

European Studies**Elements of the Modern Left-Wing European Politics
into the Horizon of the European Union's Construction**

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Abstract: This paper is about the importance of modern left-wing European politics in the process of construction of European Union. In our paper, we have tried to discern the main elements of the contemporary European left-wing, focusing on that which may currently be considered the essence of the offer of the left-wing political parties: the European societal model. The European societal model lies at the heart of most European, but also Transatlantic, intellectual debates. It is an ongoing process, which is still quite far from the final agreement stage. The European Socialists (Social-Democrats) claim the avant-garde of the construction and modernization of the European societal model. This model constitutes an important political and even ideological bet – in a global context – for the European left-wing. Political, as the left-wing desires to prove the superiority of their pan-European views in relation to the Neo-liberals and the non-Conservatives who either oppose integration or promote incoherent projects. Ideological in a global context, as the European left-wing desires to prove the superiority of the European societal model/European model of life over the North American one, symbol of the neo-liberal mundialization.

Keywords: modern left-wing European politics; European Union; Anthony Giddens

1. Left-wing's Role in the New European Ideological Context. Identity Crisis

The beginning of the third millennium is marked by the Highway of Ideas, a concept introduced by the Chairman for Global Progress, Felipe Gonzales. Under the pressure of the philosophical enthusiasm characterizing every beginning, new ideas, themes, and dilemmas emerge, less explored axiological theories are being “recovered”, while, on the other hand, several concepts and ideas that have dominated the public debate disappear. Some ideas are running faster, others more slowly, sometimes collisions occur with strong effects on the useful content of the

debate, some other times, the “ideological traffic” is accompanied by what we call the ethics of dialogue, of the confrontation of ideas.

Our paper does not propose a complete investigation of this “highway of ideas”. It aims to identify the main trends/themes/ideas running down the left side of the highway, to capture the “development stage” of the European market of the left-wing debates in the context of an analysis of the global market of ideas at the beginning of the millennium.

1.1. Trends Characterizing the Global Market of Ideas

One of the greatest political economists of all time, John Maynard Keynes, said that in the long run, the course of history is determined by the intellectuals’ great ideas and the politicians’ decisions about these ideas. Referring to this aspect, in a recent study (Dahrendorf, 2003, p. 12). Ralf Dahrendorf warned that the political effect of these great ideas is rarely immediate, most often needing to wait for its time of maturity. Even though we live in a world where future leaves present little time to think, we believe that this truth will continue to be confirmed. The great ideas will be the result of many debates and their political time will not necessarily coincide with their birth.

The current philosophical-doctrinal context is substantialized by the manifestation of a variety of political-axiological and political-praxiological issues. The early years of the 21st century establish the phenomenological principle of novism (understood as an obsessive courage for renewal, for rebuilding) as an umbrella or “ideological” source for the global intellectual debate. The place of neophobia (the “fear of the new”, portrayed even by the endist theories), which has had an impact on the intellectual debate, immediately after the fall of the Berlin Wall, is taken by the theories of novism. According to the analysts of political doctrines, at least 25 circumscribed concepts of this phenomenon may be identified: the new economy, new equality, new right-wing, new left-wing, new conservatism, new path, new party, new civics, new work, new democracy, new culture, new society, new solidarity, new poverty, new education, new government, new state, new center, new humanism, new individualism, new internationalism, new progress, new liberalism, new capitalism, and the new human rights. All these doctrinal “tags”, behind which a huge intellectual and institutional effort to substantiate them is being made, draft a true global culture of the philosophical-doctrinal rebuilding of

the social and political action. For example, the establishment of the European Network of Ideas at Oxford University in August 2002 in order to rebuild a conservative doctrinal platform meant to propose “*an economic and social agenda marketable in Europe*”. The analysts estimate that the neoconservative and neo-liberal networks are faster in interpreting global change, the think-thanks of the left-wing being “crucified” between the tradition of the mobilizing utopias and the need for political realism, claimed by the desire of the leftist parties to maintain or conquer government power.

An effect of the crisis of traditional ideologies, this culture *in statu nascendi* rather expresses a particular need for fructifying their much discussed complementarity into a post-ideological summary or for rewriting the ideologies, for returning their critical spirit sacred, than one of complete denial of these ones.

Basically, we are witnessing a global conceptual effort of political and intellectual reconstruction of enlightenment. The failure of the realities built upon the interpretations of the socialist utopias, supplemented by the degradation of the realities governed by the “*managing of liberal pluralism*” (Bergounioux & Manin), the ideological monopoly of the free market – the *liberal utopia* (the “*liberal market ideology*”), requires such strategies of philosophical-doctrinal reconstruction.

Some of these strategies state the post-ideological primacy¹: “*synthetic ideology, refinement of managing ideas (managerialism²)*”, while others advocate for the reconstruction of the old ideologies, “*the old ideas of the future*”, starting from the regeneration of the specific intangible values.³ Finally, more and more doctrinal

¹ There is, in the intellectual debate at the beginning of the century and millennium, such a trend with philosophical meanings, to speak of “the world beyond”, an effect of the endist theories of “all the ends” (the end of history, the end of ideology, the end of the last human, the end of democracy, the end of the Western world, etc.). Thus, we speak of “post-democracy”, “post-humanism” “postmodernism”, “post-industrialism”, etc.

² Managerialism is considered by the proponents of this type of strategy the essence of postmodern politics and even the final stop of politics. No need for the awareness of directions toward which to move, for ideals to achieve, for imagining society projects but only for the power to demonstrate a management capacity more efficient, more skilled than our political competitors.

³ Those who constantly challenged the thesis of the end of ideologies and thus the post-ideological synthesis between the left and right wings, state that the Right and Left will exist as long as there are different interpretations of freedom, equality, state, labor, etc.

efforts call for a new intellectual construction of some credible utopias¹ by affirming the ideas of the avant-garde, of the alternative societal projects.

Vladimir Tismăneanu, in his collection of articles *Letters from Washington (Scrisori de la Washington)*, points to the need for Left and Right, in order to save political pluralism and to avoid deviations from democracy. (Tismăneanu, 2000, pp. 158-160). He believes that the secularization of ideologies risks asserting a totalitarian dimension, deeply undemocratic of the New invoked as an alternative, dimension reflected by the ideological expression “*something completely new*”. Denying ideologies and advocating for new “unifying” syntheses may become true reception chambers of some dictatorial regimes, the famous Romanian-born American political scientist considers. Tismăneanu illustrates this thesis by quoting the former dictatorial Venezuelan President Chavez.

Referring to the situation in his country, he said: “*We are building something completely new here. From an ideological point of view, I refuse and shall refuse to my grave to let myself cataloged in one way or another. I cannot accept that politics and ideology are geometric entities (i.e. you do not necessarily have to share an ideological belief to do politics). For me right and left are relative terms, and my thinking contains something of each, especially now that all paradigms are shuddered.*” (Tismăneanu, 2000, pp. 172-175)

The Italian thinker Norberto Bobbio, (Bobbio, 1999, pp. 114-117) assumed in his intellectual approach as a left-wing supporter, holds such a point of view as that expressed by Tismăneanu. He believes that the Left/Right distinction has failed to become obsolete, being essential to the preservation of democracy, and the terms “right” and “left” continue to be essential elements of our political language. And, at the same time – in my opinion – landmarks of identification and self-identification in those societies characterized by a stable democratic evolution. Bobbio invokes the attitude towards the principle of equality as the main criterion to reaffirm the Left – Right dichotomy.

