Peter HAVAS

UDK 341.74 (420)
Vol. LV, br. 2, pp. 237-260
Izvorni naučni rad
April 2003.

THE RENEWAL OF SOCIAL DEMOCRACY AND
THE “THIRD WAY” OF THE BRITISH LABOUR PARTY

ABSTRACT

The author tries to enlighten and analyse the current processes in the
European Social Democracy intending to renew its strategy and doctrine and
adapt it to the new economic, political and social challenges. He devotes special
attention to the attempts of the British Labour Party to modernise itself and create
a new doctrinal approach, the so-called third way. The author analyses the history
of the New Labour and characteristics of the Tony Blair-led party, elaborating in
detail the contents of the third way. The main conclusion he makes is that, in spite
of the New Labour’s success at the two last general elections in Britain and the
positive lessons to be drawn from the third way, it does not mean that all Social
Democratic Parties should follow that example, for different social conditions
demand different strategies and policies and relevant responses by every party.

It is well known but not redundant to emphasise that originally the Social
Democracy has been a native of industrial revolution, universal suffrage and
mass democracy and its main target was the protection and emancipation of the
workers. For a short time somewhere it were the liberals who sharply criticized the
rude exploitation of the working people, and tried to represent its interests, but soon
it became clear that, in spite of their progressive aspiration they, were not able to
defend the interests of the people employed in the mass production. Therefore, the
independent Social Democratic parties were established which openly engaged
themselves in emancipation of workers. The Social Democrats never rejected liberal
values and recognized their importance for workers. However, they firmly declared

---

1 Dr. Peter Havas, Senior Research Fellow, Institute for Political Science, Budapest.
that political freedom was a precondition of the social freedom and the political
rights alone were not enough for the social emancipation, and therefore, the political
freedom had to be extended to the social issues. Freedom creates opportunities but
without social rights the political freedom can never be universal. In this way, taking
it as a single system of principles “freedom – social justice – solidarity” became an
axiom of the Social Democracy.

The formulation of values was an easier job than choosing the means for the
movement. At the end of the XIX century when Social Democracy was already
relatively strong the movement became divided over on the problems of the political
arsenal. For example, the role of common ownership, the function of the state
shaping the just society, the relationship of the industrial and political struggle, the
problems of coalition with other progressive parties. In the focus of such questions
stood the general problem of democracy. At that time it was only few personalities
in Social Democratic parties who believed that up to the “victory of the proletariat”
and achieving social justice it was possible to limit some political freedoms. It will
be a mistake to expect that such interpretations were expressed only after breaking
in of the Social Democratic movement in 1917 and only the Russian Bolsheviks
presented such opinions. Some West European Social Democrats also agreed with
such approach, although in more moderate interpretation, but the majority rejected
it. It is truth, however, that after 1917 the cleavage between Russian Social
Democrats (Bolsheviks) and the West European parties stood about the values of the
Democracy. Soon in the twenties the breaking of the Left became complete.

The assessment of the Soviet system and the East-European political system
after the Second World War significantly influenced European Left, which finally
divided into two hostile camps. These events on the Left incited Social Democracy,
which kept on being committed to the European style of democracy, to formulate its
own political platform which differed from the Soviet and East European system of
democracy and socialism, but preserved the original principles of Social Democracy
and critical attitude to the capitalism. The essence of such position was expressed in
the term of Democratic Socialism, in the value-oriented ideology of Social
Democracy, which was established as an alternative of limited democratic
conception of the Soviet and East European Socialism. The Democratic Socialism
declared that “there is no socialism without democracy and there is no democracy
without socialism”.

Between the two World Wars in the programmes of Social Democratic
parties the role of the state as the main instrument of economic and social
transformation, which acts in the frameworks of pluralistic parliamentary
democracy, took the central place. Some of these party programmes anticipated
regulation and limitation of the market and private ownership. However, apart from
these general principles there were not almost any kind of practical elaboration of
these ideas.
Consequently, it was also unclear how particularly the Social Democrats conceived social justice, the welfare functions of the state, its means and distribution of charges. So, the actors in economy and market were uncertain of the future economic policy of Social Democracy, as well as of the future of private ownership and workers. It was also unclear what a Social Democratic Government wants and how it can improve the welfare of the people. It was one of the reasons of the relatively weak performance of Social Democracy at the election between the wars.

In the elimination of such ambivalent conditions (actually, the acknowledgement of parliamentary democracy and its institutions and unaccomplished relationship between the Social Democracy and the market and private ownership) the central role was played by the famous Programme of German SPD adopted in Bad Godesberg in 1959. This programme was really a historical turn in the history of the European Social Democracy. Not all Social Democrats supported this document and the revision of some traditions, but the majority of the parties accepted the main contents of Bad Godesberg.

_The “golden age” of Social Democracy_

The essence of the new SPD Programme was, as the Social Democracy already did not consider essential the public ownership, the nationalisation aimed at implementation of social strategy and Social Democratic values. The coexistence of the private and public spheres, some kind of consensus, became a reality, but the programme also emphasized that it was the right of the Social Democratic state to regulate the market in case that social targets of the Government made it inevitable.

Considering that such regulation was acceptable only if it was absolutely necessary the programme expressed a positive attitude towards market economy and _de facto_ closed the traditional antagonism between the democratic Left and the market forces. In this way the fundament of the bargaining based partnership was created as well as a precondition for establishment of a mixed economy. In spite of all this, the problem of the public and private ownership was not solved with unambiguity among the Social Democrats.

It was the first time in the history of the democratic Left that the term “third way” appeared, which in the interpretation of the Social Democracy, meant that it should distinguish itself from anti-democratic and orthodox Left as well from the vision of unregulated market and capitalism. At that time it was what the “third way” meant. “Social Democratic social reform based on mixed economy”. The objective conditions in economy and the society were favourable for such a politics: after the war reconstruction programme secured a good ground for the economic boom, the social structure was generally still characterised by two poles, the politics and economy were taken within the national frameworks.

