

**What is a
Party a part of?**

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“...In that Empire, the Art of Cartography attained such Perfection that the map of a single Province occupied the entirety of a City, and the map of the Empire, the entirety of a Province. In time, those Unconscionable Maps no longer satisfied, and the Cartographer’s Guilds struck a Map of the Empire whose size was that of the Empire, and which coincided point for point with it. The following Generations, who were not so fond of the Study of Cartography as their Forebears had been, saw that that vast Map was Useless, and not without some Pitilessness was it, that they delivered it up to the Inclemencies of Sun and Winters. In the Deserts of the West, still today, there are Tattered Ruins of that Map, inhabited by Animals and Beggars; in all the Land there is no other Relic of the Disciplines of Geography”

Borges, *On Rigor in Science*

What do we mean by presentation in politics?

Jorge Luis Borges’ *On Rigor in Science* tells of the creation of a map in which every point corresponded to a point in the world that it mapped. Because it had no reason of being - after all, it did not gather the regions of the world into more compact regions of the map, i.e. it did not *represent* the world - the map was finally cast out into the desert, to be inhabited “by animals and beggars”.

This story, however brief and fragmentary, nevertheless allows us to think a very important difference - one between two senses of the term *presentation*.

The first sense is the one of those “not so fond of the study of cartography as their forebears had been”. For them, the difference between presentation and representation is qualitative or intensional: presentation is what happens directly in the world, the direct taking place of something; while representation is always a redoubling – an image of the world – whose usefulness is proportional to its capacity to repeat, through restricted and more economic means, the geographical traits of the world as it is. A map that is the size of the world is, therefore, useless: first, it does not allow us to condense the whole into a smaller part and, second, if it is an *exact* replica of the world, then it still pales in comparison to it, for the simple fact that it lacks the quality of *being* the world.

The second sense of the term is one that might impose itself on us when we witness the “tattered ruins of that map”. Here, the accent falls on an extensive, rather than intensive, distinction between presentation and representation: after all, that vast map, devoid of representational use, has been *added to the world*. Meditating upon the wasteland that the ancient map has become, we can clearly see that the map is now a part of the world just like a mountain that is drawn on that very map, and would have to be itself marked in the new, functional map of the Empire as a new region, rather than as an image, of the world. Where representation fails - who would want to engage with a one-to-one replica of a mountain when the actual mountain is out there? - the map starts to count as a part of the world. Not only this, but it counts as a very singular part of it: a part of the whole that is in one-to-one correspondence with the whole it is a part of.

In 1889, this precise formulation was used by Richard Dedekind to define the mathematical infinite: “A system S is said to be infinite when it is similar to a proper part of itself”¹. In this sense, the ruinous map of Borges, when considered as a part of the Empire and not as its failed representation - as the place of those without place, the stray animals and the homeless, rather than a guide to other places - becomes a localized proof of the infinitude of the world.

The pressing question of the contemporary relevance of the party-form could be perfectly framed by this preamble. The two functions of the map described above are, in fact, two different ways of thinking about the role of the Party. The classic conception of the party-form, of a political organization whose vocation would be to map and guide the different political struggles of its time, while not being reducible to any of these local demands, seems today to have exhausted itself². Nothing resembles the useless map imagined by Borges so much as the ossified structure of the bureaucratic Party that large and inefficient political machine epitomized by the soviet model. Accordingly, as the political struggles of the last forty years challenged the capacity of this centralized agent to map the different demands of social movements and to represent them in a powerful and effective way, the party-form was perceived more and more as an old and monstrous idea, whose proper place would be

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1 Dedekind, 1963, p.63 - where a “system S ” is a denumerable series, “similarity” is a function which maps each element of S to one element, and one alone, of a co-domain; and “proper part” of S is a sub-group of S which does not coincide with the whole series.

2 Badiou, 1998, p.9; 2010, p.54

amongst other political relics, forgotten in a desert.