“*The antithesis is quite deep*” – Bobbio says – “*the egalitarian starts from the belief that most inequalities stirring their anger and which they wish to abolish are social and as such they are doomed to extinction; the unequalitarian, in turn, starts from the opposite belief, that inequalities are mostly natural, therefore they cannot*

¹ Anatole France said in the previous century: “*Without the utopias, man would still be living in a cave.*”

be eliminated; ... in the name of natural equality, the egalitarian condemns social inequality; on behalf of natural inequality, the inequalitarian condemns social equality.”

In another paper, Étienne Schweisguth, a researcher at Cevipof, (Research Center for French Political Life) makes a record of the Left – Right gap, approaching its 150-year old European history, noting that the geography of political sensitivities is hardly canceled by ideological reflections. (Schweisguth, 1994, pp. 6-32) Right and Left are valid as long as they are needed to identify the points of view, the different stands of the various parties and politicians. Also they are valid as long as the feeling of belonging to the left-wing and to the right-wing is a strong one. These are the main conclusions of the French researcher.

On the other hand, Jean François Revel vehemently denies the usefulness of ideologies, holding that ideology is “*something that thinks for you*”. He identifies three key features of the “ideological”-like thought: ignoring facts, the cult of inconsistencies, and the ability to generate, under programmatic slogans, the opposite of the goals set. Unlike Tismăneanu (in this case), Revel sees in ideology the reception chamber of totalitarianism: “*The totalitarian temptation is a constant of the human spirit in which it was and will always be in conflict with the aspirations to freedom*”. (Revel, 2002, pp. 299-307) Revel warns that all those who believe in the therapy of ideologies and who state their useful existence, are nothing more than prisoners of the *ideological remanence*, unconscious promoters of anti-liberal culture. With this concept, Revel wants to prove that an ideology can survive for a long time the political and social realities which it has accompanied and that the schools of thought inspired by these ones can play a role in the public debate for a long time afterwards. Revel tries to exemplify this state of ideological remanence by the paradox of several former communist countries in Eastern Europe, which – he says - “*find it more difficult to mentally escape from the (post) communist magma than to physically escape from the communist jail*”. His idea is supported by an American theorist Hilton Kramer, himself well seen in the intellectual circles of the New Right: “*The end of the Cold War basically marked the end of the socialist idea and practice of Marxist inspiration, but not of the mirages and myths generated by it.*” Being “unconsciously” located himself on an ideological barricade, practicing liberal loyalties (“*Socialism exists today, but it is called liberalism*”), Revel rebukes the anti-Liberals (and this is a liberalism-anti-liberalism dichotomy, however ideologically founded) for wanting the promotion

of a society based on irresponsibility and lack of competition, by their constant action of removing two remaining fears in every human individual: the fear of liability and the fear of competition.

All these conceptual efforts are intended to be embodied in coherent and useful answers to the multilateralization of the effects of humanity's greatest challenge – *mundialization*. Genuine center of all the debates of ideas in the last 35 years, “the faceless opponent” as Julia Person calls it in The New York Times (March 2000).

Placed under the eternal sign of the Cartesian meditation, the phenomenon of mundialization is, at the same time, the main source of technological and scientific progress and the main multiplying factor of the crises that humanity passes through, crises of modernity, both individual and collective. One “small” example: about 30% of the European pupils who pass into the sixth grade do not understand what they read, and 10% decipher handwriting with difficulty or do not decipher it at all.

Owner of these attributes, the phenomenon of mundialization is gradually becoming the new primary source of the cleavage between the (new) Left and (new) Right. Like the theories of the conflict between capital and labor, which generated the ideological stands, starting with the first part of the 19th century, after two hundred years, the conflict between the beneficiaries and the dispossessed of mundialization gradually constitutes into a genuine basis for a “*new beginning of ideology*”. “*The main conflict today is not between capital and labor, but between the state and large private organizations, the corporations*” (Thierse, 1998).

The Leftists/Progressives are working to humanize globalization or to compose an alternative to the current course of mundialization (alternative globalization). The most radical of them even require stopping the phenomenon and restoring state sovereignty. The Rightists/Conservatives justify mundialization as a phenomenon of all freedoms and opportunities, with effects hard to shape, which is essentially positive and increasing the quality of life and ensuring the accomplishment of human progress.

The phenomenology accompanying the process of mundialization nurtures the main debates on the global market of ideas. There is a package of central themes: the quality of democracy,¹ status of modernity,¹ global government,² state of the

¹ There is an intense debate on the degrees of democracy just as there is a debate on the degrees of freedom; Vladimir Tismăneanu speaks of *democratic minimum and maximum*, trying to draft their

planet and durable development,³ clash of civilizations (West-East, even the US-Europe⁴), global welfare distribution,⁵ “war” of cultures (the split of beliefs and the identity cult), security and global balance,⁶ state of individualism and solidarity, overpopulation and the effects of the migration flow, condition of the equality of opportunities, quality of capitalism, quality of human communication and

definitions. Drawing inspiration from Rob Pastor’s theses at Atlanta University, Tismăneanu believes that democratic minimum means at least free elections, while democratic maximum means the effective opportunity to hold the government members accountable (*accountability*).

¹ Asserting that “*the current crisis of humanism lies in its passionate emptiness*”, the French philosopher Régis Debray finds similarities between late modernity and late antiquity, comparing the state of the world today with the state of Alexandria in the 3rd century: sovereign contempt for politics, exacerbation of individuality, the development of critical scholarship, splitting of beliefs, the conflict between the West and East (contemporary Middle Ages). “*The anarchic utopia in recent years culminates in the law of the strongest*” – Debray says. Interesting analyses on the status of modernity may also be found with important thinkers such as Alain Touraine, Hannah Arendt, and Richard Rorty. In his study “*Critique of modernity*”, published in 1992, Touraine warns of “*the need for a different conceptualization and construction of modernity, capable of withstanding the diversity of cultures*”. He invokes the urgency of the “*theoretical courage to repair the rift between the arrogant universalism and the aggressive particularism*” and thus culturalize modernity. Rorty incriminates, in his “*Achieving our Country*”, “*the disappearance of the radical-critical stand to economy and society, the abandonment of the debate of ideas, which was replaced by televised debates precisely conducted, ultra-mediatised*”. In the same spirit of critique of modernity, Hannah Arendt in “*Crises of the Republic*” believes that we are witnessing a game of images which dilutes the idea of truth, political life (and beyond), ceasing to focus on truth and embracing appearances, the image of truth. Modernity consecrates “*the marketing of prefabricated theories of imaginative schemes which, albeit distorting reality, serve higher interests.*”

² This issue equally concerns politicians, scientists, and high prelates of various religious cults. In the autumn of 2003, Pope John Paul the 2nd made a new appeal to the establishment of a global culture of rules, based on truth, trust, transparency. He advocated the return to value of the Good Pope’s (Giuseppe Roncalli) idea to achieve a constitutional engineering of mankind, which would then achieve a global governance and global citizenship based on equal rights.

