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EDITORIAL PERSPECTIVES

GLOBALIZATION, DEEP HISTORY, AND A VICTORY CELEBRATION

Unusually, this “Editorial Perspectives” *begins* with the “In This Issue” review of contents, generally held over until after some substantive problem in social theory or political economy has been addressed. This is because a major component of the current issue is a Symposium on the present writer’s book, *Deep History: A Study in Social Evolution and Human Potential* (SUNY Press, 2007). With all this attention — and criticism — followed by my own response, it would seem excessive for me to take up any additional space here! Regarding the Symposium, I will only say that I feel honored to have stimulated the contributions of all of the participants — Paul Blackledge, Paul Nolan, Alan Carling, Julio Huato, and Diane Flaherty — and hopeful that discussion of historical materialist fundamentals will have been encouraged, by the book and by the ensuing debate, regardless of where participants may fall on various sides of the issues raised.

Had I indeed written something in this space, it would have been on the pressing topic of the nature of the present phase of capitalist development, and the meaning of capitalist globalization — the matter at issue between Jerry Harris and William K. Tabb, whose paired articles here are major current statements, from different angles, regarding this question. Anything I might have written would have had to be an intervention in this debate, and it would be against the proprieties to do this in the front matter of the issue in which the two statements first appear. So, again, I must hold my tongue — for now. Harris, along with William I. Robinson and others (see Robinson and Harris, “Towards a Global Ruling Class: Globalization and the Transnational Capitalist Class,” *S&S*, Spring 2000), is a major proponent of the view that the dynamic new element in the political economy of the present is the emergence of a *transnational* capitalist class (TCC), rising above the interests of particular nation–states, and that

a corresponding *transnational* capitalist state (TCS) is also in formation. The old nation- and state-centered view of the world, according to Harris, misses this dynamic and therefore fails to grasp the distinctive new reality. He pursues this theme via an examination of Russia, China and the Gulf States. By contrast, Tabb — also a prominent figure in these discussions; see his *Economic Governance in the Age of Globalization* (Columbia UP, 2004) — regards this position as overdrawn, overly abstract, and incapable of grasping the complexity of the present situation, in which national identities, rivalries and power blocs continue to play significant roles. The debate is conceptual, methodological, and empirical — and completely open! I will return to it, and urge other possible participants to send in their contributions.

The final paper, “‘Capital in General’ and ‘Competition’ in the Making of *Capital*: The German Debate,” by Roberto Fineschi, reports on developments among German Marxists, and so ties in with the special section on “The New European Renaissance” in Marx studies, which appeared in our previous issue (October 2008). We are especially concerned to present work that summarizes discussions in languages other than English; there is of course some parallelism, but this is never complete. Seemingly more abstract and general than the TCC/TCS discussion, Fineschi’s study in fact bears importantly on present-day themes, since it is precisely the qualitative nature of the capitalist social relation that is at issue, ultimately, in discussions of class formation, evolution, and structure in today’s world.

The TCC/TCS conversation dovetails with an equally central issue: the nature of the current social–economic crisis and its relation to how we think about crisis, and crisis potentials, in capitalist society more generally. We want to know: how transnational is today’s capitalism? (And in what sense? And how differently from the past?) But also: how stable and self-regenerative is today’s capitalism? Conversely, how crisis-prone? (And again, in relation to earlier periods.) We will get back to all of this. For now, I cannot resist making just one point. As many others have suggested, progress in our understanding of these issues will depend on a methodological trope toward synthesis: it is a matter of how to incorporate the valuable insights of the different positions into a comprehensive whole, rather than embracing a one-sided rejectionism. But this, I believe, in turn depends on: a) the *rich* modeling of capitalist social relations (not letting this theoretically reconstructed particularity get lost in the immediacy of either global management concerns *or* elemental conflict); and b) applying both good *stadial* theory and a firm sense of the balance-of-class-power cycle, as that cycle has worked itself out in recent decades up to the present. (Oh, well, instead of *déjà vu* it is *Deep History* all over again!)

. . . AND THE VICTORY CELEBRATION

On June 8, 2006, John Milios, a professor of political economy at the National Technical University of Athens, and a frequent contributor to *Science & Society* (see, for example, his “Marx’s Theory and the Historic Marxist Controversy on Economic Crisis,” Summer 1994; “Tugan-Baranowski and Effective Demand,” with Dimitris Sotiropoulos, April 2007), was refused entry into the United States, where he had come to participate in a conference at Stony Brook University. He was detained for hours at the airport in New York, questioned about his political views, and finally sent back to Greece, where his case became a *cause célèbre* for weeks following his forced return. Now, with the help of the American Civil Liberties Union, and without need to file a lawsuit, Milios has been awarded a ten-year non-immigrant visa, and in June 2008 he came here to address a conference of the American Association of University Professors in Washington, D. C. This is, needless to say, a major victory for civil liberties, for international scholarship, and for progressive values against the thrust toward increasing authoritarianism and repression, in capitalist societies in general and the United States in particular. Here is an excerpt from his talk:

For centuries, since the creation of universities, a permanent international dialog has been taking place, shaping a global space of Reason, a global process of creating concepts and theories, and a global society of scientific, philosophical and ideological controversy and debate involving different currents of thought. This globalization of Reason may prove to be incompatible with the global society of repression and exclusion that emerges out of class power and exploitation, hardly disguised behind chatter about “democracy and human rights.”

Everyone in the S&S community will want to celebrate this victory with John, and with all those who worked hard to make it happen.

D. L.

ERRATUM

The “Contents” page in the July 2008 issue listed a review by David Renton of the book edited by Kevin Morgan, Gidon Cohen and Andrew Flinn, *Agents of the Revolution: New Biographical Approaches to the History of International Communism in the Age of Lenin and Stalin*. The review, however, did not appear in that issue. It appears in this issue, pp. 156–158. We regret the error.