Implementation of the social strategy of the Social Democracy is based on two pillars: on the employment policy generated by Keynesian techniques and on
the welfare system and its institutions which have used the instruments of state budget accumulated high tax sources and significant redistribution level which secured the needed public spending.2 By the way, idea to use such instruments belong to the liberal thinkers3 who in order to avoid repeat crisis of 1920-30s sought the mutually favourable consensus between the interests of industry and working people. The Social Democracy, which politically strongly consolidated its influence during the war, integrated that vision into socialist strategy. Full employment, social reforms initiated by Social Democrats improved welfare and to some extent moderated the social differences. The broadening public ownership and growing welfare activity of the state enhanced the popularity of Social Democrats and led to their electoral victories in many of European countries. In some countries the Government established certain corporative structure in order to harmonise its relations with Trade Unions, private industrial production and played a positive role in maintaining consensus. It was almost a common feature of this period that even right wing parties accepted the majority of Social Democratic reforms and policy including to some extent also the nationalisation. For example, the British Conservatives returning to power in 1951 denationalised the steel industry only. So, what is important to underline is that at the time of economic boom the market forces generally tolerated high level of public spending that generally did not confront the interests of economy. This historical period was rightly named as the “golden age” of the European Social Democracy. There were some differences in social achievements of various countries, but it was the time when the coherency of the European Social Democracy, its harmony between the principles and practical activities was on the highest level.

The Social Democratic reforms did not change the fundamental nature of the market capitalism but it modified it. Some scholars named this changes “reformed capitalism”, others “Social Democratised capitalism” or “social capitalism”4. On how to understand the changing capitalism there were some differences among the parties and members of the parties. The illusion about capitalism also appeared. The debates in Britain of 1950-60s illustrated this tendency very well. Some well-known Labour intellectuals came to the conclusion that the reforms of the Labour Party Government (1945-50), nationalisation of some industries already materialized democratic socialism and exceeded capitalism.5 On the other hand, just at the time when the German SPD published its Bad Godesberg

4 Donald Sassoon, One Hundred Years of Socialism, The West European Left in the Twentieth Century, op. cit., p. 137.
5 Ibid., p. 246.
Programme in 1959, the Leader of the Labour Party Hugh Gaitskell (who used to be
described as the right centre politician) proposed in 1960 at the Annual Conference
of the LP elimination of the famous Clause four of the Party Constitution which was
supposed to use public ownership as a tool to achieve social justice. At that time the
Clause four was not only a symbol of the Labour Socialism, but an alternative for
some Labour people. However, Gaitskell’s idea was strongly opposed and rejected
by the majority of delegates.6

Apart to the British case and in spite of some similar values and principles
there were other parties with different ideological and political approaches and
social models. South European Socialist Parties had a lot of peculiarities and their
positions completely differed from that of the parties in the North.

The leading fractions of the Italian Socialists differed from each other on
all fundamental questions and finally that led to the break up of the party. Between the French Socialists and British Labour there was traditionally a
disagreement and a gap between them was often significant. Who of them were
“creditable” Social Democrats? The political practice and voters solved this
dilemma. Each of the parties mentioned above frequently made success but also
faced defeats at the elections. Scandinavian Social Democratic Parties took the
most common position on the strategy and the model, but even they had some
specific characteristics.

Describing the picture of the political scene after the war concerning the
European Left we also should take into consideration the strong impact of the
cold war that after 1947 finally broke the illusion on the possibilities of
establishing cooperation between Communists and Social Democrats. The fact
that in some West European countries the Communist Parties exerted sufficient
influence on citizens and as supported by some influential Trade Unions they
became an important political factor. In Italy and France the division of the Left
hampered the consolidation of the democratic socialist parties, but in the majority
of West European states the position and impact of Social Democrats, due to their
modern democratic policy and welfare achievement, was much more favourable.

Generally, we can conclude that even in the “golden age” the European
Social Democracy was “colourful”. Among the “ways” there were similarities as
well as differences, but none of them was more “creditable” than others. However, what we can state unambiguously is that in the period after the war the
European Social Democracy became an indispensable factor of the European
political and party system, one of the main pillar of its stability and it is not
accidental that the Social Democratic Parties (some of them only gradually)
recognised the importance of the European integration becoming an engine of its
development.

6 Ibid., p. 259.
The challenges of the changed world and the Social Democracy

Since 1970s there have occurred historical changes in the world economy as well as in the economic and social structure of the developed industrial countries. The special publications have in many cases already analysed these processes, so it is unnecessary to list them in this paper. Instead of that we are going to enlighten these changes from the aspects of their political impact exerted particularly on the position of the Social Democracy. The energy crisis in the first part of the decade significantly accelerated the process of internationalisation, globalisation of the economy, the mutual dependence of national economies and vulnerability of national economies. Nowadays, more than 30 years after it seems to be not exaggerated if we say that the world economic and the globalisation processes of today are almost nothing but reinforcing and escalating tendencies felt from the 1970s, with one but very important exception: 30 years ago nobody anticipated that the revolution in the sphere of communications will to such an extent change the world and accelerate the processes mentioned above. Of course, it does not mean that the processes in the 1970-80s and the globalisation today are equal. However, it is also clear that there is a high degree of similarities, which can prove that these are two phases of one general tendency. For example, the North-South crisis, the deepening gap between the developed and underdeveloped world 20 years ago and its impact on the industries on both sides as well as on the employment was already an important signal of the worldwide danger. From this point it is easy to make a conclusion that the permanently changing world forced the Social Democracy to continuously seek new answers, new ways, new strategies, modern alternatives. And this process has also continued since 1970s. It is understanding for the Social Democracy, that is a very pragmatic movement, to respond permanently on the challenges posed to its values and social policy.

More than 25 years of seeking appropriate ways, successes and defeats, cyclical changes of its political impact, the dilemmas of modernisation and how to save fundamental values but accept the changes at the same time, shows that the Social Democracy has not yet found relevant answers on the basic questions of the changed world. It is true that the right wing Conservative parties and the new Right as well as neo-liberalism have also no recipes for these cardinal problems.

One of the main problems for the Social Democracy since 1970-80s is that within the national framework it has been more and more difficult to implement its political and social aims and it is less and less possible to apply Keynesian techniques. The level of permanent unemployment has been very high and it is worth reminding that the unemployment has always been the main enemy of the Social Democracy because it reinforces the inequality of classes and social groups, destroys the balance of power in the industry and because the unemployment cuts

---

7 Stephen Padgett, A History of Social Democracy in Postwar Europe, op. cit., p. 49.
the Trade Unions membership, undermines the bargaining position of working people in face of private industry. 8

The other challenge which has gradually transformed the ground for Social Democratic activities are the fundamental changes in the social structure, decreasing number of manual workers and the significant increase of the people in the middle strata as well of non-manual workers. Shortly: the social basis of Social Democratic Parties has changed a lot.

