

CAPITALISM'S EMERGENCE FROM FEUDING BETWEEN ELITES

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Book review: Richard Lachmann. Capitalists Against Their Will. Conflict Of Elites And Economic Transformation in Europe of the early New Time. — Moscow: 'The Territory of the Future', 2010

Unfortunately, it seldom occurs that really good and fresh scientific books by foreign authors become available to Russian readers. Fortunately, this is not the case for Richard Lachmann's book 'Capitalists Against Their Will'. The book was issued in English in 2000, and finally published in Russian at the beginning of 2010 by 'The Territory of the Future' publishing house. Thus, just over nine years passed between the book's first publication and the most recent one in the Russian language.

Despite the fact that this period may seem long to some people, it is actually a relatively reasonable period, especially if we recall the fact that the main work of German philosopher Yurgen Habermas 'Theory of Communicative Action' or Hans Margentau's work of classic of political realism 'Politics of Nations' still have not been translated into the Russian language. It becomes apparent that only a small amount of time that has passed from the moment that Richard Lachmann's *opus magnum* was originally published and the moment that the book finally became available in Russian, especially upon considering the fact that this State University of New York at Albany professor worked for a total of 17 years to ensure that his 'Capitalists Against Their Will' was finally published.

However, the length of time he spent working on this book was compensated for by the warm reception his book received within the scientific community. A leader in the field of historical sociology and one of the most respectable sociologists of the modern period, Charles Tilly, particularly noted Lachmann's non-standard approach in exploring one of the most important periods in the history of the West.



This leads to the question of how Richard Lachmann managed to deserve such a positive reception. What was that special thing that surprised connoisseurs of early contemporary history and sociologists? The answer is simple — it was precisely the fact that he took a non-standard approach, as pointed out by Tilly. Prior to Lachmann's appearance, the historical sociology of the contemporary period was dominated by two key research programmes — the Marxists and the Weberians. The Marxists insisted that capitalism became the predominant method of production as a result of the class struggle between the feudal lords and the bourgeoisie class. The Weberians, who followed the ideas of Max Weber, pointed to the priority influence of ideology on economic processes. They argued that if the Reformation had not resulted in the fundamental transformation of human consciousness, the Europeans would not have reconsidered their place in the world and the value of economic activities, and that if economic activities and

labour had not become the main priorities in life, the capitalism would still be just one of many methods of production and would not have come to the state of claiming domination. **Inherently, it seems as if there exists no third way between these two programmes. But Richard Lachmann found it, reconciling what was otherwise considered irreconcilable.**

In his view, capitalism as a dominating method of production really originated as a result of conflict, and the Marxists accept this idea, but this conflict did not occur between the class of oppressors and the class of the oppressed, but rather within the oppressing class itself. There were numerous factions within the dominating class, which were involved in a struggle for power amongst themselves. Moreover, they were not struggling for political power, but, even more importantly, for economical power.

As a result of a series of such conflicts, some of which lasted for decades and even for centuries, the feudal lords gradually 'mutated' into capitalists, and this also absolutely satisfies the theory of Weberians. However these mutations took place in somewhat different ways in each country, and Lachmann demonstrates it brilliantly on the basis of factual historical material. Thus, it becomes apparent that **capitalism did not emerge suddenly in its mature form somewhere, but that it was the result of the natural, gradual and uninterrupted development of European social mediums.** It follows that we can paradoxically conclude that the conflict for the model of social order, which first came to dominate in Europe and then in the rest of the world, is naturally determined. Correspondingly, the survival of this model also depends namely on the degree of conflict. ■