

A stylized map of Europe composed of a grid of dots. Some dots are grey, some are light grey, and several are red, highlighting specific countries or regions.

Right Wing Populism in Europe – How do we Respond?

ERNST HILLEBRAND (Ed.)

May 2014

- Right wing populism is on the rise in Europe. The traditional responses, from ignoring to diabolization, have proven to be largely ineffective. To fight populism successfully, established political parties, especially on the centre left, will have to look for new approaches.
- This volume gathers short papers from France, the UK, the Netherlands, and Germany. The authors discuss how to best confront and contain right wing populism.
- Despite the different circumstances in each case, the authors agree that any successful fight against populism has to start by taking seriously the concerns and anxieties expressed by the populist vote.



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How to Reinvigorate Social Democracy to Fight Populism in Europe

Laurent Baumel

Populism is gaining ground in Europe. The European project – already undermined by the painful and unpopular management of the financial crisis – is in serious danger. If the European Left wishes to combat populism successfully it must not deceive itself about the reasons for populism's success. The three patterns of explanation usually posited are in fact inadequate.

First, the success of populism is purported to be merely a protest vote against the perceived corruption of a »rotten« political elite. This approach has some merit with regard to countries such as France, Italy and Greece, where corruption or scandals related to illegal party financing, although limited, are a real problem. In relation to northern European countries, however, this doesn't wash: there corruption scandals are extremely rare, but strong populist parties exist nevertheless.

The rejection of immigration and the discourse on »national preference« are cited just as frequently in explanation of the success of populist parties. In truth, the significance of xenophobia is overrated by the media and politicians on the Left. Certainly it does exist and is abhorrent, but the Left's response is disproportionate in this context, veiling the true nature of votes for populists: this vote is much more a political cry for help than an expression of an obsession with foreigners.

Finally, the popularity of populism is held to be the result of an alleged »shift to the right« among European societies. It is true that a fear of falling down the social ladder and a sense that our countries' influence in the world is declining are widespread. Such concerns foster a turning in on ourselves and a return to conservative values. Mistrust of Islam and a rejection of gay marriage are the clearest symptoms of this development in France. However, cultural neo-conservatism is an inadequate explanation of the extent of the populist phenomenon, especially because this development is proceeding hand in hand with a clear liberalisation of the value system of society as a whole, including the most conservative families.

Progressive forces in Europe must finally face up to the fact that the success of populists is the political expression of the enormous uncertainty that grips European societies. This uncertainty is the outcome of far-reaching changes in people's living conditions and the inadequacy of the solutions offered by politicians so far.

The crisis has only accelerated economic and social destabilisation in, in principle, prosperous European societies. Everywhere the gap is growing between the winners of globalisation and its losers. The first group live in urban areas, have relatively stable jobs and access to modern communications and transport, but fears nevertheless that it will soon share the fate of the second group. The second group, meanwhile, are threatened by unemployment or stuck in poorly paid and precarious jobs. They belong to the working class or consider themselves part of the lower middle class and fear – for themselves or their children – (further) social decline. Such people live in de-industrialised areas, or rural or semi-urban areas, on the periphery of globalised metropolises to which they have no access.

Neither right- nor left-wing governments have been able to reduce this gap, never mind overcome it. Populist voters are recruited from those threatened by social decline, while still clinging on to their place in the system. They feel that the state and the dominant social model are incapable of protecting them and of coming to their aid as change progresses. Efforts to distribute prosperity more fairly or to regulate the economy have failed. The rise of populists is the result of the inability of European welfare states to help the middle and lower classes who are still part of the system.

The success of the populists' anti-Europe discourse is also to be understood against this background. The European model promised reconciliation of the market and social security. However, this has been compromised by two developments: competition from regions less developed in terms of social security and the ideological offensive waged by neoliberalism. Europe is rejected most firmly by ordinary workers and employees. They have turned against a Europe that has not kept its promises to protect

them against neoliberal globalisation. Even worse: Europe has often proved to be a Trojan Horse for neoliberalism.

