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LIBERAL SOCIALISM AND SOCIAL LIBERALISM: THE PRINCIPLES OF CORRELATION

The article establishes that the convergence of the socialism and liberalism ideas has become a leading trend in the ideological evolution of social democratic parties in Western Europe of the twentieth century. Those parties rejected the Marxist interpretation of socialism and, as a result, gradually moved to the right within the left-right party ideological spectrum – closer to a position of democratic and liberal socialism, ideologically approaching social liberalism as much as it was possible. The article also defined that today's liberal socialism (right-wing socialism) and social liberalism (left-wing liberalism), approaching each other in their fundamental doctrinal principles, form, in fact, a common ideological field in the center of the left-right party ideological spectrum, ensuring by this the essential filling of the centrist ideology.

Keywords: ideology, justice, freedom, liberal socialism, social liberalism, “third way”, social democratic parties.

The principal trend of ideological and institutional evolution of social democratic parties of the last quarter of the twentieth century was their shift to the right, closer to the center of the left-right party ideological spectrum. The determining factors of that shift were: firstly, the global economic crisis of the 1970s (it questioned the effectiveness of the Keynesian model of socio-economic policy); secondly, a significant transformation in the social structure of the leading industrial countries (decrease of the share and political authority of the working class in favor of new social groups with the priority of post-material values; consequently, “old” left parties lost their traditional electoral base). Here we mean that the combined effect of these factors caused a deep political and ideological crisis of the socialist and social democratic parties: they lost elections and for a long time lost power in their countries. The brightest examples are the British Labour Party (BLP) and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SDPG).

Thus, in an effort to face those challenges social democratic parties looked for a new ideological identity and models of organizational reforming: by using the strategy of a “catch-all party”, those political forces rejected traditional leftist ideological positions, recognized the benefits of a market economy and supplemented their programs with ideological theses of post-material essence, striving, thus, to completely leave behind the losing electoral image of class parties and establish themselves as parties of “all people”.

However, an ideological renovation did not lead to the desired result – social democracy was still in crisis. In particular, SDPG lost elections in 1987, 1990, 1994, and BLP – in 1987 and 1992. In our opinion, those failures were mainly stipulated by the collapse of the Soviet ideological project, which (the collapse) led to a significant discredit of socialist ideas and the global crisis of the entire leftist movement. Therefore, on this background, socialist and social democratic parties in Western Europe (even though the overwhelming majority of them criticized the project and disassociated from it) faced another serious challenge in the search for a new ideological identity and effective electoral strategies. As the German researcher T. Meyer rightly emphasized, all social democratic parties faced the need to develop political projects that would correspond to the new social situation and become “an actualization of a historical impulse of social democracy, and an opening of a realistic perspective for conquering the majority in their countries...”¹.

In the late 20th – early 21st century this new, the most theoretically developed (based on the concept of British scientist A. Giddens²) project of the ideological renovation of European social democratic parties (and, as a consequence, the formation of a “new social democracy”) was seen in the model of the “third way”, based on the maximum convergence of ideological positions of socialism and liberalism. However,

¹ Майер, Т. (2000). *Трансформация социал-демократии. Партия на пути в XXI век*. Москва: Памятники исторической мысли, 76.

² Giddens, A. (1998). *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

today there is no unanimity among scholars about the ideological origins of the concept of the “third way”. Thus, according to the approach of British researchers S. Buckler and D. Dolowitz, the concept of the “third way” is not an eclectic combination of the ideas of other ideological traditions (social democracy and neo-liberalism); it is based on the principles of social liberalism¹. We, in return, support a different methodological approach: the concept of the “third way” should be considered as a modified and adapted to modern challenges version of liberal socialism. That is, it refers to the redefinition of socialist discourse through the prism of ideological principles of liberalism (socialism (social democracy) that incorporated the principles of liberalism (neo-liberalism)).