The only dimension where the conditions for the Social Democracy have improved is the European integration. It is clear that European Social Democratic and Socialist Parties as well as their union, the Party of European Socialists (PES), want to treat and manage social tensions which they are not able to solve on the national level, with common socialist effort within the European framework on the basis of a single social model and transforming the EU into Social Europe. The PES has achieved considerable success in elaborating the Social Democratic answers to these challenges, but in spite of such positive steps nobody can deny that while the cooperation and integration in the economy and single market showed attractive results, the common efforts in the field of boosting employment and fight against unemployment is less effective. Sometimes we can read opinions that the sceptical attitude towards the EU can be explained mainly because of the deficit of democracy and the great distance between the people and the EU and their institutions. Partly it is acceptable, but the main factor of this scepticism is that on the Union level the results of the struggle against unemployment are still moderate.

The history of seeking a proper alternative and the Social Democratic way for solution has always been accompanied by question on the future of democratic socialism, overestimation of the problems by generalising their antagonism as a crisis and anticipating the end of Social Democracy. There were two approaches of some political scientists right wing and sometimes leftist critics. Some of them judged on the basis of the changing world and emphasized that the Social Democracy has completed its historical role and lost its identity, others interpreted the changes in its strategy as a betrayal of the original principles. Of course, in some cases the remarks of the critics were useful and included some realistic elements, but in others the authors understood the Social Democracy in a static and dogmatic manner.

Traditionally, the critics argued on the changed social basis of the Social Democracy. In mid-1960s a well-known German sociologist Otto Kirshheimer considered the changes in the society and expressed his view that European parties were becoming more and more “catch all party” instead of being class parties and their electoral addresses were going to the whole electorate. 9

---

8 Donald Sassoon, One Hundred Years of Socialism, The West European Left in the Twentieth Century, p. 49.

Later on Tamás Krausz, Hungarian historian, already assumed that as a result of “catch-all” tendencies in the Social Democratic parties the socialist ideas were pushing out to the peripheries of these parties.\(^\text{10}\) That is undisputable that Social Democratic (and other) parties try to address their election manifestos to all voters and that has some impact on the face of the parties, but it does not mean that the parties become socially neutral. In spite of the “catch-all” tendency there is no doubt on the character of the European Social Democracy. Its parties belong to the left centre political family. The assumption that the “catch-all” tendency in the Social Democratic Parties can push out the social ideas is also a vulnerable thesis. It is true that in the changing world the targets and instruments of democratic socialism are also changing but the values and principles remain alive. By the way, the parties’ commitment to the Social Democratic values, ideas, identity and credibility depends not on their subjective will but on the social environment. The market economy, the capitalist reality, has permanently reproduced timeliness of the Social Democratic values. The global economy is illustrating this phenomenon very good. Its social impact has reinforced inequality, exclusion, the gap between poor and wealthy people and Social Democratic parties, if they want to preserve their position, should fight against these anti-social problems. Especially in the 1980s when the Social Democrats in Europe were in opposition and in defensive, the thesis on the narrowing of its social basis was very popular and served as an argument for the “end of the social democratic century”. This opinion was criticised by the German political sociologist Wolfgang Merkel. First of all, he proved that the electoral support of Social Democratic parties between 1945-89 in Europe has not changed generally (except only in United Kingdom and in the Republic of Ireland\(^\text{11}\)) and was never fewer than 31%. Secondly, between the election performance of Social Democrats and decrease of number of workers there was not a visible correlation. It is undisputable that the number of workers voting for Social Democratic parties is diminishing, but it is also remarkable that the middle class people rate is growing “occupying” to some extent the place of former manual workers in the Social Democratic electorate.\(^\text{12}\) The same is true for the party membership. A pole conducted in Britain in mid-2002 presented that 17% of individual members of the Labour Party (joined already New Labour and 13% before this time) belong to the working class (manual), 13% to non-manual workers (12% before), 8% to foremen and technicians (before 7%), 2% to petty bourgeoisie (before also 2%), 60% to salaried (before 67%).\(^\text{13}\)

\(^{10}\) Krausz Tamás, Jön vagy megy a szociáldemokrácia? In: Eszmélet, No. 25, p. 7. Without data of publication.

\(^{11}\) Wolfgang Merkel, Between class and catch-all. Is there an electoral dilemma for social democratic parties in Europe? pp. 27-29.

\(^{12}\) Ibid., p. 29.

strong militant Trade Unions (affiliated to the British Labour Party) failed because its membership diminished, but their place covered the Trade Unions of public service workers, who belong to the lower middle class and their activity is no less militant than of the “old” Union’s.

So, it is not difficult to prove that the changes in the society have, of course, considerable influence on Social Democratic politics and its arsenal, but these trends are not leading automatically toward the crisis of Social Democracy and its principles.

We will be far from the reality considering that Social Democracy reached only relative results in the process of renewal and searching for a basic modernization in its strategy. If we want to give a full picture of the European Social Democracy since 1970s we should also notice a lot of its positive feature, which secured it a high political prestige in the world. Even if the Social Democracy was not able to find the needed new strategy in its national and international activity, the deep analyses of the economic and political processes have always been welcomed by public opinion as well as by UN and other international forums. For example, it was the Socialist International that initiated the reform and democratisation of the world financial system and institutions, monitoring activity of multinational companies, the complex problem of North-South crisis, it was Willy Brandt who organized independent commission and elaborated the strategy on both sides on this issue. The Socialist International and the Party of European Socialists were among the first political organisations which proposed a common action in order to prevent social tensions and give the first objective assessment of globalisation and they established a commission named Global Challenge which elaborated very useful proposals to meet these challenges. It will not be correct to underestimate such efforts of the Social Democrats. The basic problem has been that these activities were not integrated in the long-term strategy of the Social Democracy. There was a lot of good assessments in the Social Democratic parties on the situation in the world, but without conclusion on the new Social Democratic strategy in the already changed world. For example, when after the defeats in 1970-80s the Socialist Democratic parties returned to power in many countries in 1990s, this success was estimated only from one side: the neoliberal Governments collapsed because people refused the high social prices of neoliberal economic policy (what was truth) and it led to victories of Social Democrats. But such an approach was not enough for deeper understanding of the real situation. Soon, the ruling Social Democratic parties already experienced the new challenges of globalisation and importance of answering it. Refusing neoliberal politics was necessary but not enough.14

In such historical circumstances for the Social Democrats in mid-1990s appeared the “third way” alternative of the British Labour Party led by its new leader

Tony Blair, which generated big attention and debates in the great family of the Social Democracy.