The question of what form of emancipatory collective would appear in the wake of this disaster became a central one, uniting, in a certain sense, both the Leftist and the more conservative sensibilities around the common diagnosis of the decadent status of large institutional machines today. A debate with such widespread acceptance, constituting a thread that binds together the whole political spectrum is, therefore, of no interest to us here. The question we pose is rather the following: once the party-form has been abandoned - cast aside as a historical failure in the mission of representing the people's demands - does the recognition of the ineptitude of this idea settle all accounts? Or does it open the space for us to think the party-form anew; considering it not from the standpoint of representation - a clumsy guide to the political scenario - but as another region of the political world? In other words, now that the Leftist Party has been deemed useless, what are we to make of the surprising structural resonance it suddenly acquires with those it first failed to represent - the beggars, the animals, those without a purpose? Could the party-form perhaps find its true vocation in the task of being the part of the world that serves as a home to those who are "a part of no part"³?

The resistance always is on the side of the Party

Who would disagree with the claim that an important task for any emancipatory political project today is to adequate itself to the demands of the contemporary protester? It seems like any effective political organization must, if it is to engage the masses, abandon its concern with big hierarchical structures in favor of small vertical groups, substitute formal orientations by local directives born out of personal experience, and so on. We all more or less agree with the idea that we need more flexible institutions - if we need institutions at all - if we are to harvest the political potential of the spontaneous protests around the world today and direct them towards substantial change.

Jacques Lacan coined something of an axiom for psychoanalysis when he claimed that "there is no other resistance in analysis than that of the analyst"⁴. That is, the hindrances that stop the analytic process are not due to what the analysand does not say, but to what the analyst does not listen to. The hypothesis of the unconscious carries such a

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3 Rancière, 1999, p.9

4 Lacan, 2006, p.324

corollary. If the unconscious speaks and it does so with indifference to what the speaker wishes to say, then the task of marking this indelible division in speech falls on the analytic intervention. Thus, no excuse can be found in the claim that the analysand “didn’t want to face his fears” or any equivalent argument. A similar axiom could perhaps find its place in politics as well. The resistance that blocks the dispersion of ideological identifications is not on the side of the masses, but of those who have the ambition to intervene in it. The question of political direction is always: which form of intervention manages to distinguish between the transitive demands and identifications and the intransitive declarations that speak through them?

The consensus today seems to lead to the following situation: from the standpoint of political organizations, there is a growing tendency to identify with the explicit demands of the protesters, joining the chorus of those who ask for more horizontal organizations, less bureaucracy, and the general laxity of historical emblems of the Left. While, from the side of the protesters, there seems to be a general distrust of the very idea that there is anything else to listen to behind what is explicitly taking place in a protest and, therefore, a distrust of any political institution which maintains this wager. Our political moment seems to be marked by the rise of a new figure of militancy, one which appears in order to complement the consolidated figure of the corrupted socialist governor. For every penny the latter accepts, undoing in the name of power, our belief in the authenticity of his past political commitments, there is a partisan ideal that is rejected by the enlightened new militant on account of its dangerous alienating character.

Our current predicament seems therefore to be profoundly determined by our incapacity to find a conjunction between the two great axioms of 20th Century emancipatory politics: to direct the spontaneous force of masses, and to have confidence in the masses. Either we accept the former, and are automatically on the road to opportunistic manipulation of the people’s demands, or the latter, and we weaken or disperse our political institutions, because that is what the contemporary protester demands of the Left. To return once more to psychoanalysis, we find in Lacan’s teaching yet another expression in which could give a clue of how to think about the task that challenges any serious emancipatory political project today. The sentence serves as the title of one of Lacan’s most important and technical essays, written in 1958:

*The direction of Treatment and the Principle of its Power*⁵. If we were to summarize this difficult text in one sentence, it would be something like: the direction of the treatment is on the side of the analyst's position, but the principle of its power is on the side of the analysand's speech. If directing an analytical treatment requires the analyst to confront that in himself which resists the pulsation of the unconscious, the principle of power of an analysis resides in that dimension of the analysand's speech which speaks "despite" the speaker - that is, it resides in that point where we cease to recognize ourselves, but our speech goes on. Accordingly, we could say that the challenge we face today, when trying to think the conjunction of the two political maxims mentioned above, is framed by these two vectors: directing the masses requires us to confront that in us which resists marking the real openings for political intervention, while the confidence in the masses requires that we trust the true power and potential that shines through the very shortcomings of the spontaneous popular movements.