³ There is a strong controversy between the supporters of neo-Malthusianism who claim the finite nature of the planet’s natural resources and the adepts of corporate libertarianism who claim the infinite possibilities of economic growth and that it would not endanger the ecological balance. For the latter, accepting the thesis concerning the limited existence of the planetary resources would simultaneously mean accepting the ideological competition thesis concerning the limitation of accumulation at any cost in favor of equity and economic sufficiency. (See Korten, 1999, p. 97).

⁴ Alain de Benoist, theorist of the New Right, director of publications *Krisis* and *Nouvelle École*, asks: “*Europe - a market or a model of civilization in relation to the United States?*” (See comment in *Avvenire* on July 16th, 2003).

⁵ The great paradox of the beginning of the century is that people never had so many options available, like today, to fight inequality problems, or opportunities the potential of which is not turned to value, instead they are used to increase the gaps.

⁶ In his speech at the Socialist International Reunion in New York in 1998, Pierre Mauroy, one of the honorary chairmen of this world organization, warned of two great illusions that would dominate the beginning of the new millennium: the illusion of overall balance (with the fall of the Berlin Wall) and the illusion that we would still have a lot of time available for its implementation.

participation, limits of state power and corporation power,¹ and status and place of the market,² and the quality of freedom.³

There is no intellectual consensus as to the analysis of the components of this phenomenology. This means that there is debate, confrontation of ideas, hence ideological affiliation, explicit or implied. Moreover, some topics are considered (still due to ideological reasons) marginal “artificial inventions”, promoted strictly on ideological criteria, without constituting profound and necessary topics for reflection, justified by the immediate reality or perspective. Here are invoked such topics as: the spectrum of the society of the 20’s,⁴ pessimistic or catastrophic thinking,⁵ end of work, parity, consumerism, advertising terrorism, state-less government, new way of life, anti-Americanism, “war” of generations, money ethics, syndrome of unpredicted wealth,⁶ forged civil society,⁷ merger mania,¹ and the “domino theory”.²

¹ The organization of the world is about to exceed the era of absolute sovereignty of the nation states. The main dilemma is whether the reason for which the nation states are ready to give up their sovereignty – a better solution to the issues of their citizens – is truly served or whether the nation states are turning into simple business locations of the multinational corporations.

² See the analysis of the market place and valences in the contemporary models of capitalism: Rhenish and Anglo-American made by Michel Albert in his work, “*Capitalism against capitalism*” (*Capitalism contra capitalism*), 1996, pp. 62-73.

³ On this topic, we can say that there is a negative intellectual “consensus”: “There is not enough freedom”, claim both the “leftist” theorists, while accusing the cancellation of freedom by promoting the *libertarian* issues, and the “rightist” ones, while accusing the cancellation of freedom by promoting the *liberticide* issues.

⁴ Outcome of jobless development (jobless growth).

⁵ For many thinkers, it is a general mood generated by political manipulation techniques. A population warned of grave dangers, immediate or imminent, is frightened, loses its protest potential and becomes more docile, paternalistic, seeking a protection system, which it always finds in the political strength in question. “*Fear is a classic technique of power, and this standard technique became a political commonplace*” – Noam Chomsky says (“*Why is war inevitable?* – Interview published in the German weekly publication *Freitag*, December 27th, 2002).

⁶ *Sudden wealth syndrome* (depression, the chronic unhappiness of those who suddenly acquired a huge fortune or are “condemned” to manage huge fortunes). In 1889, the American magnate Andrew Carnegie said: “*The one who dies rich, dies unhappy.*”

⁷ In recent years, a number of analysts and researchers are drawing attention to this issue that they consider an obvious reality. Researching the funding sources of social movements, anti-globalization, the behavior of some leaders of these movements, analytically dismantling the social communication strategies of large corporations, they warn of the huge manipulation faced by the protesting citizens and many of their leaders. Thus, Serge Halimi from *Le Monde diplomatique* concluded that neo-liberalism is diversifying the sufficient means at its disposal to recover the appeal in its favor. This strategy implies: quoting Marx at the global economic forums, major donations to altermondialist networks, participation of the corporation agents, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund to these events, statements of solidarity with the demonstrators’ ideals (for example – James

The tendency to resuscitate the doctrinal debate, to reposition the critical intellectuals on ideological “barricades” is closely monitored by a number of independent thinkers, who take on the non-partisan observation of phenomena.

They require humanities, the “workers” in this area to allow themselves to be subjected only to the idea of living spirit, to give up endorsing or nurturing ideocratic ideals and behaviors,³ to survey/introspect future without fear and without preconceived ideas,⁴ to generate antidotes to the limits of modernity, but without challenging or denying it.

1.2. Philosophical-doctrinal Sources of the European Left-wing

The collapse of totalitarian socialism, the strong recoil of the Marxist-Leninist ideology in the entire intellectual world, the doctrinal confusion of the left-wing fundamentally marked most of the last decade of the last century. This situation generated the haste with which some theorists understood to announce the end of ideologies, of political ideals, proclaiming the victory of pragmatism, “the end of history” otherwise in a purely ideological manner.

After this period, dominated by debates, reflections, and revelations about the totalitarian socialism, a number of intellectual efforts, philosophical and political exercises, designed to identify new grounds, new ideational supports of the political left-wing, covering its whole pluralistic range, began to manifest and are still manifesting.

Wolfensohn, World Bank President: “*Our goals are very close to those of the people in the street*”-2002), the employment of supervisors for civic spirit in the large companies to increase their social responsibility (*corporate citizenship*); “*These multinationals have learned that it will always be to their advantage to stir fictional conflicts in which they leave it to the artificial adversaries which they have chosen for themselves the task of compiling a list of grievances and a list of social facilities which they desire to put into practice.*” Bourdieu’s appeal to the intellectuals, not to mistake “*the revolution of the order of words or texts for the revolution in the order of things*” receives an even stronger significance in this context.

¹ Managerial syndrome caused by the obsession with the need for the fusion of concerns, in order to increase their chances of becoming global economic players (*global players*).

² Stephen M. Walt resumes it in an article titled “*Whims, restlessness, and violent changes*” Time, February 2001, as the idea of cascading information: governments, insecure in their action, imitate one another, count on the decision of others to act. “*This political contamination occurs when the stronger actors impose their preferences and interests before the weak actors. The new ideas and political practices can spread if a group of states, large enough and strong enough, adopt a common type of standards and force other countries to adopt these rules, if they want to join the club.*”

³ Ideocracy = dominant power of an idea.

⁴ “*Neither God nor Marx nor Wall Street!*” - is their sententious warning.

Basically, the need for reestablishment/*doctrinal aggiornamento* is generated by the pressure of four types of trade-offs: between the capital and the employees, the state and the market, solidarity and competition, the national and the supranational. Michael Winnick talks about the need for reagrment between theory and practice, a fundamental issue of all left-wings, need which accredited, throughout the history of the left-wing, the schizoid character of the socialist culture.

The new doctrinal efforts aim at either the “post-ideological” reinvention of a leftist doctrine/the renovation of social democracy aware of the gains and limits of its history and its adaptation to new challenges (globalization, the crisis of the state, unipolarism etc.), or at the preservation of the values of the traditional democratic left-wing or the recovery of the Marxist critique of capitalism today, or at the invention of a doctrine – an alternative to the left-wing (more or less stated as such but certainly inspired by the eternal values of the leftist thought). If we were to think only about the analysis in the spirit of the *holders-deprived cleavage* that the theorists of this doctrinal source perform with reference to the current course of globalization.