To the extent that populist voting pertains to a clearly defined group – »ordinary people«, blue- and white-collar workers, lower middle classes at risk of social decline – votes for populists constitute a kind of »class voting behaviour«, just like abstention from voting. In the past this class tended to vote for progressive parties with universalist aims. Today it favours candidates who preach turning inwards and distrust. The success of populists in these terms is also a defeat for social democracy, which has drifted away from part of its historical electorate.

A reaction by the European Left is urgently required. But just as populist electoral successes are misinterpreted, there is also a tendency to try to fight the wrong battles. One such is trying to take the moral highground. The Left, naturally, cannot give up efforts to combat xenophobia and anti-Semitism. But there is a point at which moral judgements of those voting for populist parties become counterproductive. This only deepens the gulf between the elitist »do-gooders« and the allegedly »racist masses«, which is one of the reasons for populist success. In the same sense, ideological confrontation can be effective to show that the demagogic proposals of the populists would produce disastrous results. However, confining oneself to that ignores the fact that people don't really take these proposals seriously, but are primarily attracted by the terms of the debate and the values articulated by the populists.

The right answer to the rise of populism thus consists in restoring the legitimacy and effectiveness of political action. What does that mean? Europe's progressives must try to give back citizens a sense of control over their fate. First of all by propagating the values of equality, freedom and respect for the other in a world in disorder. This involves establishing moral benchmarks. The Left must also communicate ideas on how the states of Europe can jointly restore their sovereignty in a globalised world. The Europe of economic liberalism is not our unavoidable fate. A European economic policy has to be defined that is oriented towards growth and employment. This requires three key elements: an increase in common tax and financial resources to fund large investment projects; expanding the ECB's remit to include fighting

unemployment; and, finally, defence of the European economy with a policy of international fair trade. The social question must be restored to the centre of public debate.

It is Social Democrats who are best placed, both intellectually and politically, to formulate solutions that can overcome the opposition between elites and ordinary people. This involves creating a climate of positive social conflictuality. Constructive dialogue between the social partners, between capital and labour, must regain the upper hand over ethnic and religious differences.

The Left must see to it that the welfare state works for the benefit of the working class and the lower middle class and not only for those at the very bottom of the social ladder. Regulation, redistribution and social justice are the best way of combating populism and of winning back working class voters for the Left.

Honesty, Statecraft and Engagement: Three Remedies Against Right Wing Populism in Europe

Anthony Painter

It is notable how often mainstream parties are willing to play up to the caricature drawn for them by populist parties. Whether we are talking immigration, EU, culture change, or unresponsive elites, mainstream parties either get defensive or ignore the attack. This makes the life of a populist party an easy one.

There are the sorts of issues that come into sharp focus in the European elections. The EU is the perfect fall guy: undemocratic, inefficient, meddling, bureaucratic, legalistic, unresponsive to popular, genuinely held anxieties and distant. As a British pro-European, I can feel confident saying all these things. My own nation's political institutions have many of the same short-comings too. Yet, I wouldn't use that as an argument for the withdrawal of London from the United Kingdom or the abolition of Parliament. It is an argument for reform.


Mainstream parties invariably try to change the conversation using ›framing‹ (the latest psychological trend) or simply just refusing to engage with the issues that populist parties are most energised by. But here's the thing: the rise of the force of populism has, in part, its root in mainstream parties ignoring these concerns. And guess what, that then leaves the debate over immigration, welfare reform, democracy, the EU and a myriad of other issues to the populists.

The counter-argument is that to engage in the debate legitimises the populist platform. So there are cack-handed attempts to close the debate down. A flurry of statistics is sprayed in every direction. Evidence-based politics is lauded. Facts become the determinants of political debate rather than people. So people are told that welfare dependency isn't an issue, they should celebrate immigration, climate change is fact, the EU is good and efficient, cultural tensions are a figment of their imagination. The problem with this approach is that perception is reality in politics – whatever the truth or otherwise of these statements. So if you are silent or if your starting point is that people are wrong then good luck. And that is exactly what the populists want you to do.

If there is a law of fighting populism, it is engage the issues but confront the arguments. If there is collective concern at, for example, free-riding then that is real. Mainstream parties, including of the centre-left, have to demonstrate that they understand and respond to this concern. It might be through changing the system, condemning the free-riders, providing sustainable and supported routes to better behaviour, or tackling the structural sources of free-riding. These are the types of responses that may have genuine impact – and they need to be fundamental rather than superficial (leave superficiality to the populists).