The task which lies ahead of us is thus the following: (1) to discern some of the invariant impasses proper to our current political conjuncture - which we will do by turning our attention to the recent protests in Brazil; (2) to locate therein the question of the party-form, in hope of extracting some useful speculative problems; and (3) to present a preliminary case study of the *Partia e Fortë*, a singular political invention which took place in Kosovo and which allows us to think the contours of what we have abstractly indicated in Borges' short story as an alternative vocation for the party-form.

Rio de Janeiro as a repetition

We have recently gone through what became known in Brazil as the "June Journeys"⁶: a series of large protests which began in June 2013 and brought together hundred thousands of people in the streets of many Brazilian cities. These protests gained their strength and size in great part as a response to the brutality of the police's reaction to previous, more concise manifestations against the raising of bus fares throughout Brazil. This exponential growth was also followed by an increasing vagueness in the masses' demands - something which was

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5 Lacan, 2006, p.489

6 All the sources of information on which we base our analysis of the June Journeys have been gathered together and made available on this website: <http://marxismo21.org/junho-2013-2/>

to be expected, given that the great majority of the people involved were either reacting exclusively against the State's violence or at least joining in a mass movement for the first time. Nevertheless, such big commotion - and the confrontations with the police that followed - left a lasting mark in the political scenario, and paved the way for other protests and strikes, which have been taking place frequently throughout Brazil since June. The two impasses we have previously discerned as consequences of the decadence of the classic conception of party politics were both present here. Already in the first demonstrations, an outright and violent rejection of the participation of leftist parties could be seen, justified precisely through the argument that the political leaders, incapable of representing the interests of the people, only wanted to exploit the movements for the sake of their own agenda. On the other hand, most leftist partisans either joined the chorus against their own political organizations or merely stood by watching resentfully as they were excluded from the political process.

Finally, in the last couple of months, an alternative form of organization started to appear from within the protests: the so-called "Black Blocs" - organized protesters who distinguished themselves from the other participants by their masks and use of violence against both the police and public and private property such as banks, shops and the city hall. Rejecting any central organization, the Black Blocs do not claim any direction of political movement, nor do they claim any political ideal as their horizon.

One last point must be added to this panorama: not only did the June Journeys show the protestor's rejection of political parties, the incapacity of these parties to listen to the truth in this rejection, and the production within the protests of a violent and directionless substitute for organized political institutions, but - more importantly - the protests also showed *a staggering lack of participation of the poor*. Those whose lives would really be affected by the change in the bus fare - the initial demand of the protests - did not participate in the manifestations, which were led in their substantial majority by the recently expanded middle classes.

We have seen this sequence repeat itself: first, a large revolt against the State, led by the middle class, awoken from political slumber by the potential threat of losing the few privileges which distinguish it from the working class⁷, a first moment which is met with an incapacity of the Left

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7 On the structure of "the revolt of the salaried bourgeoisie", we refer the reader to the article of the same name by Slavoj Žižek, on London Review of Books, Vol.34, N.2, p.9-10, 2012. For a complete

to produce any consistent direction, a failure which, in turn, produces a more violent and aimless substitute, either tainting the political character of the protests or detaching itself from it altogether. The most notable cases thus far have been those of Paris in 2005 and London in 2011, both of which saw the appearance of aimless outburst of violence after mass movements, fighting for the rights of the middle class, dissolved back into the background⁸. But what is there to learn from this repetition?

Our emblematic lack of strength

The key point in this sequence is clearly the passage from the first to the second moment: first we have spontaneous mass movements led by the demand to stabilize the small privileges which identify the salaried bourgeoisie, then we have violent protests, without any direct claim to power or change, led by the lower middle classes, destroying and looting precisely those institutions which have failed to maintain the traits which justified their “inclusion out” of the proletariat. In between these two moments, we find a failure of the Left and a failure of the mass movements. The failure of the protests revolves around the structural impasse of a movement organized around the demand not to be reduced to the working class and which suddenly, in order to gain solidity, would need to join forces with the very instance it is striving to get away from. The failure of the Left, on the other hand, is evidently that of not being able to produce a form of organization and an emblem capable of operating this impossible conjunction. Out of this double failure, we witness the proliferation of meaningless violence perpetrated by those who best embody the contradiction at the heart of the movement: the lower middle class - both in need of political organization, if it is to produce any change, and in need of identity and recognition, if it is to really belong to the class it is supposedly a part of.