It is perhaps too early to say that there are new schools of thought or leftist doctrinal trends but we can certainly identify in the noosphere of the current left-wing, (The totality of the spiritual goods of the Left; the universe of leftist thinking.) sources, voices, distinct concerns as to its intellectual re-substantialization, in an attempt to provide the best answer to the limits and challenges of modernity. These conceptual lines preserve, in some form, the lack of unity – now classic – of the left-wing, promoting pluralist theories of this one, supporting the various versions of its political expression. This “schismatic” configuration of the Left must be analyzed in the context of different strategies in relation to the stakes and goals of social progress, to the different interpretations of the Left’s historical data, and to various fundamental concepts, as well as to the different nature of certain political group interests, of the manifestation of a direction modeled by conjectural grounds. (Mitran, 2000, pp. 143-155).

The “class struggle” that used to characterize the dialogue between the Marxist Leninist socialism and the democratic socialism, between the barrack communism, of Stalinist inspiration, and Euro-Communism, is far from characterizing today’s debate between the advocates of progressive governance (the Third Path) and the advocates of democratic socialism (the so-called social democrat conservatives) or between the latter and the radical democratic Leftists (the ideologues and activists

of altermundialization) or the defenders of neo-Marxism-Leninist communism. I refer to certain currents of leftist thought in Central and Eastern Europe that are frozen in projects of a Bolshevik or Marxist-Leninist type of nostalgia and that feed certain political movements, some marginal, others, significant (see Russia's Communist Party). At the same time, I target the similar ideological platforms that feed similar parties and movements in Western Europe.

The debate among the leftist ultra-Modernists, Moderates, and ultra-Conservatives has many divergent elements, many spectacular mutually disapproving accents, but the nature of the objectives is conjunctive rather than disjunctive. There is an ideological competition among the currents of the Left but a competition which does not exclude solidarity, be it tacit, axiological, or theological. It is relative to the need for the composition of a social project which would rescue democracy, developing it, affirm equality, making inequalities as small as possible, govern globalization, turning it into a source of benefits to all people.

We may speak of four philosophical-doctrinal sources of the European and international Left. The first source resides in the intellectual productions related to *the Third Path* concept,¹ as it is defined particularly in the works of Anthony Giddens² but also in other studies and papers the fundamental focus of which is modernizing social democracy.³

¹ Throughout the 20th century, there have been various uses of the concept of *third path*. Some referred to the possibility of imagining a political system between the Soviet communism and the Western capitalism. Others mentioned a middle path between communism and social democracy or between liberalism and social democracy, while others suggested alternatives to the two main political forces in a given country at a given time. *The third path*, as defined by Giddens and as it was introduced into the public speeches of some important center Left leaders: Tony Blair, Gerhard Schroeder, Bill Clinton, etc., refers to the need for a new way of social democracy, deeply modernized and modernizing, between the old Left and the new Right (neo-liberalism, in the acceptance of some, neo-conservatism, in the acceptance of others).

² Anthony Giddens is the current principal of the London School of Economics and Political Science, personal advisor to the British Labor leader Tony Blair, and the main New Labor inspirer and strategist.

³ See the works of Rene Cuperus, and Johannes Kandel, Bernard Crick, Andrew Gamble, David Halpern, and David Mikosz, Ralf Dahrendorf, Michel Albert, Amitai Etzioni, Max Gallo. One important aspect: in his works, Giddens is inspired by the critical rationalism of the Austrian epistemologist Karl Popper, accredited as one of the fathers of the modernization of social ideas (see his "*Open society and its enemies*"). Critical rationalism directly influenced the social democratic thought (see in this regard also the work of Helmut Schmidt "*Critical rationalism and social democracy*").

A second source is found in the writings¹ that are dedicated to preserving and perpetuating the principles and practices of democratic socialism, rated as the only ones that have demonstrated the humanizing strength of capitalism.

A third source is the productions of the alternative Left,² of the democratic radicalism of the Left, circumscribed to the altermundialist phenomenon.

A fourth source is to be found in several writings, analyses, and studies that deny or minimize the limitations and errors of the Marxist-Leninist Bolshevik and Stalinist ideologies and that attempt their recovery in a non-critical manner or practicing simulated criticisms. (See the writings of the neo-communist Russian thinkers (the writer and military reporter Alexander Andreyevich Prokhanov, the mathematician Igor Rostislavovich Shafarevich, once a close friend of Solzhenitsyn's, Boris Yulyevich Kagarlitsky, T. Timofeev, A. Galkin), and those of some Western Marxist-Leninists: Eric Hobsbawn, Patrice Cohen-Seat, Benjamin Cohen, Georges Labica, and Joachim Bischoff.)

In terms of the praxiological model that they propose, two of these ideological sources are forward-looking – the products of the creation of the reforming theorists of social democracy and of the theorists of the alternative Left. The key words of their doctrinal speech are: *modernization, reform, alternative, progress, criticism, (re) invention, etc.* The other two sources – the products of the creation of the socialist conservative theorists and of the theorists of dogmatic communism are backward-looking. The key words of their doctrinal speech are: *preservation, turning to good account, rediscovery, unassailable legacy etc.*

1.3. Institutions of the Debate of Ideas

Unlike Central and Eastern Europe, where the poor quality of debate (with varying degrees; less weak in the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Poland which have a tradition of the debate of ideas, partly preserved during the communist regime) leaves its mark on the quality of democracy, the debate of ideas in Western Europe is one experiencing ongoing dynamics. It features a state of the debate which allows for the emergence and assertion of innovative ideas in an open competition,

¹ See Pierre Bourdieu, Norberto Bobbio, Colin Crouch, Chantal Mouffe, Alex Callinicos, and Alain Bergounioux's studies.

² See the analyses and theories of Bernard Cassen, Viviane Forrester, Noam Chomsky, Robert Fossaert, David C. Korten, Michel Foucault, Benjamin R. Barber, Chris Harman etc.

free, unconditioned or restricted by criteria such as material considerations or calculations or the need for the absolute control of political risks. We have identified a typology of the establishments of the debate of ideas of the European Left, including a wide variety of institutions.

First, *the leftist parties in each country*. I have included the youth and women's organizations as well, very active from the point of view of the ideological creation and also the summer universities of the European Left parties, genuine annual Conferences of Ideas.

Whether they are social democratic, socialist, communist, labor, radical, environmentalist, civic, within these parties there is a lively internal debate, the existence of platforms, motions, and political and thought currents (reflected as such in the public debate, in the mass-media, and even in alternative locations) is a normal fact which contributes to the unity and vigor of the respective parties. The Congresses of the French Socialist Party (PSF) or the Left Democratic Party in Italy are true internal democracy forums. At the last Congress of the PSF in the spring of 2003 competed no less than five political motions, each with its own program and leader. The victory of the motion led by the head in charge of the PSF, François Hollande, was politely recognized by the other motions, the party's unity not being challenged at any time.