The “third way” of the British Labour Party

In our interpretation the “third way”, as we have used this term since mid-1990s, has been built up on the particular developments and events in Britain. So, in a short way it is very important to highlight these particularities in order to explain why the “third way” appeared just in the British Labour Party, one of the highly respected and largest left European party, and how this idea was born with the new contents compared with 1950-60s, together with the recognition of inevitable radical modernisation of the Labour Party.

We have to start from two basic points: (1) From the lessons of 17 years of Labour rule (1945-50, 1950-51, 1964-66, 1966-70, 1974-79) linked to the historical social reforms, creation of National Health Service (NHS), but also to the defeat in 1979 which reflected the antagonism between the British economy and the unsuccessful handling of its crisis, on one side and social programme of the Labour Governments on the other side, which finally led to the victory of Thatcher’s Conservatives, to the rigid neoliberal policy, to being 18 years in opposition and all together four defeats at the parliamentary elections. (2) From the deep Conservative impact of these years on the British economy, society and partly on the way of thinking in Britain.

One of the most important contradictions of the performances of the Labour Governments has been that they implemented a lot of social reforms, which improved the welfare of people, but often was not able to balance the interest of the British economy and the social welfare. This conclusion may not valid for the first Labour Government because of the special conditions that prevailed then. The main strategic endeavour of the Labour Party has been creation of such an economy that makes possible a high level of redistribution and a tax system necessary for maintaining of welfare state. Among the instruments serving that strategy has been the economically active state regulation of the market and planning. However, the mentioned arsenal created increasing tensions and uncertainties between the main actors of the market and industry and the Labour Governments. Later on, such a feeling reached the part of the middle class, which also protested against extremely high taxes and public spending as a factor that can undermine the stability of the British economy. No doubt, the crisis of the British industries and finances in 1970s (that was extended by the world energy crisis) derived partly from this point. In spite of its efforts the last Labour Government (1975-79) was unable to stabilise the economy. The Government tried to cut consumption, freeze and regulate wages in order to push down inflation and reach agreement with Trade Unions for supporting these aims. But when the efforts to keep inflation on the needed level failed the Trade Unions left they partner and organised strikes across the country creating
tensions and chaos. So, the Government conflicted Trade Unions, Labour voters for weak social performance, market forces for instability and at the end of the day nobody was satisfied. It was the ground on which the Conservative Party won elections in 1979 and materialised its neoliberal vision. The Thatcher Government put an end to the state interference in economic affairs and market, using the majority in parliament and implementing rigid anti-Trade Union laws which to a great extent limited the Trade Union activity. In the Thatcher era the modernisation of the economy, especially in South and South-East of Britain was successful, but the social price of neoliberal transformation of the industry mainly in Scotland, Wales and in the North and Northeast was very high. The country and the society were divided.

The defeat of the Labour Government, as well as the policy of Conservatives, led to the deep crisis in the Labour Party, and its lessons are of enormous importance for understanding the turn in the 1990s. Between 1979-83 the radical, somewhere extreme left took an important position and exerted significant influence in the Labour Party. In 1980 Michael Foot, a left intellectual, was elected the Leader of the party and the prominent and popular left wing Tony Benn lost by only few votes the contest for Deputy Leader. The Labour Party shifted to the left approving a political and economic line that was close to the period after the war just in time when the conditions and the British society changed. It was an attempt to return to the state intervention in the economy and even to the nationalisation of some key sections of the economy. The Party was undermined by permanent and open debates and disagreements. The social-liberal wing of the Party (David Owen, Roy Jenkins and others) that opposed the leftist strategy, some organisational changes and the anti-European attitude of the Labour, left the Party and founded the Social Democratic Party (later the majority emerged with Liberals and the minority dissolved itself after a short effort to keep alive SDP).

In 1983 the Labour Party suffered a hard defeat at the general elections. It will be a mistake to presume that the defeat was the result of the successful Thatcher Government – the public opinion was not unanimous in such an assessment, but the victory in the Falkland War rather played this role. The defeat can be explained rather by the fact that the Conservatives had not a real alternative. The radical Labour Party was not a true opponent and it was not able even to assess the lessons of the defeat. Tony Benn noticed that “ten million voted for the socialist programme” (by the way, Benn also lost his mandate).

In 1983 Neil Kinnock (who represented the moderate, “soft” left in the Party) has been elected for the Party leader. Kinnock belonged to the prominent Labour people who among the first recognised that for the consolidation of the party fundamental changes were needed. During the first years of his leadership in the party continued sharp debates, internal conflicts, and the struggle against the
extreme left. After 1983 the left in the Labour Party polarised, the “hard” left gradually lost its influence, majority of the “soft” left supported Kinnocks efforts.15

For the better understanding of the problems we are investigating, we have to underline the “Policy review” process in the party after the third defeat at the general elections in 1987. (By the way, Margaret Thatcher then declared that she needed one more election and Labour party will be pushed on the periphery of British politics). In seven workshops in the Labour Party began a frank and open self-investigation and revision upon all policy and situation in the Labour Party, again in the hard debates. It is worthwhile to remark that in “Policy review” process Tony Blair, MP from 1983 as a member of the Labour Shadow Cabinet and latter as the member of National Executive Committee, took an active part. Among the supporters the renewal and modernisation of Labour active role played some leading personalities from the “soft” left, for example John Prescott, former Trade Unionist, now Deputy Leader and Deputy Prime Minister, David Blunkett, former leader of Sheffield Local Council, now member of the Government and the party leadership, and many others.16

As a result of the “Policy Review” the Labour Party Conferences from 1989 approved many important party documents and standpoints that reflected a lot of new approaches in the party policy and already at the beginning of 1990s it was a “new” Labour Party. Due to these changes for first time after ten years the Labour Party took part in the 1992 election campaign with real chance to win. The new strategy totally modified the Labour Party attitude towards the market and economy, giving up the practice of Government intervention in the economy and market and declared that the Government function is to improve better opportunity for the market. This strategy maintained the state responsibility in social, education, health and employment fields.