This is not about one single election campaign. Mainstream parties have to play to their strengths – real solutions – and highlight the weaknesses of the populist parties – damaging and counter-productive ›solutions‹. Over time, a mainstream statecraft has to show itself capable of responding to popular concerns. For instance, the notion that immigration will melt away as popular concern is fanciful. The only question is whether mainstream parties can provide a better answer than the populists.

Something else is necessary too. A source of populist opportunity is a lack of faith in the way modern democracy responds to and reflects the popular will. Our democracy has become thin, sensationalist, reflexive, and divided. A media, kinetic social media, celebrity politician style democracy is one that is not serious about facing up to the real challenges faced by European societies. Mainstream parties – centralised, nepotistic, self-interested, arrogant, and aloof – have contributed to this waning of the institutions of collaborative democracy as a contact endeavour. Real democracy engages with people directly and engages them in conversation. It doesn't tell them what's best for them and it doesn't simply turn the democratic process into an ›X-factor‹ style popular vote. The former path is the one that mainstream parties have increasingly adopted; the latter is the populist route. Both are inadequate to the task of finding real and legitimate solutions to deep concerns.



So the defeat or at least containment of the populists lies in three strategies: engage with the concerns that fuel populism, construct a statecraft that can work and diminishes the potential pool for populism, and reinvigorate a mainly local, contact form of democracy that isn't simply politics as campaign but rather politics as conversational democracy.

None of this can be achieved in a single election campaign. It is a structural, organisational and behavioural change over a period time. In a single set of elections such as the upcoming European elections, there isn't really a tactical solution to a strategic problem. The damage could be limited. The early stages of better behaviour could be experimented with. Something bigger and more

fundamental is needed: issue engagement, statecraft and contact democracy.

Populist parties will inflate, deflate and occasionally pop. Mainstream parties will get nowhere by playing the populist game. But nor will they prevent further decline and volatility by distant disdain. The challenge is bigger than one of party strategy, however. It is about the health of democracy, the harmony of society, the inclusivity of our economies. If the mainstream centre-left wants to bend the future in its direction then it needs more than tactical interplay with populism. It needs seize and craft a different future as its ancestors did as universal suffrage was introduced. There is some virtue in the past – on that, the populists are right.

More Europe and fewer Europeans – the Dangers of De-politicizing European Integration

André Gerrits

Populism came as a shock to consensus-focussed, consent-aimed, and meritocratic Dutch politics. Pim Fortuyn initiated the populist revolt from the late 1990s. His assassination effectively terminated his political career, and the total incompetence and quarrelsomeness of most of its parliamentary faction eliminated the role of the ›Lijst Fortuyn‹ in a beautiful act of political self-destruction. Geert Wilders' Party of Freedom, Fortuyn's self-declared successor, is a different story. Wilders has learned from the debacle of the Fortuyn party. The PVV is essentially a one-man show, and a ›movement‹ rather than a party. This has its flaws, such as a very small organizational basis (Wilders being its only ›member‹), dissatisfaction with his leadership style, and a range of highly-publicized defections. But it has its advantages too. The party still exists, and after the 2012 elections, when it lost 9 of its 24 seats in parliament (out of 150 in total), it is now back on track.

Populism has gained a solid base in Dutch politics. The Socialist Party, a left-wing alternative to the Labour Party, shares the electorate and some of the political issues of the PVV. Both parties attract between 10–15 per cent of the vote. They draw support from the lower educated and less privileged segments of the electorate and share a strong sense of euro-scepticism. Only the PVV, I would argue, is a classical populist party – in terms of its major political issues (immigration, Islam, Europe, political establishment) and especially of its political style (direct, offensive, and provocative). Within the wide variety of populist political parties in Europe today, the PVV deviates for its relatively ›leftist‹ socio-economic agenda (an issue of controversy within the movement) and its cultural libertarianism, much in line with Fortuyn's earlier example. The PVV was never isolated by the other larger parties. An earlier coalition of Christian Democrats and Liberals gained a parliamentary majority through the support of the PVV.