It is not uncommon for these outbursts of impotent violence to give rise, in a third moment, to a new appreciation of fascism by the working class. And we can now understand why: through the operation which defines fascism - the choice of a particular enemy to stand in for

presentation of the category of the “salaried bourgeoisie”, please refer to the work of Jean-Claude Milner: *Le salaire de l'idéal: La théorie des classes et de la culture au XXe siècle*.

⁸ On the London and Paris riots, please refer to 'Shoplifters of the World Unite', available at: <http://www.lrb.co.uk/2011/08/19/slavoj-Žižek/shoplifters-of-the-world-unite>

the contradiction at the heart of capitalism⁹ - the neo-fascist groups manage to intervene precisely where the Left has failed, organizing the unrecognized lower classes by offering them a way to supplement their lack of recognition through rivalry, thereby substituting the impotent outburst of violence for an insignia of potency and strength. Because the far-Right is not afraid to build up the image of the potent militant – the man who is valuable because he is disciplined in the task of effacing his enemy – it is also able to infuse in the masses those values previously presented as inherently oppressive and extraneous to it: organization, discipline, power - the only ideals capable of truly consolidating a mass movement.

This fascist compromise solution is not the only one to take place in the wake of the Left's failure. In Brazil, the parallel power exerted by the drug dealers in the slums operates a similar feat, proposing a figure of potency to the young men who have already seen that hard work does not produce any recognition of one's value and place in Brazilian society¹⁰. The drug factions offer a stage where, armed and organized, the invisible youth from the favelas are seen as powerful soldiers by their community, recognized as dangerous and useful men. But both the illegal and the fascist routes have one thing in common: they are able to produce an emblem which allows the lower classes to recognize themselves as potent actors precisely by staging this potency, acting it out, either through the fight against a foreign enemy who is supposed to prevent their full inscription into society, or through the praise and fear which organized crime installs in the communities which house them.

Such is, then, the failure - and the challenge - at stake today when trying to combine both direction and confidence in the masses: the difficulty of inventing a political emblem which would cut across the demands for identification which distinguish different sectors of the working class while, at the same time, having confidence that such an emblem is capable of evoking passionate discipline and organization in the masses without turning popular power [into a totalitarian tendency]. In other words, our task is to engage with that monstrous force which has given rise to the seductive figures of the fascist and the drug soldier without ever forgetting that these two types do not mark the success but

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9 Žižek, 2008, p.141-143

10 A first introduction to this situation can be found in the great work produced by Celso Athayde and MV Bill, in the documentary *Falcão, Meninos do Tráfico* [Falcon: the boys from traffic] and the book *Cabeça de Porco* [Pighead], co-authored by the sociologist Luis Eduardo Soares.

rather the failure to truly grasp this popular force.

The question posed to us by this repetitive sequence could finally be formulated as follows: what is an emblem that would capture *popular potency without its acting out* - without the requirement of a foreign enemy as a guarantee of its unity or of crime as a condition for its discipline. Unfashionable as this may seem, what is at stake here is the necessity to think a *theory of masculinity*, a theory of how to infuse the emblems of the Left with the traits necessary to win over the impoverished youth which today is offered only three false alternatives against our current cowardice: to have their power recognized through the power to consume more commodities (middle class), or through their power to fight the imaginary avatars of their impotence to consume (fascism) or to be recognized through the power to imaginarily circumvent the real cause of this impotence (crime).

The Strong Party, however, begins to sketch a true alternative, one that, being compatible with the party-form, might also start to spell out what a form of organization adequate to our current conjuncture would be.