The Labour Party, in spite of the opinion polls survey that up to the pooling day anticipated its victory, lost the 1992 general election. A long time political scientists disputed over the reasons for the Labour defeat, but there was not a common explanation for that. Among them the most acceptable was that for the majority of voters such turn and the radical changes were not credible enough. The new strategy differed from the Labour traditions so significantly that many of the voters were not convinced on the sincerity of the Labour and the Conservative campaign used this uncertainty. Elsewhere the Labours taxation programme was also not sufficiently unambiguous what also raised some scepticism towards the Labour Party. For the Labour members and voters who took part in the excellent campaign, the defeat had a demoralising effect. Some political scientists expressed view that it was the last chance for the Labour Party to beat the Conservative Party.17

16 Ibid., pp. 145, 147.
In 1994 Tony Blair was elected Leader of the Labour Party. From the first days of his activities Blair worked to convince people that the radical turn of the Labour Party was truly frank and his programme was a creditable vision of a modernized Social Democratic party. At that time the conception of the “third way” became more specific and reached its practical expression. Blair rejected the politics and instruments of the “old” Labour as well as the neoliberal and anti-social way of Conservatives and declared the Labour’s own “third way” politics. As an important symbolic step Blair initiated changes in the party Constitution. The Special Conference of the Labour Party in 1995 eliminated the famous Clause four from the Constitution (about the public ownership) and reformulated the aims and principles of the Labour Party. The new Clause four declared that the Labour Party is a democratic socialist party and will preserve the traditional values and principles but for their implementation the party wants to apply new instruments that are acceptable for the citizens. Among them the party underlined the importance of partnership between the market forces and society.

In the debate on Clause four some people were against changes but not because the public ownership was on the agenda. It was rather in order to defend the tradition: Clause four always played the role of a symbol of the Labour Socialism.18 On the contrary, Blair wanted to prove that he was going to start with the “open page” and reinforce the credit of the New Labour. For those who doubted it Blair said that the principles were very important, but without power the principles were not enough. The Labour Party had to finish the 18 years of the Tory rule, to win elections, to govern.19 It is obvious that such a way is possible to achieve only by making compromises with the market forces and that supposes also certain concessions. However, for the purpose of achieving social aims of the Labour Party it is more rational than to pursue long activities in the opposition without making any compromise. Latter on the life justified that the Blair’s arguments were correct.

The Labour Party’s Manifesto of 1997 exactly mirrored the main recognition of the new Labour strategy: it is possible to win elections only with the strategy that is not of anti-market and anti-enterprise character, the one that will not jeopardise the stability of the British economy, trying to establish partnership between the market forces and the society. Blair promised not to raise taxes and maintain the level of public spending. At the same time the Labour allocated measures important for the majority of the society (“for the many, not for the few” as the new Clause four declared). That was perhaps more modest than people expected, but more effective than the Conservatives secured during their rule.

At the general elections in 1997 the New Labour won one of the greatest victory in his history. In spite of enormous significance of this performance the new

---
18 One Hundred years of Socialism, The West European Left in the Twentieth Century, p. 259.
19 Speech by Rt Hon Tony Blair to a Special Conference of the Labour Party, 1995, pp. 3-5.
Labour Government have rapidly met hard challenges and dilemmas that derived from the consequences of 18 years of the Conservative power.

As a Social Democratic party which stated that the party was going to save the Labour Party tradition, the Party has faced the heavy legacy of neoliberal policy, the growing poverty, especially children poverty, the deep social inequality (one of the largest in Europe). On the other side, the credibility of the Blair Government demanded to keep promises on the priorities of market and economic stability, of freezing the public spending level. It was obvious that for handling of such social tensions the appropriate sources are missing, so the present one should be used in some other manner. That controversial situation played great role and led to formulation of “third way” as the model of the New Labour.

The book of Anthony Giddens (“The Third Way and the Renewal of Social Democracy”) did a lot for the principal basing of the Social Democratic renewal. It is worth especial attention that Giddens exactly formulated the third ways programme: the radical centre, the new democratic state, active civil society, the democratic family, the new mixed economy, equality as inclusion, positive welfare, the social investment state, etc. However, according to the opinion of the author of this paper, the “third way” and the whole attempt of the New Labour is rather forced by the British reality than by a coherent vision or philosophy. The negation of using neoliberal and “old” Labour’s instruments was forced similarly as the recognition of the possibility of partnership between a democratic socialist party and the market forces, as the transformation of the New Labour’s social policy and the reform of the welfare state, as the new employment policy which are all built on compromises and bargaining. Phil Wilson, one of the Labour officials closed to Tony Blair, already from Sedgefield (Blair’s constituency) wrote: “New Labour is not a product of think tanks and focus groups. Neither is something foreign, which has been grafted into the Labour Party. The roots can be found in traditional hard-working communities.”

The central question is probably not what the “price” of such new policy is or what instruments have been used for pursuing it, but who will be served by this policy, as the new Clause four interpreted: “the many or the few”?

If we put on the balance the output of the first Blair Government there will be no doubt that its activity served the greatest part of the British society, even not with equal effect.

The Labour Government has created a special training and employment system, the New Deal of rights and responsibilities that achieved notable results in

the field of employment policy that is in the focus of the new social policy. Unemployment is on the rise elsewhere in Europe but in Britain is lower than any time for 25 years. One and a half million extra jobs have been created. The long-term youth unemployment totalled 350,000 in certain years, but now it is only 5,000. Ten years ago full employment was only a dream but for the new generation in Britain it is a real aim.22 At the last Annual Conference John Prescott pointed out that thanks to the new Labour Government:

“a million people back in work,
a million children lifted from poverty,
a million people treated in hospitals,
and a million people better off – thanks to the Minimum Wage.”23

In spite of such achievements it is clear that the social conditions for certain social groups are still bad and the poverty has decreased only to a moderate extent. It has been one of the reasons why the Labour Party strongly emphasized the importance of the second term. So far, the Labour Party has never made to rule two full terms one in succession and that has always prevented it to carry out its own full programme. In this aspect, the Labour Party’s attitude towards the economy, the priority of its stability, has played a general role. It was the first Labour Government that had economic competence, which guaranteed confidence and credibility to the business circle. Many years ago the market forces always met the Labour Governments Chancellor of the Exchequer traditional speech at the Annual Conference with fear because on this occasion the Exchequer usually announced the new social measure that led to the higher public spending. Nowadays the Gordon Brown's speeches are without surprises and the business world is more calculatable. His reputation in economic affairs is well known.