The PVV shares however the only real item that unites all variants of populism in Europe today – deep Euro-scepticism. While euro-scepticism in all its diverse variety is present among all major parties in the Netherlands, the

PVV is the only *anti-EU* party in parliament. Dutch politics is no exception to the rule that the euro-sceptics dominate the debate on European integration. The arguments are manifold, but easily recognizable in other EU member states too: the EU infringes on our sovereignty, is costly and bureaucratic, it endangers our welfare state, and it undermines our democracy. But only the PVV draws the ultimate radical conclusions: the Netherlands should leave the euro-zone, and eventually the European Union.

For other political parties there is no other option but to engage with the anti-European arguments of the PVV and like-minded parties. We should take populist parties and their position on Europe seriously. Firstly, part of their critique on the process of European integration is justified. Secondly, the rise of populist anti-Europeanism is an indication of the growing politicization of European integration. Politics has returned to Europe. European integration has entered the domestic political arena. This creates a variety of problems for the traditional way of doing political business in Europe, but it isn't necessarily a bad thing. National politicians have to watch their backs again when they negotiate in Brussels.

The politicization of European integration is causally linked to the rise of euro-scepticism. Public support for the European Union is on the decline across the board. Euro-sceptics frame the political and public debate. Growing euro-scepticism reflects a serious problem: the more Europe, the fewer Europeans. It seems that the further the process of integration develops, the fewer Europeans that are left.

The perceived need for further European integration in an increasingly sceptical environment has encouraged the political elites to *depoliticize* the process of European integration again. As from the Eurozone crisis, we observe a process of rapid, almost unprecedented further integration, in an increasingly euro-sceptical political environment. In various member states governments have stepped down under the pressure of more powerful member states and were replaced by more ›Euro-compatible‹ ones. Negotiations in Brussels have resulted into a higher

form of technocratic and supranational governance in the fiscal and financial sphere, which increasingly binds the member states to regulations, legal requirements, and other compliance mechanisms. Europe's elites have once again shifted decision-making away from the public arena. These were mostly measures taken under high political pressure, for obvious reasons and with positive short-term results. But what was done to strengthen the euro in the short term, may eventually undermine its public legitimation in the longer run. The strategy of de-politicization confirms the populists' critique of the European Union as a conspiracy in power, controlled by technocrats, devoid of transparency and legitimacy, and endangering the interests of the nation and state.

In conclusion, social democrats should...

- realize that de-politicization (»stealth integration«) is not a sustainable answer to the dilemma of creating more Europe in a decidedly less European environment;
- accept that the politicization of European integration at the *national* level it is the only way to eventually create longer-term legitimacy;
- understand that more »Europe« is not necessarily the answer to the crisis of European integration;
- combine an essentially pro-European attitude with a more reflective position on what European integration should include and what it should not include;
- openly and critically engage with populist euro-sceptical arguments – they may occasionally be obnoxious or plain stupid, but they are rarely without any substance.

Populism: The Errors of the Left

Ernst Hillebrand

Recent elections and on-going polling data all over Europe give little reason to be optimistic. Populist parties have done well and will do well in the future. Nevertheless, and despite spectacular success in a few countries, right-wing populism is not yet a Europe-wide mass phenomenon. Its share of the vote cannot really threaten the established order, neither nationally nor at European level. However, the growth of right wing populist parties is occurring at the expense of traditional left-wing and social democratic parties, from whom they are luring away voters who no longer feel represented in the existing order. And in an EU fraught by crises and mass unemployment their number looks set to grow. In order to halt this process the Left must finally take the populists and their voters seriously.

The articles in the present publication on right-wing populism essentially interpret the growing share of the vote enjoyed by right-wing populist parties as an distress call: as a »political cry for help« by people who feel marginalised (Laurent Baumel), as the »signal« of increasing dissatisfaction with key social and economic developments (Anthony Painter) and as the articulation of a growing concern about the nature and speed of European integration (André Gerrits).

