

ing (a particular typology of) the weak. Even after all the painstaking and precious work of historical reconstruction of the RAF's experience, such as has been carried out also in this volume, there still remains, in the end, to solve the whole mystery. The questions to be asked are thus: who/what was maneuvering these expendables in this complex game of murder and provocation, and to what end?



***Freedom Not Yet: Liberation and the Next
World Order.***

Surin, Kenneth.

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Despite spectacular failures (most recently the financial crisis of 2008 to present) neoliberalism continues to dominate the policy visions and commitments of global decision-making elites. Opposition to neoliberal politics and the possibilities of social transformation and the development of real alternative social relations are at the heart of heterodox Marxist Kenneth Surin's concerns in *Freedom Not Yet*. Surin (who has previously made some useful contributions to autonomist Marxist theory) suggests that within projects of Western neoliberalism most people are in need of liberation from their socioeconomic circumstances. Neoliberalism creates an increasingly polarized and impoverished society. Surin is particularly interested in the oppression of poorer countries and the poor globally. He asks:

“Who are the political subjects capable of building and maintaining a liberated world? What are the possibilities of their development as forces for social change?”

Surin notes that political innovation, and the alteration of politics, is required to achieve social liberation from neoliberal capitalism. In his view, part of this innovation includes drawing upon the insights of contemporary (post-modern) philosophy. In this regard he draws upon the works of Badiou, Žižek, Deleuze, and Negri among others.

Freedom Not Yet is divided into three primary sections. The first examines the current regime of accumulation, particularly the financialization of capital. The second section looks at the constructions of subjectivity and identity and the reproduction of people as social beings within specific contexts. The third section addresses liberation and the prospects for alternative notions of subjectivity that might move beyond the limited (and cynically deployed) notions of humanism as motivated within liberal democracies (14).

At the same time, Surin argues for the continued importance of Marxist theory which remains, in his view, indispensable. Surin seeks the philosophical possibilities of a Marxist or neo-Marxist perspective on liberation from capitalist regimes of economic exploitation and political domination. As a Marxist, Surin is concerned first with understanding the economic relations that structure the present period. He starts his work with an analysis of the current regime of accumulation.

Neoliberalism includes the domination globally of financial markets, investment, and speculation over traditional production economies (as under industrialism or secondary sector dominance). The domination of financial markets is enacted partly through neoliberal social policies that subordinate poor people and poorer economies to the priorities of capitalist markets and trade. Surin is also concerned with the neoliberal constitution of subjectivity—the creation of neoliberal subjects for whom neoliberalism is regarded simply as a “way of life,” the only possible world. The production of neoliberal subjects is a key aspect of contemporary struggles over dispossession and exploitation, for Surin.

Unlike many post-Marxist theorists who, over the last few decades of “end of history” defeatism in Marxist circles, have

given up hopes for revolutionary transformation and turned instead to social democracy (so-called “radical democracy”), Surin seeks the conditions and prospects for revolution in the twenty-first century. From a Marxist perspective, Surin argues that economic crises, such as the current financial crisis of 2008 to the present, are results of the structures of capitalist development, of regimes of production and accumulation. For Surin, the financial crisis is the product of deep tensions within the capitalist system of accumulation which can only be removed through removal of the system that produced, and continues to produce, them in the first place (1). This distinguishes him from other critics—liberal, conservative, postmodern and post-Marxist alike—for whom the question of capitalism as a system of accumulation to be superseded is largely avoided or discounted.

For Surin, 1989 and 2001 provide key dates in the periodization of the symbolic history of neoliberalism. 1989 signaled, of course, the collapse of the Soviet regimes as well as the final years in office of Reagan and Thatcher, whose mythologies of the renaissance of the US and Britain as the “rightful” world powers provided impetus for the rule of “free market values” and the demise of social welfare (and social movements). Notably, the collapse of distinctions between left and right, and the loss of belief in possibilities of revolutionary transformation, became widely entrenched after the collapse of the Soviet forms of “communism” after 1989. The other symbolic date is 9-11, 2001. This moment has served as the mobilizing myth behind the recent nationalist and expansionist drives to war and occupation and the US pursuit of global geopolitical domination.

The Reagan-Thatcher project was a response to the decline of the period of postwar economic growth (roughly 1945–1975). The neoliberal ideology, that was part of a broader structural adjustment project, offered several diagnoses for the collapse of the postwar boom—all of which were viewed as systemic. The pillars of neoliberal mythology involved attempts to overcome the supposed imposition of market rigidities, always attributed to the purported power or interference of labor unions, government regulation, “unfair” tax burdens on entrepreneurs who were presented as the real engines of the economy, and the excessive costs (in capital’s view) of welfare systems that had among their imagined faults the creation of a

“culture of poverty” which removed incentives for the working class to accept work in lower paying jobs, with little or no security. Indeed, these were the very work conditions sought by the budding entrepreneurs with their service sector economies (2). These pillars all remain as part of current political and economic discourses, even if some of the rough edges have been smoothed down (such as the most virulent attacks on single moms under popular Reagan and Bush discourses).

The task for neoliberal governments has been, and continues to be, the removal of the supposed market rigidities, government regulations and interventions in social welfare. Governments are said to exist to create or expand markets and protect property (militarily as well as judicially), especially from movements of the working classes and poor. Nothing more. The catchwords are deregulation and privatization. Notions of equality are reduced to an “equality of opportunity” that refuses even minimal efforts toward any actual redistribution of income (unless it goes from poor to wealthy).