In order to understand how the *Partia e Fortë* managed to cut across the current situation in an innovative way, we must consider an important trait of the political conjuncture in which it came to be. The Borgean tale of the map which contained the Empire but which, because of this very property, was cast out as a ruin, can itself be read as a tale about the status of Kosovo today: a country which is only member of financial institutions (World Bank, ERBD, IMF, etc) and still struggles to be recognized as a State, Kosovo is a map of the economic and political forces in Europe and the West, but it is a map inhabited by people - a singular part of the world that has no place in the current map of the State of that world. Within this uncanny site, our insistent repetition - which binds the moment of economic crisis, the opening of a place for a true Leftist intervention, and the ensuing rise of fascist tendencies after the failure of the Left to produce an alternative - appears in a slightly different, but crucial form¹¹. There, the gap between the first and the second moments is widened, held in suspense, in a somewhat perplexing way - specially when we consider the myriad of fraud analyses that seek to present the situation in Kosovo for the West: the profoundly critical moment that the country is going through is not instantaneously

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¹¹ The best introduction to the actual situation of Kosovo is undoubtedly *From Myth to Symptom: the case of Kosovo* (KMD, 2013)

sutured into an imaginary substitute - the selection of an enemy who would give consistency to the critical region - because what is at stake in its crisis is precisely the notion of imaginary limits and borders. We can better understand, then, why it was in such a singular situation that a different relation to the contemporary task of the Left could be thought and experimented with: in Kosovo, a crisis cannot hide behind bourgeois or nationalist issues for the simple reason that these borders and distinctions are in an actual process of being established - to make recourse to these distinctive traits requires inventing them in the process.

The novelty of the Partia e Fortë

We all know that classic situation so beautifully orchestrated by the hysteric: with a hint of debauchery, she tells her partner "I want you to act like a man!", only too aware of the metaphysical conundrum she has just staged for him. After all, if the guy tries to *actually* be a man, the very actualization of his masculine potency will become a proof of its opposite, his impotence, since in acting it out his explicit behavior has substituted his potency, rather than confirmed it - the guy has just followed someone else's orders - and if he does nothing, the potency does not reveal itself enough to be recognized as such. Since metaphysics always leads to laughter, this common situation is usually quite ridiculous, but it also tells us something about the difficulty at stake in our problem.

In the groundwork of militancy, there is in fact no other destiny for emancipatory politics: very little can be achieved by telling a poor person that one should beware of organization and power, that horizontal organizations are more authentic, or that a true militant does not fall into any ideological "box". These are either truisms, because poverty is a school of distrust, or useless remarks. This is in fact an important lesson of the *lumpenproletariat*: the demands of the poor are not actually political, they cannot be divided between a "relative" and an "absolute" struggle, partially seeking the fulfillment of present demands and partially striving to abolish the causes of their poverty. Misery is miserable precisely because there is no positive content marking the place of class struggle as such, no recognized distinction between survival and living. Unable to count either with a praise of fragility or with the reference to a particular positive content, the patient work of militancy in the slums and in the peripheries is confronted with an analogous problem to that of masculinity. If one is asked to act in accordance to a universal political

ideal, the actualization of this potency into a particular demand becomes its very opposite, the local fight for private interests (housing, food, health services, so on), proving the impotence of the Left to produce consistent and universal orientations which would not succumb to private interests, whereas if it remains only a looming background with no actuality, it is too bleak and ephemeral to inspire any confidence or organization. No wonder the Left is such a cause for laughter!

But it is only with this laughter in mind that we can fully appreciate the fundamental twist introduced in this scene by the *Partia e Fortë*. Our tired intuition tells us that this impotence to actualize our ideals can only be fixed by conjuring even more localized ideals, ones that would effectively survive their passage into actuality and therefore offer themselves as veritable emblems for popular organization. To return to our initial reference to Borges, our spontaneous tendency is to substitute a map that fails to represent a certain part of the world for a new, more precise map. The question we have posed, however, concerns the map which has become useless, which, incapable of representing anything, has become, simultaneously, a meaningless double of the world, for it reproduces it exactly as it is, and a new part of the world, for it occupies an actual site, it fights for space with the very world it contains. This uncanny mixture of pure appearance (meaningless redoubling) and pure actualization (the addition of something new to the world) is embodied by the political wager of the *Partia e Fortë*.

The Strong Party, in line with the strict Borgian standards of scientific rigor, upholds the paradoxical wager of a politics of *pure semblance*: rehabilitating the most precious lesson of Stalinism, the paradigmatic instance of a useless map, the Party has confidence in *feigning its own potency*.