The second type of establishment of the debate of ideas is found in *the main international structures and organizations of the leftist parties*: the Socialist International, the Socialist International Youth (IUSY, the International Union of Socialist Youth),¹ the Party of European Socialists (PES),² the leftist parliamentary groups in the European Parliament, the European New Left Forum (which pretends to be the nucleus of an international network of the alternative Left, of the leftist parties which are not part of the Socialist International), the European or regional forums of the revolutionary, extreme Left.³

¹ Many of the programmatic documents of this organization comprise avant-garde ideas which are then discussed in the international socialist forums.

² PES reunites all the socialist, labor, and social democratic parties on the old continent and it is the first trans-European political-organizational formula that wishes, as the integration process deepens, to function as a European party, a political vehicle to strengthen the European integration. At its congresses, the formation of alternative motions as the main instrument of internal debate is stated and encouraged.

³ See the Anti-imperialist Conference, the Euro-socialist Congress or the Conference of the Balkan Communist Parties.

The third type of establishment of the debate is located in the *networks of the civil leftist society*: the European Forum for Democracy and Solidarity, ATTAC (Association pour la Taxation des Transactions pour l'Aide aux Citoyens), an organization founded in 1998 at the initiative of some analysts, thinkers around the *Le Monde diplomatique* magazine with the stated aim of applying the Tobin tax on financial transactions, is gradually becoming one of the main actors in the construction and promotion of an international network of the anti-globalization Left, which takes shape in the form of the World Social Forum and the European Social Forum. These networks found at the beginning of their structure are still quite heterogeneous. In them we find civic and political formations/representatives with different leftist orientations: Social-Democrats, Radicals, Pacifists, Environmentalists, Communists, Socialists, Labors, leftist Christians. What unites and strengthens these networks is the unitary critique of globalization. In terms of the solutions to address this phenomenon, there is a "schism" between the anti-globalists (dogmatic Communists, some Environmentalists, some leftist Christians, some civic Radicals, some national-statist Socialists) who believe in stopping the globalizing process and returning to a world controlled by the sovereign states, and the Alterglobalists (most followers of the alternative Left/radical Democrats, an important part of the democratic Socialists, the reformer Communists, etc.) who believe in the possibility of articulating an alternative globalizing project for the benefit of all citizens not only the corporations and the capital holders.

The fourth type of establishment of the leftist debate is located in *the periodic conferences of political leaders, with the participation of key theorists*, aimed at systematizing and accrediting the debates of ideas into real political and doctrinal currents.¹

The fifth establishment, in fact one of the most important, are *the leftist publications or those centered on the analysis of the leftist phenomena*, extremely numerous, ranging throughout the entire pluralist interval of the Left and bearing

¹ See, in particular, the efforts made by the promoters of the *third path* (the Conference in Florence: "Reform in the 21st century" -1999, the Conference in Berlin: "Modern government in the 21st century" in June 2000, the Conference of the progressive leaders – New York, 2001, the Conference on "Progressive Governance" – London, 2003) and the Conferences organized by the Olof Palme International Center – The Nordic Alternative, the parent seminars organized by the FSM (World Social Forum) and the FSE (European Social Fund) (Porto Alegre – 2002, Paris – 2003, New Delhi – 2004) or the Conferences of the communist-nostalgic Left (Athens – May 1998, Berlin – June 1999, Oslo – 2000). A special place is held by the Marx International Congress, organized by the Espaces Marx network of studies.

fertile ideas: New Left Review, Dissent, Socialist Affairs, Yes! A journal of positive futures, Le Débat, Le Monde diplomatique, Transitions, Commentaire, Revue Socialiste, La Lettre d'Espaces Marx, Correspondances internationales, Communisme, Partisan Review, The Red Critique, New Statesman, Sozialismus, Nash Sovremennik, Zavtra, Sovetskaia Rossia.¹

The sixth establishment consists in *the study centers, universities, think-thanks concerned with the research and analysis of the Left*. We mention here: the Demos Center² in London, Change,³ the Rosa Luxemburg Foundations, Jean Jaurés, Agora, Friedrich Ebert, the Espaces Marx network of studies, the neo-Marxist Praxis Group, Democratic Leadership Council,⁴ Otto Suhr Institute, Karl Renner Institute, Émile Vandervelde Institute, Cevipol, Cevipof,⁵ Universities of Göttingen, Berlin, University of Paris XI, University of Essex, University of Lyon II, the socialist academic research office (OURS, Office of University Research Services), London School of Finance and Commerce, Olof Palme International Center for Social Democratic Studies.

Finally, the seventh type of establishment of the debate of ideas of the contemporary Left is configured by *the networks of the digital Left*⁶ of all colors. Most political formations, civic groups, publications, think-thanks that claim to belong to the Left have well-organized and constantly updated sites, promoting the leftist ideas in an interactive and modern manner, with discussion forums, frequently used. There are genuine networks of solidarity and civic action through the Internet. It is an extremely effective means of mobilizing to protest and of appropriately informing about the anti-globalization agenda and the real-time sharing of the means of action, the experiences of different organizations. We may speak of a real wave of electronic/digital socialism.

¹ Around these two magazines are grouped the new pedants of the Russian Communist Party with a certain ideological irradiation power of some neo-Stalinist parties in the former Soviet space.

² The founding manifesto of the New Labor line, promoted by Tony Blair, was drafted here.

³ A center for socialist studies independent of any political formation of the Left, which is dedicated to "*rebuilding the socialist idea in popular culture*", aiming to be "*a new voice for a new socialism*".

⁴ The main laboratory of ideas of the center Left American thought (the new Progressives).

⁵ Centers for studies on political life in Belgium and France with comprehensive research programs on the phenomenology of the European and international Left.

⁶ See the websites of the International Socialist parties (including the informal ones), such independent sites as www.broadleft.org, www.socialist.org, SocNet, or the websites of the revolutionary Left, as well as those of such movements as Attac, Les Alternatifs, New Party or of the publications and centers mentioned above.

2. Identity of the Left-wing and the European Societal Model

The discussion agenda of the leftist intellectuals and politicians is, at the beginning of the 21st century, both extensive and intensive. *Extensive*, as new components, pressures of reality are turning into debate topics, which the intellectual and political Left cannot avoid if they want to demonstrate their usefulness and alternative potential. *Intensive*, as the urge for the debate to produce solutions to the crises, challenges, paradoxes of reality, requires such an approach.

This paper, with a limited mission and partial objectives, aims at scientifically presenting seven main themes in relation to which the political and intellectual Left (meaning all its orientations) has developed complex projections, views, attitudes: *the idea of a left-wing, the European model of society, globalization, state, equality, democracy, and human progress.*

2.1. Idea of a Left-wing

“*The first idea of a left-wing is the very idea of Left*”, said the Italian psychologist Adornato at the beginning of the last century, and the British Dan Griffith in his “*What is Socialism?*” revealed 261 senses/meanings of the concept of socialism as circumscribed to the idea of “Left”. This intellectual emulation relative to the debates of the “Left” and to the debate about the “Left” is recovering its dynamics, overcoming the depression caused by the collapse of real socialism and its doctrinal grounds.