Thereby, in our opinion, the initial methodological task in the context of adequate scientific comprehension of the “third way” concept as a model of ideological modernization of social democratic parties at the end of the 20th – the beginning of the 21st century and the comprehension of modern directions of their ideological and institutional development are: firstly, to clarify the specifics of the socialist and liberal ideas’ synthesis within the concepts of liberal socialism and social liberalism; and, secondly, to define peculiarities of correlation between the studied doctrines.

The first attempts to conceptually synthesis the fundamental ideas of socialism and liberalism took place at the end of the nineteenth and early beginning of the twentieth centuries. Moreover, this process developed in three main directions. Particularly, in the following context: firstly, the “revision” of the basic Marxist principles within the framework of the Marxist discourse itself (the result was the formation of social reformism and the conceptualization of socialism as the “organized liberalism”); secondly, the philosophical and ideological struggle of supporters of non-Marxist socialism for overcoming Marxist monopoly on its philosophical interpretation (in particular, the activities of the “Kathedersozialismus” in Germany, the Fabian Society in Britain, the Possibilism in France); thirdly, critical rethinking (within the liberal discourse) of the fundamental principles of liberalism, which, in times of workers’ struggle for political and social rights, had to reveal its own doctrinal position in order to prove its effectiveness in solving socio-economic problems of the capitalist society (the result was the formation of a social liberalism (“new liberalism”)).

Thus, the genesis of the concept of liberal socialism took place back at the end of the nineteenth century, as the French researcher M. Canto-Sperber called it: at the junction of socialistic liberalism and socialism that was freed from Marxism². We should note that even then liberal socialism and social liberalism began to approach each other as close as possible and form, in fact, a common ideological construction. Very interesting, in our opinion, is that one of the leading representatives of “new liberalism”, British thinker L. T. Hobhouse defined his approach precisely as “liberal socialism”³.

In this regard, we proceed from the following methodological position: the considerable ideological similarity of the concepts mentioned above gives some researchers a reason to apply “liberal socialism” and “social liberalism” as identical concepts⁴. In our opinion, this is incorrect, as far as they reflect the existence of somewhat different trends in the evolution of both liberalism and socialism: liberal socialism is the result of socialism’s redefinition through the prism of liberal ideology (socialism that incorporated the principles of liberalism); and, on the contrary, social liberalism is a consequence of rethinking liberalism through the basic ideological foundations of socialism (liberalism, which incorporated the principles of socialism). That’s why it is more appropriate to classify ideological and theoretical views of L. T. Hobhouse as “social liberalism”, even though he himself described them as “liberal socialism”.

So, the basic theoretical thesis of L. T. Hobhouse (as well as other representatives of the new course of liberalism, in particular T. H. Green, A. Marshall) was a belief that the economic development of leading European states at the end of the nineteenth century reached such a level that they were capable to provide decent existence to all its citizens by means of a centralized state policy aimed at regulating social sphere and implementing social programs to help the most indigent groups of society. Thus, in his work “Liberalism” (1911), which was published against the backdrop of disputes in British society regarding

¹ Buckler, S., Dolowitz, D. (2000). New Labour’s Ideology: A Reply to Michael Freedon. *The Political Quarterly*, 71, 102-103, 107-108.

² Канто-Спербер, М. (2004). Философия либерального социализма. *Неприкосновенный запас*, 6 (38). <<http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2004/38/kanto1.html>> (2018, March, 24).

³ Hobhouse, L.T. (1964). *Liberalism*. London: Oxford University Press, 165, 172-174.

⁴ Seaman, J.W. (1978). L. T. Hobhouse and the Theory of “Social Liberalism”. *Canadian Journal of Political Science*, 11 (4), 777-778.

social and tax reforms by the Government of H. H. Asquith (1908-1916), L. T. Hobhouse insisted on the need to supplement the liberal concept of economic freedom with a socialist concept of economic justice, since, in his opinion, the system of total economic freedom was not able to completely solve the problem of poverty.