Let us try to understand what is at stake in this wager, and why it is the only strong position today.

We have already seen that, in the repetitive cycle exemplified by the recent events in Rio de Janeiro, a certain insistent failure of the Left to produce emblems capable of capturing the political potential of mass movements leads to the impotent and violent acting out of this potency through non-political means - from fascist groups to organized crime. We have then discussed the way this failure is connected with the difficulty of producing an overarching political orientation when its very actualization turns into its opposite, into a proof of the purely local and self-interested demands of the poor, who are concerned solely with their survival, or of the politicians themselves, who are all too easily seduced by the games of

power. The question, then, becomes that of thinking an emblem that would resist the passage to actualization without corrupting itself, the thought of a potency whose realization is not impotence. The answer, the Strong Party declares, in the great tradition of our legendary philosopher Hegel, is in the power of appearance as appearance.

Instead of the corruption of great ideals, the Strong Party has the strength to construct a pure corruption, a corruption without a corrupted idea or object, instead of an over-investment in an authentic emblem leading to fascist discipline, it celebrates a fascism without enemies, and in the place of the substitution of legitimate popular democracy for organized crime, it turns political power itself into a parallel power, lawfulness itself is the crime. This step leads to a veritable “transubstantiation” of impotence into something else, into a strange potency that is confirmed, rather than disproved, by its actual inversion - that is, it leads us from impotence to *impossibility*. How else are we to call a political organization led not by the empty praise of democracy, honesty and equality - something all candidates, everywhere, in all parties, are all too eager to take up - but by a democratic, honest and egalitarian praise of the failure of these very ideals?

Consider, for example, the following extract from an interview conceded by the Strong Party’s Legendary President, Visar Arifaj. When asked about what could the Party promise to the people of Prishtina, the President answered:

“We will promise the citizens of Prishtina anything that they want to hear from a candidate. Since our main goal is the citizen’s vote, we will never hesitate to weave sweet sentences and promises for the eradication of all local problems, and even go as far as promises for development. To ensure that the promises are more believable we will explain them in short points on how they can become realized. It’s understood that the explanations will be formulated in a way which will make it look confusing for the common citizen, but at the same time it will look like we know exactly how it will be realized. The impression is everything.”¹²

What are we to make of this preposterous response? Is the Legendary

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12 ‘The Best Way To Counter Oppression is to Mock it’, an interview with Visar Arifaj - available at: <http://strongparty.wordpress.com/2013/10/18/the-best-way-to-counter-oppression-is-to-mock-it/>

President mocking us by declaring that his promises only count insofar as they get the elector to vote for the Party - that is, that promises only count as potential promises? Evidently not, since no one could really argue that any of our candidates intend to deliver what they promise or that these promises serve any other purpose than helping with the vote count. But, at the same time, it is clear that *this is not it*, that there is something else at stake, as if he is in fact playing an elusive prank on us, because making explicit the role of promises in the electoral game, *not in the form of an accusation, but of an identification*, somehow turns this mechanism into its opposite. As an appearance, a promise refers to a potential that is never really going to take place, but as the appearance of an appearance, as the redoubling of something which already takes place, taking the frustrating outcome of political promises for what these promises essentially are - a political promise is not something we make and later on do not keep, but something whose utterance is already its accomplishment, its failure to take place is nothing but what was said to take place. This is why a promise from the Legendary President Arifaj is always a kept promise: if he enunciates it, then it has already been fulfilled. And what could be a more definitive demonstration of strength and power than that?

