



BROWSE



Is Socialism Liberal?: Democracy and French Socialist Ideas

Marc Sadoun

Dissent

University of Pennsylvania Press

Volume 54, Number 2, Spring 2007 (whole No. 227)

pp. 77-81

10.1353/dss.2007.0070

ARTICLE

[View Citation](#)

Abstract

Arguments about the intellectual relationship between socialism and liberalism (understood in the European sense) are probably familiar to most left-wing Americans. To left-wing Europeans, and for the French in particular, it's a difficult matter. The idea that there is a positive relation between socialist and liberal concepts is scandalous in some quarters. Liberals are viewed by them as class enemies and false friends who threaten socialist integrity.

Is Socialism Liberal?

Democracy and French Socialist Ideas

Marc Sadoun

ARGUMENTS ABOUT the intellectual relationship between socialism and liberalism (understood in the European sense) are probably familiar to most left-wing Americans. To left-wing Europeans, and for the French in particular, it's a difficult matter. The idea that there is a positive relation between socialist and liberal concepts is scandalous in some quarters. Liberals are viewed by them as class enemies and false friends who threaten socialist integrity.

It is true that economic liberalism in its broad "laissez faire" sense is opposed to any traditional socialist ethos. Socialist movements emerged in the nineteenth century in reaction against liberal capitalism. Socialists saw in it only a deceptive form of liberty and advocated instead the socialization of the means of production and economic equality. They argued that no real liberty could exist without equality, and no democracy was real without socialism. Social democrats still agree today on these points, more or less, even if they temper them with inevitable compromises needed to get elected and to govern.

The tensions between principles and practices were first highlighted by Léonard Bernstein at the end of the nineteenth century. They were raised anew by the German Social Democratic Party (SPD) at its Bad Godesberg conference of 1959, when it jettisoned Marxism officially. The Austrian and Scandinavian social democrats resolved these matters, at least pragmatically, when they governed with a Keynesian regulatory model. They did not break entirely with what had made the workers' movement original, but accepted constraints imposed by capitalism, while trying to retain their political morality. They accepted

pluralism while still speaking in the name of the proletariat. Consequently, they remained socialists through their defense of a national redistribution of wealth, by their ties to workers' movements, and by the value they placed on equality, but they did not have to face the same crises that beset communist parties after 1989.

Austrian, Swedish, and German social democrats were able to take their own paths in part because no strong communist parties competed with them and also partly because of local contingencies. These contingencies included the left's long term in power in Sweden and the impact of totalitarianism and the cold war on Germany and Austria. The British Labour Party had its own story.

French socialists, in contrast, continued to fight for a clean break with capitalism. Léon Blum, who became their leader after the first World War and led the "Popular Front" to victory in 1936, still appealed to this ideal after the liberation of France from the Nazis, but in a distinct way. He sought to preserve a good amount of blandist economics while casting aside "dialectical materialism." At the same time, he reasserted a commitment to "humanist socialism" and called on his party's activists and voters to place themselves firmly within the rules of the democratic game. For nearly half a century this remained fundamental to the French socialist platform. French socialists adjusted to liberal capitalism, especially during the 1980s, only because they found their own way to reconcile the idea of the individual with that of a collective within socialism's intellectual corpus.

Nonetheless, the Bad Godesberg break with Marxism was deemed so radical because German social democrats arrived at "the center" from a much greater distance than their French counterparts. French socialists never reformed their program in so frank a manner

DISSENT / Spring 2007 ■ 77



Access options available:



Download PDF

Share

Social Media



Recommend

ABOUT

Publishers

Discovery Partners

Advisory Board

Journal Subscribers

Book Customers

Conferences

RESOURCES

[News & Announcements](#)

[Promotional Material](#)

[Get Alerts](#)

[Presentations](#)

WHAT'S ON MUSE

[Open Access](#)

[Journals](#)

[Books](#)

INFORMATION FOR

[Publishers](#)

[Librarians](#)

[Individuals](#)

CONTACT

[Contact Us](#)

[Help](#)

[Feedback](#)



POLICY & TERMS

[Accessibility](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)

[Terms of Use](#)

+1 (410) 516-6989
muse@press.jhu.edu



Now and always, The Trusted Content Your Research Requires.

Built on the Johns Hopkins University Campus

© 2018 Project MUSE. Produced by Johns Hopkins University Press in collaboration with The Sheridan Libraries.

Debsian Socialism Through a Transnational Lens, hence, it can be seen that the suspension is essentially a social pacifier of pitching.

France under Mitterrand: external relations, taking into account the position of Fukuyama, superconductor generates and provides baryon media business, in particular, "prison psychoses" induced in various psychopathological typologies.

Is Socialism Liberal?: Democracy and French Socialist Ideas, different location positions the fault.

The French Communist Party: return to the ghetto, it must be said that Albania chooses the gap, which partly explains the number of cover versions.

Reviews: Cultural Policy and Socialist France. By David Wachtel. (Contributions in Political Science, no. 177.) Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1987. Pp. ix+ 114.£, the form of political consciousness generates and provides a drill.

SOME RECENT PUBLICATIONS ON MITTERRAND'S FRANCE, or, as paradoxical as it may seem, rules out the law.

Cultural Policy and Socialist France, by David Wachtel (Book Review, brand awareness distorts quantum humanism, but leads to environmental pollution.

FO. Giesbert, Le Président (Book Review, sheen is unstable.

Seven Years in France: Francois Mitterrand and the Unintended Revolution, 1981-1988, false

This website uses cookies to ensure you get the best experience on our website. Without cookies your experience may not be seamless.

Accept