In such a situation, it is a liberal state that must take on the function of guaranteeing not only economic freedom but also economic justice – “to secure to all normal adult members the means of earning by useful work the material necessities of a healthy and efficient life”¹. Therefore, the main task of a state is not just to give people money as charitable organizations do, but to create conditions in which they could independently support themselves and their families. In other words, state social help, according to the approach of L. T. Hobhouse, is not philanthropy, but an act of justice. Moreover, in the context of developing steps for the practical implementation of economic justice, he directly or indirectly refers to such concepts of socialist discourse as “minimum living wage”, “minimum wage”, “state regulation”, “state social programs”, “social payments”, and “progressive taxation”². “But this, it will be said, is not Liberalism but Socialism...But a word like Socialism has many meanings, and it is possible that there should be a Liberal Socialism, as well as a Socialism that is illiberal”, – L. T. Hobhouse remarked³.

Thus, we can deduce that the basic ideological principle of the new course of liberalism (social liberalism) as a result of its rethinking under the new socio-economic conditions was the proclamation of the need for state intervention in economic life, which in fact meant the denial of *laissez-faire* – the fundamental principle of the “old liberalism” (liberalism of the nineteenth century). In other words, the theorists of the “new liberalism”, by synthesizing ideas of economic freedom and economic justice, had formed the concept of a free individual, solidary with the society in which he/she lives, and to which a state must guarantee opportunities for a decent life. In this approach, according to M. Canto-Sperber, social rights of an individual were not distortions of a liberal state, but the result of its development⁴.

In that precisely period (the first 20 years of the twentieth century), the German thinker F. Oppenheimer developed his views. According to his doctrine, which he himself defined as “liberal socialism”, the advantages of socialism (communism) and capitalism must be united for the development in the “third way”. The basis of this combination should be the synthesis of the principles of freedom and equality: liberal socialism combines market economy with the lack of exploitation and social inequality⁵. It is interesting that in 1964, the representative of the center-right Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the German Chancellor L. Erhard (1963-1966) admitted the enormous impact, which he, as a “social liberal”, had experienced due to the concept of liberal socialism authored by his teacher F. Oppenheimer⁶.

The determinative theoretical substantiation and synthesis of the fundamental ideas of socialism and liberalism took place in the 1920s after critical rethinking of the Soviet experience of socialist construction. One of the leading roles in that process belonged to the Italian thinker and politician C. Rosselli, who developed a holistic theory of liberal socialism. We should note that at that time he was greatly influenced by the ideas of J. St. Mill, E. Bernstein, and representatives of the Fabian Society (especially after his visit to Great Britain in 1923, where he met with its members⁷).

So, constructing his theory, C. Rosselli proceeded from the need for a comprehensive rethinking of “socialist methods from the standpoint of liberalism”⁸. Moreover, the fundamental principle of such redefinition of socialism was the rejection of Marxism, which he considered a passed stage in the development of the socialist movement. The expediency of that rejection C. Rosselli explained by the fact that the “econo-mo-centrism”, “determinism” and “utopianism” inherent to Marxism brought the problem

¹ Hobhouse, L.T. (1964). *Liberalism*. London: Oxford University Press, 192, 203-204.

² Hobhouse, L.T. (1964). *Liberalism*. London: Oxford University Press, 87, 156-158, 195.

³ Hobhouse, L.T. (1964). *Liberalism*. London: Oxford University Press, 165-166.

⁴ Канто-Спербер, М. (2004). Философия либерального социализма. *Неприкосновенный запас*, 6 (38). <<http://magazines.russ.ru/nz/2004/38/kanto1.html>> (2018, March, 24).

⁵ Кроуфорд, К., Невский, С., Романова, Е. (Ред.-сост.) (2017). *Социальное рыночное хозяйство – основоположники и классики*. Москва: Весь Мир, 213, 375.

⁶ Repp, K. (2000). *Reformers, Critics, and the Paths of German Modernity: Anti-Politics and the Search for Alternatives, 1890-1914*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 238.

⁷ Pugliese, S.G. (1999). *Carlo Rosselli: Socialist Heretic and Antifascist Exile*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 59-60.