This same strategy shines through all the proposals and commitments laid out by the Strong Party in its extensive program, *Lorem Ipsum*¹³: the transparent house that will be built once the President has been elected, where he will engage in recreational activities while the people join in as spectators (after all, he is enjoying the luxury for their sake), the letters written to Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan (“Your approach to green spaces throughout Turkey, especially Gezi Park, stands in full compliance with the Strong Party’s program”) and the soccer players Adnan Jonuzaj (“You, Adnan, need a stable representative. Of a stable country. You need the representation of Pristina city.”), and the constant reaffirmation of Kosovo’s essential political unity (“Because of the high levels of approval that we had for the other parties, it was only logical that the Strong Party would be created, as an umbrella party that would include the best parts of the other parties.”)¹⁴. At all times, the Strong Party practices the unlikely operation of extracting force out of pure semblance (“the impression is everything”), as if harvesting from

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13 Available at: <http://www.partiaeforte.com/>

14 Quotes from: <http://strongparty.wordpress.com/>

every circulating fiction a certain indiscernible surface which, despite all cynicism which it harbors as its obverse, nevertheless exists and is universally shared. We all know that public figures praise universal values in appearance, but are, "in their essence", worried only with their own pockets, and, even worst, we all know that public figures who condition their proposals with an honest and felt admission of their petty little private concerns are, surprisingly enough, only worried about their petty little private concerns - but what are we to make of our Legendary President, who is selflessly concerned with *universalizing pettiness and private gain*? We cannot call him neither honest nor dishonest, neither ethical nor unethical: we are ultimately resigned to having to acknowledge him as a true politician.

The novelty of the Strong Party, even more than the surprising electoral success of its first campaign, is the novelty it inaugurates for political thinking. Through this precious experience in Prishtina, we have been exposed to an undeniable strength which until now we could only conceive as a weakness, appearing as the monstrous dimension of different forms of popular acting out. Crime, corruption and power can no longer serve as the universal names of our distrust in the masses and our unwillingness to organize, because it has become possible to extract political consistency out of the debasement that is proper to appearance as such. Through this impossible coincidence between a political idea and its supposedly inevitable perversion, the following paradox has risen to thought: by letting go of the reference to democracy as a future promise, as something yet to come, the Strong Party has invented an already democratic form of organization whose failure to actualize its promises, having no object, fails no one.

Obstacles to potency, objects of actuality

Our initial reference to Borges' *On Rigor in Science* allowed us to formulate a key question which served as the backbone of our investigation: once the idea of the Party as a historical agent is abandoned, how is it transformed by this loss?

The classic conception of Party politics, from the standpoint of the radical Left at least, relied on two crucial claims: a claim to direction and a claim to power. First, the party-form is such that it calls upon itself the role of organizing different social and political movements into a unified front and, second, the party-form remains in excess to the unification of the localized struggles it gathers because it seeks not to make this collection of demands heard by the State, but rather to overthrow the

current State which produced the demands in the first place¹⁵. One claim ultimately supports the other: if the party-form is not based on the organization of real popular demands, it has no strength to fight for the abolition of the current situation, and if the party-form does not maintain the reference to a possible different future, it is reduced to the mere operator of connectivity between otherwise localized demands - whose final horizon is their recognition by the State. Borges' short story served as a useful preamble precisely because it allowed us to see that the classic theory of the party-form is in accordance with the criteria of good cartography: like a good map, the Party was supposed to provide a condensed and unified picture of disperse struggles and to help us navigate this terrain in search of a foreseeable destination.

Our guiding question - what is left of the party-form when its teleological vector is removed? - found its first model there as well, in the problem posed by the map that coincided with the world which it mapped. What is the status of this form once it can no longer orient anyone? We have already noted that a map such as the one conceived by Borges displays two very singular properties: first of all, because it is an exact double of the world, it coincides with the world's *appearance*, rather than function as its representation, secondly, because it is useless and ends up being cast out in the desert, it is no longer a mere mirror of reality, but a part of it. In short, the map becomes *the appearance of appearance*: it has no particular being - all that it corresponds to something that already existed somewhere else - but, because of this, it is not the manifestation of any pre-conceived potency - like the mountain in a region of the Empire that is mapped onto it - but the appearance of a place that we have not been able to map yet. We have also suggested - in a proposition whose rigor is still to be demonstrated¹⁶ - that to add this singular form to the world is to *reveal its infinitude*.

