

"Institutions and Political Culture in Greece"

The incorporation of the domestic market into the European market together with the harmonization of the national institutional framework to that of the Community are two forces which have been exercising pressure on the country's social structure.

This harmonization process into the European and further more into international market creates a sense of insecurity. Many citizens claim that the state is responsible for absorbing the shock at "its own cost" and further more that rules and regulations imposed by the Community's institutional framework have to be disregarded.

This attitude has been nourished by the model on the basis of which power has been exercised in the past. Such a model has allowed the reproduction and perpetuation of existing social and political culture and relationships along with the appropriate institutions.

The state has thus intervened decisively for the redistribution of wealth which in turn has led to the securing of an effective control over society and the accomplishment of the necessary and desired social compromise.

The position of the ruling social group has thus been strengthened and the prevailing economic and social relationships have thus been established and maintained.

Social and political conflict and struggle has shifted away from the class level to the level at which social interest groups project a set of demands for aid from the state.

Political parties have served as the means of guaranteeing state aid to a total of affiliates and party loyalists. This nature of state intervention and role has not been drastically challenged up to date. The state has maintained its old practices of creating and redistributing income. The only adjustment was the widening of the social base to include social entities which had previously been left out and were prevented from participating in the redistribution of the state's wealth.

The eliminations of income inequalities was thus been confined within class boundaries and did not comply with rational criteria which, if adopted and respected, would promote economic development, the improvement of the economy's competitive position and the protection of the environment.

However, this system of distribution of wealth could not be proved capable of satisfying an ever growing demand. It has also been unfair for those who have been left out. The insufficiency of resources has intensified the conflict and has led to a major crisis.

Greece lacks the social and economic organization which would separate economy and society from the state. Such an organization is a prerequisite for Greece's integration into the Community's Single Market as well as for the country's harmonization into the European system of Economic and Monetary Integration.

The development, in Greece, of an autonomous driving force which would lead to modernization is inhibited by an idle society which is mixed and blended with the state, unable to respond and adjust.

This dead-end situation is multidimensional. It is not restricted to the area of national economy alone, but goes beyond such limits by generating social pressure which threatens the smooth functioning of democratic institutions.

Centralization and authoritarian leadership along with an unwillingness and inability to adjust inhibit modernization and democratization and invite economic and political crisis. A radical change at the level of institutions and political culture in Greece is needed. A new way of exercising power, sensitive and responsive to developments in the international environment, could be able to facilitate and promote society's modernization and democratization.

The substantial transformation of the country's social structure that would serve the goal of modernization and harmonization with the international environment calls for a course of action that would minimize social conflict. It also presupposes the collaboration of social forces from the widest possible spectrum. The cost adjustment could thus be reduced and the possibilities of the country to cope with international competition will be enhanced.

Therefore, we need to formulate a thorough proposition concerning the state and its functioning. Such a proposition ought to prescribe the terms according to which the market should function and resources should be allocated. It ought to be the outcome of a continuous dialogue among society's representative bodies. This dialogue is a prerequisite for striking a balance among conflicting interests as well as for defining a socially acceptable program and course of action.

The quality of the political behaviour of the various social groups will be enhanced by the establishment of economic security, the ability of government to function in an orderly manner, the elimination of corruption and a realistic relationship of the country with its international environment and especially with Europe.

We propose a specific course toward socialist modernization, a course away from the "charity state" toward an efficient social welfare state which would guarantee freedom for the individual, and a self dependent society. This should be the aim of a modern socialist party.

What is missing is an organization of the society that would bring the malfunctioning of the capitalist economy to a halt. A socialist movement ought to reject the tempting propositions in favour of populist practices, and new conservatism.

Its own choice is the promotion of a genuine new social organization which can constantly broaden the possibilities of free expression for all citizens. It is the choice of the social welfare state.