⁸ Наумова, Е. (2001). В поисках синтеза либерализма и социализма: Карло Росселли. Комолова, Н., Дамье, В. (под ред.). *Левые в Европе XX века: люди и идеи*. Москва: ИВИ РАН, 204.

of human rights and freedoms out of the main focus of socialism, thus depriving it of moral and value foundations. “The main problem for the socialists is not Marx’s denial, but liberation from him. To accept this provision is vital: to abandon openly, completely from that in Marxism, what is mistaken, utopian, accidental”, – he stressed in his work “Liberal socialism” (1929)¹. The liberal version of socialism was to become the result of such a refusal and return of socialism to its own spiritual “origins” (human, his\her freedom). “Firstly, you can be a Marxist, not being a socialist; and secondly, those socialists, who are hoping to find guidance to a particular socialist movement in Marxism, are mistaken”, – C. Rosselli remarked, thus pointing to a possibility of non-Marxist socialism².

Thus, according to his approach, socialism liberated from Marxism acquires an absolutely different meaning: it is not socialization, not the power of the proletariat and not material equality, but the “progressive realization of the idea of freedom and justice among people”³. So, as we can see, in this particular context socialism is as close to liberalism as possible. And C. Rosselli insists on the necessity of such a rapprochement. In his opinion, socialism and liberalism do not deny each other, but, on the contrary, supplement: “socialism should strive to become liberal, liberalism – to become the embodiment of the proletariat’s struggle”. In this dimension, socialism appears as a logical development of the principle of freedom. “Socialism, taken in its most significant meaning, and defined according to the results ... – is liberalism in action, is freedom that is established for poor people”, – C. Rosselli remarked⁴.

So, in our opinion, the problem of combining the socialist idea of socio-economic justice and the liberal idea of individual freedom is decisive in the concept of liberal socialism by C. Rosselli. Their synthesis, in accordance with his approach, is based on the primacy of the idea of justice, which implementation in society is a guarantee of individual freedom for every human being. “Freedom, if it is not accompanied by a minimum of economic independence, exemption from painful inability to provide immediate needs, does not exist for an individual, it is the purest artifice. In this case, individuals are slaves of their poverty, humiliated by dependence, and life appears to them only in one aspect and in one illusion: in materiality”, – C. Rosselli noted⁵.

This conceptualization of socialism makes Marxist provisions about the dictatorship of the proletariat and a violent proletarian revolution absolutely unacceptable to him. Therefore, within the concept of liberal socialism the struggle for a better society, for the “emancipation of the proletariat” is not reduced to the inter-class confrontation, violent overthrow of the bourgeois power and fundamental change of the whole system of production relations. First of all, this is a struggle for changing fundamental moral and value principles of society, that is, for changing consciousness. “I declare without hesitation that, all in all, the socialist revolution can only be regarded as such if the change of social organization is accompanied by a moral revolution, that is, the constant conquest of qualitatively better humanity, more kind, more fair, more spiritual”, – stressed C. Rosselli⁶.

Consequently, in practical dimension the concept of liberal socialism meant the rejection of revolutionary violence as a method of political struggle, of total annihilation as a means to change the capitalist society, and of the establishment of any dictatorship, including the dictatorship of the proletariat as a necessary condition for the construction of socialism. Instead of all this, C. Rosselli put forward the liberal method of political struggle, which implied guaranteeing the rights and freedoms of citizens, democratic means of obtaining power (elections and parliamentary activities), multi-party system, local autonomy, broad self-government, and pluralism. “It is essential for liberalism, and therefore for socialism, to observe a liberal or democratic method of a political struggle, the method which, as a result of its deep essence, is permeated with the principle of freedom. This can be formulated in one word: self-governance”, – he wrote. Moreover, the liberal method, according to him, does not exclude violence, but merely transforms it into a force that has a sanction of morality and law⁷.

The implementation of the liberal method politically, according to C. Rosselli’s approach, meant, in particular, the need to define a certain set of rules of the game in which all competing parties would

¹ Росселли, К. (1989). *Либеральный социализм*. Рим: Mondo Operaio, 100-102.