After having argued the hypothesis that the failure of Leftist Parties to intervene on the current political movements is connected with our incapacity to provide powerful emblems which would mobilize those without a place without succumbing to a fascist or criminal acting out, we turned to the case of the *Partia e Fortë*. Here, we believe, we have

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15 Duverger, 1967, p.262-266

16 It is enough to say that such a proposition would constitute an alternative, more Žižekian, logics of Worlds. Such work must be carried out in rigorous form, for it would allow us to distinguish between the three fundamental modes of conceiving the real in contemporary thought: presence, presentation and appearance. The distinction between the last two - until now only articulated in opposition to the first term - would allow us to properly distinguish Badiou and Žižek.

found the first elements for a theory of the party-form which displays these two traits of the Borgian map: the Strong Party organizes itself around the over-identification¹⁷ with what already takes place - to the point of considering itself an “umbrella party” which houses *all the political tendencies of Kosovo*¹⁸ - and, second, through the redoubling of the present situation, it offers to the people not the promise of a new future, a destination to which the Party would guide us, but the actuality of something new that was hidden in our current predicament. The Strong Party does not represent something still to come - a potentially new direction for the Left - rather, it *presents it as already here*. And this “already here” is, ultimately, the only mode of existence of popular power. Through this strange inversion of potency and semblance, the Party also turns those elements which currently function as the main obstacles to the political process - corruption, cynicism, fascism - into the very *objects* of political practice, into the site of an infinite force which the Left must desperately learn how to harvest¹⁹.

This is the lesson we have learned from the *Partia e Fortë*: turning obstacles to a potential change into the objects of an actual desire is precisely what a Party which does not resist the masses must do.

To conclude, let us propose four theses through which we might extract the first thinkable consequences of this new political experience²⁰:

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17 Zimeri, Sead 2013 *The Subversive Potential of the Strong Party* - available at: <http://strongparty.wordpress.com/>

18 ‘The Best Way To Counter Oppression is to Mock it’, an interview with Visar Arifaj - available at: <http://strongparty.wordpress.com/2013/10/18/the-best-way-to-counter-oppression-is-to-mock-it/>

19 In this sense, the Strong Party gives us the first entry point to think the contemporary recuperation of the lost truth of the Haitian Revolution of 1804, which succeeded, even if briefly, in elevating the corrupted ideals of the French to their eternal dignity. See Žižek, 2009.

Still, we are faced here with new and interesting problems for the Left. After all, what does it mean to construct a political practice based not on an ideal, but on this strange relation to semblance? What does it mean, within this new orientation, to direct the masses, if the politics of semblance makes no claim to a special access to what the masses “really want deep down”? How can a Party trust the masses while at the same time not fearing to put back into circulation those ideas of discipline, power and organization which are associated, by the masses themselves, with totalitarianism and fascism? And, finally, how are we to move beyond the Stalinist distrust of semblance without leaving behind the critical concern with our own possible imposture? Much more important than finding quick solutions to these impasses is to recognize that being able to pose these questions is already the first sign that something truly new can be thought in politics today.

20 I would like to thank Agon Hamza and Stojan Pelko for highlighting the importance for this author to follow his own advice and not conclude this paper with anything less than the semblance of a solution.

(1) The current crisis of the Left is not a crisis of the party-form, it is a crisis of representative politics. Our task is to demonstrate that the party-form in fact *only reaches its notion* when a political organization is constructed in accordance to that which is always in excess to representation - pure appearance and pure presentation.

(2) Only a political orientation which organizes itself around the idea of appearance is capable of producing new emblems for the Left out of those ideas which we have conceded to purely ideological use: the passion for discipline, the ability to negotiate, etc. In order to dispute the direction of the masses - for example, in political campaigns - we must cease to fight over who is the best representative of the people and accept that the vocation of the party is to be, like Borges' map, a redoubling of the world.

(3) Only a political orientation which organizes itself around the idea of presentation is capable of attesting to the fact that the party-form, when subtracted from representative politics, becomes homogenous with those who are excluded from the political sphere. In order to cultivate the trust in the masses we must think the party as a part of the world - as a shelter in the desert rather than a useful map - by incorporating those without a place into this uncharted area of the Empire.

(4) Finally, the party-form must always keep in mind Hegel's famous final words from the preface of the *Phenomenology of Spirit* - in which he reminds us that the actual work of transformation takes place at the almost imperceptible surface of things, where the emancipatory Party alone can establish itself: "the share in the total work of Spirit which falls to the individual can only be very small"²¹.

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21 Hegel, 1997, p.45

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