In the political and intellectual area of the European Left today, we witness a lively debate, “subsidized” by an ever higher number of cultural energies, on what is true or not about the Left, its status, axiological content, and missions. We come across, in this genuine competition of ideas, many exercises of self-legitimacy, illegitimacy,¹ or re-legitimacy among the various ideological and political-cultural

¹ An example of de-legitimizing is provided to us by the leftist criticism of the Social Democrats who talk of “The Third Path” as a “champagne socialism source/left – caviar”, of the new social accompaniment/“*social democracy, escort of neo-liberalism*”, of the “*social democracy with two right hands*”, of the “*social-democratization of socialism*”, or of the “*privatized social democracy*”. See the study with the same name by José Vidal Beneyto. Another example is provided by the critics of “*the old social democracy/paleo-social democracy*” who speak of the “*almost erotic pleasure of the Left Conservatives to use the word ‘socialism’*”. In the same registry, J. F. Revel believes that “speaking of *de-socialized socialism* is a pure fantasy of the theorists.” (Revel, 1995, p. 88).

orientations within the Left. Each of these conceptual lines¹ described above has its own political, economic, civic, and cultural stakes and risks. Some claim to become the dominant culture of the Left (the Third Path), others identify themselves as unique bearers of the authentic values of the Left, holders of the supreme truth of the Left (part of the “conservative” Social Democrats and Communist-Marxist Conservatives).

All these orientations however target at least two fundamental objectives:

- *the preservation of the idea of Left by removing the sources of socialist immobility*²
- *the elaboration/affirmation of an ideatic project of the Left that should win the political competition with liberalism and not lose intellectual advantage in relation to it.*

In terms of self-identification, the communist Conservatives (the Marxist-Leninist traditionalists) define themselves as *the revolutionary/anti-system Left* (“the only true one” – in their acceptance), the “conservative” Social Democrats (“defenders of the genuine democratic socialism”) are *the parliamentary/official Left* (“the main source of democratization and humanization of capitalism”), the reformist Social Democrats (“new Progressives”, “the Third Path”) – *the radical center* (a new vision – the profound modernization of social democracy – which exceeds the fundamentalist reflection of the old Left, be it socialist-democratic or socialist-revolutionary), and the radical Democrats (the civic Radicals, the Alterglobalists) – define themselves as *the new Left* (represented by a network of organizations with a critical vision of the mundialized capitalism, but with an incoherent doctrinal project;³ the new Left has global goals, intending to rewrite globalization by an alternative scenario to the neo-liberal one, which should fill the gap between the losers and winners of this phenomenon).

¹ The social democrat Conservatives, social democrat Modernizers (The Third Path); the Marxist Conservatives, the Alterglobalists (New Left/radical Democrats).

² Some see these sources in *retro-socialism/nostalgic socialism*, while others in *techno-socialism/socialism of technocratic compromises*.

³ Chantal Mouffe, one of the radical theorists, believes that the project of the Left should be separated from its theoretical premises. “*A truly radical project should begin with the recognition of the distinction between the production of wealth and the amount of work required for it. Redistribution should take this distinction into account.*”

RELATIONES INTERNATIONALES

To better visualize the map of the political-doctrinal orientations of the contemporary European Left I have made the following identification table of the key values promoted by these orientations.¹

Old European Left Conservative Marxism/Democratic		Third Path/Radical center Modern social-	New Left Altermundialization
Class fight	Class politics/Equality of opportunities	Interclass politics/Justified inequalities Equity	Global class politics/Equality before mundialization
Directed economy, mainly public	Mixed economy, classic	Market regulation/"New economy"	Global economy with human objectives ("people, not profit")
Statism; the society lives through the state	Corporatism: state-civil society	State without enemies: active civil society	Strong global civil society
Proletary internationalism	Internationalism	Renewed national identity	Civil and ethical internationalism
Social equalitarianism	Social state; providence state	State-social investor	Global social government
Popular democracy	Social democracy	Cosmopolite democracy	Global participative democracy Recovery of democracy

New Anglo-Saxon left-wing Neo-liberalism; Neo-conservatism
Class politics/Natural inequalities
Self-regulating market/Corporatist libertatism
Minimal state
Nationalism; Free trade
Minimal social assistance; Private insurance
Representative democracy/Government of elites

¹ To this table I have attached a second one, showing the values of the New Right (neo-conservatism, neo-liberalism) to get a comparative panoramic image of the current ideological debate.

At the beginning of this century, the ideological culture of the Left is very diverse and very dynamic. Numerous analyses on the ideas, words, behaviors, and feelings marked as and “markers” of, the Left appear. The prospects of the analytical approaches are political, economic, but also ethical, cultural, psychological, linguistic, semiological. All this manifestation complex of the energies of the Left actually expresses its desire to try to reinvent itself after each failure.

Within this culture, two major viewpoints affirm, each supported by a group of the critical intellectuals. The *first viewpoint* advocates the reform of the idea of Left which should start by recognizing the virtues of capitalism “tamed by social democracy” and continue the process of internalizing the values of economic liberalism into a new agenda of the Left. The promoters of this viewpoint consider that the traditional Left is going through an insurmountable identity crisis and that the radical-utopian critical-emancipatory ideals of this one cannot be sources for the reconstruction of modernity. They believe that the mission of the idea of reformed Left, the future of “ideological radicalism” should not exceed the limit of a conscious construction of *a capitalism with a conscience*.

The *second viewpoint* calls for overcoming the ideological gap of the Left by the recovery of a critical-emancipatory social project¹ that is subordinate to the idea of collective destiny. The promoters of this viewpoint blame the “*social-democratization of socialism*” or the “*secularization of the Left*”.

They believe that social democracy, being “privatized” by liberalism, becoming a real support for this one, destroys the potential and loses the credibility to be a vehicle of genuine social transformation. They consider that ideals should not be mistaken for utopias and that the resolution of the contradiction between the accumulation of capital (centralization of capital at one pole consisting of an exclusive minority) and the social requirements of its redistribution remains an attainable ideal. The supporters of this intellectual option state the need for a permanent opposition to any attempt to close the public space,² the imperative of

¹ In a dialogue with **Günter Wilhelm Grass**, Nobel laureate, published by the “Le Monde” newspaper in the fall of 1999, Pierre Bourdieu pointed out that the Left was isolated in laboratory circles and that critical thinking was not at the “*height of the effects of this violent reality*”.

² In an article published in August 1998 in L’Express, the social philosopher Jürgen Habermas argued that we are witnessing a process of closing of the public space, with the imposition of the neo-liberalism of the Chicago School both in politics and in the doctrinal debate, as well as the media and schools. Habermas proposes in his analysis creating a new public space, a provider of a new common culture that should cater to the need for new deliberative policies, and thus impose a different kind of public decision.

the emancipatory humanism recovery as the main advantage of the new leftist thinking.

We have, therefore, a type of critical thinking that includes capitalism and a second type which, denouncing capitalism, states meanings, post-capitalist projections. These are complemented by the atypical “leftist” ideological reflection in the Eastern European space. Dominated by the need for transition to democracy and market economy,¹ for European integration, the public debate of the Eastern European Left is still subordinated to the general consensus of these objectives. The leftist political actors and most theorists of the Left in these countries, deprived of their criticized object,² display ideas and philosophies managing the transition to capitalism, therefore claiming pre-capitalist senses and projections.³

2.2. European Societal Model

The European Socialists and Social Democrats claim the avant-garde of the construction and modernization of the European societal model. This model constitutes an important political and even ideological bet – in a global context – for the European left-wing.⁴ *Political*, as the left-wing desires to prove the superiority of their pan-European views in relation to the neo-Liberals and the neo-Conservatives who either oppose integration or promote incoherent projects. *Ideological* in a global context, because the European left-wing desires to prove the superiority of the European model of society/European model of life over the North American one, a symbol of neo-liberal mundialization.