I think that these interpretations are absolutely accurate and important: for too long the Left's interpretation of the growth of populist movements has been much too simplistic and ideological. It has never really taken the dissatisfaction expressed by populism seriously, but brushed it aside with patronising arrogance. Addressing or discussing the populists' arguments was dismissed out of hand. This attitude has benefited only one side: the right-wing populists who grow stronger from one election to the next and make ever deeper inroads into the centre-left electorate.


The Errors of the Left

The biggest mistake of the Left has long been to interpret the growth of populist parties simply as a social »lurch to

the right«. In truth the expansion of populist parties in Europe has occurred in a singularly liberal social climate. The everyday culture of Europe's secularised societies is deeply liberalised, hedonistic and anti-authoritarian. Many voters for right-wing populist parties are, at most, »failed consumers« in Zygmunt Bauman's sense. They don't want a different kind of society, but to participate properly in the existing one: as full-fledged consumers, or full-fledged citizens of a consumerist capitalist society. A good example of this development (and its sloppy interpretation by the political Left) is the Swiss immigration referendum. On 9 February the Swiss people had the opportunity not only to vote on immigration; in fact, there were three referendums: on limiting immigration, on long-term state core funding of investments in the nation's rail infrastructure and a decision on whether the cost of abortions should continue to be covered by compulsory health insurance. The result was that the immigration initiative barely squeezed through, state investment in the rail infrastructure received massive support and abortion costs will still be covered. A »lurch to the right« would look rather different.

A second long-held error on the part of the Left was to dismiss right-wing populism as a phenomenon of »die-hards«, which presumably would be resolved simply by letting nature take its course. Initially, this interpretation was not entirely absurd. But times have changed. Right-wing populists are not dying out but proliferating. And they are gaining ground especially among young people and first-time voters: today pensioners tend to back different parties. But it gets worse. According to opinion polls the right-wing extremist Jobbik party in Hungary has the support of just under one-third of Hungarian students.

Nor are right-wing populist parties necessarily authoritarian phenomena in terms of the traditional left/right schema. On this point, too, things have changed in recent years, contributing significantly to the success of the movement: Geert Wilders and the Front National present themselves increasingly successfully as defenders of »Western values«, such as social liberalism, sexual self-determination, religious neutrality on the part of



public institutions, a secular state and gender equality. With bitter historical irony they pose as champions of post-'68 liberalism, which is challenged from the religious-cultural norms of Islam, in particular.

And finally, today's right-wing populist parties are not anti-democratic, in sharp contrast to traditional fascist movements. In fact, they are demanding not less democracy but more. Successful right-wing populists no longer present themselves as »Führer parties« in which charismatic leaders show the masses the way to heaven. Rather they claim to give a voice to ordinary people who lack political clout in the entrenched elite democracy of »system parties«. The logic of populism is bottom-up, not top-down. Hence the demand for referendums and plebiscites, for example, on the model of Switzerland or the votes on the European constitutional treaty. It is the traditional mainstream parties who are beginning to distance themselves from a popular sovereignty that is being exercised all too directly.

Take Your Opponent Seriously at Last!

The Left would be well advised to ditch its cherished bogeymen and to regard right-wing populists in Europe as serious opponents. Opponents who are more modern and deeply rooted in society than we might like. Right-wing populism has long had a foothold in terrains and milieus that we always regarded as our backyard. It also articulates problems that are real and not just made up. As long ago as 1984 Laurent Fabius, then French prime minister, said that the »Front National puts the right questions, but gives the wrong answers«. Thirty years down the road more and more French people are taking the view that it has the right answers, too: in early 2014 a good one-third declared that they shared the fundamental positions of the FN, a new record.

Something has gone awry over the past 30 years. If we want to put it right we first have to bring our bogeyman up to date.

»Dreaming of a Good Populism!«

Werner A. Perger

Looking into the future is usually reserved for film-makers and novelists. However, time travel – remember »Back to the Future« – can sometimes be worthwhile for political journalists, too. What about 25 years later: what might historians, bloggers and talk-shows – those modern-day tribunes of the people – have to say in the period after the end of the European Union, the dissolution of the European Parliament, the abolition of the euro and the termination of the Schengen Agreement about the development of democracy in Europe? What will they think about the state and society in the real »post democracy«? And what will they think – assuming they are free to do so – about the new elites that will then be governing these »stable democracies«?