The Labour Party’s victory at the general elections in 2001, which can be understood as a wide consensus of the British public upon the positive performance of the Labour Government, is of especial importance because the Labour crossed the border of the magic second term. Moreover, in 2003 the Labour Party has been in power for seven years, which, never happened before. For the first time the Labour Party has a real opportunity to implement its full programme but all this poses great responsibility and challenges to the second Blair cabinet.

Developing the logics of this paper we have to stress that one of the main questions we are going to answer is whether the New Labour’s “third way” and the activities of its Government have justified the Social Democratic identity and credibility of the Labour. In order to analyse this issue we have focused ourselves

on the central element of the New Labour strategy, which is indeed of high importance for the future of the Social Democracy: the long-term partnership of the market sphere and the society. No doubt, it is a complicated problem with many details but now we would like to concentrate on one complex theme.

Starting the second term in the focus of the Government as well as of the public attention the most spotlighted field became the public service matter, the future of the health service and education. It does not mean that after 1997 the performance of the Government was weak. 17,000 extra nurses and 7,000 extra doctors, cutting the waiting lists in hospitals by 124,000, raising the education standards at schools – it was truly a significant step forward but not a resounding success. The public opinion expected that something more would happen and was not satisfied with the present level of services. It was the reason why the 2001 Labour Manifesto allocated an unprecedented programme of development and investment of services. In addition to enormous figures (10,000 extra doctors, 20,000 extra nurses, 10,000 extra teachers) the Government concentrated itself on the quality of services. The main aim is not only the equality in services but also a high level of services that take into account the individual demands. Many years ago Margaret Thatcher, who had not showed a friendly attitude towards NHS, trying to express her dissatisfaction with the NHS egalitarianism said that she wanted to use the health service: “The time I want, the doctor I want”. At this time such an approach expected a two-tier service in privatised NHS, one for the wealthy people, other for the average. Blair recognised that since this time the life and the demands have changed and the average people also want a more convenient service in the framework of NHS but without special payments on the basis of the conditions of their health. So, the massive plan for improving NHS has been much more than simply a quantitative reproduction of the health service but a turn of quality in the NHS. Talking about the future of the health services it is necessary to remind the special status and tradition of the NHS, because it is not only a place where the ill people’s health is improving. According to the British public opinion the National Health Service as the strongest instrument of the social justice and the welfare instructions is one of the most important historical achievements of the Labour Party and it is not accidental that the people mostly identifies it with the Labour Party. The education and its standard is also a matter of equal opportunities for the distance between the private and public schools. So, that is understandable why the second Blair cabinet has wanted to consolidate its credibility and identity in these spheres. The leading slogan of the party since 2001 has become: “Schools and hospitals first”.

Since 2001 the Labour Government has found itself in a complicated position. Of course, preparing the Election Manifesto the party anticipated that such

things could happen and at the Conferences debated about that. But when the issue came on the agenda the dilemma was already materialised.

On one hand, the Labour Party wished to preserve the stability of the economy, which reminded of the first priority of the Government and the most effective means against the challenges of globalisation. Therefore it has not been possible to increase public spending, what Labour Party, actually promised in the Manifesto. On the other hand, the enormous and very significant project on the public services needs the sources the state budget was not able to secure. The population has often criticised the Government for the unsatisfactory health service but has also protested against any increase of taxes and public spending. It was the reason why – in order to solve this dilemma – the Government decided to involve to a large extent private sources into construction and functioning of the hospitals and schools.

The process of involvement of private funds in public services has been arranged within the framework of Private Finance Initiative (PFI) model. To some extent the PFI worked also earlier, but after 1997 and especially during the second Labour Government has become one of the central sources for improving public services. Practically it means that the NHS or other state organisations are renting the hospital from the owner in the form of a contract. So, for the people and their services it is useful because the more schools and hospitals, doctors, nurses and teachers the better are services and education. But from the other side the PFI is a political test of the Public Private Partnership (PPP), which is in the focus of New Labour strategy. Nobody, probably even the Government, will say that PFI is an ideal solution to the dilemma mentioned above. It is rather a solution forced by the life and an example of a compromise. However, nobody is able to deny that in spite of benefits for the society this model means that the private capital is integrating into state institutions and the relations of power within partnership may change. Using private money for a typical Social Democratic project requires courage but for the Labour modernizers the practice will be a determinant. At the 2002 Labour Party Conference, where upon this question there was a sharp discussion Tony Blair frankly and openly said: “The values of progressive politics – solidarity, justice for all – have never been more relevant, and their application never more in need of modernisation.”  


27 Ibid.
Rationality and pragmatism justified reforms. Blair noticed that he would not go to the people where the services are weak and apologise because there was an anti-PFI argument which were not in favour of constructing hospitals in such a system. “They don’t care who builds them. So long as they’re built, I don’t care who builds them…” So long they help to deliver better NHS and better State schools.\textsuperscript{28}

Between 1979 and 1997 ten hospitals were built. Since 1997 through PFI 15 new hospitals have been built and 100 is on the way. 550 schools are being rebuilt or modernised. In Glasgow, the whole of the secondary school system is being rebuilt with 12 brand new schools. All these occurred under PFI.\textsuperscript{29} At the end of 2002 already 16 billion pounds were covered by contracts.\textsuperscript{30}

There are some signs reflecting that some Labour members and Trade Unions are partly divided on the PFI. It seems that the modernisation of the Labour Party has reached point where the principles of the new Constitution are hardly harmonised with its practice. The State’s withdrawal from the market and economy, the partnership in the sphere of employment and training is, yet acceptable, but the decreases of the State domination in health services and education are more difficult to understand. For some Trade Unions especially, it is a problem that somewhere in the health institutions the NHS and PFI employed are working together, but with different wages what caused difficulties in wage bargaining.

