

## What is modernization

Citizens, in our country, are occupied by an immense feeling of weakness. Public services, enterprises, individuals, contribute to the perpetuation of problems, by their behaviour, instead of facilitating the solution of such problems. Everyday life is a chain of proofs (verifications) that we live in a world of misfortune. At the same time we realize that possibilities for something better do exist. There is a conflict between what we feel is desirable and social reality.

We are certain we are able to secure what we consider as desirable, yet we are far from it. This conflict is at the core of the problem of modernization. Institutions and society's practices do not allow us on an individual and collective basis, to realize what we consider desirable and possible. Modernization aims at leading the way to a different functioning of society. It aims at helping us to develop and take advantage of our abilities. It also aims at securing an increased ability of handling problems related to evolution in the country with respect to all dimensions of the process of development. Modernization is the means to overcome today's crisis which brings citizens to conflict with the social and economic environment.

The causes of such a crisis were and still are, primarily, a political and administrative system with authoritative characteristics and patronage-like functioning, an economy which is dominated by oligopolies and self-employed citizens who merely manage to survive and a lack of education. Under such conditions, modernization is identified by the struggle for a different society, for a democratic and socially just society.

For the promotion of modernization, we ought to acquire a critical stand against all those legends which determine our way of thinking and our actions. Society, with all its forms of work and life which have been molded since many years, with all its political institutions its economic necessities, is considered by us all a totally modernized society. We believe that we have reached the top of a constant evolution along development. We behave just as if the end of history has come. While we accept that everything changes, we think in terms of tradition. Classes, the enterprise, paid employment, the family, political parties constituted and still do the elements by means of which we try to capture reality today just as fifty years ago.

Nevertheless, many things have a different dimension and a different function today. For example: the nation, national

sovereignty, and national independence in a world of increasingly interrelated economies, free movement of capital and supranational economic influences.

The losers of the process of development are not the salary earners but those who are weak, the elderly, those who are retired, the outcasts, the youth without access to production, the handicapped. The conflict between the state and the market is not a characteristic of our society. What really characterises out contemporary society is the inability of the welfare state to financially support its goals along with the low rate of development.

If we are to bring about modernization we ought to realize that we are at the end of an era and at the beginning of another. Society, currently under formation, has different characteristics from the one it is succeeding. Anything contemporary constitutes an evolution; however, it stands out to sharp contrast with the world which has determined our thinking and our standards. Anything contemporary is unrelated to principles and guidelines of the past projected into the future. It is something different because it encompasses the present along with the future.

There are two developments which prescribe the end of our era. The first one is the end of the conflict between East and West and the collapse of the Soviet camp. The Third World War is over. The alliance of the United States and Europe won the war without any military confrontation. 1989 brought about a new era the same way the end of the previous two World Wars did. This new era is not exclusively identified by the eruption of nationalism and the creation of a new world order but is characterised by a more intensive interrelationship of economies and the formation of supranational political and economic schemes. Our planet is becoming a small city where everybody is near everybody else and everybody is related to everybody else. The challenges are new and of significant magnitude and possibilities correspond to the nature of such challenges.

The second development relates to the role of the state and the market. The contrast between the state and the market, the private and the public sector, private and public initiative is not predominant any more. Today's developed industrial society is characterised by the interaction between private and public initiative. The social system is the result of a systematic attempt to strike a balance between decisions taken on the basis of private maximization criteria and social needs by means of state intervention. The main problem of social organization today is focused on the power of the mechanisms (apparata) of the economy and politics.

Such mechanisms compel citizens to a certain way of life, they restrict their possibilities for action and contribute to their alienation and individualism. The important question is to what extent should the outcomes of such systems be accepted, to what extent should the capabilities and freedoms of citizens be enlarged. The 20th century offered the proof that the welfare state can restrict the market's malfunctioning, that the state of justice can ease and confine the high handed practices of bureaucratic-administrative mechanisms. The 20th century also brought about the proof that the welfare state and the state of justice do not constitute a proposition against capitalist or bureaucratic development. To substantially diminish or confine does not necessarily mean that the causes of such malfunctioning are totally removed. The question of how to eliminate public deficits, while at the same time social justice is maintained and even enhanced, still remains unanswered. The pursuit of a more efficient functioning of the systems and the development of social solidarity are contradictory to a certain extent. We ought to find our way within this framework.