The European model of society is at the heart of most European and Transatlantic intellectual debates. It is an ongoing process, which is still quite far from the final agreement stage. There is a point of view with a very high agreement potential concerning the fact that the European societal model must be a Rhenish-type one as

¹ We may speak of a true ideology of transition.

² Most socialist and social-democratic leaders in the post-communist countries agree upon the need for the construction of capitalism to start with, to have, then, “the object of criticism”. The criticism of capitalism is, in this space, of nostalgic origin, poorly supported by alternative projects.

³ This is also proven by the scarcity of the literature in this area, which places the intellectual bet on the Left.

⁴ Since 2004, with the accession of a large number of Eastern countries, the European model of society becomes a bet for the Eastern Europe Left as well, who are obliged to govern themselves – *de facto* – towards a rapid integration into the institutional structures of the pan-European Left and to bring their own intellectual and political contribution to the affirmation of such a model.

defined in the theses of Michel Albert. (Albert, 1994, pp. 62-64). There are, however, many different points of view between the left-wing and the right-wing, between North and South, East and West, politicians and the European public opinion.¹ A growing polemic arises, between those who believe and those who do not (any longer) believe in the viability of an integrating European project. Within the European left-wing there are also different ideological stands concerning the European project as a whole, or some of its aspects.²

The Social-Democrats, whose creed is reflected in the values disseminated by the Third Path, imagine a European model which would harmoniously integrate the values of the economic liberalism: “Market competition and open trade are essential to boosting productivity and growth. We must create a framework that should allow market forces to work for the economic success. The European Union must act as a force determined to liberalize world trade. The European Union should build on the achievements of the single market to strengthen an economic framework favorable to productivity growth ... The taxation of the European companies must be simplified and the tax rate imposed on firms must be reduced. The firms must have room to take advantage of improved economic conditions. They should not be hindered by all sorts of rules and regulations.”³

The proponents of this point of view, founded on the works of Anthony Giddens (*the “Third Path”*) and of Bodo Hombach (*“A new impetus – the new center”*), propose new guidelines for the social mentality and attitude at the national and European levels. They believe that the ideals of competitiveness and of the ability to create wealth, the sense of progress and risk must replace, at this level as well, the old values of social security and redistribution and the old feelings of social solidarity focused on the individual assisted by the providence-state. They assert the primacy of the reform of the European institutions as a reinvention of their efficiency and transparency against all losses and fraud. “We do not promote a

¹ It accuses ever more the democratic deficit of the EU institutions, which are “*ever more complicated, incomprehensible, and farther from people's real problems.*”

² “*The European Left, or what it represents, seems united especially in promoting the construction of the Community institutions. Less clear is whether apart from the proposal of this institutional engineering, the European Left has a proposal for a political program. The Left wants a united Europe. But what it should do, only the promoters of the market economy seem to know it. We do not understand what need there is for a Left anyhow!*” – the daily publication L'Unità points out on March 11th, 2004.

³ See the Manifesto “Europe – The Third Path – the New Center”, the Joint Political Declaration of Tony Blair and Gerhard Schroeder, in June 1999.

European model by default and even less turning the European Union into a superstate. We are pro-Europe and pro permanent European reform.”

The key to success of a European institutional model is, according to them, those steps of integration – made possible only through economic growth – which will produce real added value to the lives of the Europeans, recognized as such by the people. As for the common foreign affairs and security policies, the proponents of this model believe that the foundation of European security resides in: a sustainable Transatlantic partnership, in Russia’s association to the European security structures, and in NATO’s rise as a political-institutional binder of the Euro-Atlantic community.

The Socialists, reformer Communists, and civic Radicals, who see their creed embedded in the values of the new left-wing, circumscribed to the “alterglobalist” project, consider that the European model of society must provide an alternative to liberal globalization and the American model¹ now dominating the whole planet. “Searching for a social, democratic, and ecological alternative underpins the elaboration of another model of development of the world and Europe.”²

Stating that the political and social Europes are inextricably linked, they consider that the European social issue must be at the heart of the European left-wing’s action, which has no other means of getting popular support for the European project. The proponents of this model suggest building a “Social Europe” to provide sustainable solutions to the current European challenges: the transnational capitalism governed by financial globalization, the rising unemployment, the inequalities between North and South, between East and West, the incoherence of environmental protection under the rule of the model focused on economic growth. At the Fifth Congress of the Party of European Socialists (Berlin, May – 2001), the participants adopted a declaration which advocated the modernization of the European social and economic model, the backbone of which is formed by the core values of the Left, solidarity and cohesion.

¹ This does not mean that “*the EU has to compete with the United States, that is, become a liberal economic power, in which the rich are getting richer and the poor are becoming more numerous and poorer*” (criticism of the Italian daily publication L’Unità / March 11th, 2004).

² See the intervention of the Euro-socialist parliamentarian Marie-Noelle Lienemann in the debate “*Future of Europe*”, Brussels 2002. On November 6th, 1997, she, together with other leftist European officials, proposed for debate an alternative project to the liberal mundialization under the denomination of the European Social Republic.

The main features of the model proposed by PES on this occasion,¹ under the influence of the new Left forces² of this pan-European organization are: the option for an open society, politically and economically, translated into sustainable international partnerships, knowledge-based economy, optimizing the use of public resources, social inclusion as a prerequisite for any economic progress, active state which should provide people with the possibility to adapt to change, balance between individual freedom and collective responsibility, democracy supported by active citizenship,³ a clear division of responsibilities between the European Commission, the European Parliament, and the Council of Europe, the joint intergovernmental cooperation as a Community method, a Constitution which should include the social rights, a new dimension of the principle of subsidiarity by implementing a “new federalism”.⁴

Along with the Social Europe,⁵ the followers of the new Left, the alternative Left, promote the idea of a Social Treaty establishing, at European level, social convergence criteria, a precise timetable for the recognition of the fundamental rights of employees, common social norms of the social security system, obvious

¹ See the Manifesto of the European Socialists - “The New Europe of the 21st century”, Milan, March 2nd, 1999.

² At this congress these forces manifested strongly by adopting a *Motion of the Left*, signed by ministers, parliamentarians, mayors, leaders of youth organizations of the political parties represented in the PES. The main comments/criticisms of the European integration process targeted: the imperceptible distance between socialism and liberalism in the European project of the Left, the reproduction within the PES of the drifts of the European construction, the need for the reconstruction of a critical report of the transnational capital/capitalism, creating a *European Social Treaty* in accordance with the interests of the European social movement, the objective of full employment of manpower, the reorientation of the European fiscal policy from labor to capital in the service of redistribution, transforming the European project into an alternative to globalization, limiting the expansion of market logic on education, culture, health, joy of life. “*The PES must clearly assume the identity of defending the European workers and employees. We cannot leave our countries’ popular groups without political representation before the domination of capital or throw them into the arms of the extreme Right. Our place, of Socialists in the world, is with those who refuse exploitation, the social movements that resist liberal mundialization, those who oppose the degradation of working and life conditions, those who are fighting to build an alternative to the unjust order of the world in which we live.*”

³ European public space and civil society in Europe.