One example of what we would really like to know is whether, looking back, we would agree with German sociologist and politician Ralf Dahrendorf, who at the end of the twentieth century said: »a century of authoritarianism is not the least likely prognosis for the twenty-first century«.

Or what about Indo-American commentator Fareed Zakaria, who after the turn of the millennium compared liberal democracy, somewhat melancholically, to a star in a distant galaxy whose light remains bright even though its source was extinguished long ago?

Another testimony worth considering is the views of Poland's Bronislaw Geremek, who fought for freedom in the twentieth century and when Europe's east-west division was healed became a member of the European Parliament. Would he, gazing into the past, still hold to his assertion in 2007 that in the twenty-first century the social dimension of democratic Europe would gain new importance: »social justice is an essential component of liberal democracy. It must not be allowed to happen that left-wing and right-wing populism monopolise the issue of the fair distribution of goods and wealth and together lay siege to democracy«?

In the context of a post-European neo-authoritarianism would not the political and intellectual heirs of Marine Le Pen, Berlusconi, Wilders, Orbán and Erdogan, but also

Grillo, Tsipras, Fico and Ponta at best smile patronisingly at this thinker and campaigner of the anti-authoritarian pan-European democracy movement as a »do-gooder«? Him and his idyllic concept of a now defunct »liberal democracy« and its cadaverous old political parties?

It might be objected that this is pure political fiction and very much the worst-case scenario. Perhaps that's true. But it cannot be ruled out entirely. Substantial traces of such a »future« have long been discernible, commencing around 30 years ago with the political rise of Jörg Haider in Austria, followed 20 years ago by Berlusconi and Bossi in Italy. Hard on the heels of this came the sudden flowering across Europe of national populist, socially chauvinist and, finally, anti-European movement parties, from Portugal through Switzerland to Sweden and Finland, from France to Romania and Greece.

Today it ranges from anti-Semitism and anti-Islamism to a general xenophobia. Its bogeymen include the educated elites, governments and, even more, their international partners, especially the European Union (»Brussels«), as well as the European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, the so-called »system«, neoliberalism and, cursed by left and right alike, globalisation. The key figures and leaders of these »movement parties« are the prophets of simple solutions (»exit the EU«, »do away with the euro«), radical promises (fanciful minimum wages for indigenous workers, rent restrictions, cutting social security for immigrants, halting immigration) and crazy proclamations (deportation of unemployed, criminal and otherwise undesirable foreigners, bans on building mosques, more law and order and a return to traditional moral values).

The style and substance of all this, whether on the right or the left, follows a pattern: taboo-breaching language (Tsipras's condemnation of austerity measures in Greece as a »social Holocaust«; Haider's criticism of Vienna's Grand Coalition while praising the Nazis' »successful employment policies«; Wilders's election tirade against Dutch immigration policy, rising to a crescendo with his question: »do you want more or less Moroccans?«, which was promptly answered by a chorus of »less, less!«).

Do the major parties, especially the parties of European social democracy, still have a chance of halting the trend of a constant rise of anti-European populists? Experience so far, particularly within the EU framework, indicates that we should not delude ourselves, especially for the foreseeable future. Least helpful would be to try to tactically emulate the populist recipe, although many major parties, especially on the right, but also left of centre, are trying it. But no mere copycat strategy can outdo national populism in the EU states as it has emerged, whether on the right or the left. When it comes to making bold assertions in a whirl of empty promises and downright lies the original is best. Besides they have the big advantage that no one expects them to have to make good on their promises. They are highly unlikely to come to power. Major parties, however, especially on the centre-left, will certainly be held to their election promises when they enter government – and then woe betide them.

Wanted: Populists of the Common Good

But could a little more populism – more innocuously formulated, being a bit closer to the people – at least help in the long term? It is widely believed that the temptation to try it is strong and that the question is not entirely invalid: working closely with the grassroots and standing alongside the people has always been a key part of politics, especially for progressive parties. In other words, this approach is not new, on the contrary. It was just neglected and with that neglect came decline.

