

although this terrain remains contested by privatization drives.

3. *Integration in the world market.* Here I cannot follow Heilbroner's argument. He seems to believe that in order to establish socialism, his imaginary Sweden must disentangle itself from the world market, and that this would entail a change if not a decline in its standard of living. He evidently rejects the notion that socialism without autarky is possible. The evidence for this notion is the autarkic regimes of Eastern Europe, all of which closed themselves off against the world markets and all of which broke down. This implies that either your economy is integrated in the world market—then you can have a high standard of living, but no socialism. Or it protects itself against the world market—then your standard of living won't be great, but you'll have socialism. I believe this to be a false dilemma.

The history of international institutions over the past century depicts a struggle to curtail the reach of the world market or at least to regulate it. No matter that this effort more often failed than succeeded; it was perennially renewed. I cite only the work of the International Labor Office in setting work standards and seeking adherence to the codes to which its member countries agree. Perhaps standards of living in the "advanced" countries will have to be reduced—but not so as to bring socialism to an imaginary Sweden. Rather, the threat of political instability and migration pressure may

well make large-scale investment and consumption aid imperative (as the recent \$3 billion loan by Germany to the Soviet Union indicated); and such aid can only be extended at the expense of living standards now enjoyed in the potentially aiding countries. It would be a manifestation of worldwide socializing tendencies; I am sure that Gunnar Myrdal would have so interpreted this development, and that Willy Brandt would be inclined to do so, and would even urge its intensification.

4. *Bourgeois life.* If living standards may be capped or reduced due to the imperatives of an international redistribution of income, they may also be impinged upon by environmental concerns, unless technologies are developed and resource planning is instituted that overcome such concerns and enable a shift in standards of comfort rather than necessitate a cut in them.

But leave these considerations aside; Heilbroner implies a civilizational change, even as he speaks of a "visitor" who, after all, "envisages" or sees two different societies, one capitalist, the other socialist. And what symbolizes the heart of their difference better than, for capitalism, the New York skyline and the power of capital it proclaims, and, for the socialist future, the campuslike setting of more and more industries, indicating their knowledge-based activities? The intelligence of power being displaced by the power of intelligence—that would be the promise of a civilization based on democratic socialism.

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### Mitchell Cohen

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**W**hy go beyond an advanced welfare state—beyond what Robert Heilbroner calls "real but slightly imaginary" Sweden? How would the passage from welfare state to "socialism" be manifest?

To create a more democratic society. By expanding substantive, that is, social and economic in addition to political, democracy.

If we postulate that these aims are pursued by reformist means, then the "goal" would not be evident at first glance; nor would there be a "last glance" upon something comprehensively

defined. Jean Jaurès provided the metaphor (which I'll amplify): a hemispheric border is not immediately visible to passengers on a ship as they cross the sea. Conflicting gales may press them back and forth, tempestuous travel trying the craft's seaworthiness. Yet if they persist, the voyagers eventually perceive that new waters have been reached.

These new waters are not enclosed. Nor are they frozen. They do not represent an *endziel*, or final goal, but rather an opening of possibilities. The point, to paraphrase Marx, is

to establish conditions of freedom not to impose a prefabricated set of ideals. Those conditions, in my view, must be egalitarian and entail social and economic democracy. My assumption: concentrated private ownership of a society's productive forces (and the attendant concentration of wealth) engenders undemocratic power relations in that society. Such ownership exists in Sweden; indeed, about a third of the value of the Stockholm stock exchange is, in one way or another, controlled by a single family (the Wallenbergs). Nonetheless, the Swedish Social Democrats designed an attractive welfare state that, rightly, has been the envy of much of the world. It was wrested from Swedish capitalism, while remaining dependent on it. A social democratic quandary: the purpose of the welfare state is to mitigate the socially negative consequences of capitalist ownership, yet it is the latter's economic success that sustains the welfare state.

Sweden's economy is strained nowadays. A recent account of its woes in the *Economist* reports that "economic liberals" have "long warned" that Sweden possessed "all the ingredients for economic paralysis." These include the highest taxes and—oh, horror!—"the most generous welfare state, the narrowest wage differentials and the highest trade union membership" in the industrialized world. Rueful that reality in which "last year a cabinet minister took home, after tax, only about twice as much as a blue-collar worker; in 1939 the ratio was eight to one." The "uncomfortable conclusion is that Sweden's real problem is its commitment to full employment," for "by virtually eliminating the threat of unemployment, the incentive to restrain wages has been destroyed."

Put aside contemporary Sweden (I am no expert on it); reflect on the premises of the *Economist's* argument; then imagine an alternative mode of thought, one that seeks to eliminate the incentive to unemployment. To go beyond the welfare state is to make its gains irreversible and to democratize the conditions of production. It is to make employment, health care, housing—the basics of human welfare—together with democratic control of the workplace "inalienable rights," much as private property is for the *Economist*.