⁴ This would involve a federation of states and peoples to participate in the political union of Europe, based on a broad decentralization with the participation of regions, civil society organizations. The new federalism should seek the simplification of the treaties, the stipulation of values, rights, and responsibilities of each element of the European architecture.

⁵ The idea of Social Europe is rooted in the theses of the socialist parties developed during the Bonn Conference in 1973.

progress along the way of the participatory social democracy, increasing the quality of public services of general interest, taking into account the citizens' needs.

They appreciate that the free trade model proposed by the theorists of the Third Path is likely to increase the failures and crises of the European project, ignoring the idea of sustainable development, of ensuring freedom and equality for all citizens.

In terms of the common foreign and security policy, the promoters of this version of the European model consider preeminent the development of Europe's capacity to ensure, on its own, its continental security and the development of a balanced international dialogue the profound meaning of which should be achieving overall balance, accepting the diversity of cultures and annihilating all sources of violence in the international environment.

These are the two main ideological stands manifested within the European Left concerning the European model of society.¹ These are supplemented by the point of view of the Nordic Left, which to some extent can be considered as belonging to the "socially conservative Democrats." There is an intense debate within the Nordic Left² concerning the attraction of the Nordic model of development, the possibility of imposing the Nordic standards on the old continent. The political forces of the Nordic Left, expressing the basic choices of their electorate, wish to refind in the European model, all the fundamental characteristics of their societies, built – mainly by their governments – under the general form of the welfare state: a high level of labor market participation, a low degree of inequality, large investments in the social field, social stability as a basis for economic growth, equitable distribution of productivity results, an important role for the friendly state, openness of the social system to all social classes and categories, special safety nets for children and working mothers, affirming gender equality in practice, etc.

The foreground of the debates of the Nordic Left shows the idea of adapting the Nordic model to the new challenges of modernity. Several important topics arise

¹ There are other approaches as well, but marginal in the debates of the European Left, such as those of several conservative Communists who either deny the feasibility and necessity of a unifying European project, or promote the idea of a class struggle at European level which should give rise to a socialist European Republic.

² See the studies and work of Carl Tham, Joakim Palme, Gosta Esping-Andersen, Stein Kuhnle, Rune Ervik, Joachim Voegel; the debates of the Nordic Alternative Seminary held regularly in Stockholm, organized by the Olof Palme International Center and the "Nordic News Network".

from here, such as: the relationship between generations, the relation between the winners and losers of the market economy, the need to redefine social classes, polarization and social exclusion, the equality of opportunities concerning the formation of the social-cultural, the approach of the private-societal/public report in terms of its long term effects on society.

But adaptation is not opposed to the idea of pursuing the development of a humanistic dimension of the state which should prevent the development of inequality and continue the construction of the welfare society for all. The general coordinate of the Nordic model remains the fact that individual welfare can only be achieved by the joint action of a state's citizens, which involves the enforcement of the principle of solidarity. The latest electoral programs and/or social democratic government programs of the social-democratic, socialist, or labor leftist parties in the Nordic countries emphasize these aspects: "Solidarity is achieved by ensuring freedom and equality for every citizen, and society will create more wealth if it is based on social solidarity", says one of the conclusive reports of the Nordic Alternative Seminary. Expressing the most substantial and constructive criticisms of the current course of the European integration, the Nordic Left¹ appreciates that the Nordic societal model may represent a real and efficient response alternative to the major challenges and requirements of building a united Europe. The theorists supporting this idea believe that the Nordic model of the welfare state has resisted the economic crises in the 90's, withstands the increasingly strong pressures of the conservative forces, and could, therefore, provide a stable and predictable European model of society, which is an alternative to neo-liberal mundialization.

The European Social Model (ESM) aims to be an integrated conceptual product, the result of the pan-European debate not only about development models. The ESM is a model that was initiated and promoted mainly by the political formations of the moderate European Left but which was assimilated by several European political parties of different orientations, being discussed with different arguments, but strengthened on a consensual basis. It appeared with a new force in the public debate, with increasing acuity after the waves of integration of the countries in Eastern Europe. I have tried to summarize the main sub-themes of the discussions about the ESM, bringing some analytical elements on some of the arguments in

¹ The Nordic Left comprises not only the parties affiliated to the Socialist International and the PES, but also such parties affiliated to the United Left Group NGL-GUE in the European Parliament or those such as the Socialist Party of the People (socialist Left), in power in Norway.

these debates, arguments describing the philosophy of this pillar of the European Union. The European Social Model is defined around the concept of egalitarianism, in its dynamic acceptance. The Left and Right doctrines equally accepted the challenge of discovering and implementing a strategy which should reconcile equality with pluralism and the diversity of lifestyles.

3. Conclusions

The concept of Left in the East still does not hold the same value as in Western Europe. It is a cumbersome process, involving transition, the maturation of concepts, an integral part of the overall process of democratization and modernization of the countries in this region.

There are several factors that favor and maintain the confusion about the concept of Left. First, it was seized and placed under the totalitarian communist ideology. For this reason, the “left” is still equated to: repression, lack of freedom, prohibition of fundamental human rights, delay of reform, nostalgia for the past, and stagnation. Secondly, the concept of Left is also suffering because of the economic option of the leftist political formations (we are referring to competitive parties, not to the anarchic-leftist corpuscles or nuclei talking of collectivization and class struggle). With a few variations, all these political formations support de-etatization, the market economy, reform, the well-structured capitalism. These parties are leftist based on the criterion of the need for change and the need for action in this regard. But if we introduce the criterion of the “criticism of capitalism” (existing with almost all the Western leftist formulas), they seem not to belong to the Left anymore. Thirdly, nationalism is another variable affecting the distortion of the concept of Left. Traditionally and in the Western acceptance, nationalism is identified as “right”. In Eastern Europe, it found a hospitable hosting to the “left” (the greatest number of leftist groups are made up of nationalists – see the Movement for Democratic Reform in Slovakia, the Serbian Socialist Party, even the Bulgarian Socialist Party, the Democratic Labor Party in Lithuania).

An important contribution to the poor reception of the concept of “Left” is made by the political culture tributary to its character in the totalitarian period. The poor reception of the concept is also visible in the contradictory relationship between the self-identification (self-placement) of individuals and their vote. Thus the supporters of the “leftist” parties (their voters) declare themselves as “Rightists”,

while the voters and supporters of the “Right” claim to be “Leftists”. The language of the Left and the manipulation of the concept also alter a correct perception of it. Starting with the term itself, which, in the absence of clear meanings related to political doctrines, is equated with words belonging to the same family (left = leftist, clumsiness), the destruction of this language is reflected in the “tainting” of marker words with “socialism” (social protection, social justice, solidarity, equity). The noblest concepts were associated with the most repulsive features of real socialism. A manner of affective and emotional receiving of the term “left”, rather than rational, was thus induced (in the first period especially in terms of leveling communism). Against this affective and emotional background, spurring psychological diversion, the concept was used as a manipulative tool. Labeling someone as being leftist – a socialist or a communist – meant the “halt” of careers in many countries.

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