In fact, despite the claims of neoliberal mythologizing, neoliberalism has actually been effected through what might be called more appropriately a “Military Keynesianism.” While claiming to desire “less government” or “smaller government,” ruling parties from Reagan through Obama and Thatcher through Cameron have massively grown the military and police functions of the state, at enormous cost, operating staggering deficits and running up record debts (as did the Reagan administrations, despite recent Republican revisionism). Neoliberal governments also, despite the mythology, have worked to centralize government, reaching the heights of executive exercise of authority as practiced under Bush the Younger. In addition, despite the anti-welfare bootstrapping rhetoric of successive administrations, neoliberal governments have also increased tax cuts, public grants, and interest free loans to corporations. What some term “corporate welfare,” these polices have effected a massive transfer of wealth upward from poor to rich. Never mind the usual complaints about wealth redistribution offered by neoliberal parties.

The political outcome of neoliberalism has been the reduction of political action to the spectacle of mass media panics, poll chasing, and public relations focus group driven “issues

management.” A range of moral panics (typically centered around the poor and working classes) have been, and continue to be, regularly deployed to excite the electorate. So-called terrorists and “illegal” migrants have formed some of the most popular recent manifestations. Homeless people, “squeegee youth,” and “riot grrls” posed some of the earlier examples. The hegemony of neoliberalism among parties of both left and right constructs politics as a matter of “positioning conformist citizens in front of the market” (9).

Under such conditions politics lost much meaning and distinctions between left and right, in mainstream party politics, dissolved in the electorally strategic, and highly profitable, pursuit of the marketable “centrist” position. Politics has been evacuated under economic managerialism and the forever deferred promise of trickle down economics that over time increases in wealth for the rich will filter down somehow to the poor. This approach, of course, has actually increased wealth even more for the already rich while devastating the poor and their communities.

Notably, the purportedly alternative politics of Clinton and Blair, supposed liberals, actually served to consolidate and extend the Reagan-Thatcher projects, making them more palatable (at least initially) to working class voters (4). Many disappointed liberals and social democrats are beginning to realize that Obama represents a similar “alternative” politics (or Trojan horse neo-liberal).

For Surin, the current period requires nothing less than a new democratic project. As he argues: “What is desperately needed today, therefore, is a new sociopolitical settlement, at once practical and theoretical, that will reclaim the political for the project of a democracy that will place the interests of the dispossessed at its heart” (11). To his credit, Surin sees this new democracy as being possible only as a project of liberation from the dispossession and exploitation that are at the center of capitalist structures of domination and power. It is his attempt to sketch the contours of liberation through postmodern Marxist theory that is less convincing and, finally, less promising than his approach first hinted at.

Surin notes that a key feature of the rise of neoliberalism has been the failure or problematization of categories of class strug-

gle. Notions of social class and class struggle have clearly been marginalized throughout the last three decades. This marginalization has been deepened in media manipulated politics of the neoliberal period. The need for categorical innovation provides impetus for Surin's work. Marxism requires a renovation of its own categories and the current period of crises provides some encouragement for that effort within Marxism. Yet Surin, despite his recognition that the bureaucratic, centralized state (of Sovietism and corporatism) has had its day, maintains his Marxist belief in the need for a state apparatus to manage affairs, even in a liberated society. In the end he desires only a politics to the left of social democracy, but his vision is not clearly articulated. Disappointingly he calls for little more than a "vigorous democratization of our economic and political institutions" (15). This is extremely limited. The real issue is the existence of those institutions themselves, not their democratization.

Similarly disappointing is Surin's narrow appeal for "mechanisms of accountability" that cannot be bought off by the wealthy (15). The real questions are power, access, decision-making (and, indeed, property and wealth) rather than the return of regulatory bodies (that might again degenerate in the face of the above structures).

As well, Surin seeks a return of party politics not run by political "experts" and public relations managers. He seeks parties based on commitment "to substantive ideological positions" (15) and expressing differences between right and left that might better reflect the electorate's aims. This is once again the party politics of different parts that still make up the same whole (with loyal oppositions of left and right). Yet the real problem is party politics, representative democracy, and the domination of politics by professional organizations. The real problems might be understood as authoritarianism and statism, which create, maintain, and thrive on the dispossession that Surin is concerned with. Even when discussing the need for a strengthening of communal bonds in the US, Surin sees this as being beneficial largely in contributing to increased involvement in electoral politics.

The great need that Surin identifies, but does not satisfactorily explore, is the crucial need for the development and exten-

sion of bonds of community solidarity in the West, particularly the US and Canada. Yet this is not fully explored in his work. In my view, there is a real need for liberation movements in the West to build what I prefer to call infrastructures of resistance. These are the institutions and shared resources that might sustain communities and movements in struggles over time. There is little institutional analysis in Surin's work, either of the decline of previous infrastructures of resistance within the working classes (unions, mutual aid societies, flying squads, workers centers) or of emerging alternatives and their promise and prospects for continued development.

Given the stated goal of examining prospects and possibilities, as well as pathways, for liberation of the world's poor from conditions of poverty and dispossession, the philosophical examinations of Badiou, Derrida and others reads like a considerable detour. It is not that philosophy is unimportant or that the identified theorists do not offer some insights into the issues. It is more that the dense philosophical examinations in this volume do not seem to make much of a contribution to real world questions of liberation, dispossession, or resistance.

There is a disjuncture between the social scientific or political economic analysis in the first section—which is forcefully presented—and what seems to be a retreat into philosophical excursus. The chapters on philosophical writers read too much like overviews of each theorist's position. Noticeable is the nearly complete absence of any engagement with the political theorizing, strategies, or tactics produced and debated within contemporary movements and by activists and organizers. This is finally not even a book of the radical imagination, of the images, hopes, and desires that motivate or inspire political actors, movements or communities.