

Question: Mr Baier, in your speech on Friday here in Budapest, you defined the strategic line of the European left to win the battle of ideas against the growing right, and above all you emphasised the absolute necessity of winning to govern, to take power and make it available to the social classes to which the left refers and for the common good. You divided the strategy into 3 points:

1. emphasise the call for social rights
2. keeping the focus on humanist values
3. flexibility in alliances

The third point is maybe the most interesting: to what extent can and should alliances be pushed, and what, if any, suggestion does the European left give to individual national organisations on this point?

Answer: I think when it comes fighting the far right, the key issue is social rights, social justice. Talking about ecological rights requires talking about social justice and peace. But that means that we have to be in alliance with trade unions, with social movements, with citizens. But at the same time we must see that the fight for social rights is not sufficient. We need to defend humanistic values which are not negotiable. You cannot negotiate about migrant rights. Migrants have human rights. They are humans and they have the same rights as every person who lives, who was born in a particular country. And for this reason, we will be in alliance with human rights movement, with churches, which in some cases might be the same alliances. For example in the women's movement and being a political party means being available for different types of alliances. And being able to unite with people basically to defend democracy and liberties.

Question: Thank you. And what about the flexibility in alliances and the extent that we can reach and how far we can go, in the in the goal to win the battle against the right? Because there are a lot of recipes among the European countries: for example, the the Spanish Communist Party is in the government with the Socialist Party; in Italy happens another kind of political dynamic; in Germany, in Austria, other kind as well. Is there a common point the European Left Party could suggest on this matter?

Answer: Unfortunately, not. Because the national conditions are very different and the political landscape in the country is different. I come from a tradition of anti fascist struggles in which alliances were created between parties, between trade unions, between churches in order to gather all parts of the population which would be available to defend minorities, liberal democracy, liberty rights. But at the same time, these forces are not in agreement on how the economy should be structured. Some of them were in favour of reestablishing a moderate capitalist society, other want to aim at socialism. The famous

Ventotene Manifesto actually combined the inspiration of radical liberalism, was the inspiration of socialism of communism, and I find it dislodged in the confrontation with the far right. I would say you can make alliances in a very generous and flexible way, as long as you are sure about your own identity; and if you are socialist then your identities are that you will be in the democratic space, defending the idea of common Property of common goods of democratic participation of the workers in the administration of factories and you might disagree with colleagues and partners with whom you have fought against the far right. I find this naturally, or organically, because democracy means the execution of a political struggle in constitutional forms and without exercising violence, and that's what the far right wants to do away. They want violent societies, societies in which different parts of the society are put one against the other, not considering that normal society comprises different and opposing interests which can be settled and negotiated in peaceful ways. That's what the left stands for.

Question: You quoted the Ventotene manifesto. Let me quote another Italian intellectual. Maybe the struggle is to understand a way in order to recover the emotional connection with the masses, as Antonio Gramsci said.

Answer: I love Antonio Gramsci very much he inspired, in fact the renovation of the left in Italy, of course. But in all, Europe. I remember when we discussed this, by the way, the role of the sentiments and emotions. A book by Gustave Flaubert "The education of feelings" is an account about how the cultivation of a personality also includes the cultivation of his or her feelings. And this is not an idealistic concept, as Gramsci concept is not idealistic. It is the understanding that social practise has also a spiritual dimension which must be developed, which is in the way defined and constrained by the material preconditions of the existence. But it is an independent and autonomous sphere of the struggle of antagonistic classes, and this concerns particularly the fight against the far right. Because that what they are doing is actually exploiting the decultivation of feelings which took place under neoliberalism.

They don't come out of nothing. They can connect with the dehumanisation of our societies through neoliberalism. And that's why I believe that socialist struggle, Communist struggles are closely connected with struggles in the field of culture and art. And, by the way, this is a very specific field of alliance politics which requires even much more than flexibility: it requires generosity. And it requires the readiness of self transformation. There is this famous quote of Marx: "if you talk about the education, the question arises, who educates the educators?" . And that means that every person who wants to become an educator must be ready to be educated by the masses and by their experiences, which the social agents acquire during the struggles.

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