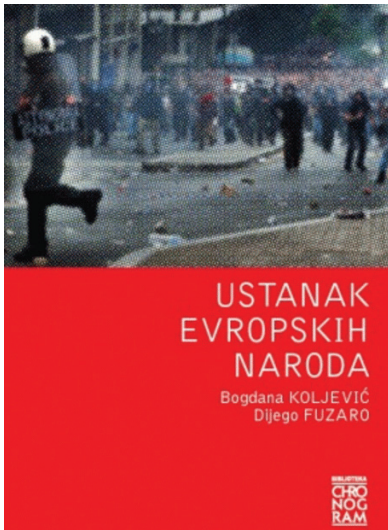


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Bogdana Koljević and Dijego
Fuzaro. *Ustanak evropskih
naroda [The Uprising of
European Peoples]*. Filip Višnjić,
Belgrade, 2016.

The word crisis receives its meaning from medicine; it is a point “in the course of disease when the patient either descends to death or returns to health.” In his *Prison Notebooks*, Gramsci wrote about the nature of crisis, which “consists precisely in the

fact that the old is dying and the new cannot be born; in this inter-regnum a great variety of morbid symptoms appear.” Gramsci was probably aware of Karl Marx’s writings from 1848. For Marx, crisis is periodic return that puts on trial, each time more threateningly, “the existence of the entire bourgeois society.” In other words, in the moment of crisis, all of capitalism is put in question. Capitalism is the patient, and its crisis should lead to cautious joy, or careful hope that revolution and attendant “expropriation of the expropriators” is drawing near.

The authors of this magnificent new book do indeed approach crisis with cautious joy. But also with careful awareness of the “morbid symptoms” we are bound to experience as we struggle to bring anew world into existence (attempting to prevent complete descent into new barbarism). It’s not just about the crisis of the European Union (Habermas), but more importantly, crisis of the very idea of politics—an “integral de-politization of the world--” and of European civilization.

Koljević and Fuzaro share the insight of the great Hungarian economist Karl Polanyi about the unprecedented rupture brought

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about the institution of capitalism: the domination of society by the economy in the form of exchange value. They offer an explosive and convincing *Zivilisationkritik*, while lunging into a fiercely compelling attack on the pretensions of liberal democracy (a truly monstrous contradiction in terms!) responsible for the destruction of collective imagination (*Phantasiemord*). The modern equivalent of Gothic Cathedral is not a bathroom, as Ernest Bloch once complained, but the Central European Bank. Banks are far less useful institutions than public toilets, especially the one that these authors denounce as an integral part of the inexorable reign of money of new European pseudo-elites. For new European rulers, humans are indeed the most precious form of capital (Stalin). Koljević and Fuzaro's inspired criticism of neoliberal quantification, mechanization, and dissolution of social bonds, draws its inspiration from the rich source of European emancipatory traditions from the left as well as from the right. The comparisons Koljević and Fuzaro make, call to mind the famous conclusion to Max Weber's *The Protestant Ethics and the Spirit of Capitalism*, haunted as it was by the specter of bureaucratic Empire of the Egyptian type.

The originality of the book lies in the way authors put the arguments and themes of contem-

porary melancholic *Kulturpessimismus* to work in service of an insightful political-activist perspective. They are persuaded that the current crisis constitutes a historic turning point. It is manifested in a variety of "morbid symptoms," which include the institution of the European Union, neoliberalism as a form of conservative utopia, and absolute capitalism (ab-solutus: detached from any ethical consideration or socio-economic breaks). In order to recover our health, to see that day when the expropriators will be expropriated, we need to build a movement that breaks not only with liberal superficiality and consumerist banality, but also represents a much grater danger to the pseudo-elites of Europe. We need another Germany in Europe, and another Europe in Germany. The modern European project is anything but European; rather, it is a colonizing project of Americanized political imagination defined by a depoliticized economy emptied of culture, is concealed by the utopia of neoliberalism. Neoliberalism should not be perceived as a solely economic phenomenon. It is, first and foremost, a political project, whose conservative utopian character resides in stubborn denial of any other structure of political authority. For the authors of the book, this conservative utopia needs to be replaced by a social ideal legitimately opposed

to the existing state of affairs, a utopia that is political as much as a metaphysical form of oppositional reality, "superior to that of vulgar empirical facticity" (Bloch). What this conservative utopia conceals is hidden in plain sight: the rise of new technocratic elite, the specific form of power embodied institutionally in European Union, and a new configuration of popular struggle. The consensus of new elites contributes to rapid and unpredictable radicalization of the "extreme" political tendencies. This process is particularly evident in the European South (the Balkans and the Mediterranean), located by the authors both as the "weak link" in the chain of German colonialism and as the primary locus of resistance to Eurocratic structural violence (a form of suffering that shapes political community without political subjectivity). Young *indignados* from public squares and activists of the right are both in the agora of new politics. New continental struggle for another Europe could take a form of transnational strikes and mass assembly movements, or the form of demands for national sovereignty and democratic sovereignty of economy.

The originality of Koljević and Fuzaro's argument lies in their proposed synthesis that aspires to unite apparently opposed ideological projects. The strength of their proposal, and a marvelous con-

densation of the main argument, is their active hope in the productive encounter of European liberatory traditions. This is a synthesis of a different order: it traverses the right and left without either opposing them or identifying with them. Some of these apparent paradoxes likely stem from our own preconceived notions about the incompatibility of particular ideas, ideas that lead us to experience cognitive dissonance where, in historical reality, none should exist. This approach reinforces the complexity of intellectual legacies and the difficulty of placing historical tendencies in labeled boxes, a task made all the more difficult by the continuous redefinition of the labels themselves. By employing this theoretical position, the volume attains remarkable breadth.

Koljević and Fuzaro invite us to revisit Karl Marx's concept of true democracy (*wahredemokratie*), one of the more neglected parts of his rich thought. Their reading of Marx's critique of Hegel's *Rechtphilosophie* leads them to recognize collective self-determination (*Selbstbestimmung*) as the principal *topos* of politics. In erudite dialogue with philosophers and theorists of "real democracy," including Mouffe and Laclau, but also Alan Badiou, they identify the indissolubility of the concepts of popular rule and active processes of popular subjectification. In equal measure, the New Euro-

pean idea should draw the heart of its articulation from those enlightened expressions of the European right, conscious of national sovereignty, economic equality and national identity. *The Uprising of European Peoples* incorporates discussions of the manifold intellectual currents that formed Kolevic's and Fuzaro's perspective in such theoretical detail that it is easy for a reader to forget at times that the book is, in essence, a dialogue. The choice of dialogue as a form is not accidental. *Dia-logos* is the beginning not only of philosophy, but also of European civilization as a whole. To write collaboratively, to find oneself in a dialogue, is to remind the reader of the crucial place of conversation in the process of knowing. It is also a powerful dialogical rebuttal of one of the central-- and most devastating--- tenets of neoliberalism: ceaseless production of the fragmented world of atomized consumers.

Overall, I highly recommend this book to those interested in political theory, European politics, neoliberalism and its European discontents. The book makes a significant contribution to our understanding of European politics. I believe that both academics and activists will find it a clear and excellent book to read on this complex topic.