At the Labour Party Conference 2002 the Labour leadership was voted down in the case of PFI. (It is the second defeat of Tony Blair since the beginning of his leadership). The Conference adopted a composite resolution that proposed the revision of PFI and up to that a moratorium in applying it. Although the Conference Resolutions are not bound for the Government and for the Parliamentary Labour Party, Blair and the leadership have to take into consideration such an opinion all the more because the majority of the Labour Party individual members joined the party during the Blair’s leadership.\textsuperscript{31}

Some delegates argued that the traditional Labourite conception of public services had been given up, others named it a privatisation of the NHS and criticised the contracts because they were closer to the entrepreneur interests. John Prescott did not deny that in some contracts there had truly been mistakes and contradictions that could be corrected, but he also made an emphasis on the positive side of PFI and its results. Prescott strongly refused the accusation about the “privatisation” of the NHS as well the approach of “NHS or PFI”, and instead

\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., p. 13.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{31} The state of the party, p. 9.
of that he said: “Public and private. Not either/or but both together.”32 Chancellor Brown underlined that the PFI sources would not substitute but complete public spending and that from 1997 the spending on public services had been doubled.33

The full picture of the New Labour and its Government requires noticing that in spite of their generally positive balance that harmonised both with Manifestos and enjoyed the support of the majority citizens, in the background it has its own problems. The internal opposition that is opposing the general line of the New Labour is nowadays marginalized but has its representatives in the National Executive Committee and in the Parliamentary Labour Party, and has some organised groups, which prepare meetings and publish newsletters and other materials. The Tribune that in 1970s was an organ of the moderate Left is also very close to those Labourites who are formulating their opinion and contra arguments of the New Labour and are accusing the Blair leadership for betrayal of the Labours. It is characteristic that one such group is named “After New Labour”34 and it is relatively active all over the country and cooperates with some Trade Unions. It is hard to say that the impact of such groups (as it was in 1970-80s) is significant. They mostly criticise and deny the New Labour and deal less with the alternatives. What is worth greater attention to be paid by the leadership is the cleave of the membership to the traditional Labour values which are, by the way, admitted by the new Constitution and the Leadership. This attitude has nothing common with the instruments and policy of the “old” Labour. It is rather an expression of dissatisfaction with the social policy of the Government. Probably, while the social inequality and poverty among some social groups will not be eliminated, the cleave, or rather rigid cleave to the traditions and to social security, have to be taken into consideration by the leadership.

There is another problem to which “New Labour” is not indifferent. It is the fact that the turnout at the last general election was very low – 59%. The opponents of Tony Blair argued that the reason of such a turnout is the “third way” politics and the New Labour, but it is a similar simplification as the argument, which stated that the turnout was low because the victory of Labour Party was so obvious that nothing was at stake.

It is worthwhile to pay attention to the new book of David Blunkett (Politics and Progress. Renewing Democracy and Civil Society), the member of the Government and the leadership, who is extremely popular in the party and also close to Blair and respected by the Leader. In his book Blunkett is looking for the reason

of the low turnout and has found it among the problems of the local community and the activity of individuals. According to his view in the future the power has to be built up on the combination of strong communities and the endeavours of the individuals who pursue their aspirations. There is a need for developing new forms of civil activity because this is the precondition for strengthening of participative democracy. The election campaigns are often self-contained and only rarely deal with the concrete problems of the voters.

Parallel with the renewal of the policy of Labour Party the internal party structure and the policy-making process has been transformed. The National Policy Forum was established with the function of preparing the programme documents for the party Conferences that preserved the right of the approval of programmes but the debates have more a consultation character, the various proposals and resolutions are being collected and elaborated by the Forum. The party organisations and Trade Unions send their proposals and remarks not directly to the Conference, with the exception that they are submitted just before the conference. In this case the Conference votes by secret ballot on the problems that should be discussed and votes for or against (as it occurred at the 2002 Conference in the case of PFI). The members of the Forum (about 200-220) are partly elected by the Conference, partly delegated by different components of the party. So, the traditional Labour representative democracy has been cut, but the programme documents are much better prepared than earlier when a mass of composite resolutions were debated at the Conference. The main organ of the party has become the Joint Policy Commission that are led directly by the Leader-Prime Minister and composed by the representatives of all elements of the Party. Taking the lessons of the previous Labour Governments the “New Labour’s” aims are to concentrate the whole Party on the implementation of the Electoral Manifesto, to create partnership among the different component of the party: the Government, the Parliament and European Parliamentary Labour Party, the Trade Unions and other collective members, the Constituency Labour Parties.

The role and functions of individual members have been enhanced significantly and the leadership wants to involve all members on the policy-making and MP selection process, to cut the competence of some middle-level party organ, shortly of the activists. In this aspect it is a little controversial that the individual membership of the Labour Party has decreased since 1997 from 400,000 to 280,000 (in 2002). The competence and position of the collective membership of Trade Unions have been reduced (3 millions at the moment). Some years ago the delegates

37 Ibid., pp. 27, 168.
38 The state of the party, p. 9.
of the Conference made 90% of Trade Unions, today only 50%, but the aims of the leadership are to cut even this proportion emphasising that it would be better if collective members became individual members and take part in the party life in such a capacity. The relations of some (it must be underlined) Trade Unions are complicated, but the political role of the Union and their financial contribution (even less than earlier) is still important for the Labour Party.

Summarising the new policy making in the Labour Party we can agree with Eric Shaw, British political scientist who wrote: “The principal aim of the new policy making structure was to facilitate consensus within the party, in particular to prevent a repetition of the discord between the Government and the extra-parliamentary organs that had beset the party in the past by creating institutional incentives for the reconciliation of disagreement through compromise and mutual accommodation. It has largely succeeded.” The critics of the New Labour do not accept that logic. They put emphasis on the cuts of the traditional Labour democracy. Even if this argumentation is true it seems undeniable that the basic democratic rights of the organisations, bodies and the members have not only been preserved but also developed. It is well illustrated by the events at the 2002 Annual Conference. At the end of the day the Conference voted down the Leadership on the cardinal question. According to Shaw two opposite argumentations are appearing on the internal reform of the Labour Party. The first is that reform have democratized party and improved activity and the rights of the individual membership. The second is that the reform has eroded party democracy by marginalizing representative procedure inside of the party. Shaw is not going to deny either of them.