Which way however?

A vision that would motivate our people is needed if we are to achieve modernization. Such a vision will offer the rational and persuasive explanations which will justify the necessary efforts, as well as the perspective which will allow people to be hopeful. This vision is summed up to the principle: a strong Greece, democratic and socially just that could be a frontrunner in Europe. Frontrunner in Europe means that we will have say, a possibility to influence developments, we will be an integral part of European integration and we will be in a position to reverse today's course which is that of the country's marginalization. It also means that we will be in a position to influence and direct developments in the Balkans and Eastern Mediterranean.

We need a national strategy if we are to advance to the direction of our goal, to construct a dynamic country, open to the outside world, able to define a new course. The national strategy presupposes an overall perception about the way in which we intend to increase the power components of the country. The national strategy does not only refer to the country's international relations but primarily the internal economic and social evolution which would offer us the means for a more important international role.

National strategy will emerge from a coherent alternative proposition which would offer answers to the main issues of the country. Such a proposition presupposes the analysis and the



elaboration of all elements which determine the present situation, public debate, confrontation and finally the synthesis of all different views. Today, the progressive part of the political spectrum, as a recipient of various special and contradictory demands, is in great difficulty and avoids to formulate proposals, to conciliate different views, to express a single strategy of all forces it represents. It follows the easy way out, that of the declarations of intent. Political parties are not planning institutions which ought to prepare "Five-year plans". They could however and should have dossiers for every issue at their disposal. They should restrict all possible alternatives, they should reconcile differences, they should define priorities, evaluate policies and be ready to implement a consistent policy when the crucial moment comes. Otherwise, when the time of responsibility arrives, embarrassment, perplexity, inertia and submission to the mechanisms of power will prevail. A policy of a ten-year horizon is now needed in Greece, more than any other time in the past.

Greece should become a member of the Economic and Monetary Union. It is very difficult for Greece to achieve this goal. It presupposes that during the next few years the tax system, the price and incomes policy, the state's intervention for redistribution purposes, the distribution of wealth, social compromises in the form of special privileges and other measures, all these, should undergo substantial changes. Membership to the Economic and Monetary Union also presupposes that certain choices have to be made with respect to laying certain claims to the European Community. What are we trying to strengthen and promote? Is it agriculture, industry, infrastructure, services? Towards which direction?

Such sweeping changes can not come about without a convergence of the forces of labour to agree, along general guidelines, on who ought to contribute, which way, when and by how much, so that we could lead ourselves to a more just and more competitive society. Such a convergence to a widely accepted plan presupposes a social dialogue, consecutive approaches by means of continuous debates, as well as the drafting of development plans which will constantly be revised and improved, the implementation of which will bring us closer to the economies of Western Europe.

Modernization makes it necessary for us to establish a strong society against the mechanisms of the state and the economy. In such a society, counterbalancing authorities independent from the desires of the state and the big capital will coexist. Such authorities will be in a position to enlighten public opinion and mobilise it, to impose solutions, to create binding rules and standards and secure wider social acceptance of any measure that

will be judged as appropriate. A strong society is the result of decentralization, transfer of power, the creation of new centers of decision making of wide participation on behalf of all citizens. The second and third degree of local and regional administration could contribute to this end. The establishment of auditing and controlling authorities, responsible for public administration and banks, the independence of public mass media and their protection against government intervention could contribute as well.

We need to broaden communication. Vigorous confrontations, the arraying of slogans against each other, misleading political explanations, all these, are being nourished by centralization and the lack of information. We have a wrong impression about the world that surrounds us. The deficit of knowledge could diminish if we promote communication.

The progressive part of the country has to work toward the establishment of a net of discussion steps, projection of demands, expression of perceptions, of a constantly enlarging cycle of points where questions are made public and where citizens can become active.