² Росселли, К. (1989). *Либеральный социализм*. Рим: Mondo Operaio, 77, 106-107.

³ Росселли, К. (1989). *Либеральный социализм*. Рим: Mondo Operaio, 108.

⁴ Росселли, К. (1989). *Либеральный социализм*. Рим: Mondo Operaio, 116, 119.

⁵ Росселли, К. (1989). *Либеральный социализм*. Рим: Mondo Operaio, 119, 120.

⁶ Росселли, К. (1989). *Либеральный социализм*. Рим: Mondo Operaio, 110-111.

⁷ Росселли, К. (1989). *Либеральный социализм*. Рим: Mondo Operaio, 130-132.

be obliged to respect the rules aimed at ensuring the peaceful coexistence of citizens, classes, and states, as well as to recognize the principle of change of power (i.e., to agree with a possibility of different parties coming to power by the election results). As for the economic life, the liberal method of self-government has to manifest itself, first of all, in the rejection of the command (authoritarian) principle of governance and in the possibility of effective coexistence of public and private property, in other words, in building a mixed economy. “There is no a single socialist, even a communist, who would seriously believe in the complete abolition of private property”, – the Italian researcher highlighted¹.

Analyzing the main provisions of C. Rosselli’s liberal socialism theory, we must agree with the statement of other Italian thinker N. Bobbio, that building his theory C. Rosselli relied on the analysis of the socialist movement, the “revision” of socialist theory and practice, and the idea of the “combination of socialism and freedom”, which finally led him to the concept of a new, liberal socialism that can be classified as right-wing².

Accordingly, we can conclude that formation of liberal socialism and social liberalism theories was one of the first attempts to create an ideological alternative as to the Marxist-Leninist (communist), so to the liberal (capitalist) project. The construction of this alternative was based on the desire to eliminate the extremes of both projects. On the one hand, to overcome the dehumanization and deliberalization of socialism, typical for its Marxist version; and on the other hand, to solve the problem of socio-economic insecurity of a person (economic injustice) in the face of unlimited action of the *laissez-faire* liberal principle. The main mechanism to solve those problems was the synthesis of the socialist idea of economic justice and the liberal idea of freedom, which enabled socialism to turn the problem of a human and his/her freedom to the center of its attention (to comprehend it as a higher value); and to liberalism – to understand and justify the possibility of state intervention in the economy for ensuring social and economic justice in society as a basis for the full realization of freedom of each individual. In this perspective, the socialist movement, according to C. Rosselli’s definition, is the heir of liberalism, the bearer of the dynamic idea of freedom, which is carried out in the dramatic course of history. “Liberalism is an ideal inspirational force, socialism is a practical creative force”, – he emphasized³.

Exactly this convergence of the socialism and liberalism ideas has become a leading trend in the ideological evolution of social democratic parties in Western Europe, which since the 1920s have been rejecting the Marxist interpretation of socialism and, as a result, gradually moved to the right within the left-right party ideological spectrum – closer to a position of democratic and liberal socialism, approaching social liberalism as much as it was possible. “Entire European social democracy, and not only European, is moving towards renewed liberalism, which absorbs motives of opposing movements (bourgeois enlightenment and proletarian socialism)”, – C. Rosselli noted in 1929⁴.

So, in our opinion, today’s liberal socialism (right-wing socialism) and social liberalism (left-wing liberalism), approaching each other in their fundamental doctrinal principles, form, in fact, a common ideological field in the center of the left-right party ideological spectrum, thus ensuring the essential filling of the centrist ideology.

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¹ Росселли, К. (1989). *Либеральный социализм*. Рим: Mondo Operaio, 108, 131.

² Наумова, Е. (2001). В поисках синтеза либерализма и социализма: Карло Росселли. Комолова, Н., Дамье, В. (под ред.). *Левые в Европе XX века: люди и идеи*. Москва: ИВИ РАН, 221.

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