly, to remain inactive on the grounds of immature conditions, inclement international circumstances, and so on. Besides, the Leninist breakthrough of October 1917 consists in revolutionary political intervention that realizes the possibilities for social upheavals, despite taking the risk of hostile circumstances. At the same time, the Leninist lesson reminds us of the need to recognize the insufficiencies, the deficits, and the difficulties confronting revolutionary politics, given the actual state of things in a broader sense, without making a virtue of necessity.

The present situation highlights the emergency of communist strategy and the overall evolutionary tendencies of humankind over the tactical choices of the period. According to an apt formulation of Lukács, quite the opposite was the center of Stalin's method, as essence of the ontology of social being.[2] Consequently, revolutionary Marxism degenerates as theory is asked to sanctify *a posteriori* the tactical choice and make it seem like a necessary result of the Marxist and Leninist method.

A serious risk that threatens to fix Marxism at this point of stagnation even as we live in a period when everything moves and changes, can be found in the following hypothetical conception of things: Theory is concerned with communism as an abstract idea; the movement is limited to social resistance without any further prospect for or expectation of struggles; revolutionary organizations and the left-wing tendencies of big parties propagandize revolution as an ideological supplement to the ruling strategy that consists in reforms geared toward progressive governmental administration and new historic compromise as a way out of crisis.

Obviously, the resemblance of the aforementioned hypothesis to real persons and conditions of current social and political conjuncture, and the new stakes of crisis, is by no means accidental. In order to understand how the programmatic discussion about reform, revolution, tactics, and strategy has reemerged recently, we must take into account the shock of collapse versus the power of the revanchist and arrogant declaration of "the end of history" in the 1990s.

The revolutionary attempts of the uprisings that began with May '68, which have never occupied a hegemonic position, collapsed along with long-standing historic compromises and illusions about achieving a democratic, parliamentary, and peaceful transformation of the capitalist state. In the 1990s, various autonomous and anarchist trends, such as the Zapatistas, based on the first round of radicalization in Latin America and the new experiences of the movement against capitalist globalization, developed a radical theoretical apparatus, but this was disproportionate to their actual political practices.

At the same time, among the numerous anarchist currents prevailed a post-hegemonical and anti-political dimension that finds characteristic expression in Richard Day's book, *Gramsci is Dead*,[3] where the same question "reform or revolution" is considered obsolete because it depends upon traditions of fundamental social change that pertained to classical Marxism as well as classical anarchism. Post-anarchism shares with Laclau's and Mouffe's post-Marxist approaches the influence of Lacan and a withdrawal from the vision of a society without state, power, and exploitation.

From different starting points, a number of approaches through diverse theoretical paths have reached the same conclusion: The goal is, in the words of John Holloway, "to change the world without taking power."[4] These autonomous islets' self-imposed exemption from struggles for power resulted both in their "autonomy" from every general political project and in the development of an anti-political perspective toward present conditions and unfolding events. In contrast, an idealization of the logic of left-wing progressive governments was invented, based on the example of Latin American radicalization, which emphasized the grassroots-level of struggles as the determinant of all sociopolitical developments, while severely underestimating the dynamic of incorporation and the structural limits of reforms from above—two defining features of contemporary, totalitarian capitalism.

The outbreak of the capitalist crisis, its quality of newness and unfathomable depth, has changed the facts dramatically. The anarchists seem to be strategically puzzled by the problems that the crisis has put forward, while the proposals for progressive administration of what Badiou once called "capital-parliamentarism" have established a relationship among the currents of social resistance that have led a new wave of politicization. To put it succinctly, we might therefore characterize the dynamic of the current period as pushing objectively towards either anti-capitalist, revolutionary solutions or towards a dangerous, radical regression. This is the case, not only in terms of the historical unfolding of actual contradictions, but also in relation to immediate solutions, here and now, for the survival and alleviation of the people.

In this sense we need a policy of the oppressed that will constitute itself as a transitional program paving the way for fundamental social transformation. The rationale of the transitional program is that of continuous contact and politicization of social resistance with the aim of developing new avant-gardes and reinforcing revolutionary processes through the masses own experience. NAR (the New Left Current) and ANTARSYA (the Front of the Greek Anticapitalist Left) have suggested such a program for mass mobilization. Its main points involve increase of salaries and pensions; abolition of memoranda and their measures; termination of payments and remission; exiting the eurozone and the EU on the basis of an internationalist perspective; nation-

"The 3 Rs" continues on page 4