Communication is not a cure for all ills. Class conflicts, social struggles, political confrontations will always characterize a society where different and contradictory interests will coexist. However, communication could wear out all ideological supporting mechanisms of established authorities and could undermine the walls within which anything new is rejected. Communication, therefore, promotes transformations as well as the easing of contrasts. It guarantees conditions for new social contrasts.

We should also drive the social state forward. The social state is not a state-patron which looks after everyone who belongs to the party in power and seeks employment for him. It is not the state-protector of any established situation on the basis of the pretext of the political cost. It is not the state-nursery which offers money to everyone for all purposes as long as the recipients possess the sufficient power to influence decisions. It is not the state which grants aids which support social groups by offering special allowances and privileges in order to secure political submission.

The social state is a state which formulates and imposes policies on the basis of the criteria of citizens equality and social solidarity. It does not differentiate and discriminate. It guarantees objectivity to all intervention processes and binds them with transparent and controllable criteria.

Education, health and the improvement of everyday living conditions are of outmost priority for the social state. This way all citizens can be assured of equal possibilities. It establishes a safety net in order to do away with marginalization and the misfortune of individuals and groups and all those who are not in a position to cope with demands imposed by the market as well as the way contemporary society is organized.

We have to develop social responsibility. Greek society today recognizes every person who succeeds, contrary to existing legislation, by demonstrating moral indifference and negligence. It favours everyone who succeeds not to pay his taxes, who builds without permission who obtains approvals which should have never been issued, who accepts bribes and bribes others in order to have his job done. Greek society tolerates those who neglect their moral and social obligations. The teacher who is interested only in his private lessons and not in the way he conducts his courses at school, the lawyer who multiplies useless lawsuits and other unnecessary legal actions in order to charge more, the farmer who sprays his crops with toxic chemicals one day before harvest, the entrepreneur who utilizes degraded materials. All such phenomena do not cause complaints.

Society accepts the pursuit of the improvement of the individual's personal position, by utilizing all possible means, as a legitimate goal. The lawyer, the doctor, the teacher, will be backed by their syndicates in opposing any attempt to curb their immunity.

The citizen ought to take into account the effects his actions might have to the functioning of society. He should examine whether his actions do contribute, or not, to the future enhancement of possibilities and well-being of all. Only then he is a citizen.

Social responsibility is everyone's obligation. It should be our claim. If we do not operate as responsible individuals we will never create a responsible society.

We need to define other standards of political action. Indifference and fatigue towards politics increases every day. The perception that all politicians are the same is steadily gaining grounds. In spite of all these, many, both on the Left as well as the Right, insist in a traditional, political approach: Politics, for them, is nothing else than constant tactical moves. Their goal is to expose and take advantage of the opponents' weakness by means of accusations about scandals, by intensifying conflict, by projecting a picture of generalized misery and disaster. Traditional politicians fall in their own



trap as far as their tactics is concerned. The misery they denounce embraces them at the end. Public opinion wants solutions and progress and does not need personal disputes or accusations. Public opinion does not tolerate the unprofessional character of public life.

The refusal, on behalf of political parties, to respond to the citizens' expectations and demands for something new and different, reinforces indifference and frustration, and strengthens the populist trend of condemning politicians, the forces which dispute democracy.

Modernization means that we ought to promote:

- Education and the spreading of values and quality properties. Neither economic growth, nor efficient government, alone, could lead to development if social responsibility, solidarity, rational judgement, and the ability to create and authentically express our sensitivities are not nourished.
- The broadening of social choices. A choice is possible only if there exists a scale of articulated alternative choices. In our country our possibilities and choices have become limited due to our inaction. There is an one way street almost everywhere.
- The existence of stable principles, provisions, motives which equip the citizen with confidence in the functioning of the state. Traditional politics brings about the opposite results. Each year new tax exemptions and new tax burdens are announced in an effort to simultaneously decrease the deficit and create favourable impressions. The result is confusion and uncertainty.
- Orientation toward the future. The solution to the economic and social problems requires long run planning and effort. Society does not change here and now. A contribution is required today that will yield results tomorrow. We have to prepare the way to control future developments. Otherwise we will keep on sliding downhill with no hope for a reversal of the process.
- The making of public processes impersonal and objective. There still exist personalized criteria, acquaintances and patron-client relationships.
- A new perception for the distribution of the social product. The reduction of inequalities remains a steady goal.