But populism shorn of demagoguery and hate speech is a tricky business for democrats. Democratic populists are a rare breed. Not too many come to mind. A number of people in recent European history have undoubtedly been such »Enlightenment populists«, however, without calling themselves that. They include such charismatic leaders as Olof Palme and – especially – Anna Lindh in Sweden, both of whom were murdered in mysterious circumstances. In both cases their sudden violent demise left a gap that has not been filled, the importance of which goes beyond their own country.

Populists of the common good, not just in the interests of their party, also include politicians, such as the legendary Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky; the unforgettable German patriot and cosmopolitan Willy Brandt; for


a while, some time ago, the Spanish socialist Felipe González; the Italian Eurocommunist Enrico Berlinguer; and perhaps also – to take an example from a completely different world – Angelo Roncalli, later Pope John XXIII, or the current Pope Francis I, for both of whom piety, enlightenment and social justice belong together. As do democracy, justice and solidarity.

If there is a way out of the tunnel in which liberal democracy now finds itself, its destination uncertain, it will not be found overnight. Besides a revival of good democratic populism, the traditional political virtues of patience, endurance and courage are needed. The extensive »how to« literature on ways of putting debilitated progressives back on their feet again has no new solutions.

The main problem is that, to date, new suggestions or reminders of ideas that worked well in the past have barely been heeded. The difficulties begin with the recruitment of the next generation. In public and social life it seems that there is nothing as unattractive, boring and thankless as everyday party work. Generally speaking only those who want to make a career of it are willing to put up with it. The road that has taken progressive parties from the 40+ per cent to the 20+ per cent zone is strewn with thousands of disappointments suffered by young idealists who had thought that political activity involved improving conditions, helping people and expanding democracy. For many people an evening spent at the local party association was enough to frighten them off. Committed young people these days garner political experience elsewhere, preferably in social movements and NGOs.

Key to a longer-term resurgence is thus not least the ability to »connect« with those outside the political realm. To be sure, this requires qualities that are a rather a liability for traditional political careers: authenticity, sincerity, truthfulness, determination, tenacity and, as already mentioned, courage. These are undoubtedly the basic virtues required by credible democratic politicians, as important as the ability to speak clearly and such natural advantages as a pleasant voice and perhaps also a personal appearance that at least does not put off one's fellow citizens.

In this context it is worth looking at an as yet little known US senator from Massachusetts, Elizabeth Warren, who combines a gutsy and progressive approach to politics



and populist gifts. The woman whom the denizens of Wall Street have long feared more than the man in the White House undoubtedly comes closest to the ideal of the good populist.

She, too, the successful election campaigner, knows like many others, and not only election winners, that no campaign ends on election day. Not even campaigns that have been lost. Working to improve things starts again every day. That will also be the case in 25 years' time. However, if we cannot find our way out of the tunnel, it will be much harder than it is today.



About the authors

Laurent Baumel (France) is Member of the French Parliament for the Socialist Party (PS). He is co-founder of the network »Gauche populaire« within the Parti Socialiste.

André Gerrits (Netherlands) is professor of Russian History and Politics at the University of Leiden and member of the scientific council of FEPS. For many years, he has been president of the Alfred-Mozer-Stichting.

Ernst Hillebrand (Germany) is a political scientist and head of the Department for International Policy Analysis at the Friedrich Ebert Foundation at Berlin

Anthony Painter (UK) is a political commentator and author of »Left without a Future? Social Justice in anxious times« and »Democratic stress, the populist signal and the extremist threat« both published by Policy Network in London.

Werner A. Perger (Germany) is a political commentator and author. He has been writer and political editor at the weekly »Die ZEIT«. His last book, published in 2013 by the Austrian Renner-Institute, is entitled »Progressive Perspektiven – Europas Sozialdemokratie in Zeiten der Krise« (Progressive Perspectives – Europe's Social Democrats in Times of Crisis).

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Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung | International Policy Analysis
Hiroshimastraße 28 | 10785 Berlin | Germany

Responsible:
Dr Ernst Hillebrand, Head, International Policy Analysis

Tel.: ++49-30-269-35-7745 | Fax: ++49-30-269-35-9248
www.fes.de/ipa

To order publications:
info.ipa@fes.de

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