Irreversibility presumes a political constellation different from the contemporary Swedish one. In it social democratic success depends significantly on disunity and weaknesses among three bourgeois (opposition) parties. In the United States, where socialists are marginal, two capitalist parties compete, one straightforward in its reactionary orientation, the other containing some social democratic tendencies. In a democratic socialist Sweden this might be stood on its head; imagine two competing parties, but both socialist. Let's call one the Democratic Socialist party and the other the Republican Social Democratic party; let's imagine that the first leans a little less, the second a little more to the use of market forces. Within the latter, in its right fringe, there might even be a small group advocating unemployment to remedy economic problems; perhaps it would be called the Democratic Capitalists of Sweden.

**T**his political situation presumes a socioeconomic hemisphere beyond the welfare state—but not a statist one. Rather, I'd draw, with some variation, on the market socialist model developed in Alec Nove's *The Economics of Feasible Socialism*. Rejecting command economies, it mixes limited sectors of public and socialized but autonomous services and industries with worker-owned cooperatives, some small-scale private enterprise, and a realm of free-lance individual activities. (My emphasis would be strongly on the cooperative sector.) State intervention would take place both for social needs and to prevent monopolies, oligopolies, and, generally the development of conditions deleterious to fair market activities. Indicative planning would provide a long-term functional framework. Firms would be governed by a system of industrial representative democracy; management would be responsible to elected workers' councils, which, in collaboration with consumers' councils, would serve as the ultimate authority of enterprises. (Small cooperatives would employ more direct democracy.) Courses on all aspects of the enterprise and the economy would be readily available to employees in order to enhance educated democratic control by them,

and to engender as much flexibility and mobility within the division of labor as possible.

Finally, the array of public institutions we identify nowadays with the welfare state would exist, but the principles governing them would be those of social citizenship. To retrieve Jaurès's maritime metaphor: citizens would see themselves in the same boat, and not just politically.\* This would be expressed in the type of society fashioned, its values (I stress the plural), its social and human

relations—a community, but without a reified *endziel*.

A caveat. The fate of Sweden's economy, which is heavily export oriented, will be substantially dependent on current processes of European integration, even though Sweden is not a European Community member. The only alternative scenario is, to say the least, implausible: an egalitarian autarky, which would likely require both authoritarianism and plummeting living standards—a nordic Albania, as it were. Consequently, the future of socialism in Sweden, no less its welfare state, will be conditioned by the general complexion taken on by Europe as a whole in the coming years.

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\* For a somewhat different application of Jaurès's metaphor to Sweden, see Adam Przeworski's *Capitalism and Social Democracy*, Cambridge University Press.

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## Lewis Coser

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**T**he term “scientific socialism” is an oxymoron. Science pertains to the study of what is, whereas socialism is a vision of what can or should be. To deny scientific status to socialism is not to denigrate its central importance. It provides indispensable guiding images without which our lives would become appallingly drab, and hardly worth living. Utopian visions are not merely frosting on the cake but a major part of its substance.

Socialism, its Marxian forebears notwithstanding, is one of a variety of utopian ideas. Utopia is, of course, nowhere, but ever since Plato's Republic, the counterimage of a perfect society has served to provide regulative ideas for a society more decent, more just, more fraternal than the present. Each society produces the utopia it deserves.

One of the least appealing aspects of contemporary society is its technocratic fixation and its lack of social vision. August Bebel once complained about what he called the damned wantlessness of the poor. In our days, it is not only the poor who lack transcending vision, but even intellectuals have largely deserted their mission to provide utopian images that transcend current habits of thought. They are for the most part timid souls who are scared to stray too much from the well-trodden path. In America, the utopian image has been

in retreat since the early days of the New Deal. What has been initial retreat has now become a full-scale rout. It seems that, according to the major current thoughtways, anybody who strays from the common paths as theorized by Milton Friedman leads us straight to the gulag.

The greatest challenge to the idea of socialism at the moment does not just come from doctrinaire defenders of the alleged benefits of free markets. It comes from large sections of intellectuals who have of late emerged in Eastern Europe. These men and women have suffered for many years from totalitarian regimes that had the effrontery to call themselves socialist. It is hence not astonishing that many of these intellectuals have turned away from what they conceive socialism to be and have come to extol the free market. Free and unhampered market enterprise is, to be sure, found only in textbooks. What these East European intellectuals perceive as the essence of a free-market society may well be a fatal distortion, but it still has the power to do untold harm to the idea of socialism and of a good society.

Some thirty-five years ago Irving Howe and I wrote an essay for *Dissent* that was meant to provide rough guidelines to what we believe to be the main components of a good society. We called this paper “Images of Socialism.”