At the same time, we should provide criteria that could take into account differences in contribution and participation of individuals and groups in the functioning of our society. Compensation should be based on such criteria. Today compensation is connected to political power as well as to the nature of each group's activity as related to the government's goals. As a consequence, justice is on the side of the most powerful and the most shrewd.

Modernization is an object of conflict. The term is often used by representatives of the conservative side when they want to emphasize their intentions for a more efficient management. Modernization is not a technocratic process of transplanting models and standards, for efficiency increases as well as institutional changes for a better functioning of the market. Socialist modernization is a social process. It is very much influenced by the continuous broadening of the individual's possibilities for a free shaping of his personality, by the pursuit of liberated forms of life with less alienation, oppression and exploitation, by the expansion and strengthening of democracy and social justice.

Rationalism, the analysis and investigation of all elements which influence the socio-economic-political evolution, the critical examination of such elements, and the implementation of knowledge thus acquired is the vehicle to modernization.

The criterion by which a policy is evaluated is its social impact and any effects which might stem from it. The long run perspectives that are traced by it. A policy is not judged on the basis of the cover it is dressed with, or the way it is presented, or by how "new" or "popular" it claims it is.

Socialist modernization differs from leftist trade unionism which demands that each policy which refers to a specific branch or profession ought to be approved by its organized representation. Society is a whole where developments in one sector have an impact on other sectors. Society is a whole which is characterized by very many interrelated process. Socialist modernization policy ought to be planned for the whole. It is a sum of policies by branch which address a multifragmented society which finds shelter in entrenched isolated branches thus perpetuation anarchy and the immunity of the most powerful.

Modernization is being attacked by the conservative side as well as the left. Both sides justify their attacks on the basis of the argument that it does not lead to a popular policy. There is no conflict between a policy for the people and a policy in favour of modernization, or between a socialist policy and a modernization policy. Socialist modernization aims at shaping (moulding) a democratic society, a society which is socially a just society. Therefore modernization looks after the rights and interests of the working population, of the citizens, of the people, for better living conditions. There is a conflict however between modernization and populism. Populism rejects critical rationalism.



It makes use of issues of different historical origins which serve different purposes without bothering to bring them together to a well formulated argumentation. Therefore, according to political aims each time, poverty, social injustice, the fear of anything and anybody foreign, international and internal conspiracies and plots, the desires of monopolies to exploit, the industrialists' voracity, the worker's laziness, the anarchists' boldness, the politicians' impotence, all these are mobilized and called upon. The development of arguments is of no interest. What is of interest is the efficiency by which such issues can calm down complaints, contrasts and disappointments in a total negation. What is of interest is their ability to gather everyone close together against the enemy. Populism hides the real problems, it presents reality in a superficial way and therefore contributes to the disorientation of public opinion. It does not enlighten in order to act. Action without knowledge is inefficient.

In order to drive modernization forward we should rely on all those forces which are in favour of an open society. Those which recognize the need for interference with the external environment, the halt of the traditional way of exercising power, the strengthening of society, an equitable distribution of income and wealth. We should rely on all those forces which seek new principles and guidelines in social and political life.

Those who place their personal labour in the very center of their efforts to survive and progress, belong in the forces which are in favour of an open society.

The forces which support a closed and isolated society are favoured by the conservative side as well as by those who adhere to populism.

All those who see the coming changes with fear and suspicion, worry about their privileges, they feel they will not dominate over the new state of affairs and they are in favour of stagnation and standstill. But there is no standstill in social evolution. This is why their battles are rear-guard battles, battles which are bound to be lost.