The fundamental changes in the world in the last decade certainly forced most European Social Democratic parties on debates of strategic questions, meditation and seeking modern Social Democratic alternatives. It would not be truth to state that the events in the British Labour Party, particularly after 1994, had no impact on this process, but it is the fact that some parties and also the Social International, as well as the PES, took note of the new world phenomena. Lots of debates, conferences, and workshops deeply analysed these from the aspect of the Left. Later on, after the great victory of the Labour Party over the strongest conservatives in Europe, and the publication of Giddens book, where he systematised the “third way”, and analysed the results of the new Labour Government, the New Labour’s activity dropped into centre of the attention of European Social Democracy. The principal initiative of the Blair’s leadership, the inevitability of the radical modernisation of Labour, the reform of the welfare state has been met with positive attention of the majority of parties. The Paris Congress of the Socialist International in 1999 also illustrated this interest. But the full identification with the “third way”

40 Ibid., pp. 147-148.
was reflected only in the famous Blair-Schröder paper: Europe: “The third way – the new centre”, although this material mostly expressing Blair’s doctrine. The majority of other parties, especially the French, in spite of their principal support, stressed the importance of national peculiarities in the strategy of the Left and that the main conceptions of the “third way” in different form had been already applied in the strategies of their parties. It was also reflected at the meeting of five leaders - Bill Clinton, Tony Blair, Gerhard Schröder, Wim Kok, M. D’Alema – which was organized in Washington (1999) to discuss the “third way”. Especially the last two pointed out that in their countries the instruments of defending the social security have already been established. Later on the Finnish Party Leader Erkki Tuomioja denied interpretations that the British experiences can be applied in Finland. Some of the leftist Social Democrats also criticised the British model, Oscar Lafontain, for example, mostly because of the attitude to the market, the partnership and also for applying some neo-liberal instruments in Labour strategy.41 Giddens in his first book about the “third way” indirectly suggested that the “New Labour’s” experiences could be applied by other parties and it could play some mediatory role between the USA Democratic Party and European Social Democracy.42 However, the European parties politely rejected this idea, what seems to be understandable. The different social conditions make impossible any standardisation of the strategy and every party believes that its policy is relevant, but it doesn’t mean that other parties are not credibly Social Democratic. From this aspect the British Labour Party is worth attention. It was in a very difficult situation, so it was forced to modernise itself and its renewal has been the most radical one, but even so its way cannot be considered the only credible for all Social Democratic parties. This model may be useful in Britain, but for example, it would be hard for the Swedish Social Democrats to with elections with such an agenda. So, their voters justify the credibility of a Social Democratic party, first of all. In any case the fact is that, while some European Social Democratic parties lost elections last year again, in 2001 the British Labour Party won it again with nearly similar majority as four years ago.

Original in English

42 Anthony Giddens The Third Way, The Renewal of Social Democracy, pp. VII-IX.

258
Cilj ovog rada je da opiše i analizira nastojanja današnje zapadnoevropske socijaldemokratije da preispita svoju doktrinu i pruži odgovore na osnovne izazove koje savremeni razvoj donosi, i usklađi zahteve privrednog razvoja i njene socijalne prioritete. Autor u centar pažnje stavlja procese preispitivanja u britanskej Laburističkoj partiji, koja je u nastojanju da prekine osamnaest godina dugu dominaciju konzervativaca, sprovela intenzivnu raspravu u Partiji i usvojila novu doktrinarnu platformu tzv. treći put, s kojom je dva puta uzastopce uspela da ubedljivo porazi svog glavnog oponenta.

Posle kratkog istorijskog uvoda, u kome se ukazuje na osnovne pojmove, vrednosti i ciljeve tradicionalne socijaldemokratije, autor navodi da se između Prvog i Drugog svetskog rata socijaldemokratija nalazila u procesu zalaganja za pluralističku demokratiju i programskega stanovišta o potrebi gotovo opštem područjivanja sredstava za proizvodnju i čvrste regulacije tržišta, što je dovodilo do sputavanja mogućnosti stvaranja konkretne racionalne politike i programa socijaldemokratije kada su formirali svoje vlade. Po mišljenju autora ova dilema je rešena usvajanjem 1959. godine Bad Godesberskog programa Socijaldemokratske partije Nemačke, kojim je deklarirano da javna svojina nije bitan uslov za ostvarenje socijaldemokratskih ciljeva i vrednosti, te da je mešovita privreda, u kojoj koegzistiraju privatna i javna svojina, dobar instrument za ostvarenje svih pa i socijalnih ciljeva. Primer nemačkih socijaldemokrata sledile su i ostale partije, čime je postavljena osnova za stvaranje doktrine demokratskog socijalizma.

Za razumevanje današnjih dilema socijaldemokratije vrlo su važni delovi rada koji opisuju najuspešniji period socijaldemokratije, tzv. zlatnog doba u kome su socijaldemokratske vlade na talasu ubrzanog privrednog razvoja uspevale da ostvare neke od svojih osnovnih ciljeva – punu zaposlenost, rast životnog standarda i veoma razgranatu socijalnu državu. Pokazalo se, međutim, da socijaldemokratija nije uspela da obezbedi ove vrednosti kao trajne tekovine zapadnoevropskog društva. Autor ukazuje da su se već sedamdesetih godina pojavili znaci koji su ukazivali da se dalji napredak ne može ostvarivati starim instrumentima kenzijaniza, da su počele da se javljaju pukotine u starom modelu, da se javila za zapadnoeuropske uslove relativno visoka nezaposlenost, da je konkurentnost starog kontinenta počela da slabi, da su internacionalizacija proizvodnje i kasnije globalizacija zahtevali nova rešenja. Socijaldemokratija je tada počela da gubi korak pred naletom neoliberalizma desnice, koji, međutim, ni sam nije uspevao da reši osnovne probleme privrede i društva.

Kada se u devedesetim godinama socijaldemokratija u mnogim zemljama počela da vraća na vlast, ona osim negiranja neoliberalizma, nije ponudila neku novu, realnu alternativu i odgovore na izazove globalizacije. Analizirajući koncepciju “trećeg puta” Novih laburista autor smatra da taj model, bar u britanskim uslovima, daje odgovore na mnoge dileme. On smatra da zadržavajući osnovne postulate i vrednosti laburizma, ali odbacujući neke “starolevičarske dogme”, zalažući se za ostanjivanje javne svojine kao uslova za društveni preobražaj, primjenjujući neke neoliberalne instrumente u svojoj
strategiji, deregulaciju u kojoj država ne komanduje već osposobljava i obuzdava moć tržišta, zalažući se za konkurenciju gdjegod je to moguće, regulaciju gde je to potrebno, za partnerstvo sa privatnim kapitalom, za dinamičnu privredu, Novi laburisti mogu da reše socijalne probleme i obezbijede ciljeve za koje se zalaže socijaldemokratija.

Osnovni autorov zaključak je da, uprkos uspjesima Novih laburista na poslednja dva izborna ogledanja u Britaniji i nekih pozitivnih pouka koji se mogu izvući iz “trećeg puta”, to ne znači da sve socijaldemokratske partije treba da slede njihov put, pošto različiti ekonomski, politički i socijalni uslovi zahtevaju različite strategije i politike koji će predstavljati odgovarajuće odgovore svake partije na različite izazove.